

*Young people are joining together to demand a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. In the process, they are transforming policies and making institutions more accountable.*

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### From assets to agents of change: Social justice, organizing, and youth development

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FEW WOULD disagree that young people today face formidable social problems. While policymakers and researchers might point to the familiar data on teen pregnancy, violence, and high school dropout rates, we believe that barriers to democratic participation are the greatest challenge facing youth. Political participation has been the cornerstone of America's democratic ideals, and yet for women and communities of color, it has come with substantial costs. Similar to blacks prior to 1954, today's young people face intense economic isolation, lack political power, and are subjected to pervasive social stigma. In response, young people throughout the country are mobilizing to demand a voice in public policy and are transforming institutions to be more accountable to their communities.

This chapter addresses three fundamental questions regarding youth political engagement. What role can youth play in forging a democratic society and creating more equitable institutions? How

can adults support sociopolitical development among youth? And what can be learned from youth organizing and its impact on the development of young people? In order to address these questions, we broaden the traditional individual focus of youth development by using a social ecology approach to provide a brief overview of the political, economic, and cultural context in which youth development and political participation occur.<sup>1</sup>

We focus on urban youth of color, who have largely been ignored in mainstream youth development literature. The focus on marginalized youth allows us to examine more deeply the social issues they confront and explore how they creatively respond through organizing, political education, and identity development. This approach is a model for building not only strong democratic processes, but also healthier communities and supportive environments for youth.

We identify the commonalities among youth organizing frameworks and synthesize key principles that might contribute to a general theory or model of social justice and youth development. Finally, through recent examples of youth political action, we explicate the conditions for successfully engaging youth in their political development and empowerment and examine the individual, community, and institutional impacts of youth participation in political organizing.

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### ***Youth in an ecological context: Uncovering the assault on urban youth***

Talking about the assault on urban youth of color in America is somewhat like uncovering the proverbial pink elephant in the middle of a large room: everyone knows it is there, but no one talks about it. From the 1980s and into the 1990s, relatively little attention was given to the serious social conditions youth of color face in their communities. Racism, mass unemployment, pervasive violence, and police brutality pose serious threats to youth and their families. Garbarino referred to these conditions as “social toxins,” a term used

to represent the degree to which the social world has become poisonous to a person's well-being.<sup>2</sup> These toxins impede productive development for young people, who are expected to develop under these hostile conditions, and place them at a greater risk than those living in stable and safe communities. Similarly, Brooks-Gunn and colleagues found that neighborhood factors such as gun violence and police abuse, lack of health care, racist school practices, lack of jobs that pay a livable wage, and few productive after-school opportunities all present barriers to healthy development.<sup>3</sup>

Policymakers usually respond to these issues by blaming youth themselves or simply writing them off as a threat to civil society. This response tends to evoke public policy that conceptualizes young people as the root causes of their own problems and does not adequately address the most significant problems facing urban youth. To understand these challenges, we must look beyond the narrow parameters of individual, family, or community behavior toward the larger economic, social, and cultural forces that bear on the actions, behaviors, experiences, and choices of urban youth.

A social-ecological approach provides researchers and practitioners with a powerful lens to examine the ways in which social, political, and economic forces influence young people's development. We examine these contexts, focusing on the central question: How does context influence the development of young people of color?

### *Political context*

In 1997, minority youth made up 34 percent of the U.S. population but 62 percent of incarcerated youth. African American youth are six times more likely to be incarcerated and receive longer sentences than their white counterparts.<sup>4</sup> Youth of color clearly bear the brunt of discriminatory sentencing practices. They also have few educational and economic opportunities. In California, for example, Proposition 187 denies undocumented immigrants public benefits, Proposition 209 outlaws affirmative action policies, Proposition 227 bans bilingual education, and Proposition 21 gives courts greater authority to sentence youth as young as fourteen years old as adults.

Mike Males documented how xenophobic notions of black youth, as well as fear of crime, helped to shape hostile public policy for black youth during the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Despite the fact that youth crime had decreased since 1990, news stories continued to report soaring youth crime rates among black youth. Legislators responded by crafting public policy underscoring the idea that to be black, young, and poor was also to be criminal.<sup>6</sup> These perceptions were reinforced through public policies that reflected a growing concern for safety and the consequent increased repression through institutions such as schools, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems.<sup>7</sup> From 1996 to 2002, for example, forty-three states instituted legislation that facilitated the transfer of children to adult court.

### *Economic context*

There was a time in U.S. history when urban youth could secure a decent job with no more, or sometimes less, than a high school education. With relatively low unemployment levels in many American cities, urban youth had reason for hope and prospects for a financially stable future. Economic changes over the past twenty years have left working-class youth and their families with few job opportunities. Low-wage employment in retail and food services offers the only legitimate option for those with no more than high school diplomas.<sup>8</sup> The decline in both educational opportunities and livable wages forces urban youth to survive in a context with limited legitimate economic opportunities. In many urban areas, young people struggle to make ends meet by juggling two and sometimes three part-time jobs, or they often “hustle,” earning money off the books through street vending.<sup>9</sup> The money that poor and working-class young people earn from working usually goes to support the household. These economic challenges are supported by the fact that many young people feel that completing high school means little in communities with bleak job opportunities.<sup>10</sup>

### *Social context*

The policies we have described are made worse by a social context that can be best described as toxic. Youth are subjugated to serious social problems such as racism, sexism, and homophobia and are

often forced to navigate these in isolation. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that traditional youth development programs rarely address the ways in which young people deal with these issues and often ignore how these issues impede their healthy development. Recently, scholars have noted that these forms of oppression can trigger depression, hopelessness, and suicidal tendencies. The trauma of persistent oppression coupled with isolation and the inability to confront and change these oppressive conditions has led scholars to believe that the presence of both can be lethal.<sup>11</sup>

These conditions, however, are not immutable. In fact, the capacity for individuals to challenge, resist, and change the root cause of their suffering is at the core of any democratic process. Despite the fact that young people of color grapple with these serious social conditions and have been grossly omitted from our democratic process, they still respond to injustice in their communities. Young people have always been at the vanguard for community and social change, and today's young people are no different. Following are a few examples of how young people are organizing to transform oppressive social conditions into healthy, fair, and democratic realities.

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### *Youth in action: Examples of youth organizing*

In communities around the South in the 1960s, students violated segregation laws by sitting at lunch counters in white establishments. The activity triggered a new direction in the civil rights movement and highlighted how young people are central to social change efforts. The children of South Africa, in their protests against the Bantu education system, directly confronted the government and helped to bring an end to the system of apartheid. As these examples show, the actions of young people can transform an entire nation. Today, young people around the world find themselves continuing the struggle for equality and are organizing to make the vision of equality a reality.

Many of the best examples of youth leadership come from outside the United States. Increasing inequality, poverty, and disease

in Brazil led to large numbers of children forced to live on the streets without their families or any other social supports. Thousands of these street children, with the support of adult educators and youth workers, formed a movement that led them to take over the Brazilian congress and force them to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

People of color and low-income people in California have faced a decade of repressive ballot initiatives, turning back the gains made by the movements for justice and equality in the 1960s and 1970s. Youth have been in the leadership of fights against policies that would deny them education, health care, and other basic rights. At one point in this struggle, six thousand youth from all over the San Francisco Bay Area walked out of school and rallied in front of a newly built police station, across the street from a dilapidated school, to protest the underfunding of education and the overinvestment in punishment and incarceration. In response to Proposition 21, an initiative that allows youth to be tried as adults at age fourteen and criminalizes many of the normal things that young people do,<sup>12</sup> thousands of students again took to the streets and engaged in civil disobedience to stop the corporations that funded that proposition in California. After interrupting a corporate board meeting of one of the initiative's corporate funders and protesting outside their headquarters, the Chevron and PG&E corporations publicly renounced their support for the initiative. In all of the counties where young people mobilized in significant numbers, the initiative was defeated.

In Philadelphia, youth organizing groups are waging a struggle against corporations that want to privatize the public school system and the politicians who are allied with them. Combining sound research with direct action, youth and their adult allies have succeeded in keeping some local control over the schools, preventing the Edison corporation, one of a number of for-profit corporations looking to gain access to public dollars, from taking over the entire school system, as had been proposed.

In New York City, thousands of youth took to the streets to protest police brutality and racial profiling in the aftermath of the case of Amadou Diallo, a Haitian American who was brutalized

and sodomized with the broken end of a broomstick by New York City police officers. Recently, those same groups of young people held mass rallies, incorporating hip-hop culture and music, to prevent the mayor from making deep cuts to the education budget.

These diverse examples of youth and student activism are part of a long tradition of youth taking leadership in social movements fighting for democracy and justice. During the past decade, the United States has witnessed the growth of a dynamic and diverse youth movement. This movement is being built not only through mass mobilizations of young people and their supporters, but through smaller-scale campaigns and efforts to make concrete changes in the social conditions that youth and their communities face. Students have successfully organized in communities around the country to defeat curfew laws, helped to write and pass policies protecting gay and lesbian students in school, changed the curriculum in their schools to make it more reflective of our diverse communities, and worked to stop dumping of waste and other forms of environmental racism. Young people are learning how to be citizens by revitalizing democracy.

As these examples demonstrate, the efforts of young people often lead to better public policy, stronger organizations, more relevant services, and healthier communities. But how does participation in these efforts promote the development of the youth involved? In the next section, we present some of the principles and practices that youth groups are using in transforming their environments.

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### *Social justice youth development principles and practices*

Political participation through organizing, informing the general public, and waging winnable campaigns against powerful groups holds the most promise for attaining a more inclusive democracy. In the youth development field, there has been rising interest in framing how young people engage in social justice activities.<sup>13</sup> Two frameworks have emerged that provide

conceptual groundwork for an emerging theory about youth political engagement. The first, developed by Watts, Williams, and Jagers, offers a social-psychological discussion about the sociopolitical development of youth and the role of social oppression.<sup>14</sup> Using an ecological approach, they examine how young people respond within oppressive social systems and identify the process of sociopolitical development. The second framework, developed by Ginwright and Cammarota, also argues for an ecological understanding of youth development and introduces a theoretical discussion about what these authors call social justice youth development (SJYD).<sup>15</sup> Each model offers a unique and substantive contribution to our understanding of youth and social justice issues, but both share several principles. (See Table 2.1.)

**Table 2.1. Principles, practices, and outcomes of social justice youth development**

<i>Principles</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Analyzes power in social relationships	Political education Political strategizing Identifying power holders Reflecting about power in one's own life	Social problematizing, critical thinking, asking and answering questions related to community and social problems Development of sociopolitical awareness Youth transforming arrangements in public and private institutions by sharing power with adults
Makes identity central	Joining support groups and organizations that support identity development Reading material where one's identity is central and celebrated Critiquing stereotypes regarding one's identities	Development of pride regarding one's identity Awareness of how sociopolitical forces influence identity Feeling of being a part of something meaningful and productive The capacity to build solidarity with others who share common struggles and have shared interests

*(continued)*



**Table 2.1. Continued**

<i>Principles</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Promotes systemic social change	Working to end social inequality (such as racism and sexism) Refraining from activities and behaviors that are oppressive to others (for example, refusing to buy shoes made in sweatshops)	Sense of life purpose, empathy for the suffering of others, optimism about social change Liberation by ending various forms of social oppression
Encourages collective action	Involving oneself in collective action and strategies that challenge and change local and national systems and institutions Community organizing Rallies and marches Boycotts and hunger strikes Walkouts Electoral strategies	Capacity to change personal, community, and social conditions Empowerment and positive orientation toward life circumstances and events Healing from personal trauma brought on from oppression
Embraces youth culture	Celebrating youth culture in organizational culture Language Personnel Recruitment strategies	Authentic youth engagement Youth-run and youth-led organizations Effective recruitment strategies Effective external communications Engagement of extremely marginalized youth

***Principles of social justice youth development***

SJYD examines how urban youth contest, challenge, respond to, and negotiate the use and misuse of power in their lives. SJYD is strengthened by youth and adult allies working together with a common vision of social justice. This requires that adults take seriously their own development and that youth workers shift how they conceptualize youth development. Reaching healthy adulthood is not the only goal of SJYD; rather, it is to build a more equitable society through the engagement of critically conscious citizens through the following principles and strategies.

**Analyzing power within social relationships.** An analysis of power within social relationships encourages youth to examine the root causes of social problems. It also requires that they understand how the misuse of power in institutions creates systems that reproduce multiple forms of inequality. For example, such an analysis might require young people to ask, “Who has the power to influence the quality of our education?” Analysis of power often reveals hidden systems of privilege and encourages critical thinking about social problems

**Making identity central.** Often, inequality is linked to identity, and as a result, identity is often the starting point for youth organizing. Identities are complex ways that young people (and adults) identify themselves, as well as how they are seen by the larger society. SJYD views identity as central to developing young people because power and privilege are often granted based on identity (with the most going to white, heterosexual, middle-class men). As a result, women, people of color, and poor and gay youth often bear the brunt of social inequality. However, it is that same social inequality that brings together young people who have a shared identity to fight for social change.

**Promoting systemic change.** The focus on systemic change develops the capacity of young people to transform institutional practices that do not meet their needs and counters the practice of blaming the individual for the effects of structural inequalities. Young people strategize, research, and act to change school policies, state legislation, and police protocols that create and sustain inequality. Systemic change focuses on root causes of social problems and makes explicit the complex ways that various forms of oppression work together. This helps counter the low self-esteem that comes from being blamed for one’s own oppression.

**Encouraging collective action.** Without action, there is no change. Collective action is the process of engagement that seeks to alter existing social conditions through noninstitutional means. Often, collective action emerges from groups affected by similar problems and sharing the same social justice vision. Collective

action encompasses the range of strategies involved in organizing and activism, including sit-ins, rallies and marches, and boycotts. The premise is that the capacity to change oppressive social conditions lies in collective efforts, not only individual ones.

***Embracing youth culture.*** Youth culture has been effective at communicating messages that promote social justice. It can be thought of as a set of ideas and a common worldview shared by most young people. Similar to ethnic groups that share similar cultural values, young people see the world as a place of possibilities and challenge the adult world to acknowledge its contradictions. Much of the dominant youth culture in America can also be described as hip-hop culture, often defined by a style that calls attention to the problems urban youth face on a daily basis through music, dress, and language.

### ***Practices of social justice youth development***

Many of the strategies that youth use to confront social inequality are those that have been drawn on by marginalized people throughout time to make their voices heard. Some of these reflect the particular ways that conservative political forces have chosen to target marginalized people. Following are some of the more prominent and effective strategies that young people are beginning to use, particularly in the California youth movement, which has been at the forefront of the SJYD effort. Many of the practices address multiple principles simultaneously.

***Developing the tools to analyze power: Defining the problem and providing a solution.*** The youth organizer and founder of LISTEN Inc., Lisa Sullivan, often said that urban youth must be given the support to define their own problems and find their own solutions.<sup>16</sup> Much of the work that young people do in the political area is as simple as this:

***Problem:*** Youth lack access to health care, leading to physical, psychological, emotional, and educational challenges.

***Solution:*** Provide free health care in schools that responds to youth-defined needs.

*Problem:* Youth services are underused and irrelevant to youth.

*Solution:* Require that as a condition of funding, youth be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs.

*Problem:* Youth from different communities have conflicts with each other in school.

*Solution:* Teach all groups to understand and respect their own history and culture and those of others by changing the school curriculum.

Young people are developing the capacity to critically analyze their world through political and popular education methods and learning to conduct action research, analyze social structures, and propose policy solutions. This process develops in young people an understanding of how things came to be (history) and a way to analyze how power in society is organized.

***Building youth identity.*** Because youth rarely have opportunities to explore and develop their identities, practices that build identity yield both personal and social change. Practices that support SJYD include support groups, summer camps based on particular aspects of youth identity, and organizations devoted to identity-based advocacy. These organizations support youth through the process of healing from social ills by building their identities and providing skills to confront social problems.

***Creating systemic change through collective action.*** Young people are developing new and creative ways to create systemic change. They are addressing social inequality through community organizing and activism; organizing marches, walkouts, and hunger strikes; developing their own ballot initiatives; putting youth voices inside the system; and using the media as tools to educate and influence. Community organizing around local issues of direct concern to youth and their communities is the most central strategy that young people are using to create systemic change.

As we have witnessed in recent corporate scandals and efforts to create campaign finance reform, corporations have a tremendous amount of power in the political process. For youth to be heard,

they must often directly challenge the corporations and wealthy individuals who support hostile public policies and oppressive political agendas. During the fight against Proposition 21 in California, youth groups targeted the Hilton and Chevron corporations, which were funding the initiative, and exposed their role in promoting the agenda on incarceration. Youth forced some companies to back down and withdraw their support. After the initiative passed, youth staged a dramatic takeover of a Hilton Hotel lobby to express their outrage that rich individuals can have such a nefarious influence on the political process, sentencing a generation to less opportunity and more suffering.

In addition, youth organizing groups that have fought from outside the system to get decision makers not just to listen but to take action to support them have also worked to put youth on the inside to be allies and advocates for youth. Youth organizing groups have won campaigns to create new youth commissions and have added youth representation to school boards and state and local commissions. Across the country, these are becoming platforms from which youth fight for real voice and power.

*Using youth culture to involve youth politically.* Youth organizations are incorporating youth culture in their work in interesting ways. By supporting young people in making the decision about what gets done, by whom, and how, organizations are creating environments that authentically reflect the needs of young people. Incorporating youth culture encompasses everything from the way that materials are developed to the language used in training and outreach. By speaking to young people in their language, groups are able to engage marginalized youth in large numbers. For example, when youth organized against Proposition 21, youth organizations, community activists, and local hip-hop artists joined forces to organize hip-hop concerts to conduct mass political education. They also distributed flyers with youthful graffiti art that encouraged disenfranchised youth to vote and participate in the political process. A well-known Bay Area hip-hop artist and participant in the organizing effort commented, “Culturally, a lot of young people do not read

newspapers or even if you pass them a flyer, they might read it but it's not as real to them because it's an old way of organizing. So hip-hop can bring us new tools to organize people with."<sup>17</sup>

*How SJYD outcomes are different from other youth development approaches*

SJYD yields a qualitatively different set of outcomes than does traditional youth development. First, it is more explicit about the serious social problems and conditions young people face. Second, it develops youth by seeing them not only as assets but also as agents capable of transforming their toxic environments, not simply developing resiliency and resistance to them. Third, SJYD fosters activism, civic engagement, and critically conscious citizens, the cornerstones of true democracy. In interviews with practitioners and researchers, Nat Williams, a researcher and program officer of the Hazen Foundation, accurately stated that if a young person "is doing well in school, has good parental support and mentored relationships, has positive self-esteem, contributes to others through service, but does not have an understanding of socio-political realities and how they affect him/her and their communities and is not working with others to challenge injustice in his/her or other environments, they may be great young people, but they are not fully developed."<sup>18</sup> This is particularly the case in a democratic society where consistent, informed, and active engagement in the civic process exemplifies good citizens. Prosocial youth development is important but not enough. Williams encourages researchers and practitioners to revisit their notions of healthy and full development.

More than any other intervention, SJYD fosters critical consciousness among youth who have been failed by other social supports, including traditional youth development programming. Critical consciousness can be described as an awareness of how institutional, historical, and systemic forces limit and promote opportunities for particular groups that lead to collective action to change unjust social conditions.<sup>19</sup> The development of critical consciousness includes a host of principles enumerated in traditional youth development frameworks, such as physical and psychologi-

cal safety and security, emotional and moral support, and supportive adult relationships.<sup>20</sup> SJYD goes further by supporting specific sociopolitical competencies.

- *Sociopolitical development and analysis.* Sociopolitical development emphasizes an understanding of the cultural, economic, social, and political forces that influence one's life. This understanding shapes young people's worldview about systemic and root causes of social and community problems and requires that they act to change social conditions.

- *Social and community problem solving.* This refers to the capacity to collectively articulate social and community problems, as well as develop thoughtful and practical solutions. Often, this type of problem solving requires critical thinking about innovative strategies that have an impact on the quality of life for youth and their families.

- *Decision making.* A key component of healthy adolescent development is learning to be a good decision maker. SJYD organizations support youth in becoming good decision makers by giving them the responsibility for deciding what needs to be done, how, and by whom. Youth are put in a context where they are supported in making decisions and seeing the impact of their decisions on themselves and their communities.

- *Healing and spiritual development.* One of the most devastating impacts of oppression is self-blame and hopelessness. However, critical consciousness allows young people who feel victimized to remove self-blame and heal from the trauma of poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression. Healing can be described as psychological, emotional, and physical wellness. The healing process also leads to a spiritual development that provides youth with a sense of life purpose, empathy for the suffering of others, and optimism about social change.

- *Community well-being and just institutional practices.* SJYD outcomes focus on individual development, but there are social outcomes as well. When youth work to transform their environments,

the process and the result strengthen community well-being with the presence of safety, economic opportunities, and opportunities for recreation and productive civic engagement, the very conditions necessary to support the healthy development of individuals.

Even programs that do not have organizing for institutional change as an explicit goal can promote systems change. To determine whether they are doing so requires asking one basic question: How does the program help youth understand the root causes and the solutions to social problems? If a program is promoting a clearer understanding of root causes, it will facilitate long-term institutional change. Service programs can do much greater social good when they cultivate bonds of human solidarity and compassion and build critical consciousness. For many, the path of service leads from charity to justice. It is our job as SJYD practitioners to help clear that path and provide more resources for justice.

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### *Increasing the investment in SJYD*

The challenge to SJYD practitioners is to critically examine current practice and find ways to apply SJYD principles in efforts to support youth empowerment. When communities of practitioners have done so, as in the case of the Brazilian street children's movement, the results have been dramatic.<sup>21</sup> Fortunately, many organizations are creating paths for those committed to urban youth to follow. For funders and other allies seeking to promote the community change necessary to support authentic SJYD, the need for bold leadership is increasingly urgent.

For civil society to hold government accountable, it needs to be politically and financially independent. This means that SJYD needs strong support from private foundations and the broader community. Whoever is paying your bills often has the power to silence your voice. To ensure that young people can raise an independent voice for their own interests, we must increase the level of



private philanthropic investment in SJYD.<sup>22</sup> One way to do this is to help see to it that 30 percent of all the funds going to youth development in the country be shifted to support SJYD as a key approach to working with marginalized youth. And beyond that, 10 percent of funding can go to support youth organizing as a core youth development strategy. There are many ways that funders can support SJYD. Following are some key recommendations:

- *Join existing SJYD funding collaboratives.* By joining the National Funder Collaborative on Youth Organizing or the California Fund for Youth Organizing, funders can make a responsible and effective contribution to supporting this new effort. Even if a foundation is starting a new SJYD or youth organizing funding initiative, commit within your own foundation at least 10 percent of your portfolio to an existing collaborative. Participating funders benefit tremendously from the learning relationships and knowledge already gained in these efforts.
- *Give larger grants to smaller organizations poised to grow.* Foundations like E. W. Hazen and Surdna have helped the field to grow by making substantial and smart investments in organizations with the potential to grow and make an impact. The field will be strengthened as other funders follow their lead.
- *Fund regional clusters.* Make a multiyear commitment to a region that is underresourced but strategically important, and fund multiple groups in that region. For SJYD practices to take hold, groups need close allies with whom they can share lessons and support.
- *Support regional intermediaries and capacity-building groups that are linked to regional clusters.* We must ask what organizational supports and opportunities SJYD initiatives and organizations need to develop and expand. There has been growth in the number of intermediary institutions working to support SJYD work in culturally and age-appropriate ways. These intermediaries are key to the development of youth organizing as a central SJYD strategy.<sup>23</sup> If there are no intermediaries in a region, look to partner with a national organization to build capacity into local groups for supporting SJYD over the long term.

- *Use a developmental framework for organizational and movement growth.* Youth development has helped us to look at young people in terms of the supports they need to navigate their stages of development successfully. We must bring this same approach to supporting the growth of groups and regional movements.

- *Involve practitioners in helping to identify organizations and distribute grants.* Philanthropy as a whole is recognizing the value of involving the people affected by an issue in distributing funds to organizations seeking to address that issue. In the SJYD field, this is of even greater importance.

Given the social, ecological, and political challenges that face our world today, the next generation cannot wait until they are adults to begin the work of building a more humane and sustainable world. In organizations around the country, young leaders are not just being taught about leadership; they are taking leadership and learning by doing—thus making organizations, schools, and communities more accountable, effective, and democratic. Given the low levels of participation in the formal political process demonstrated by adults, these forms of youth civic engagement are creating the next generations of civic leaders who will see voting not as the end of the political spectrum but as the beginning. Youth are strengthening democracy in America by building a more democratic political culture. It is time for the broader youth development community to lend its support and resources to this growing movement.

### Notes

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4. Ayman-Nolley, S., & Taira, L. L. (2000). Obsession with the dark side of adolescence: A decade of psychological studies. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3(1), 35–48.

5. Males, M. (1996). *The scapegoat generation: America's war on adolescents*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press; Males, M. (1999). *Framing youth: Ten myths about the next generation*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

6. Message, W.I.T. (2001). *Soundbites and cellblocks; Analysis of the juvenile justice media debate and a case study of California's Proposition 21*. San Francisco: We Interrupt This Message.

7. Butts, J. (1999, October). *Youth violence: Perception versus reality*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

8. White, R. (1989). Making ends meet: Young people, work and the criminal economy. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 22, 151–166.

9. Edin, K., & Lein, L. (1997). *Making ends meet: How single mothers survive welfare and low-wage work*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

10. Willis, P. (1977). *How working class kids get working class jobs*. Farnborough, UK: Saxon House.

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12. One example of increased criminalization within Proposition 21 was making \$300 of property damage felony vandalism. This means that one ball through an expensive window could cost a youth a strike in a three-strikes system. Another example was Proposition 21's definition of a gang as three or more people wearing similar clothing. This broad description allows youth with no gang affiliation to be categorized as gang members and therefore subject to harsher penalties for the same crime than if they were not considered to be in a gang. For more on the details of Proposition 21, see [www.lao.ca.gov/initiatives/2000/21\\_03\\_2000.html](http://www.lao.ca.gov/initiatives/2000/21_03_2000.html).

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14. Watts, R. J., Williams, N. C., & Jagers, R. J. (in press). Sociopolitical development and the making of African-American activists. *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

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16. Local Initiative Support, Training, and Education Network (LISTEN Inc.) is a change agent that convenes, mobilizes, trains, and nurtures urban youth ages fourteen to twenty-nine to become leaders in transforming their communities. Based in Washington, DC, LISTEN Inc. was established in 1998 as a national capacity-building nonprofit organization to identify,

prepare, and support a new generation of leaders in poor urban communities of color. For more information, see [www.lisn.org](http://www.lisn.org).

17. Sydell, L. (2000). Morning edition. National Public Radio; Hip Hop and Youth Organizing. Burrelle's Information Services, Box 7, Livingston, NJ 07039.

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19. Aspects of critical consciousness have been documented by organizations such as Leadership Excellence in Oakland California, which use identity development as a vehicle to political engagement.

20. Eccles, J., & Goodman, J. A. (Eds.). (2001). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

21. James, T., & McGuillicuddy, K. (2001). Building youth movements for community change. *Non-Profit Quarterly*, 8(4), 16–19.

22. Sullivan, L. (2002). *The state of youth organizing: 1990–2000: The state of philanthropy*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

23. Resources range from the National Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing, to long-time institutions like Youth Action, to newer intermediaries like LISTEN Inc. and the Movement Strategy Center. A directory can be found at [www.movementstrategy.org](http://www.movementstrategy.org).

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