

Planners Network '96
Renewing Hope, Restoring Vision:
Progressive Planning in Our Communities

June 14 - 16 • Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY

PROGRAM



Planners Network '96

Renewing Hope, Restoring Vision: Progressive Planning in our Communities

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Walter Thabit • Doug Lindsay
Norman Fruchter • Isabel Hill Productions
Perry Winston

Thursday, June 13

8:00 am - 8:00 pm	Registration Exhibit of community plans	Room 103 Room 107
9:00 am - 1:00 pm	Pre-Conference walking tours (Advance registration required - \$10 each) Harlem • Sigmund Shipp, Hunter College Lower East Side • Ken Reardon, University of Illinois South Bronx • John Nettleton, Cornell University (Meet in front of building)	
5:00 - 7:00 pm	Planners Network Steering Committee Meeting	Room 124
8:00 - 9:00 pm	Opening reception/Welcome	Main Hall & Room 111
9:00-10:30 pm	Videos: <i>Holding Ground</i> <i>Squatters: The Other Philadelphia Story</i>	Auditorium

Friday, June 14

8:00 am - 7:00 pm	Registration Exhibit of community plans	Room 103 Room 107
8:00 - 9:00 am	Buffet breakfast	Main Hall
8:15 - 8:45 am	Community Workshops Facilitator Orientation (For Community Workshop leaders only)	Room 111
9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Brooklyn Community Workshops	Meet in front of building
3:30 - 5:30 pm	Progressive Planning Today, Part I: Presentations of working papers Community-based Planning • Marie Kennedy National Urban Policy • Peter Drier Globalization • Tom Angotti	Room 113 Room 416 Room 111
5:30 - 7:00 pm	Buffet Dinner	Main Hall
7:00 - 9:00 pm	Greetings: Ron Shiffman, Director, Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development (PICCED) Tom Shutte, President, Pratt Institute Tom Angotti, Chair, Pratt Institute Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment Keynote speaker: Luis Garden Acosta, El Puente Academy Tribute to Mel King	Auditorium
9:00 - 11:00 pm	Video: <i>Delivered Vacant</i>	Auditorium

Saturday, June 15

7:30 am - 6:00 pm	Registration Exhibit of community plans	Room 103 Room 107
7:30 - 9:00 am	Buffet breakfast	Main Hall
8:00 - 8:45 am	Facilitator Orientation (For all workshop facilitators/leaders)	Room 111
9:00 - 10:45 am	Workshops (See descriptions on pgs. 5 & 6)	Rooms on separate sheet
11:00 am - 1:00 pm	Workshops (See descriptions on pgs. 6, 7 & 8)	Rooms on separate sheet
1:00 - 2:30 pm	Buffet Lunch	Main Hall
2:30 - 3:30 pm	Video: <i>Bordersville</i>	Screening Room A
3:30 - 4:00 pm	Video: <i>The Global Assembly Line</i>	Screening Room B

2:30 - 4:00 pm	Progressive Planning Today, Part II: Follow-up discussions Community-based Planning National Urban Policy Globalization	Room 111 Room 416 Room 113
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4:15 - 6:00 pm	Workshops (See descriptions on pg. 8)	Rooms on separate sheet
6:15 - 8:30 pm	Dinner <i>Keynote Speaker:</i> Ruth Messinger, President, Borough of Manhattan	Student Union
8:30 - 11:00 pm	Music and dancing with La Borinqueña	Student Union

Sunday, June 16

8:30 - 10:00 am	Buffet breakfast	Main Hall
9:30-10:30 am	Plenary discussion: How to promote progressive planning in the 1990s?	Room 111
10:30 - 11:00 am	PN Steering Committee Report	Room 111
11:00 am - 12:30 pm	Workshops: The future of PN re: PN Newsletter Local Organizing National Policy International Community-based Planning	Room 111 Room 113 Room 124 Room 123 Room 122
2:00 pm	Post-Conference walking tours (Advance registration required - \$10 each) Brooklyn Bicycle Tour • Dave Lutz, Neighborhood Open Space Coalition Brooklyn Bus Tour • Bill Menking, Pratt Institute Brooklyn Subway Tour • The Straphangers Campaign Weeksville Tour (Museum and restoration commemorating the first African-American settlement in New York) (Meet in front of building)	

Workshops: 9:00 - 10:45 a.m.

The Search for Equity and Participation in the Changing Community Development Environment

Community Development Corporations have grown in number and size, making problematic their original objectives of resident participation and redistribution. This session presents case studies with the intent to stimulate discussion of these issues and potential directions.

Pierre Clavel, Cornell University
James Converse and **Pat Rosenthal**, Common Wealth
Carla Dickstein, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
Kolu Zigby, Assoc. for Neighborhood & Housing Dev.
Jordan Yin, Cornell University

Participatory Action Research: The case of the Roofless Women's Action Research Mobilization (RWARM)

As RWARM members we will analyze our experience utilizing the participatory action research (PAR) methodology in investigating the causes of and solutions to women's homelessness in Massachusetts. Workshop participants will have the opportunity to share their own experiences with PAR and will be able to dialogue with the RWARM members.

Marie Kennedy, University of Massachusetts, Boston
Delores Dell, RWARM
Catherine Ferreira, RWARM
Deborah Gray, RWARM

Confronting Growing Labor Market Inequality

Inequality in pay has grown in the U.S. labor market, fueled in part by business attacks on workers' rights and standards of living. What can be done, in terms of national policy, local policy, and organizing?

Chris Tilly, Russell Sage Foundation, U Mass., Lowell
Kathy Goldman, Community Food Resource Center
Helene O'Brien, ACORN
Walter Stafford, New York University
Ron Blackwell, UNITE

Mutual Housing Associations and Community Land Trusts as Strategies for Community-Based Planning Initiatives

Case studies of a Mutual Housing Association and a Community Land Trust will be examined as illustrations of how these models have been used to promote community-based planning.

Victor Bach, Community Service Society of New York
John Krinsky, Community Service Society of New York
Sarah Hovde, Community Service Society of New York
Marina Lundrigan, York University

Habitat II: Housing as a Right

N Members returning from the UN Conference on Human Settlements will discuss the debate over the right to housing.

Peter Marcuse, Columbia University
Tony Schuman, NJ Inst. of Technology
Prentice Bowsher, Washington, DC
Sherif Yazicioglu, Queens College/CUNY

City Planning Under Capitalism Today

This workshop will ask, and hopefully answer, basic questions about the limits of city planning in capitalist societies, such as the United States. Can City planners overcome the barriers imposed by capitalism?

Richard Platkin, City planner for City of Los Angeles
Sue Nelson, Environmental planning consultant
Rod Green, Howard University

Roundtable Discussion on Environmental Issues

The panel will address issues of equity, public participation, environmental decision-making, and sustainability. Specific pollution problems and their implications for communities will also be examined.

Carmen M. Concepcion, New Schl. for Soc. Research
Robert Lake, Rutgers University
Rae Zimmerman, New York University
Mathy Sanislaus, Enviro Sciences
Catherine Hill, Cntr. for the Biology of Natural Systems
Hilda Blanco, Hunter College

Historic Preservation and the Low Income Neighborhood

Does historic preservation have a place in low income neighborhoods? Is it a luxury that leads to gentrification and displacement? Or does it foster civic pride and community development?

Eric Allison, Historic Districts Council
Gene Norman, NYC Landmarks Preservation Comm.
Clare Haaga, Houses and Services, Inc.
Paul Brock, Landmarks Harlem
John Leith-Tetrault, Natl. Trust for Historic Pres.

The Restructuring of the World Economy: Global Forces and Local Human Responses

This workshop will explore the process of globalization as it has impacted the third world; both positive and negative impacts will be examined.

Sean Robin, Pratt Institute
Lourdes Beneria, Cornell University
Amy Lind, Kellogg Institute
Courtney Guthreau, NY Cmte. for Democracy in Mexico

Video: Troublemakers (1966)

Directed by Robert K. Machover and Norman Fruchter. About urban rebellion in Newark in the 1960s. The film "portrays the efforts of former students from SDS, including Tom Hayden, to organize people in the black community of Newark, New Jersey to work for social change."

Norman Fruchter, New York University
Junius Williams, attorney and community activist
Susan Breslin, Pratt Institute

Continued on Next Page

Alternative Ownership: Who Owns What We Plan?

What difference does it make to planners who owns the projects they plan? Is democratic ownership a real challenge to the inequities of absentee capitalist ownership, or does worker- and resident-ownership simply make "owners" out of low-income people, thus distracting them from the struggle for broader social change?

Sigmund Shipp, Hunter College
Faith Wiggins, Cooperative Home Care Associates
Brent Sharman, Community Service Society
Len Krimmerman, *Grassroots Econ. Organizing Nltr.*

What's the fuss about "FAITH?" Faith-based community and economic development

Panelists will address how faith makes a difference in community and economic development, and the power of spirituality, faith and religion in identity-based communities and their affect on relationships with other communities.

Eric Clay, Cornell University
Colvin Grannum, Bridge St. Development Corp.
Steve Glaude, Natl. Cong. for Community Econ. Dev.
Lester DeSouza, York University

Fair and Equitable Planning for Regional Transportation Systems (NYC Region)

Discussion will include fair shares and equity in economic and environmental benefits and burdens, transportation alternatives, and the process for developing a regional plan.

Jennifer Fuqua, Pratt Institute
Mauricia Baca, Straphangers Campaign
Johnathan Trutt, Natural Resources Defense Council
Martha Lane, Transportation planner

Workshops: 11:00 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Habitat II Takes on Sustainability

Sustainability is a theme which has been officially incorporated into the Habitat Agenda. Whether those who are committed to sustainability have been heard, let alone influenced Habitat II, remains to be seen.

Jim Morgan, Arch./Designers/Planners for Social Resp.
Jane McGroarty, Architect
Wendy Brawer, Designer

Downsizing and the Coming Plagues: A Challenge for National Urban Policy

Emerging infectious diseases and current epidemics are major urban public health threats both in the U.S. and globally. National urban policy must address this challenge.

Robb K. Burlage, New School for Social Research
Sidney J. Socolar, University of Miami
Bernard Challenor, Columbia University
Colin McCord, Harlem Hospital Center
Diane E. McClean, Columbia University

Investing in Our Future: The Challenges of Youth Employment

This workshop will explore how to develop employment opportunities for youth that address their diverse developmental, educational, social, and economic needs.

Josephine Imbimbo, City University of New York

Making Community/University Partnerships Work

This workshop will examine how work in neighborhoods and cities is conducted by university-based planning programs. Much of the time will be given over to discussion of the political and organizational challenges to creating effective, equitable partnerships between university-based programs and community groups.

Victor Rubin, University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum
Ken Reardon, East St. Louis Action Project
Devyani Guha, Pratt Institute

Community Design Centers Around the Country

The Association for Community Design is a national network of architects and planners who lead organizations dedicated to the service of economically distressed communities throughout the United States. Presentations will continue throughout the day; see page 9 for schedule.

Public Spaces, Pedestrians and Bikes in the Big Apple

A discussion of the problems and prospects of promoting non-auto transportation in New York City.

Tom Angotti, Pratt Institute
John Kaehny, Transportation Alternatives
Meg Walker, Project for Public Spaces
Glynnis Berry, NYC Dept. of Trans., Ped. and Bicycle Off.

Housing for Homeless & Single Persons

Wide ranging discussion of the standards we should adopt concerning the need for housing for homeless and other low income single persons.

Walter Thabit, author, *Desperately Needed Now, An SRO Housing Revolution*
Bob Altman, Council for the Economic Development Committee, NYC Council
Steve Coe, Community Access
Beth Greenberg, NY Chapter, AIA Comte. on Housing
Jill Hamberg, Expert on SRO leg. & illegal occupancies
Cindy Harden, Architect
William Karg, Architect
Conrad Levenson, Phoenix House
Michael Stoops, National Coalition for the Homeless

Regionalism and the Distribution of Race and Class in the American Landscape

The panel will open by looking at the patterns of residential segregation in our country, proceeding to show harmful implications of the trends. Discussion of the merits of mixed neighborhoods will ensue, citing how they can be achieved as well as existing examples.

Tony Schuman, NJ Inst. of Technology
Nancy Denton, SUNY Albany,
Tom Wright, Regional Planning Association of NY

Privatization and the Urban Experience

Representing an effective way to respond to declining government presence, privatization of public services has recently gained momentum to the extent that governments are beginning to mimic businesses.

Vojislava Filipcevic, Pratt Institute
Diane D'Alessandro, District Council 37, AFSCME
Deborah E. Bell, District Council 37, AFSCME
Jim Tucciarelli, Sewage Treatment Union, District Council 37, AFSCME (invited)
Jennifer Faucher, Public Employee Federation (invited)

Women and Habitat II

This session will report about grassroots women's activities and resolutions at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul. There will also be a presentation and discussion of the "Our Practices" exhibition, organized by the Super Coalition of Women, Homes and Community for Habitat II.

Ayse Yonder, Pratt Institute
Ghislaine Hermanuz, City College of NY

Empowerment Zones as Sustainable Economic Development

This panel will discuss how to create sustainable development that will allow disadvantaged inner cities to become self sufficient. In addition, the workshop will explore the issue of employing the minimally skilled who represent a large portion of the population in inner cities, and whose needs have been most overlooked by federal efforts to revitalize poor communities.

Sigmund Shipp, Hunter College
Hilda Blanco, Hunter College
Mitchell Silver, Manhattan Borough President's Office
Richard Bass, consultant
Yvette Clarke, Bronx Empowerment Zone (invited)
David Shantz, York University

Cooperative Community Economics

A discussion on the development of local economic systems that are not entirely dependent on the formal economy or formal currency, mostly expressed through barter clubs, mutual credit systems, emphasis on local manufacturing and employment, local buying and selling, and direct linkages with food production sources.

Harold DeRenzio, The Parodneck Foundation
Ellen Goolsby, COWRIE, a local barter exchange
Kathy Lawrence, Just Food, NYC Sustainable Food System Alliance
David Muchnick, Bronx 2000

Developing Success Measures in Community Development

The Success Measures Project aims to lead to more effective resource allocations in community development and to greater means for community members to participate in and influence agency activities.

Louis Kilkenny, Development Leadership Network
Manny Ortiz, Development Leadership Network

Video: Made in Brooklyn (1993)

Produced and directed by Isabel Hill

About the significance of manufacturing as a critical part of Brooklyn's economy. Jane Jacobs: "This is the most lucid explanation I've seen of America's self-crippling and the direction to take to overcome it."

Randy Martin, Pratt Institute
Isabel Hill, filmmaker and city planner
David Sweeney, Greenpoint Mfg. & Design Center
Guillermo Barrios, University of Venezuela

Planning Education for Youth

Participants will view work by students at Benjamin Banneker Academy, a new visions school in New York focusing on planning education, and will discuss the relationships between planning and education.

Victoria Missick, Benjamin Banneker Academy
Joe Newkirk, School for the Physical City
Meisha Ross, Urban Assembly

Writing in Planning Education

What teaching practices help students develop the writing skills to succeed as progressive planners in the 21st century? A participatory workshop with Louise Dunlap, Writing for Social Change, and students and former students from MIT and Pratt.

Current Urban Policy Legislation

What effects will legislation in the current and upcoming sessions of congress have on urban policy and planning, and how can progressive planners respond?

Lisa Ranghelli, Center for Community Change

Racial Conflict and Government Responses

Local governments have taken a variety of approaches in responding to urban conflicts and have developed various institutional mechanisms to address this problem. The presenters will focus on examples from New York and Los Angeles.

Karen Umemoto, University of Hawaii
Rocky Chin, Commission on Human Rights
Councilmember Virginia Fields (invited)
Councilmember Guillermo Linares (invited)

Continued on Next Page

The School Building as a Community Resource

Public school buildings represent a tremendous investment of public funds -- in the structure itself, and in the range of specialized spaces and equipment they contain. Yet most schools are open six or seven hours a day, five days a week, ten months a year. Are there better ways?

Susan Breslin, Pratt Institute
Norm Fruchter, New York University
Arva Rice, Beacon Schools

Community Design Centers Around the Country

The Association for Community Design is a national network of architects and planners who lead organizations dedicated to the service of economically distressed communities throughout the United States. Presentations will continue throughout the day; see page 9 for schedule.

Workshops: 4:15 - 6:00 p.m.

Progressive Planning: Case Studies in Community-Based Planning

Planners will discuss the lessons they learned in specific cases, and how community-based planning can be part of the process of community empowerment and social justice.

Tom Angotti, Red Hook, Brooklyn
Petr Stand, Melrose Commons, Bronx
Natalia Lawrence, Richmond, California
Ken Reardon, East St. Louis
Perry Winston, East New York, Brooklyn
Richard Milgrom, Toronto

Community Responses to Globalization and Transnationals

In this session the repercussions of globalization and operations of transnationals in local communities will be discussed. Speakers will debate various strategies to resist being marginalized by the globalization process.

Sarah Anderson, Institute for Policy Studies
Ron Shiffman, Pratt Institute
William Tabb, Queens College

Labor and Communities: Planning for Common Struggles

The new leadership of the AFL-CIO has indicated that they are serious about working with communities, and about organizing for social change. What is the outlook for meaningful, progressive partnerships between labor unions, community organizations, and planners?

Ed Bruno, Union of Electricians
Dan Swinney, Midwest Center for Labor Research
Nick Unger, UNITE
Brian McLaughlin, NYC Central Labor Cncl. (invited)
Joann Lum, Chinese Staff and Workers Assoc. (invited)

Videos: Building Hope (1994)

Produced by Charles Hobson

About community development corporations in the U.S., legacies of civil rights movement and the importance of community activism in impoverished neighborhoods. Gives a historical background and emphasizes accomplishments of CDCs in low-income African-American neighborhoods.

A Practical Man (1995)

Produced and directed by Mary Brown.

Portrays Ted Watkins of Watts Labor Community Action Committee in South Central Los Angeles. About a powerful African-American leader and his struggle to rebuild a troubled community.

Ron Shiffman, Pratt Institute
Charles Hobson, Vanguard Films
Mary Brown, director and producer

Environmental Justice

Exploration of the environmental perspective on land use planning and its impact on communities and public health.

Peggy Shepherd, N. Harlem Environ. Justice Coal.
Samara Swanstron, Minority Enviro. Lawyers Assn.
Eddie Bautista, NY Lawyers for the Public Interest
Matty Stanislaus, Minority Enviro/ Lawyers Assn.

Community Design Centers Around the Country

The Association for Community Design is a national network of architects and planners who lead organizations dedicated to the service of economically distressed communities throughout the United States. Presentations will continue throughout the day; see page 9 for schedule.

Names in bold are facilitators

What's wrong with planning education?

The New York Planning Education Group of Planners' Network will be holding an ongoing dinner discussion on the shortcomings of planning education in the United States. Thousands of new planners graduate from planning programs every year, but are they adequately prepared to confront and address the persistent problems of poverty and inequality in the United States, and well as the particular concerns of communities of color? Please join us at our table at dinner on Friday, June 14 and Saturday, June 15 to discuss race, ethnicity, gender and culture issues in planning education and practice, and how to promote a planning curriculum that instills in students a greater awareness and understanding of these issues. See Jocelyne Chait for more information.

ACD PRESENTATIONS

Saturday, June 15 • 9:00 am - 1:00 pm, 2:40 - 6:00 pm

Room 113

The Association for Community Design presentations in the PN Conference is an exchange of professional practice information between Community Design Centers open to PN Conference Participants. The objective is to provide insight into the collective body of work and experience of Design Centers in serving economically distressed communities.

Time Presentation

- 9:00 Introduction
- 9:20 **Max Creighton**, Director • Community Design Center of Atlanta
Community-Based Development in Atlanta's Inner City
- 9:40 **Terrence Curry/Christopher Smith**, Co-Directors • Detroit Collaborative Design, U. of Detroit Mercy, The Neighborhood Design Studio Series
- 10:00 **George Wittenberg**, Director • UALR Donaghey Project, Little Rock, AR
Planning Collaborations: Neighborhood, LISC and the University Center
- 10:20 **Katherine Campbell**, Director • Community Design Center of Columbia, Inc
Community Design in South Carolina
- 10:40 **Michaela Pride-Wells** • Design Professionals' Coalition (DCP)
DCPs Practice of Participatory Planning
- 11:00 **Ramona K. Mullahey**, Director • Center for Better Communities, Honolulu, HI
Reinventing Community
- 11:20 **Ruth Murphy**, Director • Community Design Center of Minnesota
Sustainable Economic Development: Buzzword or Opportunity
- 11:40 **Steve Larrick**, Director • Council for Community Planning and Design
Nebraska's Urban Community Improvement Program
- 12:00 **Bob Schwartz**, Director • Community Design Service, Washington D.C.
Two Projects in Washington D.C.
- 12:20 **Manuel Divino** • University of Michigan
Architectural Advocacy in Detroit
- 2:40 **Tom Jones**, Director of Development • Asian/Neighborhood/Design
Good Neighbors - Affordable Family Housing Publication of new book.
- 3:00 **Mike Pyatok** • Pyatok Associates
Housing and Community Development Case Studies - Northern California
- 3:20 **Joe Fama**, Director • Troy Architectural Program
Analysis of Design Center Income
- 3:40 **Joan Byron/Perry Winston** • Pratt Planning and Architectural Collaborative
Recent Planning and Architectural Projects in New York
- 4:00 **Roger Borgenicht** • Assist, Inc. Salt Lake City, UT
Regional Transportation Planning for Livable Communities
- 4:40 **Susan Frankel, Don Matzkin, Patrica Carrol** • Community Design Collaborative, Philadelphia
Community Partnering - Projects, Planning and Landscapes
- 5:00 Summary Discussion of Day's Presentations

PN '96: Video Screenings

Thursday, June 13

9:00 - 10:30 p.m. **Squatters: The Other Philadelphia Story** (1984, 27 min.) *Auditorium*

An award-winning documentary about homeless of Philadelphia who squat in abandoned houses and their compelling quest for a new housing policy. The film "juxtaposes a fast moving account of the squatters' movement with a sober, concise analysis of the urban crisis."

Holding Ground (1996, 58 min.)

A powerful depiction of a vibrant, ethnic community's struggle to revitalize dilapidated Dudley Street in Boston. Emphasizes community participation and youth involvement. With its "cumulative human power." **Holding Ground** "teaches some unique lessons in bottom-up, people-oriented politics."

Friday, June 14

9:00 - 11:00 p.m. **Delivered Vacant** (1992, 118 min.) *Auditorium*

About gentrification of Hoboken. "Eight years in the making, the film depicts in poignant detail the massive displacement of elderly SRO residents and other poor and minority families."

Saturday, June 15

9:00 - 10:45 a.m. **Troublemakers** (1966, 60 min.) *Screening room B*

About urban rebellion in Newark in the 1960s. The film "portrays the efforts of former students from SDS, including Tom Hayden, to organize people in the black community of Newark, New Jersey to work for social change."

(Discussion panel with director will follow)

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. **Made in Brooklyn** (1992, 55 min.) *Screening room A*

About the significance of manufacturing as a critical part of Brooklyn's economy. Jane Jacobs: "This is the most lucid explanation I've seen of America's self-crippling and the direction to take to overcome it."

(Discussion panel with director will follow)

2:30 - 3:30 p.m. **Bordersville** (1979, 30 min.) *Screening room A*

A powerful depiction of a poor, African-American inner-city area completely neglected by the city of Houston. "The film was used as an organizing tool by the community to bring its case directly to the public . . . Less than two months after the initial showing of **Bordersville**, the community was awarded a water contract by the city of Houston."

3:30 - 4:00 p.m. **The Global Assembly Line** (1986, 32 min.) *Screening room B*

"The film follows . . . the lives of working women and men in the 'free trade zones' of developing countries, as manufacturing industries close their labor-intensive operations in the U.S. to search the globe for lower-wage workforces."

4:00 - 6:30 p.m. **Building Hope** (1994, 57 min.) *Auditorium*

About community development corporations in the U.S., the legacy of the civil rights movement and the importance of community activism in impoverished neighborhoods. Gives a historical background and emphasizes accomplishments of CDCs in low-income African-American neighborhoods.

A Practical Man (1995, 46 min.)

Portrays Ted Watkins of Watts Labor Community Action Committee in South Central Los Angeles. About a powerful African-American leader and his struggle to rebuild a troubled community.

(Discussion panel with directors will follow)

For listings of discussion panelists, see workshop listings.

Mel King

A biographical sketch compiled by Marie Kennedy, March 1996

For decades, Mel King has been one of the two or three most important progressive community leaders in Boston. A lifelong resident of the multi-ethnic, multi-racial South End neighborhood of Boston, he has consistently fought for the rights of all peoples; in his championship of gay and women's rights, he was well ahead of most progressives. An African-American who grew up in a strong union family, Mel has defended workers' rights, while fighting racism in unions. A leader in local struggles, especially for community control of education, land and economic development, Mel has also been an outspoken internationalist. Mel has worked in public and community affairs in many arenas. In the 1950's and 1960's, he worked as a community and youth organizer on street corners and as a public school teacher. Through United South End Settlements, he designed and directed a number of youth programs and was an organizer with Community Assembly for a Unified South End (CAUSE), a pathbreaking organization that championed community control of urban renewal. Mel was the executive director of the Urban League of Greater Boston in the explosive late '60's and early '70's. During this time, he launched the Community Fellows Program; through this program, which he has directed since 1976, hundreds of activists and leaders of color from throughout the United States have been able to spend a year of study, reflection and research at MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning. As an elected representative to the Massachusetts legislature from 1973 to 1983, he was a particularly effective consensus builder, crafting sometimes unlikely coalitions to pass a wide range of progressive legislation which he initiated. Running for mayor of Boston in 1979 and 1983, Mel created the Rainbow Coalition. In 1983, he became the first African-American ever to win a Boston mayoral primary and be a finalist in the race. Although his bid to be mayor was ultimately unsuccessful, his campaign united Boston across racial-ethnic barriers in a way that has profoundly and positively effected the community development movement in the city ever since. Further, the coalition idea took root and became the model for the National Rainbow Coalition. As a teacher in MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Mel has spearheaded the movement toward community development through community empowerment and has been a particularly powerful advocate for students of color. Throughout all these years, Mel has been a community leader always on call to movements for progressive social change. His home, which he and his wife Joyce King open for brunch every Sunday, has been a gathering place for progressives, both local and international, to exchange ideas and develop coalitions. You haven't tasted all that Boston's community movement has to offer until you've sampled Mel's Sunday fish fry!

Some additional specific accomplishments:

- Mel's early work with youth developed cooperation between Puerto Rican, African-American and white young people.
- Mel played a leadership role developing strategies and tactics in the struggle to win control over the urban renewal plan in Boston's South End. He led the charge to take over the Redevelopment Authority's site office and to block cars from a parking lot that had replaced the homes of 100 low-income families. Response to the arrests of Mel and other organizers triggered "Tent City" -- the encampment which for 20 years became the rallying cry of Boston's struggle for land control. Mel deserves much of the credit for winning the right to have an elected citizen committee with veto power. The South End Project Area Committee, a first in the country, became a model for citizen groups in many cities trying to control urban renewal.
- During his term as a Massachusetts state legislator, Mel successfully led the effort to end the state's business dealings with Apartheid South Africa. On the home front, he drafted agricultural legislation that benefited community gardeners and commercial farmers alike and he authored the laws creating Massachusetts' pioneering community development finance system which set up the Community Development Finance Corporation and related institutions.
- Mel was a founder of the Boston Jobs Coalition, which drafted the since-enacted Boston Jobs Ordinance, specifying that construction jobs with City funding must hire a minimum percentage of local workers, people of color, and women.
- Mel has brought local attention and support to many liberation struggles around the world; his leadership in the anti-apartheid movement and in support of Cuba is widely recognized.
- A list of alums of the Community Fellows Program reads like a major portion of the "who's who" of progressive community organizing and development from across the country. Through this program, Mel's influence has been felt nationwide.
- Mel has written and lectured widely, to lay, academic and professional audiences throughout the country and internationally. Academics and professionals as well as community organizers have learned from Mel's book *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development*; it is one of South End Press' best-selling titles. He is also co-author of *Liberating Theory* and co-editor of *From Access to Power: Black Politics in Boston*.
- Mel serves on the boards of Oxfam America, The Committee for Boston Public Housing, the Burgess Urban Fund of the Episcopal Diocese, and The Other Economic Summit, amongst others.