

Joining Forces, Taking Action

Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
32nd Annual Meeting
Saturday December 2nd, 2006

2006 Annual Report



NWBCCC
103 E. 196th Street
Bronx, NY 10468
(718) 584-0515

President's Report

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition for giving me the opportunity to serve as President of this organization for the past three years. This is not a farewell address, as I will continue on the Board and as a member. I look forward to working with all of you to ensure that this organization continues to build power and win change for all residents of the Northwest Bronx. My successor is more than qualified to take these Presidential reins; she is an extraordinary leader who will provide great vision, energy and leadership in the coming year. Please join me in welcoming Teresa Andersen as the new President of the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC).

This has been a year of tremendous momentum in the Northwest Bronx. After ten years of struggle, the City of New York has finally issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Kingsbridge Armory. Yes, the process has finally begun to turn this empty building into a true community asset! Check out the Armory Committee report for the latest on this campaign. A recent highlight is our non-partisan "Voter Power Project," was also hugely successful as we contacted 3,816 occasional voters through doorknocking in this fall's election and doubled their turnout to the polls in the primary and general elections.

In 2006 we also successfully completed our strategic planning process and created a new ten year vision for the organization. In the next ten years we want a community that is stable, multi-ethnic, mixed-income, and not gentrified; a community where our members live free of crisis and are able to pursue their ambitions; a community where there are strong relationships among a diverse community of people; and a community where NWBCCC represents the majority of the community. We also have specific five years goals and objectives:

1. Implement a critical mass organizing strategy with the 420,000 people who live in the Northwest Bronx



Ronn Jordan, second from left, tours Armory with Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff and KARA leaders in May 2006.

- a. Engage 1% (4,200) in organizing, and 10%+ (42,500+) in membership
- b. Ensure that the leadership and membership of NWBCCC mirrors our constituency
2. Address new issues that affect the majority of the community
 - a. Initiate campaigns to increase affordable and accessible health care
 - b. Initiate campaigns to create new good jobs and progressive economic development
 - c. Initiate campaigns that improve safety and decrease violence in the community
3. Continue successful campaigns to increase and preserve affordable housing, improve public education, develop the Kingsbridge Armory, and protect the rights of immigrants
4. Develop a strong broad-based organization that has excellent relationships with clergy and religious congregations
5. Build strategic alliances with unions and other partners
6. Use voter education and mobilization to advance all of our campaigns

Today's obstacles to such a vision, however, have never been greater. The Bronx is the poorest urban county in the United States, and the fourth poorest overall after three border counties in Texas. In the richest city in the country, of the richest city in the world, our constituents face unemployment rates that approach 20%. High school graduation rates lurk under 40%, and it doesn't take much work to connect the dots here.

As we move forward together I am truly excited about the future of this organization. After thirty-two years we have restructured the way we organize in the Northwest Bronx to be even more united, more powerful, and more able to bring home the victories to our members. Remember – "all organizing is reorganizing." So, let's build on the incredible work of our founders and the thousands of leaders who have worked tirelessly for justice in the Northwest Bronx!

Treasurer's Report

NORTHWEST BRONX COMMUNITY AND CLERGY COALITION, INC.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2006

			Audited	Draft
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	2006 Total	2005 Total
<u>Revenue and other support</u>				
Grants				
Government grants	\$ 2,042,750	\$ -	\$ 2,042,750	\$ 1,695,833
Contributions	136,766	1,133,783	1,270,549	930,930
Other revenue	75,402	-	75,402	-
Fund raising	43,744	-	43,744	46,551
Less: direct expenses	(10,080)	-	(10,080)	(7,755)
Program revenue	386	-	386	6,444
In-kind contribution	7,000	-	7,000	-
Interest and dividends	7,973	-	7,973	228
Total	2,303,941	1,133,783	3,437,724	2,672,231
Net assets released from restrictions	852,081	(852,081)	-	-
Total revenue and other support	3,156,022	281,702	3,437,724	2,672,231
<u>Expenses</u>				
Program and support services	3,032,301	-	3,032,301	2,540,550
Total expenses	3,032,301	-	3,032,301	2,540,550
Change in net assets before capitalization		123,721	281,702	405,423
131,681				
Adjustments for capitalization	45,005		45,005	
Change in net assets after capitalization	168,726	281,702	450,428	131,681
Net assets at beginning of year	(78,101)	645,455	567,354	435,673

Heights Region Report

Our goal is to improve the quality of life in Kingsbridge and University Heights.

On Thursday, September 28th 2006 leaders from the Kingsbridge Heights Neighborhood Improvement Association, the United Committees of University Heights, Our Lady of Angels Parish and the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center brought together more than 150 concerned residents from the University and Kingsbridge Heights neighborhoods for a public meeting. The community addressed issues of unsafe traffic conditions and more police vigilance with the Bronx Commissioner of the Department of Transportation Bronx and the commanding officers from the 50th and 52nd police precincts at the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center.

Together, we won the following victories this year:

- Increased foot patrols in and around Fort Four Park
- Increased enforcement of park hours
- Increased patrol on weekend nights on Webb, Claflin and Sedgwick Aves
- Commanding officers agreed to meet with area youth to discuss enforcement/student

harassment issues

- Increased car and foot patrol in and around Devoe
- Bronx DOT agreed to conduct study of identified traffic “hot spots”

Kingsbridge and University Heights community leaders are still not satisfied with the level of drug dealing, prostitution, robbery and other crimes in the area. We want to work with appointed and elected government officials to come up the long and short term solutions to the high crime in the area. In terms of hazardous traffic conditions, we want to keep pressure on the DOT to implement pedestrian-friendly safety measures like speed bumps, yield and stop signs. In the coming year we plan to meet with the New York Police Department’s Bronx Commander, Bronx Commissioner of the Department of Transportation Bronx Borough, and many problem landlords in our area.

For more information, please contact Heights Regional Organizer Emmanuel Caicedo at 917-325-1633.



Heights leaders take action on September 28, 2006.

Northern Region Report

Our goal is to improve the quality of life in Mosholu-Woodlawn, Bedford Park, and the Forham-Bedford neighborhoods.

One of the festival organizers, college student Oscar Peña, reflected on the community celebration: *“We turned out 150 people to a festival that was diverse and really fun.”*

The Northern Region took action in 2006:

In the past year, leaders in the Northern Region have been closely tracking the millions of dollars headed to our parks in exchange for the Filtration Plant currently being built in Van Cortlandt Park. In particular, we helped plan the redevelopment of Harris Field and Williamsbridge Oval Park, creating a process that was very inclusive of community voices. In October of this year, Northwest Bronx adult and youth leaders also put together a successful festival in Oval Park with the support of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz. In addition, this fall we began to work intensely to ensure that more local residents are hired in the construction of the Filtration Plant near Jerome and Gun Hill Road.

Our 2006 Accomplishments:

- * Conducted an extensive survey of users of the Williamsbridge Oval Park to assess what community residents want improved
- * Toured Oval Park with Bronx Parks Commissioner Hector Aponte to communicate our priorities
- * The plan recently released for the Oval Park redevelopment closely represents the interests of community residents
- * Helped establish the new “Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval,” supported by the Mosholu Preservation Corporation
- * 150 children, adults, and elderly residents gathered for an eclectic and high-energy festival in Oval Park this October



Brazilian circus performer Fernando Nogueira engaged an excited crowd of Norwood residents gathered for the Oval Park Festival on October 14, 2006.

* The Department of Environmental Protection’s Request for Proposals for contractors at the Filtration Plant included our concern about the need to increase local hiring

Our plans for 2007:

The issue of getting quality jobs for local residents in the construction of the Croton Filtration Plant is growing hotter and hotter in the Northern Region. Though the plant is being built on the promise it would create work for Bronxites, so far only 25% of jobs have gone to Bronx residents and of those, the vast majority are dead-end security jobs, not good paying construction jobs with a family wage and a future.

As the Department of Environmental

Protection plans for the 600 new construction jobs that will start next year, NWBCCC is working with community members, public officials, and experts in the field to ensure a large portion of those jobs go to local residents. Specifically, we want:

- * Department of Environmental Protection – (1) Maximize the funds and speed with which support gets to local pre-apprentice programs and to stipends for program participants; (2) Work with the contractor to get the maximum number of Bronx workers on the site overall
- * Unions – (1) Set aside apprentice slots for graduates of local pre-apprentice programs; (2) Prioritize local residents in determining who is sent to this job
- * Contractor – (1) Allow apprentices to fill approximately ¼ of jobs on the site; (2) Work with the Department of Environmental Protection to get the maximum number of Bronx workers on the site overall

To get involved in the local and neighborhood issues in the Northern Region, contact: Abby Bellows (Northern Region Organizer) – 646-642-6313

Southern Region Report

Our goal is to develop leadership and address local community issues within the Southern Region, which includes the neighborhoods of Mt. Hope, Crotona and University/West Burnside.

“Forming a tenant association in our building forced the landlord to make repairs because he found out that our building would be getting inspected by New York Community Bank. It also showed us that as a collective we do have power in shaping our living conditions.”

Joseph Ferdinand, Member, 60 E. 177th St. Tenant Association

Southern Region in 2006

The past year in the Southern Region has seen two distinct struggles take shape: the struggle for quality housing and the struggle for the city-wide recognition of two Muslim Holidays Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, in the Department of Education calendar. First, NWBCCC was able to bring the T-CEP program to ten buildings in the Southern Region, resulting in roof-to-cellar inspections for all of them bringing four landlords into litigation with HPD. The NWBCCC also worked with tenant associations to ensure that local banks were enforcing the Good Repairs Clause that all landlords must honor as part of their contract with banks who loan them money. When banks were made aware of cases where landlords that they loaned money to were not honoring this agreement, they held bank inspections in buildings, forcing many landlords to make repairs.

Secondly, the NWBCCC has joined the city-wide Muslim Holiday Campaign. While Muslims are the fastest growing religious community in New York City, the City's public school system still does not recognize the need to have schools closed in recognition of this community's major holidays. In November, the NWBCCC, New Settlement/Parent Action Committee, New York Civic Participation Project and other groups held a Community Forum in the Islamic Cultural Center of New York where many Muslim leaders from the Southern Region came together with other leaders from around the city to give voice to students who are often forced to choose between attending school and practicing their religion. The Forum brought together over three hundred concerned Muslims and non-Muslims who recognize the need for the city to acknowledge the religious holidays of the Muslim community the way that other religious communities are recognized.

Victories in 2006:

- Brought T-CEP inspections to ten buildings in Southern Region and got four litigation cases with HPD.
- Worked with Citibank, New York Community Bank and Washington Mutual to get bank

inspections in buildings where landlords were not honoring the Good Repairs Clause. Landlords were often forced to make repairs because of these inspections.

- As a part of the Muslim Holiday Campaign, we helped organize a Community Forum with over three-hundred people demanding city-wide school closings on Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha.

Our plan for 2007:

There is much more work to be done to improve our neighborhoods in the coming year. On the housing front, we must continue to follow up on the progress made with HPD and the litigation process for buildings that will have cases in court in 2007. We must also continue to identify buildings in our area that are managed poorly by landlords who borrowed money from the previously mentioned banks so that we can get bank inspections of those buildings. We must continue to work with Muslim leaders, as well as education and immigrant leaders from around the city to build momentum and visibility for the Muslim Holiday Campaign and show Mayor Bloomberg and the School Chancellor Joel Klein that this is an issue of religious equality. Safety on our streets is a constant concern for the people of our community. To that extent, the Southern Region wants to strengthen the relationship between the police department and the community and hold more constructive precinct meetings to keep communication active and productive between the people and the police. Specifically, we plan to take the following actions in 2007:

- Work with tenant associations to follow up on buildings headed to litigation with HPD under the T-CEP program. Make expansion and enforcement of T-CEP a priority for our members of City Council and the Commissioner of HPD.
- Identify buildings whose landlords have borrowed money from banks that we work with to enforce Good Repair Clause and hold those banks, and the landlords they lend to, accountable for the living conditions in those buildings.
- Get the support of Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein for religious equality in our schools and the creation of two city-wide public school holidays for the Muslim holidays of Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha.
- Work more closely with precincts and tenant associations in the area to create strategies to improve community.

To get involved in local organizing in the neighborhoods of the Southern Region contact Orlando Torres at 917-443-6359.

Housing Committee Report

“Banks are now working with community groups to force Landlords to make repairs. My building is an example of one that has been transformed as a result of our agreement with Citibank! We are ready to keep working hard to make sure that other buildings receive the same attention from all Banks. The fight for better housing continues!” Ramona Santana

The Northwest Bronx Coalition Housing committee began 2006 focused on getting New York Community Bank (the Largest Multifamily Lender in NYC) to sign an agreement saying that they would work with us to put pressure on Problem Landlords by upholding the Good Repair clause in the mortgage and abiding by the Community Reinvestment Act. In March of 2006, after making a trip out to the home and workplace of CEO Joseph Ficalora with other groups as part of the Fix it Now Campaign (part of the larger Housing Here and Now coalition), we were successful!

Subsequently, we succeeded in getting several other banks to meet with us, sign agreements, and perform full roof-to-cellar inspections! They include: Citibank, Astoria Bank, Flushing Savings Bank, North Fork Bank and Washington Mutual Bank. In addition to the Bank campaign we led actions at the Rent Guidelines Board Bronx hearing and final vote, met with Moishe Pillar (notorious problem landlord) twice, organized a full day retreat for our committee, met with Governor-Elect Eliot Spitzer and Luis Aragon, Deputy Commissioner of Preservation Services at HPD.

Our victories in 2006 include:

- Met with and signed bank agreements with: New York Community Bank, Citibank, Astoria Bank, Flushing Savings Bank, North Fork Bank, Washington Mutual Bank, Ridgewood Bank.
- Organized actions around the Rent Guidelines Board (Bringing 150 people to the first ever Bronx Hearing and shutting down the final vote for 3 hours) to put pressure on both city and state government about the need for Affordable and Safe Housing.
- Met with Governor- elect Eliot Spitzer who agreed to pass enabling legislation for the city to

create an administrative Tribunal system for collecting housing code fines outside of housing court.

- Completed three rounds of T-CEP inspections a new program aiming to revitalize and improve HPD Code Enforcement by having roof-to-cellar inspections routinely done in buildings that are in greatest need.
- Organized tenant associations in more than twenty-five buildings who have used the new HPD and bank inspection programs to get tens of thousands of dollars in repairs made.

At the 2006 Housing Committee Retreat in August we decided to work in 2007 on:

- (a) Enforcement of the Housing Maintenance Code (via, TCEP, and the Repair Enforcement Board) by challenging the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the City Council to hold landlords accountable to promptly fix all of the violations in their buildings
- (b) Continue and strengthen the enforcement of Bank Agreements with all “Problem Lenders”
- (c) Reforming the Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) to actively support Tenant’s Rights
- (d) Repeal of the Urstadt Law that prevents New York City from having home rule over its own rent laws. We will challenge our State Legislators and State Officials to support the repeal.



Approximately 150 NWBCCC Leaders participated in the Bronx Rent Guidelines Board hearing at Hostos Community College. June 19th 2006.

To get involved in the Housing Committee, contact:

Hilda Chavis, Steering Committee Member
Myra Goggins, Steering Committee Member
Brenda Irizarry, Steering Committee Member
Xiomara Mejias, Steering Committee Member
Ramona Santana, Steering Committee Member
Jose Sussana, Steering Committee Member
Joya Colon, Lead Housing Organizer 646-533-5302

Armory Committee Report

Our goal is to redevelop the Kingsbridge Armory into a mixed-use development that will meet the community's educational, retail, entertainment, recreational and social needs as well as provide a source of quality living wage union jobs to local residents.

"This is a victory because [the Economic Development Corporation] has never had living wage language in an Request For Proposals before," said Desiree Pilgrim-Hunter, a Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance member who served on the city-led taskforce that drafted the RFP. *"It's economically viable. Lots of money is going to be made, but not at the expense of the community. The community has to be at the forefront of what [developers] do."* (From City Limits)

Major Organizing Activities

This year the Armory Campaign made major progress in what has been a long eight-year struggle to get the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory moving forward with the community's vision. In October 2005, NWBCCC formed the Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance with the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) to unite local churches, community organizations and unions to fight for a community vision for the Armory. That vision was developed at our October 2005 planning summit at Lehman College that brought together over 100 community members. KARA went on to release a platform of "Community Benefit Principles" in March 2006 at a 200 person forum held at St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church. Religious, community and union leaders joined Assemblyman Jose Rivera and other elected officials in signing on to these principles.

The momentum of the St. Nicholas of Tolentine Forum led to a tour of the Armory with Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Daniel Doctoroff in June 2006 where he announced that the city was preparing to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) in the fall. KARA was able to help craft the RFP through a task force that included community members, elected officials and city agencies. After eight years of work, the RFP was released in September 2006. On September 30, over 300 community members came to the KARA rally on the drill floor of the Armory to celebrate the victory and to pledge to continue the campaign until the Armory is up and running as a multi-use facility. To date, all local elected officials have signed onto the KARA platform with the exception of Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion.

Victories:

- § In September 2006 the City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) released the RFP, officially beginning the search for a

developer. Setting a new standard for good economic development, the city included in the RFP a preference for developers that meet the KARA vision for living wage jobs paying \$10 or more an hour, and stores and facilities that will meet our community's needs such as a bookstore, recreation center, and two of the four schools that we want build on the 195th St. portion of the Armory site.

2007 will be a big year for the campaign:

Now we must ensure that the city *selects* a developer that will fulfill our KARA vision. In addition, we must continue to press the Department of Education to take full advantage of the opportunity to build four schools on 195th St. to eliminate overcrowding in District 10 schools. Overcrowding is a serious problem in our high schools – the Walton High School Campus adjacent to the Armory was at 190% of capacity in 2005 (the last year for which statistics are available from the Department of Education). This is unacceptable. Currently the DOE only plans on constructing two schools, half the number we are asking for and neither will be a high school.

List of Community Demands:

- § We want the NYCEDC to select a developer that will fulfill our KARA vision
- § We want the Department of Education to build four schools for a total of 2,000 seats at the Armory. We want two of the four to be high schools.
- § We want the selected developer to sign a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) and Labor Peace Agreement with KARA to ensure that their commitments to the community are upheld.

Contact Ava Farkas at 646-533-5454 if you would like to get involved in the Armory Campaign.

Immigrant Rights Report

The immigrant rights committee fights for equal rights for immigrants at the local and national level.

"We showed the Bronx, the city, and the world this year that immigrants are united and will not stop until we get legislation that will allow our families to be together."

Djounedou Titikpina

2006 was a year of historic action by immigrants and their allies in the Bronx

The passage of HR 4437 by the House of Representatives in December 2006 shocked the country. When our communities heard that Congress was considering legislation that would make it a felony to assist someone without immigration status, would turn local police into immigration agents, and would increase the detention and deportation of our loved ones, they took action. Forty-five Bronx clergy and institutional leaders came together for an emergency meeting early in 2007, and with the help of community members, planned the first Bronx Immigrant Rights Townhall Meeting at Hostos College on March 4th which was attended by over 500 people. The NWBCCCC Immigrant Rights Committee

advocated for comprehensive immigration reform that includes: 1) Path to Citizenship for the 12 million plus undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S and their family members; 2) Workers Rights; 3) Keep our Families Together by stopping deportation; and 4) Civil rights for all. We took this message to the streets, to elected officials in NYC and Washington, D.C., and to the polls in November:

- January 2006: Legal Clinic and Citizenship Drive at Roosevelt High School: led immigrant rights organizing trainings, legal consultations, and citizenship applications for over 200 residents in collaboration with 32BJ and Northern Manhattan Immigrant Rights Coalition.
- February 14, 2006: Visited Senator Schumer and Clinton's offices for a surprise Valentine's Day Action with "Immigrant Communities in Action" and won meetings with the Senators the following week

- March 4, 2006: Spearheaded coalition of Bronx and city-wide groups to organize the 500 person Bronx Immigrant Rights Townhall with Congressman Jose Serrano at Hostos College
- March 27, 2006: Mobilized 100 Bronx residents and Clergy for DC rally and visits with our representatives in Congress that succeeded in getting legislation introduced on Senate floor the following day for a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants in the US.
- April 10, 2006: Mobilized hundreds for NYC immigrant rights march
- May 1, 2006: Organized a Human Chain of 5,000 immigrant workers, students, business owners, religious leaders, and elected officials including

Congressman Jose Serrano on Fordham Road from Webster to Jerome, and then marched over 207th St. bridge to Manhattan.

- May 20, 2006: Interfaith Mothers Day Press Conference with mothers whose loved one were detained or deported and Muslim and Christian Clergy at Our Lady of Mercy Church.

- Summer 2006: Held second part of the Training on Deportation for Community Leaders, and Get out the Vote.

- September 2006:

Sent a bus to Washington, D.C. for Labor Day Immigrant Rights Rally and visits with Congressman Serrano and Senators Clinton and Schumer.



The campaign continues in 2007

In the coming year we plan to continue to demand action from Congress to reform our federal immigration system so that it serves the needs of families in the Bronx. At the same time, we will hold meetings in congregations and the community to identify local issues and to initiate a campaign to make real change in the Bronx, on issues such as workers rights or healthcare.

For more information, contact NWBCCC at 718-584-0515.

Education Committee Report

Our goal is to engage parents and families and improve the quality public education for all children in the Northwest Bronx community.

"We are looking out for the well-being of our children today so that they can teach other children tomorrow."
Magdalena Flores.

In 2006 the NWBCCC Education Committee took action at the state, city, and neighborhood levels to improve the quality of education in the Northwest Bronx.

Statewide Organizing

As a founding member organization in the Statewide Alliance for Quality Education (AQE), parents, students and teachers of the NWBCCC worked to restore \$1.8 billion dollars in cuts to the New York City Capital Budget by traveling to Albany to pressure State Legislators to fully fund the \$13.2 billion dollar capital plan last spring. In October education committee members participated in a two day statewide "Yellow School Bus" press tour to emphasize the need for the New York State Court of Appeals to settle the 13 year old lawsuit brought against the State by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE). On Monday November 20, 2006 the State Court of Appeals issued a verdict that New York City public schools are owed only \$1.93 billion dollars from the state to provide a sound basic education to our children. This is the minimum that the court could have decided, and both the city and the state will have to allocate billions more dollars this spring so that every student has a quality education in New York City and across the state.

Citywide Organizing

In 2006 the "Lead Teacher" program was embraced by the DoE and expanded to over 200 schools citywide. The program adds lead teachers in the 4th grade to team-teach classes and mentor newer teachers. The program was started by the Community Collaborative to Improve Bronx Schools (CCB), where NWBCCC is a member. We received national exposure for the program that started in 10 schools in Region 1. CCB members traveled across the United States to talk about this unique project, which included two NWBCCC members

speaking on a panel at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in March. Another "Pilot Program" initiated by CCB to increase safety for our children around schools by improving the flow of traffic and adding speed calming devices. While this program was not incorporated borough-wide as we had hoped, we were able to have these devices installed at many of our Bronx schools. We are currently on the steering committee of the newly created citywide organization, the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ).

Local Organizing

We decided to spend a significant part of this year to focus on local base-building. At two schools, parents, teachers and the administration came together to plan fun events like a family movie night, an international food day, and other relationship-building activities. More recently our first Education Committee meeting of this school year was attended by over 30 parents, most of them new members to discuss the issues in three area schools. In October, City Council Education Committee chair Robert Jackson spoke to over 200 parents, and students from Sistas & Brothas United (SBU), at PS/MS 279. This event was co-hosted by NWBCCC and CCB and focused on how parents think new state money should be used to improve our schools. Our major victories in 2006 include:

- * We helped win \$1.8 billion dollars in new capital funding for NYC schools
- * We became a founding member of the citywide Campaign for Educational Justice
- * The Lead Teacher program went citywide



Teresa Andersen and Ronn Jordan discuss education issues at the Education Committee's September meeting.

2007 will be a very big year for education issues in the Bronx and New York City

The Education Committee is fighting against overcrowding – and for school construction so that no elementary, middle or high school is overcrowded and all students have room to learn. This year we are going to take action on improving teacher quality, lowering smaller class size, reducing overcrowding, improving school safety, expanding after school programs, and addressing special education issues. This year as part of CCB and CEJ we will pay special attention to fixing the problem of our failing middle schools. Middle schools are

continued on next page

Leadership Institute Report

The goal of the Leadership Institute is to provide quality education for youth through interdisciplinary themes of social justice, community action and leadership.

"We, the students of the Leadership Institute, have rallied, protested and met with various Department of Education officials in the struggle to secure our own school building. We have learned to fight for what we deserve and we will continue on our struggle until we win."

-Antonio Severino,
Sophomore at the Leadership Institute

The Leadership Institute in 2006:

This past year the Leadership Institute students and teachers worked with SBU/NWBCCC members on securing a permanent site for the school which is currently located in the PS/MS 4 annex. Leaders also got DOE officials to pay attention to the serious repair issues needed to make the school's current location meet a minimum standard of

resources. In regards to both issues, leaders met with the School Construction Authority, Department of Education Region 1 Superintendent, and the Office of New Schools. Leaders also organized various school tours for these officials to see the conditions at the PS/MS 4 annex for themselves. Students organized a town hall and a demonstration demanding that Garth Harries, Chief Operating Officer of the Office of New Schools, meet with them in PS/MS 4 and respond to their demands. Our victories this year include:

- Students got several school repairs in PS/MS 4 (adjusted stair case railings, new black boards, adjusted radiator cages, etc.)
- Successfully secured a meeting and school tour with Garth Harries, Chief Operating Officer of the Office of New Schools.

Education Committe continued from previous page

actually the weakest link in the pathway to college. We plan to succeed by making sure our students have what they need in elementary, middle and high school! In 2007 we must:

- Get the city and state to agree to fund a comprehensive school construction plan that eliminates overcrowding in elementary, middle and high schools

In 2007 the Leadership Institute will continue to focus on a quality high school education for all students:

Leadership Institute leaders will continue to fight for a permanent location for their school as it was promised by DOE officials when the school was established. Leaders will continue to work on getting the necessary repairs for their current location. Leaders will work on holding the Office of New Schools officials accountable for finding a

permanent location for the school. In addition, leaders will work on creating the structure and framework for their student government. Our key demands for 2007 include:

- Leadership Institute leaders demand that Garth Harries and other Department of Education officials provide a permanent location other than PS/MS 4 for the school.
- Leaders demand that DOE officials make PS/M. 4 a viable school facility for this current school year and the next before a move to a permanent location is



Leadership Institute students demonstrate their leadership at the Department of Education

secured.

- In the coming year we plan to meet with the following officials to secure these commitments: Garth Harries, Chief Operating Officer of the Office of New Schools; Joel Klein, Chancellor of the Department of Education; and Dennis M. Walcott, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development.

For more information about the Leadership Institute and our campaigns, please contact:

Riquelmi Gomez, CAPS Coordinator
The Leadership Institute
1701 Fulton Avenue
Bronx, NY 10457
718- 229-7490 (o)
646-533-5420 (c)

- Get support on our campaign to eliminate overcrowding from Department of Education Chancellor Joel Klein, Bronx Borough President Aldolfo Carrion, and School Construction Authority President Sharon Greenberger

To get involved in improving public education in the Bronx, contact: Amanda Devecka-Rinear 917-213-6028, Education Organizer and Ava Farkas 646-533-5454, Armory Organizer

Sistas and Brothas United Report

SBU's mission is to develop the leadership of youth in the Northwest Bronx community who are concerned with the conditions in their neighborhood, interested in developing creative ways to address these problems in concrete ways, and believe in their own ability to build people power to hold all public officials accountable for the decisions they make. SBU's leaders fight for educational justice, more jobs for youth and community residents, and for more community-based resources.

"A frustrated batter can't hit the ball if he is unfocused. So when students feel like school is a prison, they are getting suspended for minor problems, or they don't have enough time to go through metal detectors to get to school on time, they get unfocused and frustrated. How are we expected to learn when we are frustrated with these problems? School officials need to understand that maintaining a calm mind and clear focus is the best solution to taking the 'prison' out of our schools."

Rafael Pena, SBU Co President

Major Organizing Activities in 2006:

Sistas and Brothas United's (SBU) membership base of youth leaders has continued to grow at three local high schools – Kennedy, Walton and Clinton, and expanded to include Roosevelt and the Leadership Institute. This year 150 new youth and fifty core leaders participated in SBU education and community development campaigns locally and citywide. Our efforts to increase the leadership responsibilities of new members have resulted in an increase of our core leadership base. Currently all our campaigns are driven by core leaders with between five and ten new members on each committee. Our 2006 goals and outcomes are:

Goal #1: To improve high school graduation rates among area youth

- **Outcome:** As part of the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC) we developed a citywide Education Platform that includes recommendations for school safety and guidance policy reforms. We believe that these reforms will help address systemic inequalities in our public education system that contribute to low graduation rates. In the past year our leaders have met with top city and Department of Education (DOE) officials, including Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, and DOE Senior Counselor for Education Policy Michelle Cahill, all of whom have signaled their willingness to

work with us on the implementation of our Education Platform.

Goal#2: Improve quality and quantity of guidance counselor services in at least three area high schools

- **Outcome:** We won a commitment from the DOE to create an internal position to oversee guidance policy reform citywide. Recently we met with Yvonne Torres, the newly appointed DOE Region 1 Superintendent, who committed to working with us to build effective relationships with local principals. We continue to meet with local principals about the creation of student success centers on local high school campuses.

Goal #3: Improve school safety in local schools / take leadership role in citywide school safety campaign

- **Outcome:** As part of the UYC we met with the DOE Chancellor Joel Klein and Deputy Mayor Dennis Wolcott to discuss revisions to the DOE's

school safety policies. Elements of the UYC education platform that address school safety problems include a provision for students to conduct trainings for school safety officers, a gang mediation program and a re-evaluation of the effectiveness of metal detectors. Though the chancellor and deputy mayor expressed willingness to work with us on these issues, in April the mayor announced

heightened security measures in high schools, including random scanning and increased use of metal detectors. On May 25th UYC members from around the city traveled to City Hall to deliver testimony about the negative impact of the DOE's school safety practices to the mayor. SBU members collected 2,500 signed cards from Bronx students denouncing these policies and presented them to the Mayor's staff (9,000 cards were collected citywide).

In the meantime we are working to address students' lack of access to services through our academic program. The SBU Academic Program organized an orientation for students and parents on high school graduation requirements and college preparation. Ginette also



Two hundred youth attended the SBU Annual Meeting in August.

worked this year to support the academic success of Leadership Institute students by holding similar orientations and setting up a peer tutoring program at the school.

SBU's leaders have also worked for three years to develop the concept for an art and technology center called BronXchanges. Students developed this idea by working with professionals from the Museum of Modern Art, Eyebeam, and artists they've met with at the Bronx Museum of Arts. Youth want the center to have an artist residency program that encourages community artists to work with people in the community to develop projects that integrate arts and technology fields together under the theme of social justice. Using feedback from the professionals they've worked with throughout the years they've completed an outline for three classes that they would like to start next year as the first phase of developing the art and technology center. The classes would focus on spoken word/ writing, theatre, and film/ photography.

Major victories in 2006:

- Collecting 2,500 postcards from students, parents, and teachers demanding that students be treated with dignity and respect regarding school safety policies
- Mobilizing 200 students to protest the Mayor's punitive school safety policies
- Training students, parents, teachers, and administrators of the Leadership Institute in community organizing and political education
- Completing the design for BronXchanges first three classes

Major organizing plans for 2007:

In the coming year SBU plans to address overcrowding and improve student success at John F. Kennedy High School, Walton High School, Dewitt Clinton High School, and Roosevelt High School. We plan to work with students, teachers, and principals on the following goals:

- The launch of a community-based art and technology center called BronXchanges
- A 70% four-year graduation rate, and 80% six-year graduation rate, in all area high schools
- A membership base of 500 youth, parent, teacher, and community leaders who are unified to create a more just world locally and beyond

Contact info

Staff: Mustafa Sullivan, SBU Director
Ginette Sosa, Academic Support Coordinator
Hector Gerardo, Youth Organizer
Jorman Nunez, Youth Organizer
718 584 0515