datacenter update

DOCUMENTING THE KHMER YOUTH EXPERIENCE

Khmer Girls for Action (KGA) works primarily with young girls of Southeast Asian descent in the Long Beach area in Southern California. Most are from low income, immigrant and/or refugee families. There is a dearth of information that reflects the experience of the Cambodian community. Therefore, KGA launched a research project to assess the conditions and needs among Khmer youth. KGA hopes the findings will help those serving youth in Long Beach to better meet the needs of this very vulnerable population.

KGA wants the project to be participatory and member-led. DataCenter designed workshops to build the capacity of youth to conduct their own research projects. The workshops culminated into a youth designed survey. Youth members will conduct the survey this winter with 300 Khmer youth.

Program Coordinator Joy Yanga felt ready to facilitate the research project as a result. "[DataCenter] *helped simplify and translate what the process could look like to our youth leaders … One of the most useful things they've moved us through is a working timeline and breakdown of tasks for our project, otherwise it would have been really hard to* get through it because it's our organization's first time going though this kind of research and survey process. They are great listeners and have a fun way of presenting and facilitating."

In January 2010, Data-Center will conduct the next workshop, analyzing the survey results, selecting the top key findings, and packaging it for effective dissemination. Program coordinator Ashley Uyeda concluded: "*DataCenter has been extremely helpful… Everything they've shared has really helped me as staff better understand research and how we can do it from the grassroots level…they were very flexible to our organization's needs.*"

Photo DataCenter
DataCenter workshop with KGA.

SUSTAINING ORGANIZING STUDY (SOS)
A STRATEGIC SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT ASSESSMENT

Over the years, as access to information technology developed and the movement called on us for deeper partnerships, DataCenter responded by placing a high priority on building grassroots capacity to conduct research and gather the information and knowledge that resides within communities. Today, we are responding to increasing demand to gather the knowledge within the social justice movement. Sustaining Organizing Study Project is but one example of how we do this to meet the needs on the ground. S.O.S. is research by the movement, for the movement, as the movement to reshape our society's worldview.

SUSTAINING OUR ORGANIZATIONS
DataCenter, in partnership with the National Organizers Alliance, launched in June 2009 the Sustaining Organizing Study (SOS), an in-depth assessment of the recession's impact on movement building and organizing work. A literature review, with over 60 reports and articles, is now available on the project's blog, designed to promote dialog sustainingorganizing.tumblr.com.

Project Advisor, Sayòkla D. Kindness-Williams says a "*study of this nature is important to the sustainability of the organizations we have made long-term investments in. There is an ever-growing need for our work to continue and as the need increases we must expand and plan for the future.*"

Project Advisor, Denise Perry notes, "*many organizations are struggling to figure out new ways to run their*

DATACENTER TEAM (2009)

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TO ALL OUR RELATIONS—

This year has been a great year for innovation and change. Through systematic building of social justice movement infrastructure and organizing, communities around the country have created unprecedented political opportunities.

We are grateful and excited to have been partners with many of these efforts. We recall, for example, the successful organizing among countless displaced low-income communities of color in our cities; and the powerful national alliances that have grown out of organizing projects among domestic workers and restaurant workers – all projects that are building leadership, articulating issues and developing strategies.

They have all taken a big step forward — and are now poised to meaningfully participate in the federal and state policymaking processes, and to forge global solidarity to transform our societies.

We are encouraged and emboldened by the tremendous success of helping communities do their own research, not only proactively defining their organizing agendas, but also implementing them effectively.

For DataCenter, such a movement milestone reaffirms the strategic importance of grassroots research infrastructure. Now, more than ever, is the moment to ensure that grassroots communities can access DataCenter services.

We face rising demands for assistance from around the country. To meet them during difficult economic times, and to advance our Research Justice mission, we are proactively embarking on strategic planning with a comprehensive sustainability lens.

Meanwhile, we draw on our 32 years of experience — prevailing through numerous recessions and adapting to profound political changes — by streamlining operations. We have come this far because of people like you. We count on your continuing support to strengthen the DataCenter as a vital asset for the social justice movement.

"Yes, we did"— and now, "Yes, we can" — elevate community voices for change!

In solidarity,

Miho Kim, Executive Director

Thanks to everyone whose hard work and dedication made a difference in unlocking the power of community voices for change.

YOUTH KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PEOPLE:
AN INTENSIVE TRAINING CAMP …WITH YOUTH IN FOCUS

In March youth organizers from many Bay Area organizations united in Oakland to learn more about methods to use to document peoples daily realities.

Educating organizers about Participatory Action Research (PAR) was the primary goal. PAR combines designing, implementing, and participating in the research, by communities. Youth in Focus arranged interactive games. In an activity titled, "Round Robin," participants were divided into small groups and led to different stations, each a different method of collecting data. It's

Photo: DataCenter

Youth training camp participants.

important to come face to face with each technique, sorting through the pros and cons. The DataCenter presented a "research planning scenario" activity, allowing participants to think about strategic approaches to issues.

I was thrilled to overhear youth organizers telling others about their organization, the type of campaigns they have been working on, and how research could strengthen their action.

by Sylvia Aguiñaga, DataCenter Intern

DA TOWN RESEARCHERS TO INVESTIGATE OAKLAND STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

In its fourth year, Da Town Researchers, a student-led participatory action research team working to improve Oakland schools, will gather the voices, experiences and ideas of students to study: How can schools better support students?

Working in collaboration with the Oakland Unified School District Meaningful Student Engagement Collaborative, Da Town Researchers have used surveys, focus groups, interviews, and photovoice to elevate student voices to inform district-wide policies.

Past projects include research on student empowerment, the school environment, and student preparation for life, college and career. Results include the launching of informed campaigns by All City Council student leaders, changes to the district's Citizenship policy, and the passage of an A-G college

Photo: Da Town Researchers

Da Town Researchers 2009-2010 Team

preparedness resolution by the School Board.

Da Town Researchers will present their findings and recommendations through a

multimedia presentation at the Meaningful Student Engagement event in the spring!

For more information or to collaborate, contact: townresearchers@gmail.com

by Lailan Huen, DataCenter Research Fellow

RETAINING OUR SERVICES…

DataCenter is responding to increasing demand to fill the gap between the desire to make change and the ability to make it happen. If you are interested in retaining Data Center services, contact Saba Waheed saba@datacenter.org, (510)835-4692 x315. Here are a few examples:

- Emiliano Zapata Street Academy in Oakland: DataCenter trained two classes of seniors to strategically implement their senior research projects. The Academy has a stated commitment to prepare students to be community leaders.

- Liberty Hill Foundation in Los Angeles: DataCenter provided a workshop for grantees. Research strategies for organizing and building the political power of grassroots constituents were explored. Every one appreciated the worksheets and concrete exercises, with plenty of powerful case studies to learn from.

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UPDATES:

❖ DataCenter joined the Food Chain Worker Alliance, a newly formed national, cross-industry alliance of organizations that organizes workers along the food chain, in Chicago this past July. We presented a comprehensive corporate and industry power structure analysis of 50 food chain corporations and trade associations.

❖ DataCenter went to New Orleans to work with Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans (VAYLA-NO) staff and members to design a survey tool to assess the needs of their community which is still struggling with the aftermath of Katrina.

❖ In partnership with Creative Interventions, the DataCenter hosted a workshop at the Allied Media Conference in Detroit, sharing stories from the storytelling project and discussing the role of community-based interventions to stopping violence.

WEBSITE LAUNCHED

The StoryTelling and Organizing Project (STOP) is a community project collecting and sharing stories about everyday people taking action to end interpersonal violence led by Creative Interventions. DataCenter has been partners on the storytelling project since it started five years ago and has been involved in creating tools, conducting analysis and training partners. Stories from the project are now available on the website. You will also find information about the project partners, discussion questions and resources for using STOP stories in your own work to intervene in interpersonal violence, as well as how to get involved in the project. From the stories, we can find out what helped survivors feel supported or what helped people change to stop their violence. We can get good ideas about how family, friends, neighbors, and community members can create safety and accountability among ourselves. STOP website: www.stopviolenceeveryday.org

SHARED LEADERSHIP SERIES

The motto "be the change you want to see in the world" has manifested in DataCenter's Shared Leadership Model since 2006. With a Design Team comprised of representatives from Bay Area social justice organizations, we convened a monthly three part-series of dialog with more than thirty other organizations to document our diverse experiences — both successes and challenges — exploring alternatives to a top-down leadership structure as a social justice movement. We listened to each other and exchanged tools and resources, as well as wisdom. The knowledge captured using participatory methodologies imparted insights appreciated by grantmakers, capacity-builders, and organizers alike. Check out the powerpoint summary of this experience, recently presented at the brownbag hosted by Learning Leadership Community — the funder of the series — available on our websites!
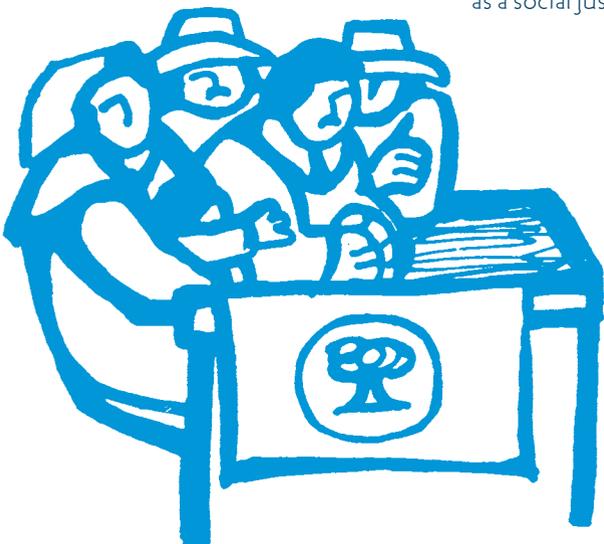

Rini Templeton, www.riniart.org

Photo: Leadership Learning Community
DataCenter shared leadership quilt.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PROJECT

Indigenous Knowledge Project is meeting critical research needs of native communities fighting corporate interests that threaten their health and environment!

This year DataCenter provided:

Cooking Tent at IEN Gathering

Photo:Miho Kim

- Campaign research tools for the Mining Campaign curriculum of the Indigenous Environmental Network.

- A profile of Siemens, operating a giant 'carbon regeneration' facility in violation of federal law. This gave the Mohave Cultural Preservation Program of Colorado River Indian Tribes intelligence to escalate their campaign.

- A profile of management and structure of HRI, Inc., uranium mining company, for the Navajo community in Crownpoint, as well as New Mexico Environmental Law Center, which later won a lawsuit to reverse a permit issued to HRI.

- Information on CEGIR to The Tohono O'odham community. CEGIR sought to locate a huge toxic dump on their land south of the border, while environmental safety questions remained unaddressed.

ADVISORY BOARD FOR THE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PROJECT

Aleyamma Mathew, Project Director, Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA)

Caleen Sisk-Franco, Winnemem Wintu Tribe

Michelle Vendiola, Community Alliance and Peacemaking Project

Robert Tohe, Organizer, Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program, Flagstaff, AZ

Ron Rowell

Sayokla Williams, Indigenous Environmental Network

WAR DANCE OF THE WINNEMEM WINTU

With DataCenter support, youth intern Michael Preston, a young emerging leader of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe of Northern California, along with our research intern Rachel Gelfand worked closely with National Radio Project to produce the radio documentary: War Dance of the Winnemem Wintu. Preston presents the story of his tribe and their struggle to prevent the flooding of the sacred land and native ecology they have called home for centuries. The Winnemem evoked the ceremonial War Dance to protect their sacred sites, burial grounds, and historical village sites from further destruction in 1887, 2004 and 2009.

The Winnemem Wintu-DataCenter partnership will probe the tribe's ecological, cultural and spiritual perspectives and attempt to assess the potential impact of California water policy concerning the Mt. Shasta watershed on the Tribe. Data from the Project will be used to support the Winnemem Wintu Tribe's efforts to preserve their sacred lands, their historical knowledge of those sites, and sustain their culture.

Making Contact is produced by National Radio Project, a weekly documentary-style public affairs program on over 200 radio stations.

photo by Christopher McCleod

Winnemem Wintu leader Caleen Sisk-Franco.

Get the Winnemem Wintu story on your public radio station, contact Lisa @ 510-251-1332 ext 105 or lrudman@radioproject.org.

Listen to the story at
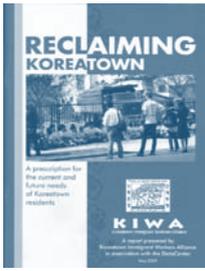www.radioproject.org/archive/2009/1909.html

NEW REPORTS

RECLAIMING KOREATOWN

In August, Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA) in association with DataCenter released *Reclaiming Koreatown*, a report that presents current and future needs of neighborhood residents and analyzes the challenges facing the multi-ethnic, low-income Koreatown community in Los Angeles. Rent increases, the reduction of affordable housing, displacement, unaffordable new businesses, an increase in traffic, and a decrease in parking are among top concerns, with up to 90% of surveyed residents expressing concern about these issues. The report calls for development that is accountable to the Koreatown resident community and puts forth a set of principles for improving housing affordability and economic well-being.

DOWNLOAD THESE NEW REPORTS FROM OUR WEBSITE: WWW.DATACENTER.ORG

ECHOES FROM THE SILENCE: RAISING OUR VOICES

Congratulations to Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) member leaders, who, as a result of undergoing the first DataCenter-MUA participatory research project in 2006, designed and implemented their own survey project. DataCenter provided data analysis and technical support towards the end of the project. The newly released bilingual report, "Echoes from the Silence: Raising Our Voices" shares the results from a 2008 study conducted by MUA members. The objective was to understand the experiences of Latina immigrant survivors of domestic violence in the Bay Area, and offer recommendations how to improve services for Latina immigrant survivors of family violence. MUA is a leader in strategically applying tools of social science to make their stories impact policy!

organizations with either less money or finding new sources. It's about help for people to not feel isolated, not feel they have just lost it all but rather help folks expand and challenge their thinking."

The SOS Project will ask hundreds of organizers and base-building groups about the economy's impact and innovative strategies they are using. The findings will shed light on the wisdom that exists among those on the forefront of building the social justice movement.

Findings will be released through convenings, webinars and the blog, and a release event at the United States Social Forum in Detroit in June 2010. Get involved, contact Saba: saba@datacenter.org.

SOS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Lian Cheun, Khmer Girls for Action

Marjorie Fine, The Linchpin Campaign

Priscilla Hung, Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT)

Sayòkla D. Kindness-Williams, Turtle Clan, Oneida Nation of WI

Arif Mamdani, Progressive Technology Project

Denise Perry, Power U Center for Social Change

WELCOME TO BOARD MEMBER

Max Weintraub, a toxics officer with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He founded the Environmental Justice and Health Union and is an instructor for the environmental justice course at UC Berkeley. Max received his M.S. in environmental advocacy from the University of Michigan and is a senior fellow of the Environmental Leadership Program.

Check out our new website at www.datacenter.org!

Join us on Facebook!

Rini Templeton, www.riniart.org