

datacenter update

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RESEARCH SUPPORT

RIGHT TO THE CITY

DEMOCRACY • HUMAN RIGHTS • POWER

On August 29, 2008, the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, protest actions took place in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Miami, New York City, Washington DC, Providence, and New Orleans. The effort was coordinated by the newly formed Right to the City (RTTC) Alliance to create a united response to the growing trend of displacement and gentrification in urban cities faced by poor, working class, people of color and LGBTQ communities across the United States.

New Orleans is highlighted not only for the devastating impact Hurricane Katrina had on the poor and African-American community there, but because it is on the forefront of neo-liberal policies that are devastating cities everywhere. Public housing is being demolished or privatized while affordable housing is being replaced by luxury condominiums, shopping centers, and tourist attractions. Public schools are being replaced by privatized charter schools. Many New Orleans residents are not able to return to, or afford to live in, their own neighborhoods.

RTTC Alliance is led by grassroots, base-building organizations around the country that organize locally, regionally, cross-regionally and nationally. Its platform addresses the right to social



Photo: Jaron Brown, POWER SF

Robbie Clark of Just Cause Oakland speaks at the March on Mayors convening in Miami that brought together 300 housing delegates from around the country.

property alongside the right to private property. Affordable, public & subsidized housing, public safety, urban land, public transportation, education, and health & cultural facilities are rights, not only a social safety net. They are singular instances of public good outweighing private profit. In this respect, the Right to the City platform is an effort to urbanize and make very practical a human rights framework.

The Alliance works with resource allies, including researchers, lawyers, and

academics, to strengthen the effort and to create winning strategies. People Organized to Win Environmental Rights (POWER) and the other organizations in the Bay Area regional chapter invited DataCenter to join the Alliance this past spring. Jaron Browne explains “we have worked with the Data Center many times and they have always been principled and done excellent work. We wanted DataCenter to be involved because we need to be sharp and be experts on these issues and that’s what they add to our work.”

Over the past decade, DataCenter has partnered with many RTTC member organizations. Joining the Alliance to support the national and regional chapters advances our strategic movement-building mission. Just as local organizing strategies are being implemented on regional and national levels with large scale impact, so we are finding that campaign research strategies can also be utilized locally, regionally and nationally.

HIGHLIGHTS

Currently, we are working with the HUD Working Group conducting a national assessment of public housing policies and their impact on low-income communities. The analysis will be released as a community-based white paper next summer at the annual Mayor’s Conference. We have joined the Miami region of the RTTC Alliance to support a participatory survey project that will assess conditions and needs of renters in that city. The project is multi-organizational and city-wide, the first ever such survey done. It will both build the bases of the organizations through the research process and gather data necessary to change renter policies in the city. Shannan Reaze from Power U Center for Social Changes who is coordinating the Miami survey explains including DataCenter in the project: “DataCenter is one of the few resource organizations that actually has a good record amongst organizers. Everyone I’ve talked to praises their work, experience, and understanding of participatory research. That was a major plus when reaching out for their assistance on our newest aim to bring social change to our communities.”

For more information about the Right to the City Alliance, visit their website at <http://righttothecity.org>.



Saba Waheed is DC’s Economic Justice Project point person.

RESEARCH JUSTICE ADVOCACY

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

DataCenter has been empowering communities with social science tools and access to information to leverage their voices and experiences as legitimate stakeholders for thirty years. Over the past three years, we've honed our analysis of research as a political framework to be assessed, challenged and understood. We first described our analysis as "Decolonizing Research" to name the structural inequities within research and trace its roots in the history of colonization and imperialism. We found that naming that history helped communities reclaim research and own it in their day-to-day struggles for change. Wanting to move the theory into a social justice agenda, we introduced "Research Justice Advocacy" to our program strategy last year to **actively uphold community expertise within the broader field of research.**



On the other end of the research spectrum, universities have a particular gatekeeper role and history. For communities holding that historical memory of research oppression, distrust often arises

when academics enter into community spaces. Prompted by the legacy of the Civil Rights movement and recent challenges to intellectual property from the collective commons, some scholars are striving to create and engage in better partnerships with communities.

Since launching RJ Advocacy, various professors and institutions have invited DC to speak about Research Justice and to work with them on creating effective partnerships and projects with communities and community organizations. This year, we have presented at San Francisco City College, University of Southern California, University of California at Santa Barbara, and Florida International University's Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy (RISEP), with more talks being planned.

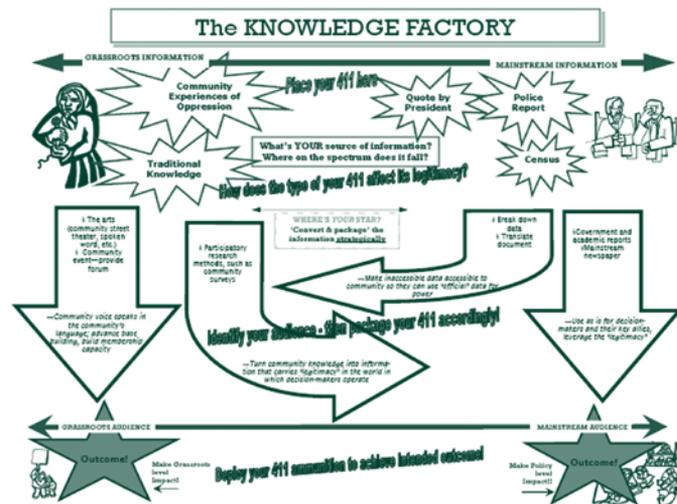
We are excited to **build relationships with academic allies** who are being intentional in engaging with communities and in dismantling the typical hierarchy of researcher over community. Sandra Ball-Rokeach, a Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs in the Annenberg School for Communication at USC, describes the importance of universities working with communities: "In this time of great challenge to civil society, academics, and especially those who research social change and civic engagement, can benefit from partnering with social

change agents and organizations working on the ground to improve community life. These partnerships can inform social research at the same time that they contribute to communities. **Academic-advocacy partnerships are on the rise** and, in the process, we are learning how to make them an integral part of graduate training programs."

Our next step in this advocacy effort is to create a Research Justice Ally Circle of academics that are interested in being involved in moving forward with Research Justice.

ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE FACTORY

At the top of the Knowledge Factory is knowledge in the world – to the left is community and to the right the mainstream. In our world, knowledge is valued differently based on the source of the information. A community voice may get dismissed by a policy maker because it lacks professional credentials. Or an



institutional report will never reach the community because it is hidden in inaccessible language. The knowledge factory pipelines show how **information can be transformed**—whether to take community experience and present it through social science tools or to take institutional data and translate it into community-friendly language so that it is 'legitimate' and accessible to its audience.

If you are interested in joining the Research Justice Ally Circle or would like us to do a presentation on Research Justice, contact



Saba Waheed at saba@datacenter.org

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PROJECT

SACRED KNOWLEDGE AND STRATEGIC RESEARCH



Photo: Black Mesa Water Coalition Youth
San Francisco Sacred Peaks (Flagstaff)

This summer, DataCenter launched the Indigenous Knowledge Project implementing a new program initiative. The goal is to strengthen grassroots capacity among traditional and indigenous communities to strategically utilize research, along with culturally-based systems of knowledge, to protect the environmental, spiritual, cultural, and economic integrity of their people and lands.

DataCenter has provided essential campaign research support for indigenous communities throughout North America and beyond for decades. In 2006, DataCenter and key constituents examined “research oppression” to determine the barriers to using research as a powerful tool for liberation. We considered:

- Lack of access to data about themselves in mainstream sources;
- Mis-/under-representation in mainstream data sources;
- Lack of community control over the production, documentation, ownership and use of their own data;
- Violation of individual & collective cultural rights;
- And lack of mainstream political legitimacy.

These factors reflect the systemic nature of research oppression in indigenous communities, the historical legacy of over 500 years of colonization. The Indigenous Knowledge Project is dedicated to countering research oppression by training traditional and indigenous communities to employ culturally-appropriate—as they define it—methodologies and research tools. The goal is to empower these groups in a way that is rooted in their spiritual and cultural tradition, and builds their political leverage vis-à-vis outside institutions and powerful interests.

For more information visit: www.datacenter.org/programs/indig_know_proj.htm or contact miho@datacenter.org



Miho Kim is DC's Indigenous Knowledge Project point person.



Photo: Christopher McCleod

Ceremonial Winnemem Wintu War Dance at Shasta Dam

YOUTH RESEARCH LEADERS

In late 2006, DataCenter welcomed Michael Preston, a young, emerging leader of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, as a project partner and intern. He is leading the three-year Oral Documentation Project of his tribe's sacred sites threatened by the proposed expansion of the Shasta Dam in northern California. Along with Rachel Gelfand, Michael became the first in DC's pilot youth internship program designed to deepen research skills and to experience non-profit professional development. Internships allow for more hands-on research capacity-building, support around research methods, collaborative strategizing, and mentoring.

The project's research agenda is entirely driven by Michael, with the tribe having full ownership. Michael explains “The Winnemem Wintu are not asking for special treatment, just to save lands always belonging to us, not to mention justice for hundreds of years of broken promises and injustices perpetrated on us. We are fighting to stave off extinction. This kind of story is not unique in the Native American world; it is just one that my Tribe and organizations are shedding a little light on for others to see.”

In addition to the educational materials to be produced, Michael and Rachel initiated a radio segment to broadcast the message nationally to strategically deepen public appreciation for their efforts and strengthen legislative support to ensure the sustainability of the tribe's way of life. Their efforts are coming to fruition as California State Senate just passed a Joint Resolution in August urging the federal government to restore federal recognition status to the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, a critical component in protecting the tribe's sacred land rights.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOTS

VICTORIES

Congratulations to **Southwest Works Union - Youth Leadership Organization**, successful campaign for *Equal Pay for Equal Work*, launched in San Antonio, Texas, after finding out Bill Miller BBQ restaurant chain was paying workers at different restaurants up to \$2.50 less an hour than others. Biller Miller quietly increased wages at various San Antonio locations. The DataCenter provided research on the company and owners, and consulted extensively on strategy.

www.swunion.org

Congratulations to **Environmental Health Coalition** after six years of organizing, for getting the San Diego City Council to adopt the *Children's Right to Lead-Safe Housing Ordinance* on March 11th. This is one of the strongest lead protection ordinances in the country, requiring lead safe work practices and ensuring children living in rental homes are protected from the dangers of lead-based paint. DataCenter provided information on best practices around the country.

www.environmentalhealth.org

PROJECT UPDATES

Worth More Than a Thousand Words: Picture-Based Tobacco Warning Labels and Language Rights in the U.S., published in 2007 by POWER, Tobacco Free Coalition and the DataCenter, has framed tobacco warning labels as a language discrimination issue. The City and County of San Francisco passed a resolution urging US Congressional Representatives to amend the Comprehensive Smoking Education Act of 1984 and require picture-based warning labels. National legislators put forward similar legislation. The report was added to the UCSF Center for Tobacco Control's national tobacco library.

www.datacenter.org/reports/reports.htm

Creative Interventions creates and promotes critically needed alternative community-based approaches to prevent and end domestic violence and other forms of intimate violence. DataCenter is working with Creative Interventions on the *Story Telling & Organizing Project (STOP)*, a multi-year participatory research project to document stories of everyday people ending violence without relying on the criminal, legal or social service systems. The Project collects, analyzes and produces the stories into inspiring and practical public information for community healing and transformation.

www.creative-interventions.org

NEW PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Mapping the Movement: Organizing for Community Accountability, Transformative Justice and Liberatory Responses to Violence is a national survey being conducted by DataCenter in conjunction with the **Visions to Peace Project**, a youth leadership development and movement-building project located in Washington, D.C. The goal is to survey organizations working to develop and implement community accountability principles and practices and map the landscape of the growing Transformative Justice field. Transformative justice refers to community-based liberatory approaches to responding to and preventing violence that transform structures of community and social injustice.

www.visionispower.org

Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD) and DataCenter are partnering in line with CYWD's mission to empower and inspire young women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the underground street economy, to create positive change in their lives and communities. The multi-year project will survey adjudicated young women in juvenile detention centers and in community-based organizations in the Bay Area. DC trained CYWD staff to develop, conduct and record surveys and will provide support for analysis. Through the primary data research process, CYWD youth plan will develop a 2009 campaign for legislative change that will improve conditions for their constituency. We also are working together to compile a much-needed resource guide for adjudicated young women in Alameda County.

www.cywd.org



Celia Davis is DC's Program Coordinator & Environmental Justice Project point person.

Marshall Trammell is DC's Criminal Justice Project point person.



WELCOME NEW FOLKS



STAFF MARSHALL TRAMMELL is a local Criminal Justice activist affiliated with such national organizations as Critical Resistance, Generation 5, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and Estación

Libre. His interests range from global land-based community organizing, liberatory approaches to violence, mapping population fluidity, and Creative Improvised Music as a site of radical practice. Marshall grew up a Marine brat in Oahu, Hawaii, spent his early adult years in the Bay Area and has recently returned from a fellowship in Electronic Arts studies at Rensselaer Polytechnic's Tactical Media Lab.



BOARD ALEX VAZQUEZ is currently a Program Manager for Community Development & Services at Tides Center. Prior to Tides, she worked for six years at California Peace Action, now Peace

Action West. Alex is a graduate of UC Berkeley and holds degrees in Political Science and Ethnic Studies. She strives to incorporate the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation into social justice work.



BOARD ENRIQUE SALMÓN (pronounced sahl-móhn), Ph.D. is a Rarámuri (Tarahumara) dedicated to studying Ethnobiology and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Enrique has a PhD.

in anthropology from Arizona State University. He is on the Board of Directors of the Society of Ethnobiology and is Director of American Indian Studies at Cal State University East Bay.



BOARD SWATI PRAKASH is the Director of the Pacific Institute's Community Strategies for Sustainability and Justice program. Previously, she served as the Environmental Health Director

at West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT) where she worked to merge scientific tools and community organizing efforts in low-income urban communities of color. She received an M.S. in Environmental Health from the Harvard School of Public Health, and an A.B. in Environmental Science and Public Policy from Harvard University.



BOARD YVETTE MARI ROBLES is the director of Bayview Hunters Point Mobilization for Adolescent Growth in our Communities (B-MAGIC) a youth-focused community-based

organization in Bayview Hunters Point, SF. She is currently on the Community Advisory Board for the Coalition of Essential Small Schools, Bayview Essential School of Music, Art and Social Justice. Yvette holds a BA in Psychology from San Francisco State University.



INTERN MICHAEL PRESTON is a member of the Winnemem Wintu tribe and a current student at San Francisco City College. Michael is currently working on an oral history project with

DataCenter documenting Winnemem sacred sites in order to protect and preserve them by educating people about their importance. He plans on getting a degree in Native American studies so he can help better his tribe's situation any way he can.



INTERN RACHEL GELFAND came to the DataCenter in November 2007, after graduating from Smith College with a B.A. in American Studies and a concentration in Autonomy, Racism,

and US Imperialism. She has been a part of the Winnemem Wintu Sacred Sites Project and the DataCenter's forthcoming Participatory Research Interview Toolkit. Rachel has returned east to pursue her interests in community radio and continue her work in oral history.

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Impact research for social justice

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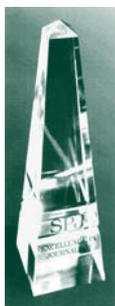


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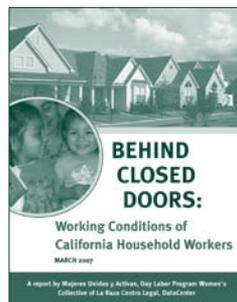
FLASHBACKS...



After DataCenter’s 30th anniversary last Fall I was honored to accept the “Unsung Hero Award” of the Northern California Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. The award acknowledged DataCenter as “database central” for journalists in pre-Internet days. Among the audience at the awards dinner, I recognized many journalists who had relied on our unique collection. In my acceptance,

I compared DC’s hard-copy clipping files to a “beta test” for Google and recalled questions from journalists as to whether DC was still relevant in the age of the Internet. I then described our current focus on partnering with low-income communities to help them capture their own story and make it accessible to the media, policymakers, and others working for change.

The award reminded me of a comment I heard at a Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) press conference on the release of *Behind Closed Doors: Working conditions of California Household Workers*. The reporter for



Telemundo was wrapping up her Spanish language coverage of a panel presentation by domestic workers, a lawyer, an academic, and DataCenter’s Anna Couey. The reporter said to me, “I go to press conferences every day, and this is by far the most powerful and compelling one I’ve covered.”

That comment was a wonderful testimony to the effectiveness and impact of DataCenter’s ongoing behind-the-scenes, and “unsung,” contributions applying the power of information and research to fuel the social justice movement.

The report can be accessed at:
<http://datacenter.org/reports/behindcloseddoors.pdf>



Fred is DC’s President & one of DC’s original co-founders.