CTWO News

To celebrate our 10th anniversary, we held the **First CTWO Chataqua** in February. Fifty CTWO staff and Board members, training associates, and graduates of the Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program (MAAP) attended the two-day "family gathering" to talk about the work in our communities and CTWO's future. Topics of discussion included expanding MAAP, increasing our training of indigenous leaders, and making the Chataqua an annual event.

That same weekend, CTWO hosted the **United Methodist Voluntary Services** (UMVS) national meeting in Redwood City, California. Leaders and organizers representing more than 20 organizations joined in three days of lively formal and informal discussions. Workshop presenters included CTWO Board members **Michael Omi** on the state of racism in America, **Herb Chao Gunther** on media strategies, and **Victoria Bomberry** on Organizing in Native American Communities. 1986 MAAP graduate **Wende Marshall** described her work with the Hotel Tenants' Rights Project in a session on Women Organizing Women and **Zeenab Johnson**, a 1988 MAAP graduate from Portland, Oregon, was elected to the UMVS Board.

Two members of the CTWO family were honored among **Mother Jones' Third Annual "Heroes and Heroines"** in the January issue of the magazine: **Mark Toney**, director of DARE in Providence, Rhode Island, and **Young Shin**, director of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates in Oakland, California. Mark has also just joined the CTWO Board. And Young was recently named one of six 1989 Fellows by the **Charles Bannerman Memorial Fellowship Program.**

CTWO salutes the other 1989 Bannerman Fellows too: **Anthony Thigpen**, Jobs with Peace in Los Angeles; **Rose Sanders**, 21st Century Leadership Project in Selma; **Baldemar Velasquez**, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) in Toledo; **Maude Hurd**, ACORN in Boston; and **Jesus Aguilar**, Central American Refugee Center, Los Angeles.

CTWO's Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program (MAAP) received an award from the **Apprenticeship Alliance** in March for its unique community organizing training for young people of color. To apply for this year's MAAP program, contact **Sonia Pena** at 415-654-9601.

Wende Marshall makes a point at the CTWO Chataqua.

The Campaign for Accessible Health Care, CTWO's new organizing project, began in Oakland in February with a well-covered press conference on the declining vaccination rate among young children of color (reported in the last *Trendsletter*). The project is headed by **Francis Colpatura**, formerly director of the MAAP Program and now CTWO's Director of Field Operations. Next steps include recruiting and training a youth health corps to conduct community surveys documenting under-immunization and other health problems.

In April, **Shahnaz Taplin** will conduct a two-day intensive **Media Training Session** for members of Bay Area groups and provide on-site follow-up. Mid-May will find CTWO hosting a west coast **Seminar on Women's Issues** and an **East Coast Leadership Training** in Providence. East and West coast consultations are also scheduled for mid-May with host organizations for this summer's MAAP Program.

Summer is always CTWO's busiest time and this summer will be more challenging than ever. The **MAAP** Program begins June 18 with a week-long training session. Then, CTWO trainers and trainees will begin six-week field placements with community and labor organizations in the Northeast (Boston and Providence), the Bay Area, and Los Angeles.

MAAP interns return for a final week of advanced training in August, which this year will coincide with the first **West Coast Community Development Institute**, organized by CTWO in collaboration with Tufts University and the Women's Foundation. The week long session (August 6-12) offers five tracks: Community Organizing, Fundraising, Women as Managers, Housing Development and Financing, and Religious Activism.

THE MINORITY TRENDSLETTER

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SCHOOLING OURSELVES

The failure of public school systems to educate children of color is painfully evident in high drop out and illiteracy rates, disproportionate placement in remedial classes, the dearth of bilingual programs, and a host of other indicators. In response, there are active campaigns in many communities to reform public education. But some parents, educators, and community organizations have taken a different approach—creating their own neighborhood-based independent schools.

The Institute for Independent Education has identified over 300 mostly inner-city independent schools serving communities of color and its president Dr. Joan Davis Ratteray says she finds new ones "every other week."

Most of the schools are pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade, though in the past few years Ratteray said there appear to be more high schools. The majority are in Black communities but there are several full-time Latino and Native American schools. In addition, there are hundreds of weekend or evening schools, particularly in Asian communities.

A 1987 Institute study summarized the characteristics of a sampling of 75 full-time independent minority schools. Nearly half were founded in the 1970s but at least one was 100 years old. About half were religious and half secular. Some of the schools were created by parents, some by educators who previously worked in the public sector, and some began as preschool centers and added a grade each year.

A number of schools are direct offshoots of struggles to improve public education. Heart of the Earth Survival School was founded in 1972 by the American Indian Movement after four years of challenging the Minneapolis public schools to teach Indian history and culture. "We were finally moved to action," Director William Means recalls, "by a court case involving four young Indian men who were kicked out of public school because they refused to cut their hair. The court ruled that if the parents did not find an alternative to the public school they'd be sent to jail."

Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School in Chicago has a similar history. Also founded in 1972, its first students had been kicked out of public school for organizing a student boycott over bilingual education.

In the Black community, some schools are rooted in the liberation schools of the 1960s but Ratteray traces the contemporary independent school movement to the late-1800s when Blacks denied public education began forming schools of their own. In the post-World War II years, efforts to establish independent institutions were overshadowed by the push for desegregation and "after the Brown decision," Ratteray says, "many Black families abandoned the Black schools. But by the late 60s and mid-70s, there was disillusionment over integration and the Black independent schools started growing again."

Although they serve only an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 students nationwide, the minority independent school experience is worth examining both for its viability as an alternative to public schools and for lessons that might be applied to public school settings.

Highs and Lows

Like other private schools, those operated by and for people of color can generally claim higher standardized test scores, lower dropout rates, and more graduates pursuing higher education than their public schools counterparts.

According to Kofi Lomotey, national secretary of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, students at CIBI's 50 member schools "perform one to three years ahead of their public school peers [on standardized tests], once they have been with us for one year."

Both Heart of the Earth and Albizu Campos serve low-income communities. "Most of our kids are what they call 'at-risk' in terms of dropping out," Means commented. But Heart of the Earth has had a dropout rate for the last three years of four to six percent. By comparison, he said, "a local study followed all American Indian students entering the eighth grade in Minneapolis public schools in 1983. This past year, I think only four graduated out of about 270." Albizu Campos boasts that 72 percent of its graduates continue their education in college or other post-secondary programs.

Why do independent schools succeed where public schools fail? Their administrators and advocates point to several distinguishing features. First, and the reason parents cite most often for sending their children to an independent school, is a "nurturing environment." In general terms, this means a positive atmosphere where students receive individual attention, encouragement, and affection. Concerns about safety and discipline also cause parents to favor independent schools, Ratteray said.

Probably the most critical factor in the independent school environment is a low teacher-pupil ratio. The average is 15 students to one teacher, and as Marvin Garcia says of Albizu Campos

Our people are being deliberately uneducated. We know we have to deal with that and there may be more than one way. We need to move to improve the public schools and to get some kind of control over them. I think that's a long range objective and we can't give up generations while we do that.

We also think that the public schools will not properly educate our folks and that's going to always be a problem. Even when our folks are getting the skills of reading and writing and math out of the public school, they're not going to get the understanding they need to be able to lead.

Tom Culotta
The Community School
Baltimore