

# FFR

FORD FOUNDATION REPORT

SPRING 2004

New York's 150 Ethnic Newspapers  
Find One Voice **page 4**

International Relief in a  
Post 9/11 World **page 22**

Sarah Jones: All the  
World's on Stage **page 34**



# Facing AIDS

Can Nigeria's  
youth set a  
new course  
for Africa?

**Peru's Moment of Truth**  
After 20 years of violence, a  
chance for hope and healing.  
**page 26**

**Comeback in the Barrio**  
Oakland's Fruitvale district has  
something to teach the rest of  
urban America.  
**page 16**

Students learn about  
AIDS prevention at an  
after-school program  
in Lagos, Nigeria.

For many Americans, human rights work is something that happens beyond the borders of the United States. A new Ford Foundation publication presents 13 case studies that tell a different story.

# Close to Home

**Close to Home: Case Studies of Human Rights Work in the United States.** examines the work of U.S. organizations that are using traditional human rights methods—such as fact-finding, litigation, organizing and advocacy—to reduce poverty, promote workers' rights and environmental justice, abolish the death penalty and end discrimination. Together the case studies shed light on the emerging human rights movement in the United States.

**Close to Home** provides activists, funders and policy makers with new points of view and valuable tools for achieving positive social change in their communities. The report is edited by Larry Cox, senior program officer in the Ford Foundation's Human Rights unit, and Dorothy Q. Thomas, an independent consultant on human rights.

To order a copy or to download the report, visit [www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org).



## Close to Home

CASE STUDIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS WORK  
IN THE UNITED STATES



## About Us

This year the Ford Foundation is making about \$500 million in grants in the United States and—through 12 overseas offices—in scores of countries around the globe. FFR reports on the remarkable work and ideas of the people and organizations behind these grants and how they are creating a better world.

## Features

### 8 Lessons for Living

Nigeria's youth are fighting AIDS by tackling a new national curriculum and teaching each other.

By Elizabeth Bryant

### 16 In Transit

It has taken more than a decade, but Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood is coming back to life in a big way.

By Elizabeth Blish Hughes

### 22 Advocate for Aid

Mary McClymont says global security depends on helping the world's struggling nations to prosper.

By Tara McKelvey

### 26 Moment of Truth

Peru's struggle to recover its moral memory is a remarkable first step in remaking the society.

By Arin Farrington

# Contents



**The big changes in Oakland's Fruitvale district are a national model for turning around an inner-city neighborhood. Page 16.**

## Departments

### 3 Front Lines

A fearless AIDS activist, translating New York's ethnic media, a film revisits *Brown v. Board of Education*, and a new home for South Africa's Constitutional Court.

### 32 Books

Peru's pathbreaking human rights network.

### 33 Radio

Public Radio International's "The World."

### 34 Theater

Sarah Jones's "Bridge and Tunnel."

### 35 Perspective

The human rights document that changed the world.

### 38 Essay

Putting the arts to work in neighborhoods.

### 40 Back Page

The trouble with dams.

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Alexander Wilde  
*Vice President for Communications*

Mary Lou Sandwick  
*Executive Assistant*

...

### Editorial

David C. Anderson  
*Director of Communications*

Tom Quinn  
*Senior Editor*

Elizabeth B. Coleman  
*Managing Editor*

Dana Hughes  
*Senior Editorial Assistant*

### Design and Production

Laura Walworth  
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Ifaat Qureshi  
*Art and Production Assistant*

Dayna Bealy  
*Photo Research*

### New Media and Circulation

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Margaret Song  
*New Media Project Manager*

Ann-Marie Chambers  
*Department Coordinator*

### Strategic Communications

Theodora Lurie  
*Deputy Director for Strategic Communications*

Joseph Voeller  
*Communications Associate*

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

# To Tell the Truth

In an age that has raised the euphemism and the carefully massaged fact to an art form, it is easy to forget that speaking the truth can still have inestimable power and effect.

Yinka Jegede-Ekpe, a young Nigerian woman, demonstrated truth's power several years ago when she announced publicly that she was H.I.V.-positive. By doing so, she stepped quietly and courageously across a line no one in her society had dared to cross before. Up to that time, making such an admission carried terrible risks; one Nigerian woman was killed by a mob after revealing she was H.I.V.-positive.

Jegede-Ekpe has become a passionate advocate for those living with H.I.V./AIDS. She is the executive director of Nigerian Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, and has appeared on national television and at numerous forums across Nigeria. Of her decision, Jegede-Ekpe, now 25 years old, says simply, "I was so afraid.

But I still came out. Because if we [activists] aren't willing to make a sacrifice, nobody will."

Her coming out has helped change the way millions of Nigerians with H.I.V./AIDS look at themselves and, ultimately, how other Nigerians look at them, and at the disease.

Today Nigeria has mobilized to fight the spread of H.I.V./AIDS in a number of ways that are new for Africa and that, experts and

activists agree, hold great promise not only for Nigeria but for the rest of the continent.

You can read an interview with Yinka Jegede-Ekpe on the opposite page. You can also read Lisa Bryant's illuminating account of Nigeria's still-developing AIDS education and awareness program, "Lessons for Living," on page 8. Bryant traveled to many parts of Nigeria over the course of her assignment. She

came away with a story of the remarkable progress being made by a people and a government that have decided to face H.I.V./AIDS squarely and honestly, following in one young woman's footsteps.

**Today Nigeria has mobilized to fight the spread of H.I.V./AIDS in a number of ways that are new for Africa and that, experts and activists agree, hold great promise not only for Nigeria but for the rest of the continent.**



JACOB SILBERBERG/PANOS PICTURES

**Breaking a cycle of cultural denial, students discuss sexual matters in a classroom in Lagos, Nigeria.**

### Q & A with **Yinka Jegede-Ekpe**

**Y**inka Jegede-Ekpe won a 2004 Reebok Human Rights Award for her fearless advocacy on behalf of people living with H.I.V./AIDS in Nigeria. Now 25, Jegede-Ekpe learned she was H.I.V.-positive in 1997. She has since helped found the AIDS Alliance-Nigeria and the Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS. She now heads the Nigerian Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS. She is married to Nsikak Ekpe, another Nigerian activist living with H.I.V.

#### **How did you find out you were H.I.V. positive?**

I was in nursing school at the time. I took the AIDS test out of curiosity. I'd been hearing about AIDS, but I thought people with AIDS were already sick and dying. I had no idea I might be infected.

I can tell you I was shocked to find out the results. For a good three days I couldn't bathe, couldn't brush my hair, couldn't eat. But when I got over the initial shock, I learned that people can be infected and live for many years. That gave me hope.

#### **You were diagnosed at a time when AIDS was stigmatized in Nigeria. One woman was killed after revealing she was H.I.V. positive.**

That woman was on TV. Her face was not shown, but people were able to recognize her from the clothes she wore. She was attacked by a mob, and she later died.

I was so afraid. But I still came out. Because if we [activists] aren't willing to make a sacrifice, nobody will.

#### **How did you go public about your condition?**

It was the same year I was diagnosed [1997]. I came out with the help of so many people. I first told my mom. She cried for a long time. Then later, she said: "I'm going to support you all the way. You are never going to die on me." That really gave me hope and courage.

Then I came out in small-group talks on H.I.V. and AIDS. Later I did interviews with the media. The initial reaction was shock. People said I was lying. They couldn't believe somebody who was healthy and beautiful could still be infected.

#### **Has the perception changed about H.I.V./AIDS?**

Things are a lot better now, even though there is still stigma and discrimination—in the workplace, for example. But I've been to some [business] establishments that now have H.I.V./AIDS policies. The discrimination is gradually fading. AIDS awareness in Nigeria now is also something like 80 percent.



JACOB SILBERBERG/PANOS PICTURES

#### **How would you assess Nigeria's AIDS policy? There have been reports of shortages of antiretroviral drugs.**

The AIDS policy in Nigeria is getting better every day. But there is no clear-cut policy, especially on women.

When the government had a shortage of drugs, it was very tough on us. They've since managed to get some drugs in stock to last for this year. But we need to ensure this doesn't happen again. And the drug program is available for only 10,000 people. We have over five million people who are currently infected. There are many more we don't know about.

#### **What's the next step for Nigeria?**

There's still silence around women living with H.I.V./AIDS. They're not being recognized when it comes to deci-

sion making. We also need to track the AIDS programs in our country, and how well international funds are being used. There's another neglected area—H.I.V.-associated TB infection is on the rise. And there's a strong [misinformation] campaign that polio vaccines contain H.I.V. Now people are running away from the vaccine. We need to correct this misconception.

#### **Finally, what are your personal dreams?**

I want to go back to school and get a master's degree in public health nursing. But I still want to continue as an AIDS activist. Until women living with H.I.V. are seen as equal partners in prevention—until women's opinions are heard and respected, I believe no science in this world can solve the epidemic.

—Elizabeth Bryant

### Found in Translation

**E**thnic communities in New York City support more than 150 daily and weekly newspapers, as well as dozens of other publications that appear less frequently. A few have published continuously for more than a century, but many more sprang up during the 1990's, as new waves of immigrants arrived from Eastern Europe, South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

In New York, where the cost of establishing specialized radio and television programming is very high, ethnic publications are often a community's most important source of local news. Until recently, however, they were generally inaccessible to the larger community, unfamiliar with languages like Bengali, Bulgarian, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Enter *Voices That Must Be Heard*, a project of the Independent Press Association's New York office. *Voices* is a weekly e-mail digest that surveys New York's ethnic and minority press for the most interesting stories and editorials. Every Thursday, nine or 10 pieces culled from these

papers are sent to some 2,500 community leaders, government officials and journalists. Stories that would otherwise die on a neighborhood newsstand live on in government debates and, sometimes, in the mainstream press. Stories have been picked up by *The New York Times*, CNN and other major news outlets.

Sayu V. Bhojwani, the city's commissioner of immigrant affairs, sees *Voices* as an important link between one immigrant community and another, between immigrant communities and city government, and between New Yorkers who speak English and those who do not.

*Voices* began in the after-



math of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, when Abby Scher, director of the International Press Association of New York, reached out to Arab, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. "We knew there would be pre-

views of these communities," Scher says. "*Voices* allowed the communities to speak for themselves."

When the Department of Homeland Security was formed, says Dania Rajendra, the original editor of *Voices*, "Pakistanis and Bangladeshis

### A Guide to Ethnic Media

**N**ew York, along with many other U.S. cities, is in the midst of a boom period for ethnic publications. Circulation for New York's Chinese language dailies has grown from about 170,000 in 1990 to more than half a million today. There are four Spanish-language dailies for the nearly one in three New Yorkers who are Hispanic. And ethnic newspapers are distributed nationally from offices in Astoria, Queens; Coney Island, Brooklyn; and Manhattan's Chinatown.

The Independent Press Association of New York has published a guide to the ethnic press in the New York metropolitan area titled *Many Voices, One City*. It profiles more than 250 publications, from the *Afghan Communicator*, a quarterly magazine in English, Dari and Pashtu, to *Ziua USA*, a Romanian weekly. The guide is available in a print edition, on CD-ROM and on the Web in an interactive, searchable format that is updated monthly. For more information see I.P.A.-N.Y.'s Web site.

were the hardest hit by special registration,” which requires all male immigrants over the age of 16 to register with D.H.S. Thousands were arrested nationwide and hundreds were detained for weeks or months. “Voices focused on ethnic papers that addressed those issues,” Rajendra says.

Although the subscriber list grew slowly at first, *Voices* quickly became popular with mainstream journalists. “We started getting calls from reporters who needed help finding sources in particular communities,” says Rajendra.

The *Voices* staff—Scher, Rajendra and a part-time intern—soon discovered that editors at most ethnic newspapers were too busy to select their own stories. So Scher and Rajendra recruited translators to help choose the best stories. Some are journalists, but many are university students, friends of friends, or readers who want to help. They subscribe to the ethnic papers, pick out strong stories, and offer them to *Voices* every week. Each Friday, at story meetings, a guest editor from one of the papers and the *Voices* staff select four stories, four news briefs and an editorial for the coming issue.

“Sometimes we have to react faster than that,” says Scher, like when Mayor Michael Bloomberg fired two members of the school board and appointed others who then voted to end social promotion—advancing children to the next grade whether or not they perform at grade level. “We called around to papers to get a reaction and published pieces the next day,” Scher says.

“In a city where more than 50 percent of the schoolchildren are foreign born, this is a hot-button issue with parents,”

says Juana Ponce de Leon, the current editor of *Voices*. Many feel the schools do not support immigrant students and believe that the new test will penalize the children for what are in fact the schools’ failures. Reactions varied, however. Several Spanish papers condemned the mayor while some Chinese parents voiced cautious approval, noting that students must pass or be left behind in China, too.

Immigration policy has proven to be the hottest topic for *Voices*, but it has also given attention to such issues as police in the schools, drug use by immigrant youth, and domestic violence against women who often lack the language skills to seek help.

“*Voices* is a microlevel news agency,” says Mohammed Jehangir, a reporter and editor for *Muslims Weekly*, who translates articles from Urdu and has served as a guest editor at *Voices*. “It needs to be expanded.”

That expansion may happen soon. Rajendra, who moved to Minneapolis in January when her husband took a new job, hopes to start a Midwestern edition of *Voices*. “We haven’t done all the research yet,” she says. “But it certainly looks like the immigrant press is growing here, too.”

Founded in 1997, the Independent Press Association has a membership of nearly 350 periodical publishers with a cumulative readership of over 10 million. The Ford Foundation has made more than \$500,000 in grants to I.P.A. as part of a larger effort to increase and improve news coverage of civil rights and social justice issues. The *Voices* e-mail bulletin is available at [www.indypressny.org](http://www.indypressny.org).

—Ron Feemster

## FILM



CARL MANSKI/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

## Beyond Brown

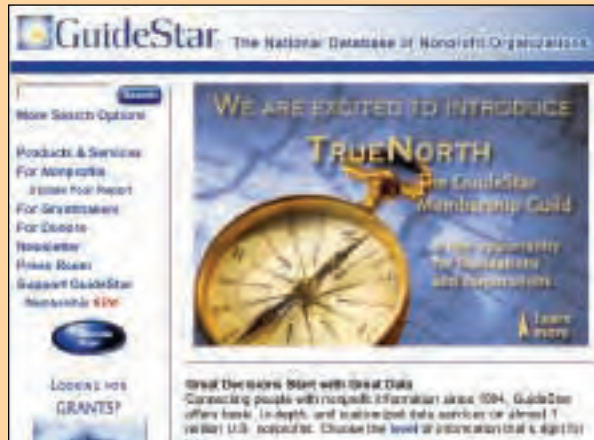
On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a ruling that ushered in America’s civil rights revolution. *Brown v. Board of Education* declared segregation in public education unconstitutional. “Separate but equal,” the court said, was a violation of equal protection laws under the Fourteenth Amendment. A new documentary, “*Beyond Brown: Pursuing the Promise*,” looks beyond the victory 50 years ago and analyzes what it means today.

**Linda Brown, center, the plaintiff in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, in her segregated classroom in Topeka, Kansas, in 1953.**

The hourlong film, produced by Firelight Media, aired on PBS on May 12. To make it easier for the documentary to be used in classrooms and other public settings, the filmmakers divided it into five segments that can be shown separately. The first recounts the history of *Brown* and its immediate aftermath. Later segments address contemporary educational issues like high-stakes testing, putting students on college-prep or honors tracks, the controversy over ending busing programs and inequity in school financing. Though these issues are not as explicitly tied to race as the “separate but equal” doctrine that *Brown* overturned, many educators argue that they are creating two separate and unequal educational systems.

“*Beyond Brown*” offers a searching inquiry into whether America is still honoring the intent of the decision—not just integration, but equal education. For more information on “*Beyond Brown: Pursuing the Promise*” log on to [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org) or [www.firelightmedia.org](http://www.firelightmedia.org).

—Dana Hughes



Last year more than 850,000 nonprofit groups in the United States filed reports with the Internal Revenue Service. With so many, it can be a challenge getting accurate and timely information on a particular organization. What is the group's mission? Who runs it? What is its annual budget? How is it funded? And just how does it spend the funds it raises or gives away? The answers to these questions, and many others, are available through [Guidestar.org](http://Guidestar.org), a Web site created by Philanthropic Research, Inc.

Supported by the Ford Foundation and other national and local philanthropic groups, [Guidestar.org](http://Guidestar.org) offers a wealth of information in a user-friendly format, making nonprofits and foundations more transparent and, thereby, more accountable. [Guidestar](http://Guidestar.org) draws its information from the public tax forms that all nonprofit organizations with budgets over \$25,000, and all private foundations, must file annually with the I.R.S. Comparative data are available from 1999 to the present.

[Guidestar](http://Guidestar.org) also offers a paid subscription service that caters to the needs of individual subscribers. For grant makers and donors, the site offers [GuideStar Analyst Reports](http://Guidestar.org) and [GuideStar Charity Check](http://Guidestar.org), which provide in-depth analyses of over 200,000 nonprofits' financial information and official verification of tax-exempt status. A unique feature of the site is that nonprofits can add information to their profiles. Grant seekers can subscribe for information on more than 1.4 million grants made by private foundations.

The site has been recommended by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg Personal Finance* and *Cox News Service*, and is widely used by journalists who cover the nonprofit world.

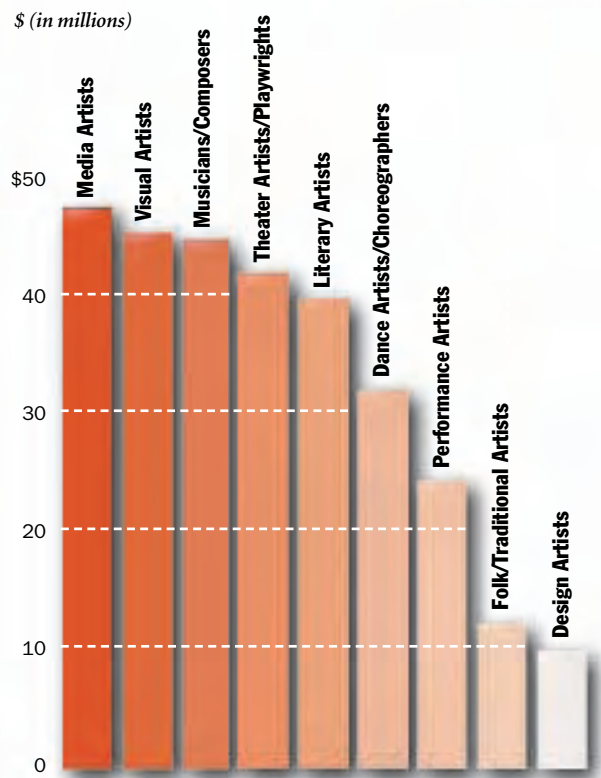
# Portrait of the Artists

*Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. Artists* is the first comprehensive survey of the economic plight of artists in the United States. Produced by the Urban Institute, the report draws on three years of research. It notes that artists, some of whom earn as little as \$7,000 a year, face many of the same difficulties as the working poor.

The report looks at patterns of support for artists by discipline, location, program and source, among other things. It also presents findings about public attitudes toward artists; case studies of support in nine cities; an analysis of the problems artists face in rural communities; and recommendations for improving assistance for artists and their work.

The Ford Foundation was one of 38 funders underwriting the study and has since made challenge grants to organizations in the nine cities highlighted in the case studies. The aim is to help them devise new ways to expand health-care coverage for artists. An online version of the report is available at [www.usartistsreport.org](http://www.usartistsreport.org).

## Money Available to Artists by Discipline



Note: Many award programs are open to multiple disciplines. The numbers in this chart represent money available to each discipline, not exclusive to each discipline. As such, they add up to more than the \$91 million reported as available to artists. Source: Urban Institute

This spring South Africa marked the 10th anniversary of its first democratic elections and its rebirth as a multiracial democracy.

One of the most important celebrations was held on March 21, Human Rights Day, on the grounds of Johannesburg's infamous Old Fort Prison, now renamed Constitution Hill. Political leaders from around the world mingled with former inmates of the Old Fort at the dedication of the new home of South Africa's Constitutional Court.

The prison, which opened in 1902, has a long and ignominious history, having held behind its walls Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and many other political activists. Much of the original prison will be preserved as a museum.

The establishment of the Constitutional Court a decade ago was hailed as one of the first major achievements of the new democracy.

## A Shining Symbol on a Hill



**A visitor outside Johannesburg's Old Fort Prison reads tributes by political leaders and former inmates. The site is the new home of South Africa's Constitutional Court.**

The court is charged with holding the executive and legislative branches of government accountable to the Constitution, regarded by many as the world's most enlightened and progressive.

The court renovation project was supported in part

through grants from the Ford Foundation. The foundation also funded the purchase of law reports and journals for the court's library and artwork for its new home.

One of the court's justices, Albie Sachs, a human rights activist who was once jailed

under South Africa's apartheid regime, told *The Times of London* that the justices wanted the structure to reflect the South African people as a whole. "We wanted everyone to feel represented here."

—Elena Cabral

## DEMOCRACY

### The Whole Truth

Like many nations that endured repressive regimes in the recent past, Chile is still coming to terms with years of military dictatorship while trying to build durable democratic institutions. In Chile authoritarian rule began on Sept. 11, 1973, when the overthrow of the popularly elected president, Salvador Allende, ushered in the 17-year regime of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

In 1999, by executive order of President Bill Clinton, the U.S. government began declassifying some 24,000 secret documents relating to Chile in this

period. The process, which involved a long legal struggle using the Freedom of Information Act, owed much to the efforts of the National Security

Archive—a nonprofit group in Washington, D.C., funded by the Ford Foundation.

In late 2003, this process led to the release of documents relating to the coup and its aftermath that threw new light on the U.S. government's role. Keyed to the 30th anniversary of the coup, a seminar on the documents' relevance and implications was held in Santiago, Chile, last November. It was organized by FLACSO—the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences—a long-time foundation grantee. Participants included scholars, journalists, activists and researchers.

Among them was Peter Kornbluh, an analyst for the National Security Archive and author of *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*.

A goal of the archive is to ensure access to documentation that can fill out the historical record of controversial events and allow Chile and other countries in the region to come to grips with, and redress, past state-sanctioned crimes against their citizens.

For more information, see [www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/) or [www.flacso.cl/flacso/](http://www.flacso.cl/flacso/).

—James Bornemeier

**Nigerian youth are fighting AIDS by tackling a new national curriculum and teaching each other.**

# Lessons

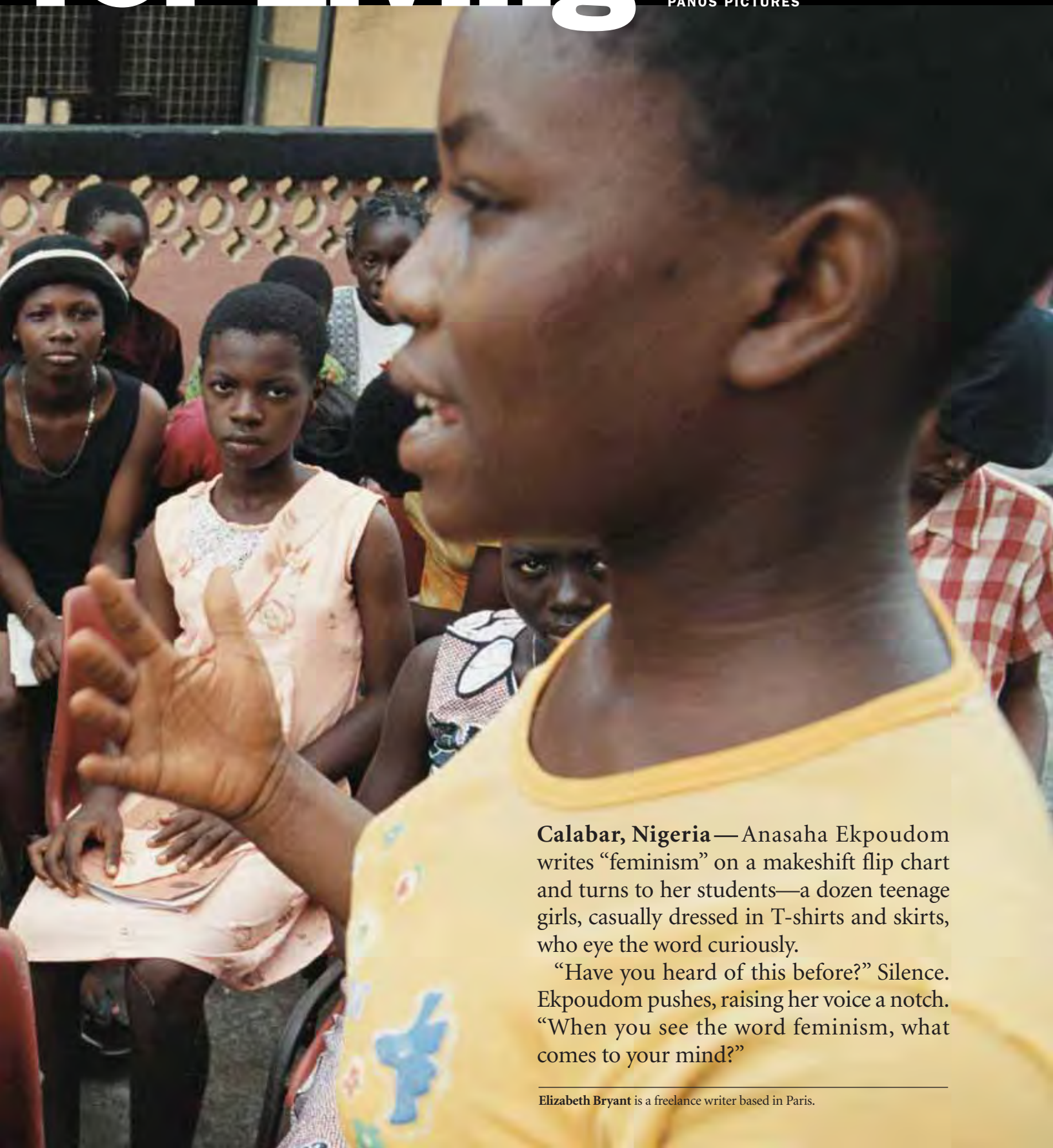


**In a Sunday afternoon class run by Girls' Power Initiative in Calabar, Nigeria, students and teacher use drama techniques as a way to discuss subjects ranging from feminism, to safer sex to drug use.**

# for Living

BY ELIZABETH BRYANT

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACOB SILBERBERG/  
PANOS PICTURES



**Calabar, Nigeria**—Anasaha Ekpoudom writes “feminism” on a makeshift flip chart and turns to her students—a dozen teenage girls, casually dressed in T-shirts and skirts, who eye the word curiously.

“Have you heard of this before?” Silence. Ekpoudom pushes, raising her voice a notch. “When you see the word feminism, what comes to your mind?”

---

Elizabeth Bryant is a freelance writer based in Paris.



**Young Nigerian men and women like these students of the Lagos-based Action Health Incorporated are learning about sexuality and gaining newfound self-confidence.**

*Opposite* **A student at Igbobi Junior High School during a class on reproductive health.**

assured, sexually informed young women.

Safer sex, drugs, AIDS—few topics are too sensitive for these Nigerian girls, caught between conservative customs and pressures to conform to their streetwise, Internet-connected generation.

“We have girls who come here and learn about menstruation for the first time,” says Bene Madunagu, cofounder of G.P.I. and a leading Nigerian feminist. “Even if they’ve already begun menstruating, it’s here they learn it’s a normal part of being female.”

Across Africa’s most populous nation, young Nigerians have already paid a steep price for silence and misinformation. Young women fall prey to prostitution, domestic violence and quack abortionists. They are the most likely to die or to suffer painful complications from giving birth too young, in a country where many girls are sexually active before they reach 17. Adolescents of both sexes are the leading casualties of sexually transmitted infections, including H.I.V./AIDS, which is spreading here at an alarming rate.

Infection rates soared from just 1.8 percent of Nigerians in 1991 to around 5 percent of

Several girls raise their hands and volunteer definitions, right and wrong. Being an activist. Being discriminated against. “The word to describe a female?” guesses one student.

Women’s rights is the lesson on a sultry Sunday afternoon at Girls’ Power Initiative in this southeastern Nigerian city, where sounds of screeching traffic and popular “highlife” music filter in from the street. But it is not the only lesson in the nonprofit organization’s after-school agenda that aims to create self-

Nigeria’s sexually active population by 2003—or about four million Nigerians. The numbers of adolescents testing H.I.V.-positive is slightly higher, according to the latest government survey. More worrisome, most experts agree, H.I.V. and AIDS cases are underreported.

“When any nation crosses the 5 percent threshold, we’re dealing with a very serious epidemic,” says Alti Zwandor, national program officer for the United Nations AIDS Program in Nige-

# M

**any experts believe Nigeria's predominantly young population can be a catalyst in breaking the cycle of cultural denial about sexual matters and its grim fallout.**

ria. "Add to that the other problems Nigeria faces—dense population, decay—and we have a lot to deal with."

Indeed, a 2002 report by the U.S. National Intelligence Council predicted that Nigeria and a handful of highly populated countries may soon lead the virus's devastating march across the planet. If true, the forecast may cripple Nigeria, a country of nearly 134 million people and the undisputed powerhouse of West Africa.

But many experts also believe Nigeria's predominantly young population can be a catalyst in breaking the cycle of cultural denial about sexual matters and its grim fallout. As one encouraging indicator, they note, more Nigerian youths are practicing safer sex than just a few years ago, as H.I.V./AIDS slowly morphs from an abstraction to a clear and present danger.

"AIDS is now becoming a reality for these young people," says Bisi Tugbobo, deputy country representative in Nigeria for Pathfinder International, a nonprofit group specializing in family planning and other reproductive health issues. "If you have someone in your family dying of AIDS, you have to accept it—whether you like it or not."

Yet many believe that it is not just fear but better information that is leading Nigerian youths to safer behavior. In the past few years, Nigeria has introduced a national sexuality education curriculum. This came after nearly a decade of programs led by non-governmental organizations to both educate youth and engage them in creating options for their futures. Health professionals see the combination of the new curriculum and the youth outreach as a model of H.I.V. prevention. It is also a sign of hope on a continent where the rate of H.I.V. infection is soaring.

Even quiet Calabar, nestled on a lazy twist of the Cross River near Cameroon, has not escaped AIDS. According to government estimates, the virus has infected up to 12 percent of sexually active people living in Cross River State, where Calabar is located—a significantly higher proportion than the national average.

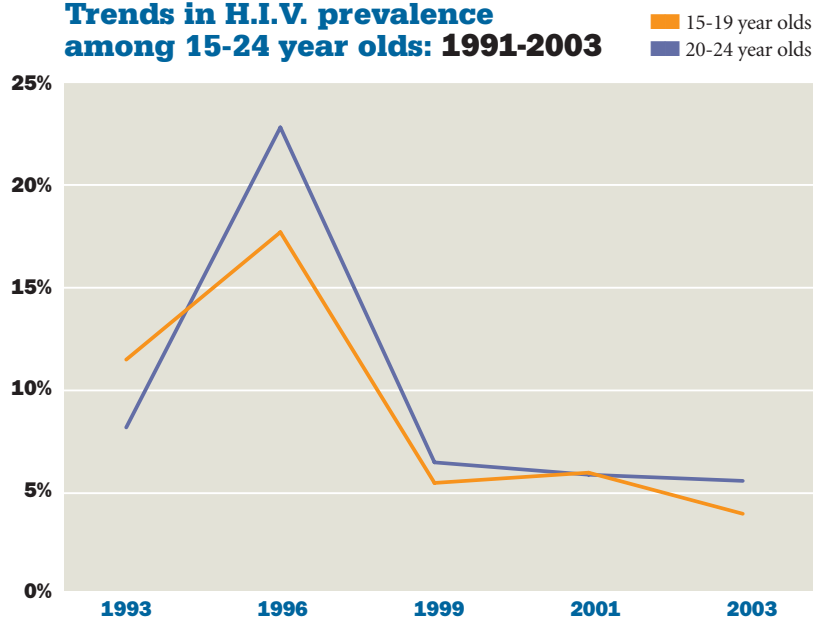
Large signs dot roads around the small, colonial-era port city, warning about the repercussions of casual sex. "Stop!" reads one, rising from a cluster of rusting tin shacks. "Sex now, AIDS later. Are you prepared to take the risks?"

The answer, as far as Uduak Nta is concerned, is "no."

"Most people preach abstinence, abstinence, abstinence," says Nta, a poised and pretty 21-year-old medical biology stu-



**Trends in H.I.V. prevalence among 15-24 year olds: 1991-2003**



**Note:** Based on the results of testing blood samples obtained from women aged 15-49 attending antenatal clinics (in health facilities in selected sites) for the first time during a pregnancy and during the survey period. The figures should be interpreted with caution given that the quality and sample size of the survey have tended to increase over time.

**Source:** National HIV Sentinel Survey (National STDs/AIDS Control Program; Lagos/Abuja: Federal Ministry of Health).



dent at the University of Calabar. “It’s good to preach abstinence. But the true fact is most young people aren’t practicing abstinence.”

Nta joined Girls’ Power Initiative at 16, following in a sister’s footsteps. “At first I was embarrassed,” she admitted. “They were mentioning things like the vulva and the vagina, words I didn’t want to hear at all. But they gave me basic information about sexuality, about healthy and unhealthy sexual practices. It was left up to me to make choices.”

Founded in 1993, Girls’ Power now works in four states in southern and midwestern Nigeria. Some 1,500 girls, ages 10 to 18, are enrolled in courses operated through its four centers. G.P.I.’s message also reaches another 25,000 students at 28 participating schools. Boys occasionally join the discussions. But as long as gender discrimination remains a reality in Nigeria, Bene Madunagu says, the three-year program on reproductive health and women’s rights will focus on girls.

“We take girls who are still groping with their self-identity and give them the right messages,” Madunagu says. “We want them to understand the barriers to achievement and that they have the capacity to succeed. Then those girls will grow up empowered. And their children will be empowered.”

In some cases, the girls are already speaking out. Instructors tick off instances when they have prevented wife battery and



female genital cutting, common practices in Nigeria. Legislation has wrought other changes. For example, several states, including Cross River, have banned female circumcision, although the laws are rarely enforced.

The return to democracy has profoundly changed Nige-

**Literature from Girls’ Power Initiative marks the program’s 10th anniversary.**

**Top Nike Esiet heads the Lagos-based Action Health Incorporated, which teaches adolescents about reproductive health, a once-taboo subject.**

**“We take girls who are still groping with their self-identity and give them the right messages. We want them to understand the barriers to achievement and that they have the capacity to succeed. Then those girls will grow up empowered. And their children will be empowered.”**



**Bene Madunagu, a leading Nigerian feminist, heads the Girls' Power Initiative in Calabar, a city in southwestern Nigeria hard hit by the AIDS epidemic.**

ria's social and political landscape. Nongovernmental groups have switched focus from restoring democracy to other pressing problems, including those facing youths.

International donors that pulled out during the nadir of Nigeria's 15-year military dictatorship are back in the country.

"It's been a tremendous and very, very positive development," says Zwandor of U.N. AIDS, about Nigeria's newfound democracy. "Especially after decades when there was virtually no dialogue between NGOs and the government."

Fighting H.I.V./AIDS is now a top priority of Nigeria's civilian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, who doubled the national

AIDS budget in three years and heads an interministerial committee focused on the virus.

The government also launched a pilot project offering subsidized antiretroviral drugs, although AIDS activists complain that delivery of the medications is erratic.

And just months after Obasanjo's election, government officials, activists and donors gathered for the first time to discuss reproductive health issues—and the idea of developing a national sexuality education curriculum for Nigerian schools. So far, five Nigerian states have begun introducing the new curriculum in middle schools and high schools.

"It took at least 10 years to get sexuality education accepted in Nigeria," says Nike Esiet, head of Lagos-based Action Health

Incorporated, a leader in the school curriculum campaign. "The idea of teaching young people about sexuality was taboo. But today the silence has been broken, and AIDS is one of the driving factors."

Groups like Action Health not only teach adolescents about reproductive health issues, but also train them to teach their peers. In some cases, the youths work through school clubs; in others, they take their messages about condoms, abstinence and sexually transmitted diseases to gritty city streets and remote villages. They have yet to weigh in at a national level, however; the federal AIDS advisory council includes no youth.

But when Action Health began training Lagos-area educators to teach the new curriculum, it selected a youth evaluation team.

"They asked us questions and gave us critiques," says Adekunbi Ajayi, a science

teacher at Lagos State Junior Model College. "Your first reaction to these subjects is shock—why should we be talking about these things? But after a while we got comfortable talking about parts of the body. You divorce yourself from your personal views and cultural biases."

Dozens of adolescents interviewed at Action Health and other youth programs around the country appear equally comfortable tackling embarrassing topics. At Action Health's office in mainland Lagos, young men and women, perched on chairs and tables, gently kidded each other as they discussed learning about sexuality.

"It's helped give me self-identity, which is a hard thing to do," says Adeola Olunloyo, a university student who went through the Action Health program. Today, she works as a youth trainer.



“I’m 24, and at this age you’re pressured to get married. But I’m comfortable being single. I feel a personal power.”

Still, there is no single strategy for running adolescent programs, or anything else in Nigeria, a country of profound religious and cultural contrasts.

In northern Nigeria, where Muslims are a majority and a

dozen states have adopted Islamic Sharia law, making headway requires negotiating with conservative community leaders. In the largely Christian south, where Roman Catholic priests frown on condom use, abstinence remains the dictate of choice.

At Nico Secondary Commercial School in Calabar, Akaninyene Inyang, the principal, largely praises Girls’ Power, which has run after-school programs there for seven years. But he balks when it comes to discussing contraceptives. “Just tell them to abstain,” he says. “Just tell them not to do it.”

In every region, youth programs encounter a tangle of local concerns: poverty and illiteracy; polygamy and early marriage; economic and political empowerment.

Roughly half a dozen young women, seated in white plastic chairs at Hellen’s Fashion Center, await Barinem Vulasi, who directs the Ogoni Youth Development Project. All the women are single, in their 20’s. Most are high school dropouts. Now they are enrolled in a two-year tailoring program in Bodo, a

**Grace Edet, 15, who is active in Girls’ Power Initiative, has won the blessing of her father, the Rev. Osory Edet, a Methodist minister, to study journalism.**

## Health Gains

**The Ford Foundation’s office for West Africa, based in Lagos, makes grants to improve sexual and reproductive health among women and youth. This includes efforts to prevent the spread of H.I.V/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as programs to fight discrimination and to help poor women and young people find jobs and earn a living. Foundation-funded research has also helped inform national initiatives, including Nigeria’s new National Policy on HIV/AIDS, its multiyear strategic plan for improving reproductive health and the national curriculum on sexuality education discussed in this article.**



**here is no single strategy for running adolescent programs, or anything else, in Nigeria. It is a country of profound religious and cultural contrasts.**

village located in the heart of southern Nigeria's Ogoniland.

There are only three old-fashioned sewing machines for seven students, but the center's long-term calculations are simple. Everybody needs a good seamstress. With income comes independence.

Vulasi is not here just to talk shop. Speaking in Gokana, an Ogoni dialect, he asks the students to introduce themselves and to list their positive qualities. He asks them how many children they want, and whether they use contraceptives. He asks why they have enrolled in the sewing course at Miss Hellen's.

"I'm learning this trade so I can marry a good husband," says Cecilia Bonwin, a slender 20-year-old wearing a pink apron. "So if he's contributing something, then I am too."

Teaching young Ogonis about family planning and career choices was not part of Vulasi's original empowerment plan for this lush and turbulent tip of Nigeria. For more than a decade, Ogoniland farmers and fishermen have waged a largely losing battle for land compensation and environmental cleanup against multinational oil companies.

The stakes are high. More than 90 percent of Nigeria's oil is pumped from this area, known as the Niger Delta. But Ogonis have seen little of the revenue.

"Companies just come in and acquire land without negotiation. The government gives them authorization, and they start work," says Vulasi, a soft-spoken man who looks younger than his 42 years. "Because of our poverty and lack of education, our people never had any access to places where decisions are being made."

In 1998 he launched a peace- and skills-building program targeting the region's angry and marginalized youth. Vulasi soon realized that the adolescents faced more basic obstacles—including drug use and teenage pregnancy, not to mention high rates of sexually transmitted diseases. A year later, he added a reproductive health component to the program, which is run by Vulasi's sister, Sanyie.

Vulasi estimates his organization has provided sewing classes and other vocational skills training to more than 200 area youth, and offered peace-building lessons to about 1,000. The reproductive health and sexuality lectures are given to youth in both programs, and to students in participating schools.

"We're not a big organization," Vulasi says as he leaves Bodo, driving past small, tin-roofed farms fringed with banana and sour-sop trees. "Yes, we may have made a difference, but it's still very small."

In northern states like Kano, which adopted a particularly strict form of Islamic Sharia law four years ago, courts have issued tough sentences for sexual misconduct, including caning for fornication and death by stoning for adultery—a punishment that has sparked international outcry but has yet to be meted out.

"We have to talk about the vagina, penis, make the students

comfortable with these words," says Nafisat Usmaan, a 20-year-old youth instructor at the Adolescent Health and Information Project, a nonprofit based in Kano. "But we know these are sensitive topics, especially in this society."

For Mairo Bello, head of the Kano project, teaching about sexuality demands constant negotiations with religious and political authorities. "We bring them to the center to sensitize them," she says. "We try to convince them we are doing the kind of work they are doing. But you can never be sure they're on your side—until they talk."

A year ago, the Kano state government temporarily banned the center's sexuality lectures from public schools, after two girls clad in veils and covered from head to toe began break dancing at an Adolescent Health Project event. In a stern letter, officials accused Bello's center of immorality, and of encouraging women and girls "to go against their culture and religion."

Nigeria's sexuality curriculum has also sparked controversy. In Lagos, where schools began introducing the lessons this year, Action Health held press workshops on the curriculum to counter an initial flurry of negative media coverage. Hostility lingers, especially in the Muslim north, despite suggestions by some advocates to replace the term "sexuality education" with something less inflammatory, such as "family life education."

"We are vehemently against teaching sexual education to young people," says Nafiu Baba Ahmed, secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, in a telephone interview. "It will bring in bad, Western ways of living."

Bello and other youth activists are hardened veterans of the two-steps-forward, one-step-backward battle. Even persuading Nigerians, young and old, about the apocalyptic consequences of H.I.V./AIDS has not been easy. "People will say AIDS will kill me in 10 years," says Adenike Adeyemi, head of the reproductive health division at Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health. "But poverty will kill me in a week, or a month."

Even the Girls' Power agenda does not please everybody. "Before I was in G.P.I., guys would bug me to go out," says Grace Edet, who is 15 years old. "Now, I know I have the right to say no—or to say yes, if I want. The boys say I'm not the same person. That G.P.I. has spoiled things for them."

But Grace's 65-year-old father, a Methodist minister, does not count himself among the critics. He is aware his daughter is learning about contraceptives and other traditionally taboo topics. "But she's exposed to these things in society," says the Rev. Osory Edet. "And in certain circumstances, she may fall prey."

He falls silent for a minute, musing about the youngest of his three daughters. "Grace told me she wants to be a journalist," Edet adds, with a smile. "I was shocked. It's a difficult profession for a woman to make headway. But she insisted, and so I've given her my blessing." ■



It has taken more than a decade, but Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood is coming back to life in a big way.

BY ELIZABETH BLISH HUGHES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOR SWIFT/MERCURY PICTURES

# In Transit

**Oakland, Ca.**—Life is not easy in the Fruitvale district of Oakland. Per capita income is under \$12,000 a year and nearly a quarter of the people live below the poverty level. A predominantly Latino neighborhood, Fruitvale is also home to people from China, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and the Balkans. Foreign-born residents make up 47 percent of the district's population. About

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Elizabeth Blish Hughes is a freelance writer based in San Francisco and New York.

half of the adults have a high school diploma; only 10 percent have a college degree.

Yet Fruitvale is a place that has come to believe in itself and its future. The story of how that came to be has much to do with Fruitvale's most venerable neighborhood organization, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, and its equally venerable leader, Arabella Martínez. Both instructive and inspiring, the story is perhaps better termed a saga. At its center is more than a decade of struggle by Fruitvale's residents to assert their community's identity and their claims to a better life. It culmi-



**Fruitvale Village, with its retail plaza linking the transit center to the neighborhood, has drawn praise as a model for inner-city redevelopment.**

***Left* A train arrives at Fruitvale's BART station, now one of the Bay Area's busiest.**

garage between the station and Fruitvale's main shopping strip on International Boulevard, they didn't ask for the views of residents of what seemed like just another hollowed-out, inner-city area along BART's routes to suburban satellite office centers. BART riders needed parking, which the garage would provide. It was as simple as that.

The officials were wrong. When Fruitvale residents learned about the plan the following year during an environmental hearing on construction of the garage, "BART ran into a firestorm," says Jeff Ordway, BART's manager of property development. "It wasn't that the community didn't want the parking. The point was that the parking was in the wrong place. The garage got stopped dead."

That was 13 years ago. Now the garage—positioned so it does not cut off the station from the neighborhood—is one element in the Fruitvale Village project, which contains a range of others, from a health clinic to a child development center to a computer technology job-training center.

The project has become a national model for transit-oriented design in a high-density, inner-city neighborhood. It is also a reminder that community building is a complex process that takes time as well as funders with the vision to be flexible and patient.

nates in the construction of a \$100 million community development project, called Fruitvale Transit Village, that is built around a rapid transit station and a bus hub. It is nothing if not out of the ordinary.

The story begins in the 1960's, when the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART), the San Francisco region's mass transit agency, broke ground for a station in Fruitvale, promising it would help bring economic development. That did not happen, but neither did the neighborhood rise up in protest. So when BART officials, in 1990, began planning to build a parking



**An ambitious revitalization effort has made Fruitvale's older commercial district Oakland's second-largest generator of sales tax revenue.**

Martínez left the organization in 1974. She was subsequently appointed an assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the

Carter administration. She returned to the Unity Council in 1989, when she was asked to lead the organization through a time of crisis. It had \$3 million in short-term debt, service programs operating at a loss and development projects teetering on the brink of foreclosure. Martínez faced two options: Close the council or revive it.

She chose the latter, which surprised few. "She had bought into the vision that a community development organization that was well-designed could make a difference," says Raul Yzaguirre, president and C.E.O. of the National Council of La Raza, who has worked with Martínez for more than 30 years.

BART became involved in the Fruitvale Village project when it bowed to community opposition, led by Martínez and the Unity Council, to the parking garage. "They never thought they'd find an organized community voice in a lower-income community," says Manuela Silva, senior executive officer of the Fruitvale Development Corporation, the Unity Council's real estate arm. But that's what BART found. "What Arabella brought back to the Unity Council was the awareness of a great purpose," says Silva.

In 1992 BART officials signed an agreement on Fruitvale Village with the Oakland City Council and meetings began. Nearly two years later, this phase culminated with the Spanish Speaking Unity Council—now known informally as the Unity Council to reflect the influx of Southeast Asian and Eastern European refugees into the neighborhood—scheduling a meeting on a Saturday morning so local residents could review project plans. The architects decided to offer a single solution to the neighborhood's complex needs.

BART's Ordway recalls the scene. As the presentation ended, one man pointed to a set of also-ran drawings on the wall, saying he thought a pedestrian plaza, or walkway, between the BART station and International Boulevard was a good idea. Other people weighed in. By the end of the meeting, there was fervent community support for the walkway.

"It's a place that's been waiting to happen for a long, long

Leading the drive for Fruitvale Village was Arabella Martínez and the organization she helped found in 1964, the Mexican American Unity Council, later renamed the Spanish Speaking Unity Council to reflect the influx of Latinos from Central and South America into the neighborhood.

## **A Dream Grows in the Barrio**

**Fruitvale Transit Village is built around two buildings lining a plaza. It includes a wide pedestrian walkway connecting the BART station and a bus station to the neighborhood's central shopping district; a 16,000 square-foot child development center for 200 infants, toddlers and preschoolers with a spacious, tree-dotted play area; the 15,000 square-foot César Chávez branch of Oakland's public library, with the city's most extensive collection of Spanish-language resources; a computer technology center for job training and educational enhancement; La Clínica de la Raza, originally**

**a pioneering local health clinic, now a 40,000 square-foot state-of-the-art health facility with 130 people staffing a medical lab, pharmacy, X-ray center and 10 dental chairs; 10 units of affordable housing; 37 market-rate units with large decks; a lively senior center called Las Bougainvilleas; commercial development that includes doctors' offices, a range of restaurants and stores, 80 percent of which are reserved for local merchants, and a retail branch of Citibank, which underwrote \$27 million in funding for the project.**

**The official estimate is that Fruitvale Village will result in 700 to 1,000 new jobs for the neighborhood.**

time,” says Pat Cashman, a board member of the local development corporation who first saw the need for a pedestrian connection between the BART station and International Boulevard when he was a graduate student of architecture in 1971. No matter how logical the connection may have seemed, however, Ordway says, “without the Unity Council, the community would not have stood up and said ‘This is what we want.’”

Nevertheless, Fruitvale still lacked a comprehensive plan. “We knew that it had to be on a significant scale if it was to have enough impact to transform the community,” says Silva. “The transformation had to address social, physical and economic conditions.”

Meetings were convened. Funds were raised. Decisions were made. Despite all the effort, however, the project existed for years only as drawings and talk. Silva remembers thinking the project “was like the Bible. Whatever your preference, or your religion, everyone reads the same book but gets something different out of it. Every feasibility study said it couldn’t be done.”

Other things were getting done, however. The Unity Council started financial education classes to help prepare residents to buy their own homes. It coordinated a home-improvement program with a local Sears store. Martínez and the Unity Council also attracted the attention of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which, since 1980, had been using historic preservation as a tool for commercial revitalization in suburban and rural areas desolated by malls. Preservationists itched to take on inner-city shopping areas. They knew community support was the key to success and that a commercial district had to be made attractive if businesses were to succeed.

In 1996 the Unity Council launched the Main Street Program, a pilot project for the National Trust. With help from the program, Fruitvale businesses began sprucing up their buildings. More than \$4 million in public funds and \$3 million in private funds were invested in the business district. The program also raised more than \$2 million for street improvements, expanded the annual Día de los Muertos Festival into a regional attraction that drew 80,000 people in 2003, and established a zero-tolerance anti-graffiti program. In six years, the Main Street Program created 224 new jobs and assisted in the growth of 66 new businesses.

Fruitvale merchants formed a business improvement district in 2001, voting to tax themselves about 14 cents a square foot to raise \$200,000 annually. The money pays for daily sidewalk sweeping. The tax also pays “ambassadors” wearing blue

and white striped shirts to patrol the street, reporting anything amiss to the Oakland Police Department. Crime dropped in the district and shoplifting is now the main worry, according to Jenny Kassin, who oversees the Main Street Program.

A shopping center opened on the other side of International Boulevard, on the site of a former cannery, in October 1997. It was the first development of its kind in 25 years and included a chain supermarket, an auto supply center and a Starbucks that is a joint venture with Magic Johnson’s Urban Coffee. Today the center has 18 retailers.

As the local merchants began seeing the neighborhood improve, the transit village project ran into another problem. La Clínica de la Raza, a local health clinic which had started in 1971 with five volunteers and grown to be the largest employer in Fruitvale, was going to be one of the project’s anchor tenants. But Silva learned that its funding depended on its owning the new facility and the land it was to be built on. “So we had to subdivide the land and sell them a parcel,” says Silva.

That was just one of the funding conflicts the project faced. For example, some \$14 million in grants and loans for the

*Below* **Arabella Martínez, C.E.O. of the Unity Council, and, below left, Manuela Silva, who heads the council’s real estate arm. Their partnership has made the most of Martínez’s social vision and Silva’s business savvy.**



### Connecting the Dots

Since 1971 the Ford Foundation has made grants totaling \$9 million to Fruitvale’s Unity Council. Foundation funding for Fruitvale Transit Village is part of a larger initiative that is supporting efforts to connect neighborhood development with regional efforts to reduce poverty and injustice. Grants have assisted transit-oriented projects, mixed-income housing and the creation of vibrant public spaces, such as the Fruitvale project. The work seeks to harness the dynamics of changing demographics, market forces and social justice to forge new approaches to community development.



project came through the city, each with a different set of rules, often in conflict.

As Martínez chased funding, she risked losing time-defined money obtained from other sources. By 1998 it was clear that one person had to oversee the project or it wouldn't get built. Martínez tapped Manuela Silva, who had joined the Unity Council staff in 1990 with a background in developing affordable housing.

Silva put together a proposal suggesting that funding sources loosen up; if a specific use wasn't prohibited, she asked them to accept that "it doesn't say you can't." There were more than 30 funding sources for the transit village project. Silva took her message to each one. "Usually, people make decisions on what they believe they can't do, but that eliminates the possibilities and I couldn't work that way," Silva says. Martínez and the Unity Council leveraged public dollars and grants, notably \$25 million in public funds for the project. The two women developed a style that let them play to their respective strengths. Martínez focused on the social goals. Silva imposed the discipline needed for successful real estate development.

"This was an incredibly complex project, and it took somebody like Arabella to keep all the balls in the air," says La Raza's Yzaguirre. "She can work with anybody. She listens to people."

The core of Fruitvale Village, two buildings lining a pedestrian plaza, remained the goal. The plaza and transportation were central to the plan. Connecting Fruitvale to the rest of the region was crucial because it meant local residents would have better access to jobs, and businesses would have better access to customers. "In new immigrant households, if they

don't have transportation choices, they're locked out of mainstream America," Silva says. "We wanted the pedestrian plaza to invite people from the community to ride BART, and we wanted to make the plaza a center of celebration and community life."

Still, for six years, the project moved slowly, a dream consisting of drawings and near-endless talk. "If you were discouraged, Arabella would pump you up," says Ordway. "She never lost sight of the vision."

"For-profit people would have pulled the plug on that project 10 different times," says Pat Cashman, F.D.C. board member. At least one private developer invited to participate backed off, saying the project was too complicated and too difficult with too much uncertainty for returns. "Arabella said, 'Maybe for them,'" Cashman recalls, but not for her and the Unity Council.

Several banks were interested in the financing but faced with Silva's untested model, which showed that the estimated net operating income from the project could support almost \$30 million in debt, they dithered. Silva then approached Citibank, which dispatched Steven Hall, deputy director of community development. "After meeting with Arabella and Manni, walking through the model and how they expected it to be used, we really didn't see much risk in this," Hall says.

By that time, Fruitvale was harvesting the benefits of a decade of Martínez's leadership. Indeed, by 2001 there were almost no vacancies on International Boulevard, and Fruitvale had

**A workman in Fruitvale Village puts the finishing touches on a decorative mosaic at one of the project's Latin-themed buildings.**

## **'In new immigrant households, if they don't have transportation choices, they're locked out of mainstream America,' Silva says.**

**'We wanted the pedestrian plaza to invite people from the community to ride BART, and we wanted to make the plaza a center of celebration and community life.'**

become Oakland's second largest generator of sales tax revenue.

Citibank became the sole conventional lender, providing \$27 million in construction and permanent financing. Another investment banking firm acted as project underwriter and marketed the tax-exempt bonds issued by the City of Oakland. Citibank's financing covered \$19.8 million for the project and an additional \$5.8 million for La Clínica de la Raza. In addition, Citibank's Social Investments Group provided \$1.4 million in equity-like debt as a matching source for other funders. The money went to the Fruitvale Development Corporation on Dec. 21, 2001. A year later, construction was at the halfway point. The first phase of Fruitvale Village was completed 10 months later, in October 2003, and was marked by a gala celebration.

Despite awards and acclaim, there are skeptics. One, John Landis, chairman of the University of California at Berkeley's department of city and regional planning, says that it will take at least five years to see if the project can sustain itself. If ten-

ants like the Unity Council move out to make way for businesses when market rates increase, Landis says, that will be a sign of success.

There are also worries about maintaining the often tense balance between improving a low-income community and defending it against gentrification, a constant challenge in the Bay Area's overheated real estate market. Yet Landis thinks there is not yet evidence that Fruitvale Village will cause anything more than interest in the neighborhood. Others familiar with Oakland say grittier, mixed-use areas with more warehouse, shipping and factory space are more likely targets of gentrification. Nonetheless, home prices in Fruitvale, admittedly low to start with, rose 43 percent last year, the second steepest climb in Alameda County.

The big question remains: Can Fruitvale Village be a model for similar transit-oriented projects elsewhere? At least two other Oakland communities are already pursuing their own versions. Martínez would also like to see the Unity Council reinvent part of itself as a consulting team for similar projects. "The Unity Council has the technical capacity, and it would be a source of revenue," she says. There is virtually total agreement, however, that Fruitvale Village cannot be a financing model for other nonprofits. In any case, Cashman says, "Being the pioneer was difficult. Would you replicate something if you knew it would take all those years and all that money? Probably not, but I don't think the next one will."

With 40 years behind it, the Unity Council had a reputation for delivering, but, like Martínez, it also had the experience to know a project like this couldn't be done alone. Like Martínez, too, the council knew where and how to build coalitions, and as importantly, they knew that a neighborhood's people and institutions must play key roles in building their community. "The message may be as simple as that its success is rooted in the community," says Ordway, "and without that, a project like the transit village is simply not going to work."

The next phase of realizing Martínez's and the Unity Council's dream of a "vibrant and livable community" includes about 215 more housing units, a seven-acre waterfront park on nearby reclaimed land, a public market, a land bank to prevent local businesses and residents from being displaced by rising property values, and Martínez's retirement.

The housing should be completed by 2008. Martínez expects to leave later this year. Her exit, she says, will be preceded by intense fund raising to ensure the Unity Council maintains fiscal strength. She realizes that because of its growth, the council needs a better system for tracking performance, and for tracking paper. It needs a chief financial officer, not just accountants.

But what it needs most, it already has—a vision—thanks to Martínez. "Arabella once told me that a lot of what I considered vision was actually experience," says Manuela Silva. "And at some point, I started seeing the vision. I think that is how the baton is passed on." ■

### **Fruitvale by the Numbers**

- Per capita income is \$11,814.
- In 1999, 24 percent of the population was living below the poverty level.
- The average household size is 3.7, compared to 2.6 for Oakland as a whole.
- Only 31 percent of housing units are owner-occupied, compared to 41 percent for Oakland as a whole.
- Foreign-born residents make up 47 percent of the population. Places of birth include Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.
- The population is 7 percent white, 19 percent African-American, 17 percent Asian, 53 percent Latino and 4 percent other.
- The residents are young: 32 percent of the population is under 18, 54 percent is under 30.
- Spanish is spoken in 43 percent of the homes. Of these households, 40 percent are linguistically isolated, that is, all family members over 14 have difficulty with English. An Asian language is spoken in 16 percent of the homes. Of these, 45 percent are linguistically isolated.
- Only 51 percent of adults have a high school diploma. Only 10 percent have a college degree.
- Most residents work in construction, manufacturing, retail, health care, food and other service industries.

**Source:** Main Street Program

# Advocate for Aid



**Afghan girls with new textbooks provided by an international aid agency.**



## Mary McClymont says global security depends on helping the world's struggling nations to prosper.

BY TARA MCKELVEY



KATHERINE LAMBERT

**D**elivering humanitarian aid and sowing the seeds of long-term development has never been an easy line of work, but lately it has gotten downright perilous. So far this year more than a dozen civilian relief workers have been killed on the job in Afghanistan. At least six others have been killed—and three more taken hostage—by insurgents in Iraq.

YANNIS KONTOIS/POLARIS

Tara McKelvey is a senior editor at The American Prospect.

**International development groups have helped spur a number of achievements: the eradication of smallpox, a 20 percent reduction in illiteracy and a 20-year increase in life expectancy. Yet, for decades aid dollars have been drying up.**

Nevertheless, humanitarian and development work is an important component of creating more stable societies and a more secure world, says Mary McClymont, president of InterAction, a consortium of 160 international relief and development agencies that are based in the United States. InterAction was founded in 1984 as a way for these nongovernmental groups to work together to advance their aims. The Ford Foundation has supported its work across a range of efforts. Member organizations provide medical supplies and emergency care to people affected by war, help people overcome the ravages of poverty, and supply the means for long-range “capacity building” among local civic organizations.

In a recent interview, McClymont named a long list of achievements worldwide by international development groups over the last 30 years, including: the eradication of smallpox, a 20 percent reduction in illiteracy and a 20-year increase in life expectancy. Yet, for decades aid dollars have been drying up. More than 15 percent of every U.S. tax dollar was being sent overseas to help rebuild Europe in the late 1940’s. It has dropped steadily ever since—to less than one percent of the government’s budget, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In 2002 that changed when President Bush announced the Millennium Challenge Account, an initiative that promises to substantially increase U.S. development assistance. An initial appropriation of \$1 billion was made for it in fiscal 2004. McClymont and her colleagues welcome this commitment. In November 2003, InterAction issued a report, *Foreign Assistance in Focus: Emerging Trends*, that assesses the changes in the foreign assistance policy implemented by the Bush administration, including the proposed increase in funds.

McClymont, 54, worked at the Ford Foundation from the late 1980’s to 2000, most recently as senior director in the Peace and Social Justice program. Previously, she was an attorney in the civil rights division of the U.S. Justice Department.

These days, she works out of an office on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, D.C. Recently she talked with FFR about the risks and challenges faced by humanitarian and development workers.

**How has the overseas work of nongovernmental organizations changed in recent years?**

For one thing, I think NGOs make a real effort to work with their local partners in developing countries. Rather than simply delivering the relief and services, they’re helping their local partners build their own capacities. For example, NGOs may help train medical personnel and give them the tools to set up their own health care systems. They teach people new farming techniques or help them build up the nongovernmental sector and develop a civil society in their country—whether it’s Bolivia or Malawi.

**In the recent InterAction report, *Emerging Trends*, the authors talk about “viewing foreign aid through a national security lens.” What does that mean?**

I think the Bush administration has decided [to increase overseas development assistance] because they would like to use international development as a tool in the war on terrorism. They believe if you provide people with their basic needs, their countries will become more stable and less likely to be places where terrorism can take root. I think it’s a good point. But we want to make sure funding is available not just to our strategic allies, but also to poor countries in Africa, Latin America and other places that need our help. We’re saying, “Don’t forget the other countries.”

**Two years ago President Bush proposed to increase federal spending on international development by \$5 billion per year by 2006. How is this initiative playing out?**

The NGO community has been very excited and supportive of this new initiative, known as the Millennium Challenge Account, by the President. And an initial appropriation of \$1 billion was made for it in fiscal 2004. Nevertheless, we’re very concerned that, given the constraints on the budget, the full request made by the President for 2005 will not be delivered. And, as important as the M.C.A. is, we are concerned that core—and ongoing—development and humanitarian assistance programs in countries around the world may be undercut to fund this new initiative.

**Are there disadvantages to tying development to the war on terrorism?**

We think international development should be undertaken because it helps build people’s skills and enables them to live with dignity and hope. It’s the right thing to do. But there are many other reasons for our country to provide development assistance. For example, we know that women and girls are critical to communities and therefore it makes sense to invest in their well-being. Countries become more stable and prosperous if women and girls have an opportunity for advancement. We also know that a fundamental part of our security in the U.S. is to do our part in addressing global poverty, hunger, disease and other problems that can make our world unstable. Diseases like H.I.V./AIDS are a transnational phenomenon. They have no bounds.

In general, Americans have become more aware that what happens to a couple in Afghanistan and their ability to put food on the table can affect the lives and safety of people in the United States. After September 11, Americans began to have a better

## **'Lasting development takes time. The bigger changes take place only when NGO workers are engaged in a thoughtful manner with people from the local communities.'**

understanding of the interdependence of our world. This new look at the world by the American public—as well as the new approach by our policy makers—provides us with an ideal moment to promote development and humanitarian concerns in our government. My concern about linking development to the war on terrorism, though, is that some people might look for short-term results. Building institutions and helping communities develop skills doesn't happen overnight.

Lasting development takes time. That is a message we must keep underscoring. It takes time to train people so they can deliver their own medical care or set up a school system. Sure, it's easy to build schools quickly, but you have to train the teachers to teach in them. And you have to help people understand the importance of girls going to school. It requires much more than just the physical infrastructure. The bigger changes take place only when NGO workers are engaged in a thoughtful manner with people from the local communities.

**A U.S. AID deputy administrator recently told The Baltimore Sun that NGOs should make it clear that they are funded by the U.S. government. "This is taxpayers' money," he said. "There should be some recognition that resources of the U.S. government are making this happen." What do you think?**

Let me talk about this in general terms. Donors should get recognition for what they fund. But nongovernmental organizations are just that: nongovernmental. Where it's appropriate to tell the local community that some funding comes from the U.S. government, we will. But we have a right—and should be able—to keep a distance from the government. It doesn't mean the money isn't appreciated. But it's not always safe to be associated directly with the U.S. government. We should use common sense about when to tell people who is providing the funding. It's also important to note that NGOs get money from many different sources—public and private.

**How have humanitarian workers traditionally been regarded in the past and how has this changed?**

Humanitarian workers have a code of conduct: They pledge to remain—as best they can—impartial, independent and neutral. They choose not to take sides. They will help people regardless of their ethnicity, race or political persuasion. That has not changed. But the circumstances have changed. Increasingly, humanitarian workers are being singled out by groups who oppose a regime or, in the case of Iraq, an occupying power. Therefore, the critical question is: How do humanitarian workers remain neutral?

We believe humanitarian workers are more vulnerable when

the military begins to undertake humanitarian activities. The military ought to handle security, which they do very, very well. And the humanitarians ought to do humanitarian work. Last year, American soldiers in Afghanistan were wearing civilian clothing, carrying guns and undertaking humanitarian activities. This led to confusion and impaired the ability of humanitarian workers to do their jobs. And, of course, it undermined their security.

**But the soldiers were trying to do something good, right?**

Increasingly, we've seen the military engaged in efforts to win the hearts and minds of people. But you've got to have distinctions between the humanitarians and the military. It's also important to note that the Defense Department doesn't have the expertise to do humanitarian reconstruction work. It should be left in the hands of those in the U.S. government who do—the civilian agencies such as U.S.AID and the State Department.

**Increasingly humanitarian work is being done by private, for-profit contractors rather than NGOs. What are the effects?**

We have seen a large increase in the use of private contractors and other profit-making firms in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a worrisome development. NGOs have decades of experience working with local communities and know how to help build them from the ground up. Again, we worry about the notion of a quick fix. The U.S. government wants to build democracy. So let's do it the right way.

**What are some of the other effects of these policies?**

We are seeing a whole new phenomenon because of the war on terrorism. If you were a humanitarian worker in the past, you might have been in danger or even killed. But now humanitarian workers are being targeted. This is a predominant concern of ours and, of course, other humanitarian organizations like the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

**What effect have the attacks on humanitarian workers had on the NGO community?**

The organizations are constantly reassessing security issues in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some are decreasing their international staff to a bare-bones level.

I don't think we've seen a decline in the number of people who want to join the ranks of humanitarians, however, and I'm thankful for that. ■



**Maria Vilchez holds up a photograph of her husband, one of more than 75,000 persons dead or missing in the political violence that wracked Peru for two decades.**

# Moment of Truth

**Peru's struggle to recover its moral memory is a remarkable first step in remaking the society.**

BY ARIN FARRINGTON

**Ayacucho, Peru**—Angélica Mendoza was sleeping soundly one night in 1983 when hooded soldiers broke into her house in Huamanga and took away her son, Arquimedes Ascarza, who was 19 years old.

“There were 30 of them, and they were breaking up the house, looking through everything, hitting us with their rifles,” says Mendoza, a Quechua-speaking Indian who is now 74. “They said he was with the Shining Path, but he was just a student.”

A dignified woman wearing long braids, full skirts, and a high-crowned white hat, Mendoza's weathered features reflect both cynicism and hope. As the leader of the National Association of Family Members of the Detained-Disappeared, known as ANFASEP, she has testified in public hearings and told her story many times. But this time, her dark eyes well up and her soft voice cracks.

“After he had been taken away, a soldier brought me a note,” she says. “It said

Arin Farrington is a freelance writer based in Lima.



ALEJANDRA BRUN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



‘I’m fine, don’t worry, but try to get money for me to have a trial or they’ll kill me in the barracks.’ But I never saw Arquimedes again.”

Mendoza is one of many Peruvians who helped shape an extensive public accounting of the atrocities committed by var-

### Seeding Democracy

**The Ford Foundation has funded human rights work in Peru for more than two decades. In addition to the National Human Rights Coordinating Group, an umbrella organization of some 60 nongovernmental groups from across the country, the foundation supports such groups as the Legal Defense Institute; the Pro-Human Rights Association, known as APRODEH; Paz y Esperanza (Peace and Hope), a nondenominational evangelical organization; the Episcopal Commission for Social Action; the Andean Commission of Jurists; and the National Roundtable on Disappearance and Victims of Political Violence, known as MENADES. The foundation also funds the New York-based International Center for Transitional Justice, which helps countries pursue accountability for human rights abuses that occurred during repressive rule or armed conflict.**

ious perpetrators during the country’s 20-year internal conflict. These efforts culminated last August when the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report in Lima.

The report’s nine volumes, each one as thick as a telephone book, are the result of a 22-month investigation by the commission. It was created in 2001, during the interim government of President Valentín Paniagua, seven months after Alberto Fujimori fled Peru for Japan. Presenting evidence meticulously collected in public hearings throughout the country, the report tells a 20-year horror story of violent abuses and crimes against humanity perpetrated by all sides in Peru’s internal conflict. The report also offers a series of recommendations, including the need for reparations and reconciliation.

Over the past decade, truth commissions have emerged as an effective way for countries to address their own widespread human rights abuses. Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission stands out from similar bodies in South Africa and elsewhere in part because of the degree to which nongovernmental human rights organizations—and the Peruvian people—have contributed to the process.

**Trailed by grieving relatives, a Peruvian soldier bears the coffin of an officer who was ambushed by Shining Path guerrillas while on patrol in the country’s central jungle.**

“The Peruvian commission is in many ways the strongest commission to date,” says Priscilla Hayner, author of *Unspeakable Truths*, a book about truth commissions around the world, and a cofounder of the International Center for Transitional Justice in New York. Among the commission’s many innovations was a special unit that not only recommended cases for judicial action, but also gathered evidence and prepared files for prosecutors.

The Rev. Bongani Finca, a member of South Africa’s truth commission who met with Peru’s commissioners in Lima before the final report’s release, says that the Peruvian truth commission “created a paradigm shift in the way the world thinks on these issues.” Hayner agrees. Whereas most

**B**etween 1980 and 2000, an estimated 69,000 people were killed—more than twice the previously accepted estimate—and at least 6,000 ‘disappeared.’ Forty percent of deaths and ‘disappearances’ occurred in the poor southwestern department of Ayacucho.

truth commissions end with the filing of their report, she says, the Peruvian commission has led to subsequent efforts to bring about the redress and systemic change the report recommends.

What was unusual about the violence in Peru is that it took place in the context of democracy. The 20-year period studied by the truth commission stretches across the democratically elected governments of Fernando Belaúnde (1980-1985), Alan García (1985-1990), and Alberto Fujimori’s authoritarian regime (1990-2000)—which began democratically.

Between 1980 and 2000, the commission learned, an estimated 69,000 people were killed—more than twice the previously accepted estimate—and at least 6,000 “disappeared.” Forty percent of deaths and “disappearances” occurred in the poor southwestern department of Ayacucho, 9,000 feet high in the central highlands of the Peruvian Andes. Although Ayacucho is only 210 miles from Lima, they are separated not only by the soaring Andes and precipitous gorges, but also by a huge social and economic chasm.

Over the years, as increasing numbers of *campesinos* (peasants) began attending the University of Huamanga, Ayacucho’s original name, an educated elite emerged, with rising expectations. Many were drawn to the call for revolutionary change sounded by the Shining Path, the Communist guerrilla group founded in 1980 by Abimael Guzmán, former philosophy professor at the University of Huamanga. Kimberly Theidon, a medical anthropologist who has studied Ayacucho communities, found that there was broad involvement in the Shining Path in Ayacucho in the 1980’s.

One theory as to why Ayacucho became the epicenter of the violence, says Dr. Theidon, was the clash between academic achievement and the limits imposed in a racist society. “No matter how much you educate yourself, you’re still brown-skinned and Quechua-speaking,” she says.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission assigned wide culpability for the abuses it investigated, which included arbi-

trary detentions, extrajudicial executions, “disappearances,” rapes and other tortures. Among those responsible, it said, were two revolutionary groups—the Shining Path, and, to a lesser extent, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement—as well as state officials, the military, police, state security forces and civilian self-defense committees. It attributes more than half of the killings (54 percent) to Shining Path guerrillas, 30 percent to the Peruvian armed forces, and the remainder to rural self-defense groups and peasants. The report criticizes the government for failing to respond to the human rights crisis and not providing protection for its citizens.

Moreover, the report presents clear evidence of a policy of racism promoted by those in power and permeating most sectors of Peruvian society. Most of the victims came from ethnic groups

and social sectors historically marginalized and discriminated against. Three out of four victims were indigenous Quechua-speakers, and 79 percent of those murdered were from rural areas.

The commission’s 12 members included scholars, lawyers, social scientists, religious leaders and an air force general. The commission

took shape slowly, through a combination of internal political pressure and the persistent efforts of an alliance of human rights groups, many of which have been active in Peru for 20 years. Located throughout the country as well as in Lima, these non-governmental organizations were able to provide access to the communities most affected by the violence and laid much of the groundwork that led to formation of the truth commission.

“The support of NGOs has been very, very important for us,” says Javier Ciurlizza, who served as executive secretary of the truth commission. By sharing their databases, the human rights groups made it possible to calculate the number of victims over two decades, he says. “Without the NGOs it is difficult to imagine the commission would have been created; they had the most active involvement with the populations outside of Lima.”

Sixty of these groups had come together in 1985 as the National Human Rights Coordinating Group. Popularly known as the Coordinadora, its purpose was to strengthen human rights advocacy efforts and give local groups a stronger voice in the national policy-making process.

Coletta Youngers, a leading human rights expert on Peru, believes that the Peruvian experience is different from other Latin American countries in part because of the Coordinadora. “There is no other country in Latin America that has developed a coalition that functions at the local and the national level as effectively and with as little internal strife.”

The main impetus for such cohesion was the emergence of the Shining Path in the 1980’s. “You had people being targeted by the Shining Path [as well as] by the military,” says Youngers, a former senior fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America and author of a recent history of the human rights movement in Peru (see review on page 32). “This changed the political dynamics in a way that did not happen in other countries.”

In one of the more complicated situations in the hemisphere, the Peruvian human rights movement became the first in the region to condemn atrocities by state *and* non-state perpetra-

“T

**he work of the Coordinadora and all the other human rights organizations created the basis from which we were able to do our work. The truth commission never, never could have happened without these organizations and their social mobilization.’**

tors alike. “By 1987, the human rights groups were under fire from both sides,” says Youngers. Ultimately, observers say, this became the movement’s source of credibility in Peruvian society. Precisely because they were seen as above the political fray, Peruvian human rights groups were able to play a central role in the creation of the truth commission, which became the first in Latin America to incorporate public hearings into its process.

Human rights groups helped the commission hold some 200 public hearings in the poor, remote areas most affected by the violence. Conducted over two years, the hearings were organized so that witnesses were seated at the same table with the commissioners and treated with respect, encouraged to speak freely and without interruption. Many of the witnesses testified in Quechua, with simultaneous translation into Spanish. Proceedings were televised live by a Peruvian cable channel and

excerpts were broadcast on the state channel. All in all, help from human rights groups enabled the commission to gather information from more than 17,000 people in 530 locations around Peru.

“The work of the Coordinadora and all the other human rights organizations created the basis from which we were able to do our work,” says Sofia Macher, a former head of the Coordinadora who sat on the commission. “The truth commission never, never could have happened without these organizations and their social mobilization.”

**Alejandra Sicha, right, dries tears as she testifies before Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated atrocities committed during the Shining Path insurgency in the 1980’s and 1990’s.**



PILAR OLIVARES/REUTERS/CORBIS

Ciurlizza agrees. “Without them it would have been difficult to get victims involved in the hearings, with trust and confidence in the process.”

In shaping the hearings, Peru’s commissioners drew on the experiences of South Africa and Nigeria, says Lisa Magarrell, a lawyer and senior associate at the International Center for Transitional Justice. “They showed how public attention could be captured by an open hearing process.”

Assisted by staff at the I.C.T.J., Peru’s commissioners also drew lessons from how other truth commissions had defined violations, used the principles of humanitarian law and approached reconciliation issues, says Magarrell. They looked to Chile and Argentina for how to deal with reparations; they learned about the difficulties of implementing such redress from Guatemala and South Africa. The concept of reparations developed in Peru is not limited to payment of pensions or compensation. Recommendations range from measures of symbolic redress, such as a presidential apology to victims and their families, to legal measures to clear the names of people wrongly accused.

Roberto de la Cruz Mallqui, 33, wants more than his name cleared. He also wants help to rebuild his life. Seized by police in a night raid on his home in Vista Alegre, one of the poorer shantytowns outside of Huamanga, Mallqui spent more than 10 years in prison. He ended up in Miguel Castro, a notorious maximum-security prison in Lima.

“They tortured me with electric shocks all over my body, dunked my head in a bucket filled with water and detergent, and hung me by the arms in a basement room until I couldn’t stand it,” he says. “That’s how they made me confess to things I never did. I’ve never been a member of the Shining Path.”

Mallqui was arrested on the basis of two “subversive” flyers found in his house in a pile of printed material being used as toilet paper. He was also accused of the murder of his stepfather, who had been killed in a similar raid by masked men months before. His Quechua-speaking mother was forced to sign papers written in Spanish—a language she cannot read or

write—confirming his guilt.

Pardoned and released in January 2001, Mallqui wants some kind of material compensation from the government to help improve the weaving workshop he has rebuilt and uses to support his family. Eventually he plans to go to university—after he has put his younger siblings through school. He is hoping that, through the work of the truth commission, he will receive educational benefits, perhaps free tuition. “I have lost half a lifetime in prison, and that is irreversible,” Mallqui says. “I want to make a professional life for myself, even though it’s late.”

In November 2003, Mallqui attended a workshop in Huamanga sponsored by the Pro-Human Rights Association, known as APRODEH, and two other human rights groups. About 120 men and women attended, hoping to learn about their rights and what they could reasonably expect from the Peruvian judicial process. A few had traveled six hours to get to the meeting.

Maribel del Castillo, 27, is president of an association of children orphaned by the violence. Her father, a village leader, was killed in 1985. Her mother—who witnessed the killing—was told it was the Shining Path, but she said everyone knew it was the military.

Del Castillo says she feels frustrated by the lack of opportunities for young people, especially people like her who are indigenous and living in poverty. “The number one thing we want is institutional reforms,” she says. “Without profound reforms, we are a country where justice does not exist. From there, the rest will follow.”

However, it took months before President Alejandro Toledo made a formal statement in support of the commission’s final report. He formally apologized in November for the estimated 69,000 deaths that occurred during the violence, and announced that the government would spend \$800 million over the next two and one-half years on social programs to benefit communities most affected by the violence. But he did not offer the full range of reparations sought by victims and NGOs.

Still, a number of efforts led by Peru’s human rights organizations are aimed at ensuring that Peru embraces such reforms. In February, President Toledo named a commission on national reconciliation—made up of government ministers and members of civil society organizations—to develop policies to implement the report’s recommendations. And to help keep the commission’s work in the public eye, Peru’s Human Rights Ombudsman, a government office, created a documentation center that houses the commission’s archives and is open to the public. “The information is a heritage for the whole nation,” says Magarrell.

In addition, Ciurlizza, the commission’s executive secretary, and Salomón Lerner, who served as president of the truth commission, have formed an institute at the Catholic Pontifical University in Lima to help focus academic resources on carrying out the report’s recommendations. “We think of our mandate as part of a long-term process in which this two-year period has been a necessary time to open minds and reveal a hidden part of our history,” Ciurlizza says. “There is much to be optimistic about.” ■

## **The People Speak**

**Over the past two years, Paco de Onís of Sky-light Pictures has been making a film, with Ford support, about Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. With Pam Yates, the film’s director, Peter Kinoy, the editor, and a Peruvian crew, de Onís filmed the public hearings and interviewed members of many of the communities most affected by the violence. The film, “State of Fear,” will be released this year.**

**“We heard the voice of a huge sector of the population that had never expressed themselves publicly for fear of retribution,” de Onís says. “Telling the truth is no simple thing.”**

**For information about the film and broadcast dates, visit [www.skylightpictures.com](http://www.skylightpictures.com).**

# Truth Be Told

BY ALEX WILDE

When Peru's president, Alberto Fujimori, assumed exceptional powers on April 5, 1992—suspending the Constitution and dissolving Congress—he could not have known that his “self coup” would make human rights the rallying cry of the democratic opposition and lead to his downfall and disgrace eight years later.

Since 1980, Peru had faced a bloody internal war sparked by the self-proclaimed Maoist guerrillas of the Shining Path. A series of elected governments—including that of Fujimori, elected in 1990—had fought the insurgency ineffectually, largely by giving the armed forces a free hand in the countryside.

The result was a vast human rights crisis—the scope of which became clearer last August when Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its report: Some 75,000 people were killed or “disappeared” in Peru over two decades. By far the largest number of victims of this political violence were civilians, particularly the Quechua-speaking poor of the countryside.

Although Peru's human rights movement had been documenting abuses by the guerrillas and government forces with an even hand since the mid-1980's, Fujimori and his predecessors had denounced human rights workers as *tontos útiles*, naive fellow travelers of the insurgents. Public opinion long reflected government attitudes, but by the mid-1990's, the movement had begun to win broad acceptance that not only were human rights beyond politics, but they could be effective—indeed, essential—to winning the war against terrorism.

As Coletta Youngers shows in her new book, *Violencia política y sociedad civil en el Perú* (Political Violence and Civil Society in Peru), much credit for this turnaround is due to the National Human Rights Coordinating Group, known as the Coordinadora. Formed in 1985, it spearheaded what is arguably Latin America's most successful national movement for human rights. With a small secretariat in Lima, the network has some 60 mem-

**Alex Wilde** is the Vice President for Communications at the Ford Foundation. He formerly directed the foundation's office for the Andean Region and Southern Cone, located in Santiago, Chile.

ber organizations—from small, religiously affiliated community groups throughout Peru to sophisticated internationally-linked NGOs based in Lima.

The Coordinadora combated the worst political violence in Peru's history in the 1980's and played a leading role in its return to democratic rule in 2000. During the 1990's, the Coordinadora's media-savvy public campaigns helped free thousands who had been wrongly imprisoned, stimulated government reforms and mobilized broad popular support.

Drawing on more than 20 years of experience working on human rights in Peru, Youngers presents a compelling analysis of how the Coordinadora responded to the changing dimensions of this human rights crisis. She has a sure touch in identifying factors that shaped national realities. One example is the importance of the country's popular grass-roots organizations and Catholic liberation theology to the subsequent movement for human rights—including its embrace of social, economic and cultural rights. Another is the particular character of the Shining Path, which targeted popular organizations and human rights groups as well as the Peruvian military and police.

The Coordinadora's decision to document guerrilla as well as government violence was a risk, although it had a measure of self-protection. Ultimately it resulted in their gaining greater credibility with the Peruvian people. As Youngers shows, nonviolence was an ethical as well as political choice, and human rights values gradually found greater resonance in Peruvian society.

Beyond Peru itself, Youngers's book illuminates the factors that go into effective work for human rights. The Coordinadora's varied organizational membership (described in a 45-page appendix) gave it solid knowledge of local realities throughout the country. At the same time, it was able to engage effectively with international actors—such as multilateral bodies, the U.S. and European governments, and human rights NGOs from the global north—that could influence Peru's national situation in a positive way.

As director of the Washington Office on Latin America in the late 1980's and early 90's, I saw the Coordinadora work effectively with staff at the U.S. Congress, the State Department and at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Respected for its accurate information, it was influential because it was able to speak on behalf of a unified, representative movement that related human rights to the task of reestablishing democratic institutions.

Youngers's book carries the history of Peru and the Coordinadora through the restoration of democracy in 2000. In many ways it provides the back story for the 2003 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—the creative, courageous and indispensable work of the human rights movement that made it possible for Peru to recover what the commission's

chair, Salomón Lerner, called its “moral memory.” It is not the story of unalloyed triumph, but of what the struggle for human rights and democracy means, concretely—a struggle that continues in Peru today.

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*Violencia política y sociedad civil en el Perú* (Institute of Peruvian Studies, 2003) can be ordered at [www.iep.perucultural.org.pe](http://www.iep.perucultural.org.pe). An overview of the book in English is available at [www.wola.org/andes/Peru/Peru\\_Coordinadora\\_eng.pdf](http://www.wola.org/andes/Peru/Peru_Coordinadora_eng.pdf). ■



# Outside the Pack

BY JENNY DOUGLAS

In a recent broadcast, Orlando de Guzman, a correspondent based in Southeast Asia, sought to explain an uprising that has killed 12,000 people since 1976 in the Indonesian province of Aceh. In another, Jeanne Baron described some of the novel ways that residents of Kyotera, a Ugandan town near the shores of Lake Victoria, are grappling with AIDS. And in Suleimaniya, in northern Iraq, Jennifer Glasse reported on Kurds who fought alongside U.S. forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom, then joined the Iraqi army and are struggling to retain their own identity.

COURTESY P.R.I./THE WORLD



Each of these reports aired on “The World,” an hourlong public radio program that tries to inform listeners in the United States about developments overseas that the major news outlets often overlook. What happens in Aceh, Kyotera or Suleimaniya may seem remote to many Americans. But events of seemingly minor importance in such places could lead to political and economic instability with global repercussions, says Bob Ferrante, the show’s executive producer.

In the last five years, the number of public radio stations carrying “The World” has almost doubled to 176 stations. The show—a co-production of Public Radio International, the BBC World Service and WGBH in Boston—attracts nearly two million listeners each weekday.

Why the surge in popularity? Ferrante and his colleagues cite various reasons: the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the war in Iraq, the steady growth of public radio in general, and a later airtime.

“By the time we go on air, NPR, CNN and the wire services have already reported the straight breaking news stories,” explains Mary Kay Magistad, the show’s correspondent in Northeast Asia. “Our challenge is to say something more, to put it in context.”

P.R.I.’s “The World” was launched in 1996 with Ford support. At that time, many U.S. newspapers and television networks were closing overseas bureaus and

cutting back on international coverage. Since Sept. 11, the U.S. news media has paid greater attention to developments abroad, first in Afghanistan and now in Iraq. But it tends to practice “pack journalism,” says Magistad, with reporters flocking from hotspot to hotspot. As a result, the American public can be caught unaware by crises that were years in the making.

To expand its reach, “The World” sometimes airs stories produced by one of its partners, the BBC World Service, or uses BBC audio in its own reports. WGBH in Boston furnishes production resources, and P.R.I.—a younger, smaller competitor of National Public Radio—oversees distribution.

The heart of the show, however, is its team of enterprising correspondents, a diverse and, by conventional news standards, somewhat quirky band of journalists scattered about the globe who live in the regions they cover.

“Journalists who pop in only when there’s a breaking story often miss the nuances, the context and the causes of an event,” Magistad says. “Stories are richer and more layered when a correspondent can explore the ways a place and its people change over time.”

So it was with the show’s coverage of a spate of suicide bombings in Iraq this past February, reported by David Aquila Lawrence. Because he had frequently visited the region where the first bomb went off, he was able to approach the region’s key political figures and discuss the attack’s

**Jennifer Glasse, a correspondent for P.R.I.’s “The World,” reports from Pakistan soon after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.**

possible repercussions. “When the next bomb hit the town of Iskanderia,” Lawrence adds, “my background in Arabic allowed me to speak with the angry crowd that gathered when U.S. troops arrived.”

Similarly, Magistad put her own mark on a story about the Six-Party Talks on North Korea’s nuclear program, held in Beijing in late February 2004. “Instead of doing three straight days of ‘this is what happened today,’” Magistad says, “I did a set-up piece explaining the broad issues behind the nuclear crisis.” She followed with a report on North Korea’s economy and its malnourished population to help explain why North Korea was pushing so hard for aid.

“On day three, I did a story on the North Korean government’s black market activities—including drug trafficking and counterfeiting \$100 bills—and about its past record of cheating a little on agreements,” she recalls. “It was a way of asking, even if they did agree to stop their nuclear program, how likely would they be to stick to their agreement?”

Such in-depth reporting from around the globe remains a rarity in the U.S. news media. “You look around and you think there’s got to be someone else out there doing what we’re doing,” muses Lisa Mullins, the show’s host. “But as far as I know, we’re the only ones.” ■

Jenny Douglas is a freelance writer and public radio producer based in Brooklyn, N.Y.

# Sarah Jones

BY CYNTHIA COOPER

A banner proclaiming “I AM A POET TOO” hangs over the stage in Sarah Jones’s one-woman play, “Bridge and Tunnel,” which opened off-Broadway in February. The letters stand for “Immigrant and Multiculturalist American Poets or Enthusiasts Traveling Toward Optimistic Openness,” explains Jones in the character of Mohammed, a Pakistani accountant. He is the exuberant host for the play’s setting—a meeting of this poets’ society.

Under the direction of Tony Taccone, Jones portrays 14 characters from many lands and cultures who have gathered in a Queens, N.Y., café. She moves fluidly from one strikingly different character to another with only the slightest adjustment of a jacket or a shawl. In every instance, Jones deftly transforms herself into people of far-flung origins—a Jamaican performance artist, a Jordanian businesswoman, a Vietnamese-American teenager—revealing their hopes, humor and humanity.

Jones created the piece, which was originally titled “Waking the American Dream,” with support from a Ford Foundation grant to the National Immigration Forum. She later added two nonimmigrant characters, an usher and a teenage hip-hop fan, and set the gathering in a fictional Queens outpost, the Bridge and Tunnel Café, where the walls are covered with graffiti-inspired traffic signs.

In this version, Mohammed is threatened by a looming problem: closer scrutiny of immigrants after September 11, 2001. Learning in a phone call that he has been ordered to appear before immigration authorities, he calms his frantic wife. “What, I am now hiding the limericks of mass destruction?” he quips.

This bittersweet combination of optimism and heartbreak becomes a common bond for many characters in the play. Lorraine Levine, a “Polish-German-Lithuanian-American” and a star of the “Almost Deaf Poetry Jam” at a senior citizens center, recalls her surprise when as a young woman she came upon a billboard advertising a new development in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey: “No Jews,” it said.

Cynthia Cooper is a freelance writer based in New York.

Bao Viet Dinh, a Vietnamese-American teenager, uses a slam-poetry performance style to challenge stereotypes of Asians: “This is not the scene/ where I share ancient Chinese secrets/ I’m Vietnamese remember?”

Questioning stereotypes at every opportunity is central to Jones’s writing and performance. One character, Mrs. Ling, a prim Chinese woman in her early forties, describes in heavily-accented English how her love of family finally brought her to accept her daughter’s love of another woman, a foreign student. Just as Mrs. Ling reached this epiphany, the lover’s visa expired. “My daughter is crying so hard, she says, you win, mom, if I was a man, I can marry Shin Yee, but we are just lesbians, so our love doesn’t count, they say we’re not real family.” Mrs. Ling then tells how she is campaigning for recognition of same-sex partners.

Juan José, a Chicano, tells a different story of love lost. He has not heard from his wife, Veronica, since she boarded a smuggler’s bus to cross the Mexican border to join him in the United States. Yet he imagines she would accept him, despite a construction accident that crushed his legs and left him in a wheelchair. “The scaffold wasn’t strong enough/To hold up all that immigrant hope,” José says.

The last poet, Rose Aimee, describes her escape from Haiti under threat of death. She survived a dangerous crossing, detention, settlement, innumerable jobs and the challenge of saving money for a downpayment on a house, only to encounter a bigoted real estate salesman. But her dreams have not died, and she ends on a note of hope and defiance. “God bless your ancestors, real estate man./ Once they were new here too./ And God Bless this great America/But not because of you.”



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN MICHAEL THOMAS

**In her one-woman show “Bridge and Tunnel,” Sarah Jones portrays 14 characters with only minimal changes in costume.**

In creating and performing these stories of outsiders finding their way in an unfamiliar land, Jones also celebrates the power of art to transform and connect. In the Bridge and Tunnel Café, the poetry of spirit is truly universal. Indeed, performances have been so packed that the play may move to Broadway. ■

# A Vision of a World Made New

BY LARRY COX



UN/DPI PHOTO

**Eleanor Roosevelt in 1949, displaying a copy of the newly adopted Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**

People around the world celebrated the 55th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this past December, and yet it is a document many Americans know little about. As many have observed, the Universal Declaration is surely one of the greatest accomplishments of the human race; in many ways it is the hope of the human race. Since its adoption by the United Nation's General Assembly in 1948, the Universal Declaration has helped shape more than 90 modern constitutions. Nadine Gordimer, the South African author and Nobel Laureate, calls it "the creed of humanity that surely sums up all other creeds directing human behavior."

But as much as we need the declaration and its call for a world built on the transcendent principles of human rights today, the declaration also needs us, all of us.

Why is the declaration not only worth celebrating, but worth fighting for? This should not be hard for Americans to understand. Our country was born with a declaration whose words remain an inspiration: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,

that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The Universal Declaration begins with similar, if slightly less stirring, words: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." What has given these words such lasting power is not their eloquence but their origin and their audience. This is the first declaration of rights in the history of the world issued not by one coun-

try or people or region or cultural tradition but by a body representing the world. And it is the first declaration of rights addressed not just to every government but to "every individual" everywhere.

**This is the first declaration of rights in the history of the world issued not by one country or people or region or cultural tradition but by a body representing the world.**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins by recognizing our rights. It does not claim to grant them. That is important. That governments can recognize but cannot give human rights means that governments may violate our human rights but they can never take them away.

The declaration goes on to spell out, in 30 articles, the exact rights that have been recognized. The articles don't cover all that human beings might desire. They are only the most fundamental of rights, rights essential to human dignity.

Many of these rights are very familiar to Americans—the right to freedom of expression and assembly and religion, the right not to be arbitrarily arrested or tortured or killed, the right to elect a representative government. Some of the rights go well beyond those set forth in this country's founding documents, and so are less familiar. But they are equally, as the declaration puts it, "indispensable for the dignity and development of the human personality"—the right to a job, to an education, to adequate food, shelter and health care. These are the so-called economic, social and cultural rights. Their recognition is one of the major advances of the Universal Declaration.

It is important to understand the nature of that advance. The framers of

This article was adapted from a speech given by Larry Cox, a senior program officer in the Ford Foundation's Human Rights unit, to the City Club of Cleveland on December 5, 2003.

the declaration were realists. They knew that governments could not immediately guarantee every person a job, or a decent home, or an adequate income. What the declaration requires is what all governments can do—use all available resources to progressively make each of these rights a reality as quickly as possible for all.

All governments, from the weakest to the most powerful, are under the same obligation—to respect, protect and fulfill each one of these rights. If they do not, they can and should be held accountable for their failure, not just by their own citizens but by the world.

How did governments ever agree to such a revolutionary step forward? The short answer is: not easily. The declaration was forged in the cauldron of World War II, a war that saw acts of such massive state barbarity that they still defy the limits of human language, a war that was preceded by an international economic depression that deepened and expanded poverty, hunger and desperation around the world.

It was the searing, still-fresh memories of those horrors and the desire to ensure that they would never happen again that enabled an alliance of smaller nations and nongovernmental organizations—labor, civil rights and religious groups—to push and push until human rights were given a significant place in the objectives of the new United Nations. Then a Human Rights Commission was established to define exactly what the term meant.

The commission was blessed with the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt and other talented people from diverse countries and traditions: Charles Malik of Lebanon, P.C. Chang of China, Rene Cassin of France, Hernan Santa Cruz of Chile and Hansa Mehta of India. They were literally racing against time. The cold war had already begun. The Berlin airlift was under way. India had declared its independence from Britain. Mao Tse-tung and his fellow Communists were marching toward power in China. In such an atmosphere, getting governments to approve a declaration of their obligations to those they ruled seemed impossible.

On December 10, 1948, however, the impossible happened. Forty-eight governments voted for and no government voted against adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Soviet



**Members of the Mississippi Workers' Center march in Florida to protest human rights violations in the American South.**

bloc countries, Saudi Arabia and white-ruled South Africa abstained.

Many, perhaps most, governments believed that they had approved some pleasant words and pious hopes that would never be taken seriously. For a long time it looked like they were right. The declaration was supposed to be followed immediately by a treaty, a covenant, which would be not only morally but legally binding on governments that signed it. “Immediately” turned into more than 18 years, and when the task was finally completed, the cold war had split what was to have been one treaty into two, one on civil and political rights and one on economic, social and cultural rights. It would take another 10 years before enough governments ratified these two treaties to bring them into force.

Yet something strange if not miraculous happened along the way. Just when it looked like the declaration was headed for oblivion it was saved by an unexpected source—the people whose rights it proclaimed. Slowly but surely individuals from

all walks of life and all around the world started to demand that governments take these rights, their rights, seriously. Organizations like Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists were formed and their efforts grew into what the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. called the “human rights revolution.”

This nonviolent global movement demonstrated the power of human rights, chipping away at and then tearing down a metaphorical iron curtain and a very real Berlin wall, helping to end racial apartheid in South Africa and dictatorships throughout Africa, Asia and South America.

The United States has long championed human rights around the world. Through many administrations, it has made the promotion of human rights a key part of its foreign policy. It has frequently raised concerns about human rights in other countries.

Yet even before the Universal Declaration was adopted, there were those in the United States working to ensure that



COURTESY OF THE MISSISSIPPI WORKERS' CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

international human rights laws would never be used to challenge policies and practices here at home. That is not because government leaders did not appreciate the power of human rights to bring about social change. It is because they did. They were alarmed that human rights might be used to attack U.S. policies and practices, particularly those related to racial discrimination and segregation. There was also a fear it would be used to criticize the United States for the relative weakness of U.S. law to safeguard economic and social rights.

For some 40 years, the United States did not ratify a single human rights treaty. When some treaties, like the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, were finally ratified in the 1990's, it was on the explicit condition that, absent specific legislation, these treaties could not be enforced

in domestic courts.

Why does this matter? It matters because U.S. efforts to get countries to respect human rights are undermined by the refusal of the United States to accept human rights scrutiny from others. It matters because today any policy that weakens respect for human rights is not only wrong but dangerous.

Once again the world faces serious and multiple threats to peace and security. And this time, as we all have learned, the threat is everywhere, even at home. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, which killed nearly 3,000 people, shattered the illusion that the United States can isolate itself.

The main question is how to fight back. When such threats were faced on a far greater scale in the 1930's and 1940's, we responded militarily. It was understood, however, that while military force was absolutely necessary, it was not sufficient to ensure a lasting victory. What was needed was a larger idea, one that could capture not just what we were fighting against but also what we were fighting for, an idea around which the strongest and

broadest possible international alliance could be built.

It was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who gave words to this idea in a remarkable speech on January 6, 1941. The world we are fighting for, he declared, would be built on four fundamental freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, freedom from fear and freedom from want. These freedoms would be created not by Americans alone but through the cooperation of free coun-

**To follow the path of human rights means setting an example of how to fight crimes of terror without sacrificing respect for human dignity and freedom. It means building a truly global alliance and strengthening international institutions to uphold universal human rights values and laws that the world has already recognized as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace.**

tries working together. Freedom, he said, means "the supremacy of human rights everywhere." This was the idea, the vision, that seven years later was embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The threat we face today also requires multiple responses, including military ones. But each passing year has only reinforced the central and hardest-earned lesson of the past century—that no fight for freedom, or against terror, can be won if it does not seek to expand and strengthen human rights everywhere.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlines a path to both greater freedom and greater security. It is not a spineless option. Acts of terror are crimes against humanity; human rights law not only allows but requires governments to do all that is possible to prevent such acts and bring to justice those who commit them. But human rights law also serves as an invaluable check on our worse impulses to act in ways that blur the distinction between us and those we oppose, and thereby perpetuate the cycle of violence.

To follow the path of human rights means setting an example of how to fight crimes of terror without sacrificing respect for human dignity and freedom. It means building a truly global alliance and strengthening international institutions

to uphold universal human rights values and laws that the world has already recognized as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace.

When I first started working in the field of human rights nearly three decades ago, there were only a handful of organizations devoted to human rights. Almost all were located in Europe or North America. Today there are thousands of human rights groups working in virtually every region of the world and nearly every

country. This global human rights movement now includes Americans working to broaden the definition of human rights in the United States. Last year a new U.S. Human Rights Network was born. It is made up of more than 60 organizations—from Amnesty International to the Deaf and Deaf-Blind Committee on Human Rights based in Lorain, Ohio—all committed to holding our government accountable to the obligations outlined in the Universal Declaration.

But the question remains whether human rights can be the basis for inventing a different kind of world. I think they can. I don't think it will be easy, especially in a time of terror and fear. We are human, which means we are often ruled by our fears. But because we are human we are also capable of a vision that keeps us moving forward to something better.

The Universal Declaration offers such a vision. Amid the difficult discussions and discouraging moments of trying to draft the declaration, Eleanor Roosevelt often invoked her favorite prayer. It ends with this plea: "Save us from ourselves and show us a vision of a world made new." I think we have the vision. What we need to pray for now is the courage to follow it and the strength to fight for it. ■

# Creating Active Public Spaces

BY TOM BORRUP AND MIGUEL GARCIA

Using their own brand of discipline, creativity and tenacity, a new generation of American arts and cultural organizations are doing more than creating, teaching and exhibiting art. A growing body of research has begun to confirm that these community-based groups are also remaking towns and neighborhoods, revitalizing their economies and building community pride and participation.

“The Creative Engine,” a report by the Center for an Urban Future, found that arts and culture are primary components of New York City’s growth. The report specifically cited the city’s thousands of small organizations as well as major institutions.

In Chicago, Diane Grams and Michael Warr, in a report to two local foundations, concluded that small arts organizations contribute significantly to neighborhood stability by improving social relations and access to outside resources.

Among the arts groups we have found to be especially effective in strengthening communities economically and socially are Houston’s Project Row Houses, Asheville’s Handmade in America, North Adams’s Mass MOCA, Chicago’s Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum and Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis. In each one artists and local leaders have joined forces to build connections across economic and ethnic lines, melding community development with arts and culture.

“A small organization using an old church or a row house can have a larger impact than one that spends its energy building a shiny new theater or exhibition space,” says Mark J. Stern, Professor of Social Work and History at the University of Pennsylvania. Stern and Susan Seifert, a city planner, lead The Social Impact of the Arts Project. It has studied the effects of cultural organizations in four U.S. cities and is now conducting a longitudinal study of some 50 commu-

nity-based cultural groups in Philadelphia. “We learned that culture does have a powerful effect on neighborhood revitalization,” Stern says.

## Rebuilding Communities on History and Creativity

Founded and led by Rick Lowe, a visual artist, Project Row Houses is rebuilding a devastated African-American neighborhood in Houston’s Third Ward. Lowe’s raw material has been the history, culture and resilience of the people, and a block of narrow, run-down houses similar to ones that once housed slaves.

Since 1995 Project Row Houses has restored 22 houses on two blocks and has begun renovations on two adjacent blocks. Seven of the houses are now used as residences for single mothers who are completing their education. Eight are used for art exhibits, while others are meeting places for local residents to discuss such issues as gentrification, ethnicity and identity. The project is now restoring the El Dorado Ballroom, once a lively nightclub for jazz and blues, including homegrown talents like Lightnin’ Hopkins. The project is also working with local residents in a surrounding 35-block area to craft a master revitalization plan that will shape new investment to benefit low-income residents. Lowe believes that the degree to which a neighborhood arts organization can integrate itself into the community and become a part of the community-building process will determine its success.

In western North Carolina, HandMade in America, based in Asheville, is enhancing the area’s quality of life while broadening economic opportunities. Realizing the futility of recruiting yet another large



## Arts Centers Help Transform Communities.

manufacturer to be their economic salvation, HandMade’s leaders decided to turn to the enormous but usually invisible talents of craftspeople from the area’s small towns and back roads. Becky Anderson, HandMade’s director, is tapping the region’s long tradition of crafts, and is aiming to make western North Carolina a major center for handmade objects.

In the similarly picturesque mountains of northwestern Massachusetts, the vast mills of North Adams have long been abandoned, as owners moved to the South in search of cheaper labor. A year after the last mill closed in 1986, Joe Thompson, a lecturer at nearby Williams College and exhibit designer at the college’s Museum of Art, set out to develop a bold arts-based enterprise in the bountiful space of the abandoned mills. Thompson’s idea was to capitalize on the area’s proximity to both New York and Boston, the region’s reputation for seasonal music and dance festivals, and the expertise of Williams College.

The result, after a long struggle, is the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MOCA), which opened in 1999. It is not only the nation’s largest contemporary art museum, it has also restored North Adams’s self-esteem, encouraged tourism and revived the local economy. The downtown business district, 70 percent vacant when the museum opened, now boasts 70 percent occupancy.

## Practicing Civic Engagement

According to Prof. Stern, arts and cultural groups “increase the inclination and

**Tom Borrup** heads Community and Cultural Development, a consulting firm based in Minneapolis. **Miguel Garcia** is acting deputy director of the Ford Foundation’s Community and Resource Development unit.



**Efforts to mix the arts and economic development—as exemplified by Project Row Houses in Houston, left, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, center, and HandMade in America in Asheville, North Carolina—are proving to be a surprisingly effective way to rebuild communities and restore civic pride.**

ability of residents to make positive changes in their community, and increase the connections between neighborhoods of different ethnic and economic compositions.”

During the past decade, the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum on Chicago’s West Side vaulted from infancy to a substantial institution by galvanizing the traditions and aspirations of its largely immigrant neighborhood.

Carlos Tortolero, a former school-teacher and founding director of the museum, drew on the West Side community’s many talents, its good relations with the Chicago Park District, and its schools, artists and youth to build an institution his community is proud of. In 2003, more than 220,000 people visited the museum, half from surrounding neighborhoods. The museum’s main meeting room, one of the few public gathering places in the area, is used daily by a wide variety of community groups.

A youth-run radio station, Radio Arte, added in 1997, solidified connections with young people and gives them and the organization a voice in surrounding neighborhoods.

The museum has helped solidify the Mexican-American community but it is also building bridges across ethnic and geographic lines, bringing new economic and intellectual resources into the community. As the international and local mix of artists began attracting audiences from far and wide, the museum led the drive to launch the Pilsen/Little Village Information Center, a tourism and local business

council. Little Village is now the city’s second largest generator of sales tax, surpassed only by the upscale Magnificent Mile shopping district.

When Intermedia Arts transformed a south Minneapolis auto repair shop into an arts center in 1994, no one expected it to become one of the area’s most dynamic and important civic spaces. Its eclectic programming and multiple community uses have created a remarkable meeting place where corporate executives, politicians and area business owners routinely occupy the same space as graffiti artists, homeless teenagers and environmentalists.

The organization took an assertive role in neighborhood redevelopment beginning in the late 1990’s, engaging artists, the public and community leaders in planning for the neighborhood’s future. Working with the city’s fast-growing Latino, Asian and African immigrant

communities, Sandra Agustin, the center’s artistic director, makes sure all these voices are heard in discussions of such issues as gentrification and racism.

With support from Animating Democracy, a project of Americans for the Arts, based in Washington, D.C., the center commissioned artist-activists to engage neighborhood residents in the creation of sculptures, performances and murals. Through both the artwork and the process of making it, the people expressed their worries about gentrification and displacement. At the same time, they were building connections with neighbors and devising ways to stabilize and improve their neighborhoods.

The operating principle at Intermedia Arts, like that of the other groups, is that a museum can and should be a living laboratory for the collaborative talents of ordinary people, putting culture to work building community and revitalizing neighborhoods. ■

## You’ve Got To Have Art

In 2002 and 2003 the Ford Foundation supported the Downside Up Listening Tour Project, an effort to understand the convergence of art, culture, public space and community development. Coordinated by filmmaker Nancy Kelly and the Center for Independent Documentary, the project used Kelly’s documentary film “Downside Up,” about the inception and evolution of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, to explore these issues.

One outcome of the listening tour has been an initiative known as Shifting Sands Communities—Art, Culture and Neighborhood Change, which has brought together a dozen neighborhood-based arts and cultural institutions in mixed-income, mixed-race communities throughout the United States. They have begun to formulate strategies to deal with changing demographics and market forces that affect long-standing residents and new arrivals alike. Changes often result in tensions between different racial, ethnic and income groups, but they also offer opportunities for social integration and upward mobility for low-to moderate-income residents. Among the assertions being tested is that art and culture have a unique role to play in spurring neighborhood-based social and economic development. The Ford Foundation has granted funds to Partners for Livable Communities, a national research and training organization based in Washington, D.C., to manage the initiative.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: COURTESY OF PROJECT ROW HOUSES, HOUSTON; THIBAUT JEANSSON; COURTESY OF HANDMADE IN AMERICA

# River of Tears

Balancing the needs of people and development

In recent decades, many nations around the world have built large dams to meet the resource needs of growing populations and changing lifestyles. Yet these projects have often come at a steep price, with huge cost overruns, the loss of fragile ecosystems and the displacement of at least 40 million people. Moreover, few of these dams produce as much electricity or provide as much water as their promoters predicted.

In 1999 a global coalition of community groups, social movements and environmental organizations—known as the International Committee on Dams, Rivers and People—urged industry officials and the World Bank to take a closer look at such projects. The result was the World Commission on Dams, an independent body composed of engineers, industry officials, investors, policy makers, scholars and activists.

**A 70-year-old man surveys the site of his destroyed home in the Three Gorges area in China.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZHOU LIXIN/IMAGINECHINA

In a 400-page report released the next year, the commission assessed the impact of 125 large dams in 56 countries. It found that although these dams prevented some floods, they caused other floods to inflict more damage. The projects incurred an average cost overrun of 56 percent, and about half faced delays of one year or more. The commission advised that no dam be built without the consent of the people affected; that alternatives be given thorough consideration; and that reparations be made to displaced residents.

Today, with Ford Foundation support, the International Rivers Network, a founding member of the committee, is working to make these findings more widely known and advocating for policy changes at the international level. At the same time, it is helping committee member groups in Brazil, Lesotho, Thailand and elsewhere to establish successful models of community-based river development.

To learn more, visit [www.irn.org](http://www.irn.org).

—CHRISTOPHER REARDON





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# Contents

FFR Ford Foundation Report Spring 2004, Volume 35, No. 2

## Features

### 8 Lessons for Living

*Nigeria's youth are fighting AIDS by tackling a new national curriculum and teaching each other.*

*By Elizabeth Bryant*

### 16 In Transit

*It has taken more than a decade, but Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood is coming back to life in a big way.*

*By Elizabeth Blish Hughes*

### 22 Advocate for Aid

*Mary McClymont says global security depends on helping the world's struggling nations to prosper.*

*By Tara McKelvey*

### 26 Moment of Truth

*Peru's struggle to recover its moral memory is a remarkable first step in remaking the society.*

*By Arin Farrington*



**Relatives of victims of an infamous massacre in Uchuraccay, Peru, attend a hearing of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Page 26.**

## Departments

### 3 Front Lines

*A fearless AIDS activist, translating New York's ethnic media, a film revisits Brown v. Board of Education, and a new home for South Africa's Constitutional Court.*

### 32 Books

*Peru's pathbreaking human rights network.*

### 33 Radio

*Public Radio International's "The World."*

### 34 Theater

*Sarah Jones's "Bridge and Tunnel."*

### 35 Perspective

*The human rights document that changed the world.*

### 38 Essay

*Putting the arts to work in neighborhoods.*

### 40 Back Page

*The trouble with dams.*

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