



MY TRIP TO THE LAND OF GANDHI

A MEXICAN-AMERICAN'S JOURNEY TO THE LEGACY OF NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

Erik Olson Fernández

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wonderful wife, our cherished daughter and all those throughout history that realized the strength, wisdom, and power of love. Only it can transform the darkness in our world into a source of light for a brighter tomorrow.

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A Mexican-American's Journey to the Legacy of Nonviolent Resistance

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INTRODUCTION

POVERTY IN THE RICHEST NATION ON EARTH

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

~ Mohandas K. Gandhi

1973 was a year that was characterized by great division, prophetically marking the beginning of an era of American decline. The Vietnam War was coming to an inglorious end. The Cold War was raging on. The Watergate scandal shook the foundations of our government. The American Indian Movement reminded Americans of the country's ugly past. The Arab countries refused to sell oil to the U.S. because it supported Israel. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* case that education was not a fundamental right under the Constitution. The World Trade Center officially opened in New York City on the 5th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. And, on September 11th, the U.S. helped overthrow Chile's democratically elected president, Salvador Allende, and supported dictator General Augusto Pinochet as his replacement. It was in this context that there was a baby boy born on the margins—literally on the border—of U.S. society to an immigrant Mexican mother and an American father on February 12th, Abraham Lincoln's birthday. This was the mother's second son. Just a year and a half earlier, her first son

was born on the other side of the Rio Grande, today's equivalent of the Mason-Dixon line, in Ciudad Juarez.

Not many years later, when the youngest son nearly reached school age, his parents divorced. Not knowing what to do alone, the mother literally gave up everything she had and flew to a far away place in central Ohio with nothing but a few suitcases of clothes and her two sons in her arms. Upon her arrival in this new place, she was greeted with foreign ideas, strange customs, and by sometimes hostile people. Having no other way to provide for her children, she fell back on the only thing she had—her physical might (all 5'1" of it). She worked in hotels, factories, and restaurants, anywhere she could find a job. Due to the disrespect and humiliation she often endured on the job, she would tell her sons that she was literally giving her “blood, sweat, and tears” only so other people could become rich. Since she worked very hard, she remained hopeful that she too would eventually be recognized and rewarded with more job security and a dignified wage. Unfortunately, that day never came.

Often exhausted, facing uncertain futures about how to pay the rent or put food on the table, she sometimes would break down in tears. While cleaning filthy bathrooms, she would remember her sons. While being disrespected by her boss, she would remember her sons. While being overlooked on the job, she would remember her sons. While angry about not being given the necessary supplies to do her job well, she would remember her sons. Being forgiving, she was willing to accept some of these little forms of disrespect with dignity. However, on issues of great importance, she was never one to remain quiet.

Suddenly, a fateful day came. After she and a few friends had worked at a factory for several years, they reached the oh-so-“high” end of the salary scale—slightly more than \$8 an hour. One by one, the factory owners strategically demoted the women to lower paid positions doing essentially the same work. The mother spoke out. Having no union, no “just cause” protections, it wasn't long before she was fired “at-will.” The son came home from school only to see his mother distressed and in tears again. What was she to do? How would she push on? Where would she find work?

Through sheer persistence and determination, she scraped and scratched and eventually found another low-wage, high-exploitation job in order to provide for her family. Through the years, her sacrifices not only provided the material basics of food, clothes, and shelter but they also provided the spiritual needs of hope and inspiration for her two sons. Eventually, this hope was born out by the fact that both her sons graduated from high school and college even when most of the other children in the neighborhood did not. In fact, the young son continued onto law school and upon his

graduation he gave his mother a gift: a gift from the heart, a poem he adapted from something he read along his journey. The anonymous poem is entitled, “A Letter from Mom to Bring that College Home.” It is written as if his mother were writing him a letter to bring that education back home.

*I've been sending you to college now for six or seven years,
Since that morning that you left me, I've been shedding bitter tears.
But I thought of that old saying, “sunshine comes behind the storm,”
So my young son, when you finish, you just bring that college home.*

*I've been scrubbin' floors, I've been sweating on this stinking job,
Many times I had to worry, and often had to pray to God.
But I hold on to my patience, beat them soap suds into foam,
All the time, my heart was saying he's gonna bring that college home.*

*I don't mean bring home the buildings or to wreck those good folks place,
Bring home real education and the high tone of the Creator's grace.
You just grab them learning habits, hold them tight through wind and storm.
Then when you get your diploma, take them all and create a home.*

*But don't get above the people, settle down, and cease to roam,
Be a light in your village, and like Jesus, be a college for those without a
home.*

Thank you, Lord! My son has brought that college home.

At this point, the mother could rest: she knew her sacrifices were not in vain. However, the son was still tormented by his early childhood experiences of growing up poor and Latino in the United States and by the fact that under America's social structure he had simply exchanged poverty for debt—shackling student loan debt of \$90,000. He knew that millions of children were still chained in poverty and millions more were in families who were not free but in the bondage of debt. Years earlier, the son had begun to look for a way to make his daily school pledge of “liberty and justice for all” real. Almost accidentally but probably through divine purpose, the U.S. Department of Agriculture poster in his elementary school cafeteria with the Statue of Liberty and the words “AND JUSTICE FOR ALL” would remain forever in his heart and mind.

His early experiences eventually led him on a journey to systematically study the writings and work of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In 1959, after the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott, Dr. King wrote an important article in *Ebony* magazine about his journey to India to study the work and life of Gandhi and the Indian freedom struggle and how to apply those lessons back home to redeem America's democracy. The article was entitled "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi." In the article, King states, "I left India more convinced than ever before that nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom." This book is about this young son's metaphoric trip to the land of Gandhi and how this journey helped him confront the great issues of today with the majestic legacy of nonviolence resistance. The first item on the agenda was the \$90,000 in student loan debt that was handed to him along with his law school degree.

CHAPTER 1

POVERTY FOR DEBT

*“Today they say that we are free,
Only to be chained in poverty.
Good God, I think it's illiteracy;
It's only a machine that makes money.”*

~ Bob Marley lyrics from “Slave Driver”

In early May 2000, I graduated from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, Massachusetts. Sadly, like so many other young people these days, I had to borrow money from a bank to pay for my education or I would never have been able to go to college or law school. My family simply did not have the money.

Throughout my years in school, I remember reading and collecting many newspaper and magazine articles discussing the rapidly rising cost of college education. Yet, I knew I had no other option except to borrow and finish my education if I wanted to be free (“released” or “satisfied” in debtor terms). In 1995, after finishing college at Miami University, an affordable so-called public ivy in Oxford, Ohio near the Indiana border, I already had around \$22,000 in debt. Keep in mind that while I was at Miami, I received the maximum amount in Pell grants each year. On top of taking a full load of classes each semester, I had a job as a student worker for ten hours a week, worked in the summers, and focused on finishing school in exactly four years to reduce the costs. Additionally, prior to law school, I participated in three national service programs, AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), AmeriCorps*National Civilian

Community Corps (NCCC), and City Year. Two of these domestic Peace Corps programs provided an educational award at the end of my service, which amounted to over \$6,000. I used these educational awards to pay a portion of my student loan debt from Miami University. Additionally, it must be said that while working as a Team Leader for City Year, I made about \$10 an hour, drove a car named “In the Spirit of Gandhi” that I bought for \$400, lived at my aunt’s house, and literally slept on the floor so I could pay down my student loan debt during that year. Furthermore, I decided to attend Northeastern partially because they gave me a \$30,000 scholarship and had a public interest focus. Despite all of this, in the end, I had a loan the size of a nice house in my Ohio hometown only without the house and the economic necessity to still pay for housing on top of my student loans.

As the months passed in law school at Northeastern, I began to think more about my financial situation and about those who grew up in similar circumstances. I was searching for a way out. Initially, I must admit that I briefly thought I would just simply not repay the student loans. I was angry. Then, moments later, I came to my senses and realized that this would not address my concern and commitment to helping others who grew up in poverty, those who are denied their human right to a quality public education, or those who were trapped in student loan debt. I wanted to change the unjust social structure while simultaneously addressing my situation in a constructive manner.

My upbringing had taught me that education was not something to be used simply to get a good job for myself. It was not an individual endeavor. Education by its very nature was something that must be shared and used to uplift humanity.

In my own studies, often on my own time at the public library, I had learned that in order to understand America one must first understand the black and indigenous people’s experience. Thus, I began to see my experience with poverty and debt in that tradition. I started to think of people like Harriet Tubman, an escaped slave (America’s original cheap laborers) who helped others to freedom through the Underground Railroad. She was fortunate enough to escape an oppressive social structure but she did not rest upon her freedom. She returned to help those still trapped in the oppressive system. This is how I analogized my situation. I wanted to be a Harriet Tubman, a Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave who would say, “Slaveholders have no rights more than any other thief.” So, I began to do research into my loans, the banks I borrowed from, the entire educational system, the CEOs of the banks, and students’ options for bankruptcy.

Having grown up poor in the richest country in the world, I essentially knew what I would find—that the social structure was skewed. Nevertheless, in the end, I learned, for example, that:

- Terrance Murray, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Fleet Boston Financial, where I borrowed money from, “earned” a salary of \$38,174,832 in the year I graduated (2000) and had another \$23,206,900 in stock options;
- The NAACP Economic Reciprocity Initiative, which grades corporations on contributions to those in need, gave Fleet Boston a “D” for a lack of community outreach, especially in communities of color;
- More than 12 million children in the U.S. were living in poverty (this number is low given that the formula for determining poverty is outdated, poor people are difficult to count, etc.);
- The former President of Tanzania, a heavily indebted poor African country, once asked the same question I was forced to ask: “Should we really let our children starve so that we can pay our debts?”
- Student loans could not be discharged like other debt (yet corporations who are considered people under the law often file bankruptcy to avoid paying debt); and
- The federal government was the “guarantor” on these loans.

So, in other words, the federal government as the “guarantor” was guaranteeing that these banks (corporations) would get their money and interest and that the CEOs of these banks would receive their exorbitant salaries. The questions I was asking were, “Who was the guarantor of children’s human right to quality public education? Who was going to guarantee that children would receive their human right to education without which the promise of equal opportunity and democracy is but a cruel dream?”

By this time, I was well read in social movements and key leaders, especially Dr. King. I had noticed that in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech there was a curious beginning that rarely, if ever, got highlighted. It read:

In a sense we have come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has

defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

When I reread this passage during this timeframe, it resonated immediately. When I recounted the speech in my mind, I simply replaced “Negro” with “poor” and it became even more relevant. Soon, I had a plan of action spurred by these words. America was not living up to its promissory note to its people and thus, my smaller, secondary, and derivative promissory notes with the banks were invalid and unenforceable. A bank or any corporation cannot exist without the government first recognizing its corporate charter or constitution. Thus, if the larger social contract is being violated then how can the smaller, derivative contracts with a bank and an individual be valid? Thus, I would decide to compensate for the failure of the government to be the guarantor of children’s human rights by redirecting my student loan payments from the banks to the nation’s and the world’s most vulnerable children. I would call this an “invest-in,” after the 1960 sit-ins by African-American students in the South. They, too, were saying that America’s social contract was not being upheld and thus would not abide by the laws of legal segregation.

So, on February 1, 2001, the 41st anniversary of the sit-ins, I launched the “Invest-In Project” by sending the banks a letter describing that I would not be paying them but would instead redirect the repayment of my student loans to UNICEF and a South Bronx organization called Youth Force. The funds would be divided equally between the two organizations. I easily decided upon UNICEF because it symbolized our now interconnected, global society and it is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a human rights treaty ratified by every country in the world except the United States, Somalia (which does not have a recognized government to sign the treaty) and South Sudan (the world’s youngest nation). Dr. King would often say “before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you’ve depended on more than half the world.” Giving to UNICEF would recognize this truth. Additionally, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has an important provision: Article 4, that says countries “shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. Concern-

ing economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources[...]" In other words, the treaty says that the country's resources should not go to excessively rich bank CEOs when children are hungry and denied an education. UNICEF gladly accepted my funds and quickly placed me on their special high contributor list with occasional invitations to special fundraising events. Finding a domestic organization would prove much more difficult.

During this timeframe, I had read a book by a well-known author of the crisis in public education in America. The book discussed the children and schools in the South Bronx, New York, the poorest congressional district in the United States. At the end of the book, it suggested giving to a church in the South Bronx that was referenced as an organization seeking to address these injustices. It had quoted and gave the contact information of the pastor of the church. So, I initially contacted the pastor by phone. When I spoke to her, she was unwilling to receive these funds. Quite frankly, I was baffled by this reluctance. So, I sent the pastor the following letter hoping to have her reconsider:

Dear Reverend,

As we spoke on the phone yesterday, I sensed your reluctance to commit to work together on the justice project I proposed and thought I might share my reasons for committing to the project despite the obvious pain and suffering it will bring to me personally and probably to those who will assist me in implementing it. Your comment that we "must be careful of financial scrutiny, particularly on the left" forced me to reflect on the first reason I chose this path. I believe we are commanded by the Creator to live according to a higher law than what is often consistent with social law and social respectability in this world. This is why the Apostle Paul counseled us to "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your spirit." For me, to conform to a system (world) that I know inflicts violence of all sorts on the children of the Creator is a sin of commission and cooperation. Thus, in deciding whether to conform by paying back my student loans or to be a transformed nonconformist by redirecting my student loan money to the children of the "Israelites," I had to ask myself, "Whom do I serve?" On deciding that I had no choice but to serve the Creator and His children, I was now compelled to deal with questions of a more worldly nature, such as "What will be the consequences of my actions?"

After literally three lonely and agonizing years spent debating this issue, this question finally brought me firmly to the face of God as I was being truly tested on my faith. I was forced to ask several significant questions about my faith. Was I willing to bear the cross, as Jesus did, so that others may one day wear the crown? Did I truly believe that unearned suffering is redemptive, as proven by Good Friday and Easter, or was that just a philosophical notion I had that was removed from ordinary life? Obviously, my ultimate decision to redirect my student loan money provides the answer to these questions, but I would like to state that my faith and conviction is now more real than life itself. Thus, as I go into this long and frightful journey into the darkness, I do not fear the worldly consequences of my actions as I know the Creator will take His children, including me as His servant, to the light of the Promised Land.

*In Struggle for Righteousness,
Erik Olson Fernández*

Unfortunately, she did not reconsider. I never heard from her again.

So, I began to look for other organizations in the South Bronx that would appreciate what I was doing and accept the funds. Eventually, I found Youth Force, an organization “created to school young people to the fact that we are not powerless, we should be seen AND heard, and we have the ability and the right to act for change. We are committed to giving ourselves and other youth the skills and opportunities we need and deserve to participate in the running of our schools, neighborhoods, and city.” They had no problem accepting the Invest-In Project funds. This acceptance was probably because they were a bold youth-led organization that was not cautious. The Executive Director of Youth Force, Shirley Webster, told a newspaper later that she was impressed with my philosophy and had no qualms about accepting the money. The title of the January 22, 2003 *San Diego City Beat* article was “Modern-day Robin Hood.” Webster was quoted as saying, “We realized that he is fighting for people’s justice just as we were[...] He just goes about it a different way.” Webster continued to say that she herself was repaying graduate loans and wished she had the guts to do what I was doing. Joy Taylor, who was head of Youth Force’s funds committee, told the newspaper that the money went to fund a summer youth employment program at a time when the state had cut funding for that program. During the first two years of the Invest-In Project, I redirected a total of \$12,000, an average of \$500 a month, to these organizations focused on children living in poverty and, through my words and

actions, raised important questions. The aforementioned article quoted me as saying, “The federal government is ultimately the guarantor on my loans, the question I’m posing is, who is the guarantor for all these children’s lives? What I’m trying to get at is property rights versus human rights[...] Ultimately, America’s going to have to solve that question if it’s going to save itself.” For the full article click here:

<http://www.sdcitybeat.com/sandiego/article-384-modern-day-robin-hood.html>).

Of course, the banks and their collectors had some major problems with my invest-in. They would call me regularly to harass and threaten me. Over time, they would become increasingly hostile in their tactics, even calling me “a coward.” Unfortunately, today, far too many Americans can relate to these experiences of belligerent bill collectors. These hired guns for the banks would respond by saying that I signed a promissory note saying I would repay the funds. I would counter by referencing the letter that I sent them, which contained the arguments I have laid out here including Dr. King’s speech excerpt, and reminding them that I was willing to accept the consequences of my actions. This often baffled them and usually pulled the rug out from underneath their threats. It was certainly never boring talking to these bill collectors, hired by the banks to do their dirty work. The irony is that these workers probably were in debt themselves, very likely were being paid very little, denied affordable health care, sick leave and more. These conversations with these workers would, among other things, make me think of Woody Guthrie’s lyrics to the song Pretty Boy Floyd, written during the Depression:

*Well, you say that I’m an outlaw,
You say that I’m a thief.
Here’s a Christmas dinner
For the families on relief.*

*Yes, as through this world I’ve wandered
I’ve seen lots of funny men;
Some will rob you with a six-gun,
And some with a fountain pen.*

*And as through your life you travel,
Yes, as through your life you roam,
You won’t never see an outlaw
Drive a family from their home.*

On the lyric sheet for this song, Guthrie wrote a notation that read, “I love a good man outside the law, just as much as I hate a bad man inside the law.” The American social structure, though legal, made it necessary for good men to be outside the law. Gandhi and Dr. King made these same arguments in the 20th century and are good examples of good men who were often outside the law.

For years, I faithfully continued with my invest-in and sought to be a good man outside the law giving thousands of dollars each year to the most vulnerable children in America and around the world. My student loan payments were redirected every month to UNICEF and Youth Force, and later to Stand Up for Kids, an organization whose mission “is to end the cycle of youth homelessness throughout the United States,” when Youth Force could no longer sustain itself. It was obvious that my invest-in could not go on as it had forever. I knew things would escalate and I had to be prepared.

Soon, the government had given permission to these banks, through a court order, to consider my loans in default and to allow for the garnishment of my wages. Needless to say, my credit had long been destroyed but I was living very simply and, thus, had no need for it. At the time, I was working at a union for public school workers in California and they were ordered to garnish a significant percentage of my wages. I had expected this so I immediately asked my employer for a W-4 form to adjust my withholdings so almost no taxes would be taken out of my check. The government, as the guarantor of these loans, was guaranteeing by force that these banks and their rich CEOs with exorbitant salaries got their money and, by extension, that I could no longer give to the most vulnerable children in the society. So, I decided to claim the 12 million poor children in the U.S. as my dependents on my taxes so I could continue to compensate for the government’s failure to provide these children with their basic human rights. When my employer received my W-4 form, they clearly were alarmed by the number and informed me that they would have to inform the IRS since it was required by law to inform them of anything over a ten allowances. I told my employer that the number was not a mistake and that I had no problem with them informing the IRS. In fact, when it was time to file my taxes, I submitted a letter to the IRS explaining my actions.

Dear Friend,

Unfortunately, I have been left with no option but to choose an advanced form of payment, consistent with the principles of nonviolence, for my federal taxes. Instead of paying these taxes to a federal government that has neglected its responsibilities and that has become an accomplice in robbing people of their inherent human rights, I will redirect these taxes to those whom it has dispossessed. In effect, I will be compensating for the government's failure to live up to its own sacred obligation. The federal government has clearly failed in its role of being the guarantor of people's inalienable human rights as captured and codified in the U.S. Declaration of Independence[...] Today, I am invoking the right "to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government." Until the government seeks to become the guarantor of all people's inherent human rights, especially those who are most vulnerable, I cannot and will not cooperate with this unjust form of government. The current unjust tax structure is a significant part of this unjust social structure. In his book Perfectly Legal: The Covert Campaign to Rig Our Tax System to Benefit the Super Rich and Cheat Everyone Else, David Cay Johnston recently stated what we already know intuitively: that we are all cooperating with an unjust tax system when we pay our taxes in the conventional form.

I continued with this plan of action for some time. However, I knew this too would not go on for very long without the IRS responding. In 2003, the IRS also began garnishing my wages and seizing my tax refunds. This was in addition to the banks garnishment. Again, I was prepared.

Since I was raising the issue of human rights, in particular of children, versus property rights of banks, as well as the failure of the U.S. government to protect those human rights, I filed a formal, legal petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) against the U.S. government. I did this because in the years after the atrocities of World War II and the Great Depression, the U.S., under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, played a critical role in the creation of international human rights and the legal system to defend them. Yet, very soon, the U.S. failed to respect many of the human rights norms it helped create. To date, the U.S. has refused to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (as mentioned previously); the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (only seven other countries have not ratified); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (which is one of two treaties that make up the International Bill of Human Rights); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Rome Statute

of the International Criminal Court; only two of the International Labor Organization's eight fundamental conventions; and the American Convention on Human Rights, a regional framework on human rights in the Americas. However, in April 1948, prior to the signing of the more famous Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December of that same year and to the U.S. getting cold feet on formally acknowledging human rights, the U.S. signed the American Declaration on the Duties and Rights of Man in Bogotá, Colombia. This treaty, along with a charter, created the Organization of American States (OAS), of which the IACHR is a part. The signing of the American Declaration on the Duties and Rights of Man is what allows individuals to file formal, legal petitions against the U.S using the IACHR. So, this is what I did.

In 2004, I sent the IACHR my petition, tax forms, tax funds, and an additional \$500 dollars. In one of my letters to the IACHR, I wrote the following:

[...] force is still being used while the United States of America fails to even acknowledge our economic and social human rights saying they are merely “aspirational.” Unfortunately, because of the failure to recognize our rights, I am left with no other recourse but to also consider my U.S. federal taxes as “aspirational.” And, please know that I do aspire to pay them to the federal government, as my extra \$500 in taxes last year reveals, but only after they recognize me and others as fully endowed human beings with all our inherent human rights—economic, social, cultural, civil, and political. Until that day, however, I will sign, with the ink of my own dignity and personhood, my own Declaration of Independence by redirecting my federal taxes to those most vulnerable in our society. Currently, the U.S. government considers our inherent human rights as mere “property rights,” commodities, to be bought and sold on the “free” market.

Unfortunately, America's government and wealthy financial institutions do not appreciate the claiming of my human right to a quality education through this “advanced form of repayment.” These financial institutions and their conspirators have now begun to garnish my wages with full governmental sanction. The federal government is ultimately the guarantor on these student loans, meaning that if I or anyone else defaults on these loans the federal government guarantees that these wealthy corporate financial institutions and their rich CEOs receive “their” money (property rights). However, the real question I am raising through this principled action is: Who is guaranteeing

that we, the People, receive our inherent human rights, including the human right to a quality education?”

Since the federal government has failed to be the guarantor of our inherent human rights and allowed these financial institutions to garnish my wages, in April of 2004, I began an “advanced form of repayment” of my federal taxes, as well as my student loans. The Internal Revenue Service of the U.S. government responded by “levying” (seizing) my wages in late 2004. Therefore, I have now decided to send this year’s federal taxes to the IACHR until it decides which party to this petition is acting unjustly. It is requested that the IACHR, as a neutral party, hold this money until a decision is made to resolve this conflict. Knowing that the IACHR is financially strained, the enclosed check of \$3,566 (2004 taxes of \$8518 minus garnished 2003 taxes of \$4,952) may be used by the IACHR to uphold human rights in the Americas until a decision is rendered. In reviewing this petition, please consider that recent attempts by members of the Invest-In Project to claim the inherent human rights of the people to health care, housing, education, an adequate standard of living, food, and a just social order from the City of San Diego have resulted in arrest by the authorities.

After a few months, the IACHR, whose headquarters are ironically in Washington, D.C., sent me a letter essentially saying they could not process my petition nor take action, and returned my check to me. Not surprisingly, years later, in 2013, a majority of the OAS nation-states asked that the IACHR headquarters be moved outside of the U.S. given that the U.S. has not even signed the other foundational treaties of the OAS. However, at this point, I had taken this issue as far as I could, trying to reveal the deep contradictions in America’s human rights record and children’s plight in the richest nation on Earth.

Since the beginning of the Invest-In Project, I had reached out to others to urge them to participate in this kind of action. It was difficult as this was in the early 2000s, before the recession of 2008, when most Americans were all about bigger cars, bigger houses, bigger greed, and bigger glamour. No one else would participate. Recently, I read a story that may be relevant. In the book *Struggling for Recognition: The Psychological Impetus for Democratic Progress* by Doron Shultziner, there is a chapter entitled “Recognition and Humiliation: The Origins of Mass Mobilization in the Montgomery Bus Boycott” which I think might help illustrate my point. One section of the chapter explores why the boycott took place in Montgomery and in 1955 instead of some-

where else and in another year. It also highlights an often untold story in 1943 by saying:

This generation was characterized by overall obedience, passivity, and often complacency. For example, Rosa Parks did not receive much sympathy in 1943 when she had her first incident on a bus in Montgomery with the same bus driver who would have her arrested twelve years later. Parks paid her fare in the front and then went straight to the back instead of getting off the bus and re-boarding it from the back as was the rule. The driver, James F. Blake, aggressively made her get off the bus. But as she left the bus, Parks overheard [black] people saying “She ought to go around the back and get on”; and she also recounts that the pressure for social conformity at the time was strong: “They always wondered why you didn’t want to be like the rest of the black people. That was the 1940s, when people took a lot without fighting back.”

I do not know for certain, but maybe the early 2000s were similar to the early 1940s.

Nevertheless, despite not “winning” on the issue and the full force of the IRS and the banks, I was doing absolutely fine, always with enough to eat, and not lacking anything meaningful. More importantly, I developed important traits necessary for non-violent action and a meaningful life—courage, faith, and strength of my convictions. In the 1940s and early 1950s, before the Montgomery Bus Boycott, several key leaders from the African-American community who had studied Gandhi, like Bayard Rustin and Rev. James Lawson, had acted as pioneers by individually participating in often overlooked, seemingly unimportant nonviolent actions like sit-ins and draft/war resistance. Both Rustin and Lawson were conscientious objectors but they did not stop the wars they opposed. Yet, they helped set the stage for the nonviolent freedom movement that took the nation by storm in the 1960s. Like them, all I could do was follow my convictions and hope to plant seeds for the future.

Today, much potential power lies in the fact that the banks and financial corporations are dependent on the “99%” paying their massive debt. Their greed has become a potential weakness if we can organize ourselves. Regarding student loans alone, more than 39 million Americans now owe student loan debt for a total of \$1.1 trillion according to *The Nation* magazine in 2013. *Forbes* magazine, in a February 26, 2014 article entitled “Student Loans Are Ruining Your Life. Now They’re Ruining the Economy, Too” reported the following:

American students are well over \$1 trillion in debt, and it's starting to hurt everyone, economists say[...]Across the country, students are taking on increasingly large amounts of debt to pay for heftier education tuitions. Figures released last week by the Federal Reserve of New York show that aggregate student loans nationwide have continued to rise. At the end of 2003, American students and graduates owed just \$253 billion in aggregate debt; by the end of 2013, American students' debt had ballooned to a total of \$1.08 trillion, an increase of over 300%. In the past year alone, aggregate student debt grew 10%. By comparison, overall debt grew just 43% in the last decade and 1.6% over the past year. According to a December study by the Institute for College Access and Success, seven out of 10 students in the class of 2012 graduated with student loans, and the average amount of debt among students who owed was \$29,400. There's no clear end in sight.

This unjust system must change and growing up poor in America I knew this much sooner than most since the poor are always the canaries in the mines.

In 2009, after the great recession caused by Wall Street greed and gambling, SunTrust Bank received \$5 billion in federal bailout funds from taxpayers. The name SunTrust was familiar to me as it was one of the banks to whom I “owed” more than \$63,000 for my student loan debt. It is a bank originally out of Atlanta and co-founded by Alabama-born Joel Hurt Jr. In March of 2008, the year of the economic collapse, Douglas Blackmon of the *Wall Street Journal*, wrote what would become a Pulitzer Prize winning book entitled *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. In the book, Blackmon shares the untold story of how legal and commercial forces joined together to create a “neo-slavery” system through forced labor of arbitrarily imprisoned African-Americans through a convict lease arrangement. Blackmon began this effort by first writing a newspaper story on how black convict labor was used in the coal mines of U.S. Steel. After extensive research, he argued in the book that slavery did not end with the Emancipation Proclamation but existed up to mid-1940s when Germany’s discriminatory actions finally made this practice unbearable in the U.S. Blackmon also described how Joel Hurt, Jr., co-founder of what would become SunTrust bank, made much of his wealth through the profitable and brutal use of convict labor neo-slavery. Today, we are dealing with another adaptation of this “machine that makes money” for a few at the expense of the many by having a generation of students who receive a

“neo-slaves” education or graduate with massive loan debt before they even begin working. Either way, they are not free people.

CHAPTER 3

STUDENT DEBT AND ORGANIZING WE, THE PEOPLE

“We have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights, an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society. We have been in a reform movement[...] But after Selma and the voting rights bill, we moved into a new era, which must be the era of revolution. We must recognize that we can’t solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power[...] this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together[...] you can’t really get rid of one without getting rid of the others[...] the whole structure of American life must be changed. America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order.”

~ Rev. Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., To Chart the Course of Our Future, May 22, 1967

By the time I finished law school, I had traveled most of the country as I drove to and from my university internships and participated in domestic Peace Corps programs like AmeriCorps*NCCC doing projects across the western United States. At the age of twenty-seven, I had my own experience of poverty in America but I also had witnessed poverty across the United States among all kinds of people (Native Americans, Latinos, blacks, Asians, and whites) and in many geographic regions of the country (urban, rural, reservations, midwest, south, west, northeast). I had seen schools that look more like prisons with barbed-wire fencing, metal detectors, and security guards. I had seen hungry children at school eat leftover scraps like they have not

eaten in weeks. I had read children's written pleas for a violence-free community so that they did not have to be "afraid of being shot." I had done presentations at schools knowing that, statistically, half of the students I was speaking to would not graduate. I had worked with high school graduates who could not write full sentences. I had seen children be absent from school because they did not have access to health care. I had seen far too many children live with their grandmothers because economic and social forces had destroyed their immediate family. Given my experience, I certainly knew charity was not going to fundamentally change these things in our society. Besides, I went to law school seeking justice, not charity, for all.

I knew America was not a "perfect union" and would have to be restructured or "reborn" as Dr. King would say analogizing America to Nicodemus in his final days. I also knew that fighting within the legal system, as an attorney, for example, was not going to fundamentally change things in our society. Laws are not written for or by working people and are generally a *reaction* to societal norms not *creators* of societal norms and structures. I wanted to be a part of shaping America's rebirth. During law school, I had read an important article as part of my Poverty Law Clinic that reflected my thinking. The article was written by Luke W. Cole, an attorney with the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, in *Ecology Law Quarterly* and was entitled "Empowerment as the Key to Environmental Protection: The Need for Environmental Poverty Law." Cole captured my experience and thoughts. While it speaks to environmental law, I believe it is representative of the entire legal system as it relates to poverty and how it prioritizes profits over people:

These laws created complex administrative processes that exclude most people who do not have training in the field and elevate the expert to glory[...] Lawsuits are now the primary, and sometimes only, strategy employed by mainstream groups[...] traditional environmental lawyering has failed low-income communities[...] poor or working people, many are people of color[...] grassroots activists come to view pollution as the success of government and industry, success at industry's primary objective: maximizing profits by externalizing environmental costs[...] The result of the laws is unequivocal: poor people and people of color bear a disproportionate share of the environmental burdens. And while we may decry the outcome, environmental laws are working as designed. Such a disproportionate burden is legal under U.S. environmental laws[...]

Rejecting a Legal Answer to a Political Problem[...] poor people and people of color have less access to the legal system than wealthier white people. Poor people and people of color also have a deeper skepticism about the law's potential, because in the United States the law has historically been used to systematically oppress people of color and poor people: the law has stripped people of their land, denied them their right to vote, and rejected their very personhood. Thus, poor people and people of color generally do not trust the law, even when they use its institutions. They understand both the need to use the law and that the system is stacked against them. "You do what you can with whatever you've got when you're in a fight," writes Gerald Lopez, "the more desperate the struggle, the more willing you are to try anything—even the law." People of color have long experience with the "dissonance of combining deep criticism of law with an aspirational vision of law," a dual or multiple consciousness which allows survival despite oppression. Poor people and people of color also understand that most problems faced by their communities are not legal problems, but political and economic ones. Even if the law is "on their side," unless poor people have political or economic power as well, they are not likely to prevail. Given this experience, poor people understand that environmental hazards are not legal problems: someone in the government has decided to allow a company to dump in their neighborhood, or to pollute the air. Thus, a political tool is required to change that decision: a community-based movement to bring pressure on the person or agency making the decision.

Using a legal strategy, rather than a political one, would likely fail these communities: a legal victory does not change the political and economic power relations in the community that led to the environmental threat in the first place[...]. traditional law practice of serving individual clients can actually disempower people and hinder the organizing efforts necessary to wage a successful struggle[...]. First, even if plaintiffs win in court, they may not be organized enough to take advantage of, or enforce, that victory[...]. Second, winning an easy victory may remove an important organizing tool from the community, making it more difficult to build and sustain a lasting community power base[...]. Third, the traditional style of lawyering, where there is no attempt to build a community group, but only to represent individual clients, may hurt "poor people by isolating them from each other." [...] Finally, to the extent that the "law serves largely to legitimize the existing social structure and, especially class relationships within that structure," the use of the law itself may

deter one's clients from thinking of or implementing more far-reaching remedies. Working "within the system" will most often strengthen, rather than challenge, the institutions which work daily against poor people.

Captured in Harry Belafonte's book *My Song: A Memoir*, Dr. King, in the final months of his life would summarize these same thoughts on the workings of the American system to a small group of close friends by saying:

It's the system that's the problem, and it's choking the breath out of our lives[...] The trouble is that we live in a failed system. Capitalism does not permit an even flow of economic resources. With this system, a small privileged few are rich beyond conscience and almost all others are doomed to be poor at some level. That's the way the system works. And since we know that the system will not change the rules, we're going to have to change the system. We fought hard and long, and I have never doubted that we would prevail in this struggle. Already, our rewards have begun to reveal themselves. Desegregation[...] the Voting Rights Act[...]]But what deeply troubles me now is that for all the steps we've taken toward integration, I've come to believe that we are integrating into a burning house.

Dr. King's final years were spent seeking to attack structural inequality and poverty in America. Unfortunately, today, poverty is an excellent example of his analogy of "integrating into a burning house." Why integrate into a society that impoverishes almost the entire society materially and/or spiritually? Why seek an integrated lunch counter if you do not have the money to buy lunch? Or, as another example, why integrate into a criminally, underfunded public school system? Why integrate into a society that is literally burning the planet? Or, finally, why vote in a society where the ballot has no one to vote for except candidates of the rich, for the rich, and by the rich? A sad testimony to how little we have truly honored Dr. King's work and message is found by looking at the 2010 child poverty rates in the cities where he led nonviolent campaigns:

CAMPAIGN CITY	YEAR	2010 CHILD POVERTY RATE
Montgomery, AL	1955	33%
Albany, GA	1962	55.4%
Birmingham, AL	1963	49.5%
St. Augustine, FL	1964	20.7%
Selma, AL	1965	67.9%
Chicago, IL	1966	33.2%
Cleveland, OH	1967	52.6%
Memphis, TN	1968	39.6%
Washington, DC	1968	30.4%

Given my experience, I intuitively knew these numbers were not good without re-searching them. By the time I finished law school, I had long come to the conclusion that only a democratic movement of organized people could challenge “organized money” and redeem the soul of our sacred democracy.

Thus, during the beginning of my first year in law school in Boston, I had already decided I wanted to be a community organizer, an organizer of “We, the People.” So, I reached out to Ernesto Cortes from the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), who happened to be teaching a community organizing course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The IAF was started by Saul Alinsky, who is often considered the founder of modern community organizing and who launched a long line of now well known organizers, like Fred Ross, Cesar Chavez, as well as spin-off national community organizing networks, such as the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO), Gammaliel Foundation, and Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART). Cortes had become famous for his faith-based community organizing work with Latinos in the 1970s in San Antonio, Texas with an IAF affiliate named Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS). A book about his work, entitled *Cold Anger*, had been written by Mary Beth Rogers, which I had read by this time. I reached out to Mr. Cortes and asked him if he would consider me for an internship with the IAF.

Northeastern University School of Law requires its students to do four internships, which they call cooperatives, prior to graduation as a part of their official curriculum. I purposely sought to do my first internship with the IAF to gain more experience in community organizing. In traditional IAF fashion, in the first meeting and thereafter, Cortes was coy and intentionally standoffish, purposely pushing back with

questions to see if I was “serious and committed.” At the end of our first meeting, he eventually agreed to consider me as a potential candidate for an internship but I would have to agree to regular assignments of reading books, articles, as well as written reports on those readings, and anything else he deemed necessary. This was my first year of law school so I can assure you that I had plenty of required reading already. Nevertheless, I truly wanted to learn more about organizing so I easily agreed. One assignment that I recall was to read the book *Wickedness* by Mary Midgley and write a reflection paper. Below is an excerpt from my report on the book, which gives a sense of the assignments Mr. Cortes gave me and of my thinking at the time.

[...] This effort to avoid fear is what Midgley calls ‘deliberate blindness.’ Deliberate blindness is the root of many of our society’s problems (wickedness). It creates a kind of institutional evil by “a steady refusal to attend to both the consequences of one’s action and the principles involved.” These critical comments fall on deaf ears because America is too proud. In 1951, the great Mexican poet Octavio Paz wrote:

The Revolutionary is always radical, that is, he is trying to correct the uses themselves rather than the mere abuses of them. Almost all the criticisms I heard from the lips of North Americans were of the reformist variety: they left the social or cultural structures intact and were only intended to limit or improve this or that procedure. It seemed to me then, and still does, that the United States is a society that wants to realize its ideals, has no wish to exchange them for others, and is confident of surviving, no matter how dark the future may appear.

This is still true today. Our proudness avoids “certain crude and common forms of meanness, but falls into others which are in the end more appalling.” Our proudness and deliberate blindness is destroying our society.

I believe that our only response is deliberate conflict through nonviolence. This allows us to confront and awaken our brothers and sisters from a chosen sleep. We are likely to find resistance, however, the resulting anger and aggression need not be destructive. To convert this anger into a positive energy “We must resort to the spirit [nonviolence]—in all its forms in which it presents itself—because without it we could not deal with our conflicts at all. From those

conflicts arises the consciousness of diverging possibilities which is our freedom.”

After many months of assignments like this, regular visits to Mr. Cortes’ office for discussions, and attending an IAF public accountability session in Boston with their affiliate, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, Mr. Cortes agreed to have me do an internship in Houston, Texas, where they had an Executive Director with a law degree, which was required for my internship. The Houston IAF organization was called The Metropolitan Organization (TMO). While in Houston, my experience with the IAF and TMO was not a good one. Ironically, those who sought to organize others seemed very disorganized from the start. Additionally, I soon learned that they often preached listening but seemed to do very little of it in practice. Of course, I did get a chance to get a more in depth, firsthand look at the organization.

During my time there, I helped to organize a public accountability session to fight for code enforcement, street and drainage projects, school safe zones, and after-school enrichment programs with Mayor Lee Brown at the oldest Mexican-American church in Houston, Our Lady of Guadalupe. Over 800 people attended the action. I was assigned to logistics and turnout of parishioners at that church. Additionally, during my time in Texas, I attended a five-day IAF leadership training, participated in a forum with IAF leaders challenging education reform experts, met with and pushed the Regional Director of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to process U.S. citizenship applications more quickly as they had a backlog of over 40,000 applications on file and a waiting period of up to two years. As in all experiences, even in not so good ones, a person learns things. This was the case with my experience with the IAF.

Years later, I read a 2002 book review from *Contexts* magazine entitled “Making Democracy Work” by Marshall Ganz, who worked with SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and Cesar Chavez in the United Farm Workers during the 1960s and who is now famous for organizing Barack Obama’s 2008 electoral campaign. In reviewing this book on the IAF’s work, he summed up my experience with the organization. Ganz wrote:

The IAF is making one of the few serious efforts to face up to the challenge of democratic revitalization in the United States, but its particular combination of authority and participation is better suited to the solidaristic Roman Catholic tradition[...] than to the contentious politics of modern pluralistic democracy.

Viewing dissent as problematic, the IAF shuns open debate, competitive elections, and majority voting. IAF organizations do develop local leadership, but the authority remains in the hands of the professional organizers, who serve as the hubs linking part-time efforts of volunteer leaders. However, democracy promises the opportunity not only to participate but also to exercise control[...] echoing the criticism of IAF organizers make of more confrontational social movements. Social movements challenge “politics as usual,” make moral claims for a new constituency and are often led by charismatic leaders and committed activists. No one wants to criticize good work, but after 25 years, why are the challenges facing the IAF’s core constituency, the working poor, as great as they have been in recent history? During the same period, the Civil Rights movement, women’s movement, conservative movement and environmental movement transformed American public life. Yet, the IAF argues social movements do not last, while their broad-based organizations do.

As I was finishing my internship, I met with my assigned supervisor during the internship and, later, with Mr. Cortes and his co-director Sister Christine Stephens to openly share my experiences, despite what it might mean for my official law school transcript (evaluation from the internship). None of them were open to listening, appreciated my experience, nor what I am sure they saw as my audacity in raising concerns. Let’s just say that I left the IAF knowing that I did not want to work there after finishing school.

Over the next two years, I continued with law school. I finished my other three internships: first on the Navajo Nation with a legal services group organizing the Navajo against reoccurring legal problems around predatory credit issues; secondly in San Diego at a conflict resolution center called the San Diego Mediation Center; and finally again in San Diego at the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC), which organizes poor communities of color for environmental justice. While I was in San Diego during my final, fourth internship, I began to prepare for graduation and consider my job options.

Throughout law school, I knew I wanted to be a community organizer not a lawyer, live near the border with a Latino population, and work in California, where I saw the future of America developing. So, I had researched and arranged discussions with the executive director of a local community organizing group. The San Diego Organizing Project (SDOP) is part of one of the four major faith-based community organizing networks across the country. It is associated with the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) network. So, after graduating in May 2000, I agreed to start

working at SDOP in July. After driving from Boston to Ohio to visit with my family for a short time, I headed west in my 1984 Honda Civic, nicknamed “Soul Force,” to find a new home.

Unfortunately, I found the PICO network to be an almost identical replication of the IAF network, including their trainings, and I left the organization in October of 2001. I resigned for a variety of reasons but one of the things I remember most is that I could not reconcile their assigned readings on the Civil Rights Movement and their actual work. Both the IAF and PICO criticized social movements yet they often referenced them and referred to them when they found it convenient. Again, I would benefit from the experience in a variety of ways. One specific way was that it would help launch the next stage of my organizing career.

Towards the end of my time at SDOP, I was conducting a leadership meeting at one of my assigned churches, First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego, and a young man named Matt Bell who participated in the meeting approached me afterwards saying, “You should come work for our union.” Soon, we set up a time to meet, discuss his work for the 220,000 member California public school workers union. It was a very good conversation that sparked my interest. However, I would soon forget about the conversation as I got caught up in my work and other responsibilities. Not much later, I resigned from SDOP and was doing work as a plumbing assistant for \$8 per hour. After some time, I remembered the conversation and reached out to Matt to ask him about working with the union. His mother, Jody Bell, also worked as the Director of Member Benefits with the California School Employees Association (CSEA). Together, they found a way to bring me on board and applied for a grant with the AFL-CIO to eventually hire me with a one year contract as a Project Organizer. Appropriately, I started my career in the Labor Movement, working for CSEA, on International Workers’ Day, May 1, 2002.

CHAPTER 4

SCHOOL SEGREGATION CIRCA 2000

“Rather than tax Bill Gates enough to stock our school libraries, we tax him at a lower rate than his secretary and hope he finds it in his heart to donate some books. Increasingly, the schools in our wealthier districts set up ‘local educational foundations,’ funded by parents and local businesses, so that when a student in the district takes up the tuba, the instrument is purchased by the fund; whereas for a student in a poor district to do the same, her parent has to buy it—perhaps by taking out a payday loan.”

~ Daniel Brook, *Harper’s Magazine*, “Usury Country,” April 2009

When I started with CSEA, like most people today given the 11% unionized worker percentage rate in the country, I did not have much direct knowledge of unions. I had never been in a union and was much more well read on other social movements. However, I took some law school classes on collective bargaining and knew unions had a major impact on one’s quality of life and provided much needed job protections for workers. Otherwise, I knew workers were at the mercy of their employers as at-will employees. I had worked various nonunion jobs myself yet had seen the impact the union had on my mother’s longtime boyfriend’s life. His job at Rockwell International was one of the few union jobs in the small central Ohio town I grew up in and it paid much better and had much better benefits than the other factory jobs in town, not to mention better job security.

My leap of faith of resigning from SDOP without another job in place paid off in the end as I now was in an organization that was not reliant on undemocratic corporate foundations for funding, like almost all nonprofits, and in an organizing position to help improve the lives of school workers and students in California's schools. I had long believed that working to defend the human right to a quality, public education was essential for any democracy. Very soon, I would be assigned to work with CSEA's members in San Diego Unified School District.

Before my arrival at CSEA, the November 2000 school board race was the most expensive in San Diego's history and the spending only increased as the stakes increased. As the *San Diego Reader*, a local weekly publication, reported, the November 2000 school board race united East Coast liberal foundations:

[...] with some of the most conservative and wealthiest of San Diego business interests. By the time the campaign was over in November 2000, the two foundations—along with the likes of Padres owner John Moores, Wal-Mart heir John Walton, downtown real estate mogul Malin Burnham, and Qualcomm founder Irwin Jacobs—poured \$720,000 into a slashing campaign of television spots, attacking Zimmerman [incumbent and in opposition to the policies of San Diego Unified School District superintendent Alan Bersin][...] The money from the individuals and the foundations was funneled into the race through a nonprofit corporation called the Partnership for Student Achievement (a front organization with no official board of directors), set up in the Encinitas offices of F. Laurence Scott Jr., certified public accountant known for managing the campaign book-keeping of Republican stalwart Pete Wilson.

What united these liberal foundations and these conservative and wealthy business interests? It was an effort to privatize the public schools, to make the school district more “corporate-friendly,” and more “business-like.” Yet, at the time I arrived in May 2002, the union's three local chapters in San Diego Unified, the second largest school district in California and one of the biggest in the nation, were a complete disaster, fighting internally amongst their own chapters as well as with each other despite massive layoffs and corporate reform efforts. I started my work by conducting over 100 individual meetings with our workers in San Diego Unified and simply listening to them. Soon, this listening campaign allowed Matt Bell and I to help the workers come together, create a “Unity Council” (the workers came up with the name) from all three

chapters, and systematically chart and implement a course of action for a different kind of school district by changing the school board and thus the superintendent.

Our motto was “Nothing Changes Until the School Board Changes” and we pushed for our “Human Rights Vision for Public Education.” Our vision, among other things, called for a more democratic and decentralized structure, adequate funding for quality public education (with an emphasis on the most vulnerable), schools that promoted active participation in the society, elimination of high stakes testing, a more well rounded curriculum (arts, music, etc.), and a holistic approach to education such as ensuring all children have access to health care and proper nutrition. In short, we wanted all children to have the kind of education the rich provide for their children.

San Diego City Schools Superintendent Alan Bersin, a Harvard trained lawyer and Rhodes scholar, was supported by some of the richest people on the planet (Bill Gates, Eli Broad, and others) and was hand selected by the business elite in San Diego. Additionally, he was very well connected with high-level leaders in both political parties, especially the Democratic Party, including Bill Clinton and Al Gore. It was said that Bersin would have been offered the U.S. Secretary of Education position if Al Gore had won the presidency. Bersin was also appointed by Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama as “border czar” before and after his tenure as superintendent. Our fight to change the board and expel the superintendent was literally a David and Goliath kind of struggle. All too often, invisible school workers (bus drivers, custodians, school secretaries, child nutrition workers, paraeducators), whom Bersin called a “dime a dozen” and “glorified babysitters,” battling against limitless amounts of money and elite political connections. Yet, despite CSEA’s lack of community connections and little actual experience with school board elections in San Diego, we were able to develop a strategy to reach out to parents, community organizations, media, and our workers to change the board and oust him. I viewed this effort in the tradition of Chile’s democracy movement to oust dictator General Pinochet through elections. The teachers’ union, who had much more power, money and visibility, was afraid to endorse candidates at the time of the 2004 election. They feared that they would lose and anger the eventual winner. Our successful campaign developed new leaders, transformed their lives, and also set the stage for the past several years of a much more progressive and responsive school board.

After our victory in San Diego, CSEA decided to make a video documenting our experience and approach as a training piece for others around the state. This process helped us reflect and capture how some of our CSEA members had been transformed by the experience. On December 1, 2004, just before the making of the video, CSEA

member leader and school secretary, Frances Fierro, wrote the following email to CSEA's video production manager:

*Someone who has made this all happen in my opinion has been a CSEA Organizer by the name of Erik Olson [Fernandez]. He has worked very hard to get us united and to work hard...sometimes feeling worn out...yet chugging along...feeling hopeless at times that our efforts were not getting us anywhere...sometimes wanting to give it up and surrender to the corporate money spending opposition. We were grassroots and at times it got tough and disappointment also set in...but Erik kept at it with us! He made us realize that **NOTHING CHANGES UNTIL THE SCHOOL BOARD CHANGES**. His beliefs and convictions gave me strength to continue in the struggle regardless of how grim it looked. He is a dear friend that I have learned from...he believes from his heart in what he does...that means more to me than anything else...for that I respect him and feel fortunate to be a part of this great success.*

In January of 2014, Diane Ravitch, a historian, researcher, and policy analyst of education, would say that: "Something magical is happening in San Diego. It is a good school district. Teachers and administrators and the school board are working towards common goals. San Diego, in my view, is the best urban district in the nation." I am not sure this is true but I am confident that she could not have said this if we did not conduct our CSEA Unity Council campaign leading up to the November 2004 election.

In March of 2010, Ravitch published her book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education* and devoted an entire chapter to San Diego Unified. The chapter was entitled "Lessons from San Diego" and it should be required reading for anyone concerned about our public schools. Reading it is necessary to understand the current education reform efforts driven by the world's richest people. Below is a lengthy, but important excerpt describing the context in San Diego City Schools before my arrival:

What happened in San Diego from 1998 to 2005 was unprecedented in the history of school reform. The school board hired a non-educator as superintendent [Alan Bersin] and gave him carte blanche to overhaul the district's schools from the top to bottom. Major foundations awarded millions to the district to support its reforms. Education researchers flocked to San Diego to

study the dramatic changes. The district's new leaders set out to demonstrate that bold measures could radically transform an entire urban district and close the achievement gap between students of different racial and ethnic groups. The San Diego reforms were based on New York City's District 2 model. A few years later, they became the model for New York City's schools during the Bloomberg era.

In 1998, in response to San Diego's business community, the city's school board selected Alan Bersin, a former federal prosecutor, as city superintendent. Bersin immersed himself in education issues, consulted with education experts at Harvard University, and quickly learned about District 2 in New York City and its visionary leader, Anthony Alvarado. Bersin invited Alvarado to join him as chancellor for instruction in San Diego. Together, this team launched a radical venture in school reform. Intent on closing the achievement gap, the two introduced changes into every classroom, disciplined resistant teachers, and fired reluctant principals. And they did so to national acclaim, while alienating significant numbers of teachers and principals and creating a national exemplar of the "get-tough" superintendent [think Michelle Rhee].

With about 140,000 students, San Diego was the eighth-largest district in the nation, second in California only to Los Angeles. Its enrollment in 1998 was 36.2 percent Hispanic/Latino, 16.7 percent African-American, 28.2 percent white, and 18.3 Asian-Filipino-Pacific Islander. The district enrolled many recent arrivals from Mexico and Asia, as well as many students from affluent sections of the city, such as La Jolla.

San Diego was a surprising place to launch a major reform effort, because the district was widely perceived in the 1990s as one of the nation's most successful urban school systems. In 1996, two years before Bersin was hired, Education Week noted that San Diego had a "national reputation as an innovative urban district with a commitment to reform." [...]

Known as a conservative city, San Diego hosted the Republican National Convention in 1996. That spring, the city's business leaders were aghast when the teachers' union launched a strike seeking higher wages and a larger role in decision making at each school. The strike was settled after a week, with the union winning a 14 percent salary increase and a commitment to school-based decision making. To the union, the agreement was by no means extravagant, since the highest teachers' salary would rise to only \$55,000 by 1998; even with the increase, few teachers could afford to buy homes in the district. The business

community fumed, however, believing that [San Diego's first woman and African-American] Superintendent Pendleton had capitulated to the union. The business leaders decided it was time the schools had a tough leader. Elections to the city's five-member school board were held every two years. The San Diego Chamber of Commerce raised money to back three candidates[...] The business community's slate prevailed in November of 1996, and this board hired Bersin in 1998.

Bersin was no ordinary change agent. A native of Brooklyn, he was educated at Harvard, Oxford University (where he was a Rhodes Scholar), and Yale Law School. He served as the U.S. attorney for the southern district of California from 1993 to 1998 and as the Clinton Administration's 'border czar,' overseeing enforcement of immigration and drug laws. A friend of President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, Bersin was well connected to the business and political elites in the city, state, and nation. The business community concluded that Bersin—known as fearless and decisive—was just the man to shake up the school system. The school board voted 4-0 to hire Bersin (one member abstained)[...]

The cost of implementing the [Bersin] Blueprint was substantial. The annual cost of professional development rose from \$1 million to about \$70 million. The district paid for the reforms partly by shifting control over federal Title I funds from individual schools to the central office. (Title I is a federal program whose purpose is to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students.) In 1999, the schools controlled some \$18 million in Title I monies; by 2001, that funding dropped to \$3 million. During the same period, the Title I funds directly controlled by central headquarters rose from less than \$3 million to more than \$20 million. Bersin and Alvarado fired over six hundred classroom aides [paraeducators] funded through Title I and used the savings to support the Blueprint reforms. In District 2, Alvarado had similarly redirected Title I funds, calling it "multipocket budgeting." Bersin raised more than \$50 million from foundations, including the Gates Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Broad Foundation. Several foundation grants had a specific contingency: The money would be available only as long as Bersin and Alvarado remained in charge of the district.

On March 14, 2000, the San Diego school board voted on the Blueprint[...] Critics complained about the superintendent's plan to fire six hundred

classroom aides, as well as the narrowing of the curriculum to just literacy and mathematics. Behind all the complaints was a simmering resentment that the leadership had not consulted teachers [school workers] or parents when forging their plans.

The board approved the Blueprint by a vote of 3-2. The vote revealed a bitter split on the school board. Bersin and the Blueprint had the solid support of the three members of the board—Ron Ottinger, Edward Lopez, and Sue Braun—who had run for office with the endorsement of the business community. The other two members—Frances Zimmerman and John de Beck—had the support of the teacher’s union, and they consistently opposed Bersin’s initiatives. Divisions within the board became open and personal, as the pro- and anti-Bersin forces argued over every decision and shift in policy. Every significant vote came out 3-2, with the pro-Bersin majority always prevailing[...]

In the fall of 2000, three of the five school board members stood for reelection. One, Frances Zimmerman, was an outspoken opponent of Superintendent Bersin. A Democrat from affluent La Jolla, Zimmerman was a parent of two children in the San Diego public schools and had worked as a substitute teacher in the system. Zimmerman objected to Bersin and Alvarado’s coercive, top-down approach. The typical school board race at the time cost about \$40,000, but leading business figures in the city contributed over \$700,000 in an effort to defeat Zimmerman. Walmart heir John Walton of Arkansas, a supporter of charter schools and vouchers, and Los Angeles billionaire Eli Broad each contributed more than \$100,000 to the anti-Zimmerman campaign. Television commercials attacked Zimmerman for “leading the fight against San Diego’s back-to-basics reform plan.” This appeal was misleading, because neither Balanced Literacy nor constructivist mathematics was a “back-to-basics” method. The business-funded onslaught against Zimmerman failed. She was reelected (with a bare majority), but the board nonetheless continued to have a 3-2 majority in Bersin’s favor.

In 2002, the school board election was again a battleground between pro- and anti-Bersin forces. The SDEA and the statewide California Teachers Association spent \$614,000 in an effort to oust Bersin’s supporters. But the election produced the same 3-2 majority favoring Bersin and the Blueprint[...]

As Ravitch would later say in a *Democracy Now* interview referencing this chapter on Alan Bersin and San Diego:

It was an effort to say, you know, we're going to reform our schools the way I want it done, and teachers [school workers] have nothing to say about it; there'll be no democracy, no buy-in, no consensus; you do it our way or the highway. They didn't get any results.

But, you know, this was part of this buildup of this notion, the business model: the foundations know what to do, the businessmen know what to do; don't listen to the teachers [school workers], don't listen to parents—they're the last ones to have anything to say about the schools.

This is what I was met with in San Diego City Schools when I joined CSEA in 2002.

Bersin and Board President Ron Ottinger, among others, were being trained by billionaires like Eli Broad to run and “reform” the school district to be a business: Bersin was a “Chief Executive Officer” not a superintendent; students were literally called “customers;” our child nutrition workers were being trained by Jack-in-the-Box to serve the students essentially fast food; Coca-Cola received an exclusive \$1 million contract with the district to put their brand and vending machines on the school campuses to capture the youth market; the school district’s real estate had to be watched carefully as the business community coveted the opportunity to have sweetheart property deals approved by the board majority for commercial development; charter schools were promoted and increased significantly under Bersin; and fighting privatization of public services was a daily battle.

We challenged Bersin and Ottinger regularly on these issues and more. Bersin got to the point where he began calling me the “college radical,” which I took pride in as I knew the word radical meant “relating to the root” of the problem. Ottinger and I had a very visible public interaction at a school board meeting where the pro-Bersin forces laid out a plan to have massive layoffs of our school workers. We were demanding that they cut as far away from the students as possible. We had learned from newspaper reports that Ottinger was not living within the school district boundaries but was instead living in Coronado, CA, a wealthy “crown city” island across the bay from San Diego. So, when he attempted to cut me off at the microphone for time (usually three minutes depending on the number of speakers), I told him I would gladly abide by the rules when he began to abide by the rules by living in the district. He was speechless, partially because the auditorium was packed with school workers, media, and community folks. I continued with my public comments and finished to rousing applause.

During these difficult times, we communicated to the board and the public that without our workers there would be no schools. We pointed out that, “You cannot run airports with just pilots, and you cannot run schools with just teachers.” We highlighted that our workers (bus drivers) pick the students up from home, greet them at school (school secretaries), provide clean and sanitary school environments (custodians, maintenance workers), feed them (child nutrition workers), nurture and provide care for them (health aides), teach them (paraeducators, librarians), and more. We reminded the school board and the public that learning does not happen only in the classroom; it happens on the school bus, at lunch, on the playground. If you followed the students from the beginning of the day to the end, school workers would interact with them many times in important and significant ways. This was not true of Bersin’s much higher paid administrators and consultants.

The school board majority under Bersin’s rule and leadership was not listening to any reasonable arguments. They arrogantly believed they had all the answers and regularly dismissed parents, students, schools workers, community residents, teachers, and administrators. Anyone who attended a school board meeting at this time recognized that it was truly a mockery of democracy. One of the best examples of this lack of democracy is that the board made no attempt to hold these public meetings at times when most parents and working people could attend. *San Diego City Beat* ran an April 30, 2003 story with the following excerpt during this time:

Parents with 9-to-5 jobs, she said, don’t have the luxury of spending all afternoon to get their two-minute turn at the podium. A couple weeks back,[...] [they] sponsored a parent forum on budget matters and invited all five board members to attend. Only Fran Zimmerman and John de Beck showed up.

Denied their request to speak at 6 p.m., the parents opted to shoot for the 7 p.m. slot. Precisely at 7 p.m., they marched en masse down the aisle of the Eugene Brucker auditorium carrying discrete signs that read: “Parents need a minute.” To make a long, though observationally interesting story short, Board President Ron Ottinger said no. Parents began to chant and shake cans of dried beans (for noise effect). Police were called. People were escorted out of the building. Entry doors were locked. And Olson, a natural do-gooder, trailed behind the crowd to see what he could do to help ease frustrations. Some 10 minutes later, a uniformed district police officer was telling an incredulous Olson to pass his leather organizer over to a friend or co-worker, lest it be confiscated at the police station. Olson asked what he was being charged with.

The charges, the officer told Olson, were “failure to disperse” and “demonstrating.” “I didn't fail to disperse,” Olson contested. “I was talking to Willy Surbrook,” he said, pointing to the district's mustached, dark-suit-wearing labor relations specialist, who had, a few minutes prior, pulled Olson aside for a chat. And true, he had walked out with the parents, but he was not part of the commotion.

Unfortunately for Olson, the arresting officer's superior, Detective Ray Hubbard, deemed Olson a troublemaker and within a few minutes Olson was led off—sans handcuffs—to the district's makeshift police facility behind the auditorium. District Director of Communications Peri Lynn Turnbull came out of the auditorium just in time to see Olson being lead away. “Don't be arresting people,” she said pointedly to Hubbard. Eventually charges against Olson and a second CSEA employee were reduced to a citation, and then a warning, but not before the board voted 3-2 to accept the budget cuts. The warning, Olson said later, was kept on file. “Consider it probation,” a police lieutenant told him.

It is important to know that these charges were reduced to a warning because our workers, community partners and the print and television media whom we had developed relationships with were literally outside the building where we were being detained. Our community partners were now outside chanting with their aluminum cans full of dry beans and demanding our release as the media eagerly captured everything. Inside, we could easily detect Detective Hubbard's and the other officers' uneasiness and nervousness as to how to handle the situation. Instead of allowing them to intimidate us and have power over us, we respectfully but assertively asked them for their names and told them we would not accept unjust punishment. Our deliberate efforts to build a democratic coalition to break Bersin's hold on the public school district proved worthwhile and this story is just one such example of how we had to work to get there.

Shortly after arriving at CSEA, I had quickly come to understand unions as a way to democratize the workplace. Why fight for a democracy in the larger society but have a dictatorship the moment you walk through the employer's doors, where we spend such a large portion of our lives? Unions exist to transform the workplace from a dictatorship to a democracy by giving workers power and voice. And, by providing this power and voice to the workers, they can not only democratize their workplace but also the larger society. Our efforts in San Diego were a perfect example of this. One of our leaders, child nutrition worker Ethel Larkins, would say “It was democracy at its

best.” Getting rid of the San Diego City Schools dictator Bersin benefitted almost all San Diegians—the workers, students, parents, and the community at large.

I once heard somewhere that every dictator’s first act in power is to try to rid the society of unions, small democracies. Bersin fit into this category. As Ravitch points out, if you think the term “dictator” is too harsh, consider a teacher’s survey in 2001 asking to “offer one word that best described the Superintendent and his administration’s attitude toward teachers and parents in the district. The most frequently cited words were “dictator,” “arrogant,” “disrespectful,” “dictatorial,” “dictatorship,” “condescending” and so on. If the teachers, who have more power, respect, and visibility in the educational community, felt this way, I can assure you that the overlooked school workers certainly felt like they were working under a dictatorship. And they also felt the joyous freedom once they liberated themselves from Bersin’s dictatorial rule.

After Bersin was asked to leave by the new school board, Carl Cohn took the helm at San Diego City Schools. He came in with a much different approach and with a good track record in Long Beach Unified School District. *San Diego Magazine* in November of 2005 described him like this:

Tapped this summer to succeed Alan Bersin, Carl Cohn brings solid credentials. He also brings a reputation for innovation and reform, with a style more conciliatory than the controversial Bersin. A career educator, Cohn once attended seminary with an eye to becoming a priest. Instead, he opted for teaching, rising through the ranks to counselor and then, in 1992, superintendent of Long Beach schools, where he helped forge dramatic improvements in student performance and behavior.

Ravitch, in her 2010 book, would summarize the transition from Bersin to Cohn with the following statement:

As Bersin’s term of office came to an end, the San Diego Union-Tribune, which had consistently supported him, summarized the seven tumultuous years of his superintendency. It was a mixed scorecard. Charter schools were flourishing. New buildings were going up. The number of high-scoring schools increased, and the number of low-scoring schools declined. Elementary schoolchildren made significant progress, but not as much as those in comparable urban districts across the state, such as Santa Ana, Fresno, Garden Grove, Long Beach, and Los Angeles. The reforms “largely fizzled in middle and

high schools.” The district’s drop out rate increased almost every year starting in 1999 and grew by 23 percent during Bersin’s tenure[...] Carl Cohn published an essay just three months after we met in San Diego, echoing what he told me in our informal conversation. Ostensibly criticizing the No Child Left Behind legislation, Cohn could not resist comparing the federal law to the Blueprint: “I inherited a district in which the driving philosophy over the previous six years had, similarly, been to attack the credibility of any educator who spoke out against a top-down education reform model. These attacks allowed those in charge to portray themselves as the defenders of children, to justify any means to promote their model of improving student achievement, and to view their critics through the same apocalyptic lens of good and evil that has characterized many of our national debates.” Such an approach, he cautioned, was counterproductive. “In San Diego, it produced a climate of conflict that is only now beginning to improve.” Any genuine school reform, he argued, “is dependent upon empowering those at the bottom, not punishing them from the top.”

Unfortunately, the people who hired, trained, financed and pulled the strings behind Bersin were still in place.

These corporate education “reformers” were very much in power locally and beyond and continued to shape the overall social structure. Their education reform would spread across the country to places like Washington, D.C., Miami, and Chicago and they would spin it as the “civil rights issue of our day” as they sought to turn public education and our children into a private market to exploit and profit from. These rich elites continued to pay little or no taxes and yet used the same money to buy politicians, create an unjust tax structure that criminally underfunded the public schools (among other public services), establish private foundations to give them tax breaks for their “charity” and simultaneously shape public policy through their private “philanthropy.”

California was one of the worst examples of this unjust social structure. Despite having one of largest economies in the world, its per-pupil spending was one of the worst in the country, behind all the Southern states, according to *Education Week* in 2014. In 2004, PBS made a film documentary on California’s public schools appropriately entitled *First to Worst*. To give you a sense for how bad things had gotten, consider a speech given in San Diego about California’s schools more than 40 years before *First to Worst* was released. On June 6, 1963, President John F. Kennedy stated the

following during a speech at San Diego State College (now San Diego State University):

One of the most impressive, if not the most impressive, accomplishment of this great Golden State has been the recognition by the citizens of this State of the importance of education as the basis for the maintenance of an effective, free society[...] I do not believe that any State in the Union has given more attention in recent years to educating its citizens to the highest level, doctoral level, in the State colleges, the junior colleges, the high schools, the grade schools. You recognize that a free society places special burdens upon any free citizen. To govern is to choose and the ability to make those choices wise and responsible and prudent requires the best of all of us. No country can possibly move ahead, no free society can possibly be sustained, unless it has an educated citizenry whose qualities of mind and heart permit it to take part in the complicated and increasingly sophisticated decisions that pour not only upon the President and upon the Congress, but upon all the citizens who exercise the ultimate power[...] In this fortunate State of California the average current expenditure for a boy and girl in the public schools is \$515, but in the State of Mississippi it is \$230. The average salary for classroom teachers in California is \$7,000, while in Mississippi it is \$3,600[...] Such facts, and one could prolong the recital indefinitely, make it clear that American children today do not yet enjoy equal educational opportunities for two primary reasons: one is economic and the other is racial.

Sadly, California public schools are now comparable to Mississippi in per-pupil spending, among other things.

In 2004, drastic new cuts to California's public schools were coming under the leadership of a new governor. In late 2003, the action-movie actor Arnold Schwarzenegger became the 38th Governor of California. Our euphoria in ousting Bersin was soon transformed into heartache. Schwarzenegger was now looking for a California Secretary of Education and Bersin was his top pick. Of course, our CSEA members in San Diego were furious. So, I sought to represent them and push the organization to challenge the appointment of Bersin as Secretary of Education. Sadly, CSEA's Governmental Relations department, essentially run by Assistant Director Dave Low, had a different view. Dave is a very talented, intelligent person but, in my opinion, it was clear he had spent far too much time in the capitol city, Sacramento, around politi-

cians and his perspective had been lost. Additionally, like many politicians, he was arrogant. He was known for always giving members speeches saying things like “we’ll kick their ass” regarding politicians who opposed us. We had a serious disagreement over the issue of truly fighting Bersin’s appointment as California Secretary of Education. He did not take kindly to my challenging his perspective and took the “I’ll kick your ass” approach with me too. He viewed me, rightfully, as a fairly new employee, and himself as a longtime veteran. I am sure he was thinking to himself, “Who does this guy think he is?” To no avail, I tried to highlight the workers’ experience in San Diego and illustrate how Bersin’s promotion to Secretary of Education would be harmful to the entire statewide educational system. As with every significant decision at CSEA, the opinion of the Governmental Relations Department took precedence over Field Operations and the organization took Dave Low’s go-slow approach to Bersin’s appointment. I did not know it at the time but this decision to side with Low and the Governmental Relations Department would turn out to foreshadow my future with CSEA. Meanwhile, Bersin became California’s Secretary of Education in 2005 with no real challenge to his appointment.

I, too, would take on a new position that same year. In December, I was selected as the Field Director of the San Diego Field Office for CSEA. I was now being asked to provide vision and leadership for 24,000 school workers in 52 union chapters throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties (from the Pacific Ocean to the Arizona border), as well as supervising 17 staff members and resources of over \$3 million. It was one of ten field offices throughout the state representing 220,000 members in over 750 chapters throughout California. Up to this point, the organization had allowed me the freedom and creativity necessary to implement new ideas and provided the resources needed to respond to the problems at hand. To my knowledge, CSEA was very supportive of my efforts, even accepting all my credit problems, wage garnishments, and court orders related to my invest-in. However, unbeknownst to me at the time, the head of Human Resources did try to disqualify me as a candidate for Field Director due to my student loan and tax issues. Later, I was told that my eventual supervisor, Director of Field Operations Steve Fraga, intervened and explained that these issues had nothing to do with my candidacy and qualifications for Field Director. This would turn out to be a second foreshadowing event for me and Steve.

For the time being, however, I would be become one of the youngest, if not the youngest, Field Director in CSEA history. In preparing for part of the job hiring process, I was asked to submit a response to three questions. These responses reflect my time with CSEA up to this point and my mindset going into this new job:

1. What qualifications, abilities and strong points will help you succeed in this job?

Over the last 14 years of working with people in the community all across the United States, I believe I have developed several key skills and abilities necessary to succeed as a Field Director for the California School Employees Association, including: Ability to relate well with all kinds of people and organize them into taking collective action, a demonstrated capacity to be creative and imaginative, capacity to conduct needed research, power to inspire others by speaking publicly and taking principled actions, the aptitude to train others and facilitate effective meetings, power to effectively use the media, ability to think critically and exercise sound judgment, the skill of remaining cool, calm, and focused on the goal at hand in difficult situations, and the successful experience of managing and leading a diverse group of twelve young people, ages 17-23 years old, from all socioeconomic backgrounds in a domestic Peace Corps program focused on the problems of the inner-city.

2. Describe your leadership style.

My style of leadership is modeled after the thinking and practice of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Like him, I seek to be both a “thermometer” and a “thermostat.” I believe true leaders must always democratically take the “temperature” of the people by listening, understanding, and responding to their needs. However, this temperature-reading approach must be complemented by a “thermostat” approach that will help shape and mold the “environment” when the people are in need of leadership or have strayed from their own ethical principles to the larger community.

3. How have you helped employees or members become committed to a job or the organization?

Through my experiences, I have learned to help people become committed to their jobs and/or their organizations by simply working to make the organization theirs! I work to create an organizational structure that will listen to them, allow them to have a voice, care for and nurture them, and facilitate

action-oriented growth (learning). In so doing, they become accountable to the larger community and inspired to a more meaningful existence. This individual growth naturally results in organizational growth, as an organization obviously cannot grow unless its individual members are growing. This structure must obviously be lead by someone who will lead by example, not merely with words. One cannot expect others to follow if they themselves have not demonstrated their commitment and willingness to do the difficult spade work. Since coming to this realization, I have done this everywhere I have worked and I believe it has been evident in my work here at CSEA. A concrete example of this includes the creation of the Unity Council in San Diego Unified and its successful campaign to change the school board and rid ourselves of the dreaded Superintendent there.

CSEA seemed to fully embraced these ideas when I was hired initially as a Project Organizer, then as an Organizer and finally as they chose me as the Field Director.

When I arrived at CSEA in 2002, the organization seemed stale, bureaucratic, behind the times, culturally backwards, dysfunctional, full of self-interested leaders, and not very representative of the community. As one small example, the union office looked more like a dentist's office than a labor union for school workers. There was nothing indicating that it was a union of school workers or that it took action by the workers to achieve and maintain their rights. As another example of the culture at CSEA, in July of 2003, I received an email from a colleague, who previously worked with the farmworkers union and Cesar Chavez. He stated "I just got an opportunity to read your document [Human Rights Vision for Public Education]. The thinking reflected by it is much deeper than what we usually operate at. It is very impressive. Too often we either have people who are deep thinkers or people of action, but seldom the two merged together." Now, in December 2005, by becoming a Field Director, I was seeking to transform the office and the union into a labor *movement* emphasizing grassroots mobilization, organizing, and mass nonviolent action instead of the usual prescription of lobbying, elections, and litigation advocated by Dave Low and most other leaders in unions. By this time, everything I did with the Invest-In Project was completely open to the public and those at CSEA. In other words, I was not just talking about nonviolent action, I was practicing what I preached and CSEA knew this when they hired me. As a backdrop, consider that a year before my hiring as Field Director (December 2004), I had made the following contributions to the "Bank of Justice" through the Invest-In Project:

AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
\$23,500	Monthly Redirection of Student Loan Payments
\$2,947	Seized from 2002 Tax Refund
\$5,000	Redirection of 2003 Federal Taxes
\$6,485	Garnished from Wages
\$37,932	TOTAL
	Given in Justice, Not Charity. Imagine If Others Did This As Well?

In the end, maybe CSEA got more than they bargained for in hiring me? Or perhaps I was too optimistic that things could change at CSEA.

CHAPTER 5

AMERICA'S FINEST CITY?

“O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where every man is free.
The land that’s mine—the poor man’s, Indian’s, Negro’s, ME—
Who made America,

Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people’s lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!”

~ Langston Hughes, *Let America Be America Again*, 1935

At the same time I was working as an Organizer for CSEA in San Diego City Schools (May 2002—December 2005), I was also using the Invest-In Project structure in my spare time to organize the people of San Diego around other social and eco-

conomic justice issues. The same people who hired Alan Bersin as Superintendent in San Diego City Schools were the same business elites who were running our city. On February 1, 2003, the two year anniversary of the Invest-In Project, I launched a 12-day campaign in solidarity with the 12 million poor children in the United States by sleeping 12 straight nights on San Diego's streets and eating only one meal a day. The campaign would end on February 12, 2003, my 30th birthday. I decided to sleep at the foot of the construction site for the newly approved, publicly financed Padres ballpark downtown to protest a skewed San Diego and U.S. social structure. I would highlight that America has not honored its own creeds, refused to ratify core human rights treaties, and violated fundamental human rights. Below is an excerpt from an interview conducted by Emmanuelle Le Texier, a French Ph.D. student at the University of California, San Diego, reporting for the weekly newspaper *La Prensa San Diego* at the time.

Could you explain why you decided to start this action?

It seems that everywhere we turn in our society profits are placed before people. To give just one of many examples, here in San Diego, "America's Finest City," we have more than 1 out of 5 children (22%) living in poverty, yet we care more about building a ballpark than relieving their hunger pains, than providing them with a quality education, than providing them with a safe and affordable home. This is true despite the fact that California, by itself, has the fifth largest economy in the world. In other words, we have a few people making enormous amounts of money while the masses, who do all the work, are being denied their human rights to an adequate standard of living, housing, education, health, etc. Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that we are entitled to social order where all our human rights can be realized. America's defective social structure is in direct violation of this article. We have to change this!

Is it a tough experience to sleep outside every night?

Yes and no. Physically, yes because my body is not used to the cold and harshness of sleeping on concrete. I don't really sleep well. I sleep in spurts. Spiritually, though, it has been very fulfilling, healing.

What is the philosophy that is driving your action?

Having grown up in a poor, Mexican-American family, I have come to understand that true compassion is not about giving charity to the poor but about seeking to restructure the unjust society that produces the need for charity. And, I've found that the only way to truly restructure something is with nonviolence (Soul Force). We live in a world that is too often filled with violence and darkness. But, how do you get rid of the darkness—with more darkness? No, with light and nonviolence. I've been deeply influenced by the ideas and work of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Cesar Chavez, whom I consider the great Nonviolent Freedom Fighters.

Can you tell us about the reactions of San Diegans when they meet you?

Many think I am homeless and treat me just as they would any other homeless person. Most just ignore you, a few say hello, and even fewer offer some kind of help. Those who realize what I am doing have mostly been very supportive, curious, and eager to learn more about the Invest-In Project.

Is this project part of a broader ideal of resolving poverty issues in San Diego? Are there other means to solve it?

Yes, the Invest-In Project is definitely about broader issues, but it is not relegated to just San Diego because the forces that impact our communities are not simply local in nature. They come from a much higher level. Thus, the project seeks to deal with these issues in a way that addresses these forces locally, nationally, and internationally. It also seeks to address what I call the Four Great Evils—Economic Exploitation, Militarism (War), Discrimination, and Environmental Degradation—simultaneously because all these issues are interconnected.

Are you going to organize other actions of the same kind in the future?

Yes, I hope to intensify the Invest-In Project's efforts to meet growing challenges that we face in our society.

How can people contribute to your activities or be part of them?

At the website, on the “Join the Invest-In Project” page, it lists all kinds of ways to get involved[...] More than anything though, people just have to get involved and care more about people and how they are treated not about how they can acquire material things. In America, we are possessed by our possessions.

A similar action was repeated in February of 2004 as I turned thirty-one years old.

By this time, the Invest-In Project had grown and developed a small, diverse core group of leaders that included three African-Americans (Rev. Arthur Cribbs —community leader and pastor of my church, a predominantly black church in San Diego), Dr. William H. Grier—psychiatrist and co-author of a couple important books on the black experience in America, and Kevin Nash—friend, community leader, and former colleague at the San Diego Mediation Center), one white (Dr. Corrie Ort—professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Miramar College), and three Latinos (David Rodriguez—friend and young student leader who I met while working for the San Diego Organizing Project, Blanca and Stephanie Romero—friends, sisters, and young student leaders who I met while working on the housing crisis in the communities of Barrio Logan and Sherman Heights). We decided to file a formal complaint of human rights violations with the Human Relations Commission of the City of San Diego, whose mission includes “to protect basic human and civil rights” and was set up to advise “the Mayor and City Council on methods to assure that all city residents have equal access to economic, political and educational opportunities and equal access to service protection and accommodation in all businesses and public agencies.” As the 12 day sleep-out and fast wrapped up on February 12th, my birthday, my mother would send me a card that read:

My Dear Erik:

Ever since you were born you had a look in your eyes, one of concern and resolve, and now after 31 years of your life I understand that look, it was a concern about the ills of the world in which you had just arrived. On your first birthday you were loved and now on your thirty-first birthday you are loved 31 times more. Have a Happy Birthday. Love and Kisses. Mom.

Despite our efforts, my concern, my resolve, and my mother's birthday wishes, the downtown ballpark would open in America's Finest City just a few weeks later in April for the Padres baseball season with \$225 million in public financing.

Around the time of these sleep-outs, the core group began conducting "Human Rights Schools" at local colleges and later in 2004 in the community at the local offices of Stand Up for Kids. I had read somewhere that less than 5% of humanity knew of the existence, much less read, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Obviously, someone cannot claim a right if they do not know what their rights are. So, we sought to educate the people of San Diego about their human rights through these classes.

We began walking around the low-income communities with a Radio Flyer wagon full of pamphlets and a video camera to document human rights violations. People would not agree to be filmed but we did speak to hundreds of community residents in the barrio near the ballpark about their human rights, their living conditions, their lives, and the campaign. Among other things, we heard regular stories of families having to double and triple up so they could afford to rent an apartment. These apartment buildings were often in poor conditions, not up to code, and had been this way for years. Yet, many of these people continued to pay the mortgage for the building owners who refused to bring the buildings up to code, much less invest in them. Now that the ballpark was coming, many of these long-term residents were being evicted so the owners could fix up the buildings, take advantage of the higher real estate value, and rent the apartments out to a whole new population. The new campaign was called "Do You Believe in Human Rights?"

The campaign also involved the preparation for nonviolent civil disobedience should the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission not respond to our February 13, 2004 complaint. The complaint provided a deadline to hear back from the city. More than two and half months and still no word had been received from the city. Thus, we were left with no option but to begin preparations for nonviolent action. Below is a Human Rights Report Card that we used in our formal complaint to the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission and to help educate the public on their human rights. The report card was based on the human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and highlighted the key economic human rights of an adequate standard of living, housing, education, health, food, and a just social order in the United States and locally in San Diego.

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT CARD

Right to an Adequate Standard of Living

Art. 25(1) UDHR

United States

12 million children live in poverty in the richest nation on earth. More than 26 million (37%) American children live in low-income families.

San Diego

Almost 1 out of 4 children (22%) in “America’s Finest City” live in poverty; 61% of the jobs created in SD County pay less than \$25,000.

Right to Housing

Art. 25(1) UDHR

United States

25% of the 2 million people who are homeless are children. An estimated 12 million households pay more than 50% of their annual incomes for housing, and a family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage cannot afford the fair-market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment anywhere in the U.S.

San Diego

63% of tenants are unable to afford the Fair Market Rent for a 2 bedroom apartment. San Diego is the 4th least affordable city in U.S. The median price of a home is over \$500,000 and rapidly approaching \$600,000. Home prices are so high that only 10% of San Diegans could qualify for a median-priced home.

Right to Education

Art. 26 UDHR

United States

50 years after Brown v. Board of Education and our schools are still separate and unequal by not only race but class too. Forty to 44 million Americans are functionally illiterate. Urban and rural public schools are inadequately resourced.

San Diego

Only 62% of high school students in San Diego City Schools graduate, and only 1 in 3 leave high school prepared to do college work. Fewer than half of Latino students and only 54% of black students graduate. Corporate occupation of the public schools is widespread with the likes of Bill Gates, Hewlett family, etc.

Right to Health

Art. 25(1) UDHR

United States

Forty-four million Americans lack health insurance; many millions more are underinsured, infant mortality is higher than any other highly industrialized nation, and the U.S. is the only industrialized country in the world without universal health care.

San Diego

700,000 San Diegans, 25% of the County's population lack health insurance. More than 100,000 uninsured are children. 85% of uninsured San Diegans are employed.

Right to Food

Art. 25(1) UDHR

United States

In 2001, the number of Americans who were food insecure, or hungry or at risk of hunger was 33.6 million, including at least 13 million children.

San Diego

SD Food Bank distributes more than 10 million meals in SD County every year. 48% of people served by the Food Bank are children. 50% of households served have at least one employed adult.

Right to Just Social Order

Art. 28 UDHR

United States

The richest 1% of American households control 40% of the national wealth while 80% of the population controls less than 20% of the national wealth—the most extreme levels of economic inequality of any highly industrialized country.

San Diego

In 2003, San Diego resident and Qualcomm CEO Irwin Jacobs raked in \$8,331,520 in total compensation. Jacobs also had another \$215,504,205 in stock options. With “his” \$224 million, how many poor children could he feed just by himself? Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

We also adapted a poem entitled “God to Hungry Child” by Langston Hughes for the campaign. We called it “San Diego to Hungry Child.” It read like this:

*Hungry Child, I didn't make this city for you.
You didn't buy any stock in my ballpark.
You didn't invest in my corporation.
Where are your shares in Qualcomm?
I made this city for the rich. And the have-always been rich.
Not for you, Hungry child.*

Eventually, we added the following quote from an August 16, 2004 *San Diego Union-Tribune* article to the bottom of our Human Rights Report Card:

[Charles] Loach, a research engineer who was employed for 20 years in San Diego before losing his job six months ago, said this market is unlike any he's ever seen. Loach said companies are so focused on the short term these days that employees are treated like a commodity, something to buy when times are good and dump if their employers are in danger of missing their quarterly projections.

Prior to this, on May 26, 2004, we were finally asked to make our presentation to the Human Relations Commission. Our presentation would focus on our Human Rights Report Card and the Commission's five focus areas at the time: 1) Educational Disparities, 2) Affordable Housing, 3) Civil Rights, 4) Peace, and 5) Mental Health. I started the presentation by stating:

Let us begin by looking at the Human Right to Education in San Diego for a moment. If we look at the Human Rights Report Card, you will see that the San Diego Unified School District, like many other public service government organizations, is in a huge deficit and that only 62% of high school students graduate, and only 1 in 3 leave prepared to do college work. The situation for Latino and black students, who total over 55% of the school district, is even grimmer. Fewer than half of Latino students and only 54% of black students graduate. Obviously, this is a huge educational disparity that must be addressed. However, if we do not simultaneously address the violation of our human right to housing we will never address the violation of our human right

to quality education because we have so many families who are overburdened by this housing crisis, even sometimes doubling and tripling up in order to make ends meet. Imagine a child trying to study in a 2 bedroom apartment with 10 other people living in that same apartment? This is an actual story told to us by folks living in Sherman Heights. Additionally, just over a week has past since the 50th anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education, and yet what was termed as a “Civil Rights Issue” then is no less a human rights issue today. 50 years later and racial exclusion has been coupled with economic exclusion in our public schools[...]Your fourth focus area, Peace, will also amount to nothing but rhetoric if we do not address the denial of the other economic and social human rights already mentioned. In fact, the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights essentially says this, alluding to the violent Second World War and the economic injustices leading up to the Great Depression as catalyst for the formal development of human rights.

Locally, we see the recent violence at Serra High School, the shooting at Santana High, and other more subtle forms of violence that do not make the morning papers. One of these more subtle forms of violence is the poverty of certain public schools. Gandhi reminded us that poverty is the greatest form of violence and yet we continue to invest in war, sport stadiums, space exploration, etcetera at the expense of our children. Even generals, such as President Dwight Eisenhower, have warned us that:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hope of its children.

Our young people are very confused as our leaders talk about peace and nonviolence but then they practice and applaud war and other forms of violence. This is nothing short of schizophrenia. And, this schizophrenia is not limited to just the issue of violence. It is pervasive in terms of honesty, respect, and even America’s greatest gift to the world: Democracy. This pervasive schizophrenia is impacting our entire lives, including our mental health—your last focus area. Did you know that the word “crazy” actually comes from a French word meaning “broken and shattered?” Many of us are mentally sick

because we have created a social structure and a culture that keeps us divided and separated from our brothers and sisters. One of the foundations of human rights is that they apply to ALL, which creates the potential for us to restore ourselves, our community, and our nation.

The Commission praised us for our presentation and thanked us for our time.

In August of 2004, we officially heard back from the Human Relations Commission after they met with the Assistant City Attorney. Despite their warm reception at the meeting, their letter to us essentially ignored us and the issues we were raising. By this point, this was just another sad response in a long series of disappointing acts from the Commission, such as:

- Being told that our complaint was never received when it was personally hand-delivered;
- Not hearing from the Commission for several months and then only being contacted after we sent out a press release declaring our willingness to take nonviolent action if necessary;
- Being called an hour before our scheduled appearance to present our Complaint at a monthly Commission meeting to say that they did not have a quorum (We requested the meeting anyway.);
- Arriving at the Commission meeting and finding only 5 of the 15 Commissioners present (This is less than the Mayor appoints to the Commission by himself.);
- Being told at the Commission meeting that we were in the right place to address these issues and then receiving a letter from the Commission Chair essentially saying that we were in the wrong place; and
- Being sent a poorly written letter that minimizes these important issues, a standard “blow-off” letter.

At this point, the City and its representatives had truly left us with no other option but to take nonviolent action in order to address these important issues and to maintain our own sense of self-respect. The core group met and revisited our nonviolent action plan which we would carry out over the next couple months.

Just before hearing back from the Commission, I took a trip to Mexico where I would be abroad on the 4th of July. I took time on that trip to reflect and rest at a critical juncture before launching our nonviolent action campaign that fall. Below is a piece I shared with supporters of the Invest-In Project upon my return.

Reflections on a Recent Trip to Mexico

Recently, I took some time to get away from everything and refresh myself before a difficult fall. A friend and I embarked on a journey throughout Baja California, Mexico on a bus. Our primary destination was La Paz, which means the City of Peace. I thought this was very appropriate as I sought to get some peace of mind and to find momentary peace from being in a country that is engaged in a needless, bloody war. Despite knowing that we would be on the bus for 24 hours, we boarded our bus with the excitement of vacation and adventure.

However, it soon became clear that escaping the culture of violence so prevalent in the United States would not be so easy. Leaving the State of California, I thought I would at least be able to avoid seeing Arnold Schwarzenegger and all his Terminator-Hollywood foolishness. But, wouldn't you know it, the Mexican bus company was showing the movie Predator (dubbed in Spanish). While in Mexico, we spent a lot of time on the bus and I'm sad to say that during our entire trip we saw nothing but American movies, almost all of which were violent, vulgar, and which surely acted as a cultural weapon. Hollywood and U.S. corporations obviously have a very strong influence in Mexico, even in the most remote places. For instance, even at the smallest road-side bus stops, one would see the Spanish version of Cosmopolitan, Frito-Lay products, etc.

Nevertheless, I found peace of mind by reading my books, listening to my music, and looking out the window at the beautiful landscape. While on the bus, I found this very appropriate quote in a book by Bell Hooks:

Since much of the pedagogy of domination is brought to us in the United States by mass media, particularly via television. I rarely watch TV. No one, no matter how intelligent and skillful at critical thinking, is protected against the subliminal suggestions that imprint themselves on our subconscious brain if we are watching hours of television.

The Creator's beautiful landscape became my television. I saw temples of cacti stretching endlessly to the sky as if they were each individually competing in a race to reach out to God. I had never seen cacti so big and so numerous. Each sight brought an even more ideal and beautiful cacti. The Mexican landscape was filled with wonderfully rugged mountains, winding roads, and the bluest of blue Sea of Cortez water. At one point, while listening to Curtis Mayfield's "Keep

on Pushing,” all three of these physical features converged and I couldn't help but get goosebumps from Nature's beauty.

One adventure in Todos Santos (“All Saints”) took us on a long two-mile walk down a dirt road until suddenly we saw sand dunes. After climbing the sand dunes, we saw nothing but the most splendid beach I had ever seen and it stretched as far as the eye could see. Literally, all there was in our sight was white sand, blue (and I mean blue) water, protruding mountain cliffs, and huge waves. It was majestic. There were no hotels, no trash, nothing except nature. The only people there were me, my friend, and about 6 locals who were surfing in the obviously dangerous Pacific Ocean waves.

In closing, I want to say that despite the obvious U.S. corporate influence, Mexico is still a very beautiful country. If one only uses their eyes, you might think my previous statement false because Mexico can be ugly in many ways. But, if you use all your other senses, one can see the truth I speak of. The colors, the sounds, the tastes, of Mexico are all so beautiful. We ate so well. How could one not eat all natural popsicles with real coconut, all natural fruit drinks of cantaloupe, and juicy mangos with lime and chile on a stick? Because of this and many other reasons, I think the Mexican people are happier than Americans.

This year, I was in Mexico for the 228th anniversary of the United States' Declaration of Independence and I couldn't have been in a better place. Because of this trip, I can say that I am now better prepared to resurrect the spirit our nation's founding document and to pressure America to make it a reality. Won't you join me on this journey?

Elections were coming that fall so we strategically planned our nonviolent actions around these calendar months. San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy was running for a second term and he had appointed seven of the 15 members of the Human Relations Commission. The other eight members of the commission were appointed by the eight City Council members individually. On August 28, 2004, the anniversary of the March on Washington, we announced in a press release that the Invest-In Project was preparing for a 30-day “Pilgrimage, Penitence, and Human Rights” action during the height of the election season. This action, which was inspired by Gandhi, King, and Chavez, would begin on October 2 (Gandhi's birthday) in the Barrio Logan neighborhood, at the King/Chavez Academy, with a six-day pilgrimage and fast exposing different human rights violations at symbolic sites throughout the city. The 30-day nonviolent ac-

tion would end on November 2 (Election Day) with 24 more days of fasting and sleeping-out in front of the Mayor's house in the Del Cerro neighborhood. We had done some research and found an article that quoted Mayor Dick Murphy in ChristianPost.com on January 25, 2003 saying "Basically, I see myself as an instrument of God and I try to do what God would want me to do in the office I hold." To us, the Mayor's statement meant that he, as the people's representative, should find ways to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, welcome the stranger, help the "least of these," and care for all of God's children not just those who had money and elite connections. Our flyer and press release for the action stated the following:

Pilgrimage

The Pilgrimage will stand not as a protest but as a symbol of the long road we have to travel to put people before profits in San Diego.

Penitence

The sufferings of the 30-day fast and sleep out are a penance for the failings of all, but especially of our political representatives, to truly address the needs of ordinary people and especially of the most vulnerable. These are physicals forms of prayers asking that we may truly "preach the gospel to those in need, proclaim release to the captives, and recover the sight of the blind."

Human Rights

These actions culminate into a demand for our city leaders to recognize, respect, protect and fulfill our human rights. All the evidence indicates that the City of San Diego and the Mayor do not believe in human rights, as proof of belief is in action not words. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defines "Good Governance" as:

Governance is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights. Good governance accomplishes this in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law. The true test of "good" governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The key question is: are the institutions of governance effectively guaranteeing the

right to health, adequate housing, sufficient food, quality education, fair justice, and personal security?

A review of the attached 2004 Human Rights Report Card clearly indicates that the City of San Diego and its political leaders are not practicing good governance. For instance, at the airport and on Mayor Murphy's campaign website he has a picture of himself with several children, calling them his friends. But, does the Mayor care that almost 1 out of 4 children (22%) in San Diego live in poverty? As the Children's Defense Fund has stated, "Every elected official says he or she is 'for' children. There are very few campaign brochures that do not include at least one picture of a child or infant." Yet, once again, elected officials are unable or unwilling to fight for children because under our current system they owe their allegiance to the wealthy individuals and corporations that got them into office, not to our children who cannot contribute to their campaigns nor vote. Kevin Nash, a member of the Invest-In Project's core group, says that, "The human rights of children, who are the most vulnerable members of society, must be protected with every means available. The true test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children." Through the Invest-In Project's "Do You Believe in Human Rights?" Campaign, we seek to make human rights a reality in San Diego and the United States. On this day, the 41st anniversary of the March on Washington and Dr. King's famous speech, we announce our willingness to suffer and sacrifice for 30 days in October and November so that our children's nightmares of the current reality will be transformed into dreams of a hopeful future.

Not long after making this announcement to the press, we were contacted by an undercover police officer named Joe Lehr assigned to the mayor's security detail. He wanted to meet and talk. So, Kevin and I met him in a local breakfast diner shortly thereafter. Initially, the officer was friendly but one could see that it was not sincere. It was obvious to us that it was a tactic, a ploy, a part of his training. He was assessing us. Soon, after realizing we were not crazy, he began to try to intimidate us, especially me, by referencing my advanced repayment of taxes and student loans (invest-in). We told him flat out that we were prepared to accept the consequences of our actions, including jail as he had implied. He was baffled and a little unsure what to do. His goal was clearly to discourage us from taking this action but we all knew he had not

achieved his objective. We ended the meeting cordially and departed knowing we would be seeing each other again soon.

On October 2nd, we began our pilgrimage at the King/Chavez Elementary School in Barrio Logan and each night we marched from one symbolic location to another, highlighting different human rights violations until we finally reached the mayor's house north of Interstate 8, which is traditionally seen as the dividing line between more people of color with lower incomes in the southern part of the city and mostly white, higher incomes in the north. Below is an outline of our schedule. We laid out the action in this way for several strategic reasons:

1. Timing around mayoral elections would almost guarantee interest;
2. Long-term action (instead of the traditional one time event lasting an hour or two) would maximize the ability of the campaign to get media coverage and communicate with the public;
3. We utilized important, historic dates tied to previous nonviolent leaders/movements to connect our campaign to this important historical legacy;
4. It built upon our previous actions and demonstrated a significant commitment on our part;
5. It would place the mayor in a dilemma of arresting us or not; and
6. It would create increasing interest and momentum as we neared the mayor's house and election day.

DATE	PILGRIMAGE STARTING POINT - 6PM	VIGIL AND SLEEP OUT - 8PM	HUMAN RIGHT VIOLATION
Oct. 2	King/Chavez Elementary School	Petco Park	Corporate Occupation
Oct. 3	Petco Park	Maryland Hotel (Affordable Housing Being Torn Down)	Housing
Oct. 4	Maryland Hotel	Scripps Mercy Hospital	Health Care
Oct. 5	Scripps Mercy	San Diego City Schools Education Center	Education
Oct. 6	San Diego City Schools Education Center	Qualcomm Stadium	Unjust Social Structure
Oct. 7	Qualcomm Stadium	Mayor Dick Murphy's House	Taxation Without Representation

Oct. 8-Nov. 2

Fast and Sleep Out in Front of Mayor's House to Demand a Response to Human Rights Violations. Begins at 8 p.m. Each Night.

Not surprisingly, the mayor's office and the media did take interest in the campaign. Even the conservative *San Diego Union-Tribune* wrote a lengthy article about the action. The article described our efforts in dealing with ants, rats, security guards and police. The mayor told a reporter that our actions "really intimidates" his wife and daughter but ended up saying "We're going to let them stay." The fact that David's birthday took place during the campaign was highlighted. He turned 19 years old while sleeping on the public sidewalk in front of the mayor's house. It also shared comments from Joni Craig, whom we did not know, of the San Diego Foundation for Change, which distributes grants to organizations that fight for social justice. She said that San Diego was "becoming unlivable for more and more residents everyday[...] Without dissent—including nonviolent civil disobedience—African-Americans might still be slaves, women might not have the right to vote and children might still work in factories." The report spoke to the law we researched prior to launching our action and strategically choose to focus on. It said:

"There is some question whether sleeping in front of the mayor's house is legal. A law designed to protect physicians who perform abortions prohibits picketing a specific home. Abortion opponents get around the law by circling the block rather than staying put.

Before Olson's campaign began, Murphy said he was not entirely comfortable with the idea of activists taking a stand, literally, so close to home. "I respect a person's right to protest, but I'm not a fan of civil disobedience," the mayor said. "Camping out in front of my house will not solve these problems."

Murphy said it is not the City Council's job to resolve the national and international issues raised in Olson's complaint. "The city ought to focus on providing police protection, fire protection, libraries, parks, streets and trash pickup," he said.

Last night, Murphy said the protest is better suited for City Hall. He said that on Wednesday a homeless services coordinator for the city had met with Olson's group to suggest how some programs could address needs of the poor."

Read the full article at:

http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20041009/news_1m9olson.html.

Before taking this action, the mayor's office had ignored us completely. Now, as mentioned in the article, as we approached his house, he set up a meeting with his homeless services coordinator along with several city police officers. However, the main purpose of the meeting for city officials was clearly to get us to stop. Additionally, it was obvious that he misunderstood our message and goal. While we were certainly concerned about the homeless, we were highlighting the human rights violations of thousands of ordinary San Diegans. If he had simply read our Human Rights Report Card, he would have known that we were not speaking simply about the homeless but about the 22 percent of San Diego children who live in poverty, the 44 percent of tenants who cannot afford the fair-market rent, the almost one out of four county residents who lacks health insurance, the underpaid workers who cannot find a good, quality job because 61% of the jobs created pay less than \$25,000 in the 4th least affordable city in the U.S., and the rest of the San Diego population who is also harmed by this unjust social structure in less obvious ways. We told the media, the mayor's coordinator and, more specifically, the police that we would not halt our actions for promises of meeting with us. We would be willing to meet with the mayor any time but we would not stop our actions in order to do so. We reminded them that if the mayor had meet with us or if his appointed commissioners on the Human Relations Commission had taken us seriously, we would not have had to take these actions in the first place.

The mayor's argument that these issues are not within the jurisdiction of the city was also a misrepresentation of the facts to avoid the issues at hand. Mayors can certainly use their position to raise public support for issues, challenge others at the county, state, and national level to do something, and take local leadership on these issues while simultaneously "providing police protection, fire protection, libraries, parks, streets and trash pickup." This is evidenced by mayors' leadership across the country now in various cities on these issues, ranging from affordable housing to universal preschool to universal health care to \$15 minimum wages at the time of writing. After our meeting with the city homeless coordinator and the police on October 5th, they were not happy with our positions and we departed without rancor but with no resolution. Thus, that evening, we continued with our action as we had before.

Almost each night after our sleep-outs, I would write a press release first thing in the morning with highlights/lowlights of the night and would then send it out to sup-

porters and press contacts so they could stay connected, take action, and respond in case we were arrested. This constant communication certainly helped our efforts as many supporters commented on the daily updates. Below are excerpts from each press release we sent out:

October 3, 2004 Press Release

King/Chavez Elementary to Petco Park

Our first night came and went with its share of excitement. 25-30 Human Rights Defenders, including quite a few children, kicked off this nonviolent action at the King/Chavez Academy. Our pilgrimage route exposed us to rows of homeless people sleeping in the streets in the Barrio Logan and Downtown and even encouraged a few homeless people (Mark, Watkins, and Mickey Mike) to join our ranks, share their experience and wisdom, and sleep-out with us. The young and old alike expressed themselves using the language of human rights. Jorge, about six years old, demanded in Spanish that the city “respect our human rights” and that there be “no violence at school.” The television stations Univision(17) and Telemundo(33) covered the event.

We were harassed several times by the ballpark security as we were sleeping. They cursed at us, threatened to call the police, and said things like “I don’t care where you go. Just go across the street.” We refused to move across the street telling them that we already spoke with the police about our actions. They called the police anyway. The police came out. We explained our actions and that the people’s tax dollars paid for this ballpark. The policemen were very sympathetic. One policeman even shared that he could not initially buy a home in San Diego working as a policeman. We again refused to move across the street but we did agree, however, to move off the concrete steps of the vacant building. We literally ended up moving only about five feet closer to the sidewalk. This compromise satisfied the ballpark security. Nonviolence seemed to work: the more they learned about our actions the more pleasant they became. They departed by saying “take care” and by bringing us some nachos in the middle of the night.

October 4, 2004 Press Release

Petco Park to Maryland Hotel

Again, we were not without our share of excitement on the second night of our action. The number of participants, Human Rights Defenders, increased to

about 35 people. Our pilgrimage was short but filled with more energy as we marched to the Maryland Hotel where we highlighted the violation of our human right to housing. This site was chosen because the poor people who formerly occupied this Single-Room Occupancy hotel were evicted and the law was not enforced to help these low-income individuals find replacement housing. Instead, the city decided to side with and protect the rich developers. Our rallying cry last night was “What do we want? Human Rights!” Univision came out again to document the people’s stories and experiences. We were told that they would be covering the story for all 30 nights.

As we slept-out, a young man, thinking we were homeless, offered to give us money for food. After telling him that we were not in fact homeless, that we were fasting, and that we were exposing the human rights violations in this city, he shared his thoughts, gave the campaign a financial donation, and praised us by saying, “The Man upstairs looks favorably on your actions.”

Unfortunately, at 3 a.m., as we were peacefully sleeping, we were again harassed and threatened by a private security guard and the San Diego police. One policeman in particular was very disrespectful, aggressive, and angry. He even cursed at us and physically grabbed our bags as he shouted at us. Initially, the private security guard did not even let us respond before saying, “We’ll do it the hard way then.” He then proceeded to call the police. This is a vacant building with no one around in the middle of the night. Both men were very unreasonable until they realized that we were willing to be arrested. And, yes, we were almost arrested! The irate policeman got to the point where he actually said, “You are under arrest. Stand up against the wall.” We did exactly as he said, at which point he realized that we were serious and not afraid. He then backed off and began lecturing us, albeit with a softer tone. In the end, as we had initially proposed to the private security guard to no avail, we ended up moving just a few feet nearer to the sidewalk just as we did last night in order to avoid breaking the law of “trespassing.” We only wish someone spent as much time and energy enforcing our human rights under international human rights law as they do protecting property rights. Who is enforcing our human rights? Being left with no other alternative, we, the Human Rights Defenders, are!

October 5, 2004 Press Release

Maryland Hotel to Scripps Mercy Hospital

This was a relatively peaceful night, thank goodness. The number of participants last night decreased, as we expected, due to the length of the pilgrimage and the ability of families with children to travel this distance. Many of them are expected to return later tonight and/or this week. Our pilgrimage was twice as long as the longest route thus far. When we arrived at the Maryland Hotel, dozens of homeless people were waiting to be fed at the Salvation Army building next door. As we marched through the Gaslamp Quarter and all the way down 5th Street, the great contrast of our city was revealed through the before mentioned fact, the fancy restaurants, and the significant development of expensive, high rise condominiums. Overall, the pilgrimage was more peaceful and allowed us to quietly catch up with one another. This was much needed as we have all been very busy working during the day, carrying out our life's responsibilities, in addition to conducting this action this week. Univision captured footage of our pilgrimage along much of the route tonight.

Upon arriving at the hospital site, our Spanish speakers gave interviews to Univision, and Jeff McDonald, a San Diego Union-Tribune reporter, interviewed many of us. Later, our core group member, Corrie, gave an excellent speech regarding the state of health care. It was a kind of teach-in for the rest of us. We, too, are still learning as we go.

Last night, the folks who slept out were finally able to get some much needed rest as we were only moved once, by security guards. At 3 a.m., these guards again yelled at us to move as we laid in front of a dark, vacant building near Washington Street. One can easily see why homeless people might have a hard edge to them sometimes because, as Kevin insightfully pointed out, people rarely talk or interact with you in a polite manner. Without our candles, I suspect they might not have even seen us. However, we did our usual routine of moving to the sidewalk. We didn't even address them as they didn't really talk to us either. As we were setting up our things on the sidewalk, one of the three security guards "protecting" us (the public?) yelled something about violating some law and needing a city permit. Maybe we will just start by sleeping on the sidewalk from now on. Somehow, I suspect this still won't be good enough to not get harassed.

As we awoke this morning, we were greeted by what we suspect was a homeless woman who said, "Good morning and God bless." We replied by saying, "Same to you." It was a nice way to begin the day.

October 6, 2004 Press Release

Scripps Mercy Hospital to San Diego City Schools Education Center

Yesterday was a very interesting day. We began the day with an early morning meeting with representatives from the Mayor's office, including Robert Young (Assistant to the Mayor for Community Relations), Sharon Johnson (Homeless Services Administrator), and several police officers. Unfortunately, the city's representatives were not very well informed about our campaign, although they were very receptive and willing to listen to us. Almost the entire meeting was devoted to educating them on what we were doing. We began the meeting with a couple preliminary questions for them: 1) Does someone here have the authority to agree to something for the Mayor?; and 2) How aware are you of the campaign and the issues we are addressing, for instance, have you read our Formal Complaint? We reiterated this first question as we left the meeting. Nothing was resolved as, again, we spent most of the time sharing and educating the Mayor's representatives. However, I believe the meeting was productive and it was appreciated. At least the people's needs and concerns are now being acknowledged and not dismissed.

The number of participants in last night's pilgrimage increased back up to about 20-25. A good majority of the participants were high school students connected to Californians for Justice as well as Hoover and Crawford High School students. Unfortunately, I had to work late last night and was not able to join the group until 8 p.m. I was told by the others that the pilgrimage went very well. The pilgrimage went through the heart of Hillcrest on University and then north on Normal Street. I was told that Univision once again covered the event, in particular the pilgrimage. As I arrived at the Education Center, the entire group was in the middle of the vigil with candles lit, everyone in a circle sharing their experiences, and then expressing the reason that they were there. All of the experiences shared were wonderful. They highlighted the human right to education. Many said that quality education should be for ALL not just some. They felt wronged by this denial of this, the "key to all other human rights." Another young woman said that our political leaders failure to educate all of us will, unfortunately, come back to haunt them. She used an analogy of Gov. Schwarzenegger needing medical care in his old age only to find out that the medical assistant does know what they are doing because they were not given much of an educational opportunity. This reminded me of Dr. King's speech

where, in Memphis before his assassination, he said that sanitation workers, hospital orderlies, and doctors are all equally important, as without any one of them the public's health would be in jeopardy. Thus, he said that they should all be valued and respected. Before ending the vigil with a "Unity Clap," I stated that everyone's participation is appreciated and valued because just a week ago we were invisible. Now, through their participation and the power of nonviolent action we turned the invisible into something very visible.

As we began our sleep-out, I had to quickly run home to pick up some things I had forgotten in my rush to work in the morning. When I returned to the site, a detective (Executive Protection Detail) from the Mayor's office, James Jarrett, was talking to Rev. Cribbs and the other participants. I was immediately told that he had asked for me and I introduced myself to him. He mentioned that he had seen Rev. Cribbs before at other community meetings. The core group continued to briefly chat with Detective Jarrett and exchange niceties. At one point, he expressed concern about having the Mayor's address on the internet. I told him we would consider taking it off the website as he requested. After just a few minutes, the detective departed. Shortly thereafter, Rev. Cribbs and a couple others from the core group departed for the evening.

However, not long after they left, Detective Jarrett returned in the same unmarked police car. By this time it was late in the evening and we were pretty tired. In fact, David was asleep. He then proceeded to essentially try to dissuade us from going to the Mayor's house and to ask us the same questions we had previously answered before with others, including at this morning's meeting. He indicated that the Mayor was not concerned about us coming but that the Mayor's neighbors were. At this point, we got into a discussion about how the neighbors would know anything about this unless the police told them (or maybe they speak Spanish and watch Univision, which I doubt). This obviously could be very troublesome as they could paint us in the light of being crazy "protesters" and not followers of Gandhi, King, and Chavez seeking to share the suffering and pain of the people with those in power, especially those who have refused to address the violation of our inherent human rights. It would be very convenient for the Mayor to say that it was not him who had us arrested but it was his neighbors wouldn't it?

Detective Jarrett mentioned a municipal code based on a U.S. Supreme Court case (Frisby v. Schulz) that dealt with fanatic abortion protesters picketing the home of a private doctor. We distinguished our situation by saying

that we were not fanatics nor protesters but very reasonable people sharing the pain of the people (through peaceful actions of fasting and sleeping out) with a public official (not private individual). We emphasized that we were doing this because we were being left with no other alternative and this was done only after being dismissed and ignored through the established public mechanisms. We also discussed our preparations to make this action the least intrusive as possible. For instance, we have planned to leave room on the sidewalk for others to walk by.

It became quite clear that the Mayor's office now had a sense of urgency about us coming to his house. We told him we were just as eager to end this action as they were. We said that nobody in their right mind wants to deprive themselves of food and adequate rest and that all of us would love to be eating regularly and sleeping in our own beds. However, we stated that the Mayor and city officials could have easily avoided this a long time ago if they showed the same kind of urgency as far back as February 2004.

Detective Jarrett was essentially trying to negotiate with us: we relayed to him that if we were going to be negotiating we preferred to it with someone who had the authority to speak for the Mayor and not with the police. We emphasized that we have been very open and had done lots of work to communicate our concerns and demands and yet the City had not truly responded to our demands of our inherent human rights. We basically said that we already have presented the city with a proposal and that the city has never responded with a counter offer, partly because they have not done their homework by reading our Formal Complaint of Human Rights Violations. In a very candid manner, I then added that it was a bit disturbing that the police department was the chosen representative body that the city has decided to send to communicate with us, especially after it has been very obvious that we are not a threat. It is our sincere belief that any city representative who has meet with us would be very hard pressed in saying that were any kind of a threat. We said that this chosen method of communication is troublesome because it has an element of intimidation and implication/threat of force, especially while "negotiating" past the midnight hour in the dark streets of San Diego. Again, this could have been easily addressed in an office and not in the street a long time ago. Nevertheless, we told the detective that we appreciated his efforts and support and that we would be willing to discuss ways to end this unfortunate action.

While we have no way of knowing for sure, it does seem that the city intends to arrest us on Friday night. We are planning to address this by sleeping in shifts of two people per night. However, if somehow we are all taken away, we ask that others take our spots in shifts of two people per night and with a firm commitment to nonviolence and love for all people, including the Mayor and the police. Who will be bold and courageous for our children and their future? If not you, then who? If not now, then when?

We must have been pretty tired because we did not hear our alarm in the morning and, before we knew it, a policewoman politely woke us up. David commented that this was the first time a police officer or security guard woke us up politely and respectfully. It was certainly a much nicer way to begin the day. We quickly gathered our things and departed for our day's work.

October 7, 2004 Press Release

San Diego City Schools Education Center to Qualcomm Stadium

Yesterday was one of the more simple and peaceful days yet (calm before the storm?). A few of us gathered at the Education Center and departed a little late, as we had forgotten that we ran out of water and decided to buy some more. The small group departed for our destination. A little later a few others joined us along the pilgrimage route. Later, we learned that several others attempted to find us but the parking situation was difficult and created some problems. In the end, about 10 of us gathered at the gate of Qualcomm Stadium. The moment we turned the corner at Qualcomm stadium the man in the security booth got on his telephone and several police cars immediately came to the scene. They soon got out and introduced themselves. We had set up all our signs of Gandhi, King, Chavez with candles lit and placed in front of them. So, we gave the police officers a little tour of each of these people and shared with them the quote associated with each nonviolent freedom fighter. Rev. Cribbs asked the police officer if he shared these values, if he thought this was taught in the schools, and if he had children. He said he did. He mentioned that his children were taught these values in his children's private Catholic school. Of course, we thought to ourselves, what about public school? What about those who can't afford private school?

A little later, we got into a discussion about what constitutes a violation of the law at the Mayor's house. We were told that the police had in fact told the neighbors that we were coming. The discussion went in circles for a while, but

the conclusion was basically that the decision as to whether or not we were to be arrested was up to one of his supervisors as he was only a Sergeant.

The police officers departed shortly thereafter and we began our vigil. At this point, we pointed to the Qualcomm Stadium sign behind us and asked, “If we have human rights, then how can our government allow one individual, Irwin Jacobs, the CEO of Qualcomm, to “earn” \$224 million in one year (2003) while at the same time almost one out of four children are living in poverty in the same city?” Is this consistent with “Liberty and Justice for all” and “in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility [...] promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity?” We then shared a few of our own experiences of repeatedly struggling with the symptoms of this unjust social structure. We declared our goal to address the root cause of the people’s human rights violations, including the violation of our right to a just social order. Later, we just enjoyed each other’s company and went to sleep without incident.

October 8, 2004 Press Release

Qualcomm Stadium to Mayor Murphy’s Residence

The last leg of our pilgrimage took place last night, as we arrived at our final destination. A new chapter of our month-long action has now begun. We departed from Qualcomm stadium a little weary about our four-mile pilgrimage to the Mayor’s house in Del Cerro. We all had the nonviolent showdown with the Mayor and City of San Diego on our minds. We were uncertain about what might happen. Several things, including the increased police activity, indicated that they might arrest us. Our pace was quick as we intended to make the four-mile trek within our set time frame and arrive on time to the Mayor’s house. We actually arrived a bit early. Fox 6 News and the San Diego Union-Tribune folks were waiting for us as we got near the church where we had planned to hold our nightly vigil.

After waiting until about 8:15 p.m., in order to allow other supporters to arrive, we began our vigil. I opened up with a short speech about “making human rights a reality” in San Diego and the United States. I mentioned that several children have participated in this action and that David M. had just asked the children, “Who is going to be the next freedom fighter on these posters?” as he pointed to our signs of Gandhi, King, and Chavez. All of them quickly raised their hands! I added that this nation was founded on the notion of

“no taxation without representation” and yet who can claim that we are being represented with just one look at our human rights report card. I then shared that the Children’s Defense Fund recently documented the fact that “John W. Snow, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, was the CEO of CSX Corporation which paid no federal corporate income tax in three of the four years 1998-2001.” How is this consistent with our founding cries for liberty and justice for all? Democracy is based on the principle that the people are to be valued and again who can claim that we are being valued with just one look at our Human Rights Report Card. (One look around us and it is obvious that corporations are certainly valued.) After my address, Kevin read a quote from Nelson Mandela’s 1994 Inaugural Speech. It reads:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are born to make manifest the glory of God within us. It is not just in some of us. It is in everyone. And as we let our light shine, we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

We were determined that we were not going to “play small” and that we were going to “let our light shine” so that we can become liberators of all, including the Mayor (and his fear of us). A few others shared their wonderful thoughts and dreams as we ended the vigil.

At this point, David, Kevin, Rev. Cribbs and I left the group in order to grab our sleeping bags and head to the home of the Mayor of San Diego. We quietly moved up the street, grabbed our things, said a quick prayer, and in a very orderly manner approached the Mayor’s house and began to lay out our things. The photographers and TV cameras were all shining lights on us. We placed the Human Rights Report Card and the signs of Gandhi and King prominently next to our sleeping bags, which were neatly placed along the edge of the sidewalk. Rev. Cribbs led us in context-specific readings of the Bible. At this point, someone connected to the Mayor summoned the press into his home. Soon thereafter, our supporters came by in a single file line, lit a candle, and initialed

the Human Rights Report Card. We all gathered in a final prayer. Rev. Cribbs stayed out to support us for a while as we quietly read. Fox 6 News did a live shot for their nightly program and soon we were asleep. Ironically, it was the best night's sleep we had all week long.

P.S. I was just served with a court summons regarding my "advanced form of repayment" of my student loans as I was writing this update.

October 9, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

The word "mayor" is defined as "The head of government of a city." The word's origins come from a Latin word meaning "greater or superior" and, yet, isn't ironic that the Mayor and his family are scared and intimidated" by three humble city residents who peacefully gather, fast, pray, and sleep in front of his house? At every step along the way and even before the month-long action began, we have met with representatives from the police department and the Mayor's office and not one of them can say truthfully that we are in any way intimidating. Additionally, I am confident that we, the Human Rights Defenders, have all had our backgrounds thoroughly checked. The Mayor probably knows more about us than he knows about anyone else he meets and greets while campaigning. Yet, he does not want to "reward us by meeting with us." Is this the same man who recently said, "I see myself as an instrument of God and I try to do what God would want me to do in the office I hold?"

There are other contradictions as well. For instance, when we began our pilgrimage on October 2nd, we were the ones who were scared as we slept downtown in the dark streets. Who was there to protect us? Certainly not the police. They were often the ones we were scared of because they cursed at us, harassed us, threatened us, forced us to move, and literally ripped at our things. However, now that we are at the Mayor's house, we have the same police protection that the Mayor has and we feel quite safe in his nice neighborhood even though we are doing the exact same thing we did downtown a few days earlier. You see, even in terms of personal security, the Mayor enjoys his human rights while so many others do not. This is just another example of why we have brought the pain and suffering of the people to him after he would not come to us through the established public mechanisms.

The other implication in all this is that we are asking for unreasonable things. Is it really unreasonable to demand your inherent human rights when you see that our head of government and the city officials are doing nothing or very little to fulfill or protect those rights. Under human rights law, the government, including the City of San Diego, has the responsibility to RECOGNIZE, RESPECT, PROTECT, FULFILL, and PROMOTE our human rights. At this point, the city and its head official will not even recognize us as humans, let alone recognize our inherent rights as humans. Is this truly “America’s Finest City?”

October 10, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

A very important point that has been missed by the Mayor and the media is the singular concentration on the Mayor and his family’s feelings (and sometimes the children in his specific neighborhood). The whole point of this action is to highlight the suffering and burdens shouldered by the people of San Diego and, yet, it seems to always go back to how the Mayor is feeling during this month-long action. What about how the 22% of children who live in poverty in San Diego everyday are feeling? What about the feelings of those San Diegans whose rents continue to rise? What about parents who, everyday, have to tell their children why there are homeless people near their homes? What about the hunger pains of the children who are forced to eat 48% of the San Diego Food Bank’s more than 10 million meals? What about the feelings of the underpaid workers who cannot find a good, quality job because 61% of the jobs created pay less than \$25,000 in the 4th least-affordable city in the U.S.?

October 12, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

Last night at around 9 p.m., a child, who was about 11 years old, came down the dark street on his electric scooter to visit us. We knew someone was coming because we saw a single headlight moving slowly down the street from a distance. His sole destination was to visit our camp-site. He briefly looked at our signs of Gandhi, King, and the Human Rights Report Card and asked what we were doing. We told him that we were “exposing the human rights violations that occur every day in America’s Finest City and that we were trying to get the Mayor and the City to do something.” He examined our Human Rights Report

Card and we asked him if he wanted a flyer and he said, "Yes." I then asked him if he was scared and he said, "No," which was obvious since he came alone after dark. I just wanted to make sure since there was all this talk of us scaring the neighbors. He then told us that his friends at school had been asking him about our action because they had seen us on TV and knew that he lived near the mayor. He soon got on his scooter and quickly took off up the street.

This morning another neighbor came up to us as we were packing our things and did almost the exact same thing. He greeted us and looked at our signs. We told him about our flyers and asked if he wanted one. He said yes and took one. He said that he had seen us and that it was usual to have people sleeping in the sidewalk. We said yes, knowing that is exactly why we choose to do it. It made me think of a discussion we had with a detective who was trying to dissuade us from carrying out our action at the Mayor's house. He said that the neighbors were scared. I asked him how they knew we were coming. Obviously, the police had told them and God only knows what they communicated to them. I then said that if someone was peacefully sleeping on the sidewalk with candles and signs of Gandhi and King in my neighborhood I would not be scared but curious. I believe this is exactly what is happening. The neighbors are not scared of us, but intrigued.

The encounters described above are not the only interactions with neighbors. For instance, an elderly couple, another supposedly frightened group, stopped in their car and asked what we were doing. We told them and they were not fearful as I walked to their car to give them the Human Rights Report Card they had asked for. Neighbors have walked their dogs by us and they were not fearful. If there is any evidence of any neighbors being scared, we have not seen it. Quite frankly, the only people who seem to be scared is the Mayor and his family. A woman who appeared to be his adult daughter (a woman about 25-30 years old) even got a police escort to move her car from the driveway to the street the other night. Now, we are not sure if this was his daughter but we do know that his daughter lives at home. (Why does she live at home? Ironically, maybe she too is unable to afford to move out of her parents home with this housing crisis.)

Why is it that the residents (neighbors) will talk to us but the Mayor will not even communicate with his own constituents? So far, he has demonstrated that he will not listen to his constituents through the established public

mechanisms nor when they are willing to sacrifice and demonstrate their commitment to the issues.

October 14, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

Throughout this campaign we have been receiving incredibly wonderful messages of support from friends and strangers alike. We would like to thank everyone. Below is one such message sent to us. As you know from the San Diego Union-Tribune story, my car has a dent in it so I think this story is appropriate. In many ways, it is analogy of us sleeping and fasting in front of the Mayor's house in order to get the attention of our city leaders to help our children." [As you read this story, remember that Dr. King always said that "violence is the language of the unheard."]

THE BRICK

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?" The young boy was apologetic. "Please, mister... please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do," He pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop..." With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me." Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay. "Thank you

and may God bless you,” the grateful child told the stranger. Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home. It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message “Don’t go through life so that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!” God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don’t have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It’s our choice to listen or not.

David and I promptly arrived at 8 p.m. Kevin had to work late last night and joined us a little later. So, David and I had a little time to catch up with one another before a couple police officers we now know came by to visit us and discuss the issues. We have made it clear before that we do not want to negotiate with the police because they do not have the authority to agree to anything and they are merely following orders to arrest us or not. Nevertheless, the police officers were bent on discussing the issues so we engaged them to some extent. One of the frustrating things is that they essentially try to dissuade us from our actions but then say that they do not have the Mayor’s ear. They say something like, “We are just low men on the totem pole.” So, why are we talking to them? Please do not get me wrong. We’ll talk with anyone about these issues but when it comes to actual negotiations about our demands and our willingness to end our action we want to speak with someone who has the authority to do something. Only makes sense, huh?

Later, after Kevin and Grant [friend and supporter] had joined us, another police officer came over and talked to us as well. He mentioned that it was a pleasure working with us because we were very reasonable and cooperative. He said he was used to working with gang members who were quite the opposite. We discussed the recent gang shootings in more detail and explored with each other some possible solutions. It was a pleasant talk about a serious issue. I couldn’t help but think, “Why is it that the neighbors (including children) and the police will talk with us, but not the Mayor?”

By this point, Grant had left, David had fallen asleep, and Kevin and I talked for a little while longer before we got in our sleeping bags and read for a while. I came across this quote in an article from my church newsletter entitled “Election Day Sermons were Common Place in 18th-Century New England.” The

article said that in these sermons, “the people were encouraged to promise to follow those they had elected and rulers were to promise to act for the good of all. As long as rulers acted ‘in their proper character,’ subjects were to obey. On the other hand, if rulers acted contrary to the terms of the agreement, people were ‘duty bound’ to resist.” My friends, we are doing what we are “duty bound” to do! In doing our duty, we are demanding our rights, our human rights. A different article about a recent Reformed church declaration said, “The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. We live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all[...] The annual income of the richest 1 percent [in the world] is equal to that of the poorest 57 percent, and 24,000 people die each day from poverty and malnutrition.” Oddly enough, I think in this case we, not the police, have become the ones who are “protecting and serving” the public.

October 16, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

The Mayor has continually defended his unwillingness to talk about the people’s needs with the Invest-In Project by saying that the human rights issues that we are raising are not the City Council’s job. Instead, he is touting his “effective leadership in these challenging times” by campaigning on establishing the “first City Ethics Commission,” tripling “the undergrounding of overhead power lines,” and eliminating “the Chargers ticket guarantee.” In an October 9, 2004, San Diego Union-Tribune article about our efforts, he is quoted as saying, “The city ought to focus on providing police protection, fire protection, libraries, parks, streets and trash pick-up.” Meanwhile, our public servant (and the Mayor’s employee), the Executive Director of the Human Relations Commission, Ashley Walker, has added that our demands “are not within the jurisdiction of the council.”

First, let us begin by saying that Ms. Walker’s comments are a complete contradiction to what she and the Human Relations Commission told the Invest-In Project after we presented our case to them in the early Summer of 2004. The website of the Human Relations Commission clearly states that “The public is encouraged to attend the meetings to bring to the Commission’s attention, any human relations’ problems, ideas, or concerns.” Additionally, after being invited to the commission meeting, we specifically asked, “Is this where we need to be to

address these issues?” The Human Relations Commission and Ms. Walker said, “Yes.” Only five of the 15 commissioners bothered to show up and the Mayor alone has seven appointees to this city commission. Furthermore, the Human Relations Commission admittedly has five focus areas, on which we concentrated our presentation. These five focus areas are: Educational Disparities, Affordable Housing, Mental Health, Civil Rights and Peace. Now, please tell me why a city commission would have these five focus areas if they are not the city’s job to address them? Please review our Human Rights Report Card and explain to me how any objective person can reasonably say that our issues do not fall within these five focus areas. Also, as pointed out previously, the Human Relations Commission mission statement says “protect basic human and civil rights” and its first activity is described as follows:

The Commission: Advises the Mayor, City Council and City Manager on methods to assure that all city residents have equal access to economic, political and educational opportunities and equal access to service protection and accommodation in all business and public agencies.

Isn’t a shame that our city officials are either lying to us or wasting our public resources by spending time on issues that are “not their job?” Just because we use a human rights framework doesn’t mean that these issues are merely foreign policy.

October 17, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

Last night, San Diego received its first rain in something like 180 days. While this was fortunate for the city, as the rain was desperately needed, we did not feel quite so fortunate sleeping outside on the street in front of the Mayor’s house. We certainly got a little taste of what the homeless must have to contend with on rainy nights. We tried to use our tarps as make-shift rain cover. From about 3 a.m. until 6 a.m. when we normally depart, we did not get much rest. Most of our time was spent trying to stay dry. We did the best we could. I would say that we did a pretty good for being novices, but we were definitely wet this morning as we got up. From the weather forecast, it looks like we might get a few more nights of practice. We left this morning laughing about the night,

longing for some rest, and uplifted by the fact that our Gandhi sign did not blow over despite the strong winds and the rain storm.

October 18, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

After leaving the Mayor's house at 6 a.m. yesterday, I began the day by going to church. I looked at the church bulletin and saw that it was Children's Sabbath Sunday. The Children's Sabbath is observed by many denominations on the third Sunday in October. It was established by the Children's Defense Fund to "convey the needs of children and to encourage religious groups to commit to care for and protect children by advocating justice and intercession." Realizing this provided me with some comfort as we are now to the halfway point of our action and because we are emphasizing the human rights of our children.

The Scripture for the day was also relevant. It began with Jesus telling a parable with the message of "not losing heart." Jesus said,

In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, "Vindicate me against my adversary." For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, "Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming." And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?"

Obviously, I had to ask myself whether we were before an unrighteous judge [Mayor and former judge Dick Murphy] who neither fears God nor regards the people? I guess the next two weeks will determine that. Even in the rain, we are doing our best to be the widow in the story by seeking relief from those who take advantage of the people and steal our inherent human rights.

October 19, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

Is it too much to ask for good governance in a democratic society that gets its power from the consent of those governed? Through our actions, we are

saying that we do not consent to this faulty form of government that values things, profit, and property more than people. In the Jewish faith tradition, the question was once asked, “Why was there violence [injustice] in Gilead?” The answer came saying, “Because they made what is primary secondary and what is secondary primary. How so? Because they loved their possessions more than their own children.” (Midrash Tanhuma, Mattot) Is San Diego following Gilead’s example? Please remember that almost one out of four (22%) of our children live in poverty.

In order to avoid history’s hard lessons, we have asked for a simple thing from the Mayor and the City Council:

Pass a law stating that the “City of San Diego can no longer be judged by its military or economic strength, nor by the splendor of its beaches, tourist locations, private and public buildings [including sports stadiums], but by the well-being of its peoples; by their levels of health, nutrition and education; by their opportunities to earn a fair reward for their labors; by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives; by the respect that is shown for their civil and political liberties; by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children.”

With a little courage and love, this can easily be done. Are we not in desperate need of a new standard, a human rights standard, to measure progress in our society? Without this new human rights standard of progress, our democracy and our very foundation as a society are merely facades waiting to be destroyed by their own contradictions.

Just before we began this nonviolent action, I was given a book as a gift by a new friend. In this book, there are two quotes from Marian Wright Edelman of the Children’s Defense Fund that I would like to share:

What legacies, principles, values, and deeds will we stand for and send to the future through our children and to a world desperately hungering for moral leadership and community? Few human beings are blessed to experience the beginning of a new millennium. How will progress be measured over the next thousand years if we survive them? By the kill

power and number of weapons of destruction we can produce and traffic at home and abroad, or by our willingness to shrink and destroy the prison of violence we've constructed in the name of peace and security? Will we be remembered by how many material things we can manufacture, advertise, sell, and consume, or by our rediscovery of more lasting, nonmaterial measures of success—a new Dow Jones for the purpose and quality of life in our families, neighborhoods, cities, and national and world communities? Will we be remembered by how rapidly technology and corporate merger mania and greed can render human beings obsolete, or by a better balance between corporate profits and corporate caring for our children, families, communities, and the environment? Will we be remembered by how much a few at the top can get at the expense of the many at the bottom and in the middle, or by our struggle for a concept of enough for all?”

Organize, mobilize, and hold our leaders accountable. It's time for children's advocates and all people of conscience to wake up, ask hard questions, act boldly, and hold ourselves accountable for holding our leaders accountable for taking children out of harm's way. It's time to close the adult hypocrisy gap between word and deed for children. It's time to compete with those who would destroy, neglect, and lead our children astray. The soul snatchers have been busy at work turning family and child dreams into drugs and violence and greed and consumption. The budget cutters have been relentless and swift in pursuing their special interests and turning child hopes into cold despair and grinding child futures into dust. Child advocates must get better and tougher at reclaiming our children's birthright to freedom from fear and want by working together and with more disciplined messages and priorities. We must set aside our personal and organizational egos for the greater good of saving children. We must seek and welcome new voices and make new alliances whose bottom line is the economic, social, and environmental well-being of children. If our nation and world are fit for children they are fit for everyone.

Will you join us in demanding a new human rights standard for progress? Our political leaders do not seem to want to implement this new standard on their

own. Shall we have to explore new nonviolent ways to withdraw our consent to be governed by these inept political leaders who perpetuate an unjust form of government? Mayor Murphy and the City Council, “Do You Believe in Human Rights?”

Highlights/Lowlights:

About 20 of us gathered at the church near the Mayor’s house to reconnect and enjoy each other’s company. Many of those who came were our friends from Latinos in Action who participated in our pilgrimage earlier in the month. We were glad to see them. They asked us a few questions and then we lit our candles and walked up to the Mayor’s house. We soon gathered in a circle and Patricia led us in a wonderful Spanish prayer asking that “the people be free as God intended.” Several children were among us and I wondered how these actions might impact their lives.

As you know, it was raining once again last night. We fought to stay as dry as possible, but you do not stay dry no matter how well you think you are prepared. David and I were teasing Kevin this morning because he thought he was the only one who got wet due to being at the bottom of the hill. We kiddingly told him that “we all got wet” and that “we were sleeping outside on the street after all.”

This morning something funny happened. It was around 5 a.m. when I heard someone right above me, but we had our tarp pulled over us so they didn’t realize that we were there sleeping. These strangers, two women walking their dogs, came over to read our signs. They happened to wake me up and I came out from under the tarp. They were immediately scared and started to back up. They yelled, “There’s someone sleeping there! What are you doing there?” We quickly apologized for scaring them and then told them that “We are highlighting the human rights violations in San Diego.” At this point, they immediately recognized us and said, “Oh, is this the Mayor’s house?” We said yes and everyone starting laughing. They departed saying, “We’re not used to seeing people sleep here.” I guess we accidentally gave them an early Halloween scare, but had a little fun in the process.

October 20, 2004 Press Release
Mayor Murphy’s Residence

Well, the rain was the big event again last night. There was agreement amongst all three of us that last night was the toughest night yet. We could not rest well at all. We were awakened by the rain, wind, and tarp just about every hour. At one point, I got up and asked the others what time it was. I was thinking that it was close to our time to leave, 6 a.m., but it was only 2 a.m. The wind blew over our candles and shattered one of the glass containers. David's sleeping bag was especially soaked, as he wrung it like a drenched bath towel in the morning. This was due to the tarp flying off of us. We are going to try and get some clamps to keep it together for tonight as the forecast calls for rain today as well as possibly tomorrow.

Jeff McDonald, the reporter from the San Diego Union-Tribune, came out to visit us last night to see how things are going. We thanked him for all his troubles. He asked us some follow up questions and said that the paper was going to publish an update sometime this week. We were glad to hear it as we know folks are worried about how we are doing in this rain. It started to rain as Jeff was asking us some questions so we had to cut the interview a little short and jump under our tarp.

Our spirits are still high. We were laughing as we packed up our things this morning. I'm sure the police officers, who see us regularly, don't know what to think about us. They see us sleeping on the street in the rain, fasting, demanding action to address our human rights violations, and yet they see us happy, laughing, and cooperatively packing up our things in the morning. I'm sure they are confused by this. It is nonviolence at work!

Our friends from yesterday, who were scared of us initially as we popped out of the tarp, were walking their dogs again this morning and they politely hollered "Good morning, boys. It is 5:30 a.m." It was nice to hear their voices. Shortly thereafter, we began to pack our things since it was not raining at that point.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: The United States is the only industrialized democracy in the world that has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): 172 out of 192 nations have ratified this human rights treaty. Other countries refusing to ratify the treaty include Afghanistan, Sudan, and Iran. And, yes, it is needed in the U.S. as women still only make 72 cents for every man's dollar, for example. Just as we are demanding in our formal complaint with the

Convention on the Rights of the Child, San Francisco spearheaded the passage of the first-ever U.S. city ordinance implementing the principles underlying CEDAW. So, what we are asking for can be done because it has been done before, in California nonetheless. Do not let the mayor fool you.

October 21, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

The rain pounded us last night from the moment we arrived at the site until early this morning. It seemed to rain at a steady, strong pace the entire night. Therefore, aside from setting up, we spent the entire time under our tarp and in our sleeping bags. We didn't even get a chance to really talk to one another last night as our sleeping arrangements don't allow us to talk much under the tarp.

There was a policewoman that was particularly rude last night. Shortly after we arrived, some woman, whom we think was the mayor's daughter, completely ignored us and moved her car, which was immediately next to our sleeping spot. Then, this police woman quickly moved her car right on top of us. Please keep in mind that this parking space is usually empty and that the police usually give us some room by parking a little ways away but not this policewoman. She was right there on us with her car emitting toxic fumes. Kevin even had to ask her to please turn the car off. Additionally, the police tend to say hello or at least introduce themselves when we arrive but not this crew. This might be due to the rain but this policewoman in particular had a sense of hostility about her last night.

The TV news station Univision was brave enough to weather the elements last night as they did an interview with us to keep their viewers updated on our efforts. Actually, David was our spokesperson last night. He did a good job conveying our message of "simply demanding good governance" and emphasizing our key question "Are the institutions of governance effectively guaranteeing the right to health, housing, food, and quality education?" In this morning's paper, Jeff McDonald has a story about the "Do You Believe in Human Rights?" Campaign in the San Diego Union-Tribune. The full article can be read at: http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20041021/news_2m21olson.html.

This morning we were actually thinking about previous comments made by the Mayor to news reporters where he said he did not want to "reward us" by talking with us and that "I still don't believe that camping in front of my house

will do anything to solve these issues.” Well, of course, camping-out alone will not solve these problems. However, we are more than ready, and have always been ready, to do something other than camp-out to address this issues. We are only camping-out in front of his home because we tried to solve these problems through the established public mechanisms and, unfortunately, we got the exact same response then that we are getting now. The Mayor, City Council, City Manager, and the Human Relations Commission ignored us and dismissed us.

We, as a group, are committed to being problem-solvers not merely people who complain. We have presented solutions to these important issues which impact not just the most vulnerable but almost everyone in the City of San Diego. Yet, these issues are not being taken seriously. What will it take to get the city and its public servants to listen to the residents it supposedly serves? If one of us were to die in front of the Mayor’s house, would that then be cause to talk with us? I know a few neighborhood stop sign campaigns that only achieved success after a child was killed. Is that what it will take? Well, Larry Milligan is promising to do just that if necessary.

On October 11th, he initiated a fast to the death if the city does not provide a “safe zone” for the homeless because there are not enough beds in the city’s shelters to hold all the homeless and yet they still get “criminalized” and ticketed if they sleep on the street. He, too, is now using a human rights framework for his efforts, highlighting Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Now, of course, we are concerned about those who live on the street yet this is much bigger than just the homeless. It is about all people’s inherent human rights.

Again, these human rights violations impact almost everyone. When only 10% of the population can afford the median price of a home in San Diego and the government, which is supposed to be a government “of the people, by the people, and for people,” does little or nothing about it, then something is desperately wrong. What will you do to change this? If nothing else, call the Mayor’s office to demand our human rights. If you are a member of the media, ask the mayor and the other mayoral candidates “Do You Believe in Human Rights?,” ask where they stand on these human rights violations, and what they will do about them.

Last night, I was reading my book again and I came across this important quote:

They tell us that once you have glimpsed the world as it might be, as it ought to be, as it's going to be (however that vision appears to you), it is impossible to live compliant and complacent anymore in the world as it is. To march was a dangerous risk—but not to was a risk of another kind—of living half-dead, with no name, unremembered, in the dark, surviving on scraps and crumbs and the outright threats and pious ultimatums of the hate-filled present moment. Why not risk all that, and walk out into the sun[...] Why not march and carry on, act out, act up, as if your life depended on it? (Bishop John Shelby Sprong calls it “solar ethics” - to commit to living as the very sun itself lives, that is, to do what you were created to do, to shine and shine without regard for recognition or permanence or reward, to love and simply be for the sake of loving and living and being.) And so you come out and walk out and march, the way a flower comes out and blooms, because it has no other calling. It has no other work[...] [These actions are] a sacrifice, an offering to a world that doesn't know it's hungry till it's fed on love, passion, and courage.

Remember that courage is the greatest of all virtues as it allows you to access all other virtues, namely love. Won't you come “flower and bloom” with the bold and courageous?

October 22, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

They say that “sunshine comes after the storm” and we were glad for it. It was nice to get a little relief from the rain. The sky was clear and the stars were out. It was a bit chilly last night but nevertheless I told the fellas that “It was a good night for sleeping in front of the Mayor's house.” The forecast says we will have a few more days of sunshine before our next storm comes. Even in the midst of this next storm, we are ready to pinch hit for the sun and “let our light shine” on the Mayor's sidewalk while the sun takes a break.

I arrived at the site a little later than usual due to a previous work assignment. When I arrived both Kevin and David were already quietly settled in their sleeping bags and about ready to go to sleep. However, I was “hyped up” according to them and got them to chat for a while. It had been a few days since all three of us had a chance to catch up with one another because of the rain and our sleeping arrangements under the tarp. So, it was nice to talk with

them outside in the beautiful night. I even saw a shooting star while we were talking. You know what my wish was, don't you? I'll give you a clue—something having to do with the Mayor and our human rights.

One thing that we discussed was the fact that there are many others who are less visible that are part of the “Do You Believe in Human Rights?” Campaign. While we're the most visible, there are many others who are providing support in a variety of ways, anything from being ready to act should we be arrested to just spreading the word about our efforts. So, we wanted to say thank you to everyone for their support. It is very much appreciated.

Just as we were about to go to sleep, a Spanish radio station producer called David and discussed having him on the radio in the near future.

This morning our friends who walk their dogs early were happy to see that it was dry out and that “they could see all three of us” out from under the tarp. They seem genuinely happy to see us each morning. It is nice to see them too.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: There is a new book out called “The Second Bill of Rights” by Cass Sunstein, which is about President Roosevelt’s idea for a second Bill of Rights. I have not had a chance to read the entire book yet but a friend gave me a copy of the introduction. It states that:

In brief, the second bill attempts to protect both opportunity and security, by creating rights to [just] employment, adequate food and clothing, decent shelter, education, recreation, and medical care[...] It represented Roosevelt’s belief that the American Revolution was radically incomplete and that a new set of rights was necessary to finish it[...] Although Roosevelt’s second bill is largely unknown in the United States, it has had extraordinary influence internationally. It played a major role in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, finalized in 1948 under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt and publicly endorsed by American officials at the time. The Universal Declaration includes social and economic guarantees that show the unmistakable influence of the second bill. And with its effect on the Universal Declaration, the second bill has influenced dozens of constitutions throughout the world. In one or another form, it can be found in countless political and legal documents. We might even call the second bill of rights a leading American export.

Is it any wonder that America has all these problems in our world today when our “leading American exports” are basic human rights that our own government doesn’t want to adhere to at home or abroad? These contradictions are inherently weak, divisive, and unsustainable. Through our nonviolent actions, we are merely seeking to make our city and nation strong and whole. Like Frederick Douglass, the Invest-In Project wants a city and a nation “that will not brand the Declaration of Independence as a lie.”

October 23, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

We began the evening by meeting our new friend Sandra. We came to know her after she saw the initial story in the Union-Tribune and emailed us with some heartfelt and extremely supportive comments. She is an immigrant from Mexico and an owner of a small flower shop. Sandra came to visit us last night and brought some flowers for us to leave on the Mayor’s front doorstep in the morning. The white roses are meant to symbolize friendship and emphasize that this is not a personal matter with the Mayor, but an urgent issue of the people’s needs. Additionally, as Sandra suggested in her email, the roses are being offered in the hope that it will calm the Mayor’s and his family’s fears and sense of intimidation.

We visited with Sandra for a couple hours. We had fun discussing and laughing at all kinds of things, from landlords to dentists to the state of things in the United States. She does not own a car so I offered to give her a ride home. She said no, but did accept a ride to the train station downtown. As I dropped Sandra off downtown, we had to go through the Gaslamp area and I was struck by the contradictions. One, I had forgotten that it was Friday night (as the days seem to be rolling together) until I saw all the people dressed up downtown at the bars and fancy restaurants. Two, I saw all this time, money, and effort spent on “looking good” to essentially cover up “feeling bad.” This might be a little judgmental on my part but it just seemed that America’s materialism was very much in display. I couldn’t help but think “how rich we are in our poverty,” in more ways than one.

David received news that he will be on the radio on Monday morning at 9 a.m. on 1470AM to discuss our actions to secure human rights for all. This morning came upon us quickly as my alarm went off at 6 a.m. I think we were tired because usually one of us is up before my alarm goes off but not today.

After waking up to the alarm, I told Kevin and David that it was time to get up. Kevin joked by saying “Call me up at 8 a.m.” I said, “Where? At your house?” He said, “No, right here.” We quickly packed up our things, moved our flowers from the Human Rights Report Card to the Mayor’s front doorstep, and left for the day.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: I just learned this week that the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce is hosting a luncheon and discussion featuring the Honorable John C. Danforth, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations on Friday, October 29th. The cost to hear Ambassador Danforth is \$55 for non-members, which seems like a lot of money especially for those in San Diego whose human rights are being violated everyday. Additionally, I wish the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce folks would do more than talk to make human rights a reality right here in “America’s Finest City.” I know from personal experience that the Chamber of Commerce is too often more concerned about profit than people. No one is opposed to business, but for goodness sake, let’s globalize people’s human rights at home and abroad.

October 24, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

As we arrived at the site, we noticed that the flowers we left for the Mayor were gone. We enjoyed another nice San Diego night on the public sidewalk. We set up our things and ended up speaking with one of the police officers for a good portion of the night before we went to sleep. At one point, a neighbor, who had been friendly and visited us before, stopped to ask us if the Mayor had come out to talk with us. We told him no and then asked him if he had called the Mayor’s office. Unfortunately, he said no. I also noticed that the police officer was a little uncomfortable with this friendly questioning. The neighbor then began asking the officer questions like, “Does the Mayor always have a chauffeur?” This further added to the level of uneasiness by the police officer. However, the neighbor soon left us as we continued to talk for a while. Our conversation with the officer was a good one. I think we both got to know each other a little more personally, as well as clarified a few things concerning our nonviolent action and our future plans.

Kevin and I stayed up talking about our families for a while until he saw that my eyes were getting heavy. We quietly went to sleep shortly thereafter and woke up at 6 a.m. this morning.

October 25, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

Last evening, I was able to catch the mayoral candidates debate on television. Probably the most interesting and relevant issue raised was a question posed by a reporter about the housing crisis. She essentially raised the exact same issue we are raising. She asked, "Aside from the usual things you mention [she named them for each candidate] what will you do to address the fact that only 10% of the people in San Diego can afford the median price of a home and the fact that the average rent for an apartment is an unaffordable \$1200?" In my opinion, all of the candidates' answers were inadequate given the fact that we've had a sustained housing crisis and little has been done by all three. Additionally, despite this crisis being the number one issue in San Diego for several years, none of them seemed to have a plan, at best piecemeal solutions to one aspect of the housing crisis. (They spent a significant part of the debate arguing over whether they should or should not have a plan for the pension situation because the numbers have not been revealed. Not true with the housing situation. Those numbers are evident.) Dick Murphy mentioned his City of Villages (higher density building in the city) plan and the need to address the supply side of the equation by building more housing. Donna Frye rebutted by stating that both Roberts and Murphy were against the inclusionary housing ordinance, and that just building more housing will not ensure affordability, and that the building process for developers needs to be streamlined. Ron Roberts stated that the redevelopment agencies need to enforce the law that requires that 20% of their projects be affordable and that the 20% should be a floor not a ceiling. Again, I felt that the candidates answers did not address the question posed as they said their "usual things."

Once we arrived to our site, I told Kevin about the debate. We discussed the housing crisis and both agreed that the our city leaders are not doing enough. In fact, we said that they should be doing everything humanly possible to address this violation of our human right to housing locally. We emphasized that our city leaders should also be advocating and pressuring the state and federal governments to recognize, respect, protect, and fulfill the people's

human right to housing. Kevin joked that if the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, for instance, didn't do what it should, "the Mayor should be sleeping in front of the White House!" [Write-in Kevin Nash for Mayor!]

About 3 years ago, I was a part of a grassroots housing organization that was seeking to address the violation of our human right to housing, especially in Sherman Heights and Barrio Logan. We tried to get Ralph Inzunza, our council member, and the rest of the City Council to address the crisis. But, they basically did the exact same thing the Human Relations Commission, the Mayor, and the City Council are doing now, which is ignore us and hope we will go away.

October 26, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

At 8 p.m., we started our evening with our community vigil. Twelve of us (a symbolic number with 12 million poor children in the U.S.?) gathered at the nearby church in front of our candles and signs of Gandhi, King, and Chavez. Since we are trying to evoke the spirit of nonviolent freedom fighters like Cesar Chavez, I began the vigil with a reading of his Prayer of the Farm Worker's Struggle. It reads:

Show me the suffering of the most miserable; so I will know my people's plight. Free me to pray for others; for you are present in every person. Help me to take responsibility for my own life; so that I can be free at last. Grant me courage to serve my brethren; for in service there is true life. Give me honesty and patience; so that we can work with other workers. Bring forth song and celebration; so that the Spirit will be alive among us. Let the Spirit flourish and grow; so that we will never tire of the struggle. Let us remember those who have died for justice; for they have given us life. Help us love even those who hate us, so that we can change the world.

After the opening prayer, we briefly shared our thoughts and feelings, as well as what we would ask the Mayor if given the opportunity. Several people shared wonderful thoughts, such as asking the Mayor "At what point, did you come to a place that you won't talk to these peaceful people whom your supposed to serve?" I asked if David and Kevin would share how they were feeling after 22 nights of sleeping outside. Kevin joked in a simultaneously serious manner that he would ask the Mayor "Why didn't he ask us if we needed to use the

bathroom?” This was symbolic to us because the police were adamant that we were not to relieve ourselves outside of the Mayor’s house and that we should get in our cars and drive to the gas station restroom if we had to go. However, where do the homeless go? In fact, where did we relieve ourselves in the middle of the night when we were downtown earlier this month? Certainly, not in a gas station. But, now at the Mayor’s house, the police were forceful in saying that we should avoid this practice. Ironically, similar to segregation in the South, even bathroom use has two standards in America except now it is not determined by the colors of black and white but by green (money) and no green. We ended the vigil by highlighting the fact that the first paragraph of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that if we truly want freedom, peace, and justice in the world we have to respect everyone’s human rights. Thus, in closing, we read the World Peace Prayer in the hope that we would avoid the prophecy in the second paragraph of the Universal Declaration which talks about what happens when people’s human rights are violated. We prayed that we would avoid the “barbarous acts” mentioned in the UDHR by stating:

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth.

Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust.

Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace.

Let peace fill our heart, [our city,] our world, our universe.

After this final prayer, Kevin, David and myself took off to the Mayor’s house to set up our things. After a short while, our friends came up the street with a candle and a flower in hand. They quietly placed the “friendship” flower at the foot of the Mayor’s doorstep and the candles near our Human Rights Report Card. We ended the evening in a circle expressing our thanks to those who have supported us throughout!

After the vigil, a few of our friends stuck around and chatted with us for a little while. It was good to catch up with them. They soon departed and shortly thereafter we went to sleep.

This morning on our way home, Kevin and I, who were carpooling, spoke about how even now after several nights of doing this we still get tense each day just before going out to the site. We also discussed our relief in the morning.

Please see yesterday’s article in USA Today describing San Diego as “Enron by the Sea.” As our friend Matt said, please note the fact that even those on the

city's boards are ignored when they expose wrongs and attempt to do the right thing. The Mayor and City Council don't listen to them either.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: "Out of 100 children born in 2000, 30 will most likely suffer from malnutrition in their first five years of life, 26 will not be immunized against the basic childhood diseases, 19 will lack access to safe drinking water and 40 to adequate sanitation, and 17 will never go to school. In developing countries, every fourth child lives in abject poverty, in families with an income of less than \$1 a day. [While not living on less than a dollar a day, essentially every fourth child in San Diego lives in poverty despite being in the "35th largest economy in the world," according to mayoral candidate Ron Roberts]. The most egregious consequence is that nearly 11 million children each year—about 30,000 children a day—die before reaching their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes." UNICEF

October 27, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

There was no rest for the weary as heavy rains and strong winds hammered us throughout the night. We arrived a little late to the site because all our things were in my car and I had to work late yesterday evening. Prior to going out to the site, I went home to change clothes and, by chance, saw part of the mayoral debate on television. At one point, they asked Dick Murphy about his stereotype of being a nice guy but not an effective leader. He responded by saying he was a nice guy and an effective leader. Thus far, Mayor Murphy's actions have not been too nice towards us. Would Dean Spanos [San Diego Chargers owner] have gotten the same treatment? We, too, have heard that Mayor Murphy is nice guy and had hoped that he would at least speak to us, especially given the fact that we have always tried to be respectful, peaceful, keep our word, and do our homework. And, please remember it was his administration that ignored us and mostly failed to even read our correspondence. Now, he seems to act as if we have wronged him and not vice versa? We should not be "rewarded" for our actions according to this public servant.

I have to say that we are a little disappointed that our human rights violations have not been addressed by the media at these debates (except for the

housing situation). Do we have to hear the same thing over and over from these candidates? Even the police officers out at the site are sick of “same old stuff.”

We got to the Mayor’s house around 9 p.m. and luckily it was not raining yet. We set up our things anticipating the rain. After arranging our sleeping bags and tarp, the police officers got out of their cars and came to give their customary hellos. One of them, who previously said had he was “anti-political,” asked me a question about the housing statistics on our Human Rights Report Card and now wanted a copy of it. I immediately thought of the irony and of the possibilities when people are actually willing to speak to another. I sincerely believe that it is quite clear that the police, neighbors, community, those who have talked with us (seeing us in person helps), have grown to learn and appreciate what we are doing. Of course, they do not understand everything but I think they know we are sincere and committed and that we are people who could positively contribute to a better San Diego. In fact, the police officer who asked for the Human Rights Report Card, said, “If your willing to sleep out here this long, I can at least read your stuff.”

We continue to have a little fun while we are out at the site. We definitely get a kick out of the police protection we are now afforded (and sometime harassment). There are times when we have to laugh at all the foolishness. For instance, David went to get some coffee shortly after setting up our things yesterday. Before leaving, he said, “Watch this cop follow me.” And, sure enough, the police officer did follow him. At times, depending on the crew, they even follow us to our cars in the morning. Kevin also joked yesterday that “we should all three split up and go in different directions and get them all confused.” Of course, we didn’t do it but it was fun to have a laugh.

I thought I would share a recent discussion I had with an apartment building manager in my neighborhood. We were talking about landlords and the housing crisis in general. We spoke about how ridiculous the situation was. Where I live, many of the property owners live in the northern part of San Diego and they rent their properties out while seeming not to care much about anything except making a profit. For example, as of a couple of years ago, 82% of the population in Sherman Heights were renters and the housing conditions are not ideal. With the ballpark, this has changed but so has the neighborhood, including the demographics. I told the apartment manager that the housing situation was unstable and that it could not last. He ended the conversation by saying “maybe it will take riots to get these people to take this seriously. They

won't care because they live in La Jolla and have insurance on their properties anyway." We, the Invest-In Project, are trying to act as a nonviolent release valve before we get to that point, but if our city leaders continue on this current path this is probably where we will end up.

Tonight, we will have a guest sleeper all the way from Oakland, CA. He didn't pick too good of a date, did he? Kevin said, "He'll get a full month's worth of rain in one night." More details to come tomorrow.

This morning as we got up it was still raining heavily so we had to plan our quick departure under the tarp. After putting on our shoes and counting to three, we simultaneously jumped out from under our tarp, grabbed our backpacks and sleeping bags, threw them inside David's truck, and then folded up the tarp as it was so that we could throw it in the back of David's truck as quickly as possible. I couldn't help but think what the police officers were thinking watching this.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: Implementing the Census Bureau's recommendation of raising the poverty threshold to a more realistic \$19,500 would boost the poverty rate to a record-high 17 percent, leaving 46 million Americans short of that minimal level. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care..." President Roosevelt also said in his Second Bill of Rights speech that "A realistic tax law - which will tax all unreasonable profits, both individual and corporate" should be adopted. If corporations and super-rich Americans were truly taxed for their fair share of the public treasury would we have the ability to fulfill the human right declared in Article 25 for everyone? I think so. This way we could have a social structure that guarantees JUSTICE and not charity, which is dependent on the goodwill of those with money. There is a big difference between JUSTICE and CHARITY.

October 28, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

As I mentioned yesterday, we had a special guest sleeping out with us last night. Our special guest was our good friend Matt Bell from Oakland, CA. Prior to our action, he was in town visiting and we told him about our upcoming plans. He promised then to join us in our action by sleeping with us outside of

the Mayor's house. Last night, he kept his word. We were glad to have him as he works for justice everyday in our public schools. Aside from being my friend, he is also a co-worker. Demonstrating his deep commitment, he flew in especially for this action by arriving yesterday evening and departing early this morning. In fact, Matt must have brought us some good luck or extra "Soul Force" because as we arrived at the site the Mayor's daughter actually acknowledged us and said hello. She seemed to direct her greeting towards Matt. This was a dramatic change. It certainly was progress because when we first arrived almost a month ago she had the police escort her to her car while it was parked in the driveway. And, of course, no one else has even acknowledged us. Now, we don't know exactly what this means, if anything, but I think it was a nice change for both parties. It is always good to be acknowledged and recognized as a person and I believe it must be liberating for her to recapture her humanity by recognizing ours.

After arriving at the Mayor's house, we set up our camp with a little difficulty due to the morning's rapid departure. We fumbled with the tarps trying to arrange them correctly. Eventually, we would set up our sleeping arrangements slightly different with the four of us side by side instead of head to foot along the sidewalk. It was a beautiful night with a lunar eclipse dramatically revealing itself before us. Under the Creator's celestial show, which was better than any reality television program, we "chatted each other up" as Matt says. We cheerfully laughed, talked, and watched the eclipse until about 11 p.m. when it began to rain.

Unfortunately, we didn't do a great job of setting up the tarp and when it began to rain we were a little unprepared. Let's just say we got wet last night, some of us more than others. We think this will be our final climate challenge before finishing on Tuesday morning. All in all, we have weathered the storms well. David joked that "we should go camping after this." Kevin added that "we should do it where it is warm." It did get a little cold last night.

Despite the weather, it was a good night. However, we did have the police crew we told you about previously who is a bit over zealous about their work in this situation. This is the same crew that consists of the policewoman who recently parked her car right on top of us. We took it in stride and made a few jokes amongst ourselves to lighten the overly serious, negative mood they created.

In the morning, we quickly gathered our things, gave each other our usual hug, and began our work day. I took Matt to the airport for his early morning flight back to Oakland.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: Katarina Tomasevski is Professor of International Law and International Relations at Lund University, Sweden, and founder of the Right to Education Project (www.right-to-education.org). Until recently, she was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. She recently said:

It was for me a shocking discovery that around the Commission on Human Rights there is no knowledge nor open acknowledgment of the fact that education has become a traded service, and that 45 countries in the world, including countries which ideologically pursue the right to education, such as the People's Republic of China, have opened their entire education system, from pre-primary to university, to complete privatisation. This means that what we have quite often at the Commission are exercises in empty rhetoric, if not worse, in hypocrisy, with government delegations reciting the right to education rhetoric but in practice, in their own law, education has been completely converted in to traded service, which means that there is no right, that only people with adequate purchasing power can buy education for themselves and for their children, but poor people simply can't get any access to education. And this term "access" is particularly important because that's the other side of the coin at the Commission, which is the changing language in all resolutions on economic, social and cultural rights, where particularly the delegation of the United States is always suggesting the same linguistic option not to talk about the right to education but about access to education because that covers both purchased education and education as an individual entitlement. Furthermore, there is no concerted opposition by human rights groups.

Please see the following story in USA Today: Integrated Schools Still a Dream 50 Years Later: "Decades after 'Brown [vs. Board of Education],' income not the law separates the races[classes]": www.usatoday.com/life/2004-04-28-brown-cover_x.htm. Also, there is an article entitled "Contracting Out is Spreading" from California School Employee Associations's FOCUS magazine that states:

Classified employees there [Oklahoma City] are fighting a school board proposal to contract out all classified services to one general contractor, who would then subcontract the various classified services to different companies. Not coincidentally, the president of the Oklahoma City school board is the owner of the Sonic fast food chain, and he has business ties to Sodexo-Marriott, a giant conglomerate that is bidding for the general contract. It turns out that the two companies signed an agreement last year to open Sonics in Sodexo-run food service facilities around the country.

This is an example of Tomasevski's "complete privatisation," where child nutrition workers no longer work to provide public school students with proper nutrition so they can learn. In practice, despite the rhetoric, these child nutrition workers, under privatization, work to make Sodexo-Marriott and their private shareholders money. The mission is completely transformed.

October 29, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

I just saw a poll on the Mayor's race this morning. It revealed a very close race with 31% of the vote for Mayor Dick Murphy, 30% for Ron Roberts, and 29% for write-in candidate Donna Frye. Six percent said they would write-in some another candidate other than Donna Frye and 4% were still undecided. It is absolutely amazing that we have this close a race and Dick Murphy still will not talk with reasonable, committed people who are raising the most basic of issues—recognition of people's inherent human rights and their violation. We believe that if he or any of the other candidates would only take a stand on the human rights violations we are exposing and seeking to address that they would probably win. It certainly would not hurt them. Just imagine for a moment, Dick Murphy continuing to refuse to meet with us and either Ron Roberts or Donna Frye deciding to come visit us in front of the Mayor's house at night or elsewhere during the day (in some nice office if they wanted) to discuss the people's inherent human rights of housing, education, health care, adequate standard of living, and food. How could they lose? All the people who are suffering under this housing crisis, for example, would certainly look favorably on this and might be the deciding factor in the election. And, let us remind folks

that we have received nothing but favorable feedback from everyone we've encountered about our month-long action except, of course, from the Mayor. If you want a city agenda and a government focused on fulfilling the people's inherent human rights, call the mayoral candidates and tell them to meet with us.

October 30, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

We were all tired last night so we talked for a couple of hours and then went to sleep quite early. Prior to sleeping, however, we had a good discussion about our possible next steps, the disturbing amount of money in politics from rich folks who buy their democracy, and the disturbing ways in which we use fear and manipulation to win votes at all costs. Early in the day yesterday, I saw a bumper stick I had never seen before. It read, "FOR SALE: U.S. Government: a For-Profit Corporation." I also saw a relevant quote in my church bulletin recently. It said, "Democracy should be more than two wolves and one sheep voting on what they will have for dinner." Isn't this what we have in America? I have to admit that I am nothing short of ashamed and disappointed in my country's conduct right now. (One cannot be greatly disappointed without having great love for one's country so please don't interpret this as unpatriotic.)

Please remember that in our Formal Complaint of Human Rights Violations we state and seek to address the issues raised above. We reveal that Eli Broad, Bill Gates, the Hewlett family, and other rich folks are effectively using their money and influence to seize our public schools. This truly is a corporate-occupation. Our public schools and our political offices have been nothing short of occupied by these corporate forces. For example, as pointed out in our complaint, Bill Gates and the Hewlett family gave the financially-strapped (because rich folks like Gates and Hewlett don't pay a fair share of their taxes to the public treasury) San Diego City Schools "\$22.5 million over a period of five years under one condition: Superintendent Alan Bersin[...] must be employed during this period." Thus, these two rich, private individuals are telling all the people of San Diego (over 1 million people) who should be their Superintendent of the public schools. And, because our political leaders have been bought by these corporate forces, our leaders will not even listen to us. It seems that you have got to pay to play to be heard or truly vote in this country.

We at the Invest-In Project have a few questions. Who is going to “liberate” all the ordinary people of this country, the less than super wealthy? This corporate occupation is blatant and arrogant but we are often too distracted with foolish things (Hollywood stars romantic lives, British royalty-quite odd in a democracy, sports, video games, reality TV) to see it or do something about it. We must not allow ourselves to be distracted with these things. Additionally, everyday I run into people who are scared in this country. While I understand it and appreciate its deep impact, we are to a point where, quite frankly, we can’t tolerate people complaining about being scared anymore. We are a very fearful group of people for living in a “free” country. We are scared, and often legitimately so, to speak up about the conditions in our neighborhoods, scared to speak up to our bosses, scared to talk to our neighbors and people on the street, and scared to speak up about our nation’s policies. We must challenge ourselves and others not to be scared. As Marian Wright Edelman has said, “democracy is fueled by truth and crippled by fear.” My friends, our democracy is severely crippled and the only remedy is COURAGE. Won’t you dig deep within yourself to find the courage needed to help this country and yourself?

October 31, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

Kevin and David had to take care of a few things last night and, thus, had to arrive at the site a few hours late. So, I held down the fort for a few hours alone before they joined me at the Mayor’s house. I arrived at the usual time of 8 p.m. and set up our things. As I was setting up our things, the police officers came over to say hello. We had a good discussion about the Mayor’s race and about the future possibilities of action. I shared with them that tomorrow we would arrive at 10 p.m. to avoid any implication that “we are scaring or intimidating people on Halloween.” He responded by saying “Well, you’ve already proven that you’re not doing that.” As we’ve said before, Mayor Murphy probably knows more about us than almost anyone in the city and yet he still won’t talk to us. It makes you wonder whether he will feel comfortable opening his door to trick-or-treating kids and parents tonight. He certainly won’t know them as well as he knows us.

Kevin showed up a little while later and was a bit hyped-up about his experiences that day. So, we talked for a while debriefing the days events. He and I discussed how we had been transformed over the last 27 days and how

that colored his experience today and shaped our future. Soon, I heard him snoring and I followed suit a few minutes later. David joined us in the sleep-out after we had fallen asleep. We caught up with him this morning as we departed for the day.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: For the Human Rights Fact of the Day today, I'd would like to share a lengthy quote from Arundhati Roy, the famous Indian author and freedom fighter.

*In an article called "Craziness Pays," [Tom Friedman] said, "The U.S. has to make it clear to Iraq and U.S. allies that[...] America will use force without negotiation, hesitation, or UN approval." His advice was well taken—in the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan as well as in the almost daily humiliation the U.S. government heaps on the UN. In his book on globalization, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Friedman says, and I quote, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist. McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas[...] and the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps." Perhaps this was written in a moment of vulnerability, but it's certainly the most succinct, accurate description of the project of corporate globalization that I have read.*

In the last ten years of unbridled Corporate Globalization the world's total income has increased by an average of 2.5 percent a year. And yet the numbers of poor in the world have increased by 100 million. Of the top hundred biggest economies, fifty-one are corporations, not countries. The top 1 percent of the world has the same combined income as the bottom 57 percent and that disparity is growing. And, now, under the spreading canopy of the War Against Terror, this process is being hustled along.

The men in suits are in an unseemly hurry. While bombs rain down on us, and cruise missiles skid across the skies, while nuclear weapons are stockpiled to make the world a safer place, contracts are being signed, patents are being registered, oil pipelines are being laid, natural resources are being plundered, water is being privatized, and democracies are being undermined.

There is a notion gaining credence that the Free Market breaks down national barriers, and that Corporate Globalization's ultimate destination is a hippie paradise where the heart is the only passport and we all live happily together inside a John Lennon song. (Imagine there's no country...) But this is a canard.

What the Free Market undermines is not national sovereignty, but democracy. As the disparity between rich and poor grows, the hidden fist has its work cut out for it. Multinational corporations on the prowl for "sweetheart deals" that yield enormous profits cannot push through those deals and administer those projects in developing countries [or certain non-rich communities in developed countries] without the active connivance of the State [government] machinery—the police, the courts, sometimes even the army. Today Corporate Globalization needs an international confederation of loyal, corrupt, preferably authoritarian governments [and officials] [...] to push through unpopular reforms and quell the mutinies. It needs a press that pretends to be free. It needs courts that pretend to dispense justice. It needs nuclear bombs, standing armies, sterner immigration laws, and watchful coastal patrols to make sure that it's only money, goods, patents, and services that are being globalized—not the free movement of people, not a respect for human rights, not international treaties[...] It's as though even a gesture toward international accountability would wreck the whole enterprise.

Meanwhile down at the mall there's a mid-season sale. Everything's discounted—oceans, rivers, oil, gene pools, fig wasps, flowers, childhoods, aluminum factories, phone companies, wisdom, wilderness, civil rights, ecosystems, air—all 4,600 million years of evolution. It's packed, sealed, tagged, valued, and available off the rack. (No returns.) As for justice—I'm told it's on offer too. You can get the best that money can buy.

Donald Rumsfeld said that his mission in the War Against Terror was to persuade the world that Americans must be allowed to continue their way of life. When the maddened king stamps his foot, slaves tremble in their quarters. So, standing here today, it's hard for me to say this, but "The American Way of Life" is simply not sustainable. Because it doesn't acknowledge that there is a world beyond America[...]

But fortunately, power has a shelf life. When the time comes, maybe this mighty empire will, like others before it, overreach itself and implode

from within. It looks as though structural cracks have already appeared. As the War Against Terror casts its net wider and wider, America's corporate heart is hemorrhaging. For all the endless, empty chatter about democracy, today the world is run by three of the most secretive institutions in the world: the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, all three of which, in turn, are dominated by the United States. Their decisions are made in secret. The people who head them are appointed behind closed doors. Nobody really knows anything about them, their politics, their beliefs, their intentions. Nobody elected them. Nobody said they could make decisions on our behalf. A world run by a handful of greedy bankers and CEOs whom nobody elected can't possibly last.

Soviet-style communism failed, not because it was intrinsically evil but because it was flawed. [No, we are not communists.] It allowed too few people to usurp too much power. Twenty-first century market-capitalism, American-style, will fail for the same reasons. Both are edifices [experiments] constructed by the human intelligence, undone by human nature.

The time has come, the Walrus said. Perhaps things will become worse and then better. Perhaps there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us. Another world is not only possible, she's on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.

My friends, over the last 27 nights, we, the Invest-In Project, have not only "heard her breathing" but hear her talking and teaching and we intend on practicing what she has preached! Won't you help us create a new, nonviolent world in San Diego!

November 1, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy's Residence

In order to avoid "scaring" any Halloween trick-or-treaters, we arrived at the site last night after the candy collecting was over at 10 p.m. With the time change and everything else, we were tired so we basically went to sleep almost as soon as we arrived. We did read some of Thomas Paine's Common Sense and discussed its relevance for today. David, who arrived shortly after we did,

found us sound asleep not waking up even after trying to talk with us. This morning we had to leave an hour early because I have to do some “get out the vote” efforts for work, unrelated to the mayor’s race today.

Human Rights Fact for the Day: According to Marian Wright Edelman, “Something is awry when, in the United States, the combined income of over 9 million families was less than that of a single health insurance executive last year.” In San Diego County, this inequality is alive and well with more than 700,000 people who lack health insurance, 25% of the population. Amazingly, 85% of those uninsured are employed. And, we don’t have a resource problem but a fairness and desire-to-do-the-right-thing problem. More than 100,000 children are uninsured while San Diego’s economy is ranked 35th in the entire world and people like Qualcomm CEO and San Diego resident Irwin Jacobs are allowed to make \$224 million in one year (2003). Yes, something is awry in the U.S. but also in San Diego. On October 29, 2004, the Center for Economic and Social Rights published “The Right to Health in the United States of America: What Does it Mean?”, a report on how the U.S. health care system falls short of international human rights standards for the right to health. The report demonstrates that the U.S. health care delivery system is structurally flawed in ways that compromise the quality, adequacy, availability, and accessibility of people’s health in the United States. The report argues for a rights-based system of healthcare in the U.S.: instead of reducing medical services to their profitability, a rights-based approach calculates success by the health of its people.

November 2, 2004 Press Release

Mayor Murphy’s Residence

Well, after 29 days and nights of marching, praying, fasting, and peacefully demonstrating in front of the Mayor’s house we began our final community vigil at 8 p.m. We gathered outside the St. Therese Catholic Church. For a while, we stood around cheerfully talking and getting to know those we did not know, including the pastor of the church who happened to come by. Univision captured some footage and did an interview with me while we waited. About a half-hour later, there were about 35 of us as we formed a circle near our signs and candles to begin the vigil. There seemed to be a positive energy around us as I began by thanking everyone. I said, “We are

appreciative, honored, and humbled by everyone's support and presence." Soon, I read an opening prayer to initiate things, while David read it in Spanish. Then, I told the group a story about how yesterday's press release/update was entitled "Final Night at Mayor's House" and how its headline was an inspiration for Kevin writing a spontaneous poem in the morning. I embarrassed Kevin by asking him to read it to the group. The wonderful poem and even more wonderful reading of the poem went like so:

Final Night at the Mayor's House

*Tonight will be the final night.
Tomorrow we leave before daylight.*

*Tonight will be the final night.
Tomorrow we continue the fight.*

*Tonight will be the final night.
Tomorrow we leave this mayoral site.*

*Tonight will be the final night.
Tomorrow we continue our plight.*

*Tonight will be the final night.
Tomorrow we leave the Murphy's without fright.*

*Tonight will be the final night.
Tomorrow we hope you do what's right.*

*Tonight will be the final night.
Tomorrow we Invest-In our Human Right!*

Then, I gave a short speech related to Kevin's poem about how we were "with fright" when we initially began this action and how despite this fear, we dug deep within ourselves, gained courage from our friends and supporters, and prayed to the Creator so that we could take action based on what was right. We overcame our fear because we knew that something must be done to feed the

hungry, clothe the naked, nurse the sick, and house those without a home. I told the story of how more than two years ago I was essentially the sole participant in a sleep-out in front of the downtown ballpark and spoke a little about how far we had come since then. I brought and shared the hand-painted sign I used back then. I said a special thank you to our mothers because we know that these kind of actions are “hard on mothers.” We know that they are fearful of what might happen to us. We expressed our deepest thanks for their understanding and courage. We asked for their forgiveness. I ended the vigil by opening up the floor to any questions or comments from the group and reading the final message we were going to leave with the Mayor as we departed for the last time in the morning. The message read:

Dear Honorable Mayor Murphy,

Please know that this nonviolent action has never been directed toward you personally, but towards the office which you currently hold and seek. While simultaneously seeking to be respectful, courteous, friendly, and peaceful towards you and your family, we have sought to address actions/policies (non-actions/non-policies) that we believe do not put ALL the people of San Diego and their inherent human rights first. Knowing that you are a man of faith, we sought to appeal to your heart by symbolically bringing the burdens and pains of the people to you by personally fasting and sleeping outside of your house for 30 days. After sincerely attempting to utilize the established public mechanisms, we were unfortunately rebuffed by your administration. Even though you have decided not to speak to us, we have not given up on you or your being a man of reason and faith. Thus, we have enclosed a few small gifts: this hand-made card by Erik’s mother, some flowers given to us by a new friend, a few Gandhi/“Human Rights Now!” stickers, our Human Rights School packet, and a copy of our specially-tailored signs with the images and quotes of our heroes. Regardless of the election results later today, we plan to continue our nonviolent campaign with those who are our public servants and, in either case, do ask that you use your power and influence to ensure that the human rights of the people of San Diego are recognized, respected, protected, fulfilled, and promoted. May God bless you and your family always.

Sincerely Seeking to “Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with Our God,”

*David, Erik, and Kevin
Representing the Invest-In Project*

So, as we’ve done in the past, Kevin, David, and I momentarily left the group to set up our sleeping arrangements in front of the Mayor’s house. Shortly thereafter, our friends came up the street in a single file line with candles in hand. Once they arrived they placed the candles in front of our Human Rights Report Card and formed another circle in the street as Rev. Cribbs closed the vigil with a prayer. A few friends stayed and had fellowship with us for a while. David and I debriefed while Kevin gave a ride home to our friend. He asked us to wait for him even though he didn’t expect us to because he knew we were tired. David, who usually was our night owl, was visibly tired. However, we did wait for Kevin to return. I’m sure he wanted to debrief everything. There was a lot to absorb and reflect upon. Soon, we had fallen asleep.

In the morning, after packing our things, we carried out our plan to leave our gifts on the Mayor’s doorstep. We also decided to leave a prayer candle with the Mayor. Then, I remember looking up at the sky as the sun was just beginning to rise thinking that this was a great way to end our action. I have always loved the sunrise and it seemed symbolic of our message that “this end is just a beginning, soon we’ll be back with greater strength and courage.” The three of us gathered for a final hug in the middle of street, said goodbye to the police officers, and jumped in our cars.

The elections for mayor took place throughout the final day of our action. Soon, it was clear that there was no obvious winner. Donna Frye, who was running a very difficult campaign as a write-in candidate for mayor, appeared to have received more votes than the incumbent Dick Murphy or the other challenger Ron Roberts. However, after several legal battles, the courts, whose judges likely were familiar with Mayor Dick Murphy given that he was a former municipal and superior court judge for years, decided that thousands of write-in votes for Donna Frye should not count because

they did not follow the proper procedure. This “proper procedure” included things like misspelling the name of Donna Frye without the “e” on her last name and failing to fill in the bubble on the left side but still clearly writing in her name in the blank. By not counting these votes, Mayor Murphy won re-election by about 2,000 votes.

CHAPTER 6

DIARIES FROM A COSTA RICAN BUS

“We in the West continue to use a hugely disproportionate amount of the resources available for nourishment, education, and health care in the world, and thus deprive ourselves of the joy that often characterizes parts of the world that are not overwhelmed by their wealth. In due course that has to change, either through God’s discipline or through our initiative.”

~ Jubilee USA Network website - Jubilee Tithe

NOVEMBER 4, 2004

In a conscious effort to get some much needed rest, do a comparative analysis of the United States and Costa Rica, and visit key human rights institutions, I departed by plane for the “rich coast” on November 4, 2004 almost immediately after the election. Costa Rica’s rich history attracted me as much as its beautiful landscapes and abundant beaches on the Caribbean and the Pacific coasts. Prior to leaving the United States and on the five-hour plane ride, I read about Costa Rica’s history in my *Let’s Go Travel Guide*. My curiosity and excitement were ignited even more as I read the guide’s Costa Rican tales of natural beauty, of democracy, of peace, and of the people’s warm and friendly nature. Below are selected quotes and ideas that filled my mind as I entered the country:

From warm, turquoise waves, to red, oozing magma, to dripping cloud forests, to awe-inspiring churches and bustling markets that come alive with the colors of tropical fruit and bright, hand-painted oxcarts, Costa Rica, a haven of

peace and stability in Latin America, offers endless opportunities to experience and explore[...] its rich culture and friendly people magically charm visitors into staying for years. Costa Rica has no army and the government has made public health and education its priorities, endowing Costa Ricans, also known as ticos, with one of the best health care systems and highest literacy rates in Latin America. The ticos are proud of their country's strong democracy and outstanding social security system and will warmheartedly share their beautiful country with whomever cares to join them in relaxing, kicking back, and living la pura vida.

This tiny country unfolds new and more vibrant colors at every turn. Its national parks and preserves comprise more than 25% of its area [more than any other country], and despite the fact that the whole country makes up only 0.03% of the world's territory, it is home to 6% of the Earth's biodiversity[...] Public health and education are the government's top priorities. Many infectious diseases have been nearly eradicated, and since Costa Rica has no army, it spends an outstanding 23% of the national budget on education, compared to the 3% it spends on its civil police force. While Costa Rica is a haven of political and economic stability, it is the warm hearts and smiling faces of the ticos that will prove worth your visit.

Unlike most of its Central American neighbors, however, Costa Rica's remoteness from the capital and its lack of mineral wealth made it a forgotten land [to plunderers like Christopher Columbus and Hernan Cortes] and gave it an opportunity to develop with the least colonial influence. Furthermore, the country was unique in that the native population wasn't large enough to be subjugated and turned into a labor force, which forced the Spaniards to turn to subsistence farming and prevented the extremes of wealth and poverty from developing to the same degree they did in most of Latin America.

Only twice has Costa Rica strayed from its peaceful tradition. The first time happened in 1856, when William Walker, from Tennessee, attempted to turn Central America into a slave state of the United States[...] Costa Rica's national hero was born out of the Batalla de Rivas, the second battle waged against William Walker[...] Juan Santamaría, a young Costa Rican from Alejuela, sacrificed his life and ran across the battlefield with a torch, setting the Meson [building] on fire, which forced enemy forces to surrender. Costa Ricans now celebrate the day Juan Santamaría burned the Meson de Guerra and won freedom on April 11, 1856.

Since the army was abolished in 1949, Costa Rica has enjoyed peace, political stability, and a relatively high degree of economic comfort. In addition, it has become Latin America's most democratic country. Most of Costa Rica's non-financial problems in the second half of the 20th century have been partly because of civil strife in other Central American nations, especially El Salvador and Nicaragua. This overflow has caused internal problems including unemployment swells, higher illiteracy rates, and mounting tensions between ticos and their new neighbors. Today the issue is still a complex and unresolved issue.

Ticos have a great natural vocation for peace, democracy, and liberty; they despise what is contrived and deceptive, and they make fun of the ones in power[...] As former president of Uruguay, Julio Maria Sanguinetti, once said during an American presidential summit in San José, "No matter where they are, where there's a Costa Rican, there is liberty."

Even though children in Costa Rica already participate in elections by helping and ushering people to the ballot boxes, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal also holds a Children's Election that parallels the official election in all senses. Children over five years of age also vote for the different presidential candidates in their own ballot boxes, staffed by other children involved in running the election. After all the ballots boxes close, the votes are counted, and the results are announced on TV alongside the official results.

Having left the United States literally hours after the November 2nd election, I was eager for an escape to this Latin America country where even the children are taught democracy. The combination of this eagerness and excitement filled me as I landed in Costa Rica.

My plane arrived at the airport on the outskirts of San José, the capital of the country, just before 11 p.m. It was raining lightly. After grabbing my luggage and going through customs, I was greeted by a polite cab driver who took me and some other American I did not know to San José where our hotels were. Immediately, I was confronted with the fact that Costa Rica's economy is heavily dependent on the United States' economy, both legally and illegally. The other American in the cab told me that he was only staying for two days, which seemed a bit odd since the flight is quite long. After dropping the American off at his hotel, the cab driver told me that the hotel was well-known for Americans who specifically visit Costa Rica for the sex trade, especially with underage girls. The young girls were on the streets even though it was raining. An-

other thing struck me as we dropped this man off. Even though it was a Thursday night at around midnight, a young boy about 11 years old was trying to make money by holding an umbrella over the American as he exited the cab. The boy seemed overly anxious to cater to visitors in his country in an almost painful, subordinate way. I wondered if he went to school or how else his “catering” to us on school nights impacted his life. The cab driver then proceeded to talk to me as he drove me to my hostel where I had made my only reservation for the trip.

The hostel is open 24-hours a day and they seemed to be waiting for me. I quickly checked in and dropped my things off near my bed in my dorm room where I was staying. I had not had an opportunity to eat so I asked the hostel attendant if there was a restaurant nearby. He told me about a place called “Nuestra Tierra” (Our Land) and suggested I not carry my backpack since it was late. I then followed his directions to the restaurant, which was only a few blocks away. It was an elegantly rustic restaurant with picnic tables, a tin roof, and hundreds of onions and plantains hanging from the wooden rafters. I immediately ordered a very typical Costa Rican dish, as I always like to get acquainted with the local food and customs whenever I travel. The dish was pinto gallo con carne en salsa, which is shredded beef in a flavorful sauce with the traditional rice and beans, a tortilla, and sweet plantains. The food was served on a big jungle leaf which was placed on top of a wooden plate. The food was wonderful! It was not spicy, like Mexican food, but really flavorful and naturally delicious. After eating, I went back to the hostel and quickly fell asleep.

NOVEMBER 5, 2004

The next morning, I woke up early, took a shower, and oriented myself to the hostel’s accommodations. They had free internet, a swimming pool, a TV room, a kitchen, and a restaurant. Pretty good for \$8 a night, I thought. I had made arrangements to visit the Inter-American Court on Human Rights and the Oscar Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress prior to leaving the U.S. but I did not have the physical addresses, only post office boxes. I asked the hostel attendant but she did not know and thus referred me to the cook in the restaurant whom she thought would know. It turned out she did not know but I decided to stay and eat there after seeing her food on someone else’s plate. It was a good decision: the food was great. I had eggs with ham and, of course, rice and beans with tortillas. I was quickly learning that food in Costa Rica was appetizing. I ended up having to call both the Court and the Foundation to get their addresses. I soon learned another thing about Costa Rica: that they do not use street addresses but landmarks and the number of blocks/distance you must

travel to your destination in giving directions. That took a little getting used to, as I even heard that businesses sometimes don't know their own address. Regardless, street signs certainly are not commonplace or regular. Luckily, the people are very friendly and I'm not afraid to ask for directions.

After obtaining the directions and hailing a cab to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, I met with Mónica Fernández, a young, full-time attorney for the Court. She gave me a tour of the Court, including the actual court room, the deliberation room, the president's office, and the judges' dressing room with robes. We sat down and talked for about 45 minutes. Essentially, I asked her, "How can we, the Invest-In Project, use the Inter-American system to make human rights a reality in the United States, especially in regard to economic and social human rights?" She referred me to a few recent cases that might be helpful and also explained some details about the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which she suggested we use. Before leaving, we exchanged a few things. She gave me her card and a couple copies of a book entitled "Basic Documents Pertaining to Human Rights in the Inter-American System" and I gave her copies of our Human Rights Report Card, our recent newspapers articles, and a few Gandhi/"Human Rights Now!" stickers. While there, I took a few photos to add to the Invest -In Project website.

From the Court, I took off to the Oscar Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress. I was greeted by the receptionist who called an American girl named Liz, a Harvard graduate who was working as a speech writer for Dr. Arias. Liz gave me a tour of the facility, including Dr. Arias's office, and graciously shared her insights and experience with me. She told me that Dr. Arias had recently announced his intention to run for the presidency in Costa Rica once again, as the legislature had recently changed a law that disallowed it previously. I gave her and the others copies of our materials. Everyone seemed to like the Gandhi stickers. I was a little surprised to find more Americans working for the foundation than I expected. And, quite frankly, they seemed slightly scared and a bit perplexed when I told them about our nonviolent actions in San Diego. They were definitely friendly and kind but they had that confused look on their faces. I wondered what had taken them to Costa Rica and how they came to work for the foundation. Nevertheless, Liz seemed genuinely intrigued. She ended our encounter by sharing three of Dr. Arias's most recent speeches with me. I was glad to have more reading material to reflect upon during my journey. The following excerpts really impacted me as I read them later in my travels:

A hundred years from now, I would like my great-grandchildren to enjoy a world in which each government is democratically elected, is able to fulfill its people's basic needs, remains at peace with both its neighbors and its internal opposition, and uses the tools of economics and science to the benefit of all its people. This, in brief, is my idea of a well-functioning society, humble yet painfully out of reach in today's world. Perhaps this "good society" of mine sounds a bit dry, a bit technical; but the fact that the twentieth century, despite its astonishing achievements, was incapable of producing such a society indicates a deep underlying flaw, a collective failure of vision[...]

No amount of mortars or bombs can ever achieve true peace; the most they can do is cause devastation and perhaps enforce a cease-fire, but we know that peace based on fear and humiliation may not be peace at all, and it probably will not last. Peace can only be achieved by its own methods, which are dialogue and understanding, tolerance, and forgiveness. But this process will not take hold without some serious rethinking about the priorities of our governments, and the ethical focus of the world economy.

Today, the seed of war lies in the paradoxical spread of human misery in an increasingly affluent world. Add to that condition the manipulations of demagogues and fanatics, and you have an explosive situation which is not easily combated by the methods of conventional warfare. I propose that to overcome this condition we must consider not methods of waging war, but strategies for establishing more jobs and education for the world's poor. Since September 11, 2001, it has often been observed that terrorism has taken the place of communism in the pantheon of enemies of the West, and the Bush strategy of preemptive war is a response to this new threat. But neither terrorism nor communism has ever been, fundamentally, the real threat. Look closely into any of the world's "hot spots," and you will find the hallmarks of a universal human crisis lurking at the very core of our modernity. It is a development crisis when nearly a billion and a half people have no access to clean water, and a billion live in miserably substandard housing. It is a leadership crisis when we allow wealth to be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, so that the world's three richest people have assets that exceed the combined gross domestic product of the poorest forty-three countries. It is a spiritual crisis when, as Gandhi said, many are so poor that they only see God in the form of bread, and when other individuals seem only to have faith in the capricious "invisible hand" of the free market. It is a moral crisis when 35,000 children die each day from malnutrition and dis-

ease. And it is a democratic crisis when 1.3 billion people live on an income of less than one dollar per day, and are effectively excluded from public decision-making because of the wrenching poverty in which they live.

Our theorizing on the transition to globalization, on the potential of enterprise and the benefits of free trade, cannot ignore the struggles of those who find themselves included in such bleak statistics. If you oppose an ideology, such as fanatical terrorism, which seeks its platform among the disenfranchised and the downtrodden, then your principle struggle must be with the structural causes of poverty itself. Therefore, economists and entrepreneurs have a vital role to play, for economic development is the tool of a greater goal: ensuring justice, a dignified life, and security for all people[...]

The leaders of wealthy countries with large domestic markets must be made to understand that we, in the developing world, depend on trade for our survival. If we cannot export our goods, we will have no option but to continue exporting our people.

Even if we do achieve a fair and open international trade system, solidarity and empathy are not the inevitable results of economic growth. I would argue that human misery stems not only from material want, but from indifference and lack of love imposed on a global scale. In our world, the most fantastic means of communication exist in the midst of seemingly infinite deserts of silence and solitude.

In solitude, our brothers in Africa suffer the torture of witnessing their children die from hunger and sickness.

In solitude, the elderly of the wealthiest cities in the world live, humiliated, in the middle of violence and misery.

In solitude, the world's most promising youth are dragged into the hell of drug addiction.

In solitude, perish the children caught up in the violence of warring cities, and in solitude suffer the prisoners in all the concentration camps still open in the world.

The millions of children who will never know the alphabet also face the sinister solitude of ignorance.

Paved in solitude are the roads treaded by millions of refugees displaced by war and misery.

Walls of solitude surround the sick who do not have access to the marvels of modern medical science, while the fruits of their labor are consumed by governments in the absurd pursuit of military dominance.

What is to be done? How can an individual confront the conditions which cause such despair? As I said before, we each must act according to the prerogatives of our consciences and in light of the vision we hold of a better world. All of you will agree that one of the greatest perpetrators of human solitude is war and the preparation for war. We must not numbly accept the idea purported by many of an “armed peace;” rather, political action must search for peace without adjectives. In light of this conviction, I have been compelled to reject the ferocious logic of militarism and the global arms trade in particular, which represents the single most significant perversion of worldwide priorities known today[...]

My friends, I am convinced that the poor can and will benefit from free trade—both poor countries, and the poorest in them. Those who live in small economies, which produce what they do not consume and consume what they do not produce, depend on trade for survival.

Of course, many citizens harbor reservations about the extent to which trade liberalization guarantees development. One pervasive concern is that free trade encourages environmental degradation by promoting throw-away consumerism, and by favoring profit over conservation. I do agree that the policy objectives of governments must take into account not only efficiency and economic competitiveness, but the effects of open markets on local communities and ecosystems. Octavio Paz, the great Mexican poet, wrote not long before his death:

The market is an efficient mechanism, but, like all mechanisms, it is blind: it creates abundance and misery with the same indifference. Left to its own course, the market threatens the ecological balance of the planet, pollutes the air, poisons the water, makes deserts of forests, and in the end, harms many living species, among them man himself. Last, and most importantly; the market is not—and cannot be—a model for life. It is not an ethical code but rather only a method of production and consumption. It ignores fraternity, destroys social ties, imposes uniformity of conscience, and has turned art and literature into commerce.

The arms trade also exaggerates global relationships of inequality and underdevelopment to grotesque levels. Currently, almost eighty percent of all weapons transfers originate in the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Is there not a terrible irony in linking security to large shipments of weapons, most of which will eventually serve criminals and totalitarian regimes? Of the twenty-nine billion dollars in conventional weapons that were sold in 2002, nearly two-thirds went to governments in the developing world. Why are leaders of the hungriest people still buying guns? And why do leaders of the wealthiest people continue to supply them?

*The fundamental problem, of course, is one of values. I want to quote my good friend, the late Mahbub ul-Haq, who was a pioneer of the human development school of thought. In his book, *Reflections on Human Development*, he notes: “Some time back, Tanzania’s president Julius Nyerere asked in legitimate despair, ‘must we starve our children to pay our debts?’ It is at least as pertinent to ask, must we starve our children to increase our defense expenditure? [...] When our children cry for milk in the middle of the night, shall we give them guns instead?”*

That, my friends, is the very image of terrorism.

The events of the last three years have made it chillingly clear that a world where millions endure extreme misery will never be fully secure, even for its most privileged inhabitants. And it is also apparent that the circulation of people, world-views and cultures is growing, whether we are ready or not for the resulting encounters. Our values will have to follow suit. We can no longer afford to ignore our common humanity or focus our vision narrowly on our own interests, our own people, our own problems. We cannot ignore the cry of that child in the middle of the night.

Because militarization, poverty, and environmental degradation are so closely linked, improvements in any of these areas should have the potential for positive ripple effects. In particular, efforts to reduce unnecessary military and arms spending would help liberate enormous amounts of resources that can, and should, be invested in human development and environmental conservation. In 2002, 800 billion dollars were dedicated to military expenditures worldwide, or 2.5 percent of the world gross domestic product. According to the United Nations Human Development Program, just five percent of that amount would be sufficient to fund basic education, health care and nutrition, potable water, and sanitation for all of the world’s people. In other words, it would take

only a modest shift in global priorities to alleviate these seemingly intractable development challenges.

I have had many of these same thoughts and have written about them previously, although never so eloquently. However, I did want to highlight one important issue that I disagree with. Liz had told me that many people are often surprised to find out that Dr. Arias is in favor of free trade, which probably stems from his background as an economist. I was among those who were surprised. I find most of Dr. Arias's thoughts and words inspiring and quite profound. When he spoke at Northeastern, while I was in law school, his speech captivated me. Yet, I believe he has missed one of the most obvious of facts that leads to injustice when he favors competition and the current economic structure, albeit with charitable reforms. Life experience has taught me that in competition, someone always loses. Yet, despite Dr. Arias's country being on the losing end of globalization in many ways, he favors competition and only asks rich countries for more charity and goodwill, not a restructuring of the system based on justice. He states:

I am convinced that the poor can and will benefit from free trade—both poor countries, and the poorest in them. Those who live in small economies, which produce what they do not consume and consume what they do not produce, depend on trade for survival.

How can a small country ever obtain justice if is dependent on rich nations for its survival? Under this competitive economy, like in all competitions, won't some nations always lose at the expense of others and thus create the "security threats" Dr. Arias so eloquently warned us about? How can a country ever achieve justice if it produces what it doesn't consume and consumes what it does not produce? Isn't this an inherent contradiction?

It seems to me, and only became ever more apparent as I spent time in Costa Rica, that if we are ever to achieve justice in our global economic structure, our national and local economies must be based on producing what we need for our survival. This is not to say that I am promoting isolationism. I am not. But, it seems painfully obvious to me that all people must become first and foremost self-reliant and must rid themselves of their dependence on big corporations and other more wealthy nations for their survival and daily needs. It is no accident that American corporations have a big influence in Costa Rica. I was reminded of Gandhi and his principle of Swadeshi

(develop/buy local) in the Indian freedom struggle. Gandhi promoted the kind of economic structure I am proposing with self-reliant villages being the foundation. However, when he died, Nehru, the first Indian Prime Minister, and others ignored Gandhi's economic ideas and instead followed the West. Now, India seems, in many ways, to be rapidly becoming a mere reflection of the so-called civilized nations with all of their vices including militarization, economic exploitation, and materialism.

After these more serious visits to the Court and Foundation, I explored San José for the rest of the day. I went to the central market for a refresco (natural fruit drink), walked along the main pedestrian walkway downtown, hung out near a park fountain full of old men who hollered at everyone they knew, visited the national park honoring the Mexican revolutionary hero Miguel Hidalgo and Cuban literary/philosopher José Martí, and even spoke with some union workers who were peacefully protesting in a caravan with the Spanish version of the song "We Shall Not Be Moved." They were protesting the corruption of Costa Rican high officials, including the last two Presidents, tied to some cellular phone company bribery scandal. As I traveled around the country, I found the ticos very engaged in the politics of the country.

NOVEMBER 6, 2004

I got up early to catch a bus to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca at the bus station Terminal Caribe (Caribbean Terminal). Quickly, we were in the midst of the clouds and mountains that surround San José. The bus ride produced beautiful sights of plants with huge leaves that I had not seen before, as well as small, pretty flowers that naturally seemed to grow along the roadside. The visuals were made even better by my own soundtrack of Antonio Carlos Jobim songs playing on my CD player. However, soon, I realized that something was not right. We seemed to be going north and I was supposed to be going southwest. I asked the young woman next to me if the bus was going to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca and she said no. It was going to another town called Puerto Viejo. She, thankfully, offered to help me get back on track. Her name was Pamela. She was getting off soon and she said she would help me if I got off with her. We got off the bus in this small little town, which I think was called Orquesta. It was a small but very clean and beautiful little farm village consisting of simple little homes, one school, one church, one store, and, of course, a soccer field. No matter how small the town in Costa Rica, you always found a soccer field with eager players. Pamela told me most of the people from the town worked in the pineapple fincas (farms). We had to wait an hour before the next bus so Pamela gave me a tour of the rural town and introduced me to her family. Her little sister was having a catechism

party at the church so we went there for a while. Later, we walked back to the roadside bus stop to wait for my bus.

While waiting for the bus, I made another friendly contact with a young man named Jonathan. He was headed in the same direction I needed to go and knew where I needed to make a transfer so Pamela asked him to help me. He agreed and soon I thanked, hugged, and kissed Pamela on the cheek in the traditional goodbye as we jumped on the bus. Jonathan, a tico, was a French teacher but also knew some English and was anxious to practice it. I learned that he too was 31 years old and that he just had a baby girl on October 28th, one day after my nephew was born. He obviously wanted to talk politics even though he always began his sentences by saying “I don’t want to talk politics...” His concern was with the U.S. election. He honestly shared his disappointment with the outcome of the presidential election (Bush winning) but he was quite clear in making the distinction between U.S. government/policies and ordinary U.S. citizens. I had read in the newspaper earlier in the day that 77% of Costa Ricans were disappointed in the outcome of the U.S. election. Not long after this discussion, we got off the bus to make our transfer. I bid him farewell and thanked him for all his help.

Luckily, I was back on track towards my destination, the Caribbean coast. After a few hours, the bus arrived at Puerto Limón. This port city is full of beautiful, diverse people from all over the world. There were people of African, Asian, Latino, and European descent. The city was bustling with energy but, unfortunately, it also seemed dirtier and more socially troubled than most of Costa Rica. Dole and Del Monte fruit companies have production sites on the outskirts of town. Upon arriving in the city, the roads were lined with rows upon rows of banana trees. I decided to hang out in Puerto Limón for a while and went to see the ocean nearby. I drank coconut milk from an actual coconut. Then, I caught the next bus to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca.

The bus ride to Puerto Viejo was hot and very crowded with people standing in the aisles. I felt a little embarrassed as I seemed to be carrying more in my bag than most of these people owned. After two hours or so on the rough roads, we arrived in Puerto Viejo, which is just north of the Panamanian border on the Caribbean side. I hauled my bag to 5 different cabanas (cabins) that did not have any available rooms before I found a cabana for \$10 a night. It was very simple and made of all wood. The accommodations were basic and very clean. The small town was a picturesque, laid-back Caribbean town with palm trees, coconuts, the ocean, and boats on the beach. After exploring a bit, I went to eat at Soda (Restaurant) Isma. I love pork so I ordered the chuletas (pork chops) with gallo pinto (rice and beans). These pork chops were like eat-

ing thick-chunks of bacon and the natural watermelon drink was truly thirst-quenching. After this meal, I tried to no avail to replicate it everywhere I went. I ended the evening with a beer on the beach before I returned to my room.

NOVEMBER 7, 2004

As I woke up, I had the intention of renting one of the scooters that looked so fun the day before. After eating breakfast at Soda Lidia's where the waitresses all wore shirts that said "If God is for you, who can be against you," I immediately went to rent a scooter for the day. I rode that scooter everywhere, including to Manzanillo, a small beach community about 15 kilometers from Puerto Viejo. Along the way, the sights were filled with beautiful beaches and interesting homes. In Manzanillo, I found a soccer field immediately next to the ocean and the town center filled with young people playing in the rain. Unfortunately, the road there was a little rough in spots and the weather was not cooperating much. It was cloudy and rainy all day long. While I was there, the rain reached a strong downpour. I relented and decided to just get wet. I was a little tired, having gotten up so early, so I went back to my room for a nap.

Later, I decided to stop at one of the beautiful beaches that I had seen from the road to relax, pick up shells, and take in the view. The rain continued to come down so I decided to find some shelter in the late afternoon by having a beer in one of the bars. Bambu, as the bar was called, was a nicely constructed, open-air wooden structure with a thatched roof and wooden seats. It was filled with people of African descent speaking Patois, Spanish, and English. They played pool in their unbuttoned guayabera shirts while drinking a beer and enjoying the reggae and salsa music. I decided to order a beer I had never tried before and when I did the bartender gave me a strange look. Later, I had to laugh as I realized that I had just ordered a non-alcoholic beer. I stuck around for one more beer (a regular beer this time) and then went back to Soda Isma to eat a special fish dinner cooked in coconut sauce called "rondon" that must be ordered the previous day, which I had done. As usual, it was great. While in Costa Rica, I didn't eat often: I was still recovering from my 30-day fast (As David said, "Now that you can eat, you don't really want to."). However, when I did eat, I ate well. After eating, I went back to my room to dry off and read for awhile. That night, I decided to go out. I found this little bar playing live Calypso music so I stopped there on my scooter. The energy at the bar was nice with lots of people inside and outside on the street. The people were friendly, smiling, and dancing. I didn't know a soul but everyone seemed willing to talk and meet other people. The evening seemed to pass away quickly as the music and people flowed into the streets.

NOVEMBER 8, 2004

I got up early only to find heavy, heavy rains that did not seem to be ending anytime soon. So, I returned my scooter, checked out of my cabana, and took off for the bus stop. I decided I'd had enough of this rain and needed to go to the other coast for some dry weather. Initially, the bus company said that the main road was closed due to it being washed out by the rain. However, one of the other bus companies had a bus departing for Puerto Limón so I decided to take it in the hope of finding better travel options in the larger city. My hopes turned out to be realized as I got a bus ride back to San José later that day. Upon arriving in San José in the late evening, I checked into a hostel and took it easy.

NOVEMBER 9, 2004

I got up early again to catch a bus to Nicoya with the intention of arriving in Playa Tamarindo, a beach town on the Pacific coast. Much of the day was spent traveling but it was enjoyable. The day before I was surrounded by a tropical setting, but soon I was in the midst of the mountains and eventually beautiful, flat farmland. After hours on the bus, the rain, which seemed to be coming down in all of Costa Rica, stopped. I arrived in Playa Tamarindo at about 4 p.m. and tried to check into the hostel but I did not have enough cash so I went to the bank. The lines at this small town bank were long. I waited patiently to get my cash and then proceeded to check into my room, which cost me more than in other places because of the large number of tourists.

I decided to venture around the town by foot. I spoke with and kind of made friends with a few friendly street kids (really young adults) who were selling their wares on the main street and doling out needed advice. They told me where to get good, local "soul" food instead the tourist-oriented stuff. I took their advice and got some dinner. Later, I ran into them at the local bar. Freddy, as one of them was named, became my compatriot for the night. He was sitting in a chair away from everyone when he said hello. We sat and had a good discussion about Costa Rica, the U.S., tourists, life, ancient cultures, karma, and reaping what you sow. I bought him a few beers and learned that he was actually from Puerto Limón. He admitted that he was hooked on drugs. I think cocaine. His income came from selling drugs to the local tourists, mostly Americans. He didn't seem to be high then, however. Actually, he seemed very sober and clear-minded as he helped me understand Costa Rica. We discussed how much the ordinary person made, their ordinary lives, and their dependence on

the U.S. economy. He pointed to some ordinary looking, although pretty, Costa Rican girls only to reveal that they were prostitutes who slept with the tourists. We also ran into Chris, a street kid from Peru who sold jewelry to get by. Chris seemed happy to see me as I had spoken to him earlier and bought some earrings as gifts from him. He genuinely told me to ask him if I needed help with anything. He was a little drunk so I didn't chat with him long as his attention was elsewhere. Not long after that, I went back to my room to sleep.

NOVEMBER 10, 2004

I woke up, went to get some breakfast, and checked out of my room before learning that the bus out of town was not leaving until later. So, I hauled my luggage to the beach, pulled out my towel and listened to my Curtis Mayfield album for an hour or so. After grooving to my music for a while in the gentle breeze of the beach, I waited at the bus stop for the late arriving bus, which took me away from this touristy beach town to Liberia (City of Liberty). You know I had to stop in this city with a name like that. Quickly, I found a cheap, but nice hostel. I toured the city, which was larger and seemed to be more progressive than most. It had a nice and very active park in the center of town. That night, I ate at a restaurant organized as a cooperative by 25 women. The mission of the cooperative was to “rescue the traditions of the people and improve the lives of the women in town.” I was glad I had chosen to eat there. The restaurant was called Los Comales, which is funny because one of my favorite restaurants in San Diego is named El Comal. The food was just as good, if not better. I had the sopa de albondigas (meatball soup), but it was not like the albondigas I had before. The meatballs were made almost like dumplings with chicken and corn masa (cornmeal) instead of the usual beef with rice. It was wonderful nevertheless. After dinner, I sat in the park and soon made friends with a young woman who was sitting next to me on the park bench. We talked for a while in the park and then she invited me for a beer at one of the restaurants that lined the park and had a patio. We sat and talked for a while. She attended one of the many universities that were in or near the city. She said she had a strong character, which she clearly did. Everyone kept telling me that I spoke a lot of Spanish. Having grown up in Ohio, I'm pretty self-conscious about my Spanish so I think they're comparing me to someone who doesn't speak any. Regardless, I had the opportunity to practice for a little while longer as she invited me to another bar for one more beer. It was getting late and I had to get up early the next morning to go to the nearby volcano so we said goodbye.

NOVEMBER 11, 2004

My morning began with grabbing some lunch for my hike to the National Park Rincón de la Vieja, the volcano. The organizers of the tour told us to bring our own lunch since we would be in the national park all day. Hardly any stores were open that early but I did find a place called Pan y Miel (Bread and Honey). I grabbed some great breakfast breads and some empanadas (stuffed beef turnovers) for later. We, the two other tourists and I, jumped into the 4x4 SUV to go up to the volcano. It took about an hour to get to, even though it was nearby, since the roads were very rough. We were dropped off at the entrance of the park at around 8 a.m. and were told that we would be picked up at 4 p.m. All visitors had to sign in at the park ranger station. I showed the park ranger my U.S. passport and he was surprised by my last name. I told him my mother's maiden name and he understood. The woman at the hotel did the same thing yesterday. After I told her my mother was from Mexico and that I was a dual citizen she said, "Erik, el Mexicano y el Americano" (Erik, the Mexican and American). As always, people didn't quite know what my ethnicity or nationality is. I'm usually told that my face is pretty universal. Anyway, my day was spent with views of big beautiful waterfalls, unusual animals, bubbling rivers, and nature's sounds. After spending hours in the forest with the monkeys, iguanas, butterflies, snakes, birds, anteaters, raccoon-looking animals, and the volcano, I returned to the park ranger station where I spoke to the two young interns who were working at the national park. They were both from Monteverde, which is also known for its national park. The two young women told me that they chose this profession because there are good careers in ecotourism. They were very curious about me and asked me a bunch of questions, including the ones about my knowing how to speak Spanish. Of course, I got the usual "Do you have a girlfriend?" series of questions, as well. During my entire trip, it was amazing how much easier it was to meet people in Costa Rica than in the United States. People were more open and willing to engage and the towns are physically set up to allow people to interact more even though ironically it is supposed to be more dangerous in Costa Rica than the U.S. in most American's minds. Shortly after these series of questions on my personal life, our 4x4 driver arrived to take us back to the hotel. I said goodbye and wished them well. At the hotel, I took a short nap and then ate at Los Comales again. Having hiked all day and having been in a more reflective mood due to my surroundings, I rested in my room for the entire evening while reading my new book from the Inter-American Court on Human Rights and Dr. Arias's speeches.

NOVEMBER 12, 2004

In the morning, the bus took me back to San José and Alajuela, where the airport is, as I was leaving early the next day. While on the bus, I read an excellent article on the biblical concept of the Jubilee, a periodic, Creator/Universe-mandated complete overhaul of the economy in order to maintain justice and restore community. The quote at the beginning of this chapter is taken from that article. It essentially sums up what I learned while in Costa Rica. Despite the ticos being poor and having their own problems, the people of Costa Rica seem to be filled with joy, precisely what seems to escape most Americans even though we have so much. Every time I leave the U.S., I find myself associating the Lao Tzu proverb “Have much and be confused” with our lives in America. I believe much of this confusion and sadness is the direct result of the sadness we cause, consciously or not, on the lives of others in the United States and around the world through cooperating with the current unjust economic structure. Interestingly, the airport in Alajuela is named after Juan Santamaría, the martyr who helped defeat William Walker, the American soldier who sought to make Central America a slave state of the United States in the mid-1800s.

The next day I arrived back in the U.S. ready, like the prophets of old, to sound the trumpet and to declare the year of the Jubilee, to keep our leaders accountable by exposing their contradictions to the world. My experience in Costa Rica also reaffirmed a lesson I learned while in law school: If human rights are to become a reality it must come from the hearts and minds of the people, not from courts or politicians far removed from the day-to-day realities of the people. If the people’s hearts and minds (and feet in the street) are filled with the spirit of human rights, the courts and politicians will follow. Sadly, most people seem to want it to happen the other way around. My time in Costa Rica filled me with the strength and courage to continue the fight to make human rights not mere words but a daily reality, first in my life then in others.

CHAPTER 7

A NEW YEAR WITH THE MAYOR AND DR. KING

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhuman.”

~ Rev. Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., Medical
Committee for Human Rights Press Conference,
March 25, 1966

Upon my return from Costa Rica, the core group of the Invest-In Project met to strategize and plan our next action. Given that Mayor Dick Murphy had been declared the winner and sworn in on December 8th, we continued our efforts by focusing on his administration’s lack of response to the people’s needs. Before the Dr. King holiday in 2005, we sent out the following press release:

We Said We’d Be Back! Now With King-Like Force

San Diegans Seek to Address “America’s Finest City’s” Human Rights Violations Through Kingian Nonviolence

In order to honor Rev. Dr. Martin L. King Jr.’s life not merely with words but with King-like actions, the Invest-In Project will launch its 2005 Nonviolent Action Plan to defend our human rights on what would have been Dr. King’s 75th birthday. On this holy holiday, we will begin “Keeping the Sabbath” every Sunday by sleeping out in front of Mayor Murphy’s house 45 out of the 52 weeks

of the year in order to highlight the fact that 45 million people in America do not have health care. 700,000 San Diegans, including more than 100,000 children, do not have access to health care despite the fact that 85% of them are employed. This “Keeping the Sabbath” will kick off this Saturday night at 8 p.m. in front of the admittedly religious Mayor Murphy’s house in Del Cerro. However, from here on out, it will take place on Sunday night. This will not be our only action but merely a long standing action running throughout the year coupled with other more intense and specific actions aimed at the corporate business interests that occupy our democracy and conspire with our politicians to rob us of our inherent human rights. Recently, in a December 19, 2004 article about Mayor Murphy, the Los Angeles Times had the following quote:

John Hawkins, owner of Cloud-9 Shuttle, said he and some other Murphy backers on the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce plan to talk to the mayor about raising his political temperature. “I really hope he receives the message in the way we mean it: We’re behind him,” Hawkins said. “We’re his soldiers; so don't be afraid to send in the paratroopers. We want him to be our [General] Eisenhower...”

One look at our Human Rights Report Card and it becomes clear that the mayor and other elected officials in the City of San Diego and beyond have become “generals” for the corporate business elite in order to cheat democracy and rob people of their human right to housing, education, health care, and food.

Last Monday, on January 10, 2005, Mayor Murphy, in his State of the City address, revealed his neglect of the people’s needs by focusing his speech on issues that can hardly be stated as the most important in ordinary San Diegans’ lives. At one point, when discussing the all too convenient “Strong Mayor System approved by the voters in November,” Mayor Murphy had the audacity to declare, “The intent of the voters is clear.” This statement is astonishing given that he does not support the basic democratic principle of counting every vote on other measures where the “intent of the voters is clear,” such as write-in ballots for mayor. This “win-at-all-costs” political disease has, for years, resulted in the theft of our inherent human rights and has now begun to callously corrupt our sacred democracy in an open fashion. Forty years ago, on the 4th of July, Dr. King warned the Ebenezer Baptist Church congregation by stating:

Now more than ever before, America [San Diego] is challenged to realize its dream, for the shape of the world today does not permit our nation [city] the luxury of an anemic democracy. And the price that America [San Diego] must pay for the continued oppression of [the most vulnerable] groups is the price of its own destruction. For the hour is late. And the clock of destiny is ticking out. We must act now before it is too late.

Through our nonviolent actions in 2005, the Invest-In Project seeks to do its part to save America's "anemic democracy" from corporate-rule by carrying on Dr. King's work right here in San Diego. Below is an outline of the Invest-In Project's 2005 Nonviolent Action Plan aimed at corporations and their occupation of our democracy.

DATE	HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE	ACTION
January 15	Dr. King's Birthday	Sleep-Out in Front of Mayor's House for 45 of 52 Weeks - Announce Plan for Year and Give McDonald's, Chamber, and Restaurant Association Notice
February 1	Anniversary of 1960 Student Sit-Ins in the South	Proclaim the Jubilee: Demand the Recognition of Economic Human Rights; "Sit-In" at McDonald's (45th anniversary of sit-ins)
March 12	75th Anniversary of Gandhi's Salt March	March from Mayor's to McDonalds
March 28	Cesar Chavez Holiday	Full-On Boycott of McDonald's (Start with one corporation and go from there); Ask folks to "fast" for one meal a week and redirect funds to campaign

Prop. 72 was an initiative on the November 2004 ballot that would have required large and medium-sized business owners to give health care to their workers. It narrowly lost 49% to 51%. The leading corporate sponsor of the effort to block its passage is McDonald's[...] Scare tactics, distortions and misrepresentations were used to defeat the bill. Concern for the plight of family businesses is now being used as a political tool by the very corporations that have driven mom-and-pops out of business.

THEME:

“The boycott is so powerful. Every person has an impact. And you really see results[...] They worked for us in 1970 and 1975. Every time you go to the store and choose not to buy grapes, you cast a vote for what you believe. You can cast this vote as many times as you want and the polls never close. These are not family farms [businesses] we are talking about. These are major corporations and the only way to get through to them is by not buying grapes [their fast food].” Cesar Chavez

WHY McDONALD’S, RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION, and CHAMBER:

- As spelled out in the book Fast Food Nation, McDonald’s and other fast food chains have “hastened the malling [commercial malls everywhere] of our landscape, widened the chasm between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and propelled the juggernaut of American cultural imperialism abroad.”*
- The California Chamber of Commerce (\$255,000 spent), the California Restaurant Association (\$4.5 million spent) and their corporate allies have spent millions of dollars to rescind the health care law through the initiative process.*
- The fast food industry is the nation’s largest employer of minimum-wage labor. The only American workers who consistently earn less are migrant farm workers (link to Chavez, grape boycott, and the urban equivalent of migrant farm workers). Led by McDonald’s, the industry has pioneered a workforce that earns low wages, gets little training, receives few benefits and has one of the highest turnover rates of any trade. Retail giants such as Target and Wal-Mart have emulated these labor practices, and there’s good reason such service-sector positions are called “McJobs.” The fastest growing job in San Diego County is food preparation. 61% of jobs in the county pay less than \$25,000.*
- Eight years ago, the California Restaurant Association claimed that proposed increases in the state and federal minimum wage would force the industry to fire more than 100,000 workers. Nevertheless, minimum wages were raised—and the annual revenues of the California restaurant industry have nearly doubled in the last decade. The industry is the largest private employer in the state[...] Its healthcare costs are now largely covered by taxpayers. California spends about \$4.6 billion a year on medical care for the uninsured,*

while hospitals absorb an additional \$5 billion. In 2003, the top five McDonald's executives total combined compensation was \$20,459,282.

- *Under the title of Corporate Responsibility, McDonald's website states:*

More than ever, we are focused on and committed to doing the right thing for the local communities in which we operate and for the customers we serve[...] McDonald's in the community means local development, support for local schools, youth sports, and other community programs, help in times of need...we help improve the health and well-being of children and families around the world.

This press release is being sent to the Mayor, the City Council, San Diego County McDonald's Association, the San Diego Chapter of the California Restaurant Association, and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce as we hope that there will be no need to carry out our more intense actions planned for later this year. However, without their using their power and influence to implement the demands submitted in our Formal Complaint of Human Rights Violations, as well as our plan to address the health care crisis, we will be left with no alternative but to pursue our "sovereign remedy" in the spirit of Gandhi, King, and Chavez. Through this press release, we extend our invitation to meet with the above named business organizations at anytime. Again, we sincerely hope to avoid this course of action.

Two days after sending out our press release regarding our action, the *San Diego Union-Tribune* wrote an article on our action. It essentially announced our plans and reminded readers of our previous action. Mayor Murphy, through a spokesman, refused to say whether the mayor would arrest us or not. (You can read the full article at: http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050116/news_1m16sleep.html.)

After two Sunday nights back on the public sidewalk in front of the mayor's house, Mayor Dick Murphy finally decided to act very late at night. On the anniversary of the Invest-In Project and the 1960 sit-ins, February 1st, the *San Diego Union-Tribune* again covered the event with an article. The piece highlighted how the mayor waited until our supporters and the media left to arrest Kevin and I (we asked David to hold off and respond with us next time should we be arrested), how we vowed to return even after this arrest, and quoted both the police chief and us. The chief said he decided to arrest us because he could no longer tolerate the continuing security threat

and said, “I’d do the same thing for any other family in San Diego that had the same set of circumstances” and that it “creates a significant risk to the mayor and his family.” His own police officers told us directly during the election that we already proved that we were no security threat. The article then quoted us saying the mayor “needs to put the people of San Diego first, not the business elite and the folks who contributed to his campaign.” After being arrested and released after about two and half hours, we were ordered to appear in court on March 30th and faced up to six months in jail and \$1,000 fines if convicted.

(http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050201/news_1m1olson.html.)

We did not let this arrest stop us. In fact, the following Sunday, February 6th, three of us showed up instead of two. Again, we were arrested late at night after the media had left. By this time, we had consciously decided to use the pending court case of our arrests as a stage for our message to the public. We had already been earning significant media coverage and response from the community but, given that we did not have waves of others who were willing to get arrested, we decided the court stage was our best option. The first arrest was quite quick and easy as they simply handcuffed us, placed us in the car, took us to the station downtown, processed us, and released us right away. We believe it was simply an attempt to scare us away. Again, we had trained and prepared for the arrest months ago. We had designated people ready to immediately contact the press and to visit us at the station. Needless to say, we came back and were arrested a second time. This time we were not quickly processed and released. We were in jail. By the time of this second arrest, I was sick with a terrible case of the flu and a sinus infection but we still had fun in the end.

One story in particular sticks out in my mind. We were being processed in the downtown San Diego jail where cleanliness was an issue. Among other things, feces was on the walls, it smelled horribly, and there was no privacy as you went to the filthy bathroom. It was in this environment that we were thrown some orange outfits, mismatched socks, and suspicious underwear briefs by the jailers. Rudely, they told all three of us to change into these clothes and to step behind a makeshift divider with sheets between us for privacy. So, we could not see each other but we could still hear each other. As we were changing our clothes, we talked to each other a little but were busy putting on our new jail uniforms. I think I came out from behind my divider first. Then, Kevin and David came out. One of them made a comment about the nasty underwear we were given and, then, I asked them with a puzzled look on my face, “You put those nasty things on? I kept my own underwear on.” They immediately looked at

each other, realized in each other's expression that they should do the same, and quickly returned to their dividers to change back into their own underwear.

The entire process was very long. It was something like eight or nine hours just to get to where the beds were. Remember, I was sick and simply wanted to sleep as we were arrested in the middle of the night. I tried to eat at one point, but the food, peanut butter sandwiches and rotten fruit, was so horrible I could barely eat. We believe they purposely wanted to make this arrest and jailing much more difficult to discourage us from returning for a third time. Eventually, after about 24 hours, we were released and given a court date.

Not long after, on April 25th, the mayor was named by *Time Magazine* as one of the three worst big-city mayors in the United States. Soon, he announced his plans to resign as mayor effective July 15, 2005. While the Invest-In Project was not the reason for Dick Murphy being forced to resign as mayor, we certainly contributed to his ouster. Toni Atkins, a San Diego City Council member, took over as interim mayor. Today, Atkins is the Speaker of the California State Assembly and recently she wrote the foreword to an important human development index report from *Measure of America* called "Portrait of California 2014-2015." In the foreword, she essentially acknowledges the Invest-In Project's 2005 argument that we should be using the people's "well-being and access to opportunity" to judge our progress as a society.

In mid-2005, with the mayor on his way out of office, we continued to receive media coverage. For example, two articles covering our conviction and sentencing were published in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* and the *San Diego City Beat*. The *Union-Tribune* covered our eventual conviction of a misdemeanor of targeted residential picketing. (http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050520/news_1m20olson.html.) Two counts each for Kevin and I and one count for David since he joined us later. In our closing argument we argued that our actions were not "picketing" but that "We were praying, fasting, reading scripture and having a candlelight vigil." We said, "We weren't targeting the mayor. We were highlighting the issues that were impacting the people." The Deputy City Attorney Leah Fields, who was not nice and appeared to want to make a name for herself, argued that the law was clear. Arguing on behalf of the mayor, she said "It's an invasion of privacy for people to conduct demonstrations in front of peoples' residence," she said. "They're really nice guys and their cause is a just one. But what they did is against the law." The jury ended up agreeing with the mayor and the Deputy City Attorney.

Interestingly, not long after being convicted of targeted residential picketing, I was contacted by the husband of one of the jurors, a professor at Palomar College. His

wife told him about our case and her experience on the jury. He sympathized with our cause and told us that his wife felt they had no option but to convict us based on the judge's instructions to the jury. He then invited me to participate in Palomar College's Political Economy Days by teaching a class on human rights. The class went so well that I was invited back each semester for a few years until the program was closed due to budget cuts.

The sentencing was also very interesting, as *City Beat* reported on June 1, 2005. (<http://www.sdcitybeat.com/sandiego/article-2718-in-brief.html>). The article was entitled "Outstanding' Trio Get Probation." It described how Superior Court Judge Richard Hanscom praised us prior to giving us a lighter sentence than the one pushed for by the Deputy City Attorney. It quotes Judge Hanscom beginning the proceedings by saying "Anyone who's around them for more than 15 minutes would see these are outstanding young men[...] Some may say they deserve a reward, but [the court] isn't in the reward business." The article quoted Corrie and Rev. Cribbs as they supported us and our arguments. Judge Hanscom then, as he revealed his sentence said the issue was deterrence. He said, "In our system, if they can go out there and do this, then the nastiest guy espousing the nastiest ideas can go out and do it, too." He gave us two years probation and 100 hours of community service. This seemed like a strange punishment to us since we were already serving the community. Deputy City Attorney, who was visibly disturbed by this decision, then asked Judge Hanscom, who had been very friendly throughout, to require that the 100 hours of community service be done specifically with the pro-business Downtown San Diego Business Partnership instead of somewhere, of our choosing, where it would be "consistent with their cause." The Deputy City Attorney's request "drew groans" from our supporters at the sentencing. The judge concluded the proceedings saying we could perform the community service with any organization of our choosing. So, at the end of our encounter with the justice system, we were essentially asked to do more of what we had already been doing—serve the community, just not in front of the mayor's house.

Not long after being charged and convicted of targeted residential picketing and as the mayor's resignation took effect in July 2005, Kevin and I went to study the "Principles and Practices of Kingian Nonviolence" for three weeks with Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette at the University of Rhode Island's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies. My employer, the California School Employees Association sent me and paid for me to learn from Dr. LaFayette, who was trained by Rev. James Lawson in Nashville as the 1960 sit-in movement spread across the South. He was a founding member of the often overlooked but essential Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

(SNCC—pronounced “snick”), participated in the Freedom Rides, played a key role in the Selma, Alabama campaign for voting rights, and later worked with Dr. King on the Poor People’s Campaign as the national coordinator. It was a unique and wonderful opportunity to hear stories directly from those who participated in the 1960s Freedom Struggle.

Dr. LaFayette often tells the story of his last conversation with Dr. King. It is captured in his own words in an October 5, 2012 interview by *Street Spirit*, a publication of the American Friends Service Committee. In it, he says:

On the day that Martin Luther King was killed, I was with him that morning in Memphis, Tennessee, at the Lorraine Motel in his room 306, and I was going over the press statement with him because he was going to go to Washington, D.C., and we were going to announce the Poor People’s Campaign officially.

But Martin Luther King could not go to Washington because a march in Memphis [in solidarity with striking public sanitation workers] had been broken up in violence and Martin Luther King wanted to hold that march over again.

He told me that since I was the national coordinator, I had to go to Washington. That morning I was going over the press release with him, tweaking it so he would be satisfied with what the statement was all about since I was doing this on his behalf.

Well, the last thing Martin Luther King said to me was a non-sequitur because it had nothing to do with the press statement. But just before I left, he said, “Now, Bernard, the next movement we’re going to have is to institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence—to be discussed later.” And I said, “Okay.”

Five hours later, Martin Luther King was shot and he died...inspired by Martin Luther King’s Poor People’s Campaign. I think it had more international implications than just in our country. From my conjecture and my observations, the assassination was designed to stop the work of Martin Luther King. And the reason I went and prepared myself for this work is because I wanted to make sure that those who attempted to assassinate Martin Luther King’s dream—missed.”

I, too, wanted to do everything possible to ensure that those who attempted to stop the work of Dr. King were not successful as I intended to carry on his legacy. Studying directly with Dr. LaFayette was one more step in that direction.

CHAPTER 8

NEEDLESS CHALLENGES AND HARD LESSONS

*“Mass strikes usually lead to unions. But unions
are not the big generators of mass strikes.”*

~ Frances Fox Piven

One of the first things I did as the new Field Director at CSEA in December 2005 was begin the process of transforming the San Diego Field Office by placing photos of our workers in action along the halls, showing them fighting for their rights. I also prominently placed the often forgotten and misunderstood preamble to the CSEA constitution in the entry way. It read:

It is generally acknowledged that almost every improvement in the condition of working people was accomplished by the efforts of organized workers through concerted action.

I also put the words, “Welcome to Your Union!” in the entrance above the preamble. I wanted to communicate a message of grassroots change and transformation by physically transforming the office. Even this simple act was not easy given the entrenched culture and long history of problems and divisions amongst staff and members. After it was done, it was appreciated by most everyone. However, this

simple task was a needless struggle. Looking back on it now, it was a sign of what was to come.

Despite the \$3 million dollar budget of the CSEA San Diego Field Office, the Invest-In Project was for the most part out-organizing CSEA by often turning out more people to its actions, receiving more media coverage, and being more connected to the community. Yet, the Invest-In Project was working on a very limited budget which essentially consisted of my personal funds left over after paying my bills and it was done in our spare time, after work and school. Nevertheless, I took the CSEA Field Director position knowing that the Invest-In Project could not continue if I did. I believed that strategically with the proper leadership the 24,000 workers and \$3 million dollars in the CSEA San Diego Field Office (and the 220,000 workers and the \$60 million CSEA budget statewide, along with its affiliation with the AFL-CIO and its 13 million members nationwide) could be organized and mobilized for real systemic change.

For a time, under the leadership of Director of Field Operations Steve Fraga, we were making some progress. Steve was essentially number two in the organization and was very supportive of my approach as my supervisor. A little more than a year after being the Field Director, one of the 52 chapter presidents in the San Diego Field Office sent this letter to Steve:

April 3, 2007

Dear Director Fraga,

In this busy life of ours, we many times do not take the time or opportunity to lend praise and thoughts of thanksgiving to our dedicated and supportive staff. I am guilty of such and do not want to wait another moment to share my thoughts about San Diego Field Office Director Eric Olson-Fernandez.

Promoting Eric to the position of Field Office Director has been such a positive move for all of our chapters, but I speak now of his position and effect on my chapter, Vista Unified 389. His availability, his professionalism, his willingness to support chapters in their needs, his incredible trainings, his fulfilled dream of an exceptional Area K conference, his uncanny ways of empowering leaders and membership and his impeccable guidance and leadership have been such a support to me, our chapter leaders and membership. Never has there been a time when Field Director Olson hasn't responded to our needs during our times of turmoil with a school district that is in a period of restructuring and

changing direction. Through it all, Eric has shown us ways to continue to activate peacefully to protect the rights and integrity of our CSEA and classified family. He has shared a quality amount of time in helping us to prepare a plan and organizing materials that have been second to none. Because of his generosity of self, we have been able to organize, activate and fight for our rights with an air of professionalism and determination. He has taught us well, and we feel comfortable in our efforts to continue down that path of commitment, determination and solidarity.

Along with Field Office Director Olson's generosity of self, he is kind, fair and firm and always a wealth of information. He is exemplary in his teachings and actions, always practicing what he preaches.

On behalf of our Vista chapter, Director Fraga, we thank you for your belief in hiring Eric Olson-Fernandez as our San Diego Field Office Director. It is our hope that our relationship with Eric as field director is a long and lasting one.

In solidarity,

Henrietta Black

Vista Unified CSEA Chapter 389 President

Unfortunately, the progress made under Steve would not last nor was it appreciated by everyone. The culture at CSEA was too sick. One of the major problems was self-interested leadership at the top and the bottom. Instead of fighting the real fights, we ultimately focused on goals created by self-interested leaders, usually driven by our Governmental Relations Department and the politicians. Despite everyone's lives being made harder by the severe attacks on public education and our workers, the organization could not get its act together.

Dave Low, the Assistant Director of Government Relations, who actually ran the department, always had a very strong influence on the organization. Not long after I left CSEA he became the Executive Director. Of course, the Governmental Relations Department typically saw things through the lens of Sacramento and its politicians. The department was very hierarchical and had a distorted political worldview with the politicians on top and the people on the bottom. Meanwhile, I was trying to bring to CSEA a new culture of bottom up politics, with the people being the ultimate authority not politicians. A documented example of Dave Low's leadership approach was

revealed publicly in the *Los Angeles Times* on October 9, 2012. To me, the revelation was not a surprise. The report entitled “Blue Shield's union ties raise concerns about conflicts” demonstrates the cultural sickness within CSEA. (<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/oct/09/business/la-fi-blue-shield-influence-20121009>).

The article documented that Dave Low was working for the health insurance company Blue Shield at the same time he was working for CSEA. While the average salary of our school workers was around \$24,000 a year, Dave Low was being paid \$125,000 a year by Blue Shield on top of his inflated CSEA salary. His relationship with Blue Shield began in 2004 (two years after I started) until the *Times* article was being re-searched on August 31, 2012 when his employment abruptly ended. The article says:

He [Low] also leads a broader group of 1.5 million government employees, including firefighters, police and teachers, called Californians for Health Care and Retirement Security. But Low had another job as well until recently. He was a consultant for Blue Shield of California, which has secured lucrative health insurance contracts that cover many of the same public workers that Low represents.

In 2010, Dave Low was making more than 11 times the average school worker salary with him making \$264,435 in compensation from CSEA alone. Ironically, when I became Field Director at CSEA, I had to sign an agreement saying I would not work anywhere else. I assume Dave Low must have also signed this agreement. Yet, the article conveys that a prominent CSEA board member was not aware of his employment relationship with Blue Shield. Please also know that during this entire timeframe CSEA was officially pushing for single payer health care legislation in California, essentially Medicare for everyone except private insurers like Blue Shield and other profiteers are evicted from our health system. The CSEA board of directors had approved our support of single payer legislation and the organization was (half-heartedly) holding public actions pushing for this legislation. The article also describes that:

One of the biggest prizes for any company is a contract with the California Public Employees' Retirement System, the country's third-largest healthcare buyer after the federal government and General Motors Co. It spends \$7 billion annually on medical care for active and retired state and local government workers. CalPERS is a crucial customer for Blue Shield, which serves about

400,000 of CalPERS' 1.3 million members. Overall, the San Francisco company has about 3.3 million customers and nearly \$10 billion in annual revenue. In August, CalPERS began the process for choosing new healthcare companies, and it plans to award three-year contracts next year that take effect in 2014. Many of the industry's biggest players—UnitedHealth Group Inc., WellPoint Inc. and Aetna Inc.—are competing with Blue Shield[...] CalPERS said it was aware of Low's work with Blue Shield and that it didn't raise any concerns.

Two of CSEA's board members also sat on the CalPERS board. One of them, was CSEA's former president and the current CalPERS board president Rob Feckner. The other CalPERS board member was Michael Bilbray, CSEA's current president who was unaware of Low working for Blue Shield. The article clarifies this by saying:

[...] some members of the 13-person CalPERS board say they were in the dark. Michael Bilbrey, a board member at CalPERS and Low's school union, said he was unaware of Low's moonlighting for Blue Shield. Low served as campaign treasurer for Bilbrey when he ran for the CalPERS board.

As implied above, whenever CalPERS board elections took place, they became a priority at CSEA with Dave Low taking a prominent role. Ultimately, the union was literally transferring its people and values to CalPERS and/or vice versa. The *Los Angeles Times* piece talks about CalPERS having “public pressure to improve disclosure of potential conflicts of interest and to take other steps to prevent ethical lapses or misconduct after the \$240-billion pension fund was caught up in an influence-peddling scandal over its investment decisions.” Now, why would someone working at a union of school workers making \$264,435 a year feel the need to make an additional \$125,000, especially in this manner? Dave Low grew up and was nurtured in the culture of CSEA. He came to the organization shortly after obtaining a Business Administration degree at the University of California Berkeley as a young man. The only conclusion I can make is that the culture of the union is sick, very sick with serious ethical problems of all kinds and Dave Low has become what the organization has valued and taught him.

Instead of being an alternative to the dominant, corrupt corporate culture in society, CSEA mirrors it. Our annual conventions, with delegates from each of our 750 chapters, were painful examples of this corporate mentality. We would often have Sacramento politicians and the same “motivational” speakers as the corporate world

(think Chris Gardner, whose homeless person to rich stockbroker life story was played by Will Smith in the film *The Pursuit of Happyness*). The same corporate peddlers (insurance companies/financial institutions) would hand out promotional items to our members. It was a stomach wrenching experience to see the members simply grabbing whatever promotional items (cheap pencils, bags, water bottles, etc.) they could without even looking at them. It was simply time to consume. Our workers were deeply entrenched in this worldview of consumer not citizen and, unfortunately, they were not challenged by the union or its most influential leaders to think in new ways.

Another example of the corporate mentality at CSEA is that when I was promoted to Field Director I was driving a 1989 Toyota Corolla because it was made by union workers in Fremont, CA, and was still running well despite that it had a back door that was crashed in. The members were now more concerned with my car than our work and would complain. The same is true of my clothes. I have always taken pride in showing up with clean, neat, and ironed clothes. My mother taught me early on, around nine years old, how to iron clothes and, to this day, I still iron my clothes every morning. Yet, even members who fought the hard battles with me at San Diego Unified seemed to spend too much time and energy on these issues. It was as if they now wanted me to dress in suits and ties like the fancy Human Resource Directors at the school districts and drive fancy cars (Mercedes/BMW) like them. Ironically, I was trying to do the opposite—follow the Gandhian principle of dressing more like the people, the workers. No one complained about either of these things when I was the Organizer but now that I was the Field Director it was suddenly an issue. From my standpoint, my new purpose was simply to organize on a larger scale. Clearly, the members were shaped to think otherwise and the organization was not willing to take a critical look at itself.

In March of 2009, after nineteen years in the Executive Director role, Bud Dougherty retired suddenly without explanation. In June of 2009, the CSEA Board of Directors overlooked Steve Fraga and hired a new Executive Director from the outside named Josie Mooney who worked with Andy Stern at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Stern is notorious for partnering with the corporate world, much like Dave Low. Mooney was the last person CSEA needed as its leader as she had a very dubious undemocratic history in helping Stern as the head of his union. The board's choice of Josie Mooney made all the CSEA field staff ask: "Did they even Google her?" Once she came on board, it was unbearable and the truth is that I probably should have left sooner as I knew by then that the organization was not going to change and that good work could not really be done there.

When I decided to apply for the Field Director position at CSEA in 2005, I had hoped it would be possible to have a transformation of the organization. An overlooked but absolutely crucial aspect of the Indian Freedom Movement's success was Gandhi's transformation of the Indian National Congress. In Krishnalal Shridharani's important book *War Without Violence*, he says:

The success of Satyagraha, particularly those with a national bearing, came not merely from the employment of a novel and surprising strategy; they were made possible to a great extent by the existence in India of a lusty organization to back and to conduct the actual operations of non-violent direct action. In fact, no technique of mass mobilization, however sound and logically tenable, can ever achieve anything worth while without being guided and controlled by strict discipline.

Later, in the chapter entitled "Organization and Discipline," Shridharani lays out the process by which Gandhi transformed the Congress from an elitist party based in the colonial cities to an organization of the Indian people with a base in the thousands of rural Indian villages. His description of the Congress prior to Gandhi is key:

A few exceedingly prosperous and urban Indians, with Oxford and Cambridge backgrounds together with British tastes in dress, food and accents, gathered together once a year for three days in an outstanding Indian city. Humorists have said that these men pleaded the case of Indian-made goods while ramming their hands in the pockets of their Savile Row or Bond Street suits[...] At best it was a very small, select group, and the overwhelming illiterate peasantry did not know that the organization existed.

After returning to India from South Africa in 1914, touring the vast country in an effort to reconnect with the people and the land, and working independently of the Congress with great success in Champaran, Gandhi was asked to lead the Congress. According to Shridharani, "Then things began to happen. Inside of a few months after Gandhi took the helm of the Congress, it was a revolutionized organization. From a mouthpiece of the well-to-do bourgeoisie, it became an organization of the people." What specifically was done to transform the organization and create a practical program of action? Gandhi democratized the organization by:

- Changing the Congress constitution to seek not “Dominion Status” but “Complete Independence” by “peaceful means.” In other words, he did not compromise on their ultimate goal of independence and he institutionalized nonviolence knowing that “Only nonviolence can save democracy”;
- Strategically altering the focus from the colonial cities where the British dominated to the rural villages where the Indian masses were located;
- Replacing English with indigenous languages as the official language of Congress meetings in order to connect with the masses;
- Emphasizing All-India unity by eliminating demarcations of caste, religion, and sex. Gandhi’s openness to women’s participation was especially essential;
- Expanding participation by reducing membership dues and creating alternatives to paying dues through service;
- Developing a Constructive Programme that created the foundations for a better society not just simply opposed colonialism. The Constructive Programme also trained and disciplined Freedom Fighters for times when civil disobedience was necessary.

I had hoped to make a similar transformation at CSEA.

As I scanned the American landscape, very few organizations have the reach, structure, and financial independence necessary to help catalyze a national movement. However, unions do. So, grateful for the hard lessons at CSEA, I decided to leave the organization in mid-December 2010 and try my luck with another education union in Florida.

The Florida Education Association (FEA) is a statewide federation of teacher and education workers’ unions in the state. With its 137,000 members, it is the largest union in Florida. It is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Education Association (NEA), and the AFL-CIO, which is very unusual among education unions, which usually affiliate with only one of these three, like CSEA. Shortly after leading the nation’s first statewide teachers’ strike in 1968, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that teachers had a constitutional right to bargain collectively. This too is very unusual in the south. In 1974, FEA split into two separate federations. The two groups merged again in the year 2000. I decided to apply for the Southern Region Manager position in 2010 because I read in the job description of FEA’s current “transformation process into a high performance organization that promotes a culture of organizing and learning.” Given this declaration, its history and the large Latino presence in the state, I felt I could be helpful there. Additionally, strategically, it seemed to make sense since FEA bargained by county. There are 67 counties in Florida. CSEA

bargained by school district and there were 750 contracts to bargain every year with re-openers. This alone is a huge obstacle to organizing strategically as your staff and resources are always focused on bargaining. My job at FEA would focus on the southern quarter of the state, the most populous part of Florida. This area included the 5th largest school district in the nation, Miami-Dade, and the 7th largest school district in the nation, Broward. Again, strategically, it seemed to make sense. So, with this hope and optimism, I accepted FEA's offer and moved to Miami to begin the new year there.

Unfortunately, I flew across the country only to find the same exact dysfunction and culture at FEA. At my very first meeting, one of the other four regional managers that was brought to FEA to help bring about this shift to organizing pulled me aside and told me I should try to get my old job back. After only a couple months, three of the six top staff leaders brought in to change things—including the Chief of Staff (read Executive Director), Director of Organizing and Field Services, and the Central Region Manager—had departed in frustration. Again, the person truly controlling things at FEA was the Director of Public Policy Advocacy, the equivalent of Dave Low. One interaction with this Director of Public Policy Advocacy is telling.

In my early conversations with veteran FEA staff and members the 1968 strike came up a couple times. So, I decided that it was an important event to investigate further. Soon, I learned that stacks of the book “Educational Conflict In The Sunshine State: The Story Of The 1968 Statewide Teacher Walkout In Florida” by Don Cameron were in storage at headquarters. Below is a summary of the book:

In the state of Florida in the 1960s, the tension between the costs of funding a quality education program and the taxes required to do so exploded into a confrontation between the state's teachers and the Florida power structure. For a century or more, the state had been determined to keep taxes—all taxes—as low as possible. In that context, Florida's education system atrophied to the point that educators felt they could no longer continue to ignore what it was doing to their students. After years of begging, cajoling, and threatening, the Florida Education Association called for a statewide strike of all teachers in order to force education improvements. Cameron explains the statewide walkout of 35,000 teachers in Florida in 1968, a seminal event in the history of Florida and in the teacher union movement. It rocked the Florida power structure that had allowed education in the state to atrophy to the point of scandal. The walkout ended after three weeks in a sea of recriminations,

lawsuits, and ill feelings. The strike lasted three weeks at the state level, but went on for up to seven weeks in some local school districts. Its repercussions, however, went on for decades.

The book had actually been commissioned by the organization to celebrate its 40th anniversary a couple years back but clearly the book had not been distributed or utilized to educate all of its staff or 137,000 members. Soon, I tracked down a wonderful video of the 1968 FEA President describing why teachers were forced to take this action. The long-time FEA Information Technology Director also showed me some wonderful photographs he had collected of the strike and placed in his office. I quickly began to educate the leaders and members of the organization about their own forgotten history. I distributed the book to my staff and key member leaders, set up time to discuss the book, and to do trainings on this important history.

At one FEA conference with key leaders from around the state, I was asked to do a training. So, I did one on “Organizing in Difficult Times” and focused on FEA’s own history, specifically the 1968 strike. The Director of Public Policy Advocacy sat in on my session. I started by suggesting that as educators we should use history as a guide to see what our ancestors did in tough times. I asked why we study and teach history as educators. Then, I showed the following slide:



Then, I asked, “Being in similar circumstances today, shouldn’t we consider how workers in the 1930s won their rights?! I mentioned the 1934 general strikes in Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Toledo and the 1936 Flint sit-down strike. Next, I showed a political cartoon entitled “School Segregation Circa 2000” by Rex Babin with two water fountains, one very nice, clean and modern with a sign above saying “AFFLUENT ONLY” and another right next to it run down, old and broken with a sign above it saying “POOR ONLY.” (The cartoon can be found at the following link: http://decentschools.org/images/school_segregation_cartoon.gif.) Then I asked “Being in similar circumstances today, shouldn’t we consider how workers in the 1930s and African-Americans in the 1960s won their rights?!” Then, I began to engage the workers in a discussion about the 1968 FEA strike and shared with them a handout that I created with some key quotes and lessons from the book FEA had commissioned. The quotes included:

EFFECTIVENESS

Schools were forced to close immediately and entirely in twenty-two of the state’s sixty-seven counties, with most of the other counties struggling to keep some schools open. Only about half of the state’s teachers participated in the walkout, which meant that the entire Florida public school system never did close down. That was problematic for FEA, and so was the fact that other school employees like secretaries, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and so forth were never part of the walkout. In other words, not enough schools closed to make the strike a roaring success, but enough were shuttered to give validity to the effort.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL SYSTEM

After a hundred years of patience, it had become abundantly clear to Florida’s teachers that passivity and compliance had produced very little for them or their students. Quite the contrary, acquiescence had served no purpose except to whittle away their ability to teach and to crush their morale; it also negatively impacted their students’ ability to learn. As far as the striking teachers were concerned, waiting for school boards and legislators to do the right thing hadn’t worked, and it became clear to them that it wasn’t going to work in the future either. They came to accept the finality that the repeated promises politi-

cians made to them were nothing more than delaying tactics at best, and meaningless lies at worst.

RESULTS

[...]the walkout produced some very practical results that could be considered victories. The money appropriated for education during the special session was more than had ever been generated before in any preceding session of the legislature. The package approved by the legislature and enacted into law without [Governor] Kirk's signature allocated about \$250 million in new spending, with about \$175 million earmarked for K-12 education. That meant over \$2,000 for every classroom in the state. It was the largest education appropriation ever[...]the bottom line was that there were substantially more funds for Florida's schools than there would have been without all the fuss. It was the largest financial injection the schools had ever received in the history of the state, and the salary increases teachers received were also the highest they had ever received. Florida salaries went from twenty-second in the nation the year of the strike to thirteenth the following year. They had never ranked that high before and haven't since[...]

In the most ironic twist of all, within a few years after the walkout FEA, through court challenges and legislative action, was able to achieve collective bargaining for public employees. It is incontrovertible that the strike had an impact on gaining a collective bargaining statute.

MISTAKES/LESSONS

In retrospect, the single biggest mistake made by FEA was adopting the strategy of having teachers resign from their jobs. The concept originally centered on the notion that since strikes were illegal, if there was no employment relationship between the teachers and their school boards, they couldn't be punished or ordered back to work[...] by allowing each county school board to decide who would be rehired and who wouldn't, and deciding which striking teachers would be punished and which wouldn't, FEA lost a great deal of leverage in getting all the strikers back to work. Neither had FEA prepared for the vindictiveness of some of the school boards.

At the time of the 1968 strike, FEA only represented the teachers. Now, FEA represents all the education workers. So, I ended the training with the idea that the

mistakes of the past (lack of unity between teachers and school workers and the strategy of resignations by teachers) need not be repeated. The workers who sat in on the session were inspired and the Director of Public Policy Advocacy knew it. So, a little later in the plenary session, he made an awkward, unclear statement to everyone referencing me and my presentation and not knowing what could happen in the future. It was as if he was confused and threatened by the ideas in the training and needed to call me out on it. I was not sure how to take his comment but I knew he did not like it or appreciate it.

One should know that in 2010, just a few months before my arrival at FEA, a third of the 20,322 teachers, mostly Latinas, in Miami-Dade County Public Schools participated in their own successful sick-out to protest legislation that would overhaul their pay to be linked to student test scores. Their action was a major factor in forcing then Republican Governor Charlie Christ to veto the bill despite it passing the legislature. Governor Christ knew that Miami-Dade County Public Schools is the 5th largest school district in the United States, that neighboring Broward County Public Schools is the 7th largest school district in the U.S., and that this could spread to other areas if not quelled. He probably was aware of the 1968 statewide teachers strike. Unfortunately, I learned later that the United Teachers of Dade (UTD), the local FEA affiliated union, did not support and in fact discouraged the teachers in their mass action despite their key role in vetoing the proposed legislation. UTD was more concerned about its treasury being at risk for fines connected to the “illegal” sick-out than supporting workers in “concerted actions” as the CSEA preamble recognizes and as FEA should have recognized. This was a great opportunity to help the students and empower the teachers. FEA, the public schools, and the students were suffering severe political attacks. The lack of support for these teachers in Miami-Dade by UTD and FEA in 2010 foreshadowed what was to come. The organization was not prepared to make the shift to organizing despite their professed statements and restructuring of the organization.

FEA was also riddled with dysfunction, silos, and self-interested leaders. After only six months with the organization, I, too, decided to join the others in leaving as it was clear that the organization was not committed to organizing. After publicly sharing that I was leaving the organization, one of my staff members sent me an email saying, “Such a huge loss for FEA!! I hope you have found something wonderful that will embrace your ideas and passion. Thank you for all you have tried to teach us :). I learned so much and gained such perspective in the short time working with you.”

As I began to make a transition, I made one final effort to make real change with an educational union.

I decided to apply for a position with the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA). This time I figured I would apply for the Executive Director position as I did not see any other way of making the necessary changes without being in this kind of position. I continued to have a vision of a Gandhi-like Indian National Congress transformation of an educational union in a critical U.S. state that had a large Latino population. And, again, the TSTA was emphasizing “understanding how to move an organization from a service culture to an organizing culture” in its job description for Executive Director. All candidates were given a “pre-interview project” which stated, “In order for this strategy [of building strong, powerful local associations] to be successful, we believe it is essential to shift from a “service model” to an “organizing culture. Despite the successes we have had over the years in winning some protections at the state level (duty free lunch, class size limits, due process for teacher terminations, RIF [reduction in force] protections, planning periods, etc.), without the power to enforce these rights locally, there always was the danger that a single act by the legislature could wipe out these gains.” It then asked the candidates for the three to four most important elements they would emphasize in creating a plan of action.

My strategy was to lay out my ideas centered around building a movement in a very frank and honest manner to see if TSTA was truly serious about making changes. Otherwise, I did not want to be a part of their organization. This seemed to be a logical approach given that their website says, “Don't just join an organization, get involved in a movement! Together we can change the way public schools and public school employees are treated.” So, I presented my ideas for a movement starting with their own quote of not joining an organization but a movement and suggesting that the organization's top leaders needed to be “Social Movement Strategists.” I asked if the key leaders were truly prepared to shift the structure of the organization (time, money, and people) to creating a movement and if it is prepared to think about where our Montgomery is? I shared documents that gave specifics on how you shift from “servicing” to “organizing” and on a “Human Rights Vision for Public Education.” I then proceeded to present other ideas, including that the political approach of the union would need to be a Movement Model that focused on participatory democracy and issues not elections, candidates, or political parties. I emphasized that it must be politically independent and cannot be focused on the capitol but instead on the bottom up, in the locals, centered on communicating more with our members and the community than with

the politicians. Lastly, I highlighted that our political approach must include nonviolent resistance if necessary.

Next, I proposed that the legal approach of the organization would also need to be a Movement Model focused on finding a strategic way to leverage organizing power for the workers. The examples of the National Labor Relations Act excluding farmworkers and thus allowing the United Farm Workers grape boycott to be legal and the Freedom Riders testing the *Boynton v. Virginia* decision were used to demonstrate this approach. I told the TSTA leaders that we must use the international human rights legal system. Since the U.S. Supreme Court said in the *Rodriguez* case that education was not a fundamental right in the U.S. Constitution and the Texas state constitution had not been enforced, we were left with no alternative but to turn to the international system and organize a movement. Additionally, I emphasized the need for the legal department to play the movement role of helping leaders participate in nonviolent action by responding to arrests, legal convictions, and jailings.

I ended my presentation with a slide showing that I wanted to lead by example and that, if selected, I would self-impose a cap on the executive salary to the top wage received by a member. This was significant as according to the TSTA national affiliate, the National Education Association (NEA), the beginning teacher salary for TSTA teachers was \$34,234 and the average was \$47,157. I can assure you that this is a lot less money than what the top executives of TSTA earn. The job came down to two candidates, myself and the current TSTA Director of Public Affairs, again the equivalent of Dave Low at CSEA. Guess who got the job? The TSTA Director of Public Affairs was selected. I never had the pleasure of meeting the man, but I am fairly confident that his approach, as the head lobbyist for the union, was essentially more of the same with a focus on elections and politicians. After the selection was made, some unusual things occurred that made me think that my presentation must have had an impact on some of the board members. For example, I received an offer to help me find another Executive Director job at another NEA state affiliate from the outgoing, retiring Executive Director who did not participate in the interview process. However, at this point, I was fed up with educational unions and I ended up going to Chicago to work with a much more progressive nurses union that will actually strike if necessary.

One of the nurses union's partners was the Chicago Teachers Union, which actually was in the middle of a real transition to an organizing approach under new leadership: they were challenging the traditional education unions and leaders at the national level. Chicago has the 3rd largest school district in the country and has 22,519 teachers, and over 400,000 students. Eighty-five percent of these students are on free

or reduced lunch and 84.9% are black or Latino. Given my experience in California, Florida and Texas, it was hard not to think about the missed opportunities when the Chicago Teachers Union launched its strike in September of 2012 against Obama's former Chief of Staff and now Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his Eli Broad-trained Superintendent, Jean-Claude Brizard (whose official title was CEO).

A short time before arriving in Chicago, while I was in Florida, I had read a book called *Quality Education as a Constitutional Right: Creating a Grassroots Movement to Transform Public Schools* by editors Theresa Perry, Robert P. Moses, Joan T. Wynne, Ernesto Cortes Jr., and Lisa Delpit. One chapter in particular stuck out for me. The chapter was entitled "Reading, Writing, and Rights: Ruminations on Getting the Law in Line with Educational Justice" by Imani Perry. Below are some key excerpts:

In San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 31.1 (1973), the United States Supreme Court stated that public education is not a right granted to individuals by the Constitution. The Supreme Court has asserted that there is no constitutional right to education at all, much less equal or quality education[...] However, beginning as early as the noncommittal "all deliberate speed" mandate in Brown II, it has become clear that the federal judiciary has consistently, even doggedly, failed to support equality goals in American education, even while acknowledging how fundamental education is to the fabric of our society. The fight for equal education in the post-Brown era seems to the American law student a dead end[...] What is clear is that activism and public will are critical to constitutional re-interpretation of the sort that would be required to affirm a right to a quality education[...] According to [Derrick A.] Bell, the emphasis on integration in Brown and the cases which followed it, rather than on quality or resources, was evidence of this misapplication of energy[...] So, you might wonder, if all of this is true, why do law students (lawyers and law professors) believe that the fight for quality education as a constitutional right is a losing battle? To answer this, we must consider context[...] the establishment of the National Relations Labor Board occurred in the context of larger social justice movements. It was not an objective constitutionalism that led to those results, but a movement context. [Howard] Zinn goes on to say in the same piece:

The Constitution gave no rights to working people: no right to work less than twelve hours a day, no right to a living wage, no right to safe working conditions. Workers had to organize, go on strike, defy the law, the courts, the police, create a great movement which won the eight-hour day, and caused such commotion that Congress was forced to pass a minimum wage law, and Social Security, and unemployment insurance.

Zinn's point is that activism, not constitutionalism, has created so many of the legal protections we hold dear[...] looking at these historic decisions is key to imagining how one might get to a different and more just conclusion about the nation's responsibility to educate children than what we currently have[...] it was the cumulative power of the labor movement in the early twentieth century[...] that led to the National Labor Relations Act in 1935. In that act, the statement that "the denial by employers of the right of employees to organize and the refusal by employers to accept the procedure of collective bargaining lead to strikes and other forms of industrial strife or unrest" fundamentally changed the relationship between the law and workers. The test, however, was when the Supreme Court was asked to review the constitutionality of the act, it stated, "a single employee was helpless in dealing with an employer; that he was dependent ordinarily on his daily wage for the maintenance of himself and family; that if the employer refused to pay him the wages that he thought fair, he was nevertheless unable to leave the employ and resist arbitrary and unfair treatment; [and] that union was essential to give laborers opportunity to deal on an equality with their employer." It was an acknowledgment of the injustice of the exploitation and manipulation of power on the part of employers, not merely a technocratic interpretation of law, that shaped judicial review. The Court reached the conclusion it did under the national commerce power held by congress[...] And the Court allowed Congress to punish such practices because Congress has the authority to regulate interstate commerce, even if the actions in question were not directly related to interstate commerce[...] So by upholding the legislation the Court effectively granted rights to employees that had not been enumerated or codified in the Constitution, in order to meet the demands of the labor movement. Many things we take for granted, such as bargaining over wages, hours, health benefits, pensions, and sick days, all emerged out of the establishment of the NLRA and the NLRB. While the scope of employee rights under the act and board have diminished over the last several decades, it

is critical to understand how essential most of these rules have become and how they directly emerged from a history of strikes and labor organizing done in a fashion that was, before the NLRA was passed, illegal. Even without an enumerated legal right, the Court did acknowledge the rights of employees in what I would call a sort of liberty interest that entailed both freedom from (prohibition, retribution, penalty for organizing) and freedom to (participate in institutions and political sphere in collective manner), vis-à-vis their employers. The Court sought to acknowledge and remedy the inequality of power in that instance by interpreting the Constitution to allow workers the right to use what power they had at their disposal, a collective power in numbers. I reference this politico-legal history not because it is more compelling or inspiring than that of the civil rights movement or other social justice movements, but because it provides a context in which the law wasn't there until the people were.

For years, I, too, had been asking myself and searching for how can we get “the people there?” Even in law school, more than a decade prior to reading this chapter, I had taken a human rights course where I made many of these same arguments in a written assignment. In the paper, I analyzed the Rodriguez case, international human rights law, a potential grassroots movement around the right to education, and the question of “Can American society survive without a first rate public school system and still live up to its democratic ideals?”

Unfortunately, after several years of working in the labor movement, I learned the hard lesson that even unions (and thus union workers) have forgotten that they forced the Supreme Court in the 1930s to legally acknowledge the rights of employees because of their movement and often illegal actions. Collectively, union workers have forgotten that they forced the Court to “reach” the conclusion that it had the power to grant rights to employees that had not been enumerated or codified in the Constitution. But, after years of working in unions, my experience has taught me that the kind of people’s movement our country so badly needs will not come from labor unions or union leaders. As Frances Fox Piven, author of the book *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail*, recognized, “Mass strikes usually lead to unions. But unions are not the big generators of mass strikes.” In fact, given my experience inside and outside of labor, I learned that the kind of movement we need in America will not come from any of the traditional leaders or organizations in our society.

So, what do we do? It is important for today’s human rights defenders to think long and hard about how we can strategically get the people there. How do we help

people not be fearful, obedient, passive, and complacent in “the land of the free” and “the home of the brave?” How can we help create the equivalent of 1960s struggle today? In other words, how can we create a movement with a series of planned, strategic nonviolent campaigns? I have come to believe that we must create the equivalent of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee of the 1960s, with a Latino twist: Nuevo SNCC.

CHAPTER 9

NUEVO SNCC (STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE)

“...always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal. Now we are poor people, individually[...] collectively, we [black people in America] are richer than all the nations in the world, with the exception of nine. Did you know that? That’s power right there, if we know how to pool it[...] We don’t need any brick and bottles, we don’t need any Molotov cocktails. We just need to go around to these massive industries in our country, and say, ‘God sent us by here to say to you that you’re not treating His children right. And we’ve come by here to make the first item on your agenda fair treatment, where God’s children are concerned. Now, if you are not prepared to do that, we do have an agenda that we must follow. And our agenda calls for withdrawing economic support from you.”

~ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I’ve Been to the Mountaintop, April 3, 1968

In July of 2012, I received a transfer from my job in Chicago back to San Diego after a year and half of being away from the where I felt called to put down roots. A few months later, on September 16, 2012, not long before turning forty years old, I was finally liberated from all student loan debt. To put this in perspective, up until this time, I had already outlived Dr. King by a few months but was still in debt. In celebration, I wrote the following poem entitled “Freedom on Mexican Independence Day.” It included the following words:

*One trapped by debt is not released but burdened and full of fret[...]
A boy released from his captive bond is full of God's Freedom and strong.*

Aside from writing the poem, I began to think in earnest about how I could help others be free.

Now, that I was finally free from debt and poverty, I started to work on making Nuevo SNCC a reality after learning the painful lesson that it would not be possible to create a movement from within the established institutions. So, I started to reread all my materials I had compiled over the years, including an independent study assignment in law school focused on creating a SNCC-like organization, books on SNCC, and original SNCC documents. One of the documents I found was a 1963 SNCC brochure. It described SNCC as “not a membership organization, but rather an agency attempting to stimulate and foster the growth of local protest movements.”

Without SNCC, the 1960s Freedom Movement simply would not have materialized. Just try to imagine the 1960s without the Sit-Ins, Freedom Rides, the Albany campaign, the March on Washington, the Birmingham campaign, Mississippi Freedom Summer, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, Selma, all of which SNCC and/or SNCC leaders, especially from Nashville, played a significant role in. In order to confront today's great social challenges, to get the people “there,” and to understand why we need a Nuevo SNCC to create a people's movement, we must ask what does history teach us? How did our ancestors get “there”? I think the most important lesson that history teaches us is that effective nonviolent movements require a core group of people who develop a grand strategy with military-like planning and training. Two people who were thinking strategically and helped create SNCC in 1960 were Ella Baker and Rev. James Lawson. Without them, SNCC would never have been born. So, what prompted these leaders, Ella Baker and Rev. Lawson, to create a new organization of students instead of simply joining the established NAACP, for example?

Both of these leaders actually had experiences with and ideas about the NAACP. Let's review that history together. In an article entitled “Ella Baker and Models of Social Change” written by Charles Payne in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, he summarizes Ella Baker's involvement with the NAACP by saying:

Her organizing work in Harlem brought her to the attention of some people active in NAACP circles, and in 1941 she applied to the NAACP for a job as an assistant field secretary. The job involved extensive travel throughout her na-

tive South, raising funds, memberships, and consciousness, trying to get people to see the relevance of the organization to their lives and trying to help them work through their very real fears about being associated with the NAACP. She spent about half of each year organizing membership drives and new chapters in the South—Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia—thus becoming exposed to a wide variety of leadership styles and organizational structures while making innumerable contacts with grassroots leadership, contacts that would become important in her work with the SCLC and SNCC.

In 1943 she became the NAACP's National Director of Branches. In what seems to be the pattern of her life, she was more in the organization than of it. She was a critic—not always a gentle one—of that organization's style of work. By 1941, she was calling the program "stale and uninteresting." She thought the leadership was overly concerned with recognition from whites, overly oriented toward a middle-class agenda, unaware of the value of massed-based, confrontational politics, not nearly aggressive enough on economic issues, and too much in the hands of the New York office. She was particularly critical of the organization's tendency to stress membership size without attempting to involve those members more meaningfully in its program. She saw the organization as the victim of its own success. It was successful enough with its programs of attacking the legal bases of racial oppression that its very success blinded the organization to its shortcomings. The legal emphasis meant that the huge mass base of the NAACP—400,000 by 1944—could not play a meaningful role in the development of policy and strategy.

She urged the organization to recruit more low-income members by, for example, sending organizers into pool rooms and taverns; her experience had been that some people would join up out of sheer surprise. The branches, she argued, not the national office, should be the focal point of the struggle. "Any branch which says it has nothing around which to build a program," she wrote, "is simply too lazy to concern itself with things on its own doorstep." While many of her recommendations were ignored, she was able in 1944 to initiate a series of regional leadership conferences. The conferences, one of which was attended by Rosa Parks, were intended to help local leaders search for more effective ways to attack local problems and at the same time see how local issues were, inevitably, an expression of broader social issues.

She left the national office in 1946, partly as a result of having accepted responsibility for raising a niece and partly as a result of her conflicts with the or-

ganization's viewpoint. She worked for a while as a fund-raiser for the National Urban League and continued to work with the NAACP at the local level, becoming president of the New York City branch which, in her phrase, she tried to "bring back to the people" by moving the office to a location where it would be more visible to the Harlem community and by developing a program in which black and Hispanic parents actively worked on issues involving school desegregation and the quality of education.

So, as Clayborne Carson, who wrote an important book on SNCC and who is the director of the King Papers Project at Stanford University has pointed out, in 1955 when the Montgomery Bus Boycott emerged, Ella Baker viewed this as an extension of her previous work with the NAACP. Many of the key people involved in the boycott were people she knew from her time with the organization.

According to the book *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* by Jean Theoharis, Ella Baker had a significant affect on Rosa Parks. Theoharis writes:

Park's growing activism was given a lift, according to historian Barbara Ransby, after attending an NAACP leadership conference run by veteran organizer Ella Baker in March 1945 in Atlanta and then another in Jacksonville in 1946. A seasoned organizer who saw local activists as key to the work of the organization. Ella Baker was then serving as the NAACP's Director of Branches. Baker shunned the hierarchy and class leanings of many in the organization. In the mid-1940s, Baker sought to develop the NAACP's local chapters and the grassroots leadership within them. She instituted a series of conferences (like the ones Parks attended) to train local leaders in developing a way to attack community problems and encourage them to see local issues as part of larger systemic problems. Baker left the Director of Branches position in 1946, in part because she had grown disappointed by the ways the national office did not adequately support the work and vision of the local chapters[...] Baker made a powerful impression on Parks. Calling her "beautiful in every way," Rosa Parks noted how "smart and funny and strong" Baker was and wrote to tell the national office how "inspired" she was by the Jacksonville meeting. From then on "whenever she came to Montgomery, [Ella Baker] stayed with me. She was a true friend. A mentor."

The boycott also proved that “mass-based” action was possible if nurtured, as Baker had said it was while working for the NAACP. After the boycott ended, Ella Baker, along with Bayard Rustin, Dr. King and others, helped establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the hopes of replicating Montgomery’s mass action in other places in the South. However, the SCLC struggled to find a way to make this happen, partly due to its continued default focus on NAACP-like activities and its hierarchical approach with male preachers at the head. This approach frustrated Baker. It was not until three years later, when the mostly black student sit-ins spread across the South, that Ella Baker realized that the potential of a real mass-based grassroots movement was with the youth. So, she pushed SCLC to fund and organize the first conference of student sit-in leaders in what would become the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Ella Baker, as interim Executive Director of SCLC, and Dr. King, as President of SCLC, signed the letter urging student leaders to attend the important gathering. The joint letter said “Together, we can chart new goals and achieve a more unified sense of direction for training and action in Nonviolent Resistance.”

At the April 1960 founding conference of SNCC, held at Ella Baker’s alma mater Shaw University, Rev. Lawson gave the keynote speech that included the following:

The choice of the nonviolent method, “the sit-in” symbolizes both judgment and promise. It is a judgment upon middle-class conventional, half-way efforts to deal with radical social evil. It is specifically a judgment upon contemporary civil rights attempts[...] After many court decisions, the deeper south we go[...] Crisis magazine [published by the NAACP] becomes known as a black “bourgeois” club organ, rather than a forceful instrument of justice. Inter-racial agencies expect to end segregation with discussions and tea. Our best agency (the NAACP) accents fund-raising and court action rather than developing our greatest resource, a people no longer the victims of racial evil who can act in a disciplined manner to implement the constitution[...] But the sit-in is likewise a sign of promise: God’s promise that if radically Christian methods are adopted the rate of change can be vastly increased.

Lawson later commented on the NAACP’s approach to the *New York Times* declaring that “The legal question is not central. There has been a failure to implement legal changes and custom remains unchanged. Unless we are prepared to create the

climate[...] the law can never bring victory.” History has proven Lawson’s analysis correct, then and now.

We must learn from history, not rely primarily on legal or electoral challenges, and not allow SNCC’s great legacy to be buried by never-ending legal and political quarreling. “[E]fforts to deal with radical social evil” in America today can also be described as “middle-class conventional, half-way” actions. For instance, marches by blacks in the southern United States in the 1960s were essentially all-out rebellion and the participants risked their lives and livelihoods by participating. We must remember that even the famous 1963 March on Washington for Jobs And Freedom was viewed as open rebellion and with real fear by President Kennedy and other legislators. In fact, the 1941 March on Washington never even had to take place as the mere threat of having thousands of blacks in the Capital buckled President Roosevelt into desegregating the defense industry with an executive order. Protest marches in the U.S. today are often more like having a parade. The same is true of registering to vote, bus rides, and even arrests. We have to shift from protests to a strategically planned nonviolent resistance movement as these mostly symbolic protests do not challenge the status quo or the power structure. These protests are often not effective as they are not linked to a larger nonviolent campaign or strategy. Today, as we face the radical social evils of great inequality, criminally underfunded public schools, shameful child poverty rates in the richest country in the world, and a corrupt, unjust tax system, among other things, the ACLU focuses on litigation, Amnesty International USA on letter writing and fundraising, unions on elections, nonprofit community organizing networks on middle-class convention, churches on interfaith discussions and resolutions, and every organization with more than two people on an annual lobby day. If it took people willing to be beaten, arrested, thrown out of school, losing jobs, homes being bombed, jailed without bail, and more to get lunch counters desegregated, it will surely take more than this to get true equality of opportunity. Importantly, addressing the radical social evils of today will require a more just collection and allocation of our society’s resources and, as Dr. King said, “Freedom is not some lavish dish that the power structure will voluntarily hand out on a silver platter while we merely furnish the appetite. If we are going to get equality, if we are going to get adequate wages, we are going to have to struggle for it.”

Ella Baker and James Lawson knew that we needed more than symbolic actions in 1960 and their ideas at the founding conference of SNCC drew great interest from the young people engaged in the sit-ins. The young students were learning well from their older advisors. For instance, one of Lawson’s students from Nashville, John

Lewis came to understand that the traditional, established organizations and leaders would not be willing or able to catalyze a movement. In John Lewis' graphic novel entitled *March: Book One*, he recalls this time and writes:

What has business been like? [Due to the economic boycott] You could roll a bowling ball down Church Street, and not hit anybody. On April 5th [1960 during the sit-in/desegregation campaign in Nashville, Tennessee], those empty streets brought an offer from the mayor's committee. It proposed a system of "partial integration"—which was the same to us as partial segregation. But it was supported by two black committee members—Fisk [University] president Wright, and T.S.U. [Tennessee State University] President president W.S. Davis. This felt like betrayal, and was more evidence of the differences between our generations. We saw that evidence the next time Thurgood Marshall [then of the NAACP] spoke at Fisk. "Look, once you've been arrested, you've made your point. If someone offers to get you out, Man—Get Out!" Thurgood Marshall was a good man, but listening to him speak convinced me, more than ever, that our revolt was as much against the traditional black leadership structure as it was against segregation and discrimination."

Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP were not supportive of nonviolent direct action. The students were revolting against the established leaders and organizations. They were searching for more progressive leaders to be their mentors. In 2010, at the 50th anniversary of SNCC, John Lewis said the following:

I tell all the young people I meet that the students of SNCC didn't just wake up one day and say we are going to march, didn't wake up one day and say we are going to sit-in. We studied. We prepared. We studied the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. We listened to Jim Lawson[...] We learned from Bob Moses[...] We were inspired by a militant and fiery radical like Ella Baker. I know some of you don't like to say it today but Ella was fiery. She was militant. She was radical. We need some people like Ella Baker today.

Will we listen to these crucial messages? We will listen and learn from John Lewis, Jim Lawson, Bob Moses, Ella Baker and other former SNCC leaders? Will we study and practice the discipline of nonviolent resistance? If we do, then, we too must come to understand that the traditional leaders and organizations will not help get the

people “there” today! A new organization must be born for this task as history has shown us that the established organizations and leaders will not be able or willing to take the kinds of radical nonviolent actions needed to advance the country forward.

Even with Nuevo SNCC, what issues should it strategically focus on and how should it work to get the people “there?” Rev. Lawson, who is still with us, stated in an interview from the March/April 2013 issue of *The Believer* magazine that:

Today, much of our activism does not discuss, study, and apply what nonviolence theory offers the struggle. Too much activism gears itself to lobbying legislatures and Congress and the president. That activism does not have the clout that the Council on Foreign Relations has, or that Exxon has or the Pentagon has, so it's lost. Again and again, when a movement begins to raise its head in the United States, the so-called political social progressive forces immediately try to surround it and guide it into the channels they think are important. I experienced this as early as 1961 with what I think to be very wonderful people in the Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations. Robert Kennedy was mobilizing foundations and others to put money into voter registration. In meetings, he pushed very, very hard and eloquently that we should end the Freedom Rides and go toward voter registration. In 2006, when the coalition of immigration groups came together to start the big marches, they were immediately approached by foundations and political groups that said the way to do this was to lobby for a good bill.”

So, using the immigration issue as an example, despite Obama’s limited executive order on immigration in late 2014, here we are years later after much lobbying, millions of dollars in foundation money to community organizations, and following the strategy and advice of “so-called political social progressive forces” and, yet, there is still no “good bill” on immigration. What has been achieved in immigration was due mostly to young Dreamers and other activists taking actions like sitting-in at Democratic Party offices. Imagine if an Ella Baker and a James Lawson would channel the engaged young people of today into a new SNCC-like organization that did not focus on lobbying, elections or symbolic protests but on the creation of a strategic, planned nonviolent civil resistance movement. In the 1960s, SNCC pushed the NAACP and other organizations to support real change through the creation of a people’s movement. It can be done today too if we learn from history and former SNCC leaders.

To catalyze a movement, we must determine through historical analysis and listening to see what kinds of issues move people to action. One cannot simply choose the issue that is most important to them personally. Listening, analysis, strategizing, and planning must take place. Key questions must be asked and critical lessons must be learned. How can we build on previous movements? Where could we focus on a local problem that could gain national attention about a larger societal issue? As Glenn Smiley, Dr. King's nonviolent mentor in Montgomery, asked, "what widespread social evil is affecting a large number of people who are economically significant yet outside the power structure?" How can we take advantage of changing demographics? Where are people already concentrated in our communities (schools/churches) with a potential for organizing (Latino communities with strong social connections, independent media)? In an increasingly interconnected world, how can we incorporate a global framework to connect to people around the globe. In California, which has a border with Mexico and where there are many Latino immigrants, how can we connect to the rest of Latin America, much like the 1960s struggles were connected to Africa? How can we reach young people who have demonstrated a proclivity to action (2006 immigrant actions, Dreamers, Occupy, Black Lives Matter/police lawlessness)? What "legal crawlspace" is created by current law for organizing the people? Only after asking these kinds of strategic questions, can we find some answers for moving forward.

In Dr. King's final years, after being pushed by SNCC to grow deeper and more courageous in his understanding and practice of Gandhian nonviolence, he was asking, "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" Unfortunately, we have now had a lifetime of chaos in America. I think by studying Dr. King's and former SNCC leaders' ideas, it can help guide us strategically toward a "beloved community."

Bob Moses tells a couple stories today from his days with SNCC which are critical to knowing where we must go from here. On the Tavis Smiley Show, on June 19, 2014, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Mississippi Freedom Summer, he said:

[...] We had to earn—we were running what I think of now as an earned insurgency. We first had to earn the right to ask the people we were working with, the farmers, the day laborers, the sharecroppers, the domestic workers, to risk really economic and physical violence, even murder, right, to try to register to vote. Basically, we earned that by getting knocked down and standing back up. You couldn't earn that by talking, right? When we got knocked down enough and stood back up enough times, I think they thought we were serious. So we earned their participation. Quiet as it's kept, we had to earn the right of the Jus-

tice Department. You know, the '57 Civil Rights bill, people poo-poo it, but it actually provided what I think of as the legal crawlspace which allowed us to do the work we did. So Mississippi would lock us up, but the Justice Department really held the jailhouse key. And as long as we were working on voting, we were able actually to do that work. Then we had to earn the right to call on the rest of the country [through Freedom Summer], right? 'Cause they were risking their lives, but we had risked ours. So because we had also risked ours, we earned the right to call on the country to come down and take a look at itself. Black people were not going to be able by themselves to move this country to change what had been in place for 75 years, three-quarters of a century.

Moses's idea of "earned insurgency" is really important because it demonstrates to those you are seeking to organize and to the public that you are committed and willing to sacrifice for the cause.

Today, community organizers usually are not sacrificing or risking anything and thus we have not had an "earned insurgency." I have heard Moses in interviews say that when he first went to Mississippi in the early 1960s, he was simply another person walking down the street. However, after the Freedom Rides, the bombing of the buses, and the beating of the Freedom Riders, he was no longer an anonymous person walking down a Mississippi street. He was now a "Freedom Rider" in the black community even though he did not actually participate in the Freedom Rides. He was a beneficiary of the other SNCC workers who saved the Freedom Rides and now had a kind of credibility that opened doors in a community that previously were shut to him and other organizers.

Moses also mentions the important notion of a "legal crawlspace" created by the 1957 Civil Right Act. Like in the 1960s, I believe the U.S. Supreme Court has created a "legal crawlspace" in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) by finding in a 5-4 decision that Texas could not discriminate against undocumented farmworker children by denying them a public education. The majority of the court stated that denying children a public education would contribute to "the creation and perpetuation of a subclass of illiterates within our boundaries, surely adding to the problems and costs of unemployment, welfare, and crime. It is thus clear that whatever savings might be achieved by denying these children an education, they are wholly insubstantial in light of the costs to these children, the State and the Nation." In justifying its decision, the court said that:

Public education is not a “right” granted to individuals by the Constitution. San Antonio School Dist. v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 1, 35 (1973). But neither is it merely some governmental “benefit” indistinguishable from other forms of social welfare legislation. Both the importance of education in maintaining our basic institutions, and the lasting impact of its deprivation on the life of the child, mark the distinction. The “American people have always regarded education and [the] acquisition of knowledge as matters of supreme importance.” Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390, 400 (1923). We have recognized “the public schools as a most vital civic institution for the preservation of a democratic system of government.”

The Obama administration has even distributed memorandums to school districts across the country warning them not to check the immigration status of students as it is illegal to do so. So, we have two U.S. Supreme Court rulings discussing the right to public education in a democratic society. Which one is correct: Rodriguez which says that education is not a fundamental right under the Constitution and thus there is no need for equity in funding of the public schools or Plyler which says that denying children a public education would contribute to “the creation and perpetuation of a subclass of illiterates within our boundaries” and that public education is the “most vital civic institution for the preservation of a democratic system of government”? The court wants to have it both ways. Ironically, the ruling that speaks to undocumented children in Plyler is the decision that is best for all children, regardless of their status, as it is consistent with most people’s belief that public education is vital to a democratic society and without education the child and the society suffers. This legal crawlspace must be seized by organizing nonviolent actions around this issue with Latino and black students in the forefront. White SNCC worker Mary Elizabeth King, describes Ella Baker’s constant reminder by saying the goal of SNCC was “to awaken and elicit leadership from the black community[...] That we were not here to become leaders ourselves, and she would say you have to have a sense of your own worth and a strong sense of security to realize that you should forgo the glamor of being a leader. Help someone else become a leader.”

Bob Moses, who very much adopted Ella Baker’s ideas, has a second story that he regularly shares in regard to the idea of quality public education being a fundamental right in our democracy. This version of the story is taken from the January 20, 2009 transcript of the *Democracy Now* television show where Moses is speaking about being in court after being arrested for trying to register black people to vote:

And when we were in Mississippi, people all the time were saying, “Well, we want to be first-class citizens,” and so, the implication being that they were second or even third-class citizens. So, the civil rights movement—and here I have to—I think we have to give credibility to the sit-in movement, to the young black students at the historically black colleges who really dismantled Jim Crow in the area of its public accommodations with the sit-in movement. They actually dismantled that aspect of Jim Crow. So, then there was this dismantling of it around the right to vote and, what I was talking about earlier, also around the national [Democratic] party structure.

*I was sitting in the federal district courthouse, I was in the witness stand, and if you remember, this was in the spring of 1963. And at that time, President Kennedy was still alive, Bobby Kennedy was attorney general, Burke Marshall was the assistant attorney general for civil rights, and John Doar was my lawyer. He was the chief litigator in the field. And the judge, Judge Clayton, was a federal district judge. We had taken hundreds of sharecroppers in Greenwood [Mississippi] to register, and then, subsequently, the SNCC field secretaries had been arrested. And Burke had our cases removed to the federal courts. So, Judge Clayton looks over, and he wants to know why we are taking illiterates down to register to vote. And so, in a nutshell, our answer is, “Well, the country can’t have its cake and eat it, too. It can’t have denied a whole people access to literacy through its political arrangements and then turn around and say, ‘Well, you can’t access politics because you’re illiterate.’” And, we won that struggle. We won it in the courts. And it was Judge Wisdom’s decision in the case of *U.S. v. Louisiana*, where he said, well, we can’t allow the state of Louisiana to have authority over the actual qualifications of voting. That has to be moved to the federal system. So the 1965 Voting Rights Act gave the federal government the responsibility of saying who could qualify for the right to vote.*

But we didn’t win the issue of illiteracy, and I think that’s the issue that in this evolution of who are the constitutional people—the children of our country do not have a constitutional right to a public school education. And you have to look at the Rodriguez case[...], Mexican Americans who sued in Texas for equity. Their case went all the way up to the Supreme Court. And the Supreme Court said, you can’t come here into the federal system for relief, because there’s no substantive federal right—a constitutional right—to a public school education in this country. And I don’t think most people understand that. But following

Rodriguez, litigation shifted to the states. So right now in our country, there are 45 cases in 45 different states looking at the question of equity and the funding of our public school system.

In other words, lack of education was always the subtext of the 1960s Freedom Struggle. Moses says, “We got Jim Crow out of public accommodations; we got it out of the right to vote and the national Democratic Party. We didn’t get it out of education. So, I think of it as unfinished business.” The current fight, Moses explains, is for quality public education as a constitutional right.

I would, however, change Bob Moses declaration to say the current fight is for quality public education as a human right because, as mentioned, the U.S. Supreme Court has already said that it is not a fundamental right and states, like California, have not lived up to their state constitutions’ legal requirement to protect the recognized right to public education. Previously, the fight for freedom and justice in the United States was on the battlefield of states’ rights (i.e. Mississippi) versus federal rights (i.e. 1957 Civil Rights Act). The fight for the right to a quality education in this globalized world has to be one of national law versus international human rights. Toward the end of their lives, both Dr. King and Malcolm X began to recognize that the struggle was no longer for “civil rights” but “human rights.” Without much notice from the public, Dr. King clearly said, “I think it is important to realize that we have moved from an era of civil rights to an era of human rights” and “We are in an era in which the issue of human rights is the central question confronting all nations.” In 1964, Malcolm X stated:

We need to expand the civil-rights struggle to a higher level—to the level of human rights. Whenever you are in a civil-rights struggle, whether you know it or not, you are confining yourself to the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam[...] All of our African brothers and our Asian brothers and our Latin-American brothers cannot open their mouths and interfere in the domestic affairs of the United States. Civil rights keeps you under his restrictions, under his jurisdiction. Civil rights keeps you in his pocket. Civil rights means you’re asking Uncle Sam to treat you right. Human rights are something you were born with. Human rights are your God-given rights.

The U.S. Declaration of Independence clarifies that we are “endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights” and we should seek to defend them remembering

“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

Given this mandate and the increasingly multicultural and global nature of our population and economy, especially in places like California, the struggle for quality, free public education must use the international human rights framework as it organizes locally. I contend that the people are forced to pursue this right on the international stage given that the nation and the states have failed to recognize, respect, protect, and fulfill the right to quality public education. This effort would include using established international law such as, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, all of which recognize the human right to education and have been signed by the U.S. A variety of legal organizing tools could be used including individual complaints to the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and, the already mentioned, formal petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. These would act as a kind of modern equivalent of *Brown v. Board* but on the international level. Of course, these legal instruments would be used as legal crawlspaces to achieve what must ultimately be an organizing victory through the strength of a nonviolent people’s movement.

Additionally, much like the 1960s Freedom Struggle was inspired by the African decolonization movements in the 1950s and 1960s, I believe that students in states like California could benefit from interaction with movements taking place in Latin America today, the home countries of many of these students, against neocolonialism, neo-liberalism, and privatization of public services. For example, Chilean students are currently waging an important multiyear struggle for the human right to free quality public education by going on massive nationwide strikes. In a December 2, 2014 *Foreign Policy in Focus* article by Sebastian Rosemont entitled “Chilean Students Change the Rules of the Game” clarifies how the students joined forces with workers to create change. Tasha Fairfield, a professor in international development, is quoted as saying, “The student movement played a critical role in creating political space[...It] dramatically changed the political context in Chile and helped to place the issues of Chile’s extreme inequalities centrally on the national agenda. The article states:

This set the stage for Michelle Bachelet to run for election in 2013. She was previously president from 2006-2010, but Chile's laws prevented her from running for a second consecutive term.

This time around, her platform was much more radical. Bachelet pledged to reform the tax system and, with the increased revenue, reform the education system. She won the election and immediately took the first step. She raised the corporate tax rate and closed significant loopholes[...]

Bachelet had been given a clear mandate. The government put together a package that would raise corporate income taxes from 20 percent to at least 25 percent and close tax loopholes for companies and wealthy business owners. The changes promised to bring in an estimated \$8.3 billion each year. The government pledged to put half of these funds toward providing free education for all Chileans by the year 2020 and to roll back the for-profit schools that emerged during Pinochet's dictatorship. The remainder would be used to improve the health care system and other social programs[...]

Although many of the protests of 2011—the year of Occupy Wall Street—have faded, Chilean students and workers managed to win many of their demands. This experience offers important lessons for popular movements struggling for similar goals around the world. By focusing on tangible demands, making broad partnerships, and linking to the larger platform of economic inequality, Chilean protesters changed the rules of the game. (Find the complete article here: <http://fpif.org/chilean-activists-change-rules-game/>)

California students, especially Latinos, should know about the Chilean student movement. They should also know about Pinochet's efforts to privatize the Chilean public schools in the 1970s and 80s, how those policies are essentially taking place here now after our government helped to implement them in Chile, and how we are ending up with the same result—social inequality with only the most privileged receiving quality education at private or quasi-private schools. Notice the root of “priv” in the words “privileged” and “private.” In short, with the proper strategy and action, the Latino-ization of the U.S. could help bring some long missing civic engagement back to American public life, which has been purposely privatized.

There are some potentially ripe organizing spaces, especially in California where the students have already gone out on massive May 1st strikes in 2006-2007 and have organized against unjust tuition spikes over the last few years. What if we began with a vote for students in California on whether education was a fundamental right or if the

state is fulfilling its constitutional obligations? California's Constitution currently states, "The Legislature shall provide for a system of common schools by which a free school shall be kept up and supported in each district at least six months in every year, after the first year in which a school has been established." Are California schools "free" now? Before you answer know that children and parents are regularly asked to be fundraisers for their local schools and to pay for a whole range of things from field trips to school supplies to sports. Is our educational system trending toward "common" schools, meaning "shared equally?" Is "at least six months" of guaranteed education sufficient in 2014? Keep in mind that school districts in recent years have shortened the school year due to budget cuts and traditionally children of slaves and farmworkers did not need nine months of school so they could work instead.

California has recently passed a new law called the Local Control Funding Formula, which requires a much fairer method for distributing education funds. However, even with new temporary funds under Proposition 30, California schools are still completely underfunded. As the California Budget Project has stated, "California is a state with enormous wealth, diversity, and opportunity, but one challenged by widening inequality." They also state that "California's school spending per student has substantially lagged behind the rest of the U.S. for at least the past 20 years. California would need to spend an additional \$15.3 billion in 2012-13 to reach the same level of spending per student as the rest of the U.S. It would take \$41.1 billion in additional 2012-13 spending for California to rank in the top 10 states." *Education Week's* 2014 report gave California a "D+" in "School Finance," a "B+" in "Equity," and a "F" in "[per pupil] Spending." It ranked California 49th in its state rankings of per-pupil spending—below all the Southern states. Black and Latino students today make up at least 59.5% of the student population in California. 59.4% of the students in California were poor as of the 2013-14 school year.

More than 60 years after *Brown v. Board*, California students are still plagued by stark racial and economic segregation and misguided education reform efforts led by some of the wealthiest people on the planet. California's once proud, mostly white, public school system was the envy of the globe in the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s but it is now one of the worst in the country because it is criminally underfunded. In 1976, California's Supreme Court did respond positively to the Rodriguez case with *Serrano v. Priest* by affirming that the right to education was fundamental and equally protected to all by California's Constitution. Yet, almost forty years later, after much legislation, many public referendums, and other high profile lawsuits to enforce *Serrano v. Priest*, California's students are still denied their constitutional right to a free quality public

education. These contradictions are potential organizing opportunities. However, these organizing spaces around the right to education in states like California will remain only potential opportunities unless someone, like Rev. Lawson and Ella Baker did previously, helps create a Nuevo SNCC to address not just the right to education but all the other issues that are inherently connected to it like the unjust tax structure, the criminal justice system, student loan debt, child care, preschool, child poverty, health care, dignified wages, affordable housing, military budget/recruitment, and overall inequality. The beauty of organizing around the human right to education is that you cannot simply address it alone without addressing the other fundamental issues of our day, especially those concerning economic inequality.

Even if Nuevo SNCC organizes around the human right to education, where specifically shall it organize? And, whom shall we organize? In 2007, during the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, I took a lone pilgrimage to Atlanta, Montgomery, Birmingham, Selma, and Anniston to reflect and visit some of the key sites of the 1960s struggle. During that trip, after seeing the size of these cities and towns, it occurred to me that, like in the 1960s, organizing spaces are probably not in the big cities like Chicago but probably in smaller, more manageable places like Greenwood, Selma, Nashville, Montgomery, and Birmingham where blacks were a significant part of the population. For example, during the 1955 bus boycott, Montgomery had 50,000 blacks, according to Dr. King's speeches, and a total population of 106,525 in 1950 according to the Census. Today, I believe that potential examples of smaller, more manageable organizing spaces are in suburban places like Escondido, California (pop. 143,911), where Latinos are soon to be the majority (48.9% Latino according to 2010 Census) and where students already are. In the elementary schools, for example, the demographics include 69.5% Latino, 2.1% black, .3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.7% Asian, 1.6% Filipino, 20.4% White, 2.1% Two or More Races, 1.0% None Reported. 68% of the students are poor. The per-pupil spending in Escondido has been more than \$1,000 less than the already very low statewide average. Additionally, Escondido is marked by racial and economic segregation and surrounded by wealthy, high-achieving, mostly white school districts like Rancho Santa Fe and Poway. These places like Escondido are not just more manageable for organizing because they are smaller but also because of the presence of a large community of color with strong social ties.

Organizing in America can be difficult given the strong culture of individualism, domination of corporations, and the erosion of civil society institutions in the mainstream of society. However, my experience and reading of American history has

taught me that immigrants, with their fresh eyes and collective spirit, can help to save America's democracy. The song *Buscando América* (Looking for America) by the Panamanian Rubén Blades does a good job of summarizing this idea, clarifying why we have immigrants from Latin America in this country, and why Latinos can lead the way for us all. The song, in part, says:

I'm searching for you, America, and fear that I won't find you. Your footprint has been lost in the dark[...] Living under dictatorships I search for you and can't find you. Your tortured body is nowhere to be found[...] You've been abducted, America. Your mouth has been gagged and today it's our turn to bring you freedom[...] And we will find you among the darkness. You've been vanished by those who're afraid of your truth. And we will find you while we search for the truth. Searching for our America, mama and papa's dream, And it's our turn today to set you free.

In today's world there is no freedom or dreaming if you do not have education.

The need to focus on the right to quality public education in smaller, historically strategic locales with significant numbers of Latinos and other students of color in America is evident. Consider the UCLA's Civil Rights Project report entitled *The Resegregation of Suburban Schools: A Hidden Crisis in American Education*. Richard D. Kahlenberg, in commenting on the publication declares that:

The United States today is a suburban nation that thinks of race as an urban issue, and often assumes that it has been largely solved[...] They show that the locus of racial and ethnic transformation is now clearly suburban and illustrate patterns of demographic change in the suburbs[...] The suburbanization of American poverty is one of the most significant trends of recent times, and yet school systems are largely unprepared.

Additionally, seldom thought of history in Escondido, like Birmingham, Alabama and other places in the 1960s, continues to play a key role in the city's culture and problems today. When the unjust Mexican-American War began in 1846, the key Battle of San Pasqual was fought in Escondido. Paying homage to the war's lasting impact on the area, there is a San Pasqual Battle Historic State Park with annual commemorations of the battle, which was the bloodiest fought in California during the Mexican-American War. Additionally, the downtown public library in Escondido has a

very large, multi-panel painting of the battle on its wall. In a 1967 speech in Los Angeles, Dr. King spoke on “The Casualties of the War in Vietnam” and discussed the Mexican-American War. He stated:

Curtailment of free speech is rationalized on grounds that a more compelling American tradition forbids criticism of the government when the nation is at war. More than a century ago when we were in a declared state of war with Mexico, a first term congressman by the name of Abraham Lincoln stood in the halls of Congress and fearlessly denounced the war. Congressman Abraham Lincoln of Illinois had not heard of this tradition or he was not inclined to respect it. Nor had Thoreau and Emerson and many other philosophers who shaped our democratic principles. Nothing can be more destructive of our fundamental democratic traditions than the vicious effort to silence dissenters.

Additionally, in Thoreau’s famous 1849 book *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, he connected the black struggle to important Latino history in America by writing:

[...] when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be a refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country [Mexico] is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign [U.S.] army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize[...] Practically speaking, the opponents to a reform in Massachusetts are not a hundred thousand politicians at the South, but a hundred thousand merchants and farmers here, who are more interested in commerce and agriculture than they are in humanity, and are not prepared to do justice to the slave and to Mexico, cost what it may.

In 1846, Escondido, along with all of California and most of the Southwestern states, was literally in Mexico and was home to a large Spanish-speaking population. After the U.S. won the war, non-Latino settlers came to Southern California in increasing numbers, eventually overwhelming the city.

Now, as globalization and the “Harvest of the American Empire” brings Latinos back to Escondido they find themselves in very harsh and unwelcoming conditions. A nationwide study in 2005 ranked Escondido 11th out of 25 of the most conservative cities in America. Much like Birmingham City Commissioner Bull Connor in the 1960s, there are recalcitrant city leaders in Escondido who continually torment and harass La-

tinios with checkpoints, unjust housing ordinances, police collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), support of the Minute Men, and denials of housing for immigrant children. Escondido is, in many ways, the modern version of 1960s Birmingham.

If strategic, nonviolent trainings and actions are conducted in the right places and with the right demographic, young Latinos could be the next oppressed group in the U.S. to resurrect the spirit of mass nonviolent resistance of the 1960s. In 1936, long before the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, Gandhi prophetically stated to visiting African-Americans in India that “It may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world.” Today, I predict that Latinos will be the next group of dispossessed people to carry the powerful message of non-violence to the world.

There is no more relevant place for the true legacy of Gandhi, Dr. King, and SNCC to be remembered and acted on than California, specifically Southern California. California is the site for many of the most visible conflicts that arise as the national state intersects with the global economy. It now has the 8th largest economy in the world and is where national elections can be decided, where ballot initiatives set national trends, and where the pulse of the country is often monitored. Many years ago, Dick Gregory reportedly once called California “Mississippi with palm trees.” This statement might be even more appropriate today. According to a February 4, 2015 article from *Capital & Main* entitled *The California Chasm* by Manuel Pastor and Dan Braun, “California, for example, is the home to more super rich than anywhere else in the country-and it also exhibits the highest poverty rate in the nation, when cost of living is taken into account. Income disparities in the state of California are among the highest in the nation, outpacing such places as Georgia and Mississippi in terms of Gini coefficient, a standard measure of inequality.” Additionally, California, a state whose very name is in Spanish and which began with its constitution in English and Spanish, continues to demonstrate great antagonism, albeit sometimes hidden, in many places toward its growing Latino population. Places like Escondido are strategically located near the major media markets of San Diego and Los Angeles. It is also located near the rest of the “Americas” and the U.S./Mexico border region along with Tijuana, another major media market and the most crossed international land border in the world. Additionally, the *New York Times* described suburban Murrieta, about 30 minutes from Escondido, in a July 3, 2014, article as “Nowhere have the Central American [child] immigrants been met with such tremendous anger as they have here, in this middle-class conservative community about 90 miles southeast of Los Ange-

les[...] The city's motto calls Murrieta 'the future of Southern California.' It's official song, which was created for the city's 21st anniversary, is called 'Gem of the Valley' and boasts that "she's a safe place, where we can live, laugh, learn and play.' Many residents say they came here to escape the kind of crime and urban problems they now fear the immigrants could bring."

As early as 1991, Cesar Chavez, the Latino leader for farm workers described the changing political situation in California by stating:

Public schools provide the greatest opportunity for upward mobility to Hispanics and to all ethnic minorities in this state. Yet today, it is a Republican governor and his allies in the Legislature who are less concerned than we are about preserving public schools. That is ironic because it was not always the case.

In the 1960s and early '70s, another Republican governor—Ronald Reagan—was leading the fight for more support of public education. But there was a big difference. Back then, the majority of public school children were white and they were from middle or upper middle-income families. Today, the majority of children in our public schools are minority—African American, Hispanic, Asian—and they are from poor and working-class families. Back then, under Ronald Reagan, Californians spent \$.05 out of every dollar of personal income on public schools. Today, under Pete Wilson, Californians spend a little over \$.03 out of every dollar on education. And if he has his way, it will go down even more.

There is another institution in society that is funded by the state and that is dominated by minorities: the state prisons—and they have fared very well. Over the last nine years—under Governor Deukmejian and now Governor Wilson—California has carried out a policy of dramatically expanding state prisons while it starves public schools. What message do those priorities send? Does this mean that the only way our sons and daughters can get recognition from the state of California is by using drugs and committing crimes?

We have looked into the future and the future is ours! Asians and Hispanics and African Americans are the future in California. That trend cannot be stopped. It is inevitable. Then why do they want to cut funds for schools and other vital services—now? Why do Governor Wilson and his allies seek to reduce the commitment to public education—now? If the majority of children in school were white and if they lived in affluent suburban communities, we wouldn't

even be debating how much money to spend on public education. But it is our children—the children of farm workers and Hispanics and other minorities—who are seeking a better life. It is for them, for their future—and for the future of California—that we must say “no” to suspending Proposition 98 [legislation that protects education funding]. We must say “no” to cutting essential services for the needy instead of tax loopholes for the wealthy. We must say “no” to making our children and their teachers scapegoats for the budget crisis.

To understand how we got to this place of where we have plenty of money to imprison our youth, to fight wars, and to bail out banks, and no money for public schools and colleges, we have to understand that California schools once had plenty of funds and, until 1984, community colleges were free.

So what happened? How is the current national trend, originally led by California’s “taxpayer revolt” (1978’s Proposition 13), connected to this? We must remember that California Governor Ronald Reagan (1967-1975) became U.S. President Reagan (1981-1989) and gave birth to a new brand of race-based, conservative politics. Dr. King saw this coming in 1967 with Ronald Reagan’s emergence on the national scene. In a speech entitled the “Domestic Impact of the War” to the National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace, he said:

Now what are some of the domestic consequences of the war in Vietnam? It has made the Great Society a myth and replaced it with a troubled and confused society. The war has strengthened domestic reaction. It has given the extreme right, the anti-labor, anti-Negro, and anti-humanistic forces a weapon of spurious patriotism to galvanize its supporters into reaching for power, right up to the White House. It hopes to use national frustration to take control and restore the America of social insecurity and power for the privileged. When a Hollywood performer [Reagan], lacking distinction even as an actor can become a leading war hawk candidate for the Presidency, only the irrationalities induced by a war psychosis can explain such a melancholy turn of events.

Consider also the following quote from a book written by Berit and George Lakey, called *Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership: A Guide for Organizations in Changing Times*. George Lakey participated in the 1960 sit-ins and was greatly influenced by Ella Baker. The Lakeys write:

The choice made by the Democratic Party on how to respond to the civil rights movement was fateful for its own future and revealing for us today. Democratic leadership in the Kennedy-Johnson era was besieged by the numbers, militancy, and the moral high ground taken by the civil rights movement; the result was a fracture in the Franklin Roosevelt coalition of the Old South, urban-working class ethnics of the North, and liberals. The Republicans exploited this crack, widening it in each campaign with coded appeals to the racism of white working people, predicting that their taxes would be raised to spend on black people. White working people had not until then minded voting for “tax-and-spend” Democrats, since Democrats spent the money on programs that white working people wanted, like social security and education. When the Republicans pointed out, largely in code, that their taxes would be diverted to programs specifically for blacks, baby “Reagancrats” were born. The Republicans were not making this up. Dr. King was calling for a “GI Bill” for blacks [actually a “GI Bill for the Disadvantaged”]; others were calling for reparations; Lyndon Johnson declared a “war on poverty” which was seen by all as a war on black poverty [even though more whites than blacks were in poverty and on welfare]. And the money to pay for it did, in fact, come from increased taxes on the working class. White taxpayers watched civil rights groups leaning on the president, the president giving in, and their taxes going up. This story is interesting because the Democratic leadership did have other options for getting the money to pay for economic and racial justice. They could have cut the military budget, a very large pool of waste and irrelevance. They could have raised taxes on the rich, who could easily afford it. For real change, they could have done both. Their choice to raise the money from working people reflected who actually owned the Democratic Party even in that period when progressive Democrats and labor had a larger voice than today.”

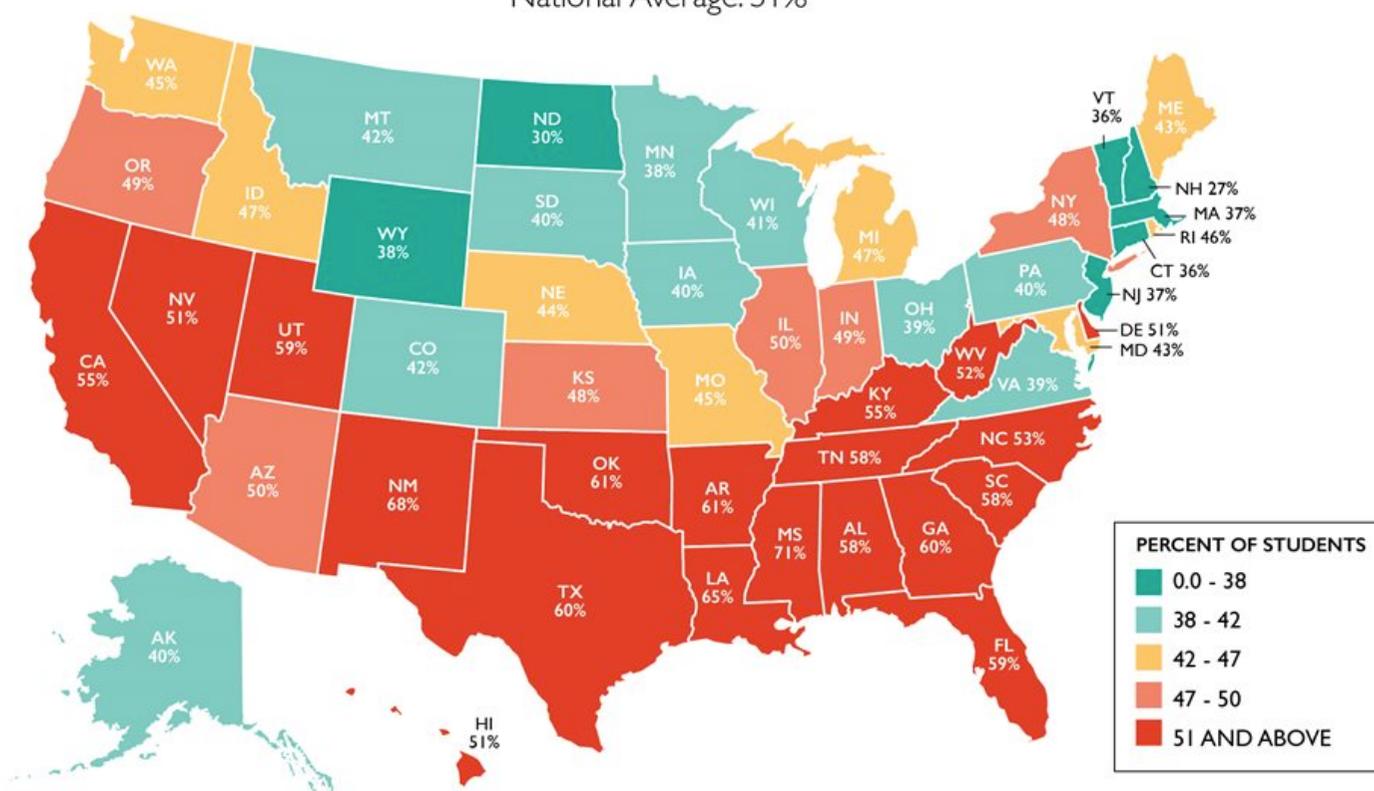
California, under the leadership of Governor Reagan and others, was on the forefront of leading the “Southernization” of the country, which later included a nationwide revolt on taxes seen as helping blacks and Latinos.

Today, the climate of hate towards taxes and Latino immigrants all across the country, but especially in the Southwest, has reached a very dangerous Dixie-like point where hatred, greed, and exploitation thrive. The Southwest border region today is the Deep South of yesterday. Take a look at the map here which documents the per-

centage of low income students in U.S. public schools. One look at the map and you can see that American history is still very much with us. If you were to compare this map with a map of all the former slave states in 1861 (prior to Civil War), a map of states with legal segregation in 1950, a map of today’s so-called “Right to Work” (really “Corporations Right to Cheap Workers”) states, a map of the states with the largest combined black and Latino populations today, and a map of the states with the lowest per-pupil spending today, you would find that they would overlap very closely. By doing this exercise, you will see the increased Southernization of the nation.

PERCENT OF LOW INCOME STUDENTS IN U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2013

National Average: 51%



SOUTHERN EDUCATION FOUNDATION | SOUTHERNEDUCATION.ORG

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data

<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rulesforengagement/Percent-of-Low-Income-Students-in-PS-2015.png>

While in Florida in 2011, I remember reading an April 12th *Washington Post* article entitled, “150 Years Later, We’re still Fighting the Civil War” by Harold Meyerson. In that piece, he clarified this idea of the Southernization of the nation. Meyerson wrote:

In the private-sector economy, the Southern labor system—in which workers are paid less and have fewer rights—has been winning for decades. Despite their huge growth in members during the 1930s and 1940s, unions never succeeded in penetrating the South, where white racial animosity toward blacks

thwarted efforts to build working-class solidarity. The gap between Northern and Southern wages remained vast—so vast that many Northern companies began relocating facilities there, particularly after the civil rights revolution of the '60s made the South seem less culturally foreign[...] When Americans could no longer be found to make products as cheaply as Wal-Mart wished, the chain turned to China [Mexico, Latin America], where labor was cheap and workers had no rights. Not slaves, to be sure, but not really free, either[...] Today, under Republican budget constraints, the traditional Southern underinvestment in [public] infrastructure and [public] education threatens to become the national norm.

With corporate-driven globalization, the Mason-Dixon Line, which once separated slave from free, segregated from non-segregated, has simply moved west and farther south to the U.S./Mexico border in search of cheap labor.

The similarities between blacks (“Negros” in Spanish) and Latinos being exploited and used as cheap labor are plenty. African-American history is filled with dreams of freedom and journeys to the North. Latinos today have those same dreams of the “El Norte” and “first class citizenship.” Where African-Americans once “rode” the Underground Railroad, Latinos from places like Guatemala today take an actual train north to “the land of the free.” Historically, as well as today, Latinos suffer many of the same social evils as African-Americans, especially the violation of economic and social human rights such as the right to education, housing, health care and an adequate standard of living. As history has taught us, these injustices cannot continue without dire consequences. If nonviolent action in line with SNCC’s legacy does not take root soon in California and beyond against these second-class conditions, chaos will continue and violence and destruction will surely come to our American experiment in democracy.

Unfortunately, as far back as the 1960s, Dr. King’s confidant Rev. Andrew Young commented on how the corporate private sector and disconnected labor unions failed to respond to the Southernization of the nation. He states:

However, once we moved North and began to target the deeper more entrenched problems of the poor urban blacks, the private sector turned against us. Now their interest was in favor of maintaining the status quo. Cosmetic or token changes were fine, but not fundamental changes that in the long run would provide a more equitable and healthy society. The nature of the changes

we were now seeking would have required a major redistribution of wealth. This, of course, was a very threatening situation. Now we were the problem. Even the big labor unions, which supported the movement's efforts to end segregation, were less enthusiastic when it came to social justice for the poor. There was a big gap between the wages earned in heavily unionized industries and the wages of workers in industries that were not unionized—the working poor were not among the members of the big unions. In the late sixties, there was an unfortunate level of complacency in the union movement. Its leaders were slow to recognize that huge numbers of [poor and] unemployed people were a drag on union wages.

Dr. King, himself, in his 1964 book entitled *Why We Can't Wait*, tried to educate us on the need to create alliances across racial and economic lines in America in order to break free from the historic events that have always haunted the country. He shared the following:

In the thirties, the country was faced with a parallel challenge. Powerful and antagonistic elements all over the land were strongly resisting the efforts of workers to organize to secure a living wage and decent conditions of work. It is interesting to note that some of the states that today are opposing progress in civil rights were the same that defied the unions' efforts during the thirties[...] In the case of organized labor, an alliance with the Negro civil-rights movement is not a matter of choice but a necessity. If Negroes have almost no rights in the South, labor has few more; if Negroes have inadequate political influence in Congress, labor is barely better off; if automation is a threat to Negroes, it is equally a menace to organized labor. The withholding of support from the March on Washington by the National Council of the AFL-CIO was a blunder, and served to strengthen the prevalent feeling that organized labor, not only on the national level but frequently on the local level as well, is lacking statesmanship, vigor and modernity.

Dr. King, toward the end of his life began to talk about America's autopsy and analogize America to fallen empires. He also began to reference Edward Gibbons. In *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbons wrote about why the Roman Empire fell. In it, he laid out that:

[...] even while her frontiers were advancing, Rome was dead at the heart. Great estates had ruined Italy. Inequality had dried up the strength and destroyed the vigor of the Roman world. Government became despotism, which even assassination could not temper; patriotism became servility; vices the most foul flouted themselves in public; literature sank to puerilities; learning was forgotten; fertile districts became waste without the ravages of war— everywhere inequality produced decay, political, mental, moral, and material. The barbarism that overwhelmed Rome came not from without, but from within. It was the necessary product of the system that had substituted slaves and colonii for the independent husbandmen of Italy and had carved the provinces into estates for senatorial families.

The same global imperial ambitions and inequality that “dried up the strength and destroyed the vigor of the Roman World” is fiercely tearing at our delicate social fabric.

Ten days before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was violently assassinated on April 4, 1968, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, author of the classic study *The Prophets*, introduced Dr. King to an assembly of rabbis and said:

Where in America today do we hear a voice like the voice of the prophets of Israel? Martin Luther King is a sign that God has not forsaken the United States of America. God has sent him to us. His presence is the hope of America. His mission is sacred, his leadership of supreme importance to every one of us[...] Martin Luther King, Jr., is a voice, a vision and a way[...] The whole future of America will depend on the impact and influence of Dr. King.

So, what did Dr. King truly have to say to us and have we learned his teachings? One thing I think Dr. King sought to teach us was that we live in a “World House” and that all life is interconnected. I think he would have said that immigration is merely a symptom of a larger problem we have in our nation that is very much connected to our history of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism (race, war, and economics). Reflect on these two quotes from Dr. King mentioning Latin America:

Everywhere in Latin America one finds tremendous resentment of the United States, and that resentment is always strongest among the poorer and darker peoples of the continent. The life and destiny of Latin America are in the hands

of United States corporations[...] Here we see racism in its more sophisticated form: neocolonialism. The Bible and the annals of history are replete with tragic stories of one brother robbing another of his birthright and thereby insuring generations of strife and enmity. We can hardly escape such judgment in Latin America[...] In recent years their countries have been invaded by automobiles, Coca-Cola, and Hollywood, so that even the remote villages become aware of the wonders and blessings available to God's white children.

“Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.” Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered[...] A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, “This is not just.” It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, “This is not just.”

Here Dr. King is reminding us that America's original sin of putting profits over people is being exported around the world without concern for our nation's or other nations' well-being.

The ultra rich and their corporations have no borders or allegiance to nations or race. Corporations and rich people move their money, purposely jump borders to not pay taxes to the “commonwealth,” and live wherever they like. Borders are only problematic for the poor, and especially “the poorer and darker peoples” of the world. Corporations and the rich have been thinking globally, beyond nations, for years. Working people of all races in the U.S., who are the victims of these corporate injustices (i.e. unjust tax structure, tax evasion, tax loopholes, privatization of public services, and un-

derfunding public services), need to wake up. The top marginal tax rates, capital gains taxes, and corporate taxes are actually far lower today than they were during Dr. King's day. For example, the top marginal tax rate was just over 90% in the early 1960s. Today, it is 39.5%. And we wonder why there is no money for the public schools. There is plenty of money. It is just not being collected and paid in taxes by those who most benefit from our societal structure, otherwise known as the government. For more details on the decline in taxes for the rich see:

<http://visualizingeconomics.com/blog/2012/01/24/comparing-tax-rates?rq=top%20marginal%20tax%20rates>.

To confront these issues, we must think globally and rethink the idea of “nations” and “citizens” if we are to truly confront these issues. The 1960s Freedom Movement created space for important social changes that impacted people's relationship around the world with America. The movement allowed for the passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 which, as Taylor Branch wrote in *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* stated, “Asians joined Latin Americans, Africans, and natives of the Middle East to become the vast majority of new immigrants, taking places formerly reserved for the few nations deemed the most Anglo-Saxon.” This change in immigration is very much seen in California.

Today's movement leaders must build on previous movements and understand the historic socioeconomic context they are working in. For instance, we must understand the role of the U.S. military in the world. Chalmers Johnson, in his book *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* wrote that:

The most powerful agent pressuring other countries to open their markets for free trade and free investments is Uncle Sam, and America's global armed forces keep these markets and sea lanes open for this era of globalization, just as the British navy did for the era of globalization in the nineteenth century. If Mexican corn farmers are driven out of business by heavily subsidized American growers and then the price of corn makes tortillas unaffordable, that is just the global market at work. But if poor and unemployed Mexicans then try to enter the United States to support their families, that is to be resisted by armed force.

What are the results of this military and “free trade” on the California/Mexico border area, for example? Let us look at the 2004 report entitled *Globalization at a Crossroads: Ten Years of NAFTA in the San Diego/Tijuana Border Region* by the

Environmental Health Coalition, where I interned during law school. The report documents:

[...] the impacts of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the San Diego/Tijuana border region. A case study of TV manufacturing in Tijuana, the “TV Capital of the World,” illustrates the global flow of corporations, goods and workers. The report exposes how today’s corporate globalization puts profits above health, the environment, workers’ rights and democracy.

The promises of NAFTA

- New jobs
- Lower prices for consumer goods
- Improved public health
- Improved environmental quality
- Reduced migration from Mexico to the U.S.

The reality of NAFTA

Economic instability. *In the TV industry in the U.S. in 1967, there were 90,000 good paying, factory jobs. Today, there are barely 3,000 left. The initial boom in Mexico as jobs moved there from the U.S. ended when factories began moving to lower-wage countries, especially in Asia. In Tijuana’s TV plants, 3,446 workers lost their jobs between 2001 and 2003.*

Poverty. *Pockets of poverty more than doubled in San Diego during NAFTA. 35,000 more children live in poverty in San Diego County than in 1989. In Tijuana, full-time factory workers live in squatters settlements without running water, sewage, electricity or garbage pickup.*

Worker injustice. *The 28 petitions filed under NAFTA’s labor commission since 1994 failed to correct one health or safety issue or support the recognition of a single independent union. Worker injury and illness rates are 250% higher in Mexico than in comparable U.S. factories. There are no independent unions in Tijuana’s factories. Negative pregnancy tests are routinely required as a condition of employment in Tijuana’s maquiladoras [factories].*

Environmental injustice. Mexico's spending on pollution monitoring and factory inspections is down 45% since 1994. Only 5% of companies required to report industrial toxic discharges do so in Mexico. The border toxic waste tracking system Haztraks was cancelled in 2003. There are 66 documented toxic dumps along the border. Tijuana's Metales y Derivados is the landmark case of the failure of NAFTA to protect the environment, proving that the petition process can document toxic dumps endangering communities, but has no authority to clean them up.

As Dr. King reminded us, if we ignore the injustices of poor Latinos and blacks in and outside the U.S., like we have done, it will harm us all.

We ignored the economic injustices of African-Americans in the 1960s and now we, as a nation, according to an August 15, 2013, Huffington Post article, have “the highest income inequality in the developed world. Our inequality follows only Chile, Mexico and Turkey among all nations.” Mexico's and Chile's inequality, for example, is partly due to our influence and our policies. Additionally, inequality is reflected in domestic issues like public education where we have purposely refused to address the educational inequalities of “the poorer and darker peoples” of this nation saying that it is not a fundamental right and that it should not be financed equitably in relation with the richer and whiter peoples of the nation. Now, like in Chile, Mexico, and other nations, only those with money receive their human right to quality public education in the United States. This is not a recipe for stability, democracy, or justice for all. The book *Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* by Richard G. Wilkinson and Kate Pickett argues that there are “pernicious effects that inequality has on societies: eroding trust, increasing anxiety and illness, [and] encouraging excessive consumption.” It further claims that outcomes are significantly worse in more unequal rich countries in a variety of categories including physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, social mobility, trust and community life, violence, teenage pregnancies, and child well-being. In other words, chaos not community reigns in unequal societies.

How many of us remember Dr. King's economic's lesson the day before his assassination in Memphis while helping black public sanitation workers who were on strike? He said, “...always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal.” Dr. King was a very good student of history and knew that people do not achieve their rights without sharing their pain, their economic pain, with those in power. By doing so, he knew those in power had more of an incentive to address the

problem as they now felt the same economic pain that ordinary people do on a regular basis. So, he was offering a necessary component of any struggle for justice by oppressed people. How can we do this today? A couple weeks before his assassination, on March 18, 1968, in an address in Memphis to the same striking sanitation workers, he provided an insight as to where I believe we must go now to “Redeem the Soul of America.” In the speech, he said:

“If we are going to get equality, if we are going to get adequate wages, we are going to have to struggle for it. Now you know what? You may have to escalate the struggle a bit[...] in a few days you ought to get together and just have a general work stoppage in the city of Memphis. And you let that day come, and not a Negro in this city will go to any job downtown. When no Negro in domestic service will go to anybody’s house or anybody’s kitchen. When black students and teachers will not go to anybody’s school. And they will hear you then. The city of Memphis will not be able to function.”

Now, imagine that Dr. King was speaking today and said the same thing except he substituted “Memphis” for “Escondido” and “Latino and black” for “Negro.” Dr. King was pushing for a day without a Mexican, without Latinos, without blacks!

Latinos, especially students, already did this in the spring of 2006 during the marches that Rev. Lawson referenced. The leaders of the Invest-In Project marched in those massive marches in San Diego. These marches were different. They were not parades as they were more like the marches of the 1960s in that the many undocumented participants risked being deported and losing their jobs. Their fear was dissipating.

A little less than a year after these marches, in April 2007 before May 1st (International Workers’ Day), as the Field Director of the school workers union, I met with the new San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Carl Cohn for the first time. What did he want to know? What was on the forefront of his mind when he first met with me? After we briefly exchanged pleasantries, he asked me how many Latino students and workers would be absent on May 1, 2007. Clearly, he was concerned and his question has long remained in mind. It revealed a power point, a point of leverage for “We, the People.” In California, if students do not attend school, the school district loses money. Individual schools publicly track attendance and loss of funds for parents to encourage them to bring their children to school on a regular basis. The San Di-

ego Unified School District uses the following example on its website to educate the community:

Overview:

The state of California funds school districts based on student attendance, also known as Average Daily Attendance (ADA), at school. ADA is calculated by dividing the total number of days of student attendance by the number of days of school taught during the same period.

Example:

*Michael has perfect attendance, calculated this way:
142 days attended ÷ by 142 days of school taught = 1.0 ADA*

*Hannah attended 136 of the 142 days taught, calculated this way:
136 days attended ÷ by 142 days of school taught = .96 ADA*

How Does ADA Generate Revenue for the District?

A student like Michael, with perfect attendance, generates \$5,786 in revenue for the district. It is calculated this way: 1.0 ADA x \$5,786 revenue limit per ADA = \$5,786.*

*A student like Hannah, who may miss several days, generates less revenue. In this case, ADA is calculated this way: .96 ADA x \$5,786 revenue limit per ADA = \$5,554
In this case, there was a loss of \$232 in possible revenue.*

Irregular attendance also affects the revenue the district receives from the lottery, and for Special Education.

Lottery

*1.0 ADA x \$118 = \$118
.96 ADA x \$118 = \$113*

Special Education

*1.0 ADA x \$643 = \$643
.96 ADA x \$643 = \$617*

What are the financial effects of lost ADA revenue?

If all students attended daily, the district would have approximately 117,556 students (excluding Charter Schools) counted toward ADA. When ADA drops, revenue dips accordingly.

Perfect Attendance

$117,556 \times \$5,786 = \$680,179,016$

*Estimated ADA at 95.0***

$117,556 \times \$5,786 \times 95.0\% = \$646,225,032$

Lost Revenue: \$33,953,984

** Estimates for 2007-08 as of 3/13/08*

*** Data is according to 2007-08, the most current year for which data is available. This figure is averaged, as different grade levels and different tracks generate different rates of ADA.*

Superintendent Cohn was overseeing an already very underfunded school system and now he had large numbers of students purposely missing school so he clearly was concerned. But, why are students, Latinos, blacks, and others, attending schools that are criminally underfunded and violate the California constitution and human rights law anyway? Shouldn't they boycott them and demand a just tax structure with sufficient resources for a free, quality public education as a state constitutional and human right? Even sympathetic adult educational leaders that know the schools are inadequately funded and violate of the state constitution participate with the unjust system. They go to work. And, parents, who are not educated on the issue are distracted by "choices" and spend all their time trying to find their child a quality education locally while the whole system continues to deteriorate. This must change.

I think it is always important to highlight the fact that ultimately the power rests with "We, the people" and that if the people do not obey, the rulers cannot rule. Too often, this basic fact is forgotten and overlooked. And, even if it is remembered and understood, the people must develop enough courage to disobey, accept the consequences, and earn an insurgency. It took brave, young, black students to take the lead in the 1960s and push the reticent adults and traditional organizations to come on board with a more radical approach to "vastly increase" the rate of social change. The

same is true today except a nonviolent movement will have to be led by courageous, young, Latino students, along with blacks and other young people. As an example, imagine a future May 1st with no Latinos, blacks, and other allies in a local California school district, like Escondido, and students demanding a radical revolution in values and policies like Chilean students. They would demand a shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society, including wholesale changes in per-pupil spending, to the tax system, to the criminal justice system, to the minimum wage, to the ability to join a union, to the military industrial complex, to trade policies that create injustice abroad and drive immigration, environmental laws, and more. Then, later, as the movement builds, imagine students across the entire state of California doing the same thing for a day or even for the entire month of Sept. 15th to Oct. 15th (Hispanic Heritage Month) with no Latinos, blacks, and others in all of California's public schools. Imagine that students in other states, especially in the South and Southwest, also joined in. Imagine college students across the nation joining in to use their significant collective leverage to refuse to pay back their student loans to banks, choosing an "invest-in" in mass, and demanding a year of Jubilee along with these other changes to the society, including free college education. Imagine students across the Americas, from Chile to Quebec, participating in coordinated actions for free, quality public education. The possibilities are endless if we organize strategically and plan for a nonviolent movement.

I see nonviolent civil resistance as an absolute necessity in fostering real change in the U.S. and in the Americas given our violent history. Former SNCC leader Diane Nash, when asked why she did not believe in nonviolence at first responded by saying, "Why? Because I grew up in a violent society. Let's leave it at that." She continued to say in the interview that:

I am frankly surprised that it [nonviolence] hasn't been used much more since the Movement. Given the amount of progress we were able to achieve in the '60s using nonviolence and the relatively low number of casualties, I would have expected people would have been impressed and would have started using it more than they have.

Nash was one of Rev. Lawson's students in Nashville. She would later take a critical role in SNCC and SCLC during the 1960s. In a January 17, 2013 *Associated Press* article, she stated that students efforts in "Nashville was the reason that the whole Southern civil rights movement was nonviolent." Dr. King called the Nashville Sit-In

Movement the “model movement” and called James Lawson “the mind of the movement” and “the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world.” What is needed today is the development of the same kind of young nonviolent leaders and at least a five year campaign for true equality and opportunity in the country through the fight for free quality public education.

Those SNCC people who were most impactful in the 1960s Freedom Struggle were trained by Rev. James Lawson in Nashville and greatly influenced by Ella Baker. I and other Nuevo SNCC founders will play a similar role to these two leaders. Nuevo SNCC would initially begin by intensively training 12 young, committed leaders to act as a core group of catalysts in a new modern nonviolent struggle. After 3 months of intensive training on nonviolence, community organizing, and the human right to education, these young leaders will eventually be released to organize others in a local community into a human rights movement for free, quality public education for all. Charles Cobb, Jr., the former SNCC Field Secretary in Mississippi from 1962 to 1967, has written the following on the SNCC Legacy Project’s website:

SNCC’s youthfulness was important to what it was and what it became. The number and manner in which young people began emerging as leaders in the civil rights movement in 1960, was unprecedented. As Martin Luther King put it at a Durham, North Carolina civil rights rally less than a month after sit-ins erupted in Greensboro, “What is new in your fight is the fact that it was initiated, fed, and sustained by students.” An often ignored effect of this student action was their making legitimate going to jail for a principle. And this changed the students, laying the foundation for everything they would do as SNCC organizers[...] In Mississippi and throughout the black belt, the savage never-ending oppressive cycle that kept black people politically disenfranchised had two connected halves. 1) Blacks were deliberately and systematically kept illiterate (and the public school system was part of this) while at the same time literacy was the primary requirement for voter registration. 2) Violence and reprisal was the response to any black effort aimed at gaining the political franchise; but because few blacks were willing to brave the virtually certain terroristic response to seeking the franchise, they were said to be “apathetic.”[...] First, by putting their lives continuously at risk through committed grassroots organizing, this relatively small group of young people broke the back of a racist and restrictive exclusionary order that was tolerated at the highest levels of government. Much of what kept white supremacy and

segregation in place was the absence of direct and continuous challenge to it and the undramatic grassroots work on the back roads and in the towns and villages of the deep south for voting rights also made it impossible to ignore the will to freedom. And it needs to be said here that this work liberated Whites as well as blacks.

We need direct and continuous challenge to educational inequality in America as it is the basis for the racial and economic inequality which is deeply rooted in our history.

We must catalyze a new nonviolent resistance movement in the United States to redeem America's democracy. This kind of movement is not guaranteed nor can it take place without the nurturing and development of peaceful, just leaders and organizations. When presented with the question of "Where Do We Go From Here?" so many of our leaders and institutions today have remained irrelevant and asleep. They have in effect chosen chaos. By creating Nuevo SNCC, we can instead choose community, justice, and freedom. I have no doubt that the choices we make in the next few years in our nation will determine our fate for years to come. Nuevo SNCC will be tasked with nothing less than attempting to facilitate a nonviolent movement for the human right to a free quality public education in California and, thus, the United States as one out of eight American students comes from California.

In Spanish, "Escondido" means "hidden." It is high time to revive SNCC's legacy and reveal the hidden parts of America to the entire nation and the world with yet another nonviolent movement by and for our children who, like women in the early 1900s, cannot vote their way to freedom in our democracy. Unless we open the doors of true democracy for all our children by recognizing, respecting, and protecting their human right to education, the soul of America's democracy cannot and will not be redeemed. Let Nuevo SNCC be born for this purpose!

CHAPTER 10

CARRYING ON THE GREAT LEGACY & INTERCHANGE

*“By a strange coincidence it was exactly a century ago, on September 11th, 1906, that Mahatma Gandhi launched a new way of waging conflict that many believe can lead humanity from the mire of hatred in which we seem to be bogged down out into the clear land of peace. These two 9/11s, the one freshly smarting and the other much less appreciated or understood (or in most cases, even remembered), seem like signposts for two paths that can be taken by the human race[...] While the method that Gandhi worked out was not new—he was the first to insist it was ‘as old as the hills’—it fell to him to develop it systematically and apply it on a broad scale to social problems[...] This is why it is so important that we realize that humanity has a double legacy, which is strangely symbolized in two 9/11s. The century that gave us both Gandhi and Hitler gave us a crucial choice, **if** we become aware of the power that was launched on September 11, 1906[...] More than fifty countries would shake off the yoke of colonialism, at least in large part influenced by the successes of his struggle in India.”*

~ Michael N. Nagler, *Hope or Terror: Gandhi and the Other 9/11*

In the year I was born, 1973, on September 11th, this day is known across Latin America as the date the United States backed a coup in Chile to oust democratically elected Salvador Allende and place dictator General Augusto Pinochet in power. A year after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Chilean Tito Tricot clarified many Latin American's views in the *Guardian* newspaper:

It is not a matter of comparing sorrow and pain, but for the past year the U.S. media has tried to convince us that north American lives are worth more than other people's lives. After all, we are from the third world, citizens of underdeveloped countries who deserve to be arrested, tortured, and killed. How else are we interpret the fact that the military coup in our country was planned in the United States?

The truth is that no U.S. president ever shed a tear for our dead; no U.S. politician ever sent a flower to our widows. The U.S. government and media use different standards to measure suffering. It is precisely this hypocrisy and these double standards that make us sick, especially when on such a symbolic day for Chileans, the president of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, attended a memorial service at the United States embassy where the ambassador, William Brownfield, stated that "people who hate the United States must be controlled, arrested or eliminated."

In what kind of a world are we living? Can we stand idly by while in the name of the fight against terrorism countries are bombed or invaded by the U.S. war machine? I think not, especially because, irrespective of the horror of the World Trade Centre attacks, the U.S. has no moral right to impose its will on our continent. After all, we in Latin America have ample experience with U.S. terrorist tactics. In our continent alone 90,000 people disappeared as a direct result of the operation of the School of the Americas and U.S. "counterinsurgency" policies—30 times more than the victims of the World Trade Center.

One cannot—and should not—attempt to quantify suffering, but we do have the right to denounce this double standard.

Unfortunately, this is our legacy at home and abroad in the rest of the Americas. Strangely, the sentiments of Tricot mimic those of the 1960s southern Freedom Movement who also challenged U.S. terrorism and the devaluing of their lives. Ella Baker scolded the nation in 1964 by saying "Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons, becomes as important to the rest of the country as the killing of a white mother's sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest."

Having been born literally on the edge of this nation, on the border between Texas and Mexico, and having grown up in a poor, immigrant family in the United States with a single mother from Mexico, I developed a deep desire for justice when I

was very small. Even as I temporarily left the border region as a boy when my family moved to a small central Ohio town to find work, I would somehow come across Dr. King's legacy. The Normans (Janice, Joe Sr., Joe Jr. Jeff, and Jimmy), one of the few black families in an almost all white town, who lived a few apartments down from us, warmly welcomed us to the region. One of my first memories of Ohio is of the Normans giving my brother and I a gift during our first Christmas there and of a picture they had (and still have) on the wall of their apartment. It was a picture of Dr. King and it was my first introduction to him and it made me wonder why he was important enough to place on their wall. Much like the before mentioned USDA poster in my school cafeteria with the Statue of Liberty and the words "AND JUSTICE FOR ALL," the image would stay with me.

Eventually, these early experiences led me to search for, find, and systematically study the legacy of nonviolent civil resistance that Gandhi, King, and SNCC left to us. I often joke that my real degree came from the public library where I studied social movements and could read what I wanted to read—books on understanding and addressing the existence of needless poverty and inequality amongst great wealth. In 1991, during a very formative time, I entered Miami University's Western Program as a college freshman in Oxford, Ohio. Without knowing it initially, I spent my entire first year of college at the very site where SNCC trained volunteers for the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer. Learning about this legacy would help to set the trajectory of my life for many years to come. Over the years, I would seek out encounters with people like Arun Gandhi, Narayan Desai, Bernard LaFayette, James Orange, Marshall Ganz, Vincent Harding, Dorothy Cotton, James Lawson, and Mary Elizabeth King, all of whom worked with Gandhi, Dr. King and/or SNCC. More recently, in August 2014, the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer, I would continue along this path as I attended the James Lawson Institute, an eight-day course on nonviolent civil resistance, in Nashville, TN. The institute was sponsored by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict and included presentations from Rev. Lawson and Mary Elizabeth King, both of whom are connected to the original SNCC and continue to teach about the important legacy of Gandhian nonviolence.

Mary Elizabeth King speaks eloquently about the "great interchange [that] occurred between African Americans and Indians struggling for independence." Key black leaders, including Howard Thurman and Benjamin Mays, who had significant influence on Dr. King, traveled to India in the 1930s to visit and learn about Gandhi's nonviolent struggle. The Indian struggle was also regularly covered in black newspapers across the country. For instance, a young James Lawson learned of Gandhi's non-

violent actions from black newspapers, including the Cleveland Defender and Pittsburgh Courier. This great interchange was necessary to help give birth to the 1960s Freedom Struggle. Now, a new great interchange between the Gandhian-inspired African Americans who led the Freedom Movement in the south in the 1960s and Latinos in the Americas today must take place. Without this contemporary exchange and an understanding of the past, I do not think we can adequately address the great issues of our day. Through this book and through the creation of Nuevo SNCC, I plan to do everything I can to carry on this great legacy and to create a direct link from Gandhi's September 11th action in 1906 to African-American's who studied and acted upon his legacy in the 1960s to today's young Latinos. We must learn and act on the more than one hundred year legacy of nonviolent resistance starting with Gandhi.

One day, like Dr. King and Rev. Lawson, I would like to add to my metaphoric "Trip to the Land of Gandhi" with an actual trip to close this circle back to Gandhi, the grandfather of nonviolent civil resistance. More importantly, I plan to do everything humanly possible to carry on the great Gandhian legacy here in the Americas with Nuevo SNCC and the creation of a nonviolent resistance movement for justice. Won't you help to carry on this Gandhian legacy with Nuevo SNCC? Similar to Gandhi's spinning wheel, I am inviting others to join me in fasting for one meal a week and redirecting the money that would have been spent on food (\$10) to go to Nuevo SNCC. This is an act of solidarity with the more than half of U.S public school students who live in low-income families and who often do not know where their next meal will come from.

Nuevo SNCC will recruit 12 of the best and brightest young folks from California's universities and community colleges to volunteer at least two years to help us save public education and America's democracy. We will in turn help them pay for their own education with SNCC Legacy Education Awards to pay off student loans or pay for future college. To lead by example, I am setting aside \$500 a month toward financing Nuevo SNCC. Won't you help by making Nuevo SNCC financially viable and independent with a regular monthly contribution? Nonprofits who are dependent on corporate foundations can not change the world. We, the people, must fund our own organizations and revolutionary changes. Every penny earned on this book will go to the creation of Nuevo SNCC and its work. However, your support cannot stop there as we need a sustainable organization financed by regular, monthly contributions so it is capable of launching a multiyear campaign. We reap what we sow. I challenge you to not give a single penny to political candidates or parties without at least matching the amount to fund Nuevo SNCC and a nonviolent movement of "We, the people." I chal-

lenge you to not give a single penny to charity without at least matching the amount to fund Nuevo SNCC and the fight for justice. In closing, I invite you to join me in this effort to carry on the great legacy and interchange between the nonviolent leaders of the past and tomorrow. What legacy will you choose: chaos or community?

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF NUEVO SNCC

Description

Nuevo SNCC is designed to strengthen communities and develop leaders through nonviolent action. Nuevo SNCC is built on SNCC's nonviolent legacy and seeks to work effectively with local communities to address pressing needs around the human right to free quality public education. Nuevo SNCC is a full-time, team-based program for young people between the ages of 18-30. Its structure is drawn from a combination of the successful models of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and their modern versions of AmeriCorps, City Year, Episcopal Service Corps, Jesuit Service Corps, and Peace Corps.

Benefits

Nuevo SNCC members will receive a living allowance of \$4,800 for every year of service, cell phone, limited medical benefits, up to \$400 a month for childcare (if necessary), member uniforms, and a SNCC Legacy Education Award upon successful completion of the program.

SNCC Legacy Education Award

A SNCC Legacy Education Award \$5,550 will be provided. This education award will be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education, to pay for educational training, and to repay qualified student loans. The education award could be applied toward a college degree, graduate school, or existing or future qualified student loans. Eligibility would be based on a minimum of 2,040 service hours, all requirements, and a complete year of service.

Contribute to Nuevo SNCC

Visit www.nuevosncc.net and click on the blue button. The Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity (www.Im4HumanIntegrity.org), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization devoted to ensuring that "Every person is sacred across all borders," is our fiscal sponsor. Contributions are tax deductible. Simply go to <http://im4humanintegrity.org/donate/> and click on the yellow "DONATE" button at the bottom of the page. Please be sure to "Add special instructions" stating that this contribution is for Nuevo SNCC if you use PayPal. If you send a check, simply put "For Nuevo SNCC" in the memo section.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:

The purpose of this section is to suggest items and a process for additional information on the Gandhian legacy of nonviolent resistance. I would strongly recommend you start with reading, listening, and watching the original works created by Gandhi and Dr. King. The beauty of both of these nonviolent leaders is that they have left us a significant amount of writings, documents, sound recordings, and videos. The www.gandhiheritageportal.org website is a great resource. From there, you will see references to other books and materials and can read what they read, tracing their influences back. For instance, in his writings, Gandhi references Leo Tolstoy and his book *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Soon, you will find that they wrote each other letters and can track those letters down too. As another example, both Gandhi and King reference Henry David Thoreau and his important essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*. Additionally, today, especially for Dr. King, you can listen to and watch many of his speeches and sermons, which I have found invaluable. After connecting with the original works of both Gandhi and Dr. King, I would suggest reading the writings of those who, like Howard Thurman, Benjamin Mays, Krishnalal Shridharani, C.F. Andrews, Richard B. Gregg, and Joan Bondurant, each of whom, among others, helped create the great interchange of nonviolent knowledge between the Indian freedom struggle and the African-American freedom struggle. After this, I recommend you read books from former colleagues of Gandhi and King such as Andrew Young, Vincent Harding, Narayan Desai, and others.

Regarding SNCC, I would recommend you start by reading important books on SNCC written by Howard Zinn, Clayborne Carson, Charles Payne, and Wesley Hogan. Then, you can read the books of former SNCC leaders like John Lewis, Bernard LaFayette, Bob Moses, Mary Elizabeth King, James Forman, and Cleveland Sellers. After the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Fellowship of Reconciliation wrote a comic book entitled “Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story.” It was influential on the life of John Lewis and he has now written two comic books of his own, with a third coming soon. These should be read along with other works like *The Children* by David Halberstam, which includes significant information on Rev. Lawson and those he trained. Rev. Lawson does not have any books but many of his interviews and college classes on nonviolent struggle are available online. Ella Baker also does not have a lot of her own writings available but there are some critical books on her life as well as a hard to find but critical film called *Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker* on her life and work.

Imagine the kind of world we could have if everyone read and learned this non-violent legacy. Most of these materials mentioned above are available for free either

online or from the public library. So, don't delay, get your "Ph.D." today in nonviolence resistance for free at the public library.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Erik Olson Fernández has many years of experience organizing for nonviolent social change as a Community Organizer and in the labor movement as an Organizer, Labor Representative, and Field Director with public education and health care unions. Motivated by the experiences of growing up with a single mother from Mexico, he has a long commitment to economic and social justice through nonviolent resistance. Erik has a law degree but has instead focused and devoted his life to organizing workers and community residents for justice. He is currently working to create Nuevo SNCC, the modern equivalent of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a project that seeks to revive SNCC's nonviolent legacy to challenge today's human rights violations around the right to education. Erik holds a Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning from Miami University and a Juris Doctor from Northeastern University School of Law.

BOOK DESCRIPTION:

My Trip to the Land of Gandhi: A Mexican-American's Journey to the Legacy of Nonviolent Resistance is a memoir about a Mexican mother's son growing up in poverty in America and his pursuit of the human right to education through the legacy of Gandhian nonviolence. In 1959, after the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott, Dr. King wrote an important article in Ebony magazine about his journey to India to study the work and life of Gandhi and the Indian freedom struggle and how to apply those lessons back home to redeem America's democracy. The article was entitled "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi." In the article, King states, "I left India more convinced than ever before that nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom." This book is about this young son's metaphoric "Trip to the Land of Gandhi" and how this journey helped him confront the social issues of today with the great legacy of nonviolence resistance. The first item on the agenda was the \$90,000 in student loan debt that was handed to him along with his law school degree. Erik Olson Fernandez's journey and his strategic insights are a call to action to finish the "unfinished business" of the 1960s with a nonviolent struggle for the human right to quality free public education in the Americas.