
The YouthBuild[®] Story of Thanks

By Dorothy Stoneman



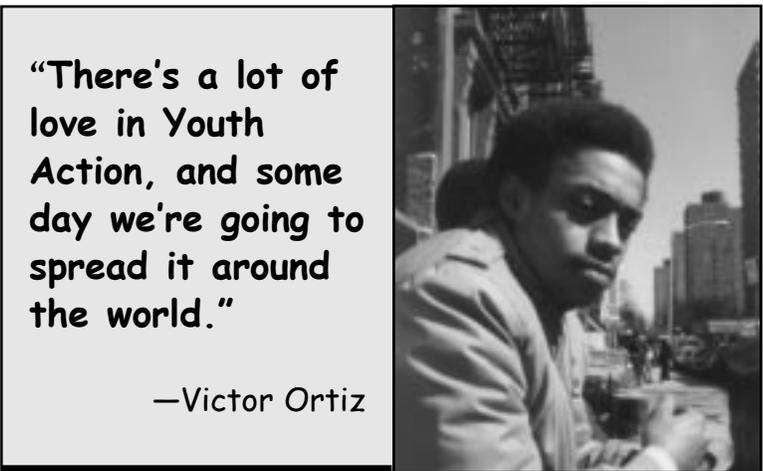
58 Day Street • P.O. Box 440322
Somerville, MA 02144
617.623.9900 • Fax: 617.623.4331
www.youthbuild.org

The YouthBuild Story of Thanks

YOUTHBUILD STARTED FROM A SEED PLANTED IN EAST HARLEM, far from the seat of power, and propagated slowly, carefully nurtured by dedicated people in location after location. It has taken the work of literally thousands of people over 20 years to bring the YouthBuild program to its current position as a national network of exciting programs engaging 5,000 young people each year, contributing to community development in 129 urban and rural communities, and growing every year.

This is the moment when I want to thank and recognize as many of those wonderful people as possible. It is of course risky to start naming large numbers of people, because many will inevitably be left out. I risk offending dozens of people. But not to try seems simply wrong. Any serious effort to change the world takes hundreds, thousands, and when it really works, probably millions of people, to support that effort, to lend their hard work, good will, resources, imagination, kindness, power, leadership, and soul to the effort.

From the beginning, ever since **Victor Ortiz**, one of the founding young people, first said, “There’s a lot of love in Youth Action, and some day we’re going to spread it around the world,” YouthBuild has been a full-time labor of love for dozens, then hundreds of us, and over time, thousands. In deciding how to acknowledge individuals, we decided the most interesting way is to tell at least some of the story of YouthBuild and adding lists of people at the end, each of whom has given something of enormous value to our shared mission.



Of course, the whole story of YouthBuild goes far beyond my own awareness. Each program in each community has its own network of heroes and supporters, leaders and staff, other people who came forth to help in their own way and who solved thorny problems to help their local program get off the ground and succeed.

There are also programs that failed despite the heroic efforts of individuals to build them or save them. Sometimes the leaders who gave their best were not able to overcome their own weaknesses and had to leave; or in a very few cases they stayed and caused the eventual collapse of their program. Their work was no less genuine, and if I have any regrets it’s that everyone who gave their best wasn’t able to succeed and prosper and enjoy the fruits of their labor and the joy of being part of this wonderful movement.

In addition to every adult who has made YouthBuild possible, each young person who has entered YouthBuild has a complex and powerful story of facing and working to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. If thousands of young people hadn’t made a heroic effort to take advantage of the opportunity of YouthBuild, it would have failed completely, regardless of the best intentions of the staff and funders.



East Harlem Block Schools, 94 E. 111th St., New York, NY. Dorothy Stoneman (left), John Bell, (standing center), Tom Roderick (standing right), and Chantay Henderson (on stairs).

I feel so much affection for so many people who have walked part of the way with us. It has already been quite a long walk. And, in truth, we have just begun!

The Roots of YouthBuild

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YouthBuild grew out of the Youth Action Program, which grew out of the East Harlem Block Schools, which grew out of the New York Friends Group and the federal Anti-Poverty program. **Robert Gilmore** had supported the New York Friends Group's at 94 East

111th Street, where **Tony Ward** came as a young quaker volunteer when he finished college and met **Carmen Maristany**, a young woman who lived on 111th Street with her four children. Carmen and Tony fell in love and married. Tony was running a tutorial program for children in the neighborhood under the sponsorship of the Friends Group; Carmen gathered a group of mothers together to start the East Harlem Block Schools with a grant from the Community Action Program of the Anti-Poverty Program and later from **Larry Benenson**; and the mothers hired Tony as their first executive director.

I came to the East Harlem Block Schools in 1965, after having taught 2nd grade at PS 92 on 134th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues. Teaching in the public schools was extremely difficult. The context was wrong. Thirty seven-year-old children were crowded into my classroom with me, and I had too little experience and no help from anybody else. I knew I was not succeeding. My friend **Lois Goldfrank**, who was teaching at the East Harlem Block Schools, persuaded me that under the leadership of Tony Ward, and in the context of a small, experimental, parent-controlled community-based school, it was possible to teach and to succeed, and to become part of the community. She was right.

I learned the first half of almost everything I needed to learn from Tony Ward and **the parents at the East Harlem Block Schools.**

Before teaching in public school, and before coming to the Block Schools, I had joined the Civil Rights Movement in 1964 by getting on the subway and going uptown to 137th Street to the small storefront office of the Harlem Action Group (HAG) and asking if I could volunteer. HAG was a decidedly grassroots, chaotic, and creative organization in a tiny storefront on 8th Avenue and 137th Street. This was where I met **Leroy Looper**,



Dorothy and Leroy Looper in 1964.

who became my mentor and later the founding chairperson of YouthBuild USA.

Leroy helped me negotiate my way within the black community, as I later helped him negotiate the white community. This, my first and lasting cross-race, cross-class alliance has been fundamental to my ability to figure out what to do and what not to do at difficult moments when issues of class and race were dominant.



Ethel Velez, Block Schools parent and later advisor to Youth Action Program.

With Leroy's assistance I set up an exciting summer pre-school for 120 children that operated out of public school space donated to us. The following year I started teaching 2nd grade in the same local public school, but soon transferred to the East Harlem Block Schools, looking for a community-based alternative to the public schools.

The parents who ran the East Harlem block Schools—**Rosie and Joe Gueits, Carmen Maristany Ward, Ethel Velez, Sonia Medina, Anna Rivera, Rosie Tirado, Carmen Arevalo**, and many many others—welcomed and taught me. I learned how to work in a community, how to structure an organization that would hold me accountable to the constituency, while helping it to run its own programs and build its own community. At their invitation, when Tony Ward left in 1969, I became the executive director of the East Harlem Block Schools.

At the Block Schools I met **Chantay Henderson**, a first grader who was my student, and her parents, **Kent Edwards and Gwen Henderson**.

Birth of Youth Action

Skipping forward to 1978, when Chantay had grown to be 14 years old ... I had decided that the most important immediate thing I could do in the world was mobilize teenagers to become a positive force in their communities. The presence of hundreds of thousands of teenagers who were dropping out of school, dying or wasting their lives on the streets, appeared to me as a sin of society, a waste of a most precious resource. One of my own 2nd graders in PS 92 in 1965, **Wesley Terry**, a talented and wonderful child whom I had loved very dearly, had died in 1978 in unexplained street violence.

So I asked Chantay to gather her friends together to talk about what we could do. She brought Victor Ortiz and **John Sainz**, 16 year old cousins who lived on Chantay's block. They became part of the core of Youth Action Program for the next six years. It was their idea to rebuild a house on their block. They had already rescued 17 stray dogs they were taking care of in an abandoned building, and they wanted to fix up that particular building. An engineer later told us it was dangerous, so we picked a different building around the corner. There were hundreds of abandoned buildings in East Harlem, so finding one wasn't difficult. Victor and John gave their entire adolescence to the successful effort to rebuild the first YouthBuild tenement at 2328 2nd Avenue, where Victor still lives. This project was called the Youth Action Restoration Crew.



Chantay Henderson, one of the founders of Youth Action Program.

“Youth Action is not an ordinary program. It is a family, a place with a sense of togetherness... Youth Action showed me that I was capable of succeeding at any expectation I have for myself and my community.”

—Christina Head
YAP 1996

I also asked **Bolivar Macias**, another former Block School student who was my daughter’s babysitter, to bring his friends to my home one evening to talk about what they would like to do to improve the community. Boli brought about 12 friends. When asked what project would be worth their time, they said they wanted to rebuild abandoned buildings. They knew every empty building in the neighborhood, because there was nowhere else for teenagers to hang out in the evenings. Among Boli’s friends were **Sigfredo Acosta, Jenny Macias, and Cynthia Orchart**, who also gave their entire adolescence to the project. At that first meeting they said that in order not to feel that they were somehow wasting their time or being used, they would need at some point to get paid, or at least to be able to live in the building when it was done. This meeting took place in March 1978.

This group selected a building on 107th Street, after surveying the neighborhood. Then, with the help of Chantay’s dad, Kent Edwards, and **Jimmy McKenzie**, a Block Schools parent with expertise in construction and

an adventurous spirit, we set to work to clean out that building. It was a total mess, completely vandalized and full of disgusting garbage and dead animals. We got permission from the neighbors, and cleaned it from top to bottom.

I will never forget the night when we bricked up the basement windows. It took Kent Edwards, Victor Ortiz, Chantay Henderson, and me five hours to lay 14 bricks, because we were truly learning as we went. We were using water from an open hydrant two blocks away, and as I walked to get the water with my old metal bucket, through the busy evening streets in the dark, I wondered where in the world this project would end up. I imagined my father watching me wandering around the city streets with a bucket full of water to mix cement to seal up a dilapidated building, and knew he would be thinking I was a lost cause.

Meanwhile, during the early months of 1978, a group of us had been meeting as a planning committee to think about whether and how teenagers could be mobilized as a positive force on a broad scale. **John Bell**, my husband and a former teacher at the Block Schools; **Tom Roderick**, former director of the East Harlem Block Schools’ elementary school; **Carol Gross**, also a teacher; Gwen Henderson, Chantay’s mother; and **Edythe Boone**, a resident of the James Weldon Johnson housing Project in East Harlem, were meeting in the Block Schools’ tiny basement on East 111th Street. This building was the home of the NY Friends Group originally, and then of the East Harlem Block Schools, which is still there.

In fact, this little group was a committee of what we called the New Action Party for a Human Society. About 70 friends had gathered in 1974 with the idea of starting a new political party. We felt neither the Republicans nor the Democrats were speaking adequately to the



John Bell, one of the first organizers.

issues that mattered most to us nor to the reality that we faced in low-income communities. We felt both major parties' approach was skewed in different ways. We believed there was a yearning among the American people for a party that would be incorruptible, dedicated to racial and economic justice, and able to enlist a whole new level of energy from ordinary people who had felt alienated from the political process. We were concerned at the low level of voter turnout. We believed that for a new party to have the right or the credibility to seek power through the electoral process, it should have already produced something of such value to the nation through dedicated and unselfish work that hundreds of thousands of people would have already benefitted from the integrity of its work.

While these ideas had merit and were exciting to think about, we abandoned the effort to develop a new party as soon as the Youth Action Program took off. It consumed all of our energy, was tangible immediately, and its vision was sufficiently challenging and idealistic to satisfy the desire to make a difference.

At about this time, in the winter of 1978, **Micaela Hickey**, who worked at the Bank Street Day Care Consultation Service, called to tell me that there was an announcement in the Federal Register of a grant program called the Community Anti-Crime Program (CACP), under the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, sponsored by **Congressman John Conyers** of Detroit. She thought the program could work for organizing teenagers into a positive force. Sure enough, this program was ideal; it reflected a real understanding of low-income communities. It called for building community cohesion as a means of preventing crime.

During the process of writing the CACP proposal, I asked the board of directors of the East Harlem Block Schools if they would formally sponsor the project and act as a conduit for the funds. They readily agreed, because they trusted me as their former executive director.

I wrote the CACP proposal with the help of **Peggy Ray**, a friend. For three weeks in the Block Schools office we wrote and typed, 14 hours a day, determined to make the deadline, asking for \$220,000, the largest single amount of money I had ever sought from any source. **Jeff Nugent**, now a well known member of the Development Training Initiative, then a staff member providing technical assistance at CACP, called me to say that the draft proposal that we had submitted was superb, except that it had a self-effacing quality to it. He offered to come to East Harlem to help me eliminate the overly humble tone. So we sat in the basement at 94 East 111th Street and struck out all the phrases that seemed to be understatements. Three months later, the proposal to CACP was fully funded!

By September, the Youth Action Program of the East Harlem Block Schools (YAP) was able to hire seven community organizers to develop seven youth-run community improvement projects in East Harlem, and to organize the East Harlem Youth Congress to unite the young people in these seven projects into a policy voice for the youth of East Harlem.

"I will never forget the night when we bricked up the basement windows. It took Kent Edwards, Victor Ortiz, Chantay Henderson, and me 5 hours to lay 14 bricks, because we were truly learning as we went."

—Dorothy Stoneman



The Launch

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Once we had funds, we were in a position to hire seven project organizers, each of whom would have the charge of finding a group of teenagers and helping them formulate and implement a substantial community improvement project. I became the project director. We would all be paid \$11,000/year, plus full medical coverage. The idea was to find people who were so dedicated they would have done the work as volunteers, but to pay ourselves subsistence wages.

“Young people who grow up feeling ignored find that they have a voice and can play a major role in improving their communities.”

—Tony Minor

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Victor Ortiz, John Sainz, Boli Macias, Sigfredo Acosta, Jenny Macias, Cynthia Orchart, Kent Edwards, John Bell, Chantay Henderson, Tony Minor, and others joined me to interview 60 candidates. Every afternoon for three months we held three interviews. We had decided that the decision to hire had to be unanimous. This process was an extraordinary learning experience. Each candidate held forth on all their convictions and aspirations for a better world and community, as the young people plied them with questions and listened with great interest to all their answers.

The first person we hired was **Orlando Rivera**, a resident of East Harlem who had gone to Yale, graduated, and returned to find a way to help the community. When we finished interviewing him we did our usual go-round in which each of the interviewing group would give a quick “yes,” “no,” or “maybe” before we went around again to give our reasons. Well, for the first time after dozens of interviews, all 10 of us said, “Yes!” We broke out into cheers and foot stamping.

Soon afterwards, we found **David Calvert**. He also had grown up in East Harlem. He was the son of a minister very active in community affairs. He was returning after completing college and a couple of years in international service. David became the Project Organizer of the Youth Action Restoration Crew which, in effect, makes him the very first YouthBuild director. We didn’t call it YouthBuild yet, and we didn’t know that this project would become the core of Youth Action Program, to be replicated around the country. But David Calvert made it work. He made that project his consuming life’s work for five years. At the outset David knew nothing about construction. He took classes in the evening to keep ahead of the project. He served as construction manager, counselor, project director, fundraiser, and youth and community organizer.

David Calvert had infinite energy, absolute idealism, unbelievable resourcefulness and resilience, and an irrepressible optimism. There was no stopping him, along with Victor Ortiz, John Sainz, and Chantay Henderson, the teen-aged leaders. The story of the five years it took them to raise the funds, rebuild the first building, and organize 200 teenagers to do it, is a long story of an exciting roller coaster ride. He was given critical assistance by **Logi Cedano**, head of the Renegades; **Joe Biber**, then a staff person at the City’s Department of Housing and Development; and **Conrad Levinson**, architect.

I won’t try to tell that story here, nor the story of the other six fabulous community improvement projects implemented with the CACP grant. These projects were all under the

umbrella of the Youth Action Program. We held regular general meetings as well as conferences open to all the youth of East Harlem. We formed the East Harlem Youth Congress to develop policy positions to influence the adults who held power in city, state, and federal government. The East Harlem Youth Congress was led over time by a number of young people, but prominent among them were **Johnny Rivera**, 16 years old at the time and now a member of the community Planning Board and the School committee in East Harlem; **Francisco Diaz**, who led the first workshop on holding local politicians accountable and 10 years later was elected State Assemblyman for East Harlem; **Mary Kay Penn**, **Richard Malavet**, **Christopher Bell**, **Ismael Nunez**, and **Winston Sweetie**. These young leaders are still serving, years after being part of Youth Action Program.



John Rivera, a leader at age 16; now a member of the East Harlem Community Planning Board and School Board.

In 1981, the East Harlem Youth Congress put forth a “Youth Agenda for the Eighties” that included a broad array of action items in every conceivable area of community life. The 25 young leaders then identified five priorities, as follows:

- More sex education for teenagers
- Better public schools
- More accountability of local politicians to the community
- Real jobs for teenagers rebuilding the community
- Peace and people as national priorities

The group approached these in the order of attainability. They first organized youth conferences focused on sex education, then developed student governments in the four East Harlem junior high schools. They waited to see how in the world we could get real jobs for teenagers rebuilding the community, and how we could affect national priorities.

The Opportunity to Get Jobs for Young People Presents Itself

In 1984, **Maddy Lee**, president of the New York Foundation, invited me to a conference to **I**speak. There I met another speaker named **Stan Litow**, then president of Interface, who was eloquent about the need for a major program of youth employment. The next week I called Stan and proposed that we work together to produce such a program. He informed me about Mayor Koch’s \$38 million program for disadvantaged workers to rehabilitate housing. This instantly struck me as the vehicle through which the East Harlem Youth Congress could implement its ideas for young people to have real jobs rebuilding their communities.

I remember the moment. I hung up from the conversation with Stanley and came running and yelling out of my little windowless office at the back of our overheated warehouse on 110th Avenue, to tell everybody that this was it! **Sonia Texidor**, who was my secretary and also a member of the Youth Congress, remembers nearly jumping out of her skin when I stormed out of my office, yelling. Practically jumping up and down, I explained that the Mayor was starting something and this was the moment when we could form a Coalition to



The Steering Committee of the East Harlem Youth Congress (above) set priorities in the “Youth Agenda for the Eighties.” Chantay Henderson is pictured in front.

get him to include youth. There were no provisions in his project for training and employment of young people!

And so we did. **Sonia Texidor, John Rivera, and Rey Hernandez** became the core group of young people who organized this city-wide coalition. At the same time, we had been meeting with a group of organizations at the Fund for the City of New York. This group had been invited by the President of the Fund, **Greg Farrell**, to think about a city-wide employment training program for youth. We had coalesced into a tightly-knit group of like minded people: **Tom Pendleton**, director of The Dome in Manhattan; **Adina Johnson; Jean Thomases**, director of Good Shepherd Services in Brooklyn and **Bonnie Genevich** from the same organization. They agreed to form a “Coalition for Eight Million Dollars” to propose to the

Mayor that he set aside \$8 million of his \$38 million for young people.

A group of about a dozen people, including the youth and adults mentioned above, met with **Joseph Shuldiner**, then an official of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), who said there was absolutely no room to redesign this program to include youth. They were already half way down the pike with their plans, and we should forget about it. When he left the room, we stayed at the table, somewhat dejected. This was a critical moment in our development. After discussion, we agreed that we would honor his statement that it would be too disruptive and probably fruitless to try to change their plans. Instead, we would design our own city program specifically for young people and aim to get it included in the following year’s budget.

We wrote to Joseph Shuldiner to say that we would not aggravate him by persisting in our request, but that he should not underestimate our determination to create something appropriate for youth. We would be back the next year with a proposal for the City Council.

And we were. We were back with a Coalition of 70 organizations, a carefully worked out proposal, and hundreds of youth to testify before the City Council about why they wanted jobs rebuilding their communities. We had become the Coalition for Ten Million \$.

Finding Our Voice

To get there, we had a lot of work to do. We had to learn how to “change City Hall.” I again turned to Tony Ward for advice. Tony laid out a sequence of steps as well as the pitfalls to avoid. We turned to **Ruth Messinger**, then a City Councilwoman who was dedicated to informing community groups about how the City’s budget process worked and letting them know how they could influence it. **Richard Murphy**, then director of Rheedlen Foundation, was close to Ruth and was helping her activate community groups. We turned again to Maddy Lee at the New York Foundation, who gave us a grant to pay for a coalition organizer.

We hired **Paula Phillips** as the organizer and quickly built a broad-based coalition of groups that would support our Statement of Purpose and our specific proposals.

Soon a core group of reliable community-based activist leaders was gathered: **Getz Obstfeld**, then executive director of Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association; **Jovita Nedd**, also of Banana Kelly, **Tom Pendleton** of The Dome; Adina Johnson, Jean Thomases and Bonnie Genevich of the Good Shepherd Society; **John Bess**, director of Manhattan Valley Youth Center, **David Harris** of Jobs for Youth; and others.

Meanwhile John Rivera, Sonia Texidor, Rey Hernandez, and I organized a group of about 20 young people who met every Wednesday night. They learned about the budget process, developed the Statement of Purpose, practiced their speeches to City Council, reflected on the meetings of the adults in the coalition that they had attended, and planned their strategy for involving other young people.

As part of the campaign, both adults and youth met with key Councilpeople and City officials. We worked out a shared agenda with Interface, led by Stan Litow and **Robin Wilner**. They were skilled lobbyists, respected and accustomed to having influence at City Hall; they were essential to the process. The president of the City Council, **Andrew Stein**, whose staff person **Jose Cintron** had come from East Harlem, was not only in support of our proposal but had come forward with a dramatic \$40,000 grant from his discretionary funds to complete the first building on 2nd Avenue when no other funds were available for brick and mortar. **Ruth Messinger** remained our primary inside advocate.



Sonia Texidor (above) helped organize the Youth Congress.
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By the time the budget hearings for 1984 took place, we were ready with a viable large coalition, dozens of youth and adult speakers, and a dramatic public display of support. We swamped the City Council's budget hearings with testimony from youth. City Council Chairman **Ed Sadowsky** was sympathetic. In the end he added a youth employment program of his own onto our proposal. Commissioner of Employment **Ron Gault** also added his favorite program to our agenda. We had momentum. We had obvious, visible grassroots support and increasing official endorsement. When the City Council approved our proposal in one of its midnight budget dramas as an add-on to the Mayor's budget, it had funded not only the YouthBuild program (then called the "Housing Model"), but five other programs we had recommended. We obtained an appropriation of \$4.75M for the Department of Employment to administer.



Celebrating the first appropriation from City Council.
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With the help of **Carolyn Maloney**, then East Harlem's City Councilwoman (now a NYC Congresswoman) and Ruth



Councilwoman Carolyn Maloney, an early champion of YouthBuild.

Messinger, we persuaded the city administration that the “Housing Model” was worth implementing. Key administrators had been skeptical of its feasibility even after the funds were appropriated. Combining job training and housing development was said by some to be an inefficient approach to both housing and job training. But Commissioner Ron Gault gave it his cautious support, named it the “Housing Related Enhanced Work Experience Program” and funded several groups to implement it. Among them were Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, and the People’s Firehouse, respected New York organizations. Joseph Shuldiner, Commissioner of HPD, supported the initiative.

Partnering with the City Government

A partnership between HPD and DOE was born, with senior officials **Tom McHenry** and **Fredda Peritz** as the key implementers at the DOE. **Steve Norman** oversaw the partnership at HPD. This was a special moment. We had been told repeatedly by experienced people that there could be no effective partnership between two city agencies and that therefore the implementation of our proposal was doomed. But HPD and DOE did partner effectively, and with good humor. We found that as long as the commissioners appointed high level people to implement it, the partnership would work. This was our first of many experiences with dedicated public servants rising to interesting challenges in the public interest. There is a knee-jerk, overly-critical view of government agencies that exists in the public policy world; we have repeatedly found it to be false. The unsung heroes who toil for decades inside government agencies to make life better for low-income people deserve enormous credit and make very good partners for non-profit agencies in the communities.

YAPH did not actually apply for the new City funds that its Coalition had raised. It had received full funding from a combination of state funds under **Governor Mario Cuomo’s** Homeless Housing Assistance Program and private funds from the Public Welfare Foundation.

The role of the Public Welfare Foundation was important. **Larry Kressley**, then a program officer, had called me in 1981. He asked if we would like a grant to run a job training program. I said “No, thank you. We're focused on leadership development.” I called him back 10 minutes later and said, “On second thought, our housing rehabilitation project could easily be framed as job training, and we should talk about it.” He came to visit, discussed his foundation’s concern with what they were describing as the permanent underclass and the lack of pathways for members of the underclass to climb up into the mainstream. For the first time, we framed the Youth Action Restoration Crew as a full-time job training program, instead of a part-time volunteering program for dedicated youth leaders. The Public Welfare Foundation thus provided the first private funds in the early eighties for what was to become YouthBuild.

“The most important thing is building community.”

—Nina Saxon
YAPH , July 1998

Meanwhile Governor Cuomo had initiated the State Homeless Housing Assistance Program (HHAP) to build housing for homeless people. In the late seventies there had been

no dedicated source of funding for the bricks and mortar for housing for the homeless. From 1982 to the present HHAP has served as a rock-solid foundation for Youth Action Program's YouthBuild program. **Nancy Travers, Peter Brest, Tom Sanzillo, John Moukad, and Trevor Porter** worked for the State Department of Social Services managing this program, and they made it work for Youth Action. They supported us through many ups and downs because they believed in our concept. John Moukad is now Vice President for Program Investment at YouthBuild USA, and Trevor Porter serves on the board of directors of YAPH.



Under HHAP, ribbon-cuttings happened regularly. Above, Cesar Perales, New York State Commissioner of DSS, presides over a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Stepping Up the Pace

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Things were moving forward, but we had been disappointed by obtaining only \$4.75 million instead of the \$10 million we had asked for. This was when we realized that the political process doesn't produce exactly what you ask for, even when it's well justified; you're lucky to get half. Since we wanted \$10 million, in 1985 we changed the name to The Coalition for \$20 Million, crossed out the Ten and changed it to Twenty on our letterhead and t-shirts, expanded the membership from 70 to 150 organizations, set up vigils at City Hall during the budget season, and swamped the public hearings with hundreds of young people testifying about how they wanted to rebuild their communities and get job training and education at the same time.

Carol Bellamy was then city council president. I well remember the meeting in her office when **Maria Motta** sat at the end of the table, surrounded by other teenagers, and explained that she would probably be dead if it weren't for Youth Action Program, and went on to describe how deeply she wanted to give back to her community. Carol Bellamy looked at Maria and the group and struggled to express the insight she had just had: "I see. I see that you are not just... I mean, I see that people have not understood... I mean, I see that you have something to offer." From that day on, she supported the Coalition's request. **Peter Vallone** and others offered their support. Ruth Messinger remained a true advocate, pushing from the inside. This time over \$12 million was appropriated as add-ons to the Mayor's budget.

With this appropriation, City Works, the largest city-funded program in the country for out-of-school youth, was set up. A school called the Young Adult Learning Academy was established for 700 students as part of City Works, and **Peter Kleinbard** was hired to run the school. This was an excellent school that has never received as much attention as it deserved as a model for a city taking responsibility for educating and training its young people who had dropped out of school. Peter ran the school brilliantly for 10 years.

Incidentally, in his prior role as Director of the National Center for Resources for Youth, Peter had been the person who first discovered Youth Action Program. He had noticed in 1980 that confident young people from East Harlem were appearing at city wide meetings and speaking eloquently. He followed the thread back to East 111th Street where he found YAP and then publicized it.

Struggling to Replicate in New York City

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By 1986 nine community-based agencies had been funded by the DOE to run what they called Housing Related Enhanced Work Experience (HREWE) programs. These were the early YouthBuild programs, but we didn't invent the YouthBuild name until 1989. Unfortunately, there was no handbook or prototype to follow, and no training or technical assistance for these programs. As a result, the new Commissioner of the Department of Employment, **Lilliam Barrios-Paoli**, found that half the programs failed within two years and she reluctantly, but responsibly, de-funded them.



Al Rodriguez, coordinator of the Coalition for \$20 Million and editor of the first YouthBuild handbook.

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This galvanized the staff at YAPH and Banana Kelly. We set out to write a handbook and position ourselves to provide training and technical assistance. We had naïvely believed that just getting the funds into the hands of community groups to do the program would be enough. Joseph Shuldiner had warned us that very few groups could do it, and had even advised that all the funds should go to YAP because it had already proven itself capable. But in our zeal to spread the concept and the resources, and to build a movement, we refused.

But now we realized that while other groups might be able to do it, they couldn't do it without concentrated training and complete information. A handbook was produced by a group of staff from YAP and Banana Kelly, through several edits overseen by **Al Rodriguez**, then coordinator of the Coalition for \$20 Million. We still use this handbook, now in its 7th edition.

In 1986, I was invited to travel to Europe on a German Marshall Tour to observe job training systems in Germany, Sweden, Ireland, and England. On this tour were **Jon Blyth** of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and **Rob Ivry** of Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). As we considered what needed to happen in the

United States, Rob Ivry said YAP was one of the better kept secrets of the youth development field and it should be better known as well as spread. (He later told a reporter from the *Los Angeles Times* and this led to a front page article in the *New York Times* in 1992.) Jon Blyth said that if YAP were to replicate its program nationally he would recommend to **Bill White**, the president of the Mott Foundation, that the replication be funded. He urged me to consider doing this. I said I wasn't ready—but the seeds were sown.

Making It Work

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For the next two years, YAP focused on making the HREWE program work at Youth Action, and extracting the lessons learned.



Jon Blyth attending early youth conference.

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“Yes, YouthBuild is a stepping stone to our dreams. But I think of it more as a trampoline. It has vaulted me over so many obstacles.”

Anthony Turner, New York City, graduated 1998

This was no easy task. The program design changed what we had been doing. First of all, eligibility for the program was limited to young people who read between the 4th and 8th grade levels. In partnership with Stan Litow, we had persuaded City Council that this program was needed because the federally funded JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act) was serving young people who read at the 8th grade level or above. This left a huge population of high school drop-outs with nowhere to go. Furthermore, in order to address the tremendous academic needs of the students, we had structured the program to require that participants spend 50% of their time in an academic program. As a result, we had to create a school. Schools are inherently hard to run, and our students were those who not only had been unable to complete high school but had learned the least while there.

This change in target population and in program structure demanded incredible ingenuity and persistence. At first we were not sure if it would work. **Sonia Bu** and **Mercedes Rodriguez** joined Youth Action as deputy director and program director, respectively, to implement this program. David Calvert returned to help. Through enormous dedication and creativity, they succeeded. At the end of the first year, we asked ourselves if the change in population and design had made the program too difficult. Our answer was that, yes, it was extremely difficult, but absolutely worth doing. We had stumbled into a program design that worked better for this group of out-of-school, disconnected young adults than anything we could have deliberately designed. We decided it was worth continuing, and replicating.

The original purpose of Youth Action was leadership development. We naturally built leadership development into the new program. We discovered that when we offered leadership roles to this group of young people, we unleashed enormous hope and positive energy. We seemed to have tapped into a reserve of intelligence and caring that lay fallow just below the surface. Love and respect, responsibility and community, adult mentoring and peer support, the chance to make a difference, and to become somebody, were the key elements.

By 1988, YAP had received many requests for information from across the country. The handbook was completed. YAP had made the program work in East Harlem and Banana Kelly and People’s Firehouse had made it work in the Bronx and Brooklyn. It was do-able, and replicable.

Tip-toeing into the National Arena

A group of 10 representatives from organizations around the country met at Youth Action Program in June of 1988 to discuss starting a national Coalition for \$200 Million modeled after the New York City Coalition for \$20 million. The group included Leroy Looper, by then executive director of Reality House West in San Francisco and still my



“Our communities are dying for leaders.”

—Leroy Looper



mentor; **Tom Swan** of Youth Action in Washington (a wholly separate organization that had a national base); **Jeff Newman** of the National Child Labor Committee; Bonnie Genevich; and others. It was unanimously decided to start the Coalition for \$200 Million, although Jeff warned us that cynical Washington would not respond well to the name. We later changed the name to the YouthBuild Coalition.

Our purpose would be to attract federal funds for low-income communities so young people could have the experience of rebuilding their communities while gaining job and academic skills. We were concerned that the federal government was pulling out of low-income communities and nobody was lifting a voice for low income youth. We decided that whether or not it was feasible, trying to win over the federal government to play a role was the right thing to do.

Meanwhile, not only Jon Blyth at the Mott Foundation but also **Gordon Berlin** at the Ford Foundation had urged us to replicate the program. Everything was calling us to go national. When the Coalition for Twenty Million \$ had succeeded in getting the City Council to appropriate \$12.75 million for youth employment, Gordon wryly but prophetically responded, “Good! Now you should become the Coalition for \$10 Billion and go national.”

“Good! Now you should become the Coalition for \$10 Billion and go national.”
—Gordon Berlin, Ford Foundation

When Gordon left the Ford Foundation, he recommended to **Bob Curvin**, then the new director of Ford Foundation’s Poverty Program, that he support Youth Action’s replication project. Bob Curvin met a group of about eight Youth Action Program students in his offices at The Ford Foundation. They won his heart and his admiration. He gave Youth Action Program a start-up grant of \$50,000 to launch the national replication project. This was the first of many decisive grants from The Ford Foundation.

Between 1985 and 1988 I had been commuting to East Harlem from the Boston area, where my family and I were caring for my mother who had Alzheimer’s Disease. In 1988, I stopped commuting. With the Ford grant, I set up The National Replication Project of the Youth Action Program of the East Harlem Block Schools in my mother’s living room in Belmont, Massachusetts. This was the precursor of YouthBuild USA.

Starting Again

Margherita Pagni was the first person hired for the national replication project, and she is still playing a key role. A three-year grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation enabled us to dig in deeper. John Bell, **Kevin Tarpley**, **Curdina Hill**, **Denise Matthews-Turner**, **Stacey**

On left, from top to bottom: Margherita Pagni, John Bell, Stacey Simmons, Kevin Tarpley, Mark Paley (YouthBuild USA staff.)

Simmons, Marilyn Bibeau, and Mark Paley came on board. This group of staff built YouthBuild USA between 1988 and 1992. They all continued to play central roles as YouthBuild USA grew. Most are still doing so.

Sometime in 1989 John Bell and Margherita Pagni invented the name YouthBuild. This was a tremendous step forward. The name was perfect! Much better than “The Housing Related Enhanced Work Experience Program.”

Sometime in 1989 John Bell and Margherita Pagni invented the name YouthBuild. This was a tremendous step forward. The name was perfect!

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We held a national youth conference in 1989 to bring together young people from across the country who might be interested in seeing YouthBuild spread in their communities. **Lori Kaplan** of the Latin American Youth Center in Washington sent a large delegation; Youth Action Program was well represented; Kevin Tarpley brought youth from Youngstown, where he was based; and others came from various places. Our friend from the Mott Foundation, Jon Blyth, was there to see the kickoff.



Clockwise from top left: Bernard Thomas, Makayah Mitchell, Monica Lopez, Rey Hernandez, and Cliff Johnson, early board members.

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We laid out a series of 14 necessary steps for replicating the YouthBuild program with public support. The 100 young people elected a steering committee. Rey Hernandez, formerly the Policy Committee Chair of Youth Action Program during his teenaged years, chaired this National Steering Committee. Rey was always one of the most reliable young leaders with the highest standards for ethical behavior. (He later became a New York City policeman.) Rey and the other elected members of this steering committee—**Agape Looper, Makayah Mitchell, Bernard Thomas, and Monica Lopez**—became the initial youth members of the Board of Directors of YouthBuild USA when it was incorporated in 1990.

As the YouthBuild Coalition organizer, Margherita Pagni set out to build a national coalition comparable to the Coalition for \$20 Million that had been so successful in New York City. We developed a statement of purpose, sent out packets to every available national mailing list of local organizations interested in housing, job training, education, homelessness, community service, and community development. Every individual who sent in a membership form and checked that they would be interested in bringing YouthBuild to their community got a call from Margherita. She explained YouthBuild in detail and invited each one to a YouthBuild Seminar in New York City.

These seminars were designed to attract the hardest and least opportunistic community organizers and leaders. Peter Kleinbard provided space in the 3rd floor walk-up library of the Young Adult Learning Academy in an old public school building on the



Richard Greene (left) and John Moukad at early seminar.



Above, Getz Obstfeld facilitates at early seminar.

edge of East Harlem. We provided no travel money and no lodging. The leaders of Youth Action Program and Banana Kelly YouthBuild programs—Sonia Bu, Getz Obstfeld, **Anne Meisenzahl**, **David Greene**, **Jovita Nedd**, David Calvert—and others who had helped us along the way—Joseph Biber and John Moukad—and YouthBuild USA staff John Bell and Curdina Hill, spent three days explaining how difficult it is to run a YouthBuild program. We tried to impress upon them the complexity of what they would be undertaking, at the same time inspiring them with the YouthBuild philosophy and vision. We held these seminars in New York City so that site visits could be done in East Harlem and the South Bronx.

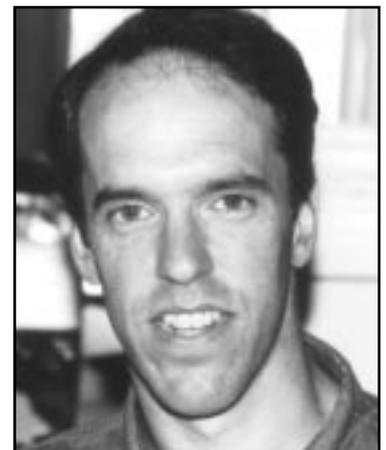
People who have become some of YouthBuild’s strongest local directors and national leaders attended this early series of seminars: **Bob Brandhorst** and **Joyce Sonn** from St. Louis, **Jackie Gelb** from Boston, and **Bettye Brooks** from Gary, Indiana.

Tom Quinn, editor of The Ford Foundation’s newsletter, attended one of these seminars for three full days as part of his research for writing the first Ford Foundation public report on YouthBuild. At the end of the three days, he rose to say that he had learned that YouthBuild was not just a program, it was a philosophy, a philosophy that he found inspiring. Reprints of the superb report he wrote became YouthBuild USA’s first public information brochure, and gave YouthBuild national credibility.

YouthBuild Boston Springs Up

During this same period, YouthBuild Boston was developed as the first site outside of New York City. In 1988 Maria Motta, a graduate of Youth Action, had spoken at a conference in Canada. **Tim Cross**, then the director of Youth As Resources in Boston, heard her presentation and decided that this program should be replicated in Boston. He contacted Youth Action Program and learned that I had just moved to Boston to run a national replication project. From that moment forward, we worked together.

Tim orchestrated an extraordinary process of building community support for YouthBuild in Boston. He convened a series of meetings, each one for a different subgroup of community leaders—those interested in housing, job training, community development, homelessness, youth leadership development, women and people of color in the trades—to explore whether Youth Action’s YouthBuild program should be replicated in Boston, and if so, what existing agency should sponsor it. Margherita and I attended all the meetings in support of Tim. A video about YAP made earlier in New York by **Angela Solomon** with a grant from **Mary McCormick**, of the Fund for the City of New York, was tremendously useful in this process. It became a regular part



Tim Cross, founder of YouthBuild Boston.

“You learn about integrity here. You learn about how to do the right thing when nobody's looking.”

**Robert Clark,
YouthBuild Boston, 1993**

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of generating community support as YouthBuild was replicated across the country.

As part of this process, **Charlie Rose**, then director of Community Outreach for Boston Public Schools, helped Tim organize a youth conference of several hundred teenagers to ask them if they thought Boston needed a YouthBuild program. A delegation of East Harlem young people led by **Maria Motta** came to explain the program to the Boston youth, who then strongly endorsed the idea. They formed a committee that met weekly with Tim and **John Bell**, then director of leadership development at YouthBuild USA, to set policy for the new program.

Through the adult community leaders' meetings it was decided that there was no existing organization ideally positioned to start YouthBuild. They recommended starting a new organization specifically for YouthBuild. A steering committee was formed that later became the board of directors of YouthBuild Boston. Among others, **Ken Smith**, **Charlie Rose**, **Makayah Mitchell**, **Margherita Pagni**, **Tim Cross**, **Curdina Hill**, and I served. Setting up a new organization turned out to be the ideal approach. Free-standing YouthBuild programs have often fared better than those that are embedded in larger organizations that can only give YouthBuild part of their attention.

This Boston process embodied YouthBuild's typical grass roots approach. YouthBuild was brought to Boston by a local leader, **Tim Cross**, who spent a year as a volunteer carefully laying the groundwork of community support. When **Mayor Ray Flynn** convened an emergency meeting about youth violence in Boston, Tim had laid the groundwork so well that many community representatives at this meeting recommended to the Mayor that he start a YouthBuild program in Boston. This was the first the Mayor had heard of YouthBuild. He endorsed it, and also arranged for an endorsement from the national Mayors Association in 1991 for the federal legislation.

Jackie Gelb, then a consultant to community based programs, was hired to develop the new organization. Believing that getting a strong program up in Boston would be the most effective first step in our national replication project, we put her on YouthBuild USA's payroll until she could raise enough money to launch YouthBuild Boston. Jackie orchestrated the start-up with incredible skill, creativity, and determination. She was a phenomenon, handling a million details with perfect clarity coupled with good judgment on overall strategy. **Bob Credle**, the board chair, was a constant source of support and insight for years, and is now the vice president of management at YouthBuild USA.



Mayor Ray Flynn (right middle) at YouthBuild Boston ribbon-cutting ceremony. David Lopes is at the microphone.

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Senator John Kerry at his first visit to YouthBuild Boston.

By 1991, YouthBuild Boston was up and running, and was setting new standards for what would follow all across the country. Jackie made a point of trying to implement everything we had learned in New York, so that YouthBuild Boston could benefit from the first 10 years of experience. **David Lopes**, then construction manager, played a key role. YouthBuild Boston became a showcase. **Senator John Kerry** visited. He made immediate contact with the students and understood the whole concept. **Bill White**, President of the Mott Foundation, visited also. He was the first and only Foundation president to visit a YouthBuild program. Both John and Bill later visited other YouthBuild programs, because they were interested in the replication process, and saw it working. They both became permanent, leading champions.

By 1993 John Kerry began bringing key visitors to YouthBuild Boston, such as **Secretary of Labor Robert Reich**, **Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros**, and **Senator Barbara Mikulski**. **Sam Halperin**, publisher of *The Forgotten Half* and director of The American Youth Forum, began bringing additional visitors from Washington, further increasing YouthBuild's credibility and visibility with policy-makers. **Bill White** twice brought his staff and board of trustees to visit Youth Action YouthBuild.

Making Friends In Washington

We had started working in 1989 to get federal legislation passed. The key person who first introduced YouthBuild to Washington D.C. was **Cliff Johnson**, then working at the Children's Defense Fund. He had discovered Youth Action Program a few years earlier and decided it deserved national attention. In 1989, he introduced me to **Braden Goetz**, then legislative director for **Rep. Major Owens**. Braden thought the idea of a grassroots organization mobilizing a national constituency to obtain federal funding benefiting low income young people was pretty unlikely in 1989, but exciting and worth a try. Major Owens told him to go ahead with it. He was familiar with Youth Action Program's YouthBuild in East Harlem, having attended graduations there.

We decided that the right vehicle for gaining an appropriation was a free-standing bill, rather than a line item or inclusion as an item eligible for funding in an existing bill. With a free standing bill we could organize a constituency. This group could see clearly exactly what they were supporting, and could have input on its content.

Representative Owens introduced The YouthBuild Act HR.501 in 1990 with 78 co-sponsors. Senator Kerry introduced it in the Senate, as S.1100, with 18 co-sponsors. Representative Owens later attached it to The National Service Act as a separate title. **Gene**



Representative Major Owens

Sofer, then senior staff for the House Appropriations Subcommittee handling national service, visited YouthBuild programs in New York and gave the legislation his support. It passed in 1991, boosting YouthBuild USA's credibility tremendously. Our foundation supporters and national constituency were delighted and surprised that we had succeeded so quickly in getting authorizing legislation passed.

The glitch was that we couldn't get an appropriation. For technical reasons, YouthBuild went to a different appropriations subcommittee than the rest of the National Service Act, and there was no interest there in funding it.

Against conventional wisdom, we decided to start over, and get YouthBuild attached to new authorizing legislation that would come to a different Appropriations Subcommittee. Senator John Kerry agreed to attach the YouthBuild Act to the National Community Development Act in the Senate, and **Representatives Major Owens, Joseph Kennedy and Maxine Waters** arranged to do the same thing in the House.

By this time, we had found **Bob Rapoza** and hired him as our lobbyist. His savvy handling of the legislative process has guided all our work in Washington ever since.

In 1991, Bob took me to meet with **Bruce Katz**, then the general counsel for the authorizing Subcommittee for HUD, Veterans Affairs, and Independent Agencies. Bruce said he was personally very sympathetic to the bill, but that it was highly unlikely that we could get any funding. It was going directly contrary to the current trend in the Senate. They were blockgranting, not multiplying categorical federal programs.

Bruce said, "Unless John Kerry cares about this bill more than any Senator almost ever cares about anything affecting poor people, you don't have a chance." Two weeks later, Bruce called to say, "John Kerry called me directly to say he wants YouthBuild. It is very unusual for a Senator to call a staffer like this. With this kind of support, YouthBuild may actually get funded."



Senator Kerry (right) brings distinguished visitors to meet YouthBuild Boston students. Above, Henry Cisneros (center) meets Dorothy Fleming, a YouthBuild trainee.



Bill White (left) brought his staff and board of trustees to visit Youth Action YouthBuild.

“John Kerry called me directly to say he wants YouthBuild. It is very unusual for a Senator to call a staffer like this. With this kind of support, YouthBuild may actually get funded.”

Bruce Katz,
General Counsel for the
Authorizing Subcommittee for HUD,
Veterans Affairs, and Independent Agencies

It did. Once he had the mandate from John Kerry, Bruce Katz himself played a critical role. He risked part of his relationship with the appropriations subcommittee staff by putting YouthBuild in the Housing and Community Development Act as a set aside. Bypassing the appropriations subcommittee, this move mandated YouthBuild’s funding at a level between \$17 and \$40 million in FY 1993. It would be up to the Secretary of HUD to choose the precise level.

In the fall of 1992, **President George Bush** signed the Housing and Community Development act of 1992

that included YouthBuild as “Title D: Hope for Youth: Youthbuild.”

At that time, the secretary of HUD was **Jack Kemp**. His assistant secretary was **Anna Kondratas**. I had met Anna when we both served on a panel discussing community development. We liked each other’s remarks. She soon visited YouthBuild in New York, spending a full day at Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association in the South Bronx and Youth Action Program in East Harlem. She met with 50 young people for over an hour, asking them questions about the realities they faced and why YouthBuild worked for them. From that day forward, Anna supported YouthBuild both at HUD and in the legislative process after she left HUD.

During the legislative process **Mat Roberts**, then counsel for the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, wrote YouthBuild into Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, giving YouthBuild graduates priority for employment in construction within local housing authorities.

In January of 1993, Secretary Jack Kemp was replaced by Henry Cisneros. Assistant Secretary Anna Kondratas was replaced by **Andrew Cuomo**. We hoped the level of support given it by Anna and Jack Kemp would continue. It did.

When the new legislation crossed the desk of **Roy Priest**, then director of Community Economic Development at HUD, he decided immediately that he would like to manage this program because it had such promise. He was a longtime civil servant who had skillfully managed many of the community development programs at HUD. He tracked down the origins of YouthBuild, and called us. He visited YouthBuild



Roy Priest (right) visits YouthBuild Boston.

Boston, and formally requested of the Secretary that he get jurisdiction over the program.

When Henry Cisneros began at HUD, Bruce Katz became his chief of staff and Andrew Cuomo became assistant secretary for CPD. They made the superb decision to assign Roy Priest to manage YouthBuild. After receiving dozens of letters from community leaders across the country, they also selected the highest level of funding —\$40 million—as the funding level for 1993. This was a great start for YouthBuild at HUD.

Spreading the Grassroots Movement

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Meanwhile, individuals who had attended the New York YouthBuild Seminars began to replicate the program locally with whatever funds they could find.

Leroy Loper in San Francisco followed almost precisely the same process that Tim Cross had followed in Boston over a two year period, resulting in the establishment of a new organization with a new director and the granting of substantial private funds. Joe Ventura organized YouthBuild in Cleveland and persuaded the United Labor Agency, chaired by Dick Acton of the AFL-CIO to sponsor it. This site provided strong labor union endorsement and advice. Al Rutherford in Gary, Indiana, engaged Bettye Brooks of the Tree of Life Community Development Corporation and they organized YouthBuild there. They were an outgrowth of a church-based organization. Tom Fischer in Tallahassee organized support and persuaded the Tallahassee Housing Foundation to sponsor the program. Taylor Frome in Philadelphia organized the program from scratch and incorporated a new YouthBuild. Jennifer Henderson Germany did the same in Pittsburgh.

"Once I was in YouthBuild I could see what could be accomplished, and with the help of YouthBuild, I cut out all the negativity and replaced it with positive thoughts and objectives."

Jahi Davis,
YouthBuild Philadelphia, 1993

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Funding from National Service, private foundations, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), drug prevention funds, public schools, and even casinos was painstakingly gathered together in each location by the local organizers. By 1993 there were YouthBuild programs not only in Boston and New York, but also in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlantic City, Atlanta, Tallahassee, Gadsden County (FL), Cleveland, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Gary, and San Francisco. Each City had its own organizer, each one of whom undertook an extraordinary community organizing and fundraising effort from the bottom up.

YouthBuild's Strong Foundations

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In 1990 YouthBuild USA was incorporated as a separate national organization, spinning off from the Youth Action Program. That same year we set up an independent evaluation of YouthBuild. Karen Fulbright was our program officer at Ford Foundation. She

By 1993 there were YouthBuild programs not only in Boston and New York, but also in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlantic City, Atlanta, Tallahassee, Gadsden County (FL), Cleveland, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Gary, and San Francisco.

both required this of us and guided us toward excellent researchers. **Philip Clay** of MIT, **Ron Ferguson** of Harvard's Kennedy School, and **Gary Walker** of Public/Private Ventures collaborated with us in developing a research design to determine whether the program was replicable and if so what were the key factors in its replication.

The Ford Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, DeWitt Wallace-

Reader's Digest Fund, and the Lilly Endowments contributed generously to what became a five-site demonstration in Boston, Gary, Tallahassee, Cleveland, and San Francisco. They also contributed to the development of YouthBuild USA in all its facets. **Andy Fisher** at the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, **Willis Bright** at the Lilly Endowments, **Jon Blyth** and **Bill White** at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and **Karen Fulbright**, **John Foster-Bey**, **Bob Curvin**, and **Inca Mohamed** at The Ford Foundation guided our development through good advice and on-target grants. They were all well supported by their foundations, and we will be forever grateful to them for their wisdom and the excellent policies of these foundations.

With generous grants toward building our capacity to provide training and technical assistance, we began to build the network that would become the center of gravity of the national YouthBuild movement. Annual youth conferences, regular trainings and conferences for directors and staff, intensive on-site assistance, and a democratic spirit of program development characterized the project. **John Bell**, **Kevin Tarpley**, **Curdina Hill**, **Al Rutherford**, **David Burch**, and **Margherita Pagni** continued to play key roles as YouthBuild USA staff, in partnership with the local directors. They gave loving commitment and support to the directors and youth every step of the way.

During this period, we moved YouthBuild USA from my mother's living room—by then 17 of us had our offices in the basement, the dining room, and the bedrooms—to an office in Davis Square in Somerville. **Denise Matthews-Turner** moved us there, just in time, with one month to spare, for us to welcome representatives from HUD to our well-appointed offices while they assessed our capacity to become HUD's technical assistance provider.

While we built the national organization, each local program played a role in developing political support: **Leroy Looper** (San Francisco); **Joyce Sonn** and **Bob Brandhorst** (St. Louis); **Jennifer Henderson Germany** (Pittsburgh); **Taylor Frome** and **John Gallery** (Philadelphia); **Tom Fischer**, **Michelle Hartson**, **Philip Jackson**, and **Curtis Corbin** (Tallahassee); **Stanley King** and **Anthony McLarn** (Atlanta); **Joe Ventura**, **Dick Acton**, **Dave Knapp**, **Dave Burch**, and **Michael Murphy** (Cleveland); **Jackie Gelb**, **Tim Cross**, **David Lopes**, **Bob Credle** (Boston); **Linda Stingle** and **Howard Snyder** (Milwaukee); **Carolyn Ford** (Gadsden County); **Bruce Saito**, **Jim Smith**, **Martha Diepenbrock** (Los Angeles); **Bettye Brooks** and **Al Rutherford** (Gary, Indiana); **Jovita Nedd** and **Getz Obstfeld** (South Bronx); **Sonia Bu**, **David Calvert**, and **Mercedes Rodriguez** (East Harlem).

During this same period, 1992-94, **Jim Smith** emerged in Los Angeles to build YouthBuild from scratch, through two years of determined volunteering, after promising at an early seminar that he would do whatever it took, because his community of Watts needed YouthBuild.

Curdina Hill, the first program advisor for YouthBuild USA, gave almost all of them decisive support. These were some of the pioneers, on whose unselfish labor the YouthBuild movement has been built. They know better than anyone both how hard and how satisfying it is to create a solid YouthBuild program. Many of them continue to play key roles.

The staff who worked alongside them, and the youth who seized the opportunities to grow, deserve great credit and respect as well.

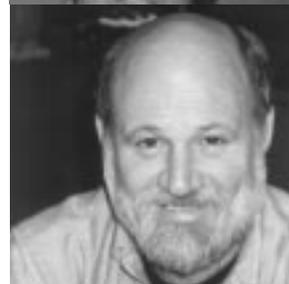
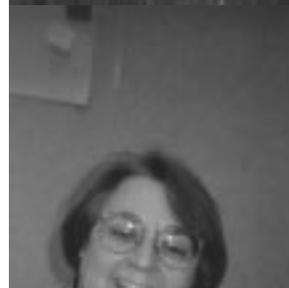
From Program to Network

When the HUD Youthbuild legislation passed in 1992, the directors of the existing sites called on YouthBuild USA to establish an affiliated network of programs that would agree to adhere to the YouthBuild philosophy and program design. They were concerned that large numbers of opportunistic organizations would be funded who had no loyalty to the vision. They also feared that the federal funding could be short-lived, and that to counteract that possibility we should position YouthBuild to survive no matter what happened in Washington. Taylor Frome of YouthBuild Philadelphia was the prime spokesperson for this concept.

During 1992-1994 we hammered out the program design and performance standards, the contractual agreement, the organizational structure of the Affiliated Network, the management information system, and the legal arrangements for control of the YouthBuild name. From the first 14 programs in 1992, the Affiliated Network grew to 77 programs by 1999. Affiliates chose to adhere to the philosophy and program design regardless of what HUD would require, and to participate in a rigorous quality control system. Taylor Frome managed the membership process as chair of the membership committee.

Since then an elected Directors' Council has maintained the integrity of this network in partnership with YouthBuild USA. Its members contribute large amounts of time to thinking about the overall direction of the YouthBuild movement. Chaired by **Elijah Etheridge** from YAPH in East Harlem, its current members include Vice President Jennifer Henderson Germany (Pittsburgh); Secretary/Treasurer **Kerry Knodle** (Rockford, Illinois); **Ann Higdon** (Dayton); Jim Smith (Los Angeles); **Greg Flores** (Brownsville, Texas); **Helen Whitcher** (Charleston); **Tim Johnson** (Toledo); **Gil Barno** (Columbus); **Suzanne Fitzgerald** (McLean County, Illinois); and **Terry Moran** (New Bedford, Massachusetts). The Directors' Council has been supported by staff from YouthBuild USA: **Susan Naimark**, **Tiara McKinnon**, and **Rowan Murphy**. **Mike Walker** and **Vic Taylor** developed the management information system for them.

On right, from top to bottom: Taylor Frome, David Burch, Al Rutherford, Bev Manick, Bob Brandhorst, Jackie Gelb.



The Fabulous Years of Growth

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John Kerry (left) and Henry Cisneros (far right) visit ARCH YouthBuild in Washington and announce 77 implementation grants on June 16, 1995.

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Once the HUD Youthbuild program got rolling, everything speeded up. In 1994 HUD funded 31 implementation sites and 105 planning sites. The following year, HUD funded 77 implementation programs. By 1996 there were 108 YouthBuild programs in operation. Two years earlier there had only been 14.

Through a competitive process, HUD also selected YouthBuild USA as its training and technical assistance contractor for these sites. This cemented the public/private partnership between HUD and YouthBuild USA and put us in the position to inspire and train the new program directors and staff.

First Roy Priest, and then **Ron Herbert**, and then **Mike Savage** ran the YouthBuild

program at HUD. Each of them did it brilliantly, with dedication, political savvy, and incredible energy. They were all public servants, but invisible to the public. All were thoroughly competent and unselfish. They each almost singlehandedly ran this \$40 million national program. First **Susan Shinderman** and then **Sheila Platoff** gave them decisive help as the supervisor for the contract, and of course they got support from HUD's leadership at each stage. **Deputy Chief of Staff Jacquie Lawing** became the senior trouble shooter for YouthBuild after Bruce Katz left HUD.

At YouthBuild USA, staff stepped up to the challenge of rapid expansion. John Bell, training director, and his superbly organized and generous administrative assistant, **Liz Reilly**, mobilized to produce dozens of inspiring training events that effectively communicated theory and practice to thousands of local practitioners, building a cohesive network across the country. John, first in his role as director of leadership development and then as training director, has been the genius behind the scenes who combined the visionary ability to inspire with the concrete ability to plan, manage, and produce.

Our field staff, led at the time by Al Rutherford, who had already emerged as the natural leader of the directors when he was running YouthBuild Gary, made hundreds of supportive trips to local programs to help them get off the ground and solve problems. John Gallery, previously housing commissioner in Philadelphia and at that time working as a consultant to us, called me from Philadelphia to say, "I see many challenges for the relatively young organization of YouthBuild USA....can I



YouthBuild USA staff sending competitive proposal to Washington, DC. Denise Matthews-Turner, one of the first staff members and now director of administration, is in front.

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(Left to right) Roy Priest, Mike Savage, and Ron Herbert, YouthBuild directors at HUD.

help you in the next period? I can give you half my time.” John Gallery, luckily for all of us, commuted from Philadelphia for the next three years, joining his senior executive experience and steady hand to the steering wheel of YouthBuild USA.

In the field, the directors rose to the challenge of maintaining unity and welcoming new directors to the movement.

Elijah Etheridge emerged from

Baltimore as a unifying leader with total commitment and integrity, and Taylor Frome and Jennifer Henderson Germany continued to hold a steady caring center for everyone, drawing in a solid core of committed local leaders.

Those two years of rapid expansion were thrilling. The most amazing part was that over and over again young people came together in national conferences and reported their experience in such a way that we knew YouthBuild was actually working in their local communities. The replication was working at a rapid pace and a large scale. It was working due to the clarity of the legislation and the comprehensiveness of the program design, the inspiration of YouthBuild USA’s trainings and written materials, the dedication of the local leadership, the responsiveness of HUD’s management, the flexible support of private foundations filling the gaps in public funding at YouthBuild USA and the availability of adequate funding for each local program.

Surviving the Near Crash...with Help

In 1996, after the elections changed the direction of Congress, the House of Representatives zeroed HUD’s Youthbuild program out of the budget and the Clinton Administration did the same. At that time the survival of HUD itself was in question. Senator John Kerry saved YouthBuild in the Senate. He and his staff worked with the YouthBuild Coalition to get a maximum number of Senators to support preserving the appropriation. **Scott Bunton**, then John’s chief of staff; **Paul Weech**, then the staff director of the authorizing committee for HUD’s programs; and **Roger Wolfson**, then staff for John Kerry, worked behind the scenes in the Senate, with tremendous energy.



John Gallery (left) with Dorothy Stoneman. John served as vice president of field services for YouthBuild USA, for three-and-a-half years, commuting from Philadelphia

With the support of **Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO)**, chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee for HUD, and the help of his staff, the Senate kept the



Senator Christopher Bond (right) with YouthBuild St. Louis trainee Evita Graham.

YouthBuild appropriation at \$40 million. As a result, YouthBuild survived. The House of Representatives split the difference with the Senate, and YouthBuild took only a 50% cut, down to \$20 million.

Senator John Kerry has done this at every turn for 10 years. He has used his position and relationships on behalf of YouthBuild, and never asked anything of us in return. The press has ignored his role in this, he has received virtually no political benefit, and he had no personal relationships with any of the principals the first time

he came to YouthBuild. But when he visited YouthBuild Boston in 1991, and spent a day in 1992 working at YouthBuild in East Harlem, he embraced the concept of a comprehensive program that simultaneously rebuilt the community and enabled young people to take charge of their lives.

Senator Christopher Bond visited the YouthBuild program in St. Louis and, like John Kerry, has also supported YouthBuild repeatedly, in bi-partisan cooperation. Another leader who championed YouthBuild at that time and consistently over the years is **Representative Bill Goodling (R-PA)** from York, Pennsylvania. He discovered the power of YouthBuild through visiting the excellent program in York run by **Cyndi Dotson, Scott Dempwolf, and Bobby Simpson** at Crispus Attucks Community Center. When YouthBuild was threatened in 1996, he personally spoke with appropriators on both the House and the Senate side, influencing the outcome in our favor.

No Two Alike— Creativity at the Grassroots

YouthBuild is not an easy program to run. Building housing with inexperienced young people as the primary labor force, running an effective school for students whose past experience in school was unpleasant, counseling young people who face tremendous obstacles to success, maintaining a philosophy of leadership development that runs counter to mainstream practice: these are hard things to do simultaneously. Yet talented directors and staff were and are gravitating toward YouthBuild and making it work all over the country.



Rep. Bill Goodling speaking at York Rotary Club on behalf of YouthBuild.

Suddenly there were many showcase programs to which we could send press, foundations, and elected officials and know they would see YouthBuild at its best. Gradually different directors evolved slightly different special emphases and broke new ground for other directors.

- **Taylor Frome** in Philadelphia grew her program to 200 students in several locations and became a state charter school, developing curriculum and an educational philosophy especially suited for the out-of-school youth in YouthBuild.
- **Elijah Etheridge** in Baltimore and later in East Harlem put special emphasis on leadership development and college entrance, and soon the young people emerging from his program showed obvious seriousness of purpose and began to go to college in groups to support each other once there.
- **Jennifer Henderson Germany** in Pittsburgh tackled the gang situation in her neighborhood of Homewood Brushton, bringing rival gangs into YouthBuild and helping them make peace.
- **Joyce Sonn and Bob Brandhorst** in St. Louis kept their program small and focused on high attendance, retention, placement rates and wages as well as lots of additional community service through their YouthBuild AmeriCorps program.
- **Ann Higdon** in Dayton created a complex set of effective partnerships that rooted her program deeply in the local community, capped by stunning support from the local Rotary Club that brought the program to the attention of the National and International Rotarians.
- **Duane Gautier and Leon Edmunds** in Washington DC developed a pre-YouthBuild program for students who read below the 6th grade level and made it possible for these students to succeed at achieving their GED.
- **Cyndi Dotson** in York built a relationship with the Criminal Justice System that resulted in the development of a residential program funded by the state justice department.
- **Richard Halpin** in Austin integrated YouthBuild with the environmental emphasis that his program always had, even before becoming a YouthBuild program.
- **Terry Moran** in New Bedford, Massachusetts, showed how to build and sustain a small program without HUD funding, by being a reliable player in many systems.
- **Suzanne Fitzgerald** put emphasis on keeping full track of every single student and graduate with thoroughgoing follow-up to build a strong alumni support system.



On left, from top to bottom: Cyndi Dotson, Jim Smith, Helen Whitcher, Gil Barno, Ann Higdon, and Terry Moran



“Everybody in YouthBuild is trying to help someone else make the change.”

—Kenny Meyers
YouthBuild Philadelphia, 1995

- Helen Whitcher in Atlanta and **Luisa Peschiera-Odell** in Hartford built exemplary partnerships with The Home Depot, strengthening the national partnership.
- And there are many, many more. Each successful program has a director who constantly puts his or her own creative stamp on it.

Stunning Solidarity in the Field

One of the proudest moments for YouthBuild occurred in the fall of 1995. HUD had announced the selections of programs to receive \$78 million of combined '94 and '95 funding. Then the Congress rescinded \$10 million of the '95 appropriation as part of a broad cut of spending. The General Counsel at HUD ruled that HUD would recover that \$ 10 million by de-funding those grantees who hadn't yet signed their contracts. However, there had been no deadline for signing contracts.

YouthBuild USA and HUD program staff thought a better solution would be to take a 12.8% cut off the top of all the grants. The General Counsel said that if contracts were signed HUD could not do that. So Taylor Frome got on the phone with program directors to see if they would support a voluntary 12.8% cut. Roy Priest and Ron Herbert of HUD came to YouthBuild USA's new grantees' conference and proposed a voluntary 12.8% cut across the board rather than the elimination of 30 programs.

Within 45 minutes almost all directors present had supported this concept; within three weeks all boards of directors had voluntarily given up 12.8% of their grants to keep open the other 30 programs. This commitment to other communities by the leadership of local programs was unheard of at HUD or on Capitol Hill.

This spirit has characterized YouthBuild from the beginning. We are not in this for ourselves. We are not in this only for our own programs or own communities. We are all committed to the largest possible impact and broadest set of opportunities in the largest number of locations. YouthBuild is part of changing America to create opportunities for all its young people to fulfill their dreams, achieve their goals, and give back to their communities as citizens and leaders. The young leaders are taking their places alongside all the adults who have built and supported YouthBuild in the spirit of wanting to make



At the directors conference, Jackie Gelb makes the case for taking an across-the-board cut.

On left, from top to bottom: Jennifer Henderson Germany, Richard Halpin, Suzanne Fitzgerald, and Elijah Etheridge (YouthBuild directors).

the largest possible difference by spreading love and opportunity around the world.

A Series of "Firsts"

Over and over again we told young people that their own personal achievement would make a difference to every young person coming behind them. They understood that we had to make the case to the policymakers that low-income young people who had not finished high school would in fact take advantage of opportunities if they were offered. They understood that their absences or failures, as well as their accomplishments, would influence how much the country would be willing to invest in them and their peers.

Rudy Griffiths of YouthBuild Boston was the first to obtain perfect attendance and was followed by many others who obtained the Rudy Award, named after him. **Erick Howell** of YouthBuild Philadelphia was among the first of many YouthBuild graduates to complete community college and go on to a four year college. **Sikina Lee** obtained the St. Louis Award for Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things. **Brendan Brooks** of Pittsburgh was among the first graduates hired by his program as a construction site supervisor. **Heather Rebeiro** served on the State Commission for National Service in Massachusetts. **Johnny Rivera** was the first to be elected to his local community school board. **Kenny Chau** of St. Louis was one of many to become a union apprentice. **Leslie Gooding** of Austin was the first to become a manager in a Home Depot store. **Antoine Bennett** of Baltimore was the first to obtain his own home with the help of Habitat for Humanity. **William Torres** from East Harlem was the first to become a deputy sheriff. **Imam Lewis** of Cleveland was the first to make a success of his own business. **Starr Irvin** of Pittsburgh was the first to become a full-time graduate coordinator for her site. There are many other firsts, and thousands of other achievements by students that set a standard and carved a path for those coming behind. Many of them we don't even know about.

Building Youth Leadership

To build national leadership and obtain youth input to the national YouthBuild movement we have held at least one national youth conference each year, and have maintained both a nationally elected young Leaders' Council and an Alumni Council at the national level from the beginning. Kevin Tarpley, **Tina Johnson**, **Gregory Scott**, and **Gloria Lopez** have led this aspect of our work. The young people who have risen to participate in these councils are precious resources for our

On right, from top to bottom: Rudy Griffiths (right), the first trainee to achieve perfect attendance, Antoine Bennett, Tina Johnson, and Sikina Lee.



"The good part is seeing how you make a difference in the community. The way people look at you now is different."

**—Mason Jenkins
YouthBuild New Bedford, MA,
1996**



Catina Heslip (left) leads delegation in 1992.

movement and our nation, as are the young people who participate in the many leadership roles provided at the local level.

The national youth conference and the young leaders council spend one or two days every year on Capitol Hill explaining to the aides of their elected representatives why YouthBuild is important to them. This has been a critical part of the campaign to obtain and preserve funding for local YouthBuild programs. There is nothing quite as inspiring as watching YouthBuild students explain their reality to young legislative aides who are about the same age but live in an entirely different world.

Each year, the YouthBuild Coalition organizer sets up at least 100 meetings on Capitol Hill. Over 1,000 students have participated in this process. They have learned how the legislative process works and how citizens can be involved. It is always exhilarating for young people who have been far from the seat of power to interface directly with the people who control the purse-strings. I'll never forget walking through the marble halls of one of the Senate buildings with a YouthBuild Boston student who burst out after a meeting with **Ted Kennedy's** aide, "He really listened to us! To think I wasted years selling drugs when I could have been doing this!" **Valdasia Merrick** has organized these days

brilliantly for the past three years, and before her Margherita Pagni, and **Celenia Toledo**.

These days on Capitol Hill coincide with the annual "Dear Colleague" letters that Senator Kerry and Representative Owens write to ask support from their colleagues. Every year the students succeed in increasing the number of signatories on those letters. The directors and coalition organizer follow up on the meetings urging the legislators to sign the letters. This year 50 Senators and 113 Congresspeople called for supporting the 75% increase in funding for YouthBuild that the Clinton administration had requested.

One year **Robert Clark**, a graduate of YouthBuild Boston who was employed in Washington at Public Allies, went on his own to the Senate and testified before the Senate Subcommittee chaired by Barbara Mikulski. He made a powerful impression. Antoine Bennett, based in Baltimore, would jump on the train and meet me on Capitol Hill whenever I was there. He accompanied me in meetings with Paul Weech, **John Gauthier**, and other key staff. His words were always the ones that won the hearts.

The chairs of the national Young Leaders' Council have carried significant volunteer responsibility. They include **Catina Heslip** from San Francisco, **Marcus Baker** from Gadsden County (FL), **Gloria Jean**



Valdasia Merrick
Coalition Organizer

Cardenas from Brownsville, TX. The current chair is **Gerald Washington** from Baltimore.

Getting the Right Direction

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Leroy Looper has chaired the board of directors from its inception in 1990. He continues to be a source of guiding wisdom for me whenever problems arise. Other founding board members included not only young people Rey Hernandez, Agape Looper, Makayah Mitchell, Monica Lopez, and Bernard Thomas, but also Cliff Johnson of CDE, **Peter Szanton** of Szanton Associates, Mary McCormick of the Fund for the City of New York, **Sydney Moshette** of Reality House, and **Milton Little** then of MDRC and now at the Urban League. Shortly after its start, **Charlie Clark** from US Trust joined, as did **Melvyn Colon** from Tufts.

The board has been made up of people who had already helped YouthBuild, whose excellent judgment could be relied upon, and who would attend meetings. Current members include most of the above plus **David Abromowitz** of Goulston and Storrs (the firm which has given YouthBuild USA superb pro bono legal counsel for 10 years); **Sam Peabody** of the Citizens Committee for Children in New York; **Pedro Mendiguren** of The Home Depot (the company that is our primary corporate partner); **Cheryl Lockhart** of Baltimore Gas and Electric; Roy Priest, formerly of HUD and now head of the National Congress for Community and Economic Development; and Antoine Bennett, Sikina Lee, and Jerry Hernandez, graduates of YouthBuild programs in Baltimore, St. Louis, and Boston.

While a national board, it has always had a balance between people with a national policy perspective, people with roots in local communities, and young people. We have tried to build a national organization that would “act globally but think locally,” to turn the familiar slogan on its head. It has done a superb job of guiding YouthBuild USA and supporting me at each stage of our development. Each local program also has its own board of directors made up of dedicated volunteers.

Spreading to Additional Federal Agencies

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The Corporation for National Service

Youth Action Program did not start as a job training or housing development program. It started in 1978 as a leadership development program in which young people were organized to design and implement community

On left, from top to bottom: Bob Credle (vice president of management, YouthBuild USA and former board chair of YouthBuild Boston) Marcus Baker (president of the Young Leaders Council for two years), Peter Szanton, Charles Clark, Sydney Moshette, and Melvyn Colon (YouthBuild USA board of directors).





improvement projects they thought would make a difference. Housing was only one of our many projects, and the original young people were all volunteers who came after school to Youth Action Program.

We were therefore among the first of the national and community service programs that arose in the eighties with foundation, city, state, and finally federal support. In fact, our first contact with **Gordon Berlin** of the Ford Foundation was in this context, as Ford was a primary proponent of national service. I met Peter Szanton, a founding board member for YouthBuild USA, when he was president and I was vice-president of the founding board of directors for Youth Service America in the early eighties.

The current national service legislation has a clause in it, thanks to **Shirley Sagawa and Gene Sofer**, that describes YouthBuild as an eligible activity. The “national direct program” of the Corporation for National Service that funds national non-profits to run service programs in multiple states was invented by **Roger Landrum** of Youth Service America and me over dinner. Roger and **Frank Slobig**, also of Youth Service America, then successfully advocated for it. The “national direct program” has supported dozens of national non-profits in their work and strengthened the national service movement. YouthBuild USA has itself been a grantee from this funding stream each year, enabling us to support dozens of local programs.

The fact that **Eli Segal**, first CEO of the Corporation for National Service, and **Harris Wofford**, current CEO, have visited and embraced YouthBuild as a significant part of AmeriCorps has enabled us to keep community service front and center within our program design and grant college scholarships to YouthBuild graduates. **Shirley Sagawa**, first chief of staff at the Corporation for National Service has helped YouthBuild at each turn.

The MacArthur Foundation funded **Roger Landrum** at Youth Service America to hold a leaders seminar for national service leaders over a two year period to bring unity to the field. This was highly successful. Through this our relationships with **Michael Brown** of City Year, **Kathleen Selz** of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC), **Vanessa Kirsch** of Public Allies, and others were built into a collegial network that enabled us to always call on them for mutual support. Kathleen Selz has been such a loyal ally, always watching out for YouthBuild’s welfare in Washington, that we have submitted joint proposals to various funding sources. Now **Gregory Scott**, director of YouthBuild USA’s AmeriCorps program, leads YouthBuild’s participation in the national service movement.

The Department of Labor

Rob Ivry of MDRC introduced me to **Ray Uhalde** of the DOL and **Marion Pines** of Johns Hopkins. They, along with **Allan Zuckerman**, now execu-

On left, from top to bottom: Cheryl Lockhart, David Abromowitz, Sam Peabody, Pedro Mendiguren, Jerry Hernandez, (board members) and Gregory Scott, director of YouthBuild USA’s AmeriCorps program.

tive director of the National Coalition for Youth Employment; **Sam Halperin**, head of the National Youth Policy Forum; and **Tim Barnicle**, formerly assistant secretary at DOL, have served as our primary advisors related to the Department of Labor.

Under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) there was little we could do at the national level with the Department of Labor because JTPA was not designed to support comprehensive work experience programs like YouthBuild. But once Tim Barnicle introduced the Youth Opportunity Zones, and the Administration introduced the School to Work and later the Welfare to Work legislation, there were a number of points of philosophical agreement as well as points of entry.



Harris Wofford (second from right) visits YouthBuild AmeriCorps in York, PA.

When the DOL announced the national competitive welfare to work initiative we responded and were awarded a \$5.4M grant in the first round to support 10 local programs.

The National Community Development Initiative (NCDI)

In 1997 we were looking for a way to recover from the terrible 50% cut that had occurred in 1996. **Bob Rapoza** was talking with Senator Christopher Bond’s legislative director, **Julie Damann**, about including YouthBuild in an emergency appropriation bill. **Jon Kamarck**, who also worked with Senator Bond as general counsel for the Appropriation Subcommittee, conceived of giving YouthBuild USA a grant within the National Community Development Initiative along with LISC, Enterprise Foundation, and Habitat for Humanity. With the support of Subcommittee staff **Valerie Baldwin** and Chairman Jerry Lewis in the House, an appropriation of \$7.5 million earmarked for YouthBuild USA was made. It required a 3:1 match of private funds.

This was one of the more amazing things that ever happened. This grant was of inestimable help to the YouthBuild field at a time when it was desperately needed. We would not have thought of it ourselves. John Moukad and **Lisette Rodriguez** have managed this grant for maximum impact.

Making a Breakthrough Friendship in the Corporate World

The Home Depot first met YouthBuild when **Suzanne Apple**, then director of Community Affairs, met Leroy Looper in San Francisco. Based on their conversation, her staff contacted YouthBuild USA. Simultaneously, various YouthBuild programs had made local relationships with The Home Depot. Gradually a relationship developed that was obviously a

"YouthBuild gave me something. I feel it's my destiny to give something back."

**—Melinda Murray
October 1995**

natural and was working at both local and national levels. **Carolyn Smillie** of The Home Depot and **Gary Daffin**, former vice president at YouthBuild USA, created an easy partnership at the national level.

The Home Depot's decision to give YouthBuild \$1.5 million was a landmark. Under the leadership of **Arthur Blank and Bernard Marcus**, The Home Depot had committed itself to supporting low-income housing and "at-risk" youth.

The Home Depot's large commitment has encouraged other corporations to support YouthBuild. **Boston Capital, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Citicorps, U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray, Fannie Mae, and Alcoa**, have each made significant gifts to YouthBuild. **Patty Foley** guided us in our initial conversations with corporations as we laid the groundwork for what was to become the \$50 million campaign to be launched in October 1999.

Reflecting on the Story

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I have told only a tiny bit of the story here, with most emphasis on the beginning, because I wanted to capture the early history. I have under-stated everyone's role, perhaps especially the staff of YouthBuild USA, who have provided the steady guidance and support to the field that holds the entire effort together. They often do this in a quietly invisible way, because that is their role. But they are no less dedicated and skilled in their supportive role than those who are out front; and this is also true of all the local staff at every single YouthBuild site.

I have told here the marvellous story of thanks. I have not told the story of various disappointments and struggles, of tragic losses of successful YouthBuild graduates to murder in the streets, of sadness that it takes 20 years of such enormous work to make little progress in the larger scheme of things because we are working against the grain of the larger society. Nor have I tried to tell the objective story in terms of results of research, outcomes, numbers, statistics, housing units built, and cost effectiveness. Nor have I tried to tell the policy lessons learned and the implications for any other systems.

I am simply trying to say thank you. We have come this far through the power of our collective love and our absolute determination. We will continue to care for each other and the world to the best of our ability, persistently, until death do us end. I know all of us well enough to know that none of us will stop. We will continue to spread love and justice and opportunity and hope wherever we each may go. And the YouthBuild movement will continue to grow and do its part. There is no limit in sight to what we can do in the next 20 years.

The Way People Should Be Treated

*By Hilton Marrero, Age 12
East Harlem
March 20, 1979*

Bums should be treated nice.
Give them food.
Give them love.
Give them clothes.
Respect them.

Children should be treated nice.
Give them love.
Give them things.
Kiss them.

There should be no fighting.
Be friends every time.
No smoking, no drinking wine.

The old people: help them when you see them.
Give them love.
Respect them.
Don't bug the old people, kiss them.

Little kids that don't know how to do nothing —
Teach them how to play.
Don't hit them.
If they're in trouble, help them.

If you see somebody sick,
Call the ambulance.
Take them to the hospital.

The way people should be treated,
Forever, with love.

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Karen Young

"When I needed a shoulder to cry on my YouthBuild staff was always there and always stood by my side 100%. They understood every problem I went through."

—Brenda Cade
Centro Campesino, 1997



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Arthur Waldstein, Esquire;
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**"When I heard about YouthBuild, I decided I was
ready to commit to changing my life. "**

**—Leroy Nathaniel Boyd
Columbia Heights YouthBuild**

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"There's so much intelligence and commitment being enlisted here, it's unbelievable."

Antoine Bennett,
YouthBuild Sandtown,
Baltimore, MD 1995

