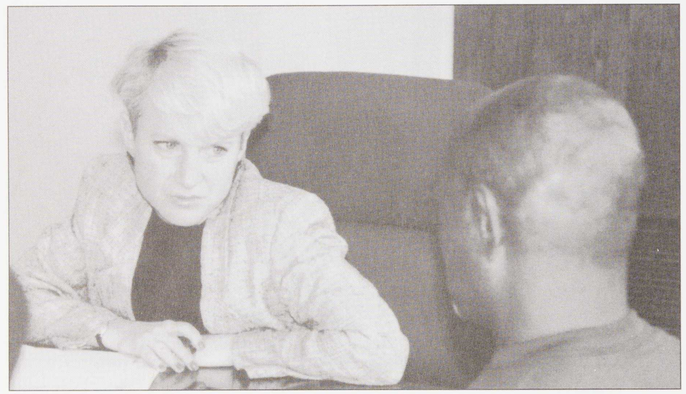
are generally ad-hoc groups that come together around particular instances of police brutality or discriminatory law enforcement, such as: Justice Denied, a Maryland group formed to protest the lengthy sentence given to the young African American Terrance Johnson; and the Committee for Justice for Jerrold Hall, an African American teenager shot and killed by an Oakland transit police officer [see "Shot in the Back for Being Black," May/June 1993].

These emerging activists often demand police accountability to the community, or at least the firing of particularly brutal officers (more radical elements depict the police as the agents of social control, responsible for keeping the disenfranchised from rising in rebellion). Their effectiveness, however, has been undermined by pro-police arguments that such civilian oversight hampers the police's ability to fight crime, thus making communities even more unsafe.

The Campaign for Community Safety and Police Accountability, or CCSPA, was created to bridge these two approaches with the larger question of community safety. As Denver resident Shannon Smith put it in a June 1994 CCSPA press conference held in Washington, D.C., "Everyone should have the right to walk the streets in safety, feel secure in their own home and be able to go out at night without worrying about being robbed, beaten, raped or killed. Too many of us, however, have as much fear of the police and other law enforcement agents as we do of bandits and lawbreakers. Proposals to 'do something about crime' need to take into account that what people really want is to feel safe. Nobody can feel safe living in a community where the police routinely threaten, harass and brutalize the very citizens they are supposed to protect."



Director of Justice Programs Laurie Robinson listens as Dale Jackson explains why the community needs a role in the implementation of the crime bill.

Third Force file photo

CCSPA members say they are organizing to reduce both the crime rate and police misconduct, and that they are working with a sophisticated strategy, employing both national and local handles. "The debate over crime — with all its political implications and racist images — takes place on the national level," argues Gary Delgado, director of the Applied Research Center (ARC) in Oakland. "But for the most part issues of law enforcement and crime prevention and punishment are settled locally." One of the member organizations of the CCSPA, ARC has helped with research and has provided some of the group's intellectual framework. The Center for Third World Organizing, a 15-year-old training and organizing institution based in Oakland, developed and leads the CCSPA.

Step by Step to a Strategy

The HERE Local 28/50 union hall in downtown Oakland feels like a high school gymnasium. Footsteps echo off the hardwood floors. Daylight barely manages to seep in through the high windows, even in the summer. There don't seem to be any good seats for viewing the stage. Grassroots organizations always seem to inhabit such stark settings.

On a cool August day in 1993, community members from five organizations across the country gathered at the union hall for what was billed as the first CTWO Strategy Session (before the campaign had an official name). Each one of the groups — People United for a Better Oakland (PUEBLO); Denver Action for a Better Community (ABC); Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) in Providence, Rhode Island; Sacramento Communities Taking Action for Neighborhood Dignity (STAND); and Tri-County United Action (Orangeburg, South Carolina) — had been through a year-long process of popular education in a series of 13 Issue Study Groups, or ISGs. The ISGs covered diverse topics like police brutality, alternatives to incarceration, community policing, the Border Patrol, public spending on law enforcement and proposals for change.

Each organization developed a set of recommendations for action based on what was learned in the ISGs and what the community members felt were the most pressing concerns for their neighborhoods. These recommendations were brought to the strategy session in Oakland and hammered into a rough plan for a national campaign to link police accountability with solutions to the root causes of crime. "The ISGs were very interesting," PUEBLO member and Oakland resident Maria Leal told the *CTWO Times*. "Sometimes I think people get so scared of crime that they are willing to let the police do whatever they want. But in the ISGs we discussed ways to have both safe communities and police who respect us."

Leal was one of seven PUEBLO leaders who attended the strategy session. She was joined by her counterparts from the other four grassroots organizations, about 30 leaders in all. In community organizing terminology, "leaders" are members who have been around the organization for a significant period of time and have made a personal investment of time and energy. They tend to be the more dynamic and committed members, but the basic defining characteristic is a willingness to go out and get other members of the community involved in the group. "What makes a leader a leader is that they have followers," argues Tim Sampson, a tireless white-bearded veteran organizer and CTWO board member seldom seen without a pencil behind his ear and brightly colored socks showing through his Birkenstocks.

"[In the ISGs] we went step by step to developing a strategy," explains CCSPA coordinator Francis Calpotura, who is also CTWO's co-director. Calpotura cut his political teeth as a student organizer during the Marcos years in the Philippines. Occasionally brash and with a laugh that can be heard down the block, Calpotura has a reputation as an organizer who sometimes seems to bite off more than he can chew, but who always pulls things off in the end. Legend has it that he walked into the CTWO office in 1984 to apply for an office manager job opening. A student of philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley, Calpotura had no filing or bookkeeping skills and typed with one finger (he has since improved to two), but he got the job anyway.

"The other thing the ISGs did for us," he continues, "besides producing an impressive list of recommendations for how to approach the issues, was give us the time to do the hard research and find real handles for this campaign." What finally emerged from the strategy session and subsequent meetings was a framework built around four basic principles: preventing crime by reallocating resources toward social needs and conflict resolution; promoting community justice and alternatives to incarceration; fostering public participation; and holding the police accountable to the community. The CCSPA calls this their "Home Run Strategy for Community Safety" (a somewhat clumsy metaphor meant to distinguish the CCSPA approach from "Three Strikes and You're Out" proposals sweeping the country).

"After that strategy meeting," says Calpotura, "we had the leadership and the basic approach in place. The trick at that point was to find some concrete handles around which we could develop both a national campaign and a way for local organizations to carry the fight to their areas."

Taking It to the Feds

Community organizing, like any profession, has its own jargon and its own way of looking at the world. For organizers, an "issue" is something a community group can have a fight over and stand a chance of winning. A "handle" is a particular part of an issue that a group can grab on to and use as a lever to move large institutions. The final congressional committee hearings on President Clinton's 1994 crime bill (which he billed as the "smartest and toughest" ever) offered just such a handle for CCSPA organizers. (Committee hearings are held to reconcile the House and Senate versions of a given piece of legislation.)

Earlier research revealed that two other pieces of existing federal anti-crime legislation (the Local Partnership Act and the Crime Prevention Block Grant Program) mandate that the community participate, through local hearings, in how anti-crime dollars are spent. CCSPA organizers wanted to add the same language to the "Cops on the Beat" section of Clinton's crime bill, which since the bill passed now provides $8.9 billion for community policing.

"People from the community know best what is needed," said CCSPA member Dale Jackson of Providence, Rhode Island, in a meeting with Director of Justice Programs Laurie Robinson. "Why don't you give us the chance to have our say?" CCSPA organizers believed that if they could get community hearings mandated as part of the Cops on the Beat program, it would give all the local CCSPA chapters a way to play a strong role in how community policing money is spent in their communities.

In a fortunate bit of timing, the congressional committee hearings were held in June, the same month that CTWO begins its annual summer training programs for organizers. By holding the CTWO trainings in Washington, D.C., and having them coincide with the first national announcement of the CCSPA, Calpotura and the other organizers were able to draw on about 30 community leaders involved in the trainings, and another dozen or so staff organizers who were on hand. "We had about 40 excited people running around that town," remembers DARE director Shannah Kurland, "ready to put their organizing training into action."

An advance team made up of CTWO office manager Erika Dudley and local D.C. activist Kevin Harris set up meetings with congressional aides and two representatives (Pat Schroeder of Colorado and Strom Thurmond of South Carolina) and worked out the legislative details of inserting community participation into the crime bill. Over the course of a frenetic two days in early June, CCSPA members met with the representatives or their aides, held a press conference at the Washington Press Club to announce the Campaign for Community Safety and Police Accountability, demonstrated outside the Office of Justice Programs (a division of the Department of Justice) calling for greater emphasis on crime prevention and programs to stop police brutality, and held a mass meeting with Laurie Robinson to get her office to recommend that a mandate for community participation be added to the crime bill.

In the end, the language was not added to the crime bill. But as a result of the high-profile meetings, press conferences and demonstrations, CCSPA leaders pushed their way into a set of discussions being held between the Department of Justice and various community groups around the coun-