

**Youth  
Leadership  
for  
Development  
Initiative**

Broadening the  
parameters of  
youth development  
and strengthening  
civic activism

The Innovation Center  
for Community  
and Youth Development

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# Youth Leadership for Development Initiative

## **Young people bring passion, ideas, knowledge, and experience to community life**

As pure human capital in community ventures, youth offer tremendous and often untapped contributions. Young people's exuberance and optimism alone can make rich additions to efforts to strengthen communities. What's more, every young person, like every adult, has unique abilities and experience that can expand the capacities and outcomes of community development efforts. Yet all too often youth are seen only as heirs to the future, trustees of posterity who will in some distant future finally take their place as partners in civic life. For many community organizations and programs, youth are underused resources, overlooked and marginalized.

The exceptions, those organizations and projects that do involve young people as integral and respected leaders and participants, are not only enriching their endeavors, they are also exercising a powerful and promising strategy for youth development.

## **Youth as civic activists**

In a world that is now home to the largest-ever cohort of youth, it is critical to seriously consider how young people can exercise good citizenship. How are young people encouraged to be active participants in civic life? In particular, how do we ensure the involvement and contribution of young people who are not engaged in conventional youth development activities?

The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development believe that one path to the answer to these crucial questions is through youth involvement as leaders in civic activism, a forceful, dynamic strategy that recognizes that young people are capable of addressing societal problems and concerns and provides a forum for them to do so. In the process, young people acquire the core skills and competencies that prepare them to be community leaders now and in the future. The combination of youth leadership and civic activism offers great promise as a valuable approach in the broad constellation of positive youth development strategies.

Positive youth development, a process that sees young people as assets to themselves, their communities, and society at large, requires that young people have stable environments, services, and instruction. But they also need supports – relationships and networks that provide nurturing,

standards, and guidance, as well as opportunities for trying new roles, mastering challenges, and contributing to family and community. In addition to skills, young people must have a solid sense of safety and structure, membership, and belonging. They must also have a sense of purpose, responsibility, and self-worth.

Young people, with a combination of passionate indignation, optimistic enthusiasm, and a willingness to take risks and challenge the status quo, have long been associated with social movements for justice and equity. For example, young people's determination to bring about an end to the war in Vietnam and to extend civil rights to ethnic and racial minorities, women, and gays and lesbians transformed the cultural environment of the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. While much of this struggle was contentious and controversial and not every outcome was positive, there can be no question that the youth movement of those years made beneficial contributions to society. And the lives of the young people themselves were enhanced in the process.

Today, young people are often viewed as belonging to either end of a spectrum that is characterized at one end by a passive acceptance of the established culture and at the other end by alienation and the desire to bring the establishment down. The reality, however, is that the middle of this spectrum includes innumerable young people, youth who care deeply about the challenges their communities face and who want to work to create positive change. Furthermore, many of these young people find themselves outside the boundaries of prevailing youth development programming, and they are often motivated by the desire to change the societal forces that relegate them to the margins. For youth who are marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and immigrant status, opportunities to express how society has thwarted their development often help them to move forward in positive ways. Through civic activism, young people contribute meaningfully as they participate in community building, work toward social change, and apply their leadership skills, while at the same time gaining access to the services, supports, and opportunities that facilitate their own development.

## **Youth Leadership for Development Initiative**

In keeping with the Ford Foundation's new emphasis on the critical importance of leadership in achieving social change, the Foundation created the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative (YLDI) as an opportunity for organizations to explore how civic activism can be employed as a component of youth development programming. YLDI is managed by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, a project of the Tides Center that seeks to transform and enrich the youth development field by promoting bold and creative practices.

In conceiving and shaping YLDI, the quest for the Foundation and the Innovation Center concentrated on broadening the parameters of youth development and strengthening civic activism efforts. Issues of identity often remain unexplored in youth development programming. YLDI pushes these boundaries and demonstrates how youth development can take up identity as an important component of its work. And the initiative illustrates how social justice work is integral to the youth development mandate. Additionally, the Foundation and the Innovation Center were motivated by the desire to expand the existing pool of youth workers to include a new group – activists and community development practitioners who could become more

intentional about youth development. Thus, YLDI is constructed as a learning network of organizations, representing pluralistic constituencies, in which young people are engaged in civic activism.

The Foundation's exploration of community-based organizations involving young people in civic activism uncovered a substantial number of such organizations. Twelve U.S. community-based organizations were chosen from this national search to be part of the three-year YLDI learning network. Their selection was based on several factors, including a demonstration of a primary focus on community service and social issues, having been established or run by young adults, and a recognition in their work of the relationship among youth leadership development, civic activism, and positive youth development. The organizations represent an array of youth constituencies, including African American, Latino and Latina, Native American, Asian Pacific American, low-income white suburban, gay and lesbian, faith-involved, girl leaders, and low-income Asian immigrant women and children. All the groups will come together every eight months during the three-year initiative to share their experiences and discoveries in employing civic activism as a youth development strategy. Furthermore, each organization received financial support from the Foundation for building individual and organizational capacity.

In addition, the Foundation created the Youth Leadership for Development International Fellowship Program as a way to broaden the scope and impact of YLDI. Two fellows from South Africa have joined the YLDI learning group. International YLDI fellows will be eligible for project support for capacity-building work related to civic activism and youth development in their countries.

### **Building a better future**

In summary, YLDI is an investment in two intertwined beliefs: that youth are indispensable actors in creating a more just world, and that civic engagement is an indispensable tool for youth development practitioners. Through YLDI, the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center are exploring and identifying practical tools for integrating the elements of identity and civic activism into the youth development arena. Our aim is for the field to gain an increased understanding of and appreciation for the powerful possibilities in engaging youth in social change movements. Ultimately, we hope, young people in the United States and around the world will have greater opportunities in working to create more vibrant, democratic societies.

*Inca A. Mohamed*  
Program Officer  
The Ford Foundation

*Wendy Wheeler*  
President  
The Innovation Center for Community  
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# YLDI Organizations

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## **Asian Immigrant Women Advocates**

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(510) 268-0192  
Young Shin, Executive Director

Piece work in the sweatshops. Assembly-line work in dead-end jobs. Long hours. No security. And off the job, traditional family demands that must often be met alone. This is the situation for thousands of Bay Area women young and old, from China, Hong Kong, Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Founded in 1983 by Asian immigrant women workers, community activists, and union organizers, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) educates, serves, and fosters the empowerment and civic activism of low-income Asian immigrant women and their families, especially their children, so that they may actively participate in the decision-making processes that determine their working and living conditions. Today its 1,200 members are low-income Chinese, Korean, and Chinese-Vietnamese immigrant workers primarily from the garment, electronics assembly, and hotel industries.

AIWA's Youth Build Immigrant Power (YBIP) project has a base of some sixty youth from low-income immigrant families who develop their leadership skills to work with low-income Asian immigrant women and other disadvantaged communities.

The Foundation's support through YLDI is helping the organization realize its vision of fostering the leadership development of community youth to become organizers and activists with a commitment to economic and social justice. In its organizing work in the community, AIWA found that many young people were demonstrating their support for their mothers, aunts, grandmothers in their struggle for fair wages and safe working conditions. Building on that momentum, AIWA's YBIP project is strengthening its training model designed to address problems affecting low-income Asian immigrant women workers and their families, including language discrimination, economic injustice, racism, and sexism. YBIP is documenting this model in a multimedia package for replication.

## **C-Beyond**

1846-B Grant Street  
Concord, CA 94520  
(925) 676-6556  
Lisa Pintado, Executive Director

C-Beyond, a project of the Tides Center, was founded in 1997 by a group of four young men and women volunteers who saw the need to develop low-income, high school-aged youth from predominantly white communities in California – communities in which few multiracial models exist and where strong divisions and hindrances to collective action are found. Today the organization remains entirely youth-run; its mission continues to be guided by its vision of ending racism and discrimination in all its forms.

In order to meet young people's immediate needs and to build community strength for the future, C-Beyond has a dual approach of leadership development and community organizing. Its leadership development and training component educates and trains C-Beyond youth to be articulate and skilled leaders as they work with youth in Concord, California, to address the challenging situations that youth must regularly navigate. C-Beyond's community organizing program organizes community action campaigns through membership meetings, outreach, recruitment, petitioning, and attendance at government and private industry meetings. C-Beyond leaders guide new members through the process of researching community needs, constructing an action plan, and developing realistic goals and objectives for effecting change.

With its YLDI support, C-Beyond is recruiting new youth activists for intensive, paid training in positive social change and expanding its individual and organizational capacities.

## **The Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth**

Institute for Asian American Studies  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
100 Morrissey Blvd.  
Boston, MA 02125  
(617) 287-5689  
Trinh Thi Tuyet Nguyen, Coordinator

“We believe that youth, united by a common purpose, can make a difference.” So began a statement forged at the founding of the youth-run Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY) in May 1994. In partnership with the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts, CAPAY continues to challenge racial harassment and exclusion of Asian Pacific American youth in their high schools and communities. By conducting educational and youth leadership programs, CAPAY works toward its mission of abolishing stereotypes, improving race relations, promoting youth-led activism, and advocating for the inclusion of youth in critical decision making.

The organization’s annual youth-organized symposium draws some 400 teachers and community educators. Furthermore, CAPAY galvanizes community support around issues of welfare reform, immigration policy, domestic violence, and voter education. And its statewide Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Education Project works with more than forty-five high schools to educate communities about APA history, contributions, and struggles.

CAPAY is building its capacity in order to design and implement youth-led community-based projects for Asian Pacific American youth groups in Massachusetts high schools and in two additional youth-run organizations. These projects will allow the youth involved to recognize their abilities as agents of change and give them the opportunity to become decision makers and program developers in community projects.

## **Leadership Excellence**

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(510) 267-9770  
Nedra Ginwright, Executive Director

Leadership Excellence started in 1989 when college students at San Diego State University began a program to enhance leadership development opportunities for African American youth from San Diego’s low-income communities. In 1993 the organization moved to Oakland, California, where it continues to operate programs that provide grassroots community organizing and leadership skills to African American youth ages five to eighteen.

In Oakland, low-income African American youth are disproportionately represented in school failures, dropout rates, substance abuse, homicides, and the juvenile penal system. Leadership Excellence operates under the premise that young people themselves are in the best position to detect and solve the problems they experience in their daily lives. Indeed, the organization believes many of the problems exist because youth have no say in school, neighborhood, and community decisions. The organization believes that community involvement need not be only for youth who are already high achievers. Young people come to the organization through a wide referral network and an active outreach program. Emphasis is placed on recruiting applicants from low-income communities and families.

Underlying the organization's approach is the belief that by providing youth with a meaningful role in community problem solving, they will become more socially aware, academically motivated, and resilient in dealing with community, schools, and family problems. Leadership Excellence involves young people in workshops, training, and curricula that empower them to make positive changes in their communities and informed decisions about their lives.

### **Mi Casa Resource Center for Women, Inc.**

571 Galapago Street

Denver, CO 80204

(303) 573-1302

Gayle Warner, Director of Youth and Career Programs

In 1976, a group of women from Denver's Westside community gathered in a church basement and decided to change their lives. They did that, and they also changed their community. One year from that first meeting, the women established Mi Casa, with a mission to provide quality employment and education programs that promote self-sufficiency for primarily low-income Latina women and youth in the Denver area. Today, Mi Casa provides an array of services through three programmatic areas: career development, business development, and youth development.

Mi Casa's youth development component works to provide youth with comprehensive programs that give them the skills they need to make the transition from school to career, to avoid negative risk behaviors, and to improve their outlook for the future. Because the dropout rate for Latino and Latina students in Denver public schools is over 50 percent, and over 85 percent of participating youth come from low-income families, the youth development component emphasizes the importance of finishing high school, postponing pregnancy, and going on to postsecondary education as a means of overcoming poverty.

Youth and young adult staff members oversee the majority of youth development programming at Mi Casa. The organization is now building the leadership capacity of these staff to promote and support civic activism as an approach to youth development. They will identify three major community issues on which staff and youth are committed to work, and then develop a three-year youth civic activism plan to bring about positive change. Furthermore, the group is developing and implementing an annual training plan covering topics, identified through an assessment process, which may include supervision techniques, culture and diversity, mentoring and coaching, conflict management, decision making, leadership development, fund-raising, networking, and evaluation.

### **National Youth Advocacy Coalition**

1638 R Street, NW Suite 300

Washington, DC 20009

(202) 319-7596

Craig Bowman, Executive Director

Founded in 1993, the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC) is a social justice organization that advocates for and with young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning (LGBTQ) in an effort to end discrimination against these youth and to ensure their physical and emotional well-being. In addition, NYAC supports LGBTQ youth in their efforts to end discrimination for all socially and economically oppressed populations. NYAC is a coalition of both community-based and national organizations working to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth. The coalition has more than ninety-five members in thirty-three states across the United States and represents the field of the more than 300 LGBTQ youth-serving organizations nationwide, many of which NYAC helped establish.

In coordination with these youth-serving organizations, NYAC creates opportunities for social support, youth leadership, and civic involvement among LGBTQ youth and works to shift the framework of LGBTQ youth work from one of high-risk and pathology to one of healthy youth development and normalcy. While research continues to show LGBTQ youth at substantial risk of suicide, homelessness, drug abuse, school absenteeism, HIV/STDs, or depression, less documented is the lack of opportunities these youth have for healthy development, the development of leadership skills, feeling of empowerment, and a sense of community. By engaging youth in addressing the barriers they face, NYAC creates change while providing opportunities for youth to become empowered and connected and to gain skills applicable in any vocation they may enter.

NYAC is home to a range of projects and approaches, including the following:

- NYAC operates the most comprehensive and up-to-date national clearinghouse for information and materials on LGBTQ youth issues through the Bridges Project.
- NYAC identifies and makes available model programs for HIV prevention and health promotion among LGBTQ youth.
- Through its five-region infrastructure, its members are able to advocate locally and regionally, attend regional NYAC conferences closer to home, and channel their expertise and experiences on a local level to influence national policy.

NYAC is now undertaking a three-year Racial and Economic Justice Initiative to support youth leaders in fighting racism. The initiative is addressing the unique and often neglected intersection of race, class, and sexual orientation as it affects the healthy development of youth. NYAC's leadership reports that members have made it clear they are hungry for the skills and assistance to continue transforming the LGBTQ movement into a powerful agent in the struggle for social justice.

## **OUTRIGHT**

P.O. Box 5077

Portland, ME 04101

(207) 828-6560

Cindy Garthwaite, Youth Services Coordinator

OUTRIGHT was founded in 1987 in Portland, Maine, as a collaborative alliance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) youth and adults. OUTRIGHT creates safe, positive, and affirming environments for GLBT and questioning people ages twenty-two and under. The organization manifests a philosophy in which youth needs and beliefs inform decisions and a collaboration of youth and adults provides support, education, advocacy, and social activities.

OUTRIGHT's programs address hate crime prevention and civil and safe school environments for GLBT students. Its major activities include drop-in programs, support groups, individual support and mentoring with adult staff and volunteers, a transition group for twenty- to twenty-six-year-olds, HIV and substance abuse prevention, short-term special topic support groups, a youth leadership committee and development program, advocacy with other agencies, social activities, outreach and education to schools and youth-serving agencies, and collaboration with local OUTRIGHT groups in rural Maine to create community programs and statewide efforts such as an annual statewide GLBT youth summit.

The organization is now engaged in a training project to build organizational capacity to effectively develop youth leaders in Maine and to engage Maine youth in civic activism.

## **Tohono O’odham Community Action**

P.O. Box 1790  
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(520) 383-4966  
Tristan Reader, Co-Director

The crisis of identity among Native American youth today is one of the most critical issues for the future development of indigenous communities. Traditional social forms have undergone tremendous damage, and many Native youth seek a sense of identity in harmful places such as gangs and drug use. Indeed, the Tohono O’odham (formerly Papago) Nation in southern Arizona faces many acute challenges. It is one of the poorest communities in the United States. Nutrition-related disease devastates the health of the population, violence is increasing at an alarming rate, education levels are among the lowest in the country, and many cultural traditions are threatened with extinction. Tohono O’odham Community Action (TOCA) was founded in 1996 by members of the Tohono O’odham community who recognized the need to reinvigorate Native traditions and rebuild community systems. TOCA provides culturally appropriate, intergenerational, grassroots community development and cultural revitalization programs in the Tohono O’odham Nation.

TOCA draws upon the many assets held by the community to create an integrated set of culturally appropriate programs, including the Tohono O’odham Community Food System, the Tohono O’odham Basketweavers Organization, the Tohono O’odham Arts and Culture Program, and TOCA’s Youth/Elder Outreach Initiative.

TOCA’s Youth/Elder Outreach Initiative nurtures youth, helping them develop cultural and personal identity and the practical skills necessary for the creation of a bright future. Through the integration of youth and young adults into all levels of TOCA, the organization helps a new generation of leaders develop community-based, indigenous development programs.

TOCA is now at work building its organizational and individual capacities, expanding leadership opportunities for youth, and providing training related to specific topics in community development and cultural rejuvenation.

## **21st Century Youth Leadership Movement**

P.O. Box 2516  
Selma, AL 36702  
(334) 874-0065  
Malika Sanders, Executive Director

Through 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, based in Selma, Alabama, young people develop themselves and their communities simultaneously while being connected to youth nationally and internationally. 21st Century was founded in 1985 by young people and elders who were involved in the civil and human rights movements as youth and who realized the power of their community organizing involvement in their lives. Today the organization has thirty-four chapters and affiliates throughout the nation, primarily in the southeastern United States. Its mission is to continue the legacy of the civil rights era by inspiring, assisting, organizing, and developing African American youth, in and out of school, to be skilled, community-focused leaders, resiliently and creatively empowering themselves and their communities to effect positive change. 21st Century encourages youth excellence through leadership, academic, cultural, economic, and spiritual pursuits.

21st Century addresses a number of community challenges, including voter apathy, miseducation of minorities in the school system, and the continued existence of racism in public policy and in economic relations. Programs are designed to address issues that affect all communities and give young leaders the opportunity to develop and practice leadership skills. The organization runs regular local meetings and three annual national training camps. Programs include:

- Sankofa Clubs, designed to motivate young people to study and discuss the history of social movements.
- Super Birthday Tuesdays, a quarterly program inviting all high school students turning eighteen years of age during a given time period to register to vote and learn about the electoral process.
- The Malian Exchange, an exchange between chapters throughout the nation and the Mali chapter in West Africa, providing a venue for young people to have an international perspective of issues and leadership.

21st Century is now increasing its organizational capacity by establishing facilities to serve as chapter offices and community technology centers, by developing staff to maintain the offices, and by building young people's technological skills through computer training and Internet access.

## **The Young Women's Project**

1328 Florida Ave. NW, Suite 203  
 Washington, DC 20008  
 (202) 332-3399  
 Nadia Moritz, Executive Director

"We are working toward a city where teen women are running and making decisions for the institutions that affect their lives." The Young Women's Project (YWP) is a multicultural organization that builds and supports teen women and girl leaders in Washington, DC, so they can improve their own lives and transform their communities. Founded by and for young women in 1992, YWP recognizes teen women and girls as valuable community resources, supports them where their environments fail, invests in them through training and peer support, and engages their skills and talents to solve community problems and challenge institutions. The organization involves young women at every level of organizational planning and leadership.

YWP programs focus on teens of color and teen women and girls who lack economic resources and family support. The organization works in particular in neighborhoods in Washington where teens struggle with under-resourced public schools, few job opportunities, single parenting, family and relationship violence, and high rates of HIV/AIDS. Programs focus on women and the specific individual and institutional challenges that come with their identities. By building self-concept, developing leadership skills, identifying issues, and undertaking community action, the organization trains young women as leaders and organizers in the areas of reproductive health and rights, teen mother issues, family violence, and teen women in the foster care system.

YWP is now expanding its Teen-Led Projects, a workshop program in schools and community centers throughout Washington, into issue campaigns that can directly bring about meaningful change. And the organization is building its systems for monitoring and evaluating its work, with the goal of sharing its learnings with other youth workers.

## **Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice**

1384 Stratford Avenue  
 Bronx, NY 10472  
 (718) 328-5622  
 Alexie Torres-Fleming, Executive Director

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) in the Bronx River and Soundview/Bruckner communities in New York City face innumerable challenges. More than two-thirds of children there are born into poor families. Not a single youth center exists; only one library and one recreational program operating out of the local public housing project serve the entire 65,000-resident community. A recent mayoral initiative to "improve" the neighborhood offered no opportunity for community input. Other official efforts in the community, similarly unwelcoming to resident contributions, have been weighted heavily toward increased police presence. YMPJ has been working since the mid-1990s to engage young people ages six to twenty-one in Bronx River and Soundview/Bruckner in the work of community change.

The YMPJ program has distinct phases of youth involvement:

- Arts for Activism, through which young people are introduced to the concepts of social justice and activism and learn of the power of the arts in the process of self-awareness, cultural enrichment, and social change.
- Education for Liberation, which introduces youth to the leaders, movements, and history of social justice while building critical thinking, analytical, and academic skills.
- Assessment and Training, a process in which young people prepare themselves for community action.
- Community Organizing, in which young people step into action toward the goal of building peace and justice within their community.

Over a five-year period, YMPJ members have been involved in numerous projects, including organizing the first youth development center in the community; developing a program to improve attendance and combat attrition at the local high school; persuading authorities to keep the local elementary school open during the summer months and allow the organization to offer food, education, and recreational programs; and organizing a campaign to clean up a nearby section of the Bronx River and redevelop it as a safe, open recreation space.

YMPJ's programs demonstrate the power of young people to mobilize, develop their own capacity for self-reliance, and participate in issues that affect their well-being, lives, and communities.

## **Youth United for Community Action**

1836-A Bay Rd.  
East Palo Alto, CA 94303  
(650) 322-9165  
Oscar Flores, Executive Director

Youth United for Community Action (YUCA), a project of the Tides Center, was founded in 1994 by a small group of young people of color who were active in their communities. They envisioned an organization that would train a new generation of leaders to be on the forefront of change by providing young people of color with meaningful leadership experience in community-based efforts for environmental and social change. Since then, YUCA has developed and operated two programs in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area, California, as follows:

- The Irvine Fellows for Sustainable Communities Program, a program for young people of color that includes a year-long organizing project and a paid summer internship with organizations working for environmental and social justice.
- Higher Learning, a program developed by and for high school-aged youth that creates a safe space where youth can come together to critically examine and act on issues that impact their communities. With Foundation support, YUCA is strengthening the Higher Learning program.

YUCA's board, staff, participants, and members are young people of color, mostly low income, and diverse in race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. As an organization made up entirely of young people, YUCA supports young people in taking their education and development into their own hands, acquiring information and learning new skills.

# Youth Leadership for Development International Fellowship Program

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## **The Joint Enrichment Project**

P.O. Box 62024  
Marshalltown, 2107  
South Africa  
27-11-830-6865  
Penny Foley, Deputy Director

The Joint Enrichment Project (JEP) was established in 1986 by the South African Council of Churches and the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. Through its history, the organization has focused on the goal of increasing opportunities for the healthy development of South African young people. Since 1993 JEP has conducted pilot programs with the aim of producing models that respond to changing youth needs and societal trends and that could be replicated on a large scale.

JEP's vision reflects a belief that young people have the inherent right to contribute to and be nurtured by South African society. It seeks to achieve a society that recognizes and responds to the full range of needs and gifts of young people.

While South Africa has seen remarkable transformations since welcoming democracy in 1994, growing unemployment, poverty, and decreasing social spending produce formidable challenges. As a result, many young people continue to live in a state of extreme disadvantage. JEP's work is based on the belief that youth development programs must take into account the economic, educational, psychological, and social needs of young people. This integrated approach recognizes that young people live in and are affected by the communities they live in. Thus, JEP's approach to youth development includes community development as well.

The organization's program models actively engage young people in positive and integrated youth development programs based in their communities. These programs include using community service as a method of providing young people with skills, training homeless young men and women to reengage in legitimate economic activity, and equipping young women to become leaders and agents in addressing issues that negatively impact their development.

## **Youth Development Network**

P.O. Box 62024  
Marshalltown, 2107  
South Africa  
27-11-834 6865  
Clayton Peters, Executive Director

The Youth Development Network (YDN), a network of seven youth development organizations, was established in July 1998 in response to the crisis of South African youth unemployment and as a mechanism for strengthening the youth development sector in that country. Its seven members include South African Association of Youth Clubs, Joint Enrichment Project, Resource Action Group, Northern Province Youth Development Organisation, School Leavers Opportunity Training, Junior Achievement, and Centre for Education and Enterprise Development.

South African youth were critical participants in the movement to end racial apartheid. Since 1994, however, as the country has focused on the challenges of transition to democracy, youth involvement in civic activism has drastically decreased. What's more, young people are severely overrepresented in the ranks of the unemployed; at least one-third of those aged fifteen to thirty cannot find a job, and estimates are that only one in six young people entering the job market obtains employment. Furthermore, although people younger than thirty-five make up 70 percent of South Africa's population, young people are often excluded in democracy-building processes.

In this challenging environment, YDN has become a leading voice for youth development in South Africa. The organization builds and strengthens the capacity of member organizations to deliver effective youth development programs, advocates for an integrated approach to youth development, strengthens the capacity of the broader youth sector, stimulates discourse, promotes an indigenous knowledge base for youth development, and explores consortium funding opportunities. Programs within the seven member organizations center on engaging young people in the process of their empowerment through skills building and by motivating youth to become engaged citizens.



**Youth**  
**Leadership**  
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