Occupy Everywhere!

Since the Occupy Wall Street Movement burst onto the scene last October, it has not only mobilized hundreds of thousands of people around the globe to protest economic inequality, it has also injected energy into local campaigns led by existing grassroots groups. These new protest movements could not have come at a more crucial time: with rulings like Citizens United unleashing millions of corporate dollars into the political system, the streets often feel like the only venue where progressive voices are heard. The Occupy Movement has utilized the power of popular protest to shift the public conversation from government deficits to the needs of the 99%.

Here in Chicago, the Occupy Movement has partnered with Crossroads Fund grantees repeatedly over the last six months, amplifying their voices and increasing their numbers. In November, Occupy joined forces with Jane Addams Senior Caucus and ADAPT Chicago to protest planned cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Their march and civil disobedience brought out over 1,500 people, and made it clear that our social safety net will not be dismantled without a fight. In February, parents, students, neighbours and members of Blocks Together and Occupy Chicago held a sit-in at Piccolo Elementary School, in West Humboldt Park, which was scheduled for turnaround by the Board of Education. In April, the Mental Health Movement, together with Occupy Chicago, and Southside Together Organized for Power, led an occupation and tent city outside of a public mental health clinic scheduled for closure by the city.

“Occupy Chicago was very supportive,” explained Blocks Together Co-Director Cecille Carole. “They took the time to do media trainings with the parents, which was important because there was 24 hour media attention. There were so many people who came to support us that first night [of the Piccolo occupation] it was almost overwhelming, but it gave those of us inside energy.”

Although it’s not yet clear what the long term outcomes of these “occupations” will be, this movement is bringing attention to critical issues and building solidarity across communities and movements. It’s not enough to simply fund organizations; we must also support broader movements to build more just communities. We are proud to host a pooled fund benefitting Occupy Chicago at Crossroads Fund. This fund continues our 30 year history of supporting emerging social movements, as we did with the disability rights movement, the LGBTQ rights movement, and the movement to abolish the death penalty and more.

It’s been a record year for marches, sit ins and civil disobedience, both in Chicago and around the world. Time Magazine declared “activists” as 2011’s person of the year, and grassroots movements for economic justice and government accountability will continue to grow through 2012. On May 20-21st, some of the world’s most powerful leaders will be coming to Chicago for the NATO summit, and tens of thousands of people from across the country are organizing in response. The meetings will provide a global platform to protest issues of war and militarization, economic justice and public policy. Although Crossroads Fund grantees’ work will continue long after the summits are over, these protests allow local groups to link up with movements for justice around the world.

Crossroads Fund is providing three technical assistance grants to local groups to help support crucial communications, health and legal infrastructure for the protests. Keep your eyes open for the planned marches and activities, including a “Peoples’ Summit” May 12-13. For more info, see http://cang8.wordpress.com/
Welcome New Board Member!

Welcome Julie Walther, the newest member of the Crossroads Fund Board of Directors! Julie is the Senior Director of Programs at the Center on Halsted. She has worked hard to expand access to factual, inclusive, sexuality health education materials to young people through her work on the board of the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health and the Chicago Public Schools Sex Ed Curriculum Review Committee. She has previously served as Senior Program Officer with The Brinson Foundation, and for Girl’s Best Friend Foundation.

And thanks to our outgoing board members and intern!

We will miss board members Rene David Luna and Barbara Kemmis. Rene served on the board for four years, and Barbara has been on the board since 2003! Your contributions to the Crossroads Fund board are much appreciated, and you will be missed!

Also leaving us is Emmanuel Garcia, our fifth Lisa Fittko intern. Emmanuel produced many outstanding multimedia pieces during his time with Crossroads Fund, including our 30th Anniversary award slide shows and two short web-videos highlighting grantees. To read his reflection on his time at Crossroads Fund and see his videos, visit the Crossroads Fund blog: http://www.crossroadsfund.org/blog

FIVE YEARS OF FUNDING YOUTH SOCIAL CHANGE.

Five years into grantmaking through the Youth Fund for Social Change, we remain humbled and inspired by the many young people who are taking a stand and transforming systems that harm them and their peers. Crossroads Fund was founded 30 years ago by a group of young activists interested in supporting social change. Over the past five years, the Youth Fund has continued that goal, supporting young people advocating for a trauma center in their neighborhood, engaging their elders to break cycles of violence, coming out as “undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic,” and empowering homeless LGBT youth, among other issues.

As we look toward our next 30 years as a resource for grassroots social change groups in the Chicago area, Crossroads Fund rededicates itself to supporting the development of youth leaders, through our many youth oriented initiatives: the Youth Fund for Social Change; the Lisa Fittko Internship, which immerses one young person each year in all aspects of our work; the Youth Fund grantmaking committee; technical assistance trainings; and movement-building convenings designed to meet the needs of youth organizations.

Around the world, youth-led movements are rising up to insert a voice in the decisions that directly affect them. We are proud to help partner in this work.

2012 Youth Fund grantees, are listed at http://www.crossroadsfund.org/blog/youthfundyearfive

What’s New at Crossroads Fund
Crossroads Fund Celebrates Our 30th Anniversary!

Crossroads Fund’s 30th Anniversary Celebration was a fantastic night of music, food and celebrating social justice. More than 500 people came out to honor the accomplishments of our awardees: Barbara Ransby, the Chicago Freedom School and the Occupy Movement. The event raised over $100,000 to support grassroots groups working for racial, social and economic justice in the Chicago area. For more photos and videos from the event, see http://www.crossroadsfund.org/30thanniversarywrapup.
BECOME A PARTNER IN CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE

When you give to Crossroads Fund, your gift is pooled with others and becomes a significant resource to foster social change in Chicago and beyond.

Here are some ways you can give to Crossroads Fund:

ATTEND OUR ANNUAL BENEFIT
and bring friends!

WRITE A CHECK
and return it in the enclosed remittance envelope. Find out if your employer matches contributions — that is an easy way to make your gift go much further.

BECOME A SUSTAINER
and have your contribution deducted from your credit card monthly or quarterly. As a sustainer, you can take pride in knowing that you are one of our most reliable sources of support.

CONTRIBUTE ONLINE
via our secure service. It’s quick, convenient and safe — just log on to www.crossroadsfund.org.

HONOR OR REMEMBER SOMEONE SPECIAL
with a gift in their name.

CO-HOST A HOUSE PARTY
and help us spread the word about the good work of Crossroads Fund to your colleagues, friends and family.

REMEMBER CROSSROADS FUND IN YOUR WILL, INSURANCE OR RETIREMENT PLAN
all three are easy ways to have a lasting impact for social justice.

OPEN A DONOR ADVISED FUND
and partner with us to have an impact on social justice issues.

ESTABLISH A CHARITABLE TRUST
to benefit Crossroads Fund, and reduce your tax burden.

For more information, please contact Sheila O’Donnell, Development Director, at 773.227.7676 or sheila@crossroadsfund.org.
Thank you so much to all of our generous individual, institutional and foundation donors for your continued commitment to grassroots organizing for social justice in Chicago.

- Also gave to Lisa Fitch Internship Fund
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