



BROOKLYN
CONNECTIONS

Community Organizing
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name

INTRODUCTORY READING

Community organizing involves neighborhood residents getting together to advance their collective interests against a power held outside the community. This type of organizing is characterized as **grassroots** and is, therefore, democratic because membership relies on local leaders representing the community in which they reside. Typically neighborhood groups organize protests against government or corporate groups through a range of strategies, from mass meetings and demonstrations, to creating local power for local control of local issues.

Various social movements have used community organizing techniques to bring neighborhoods together. Because community organizers work to change the power structure in their neighborhoods and cities, they've often been challenged. They have become symbolic of the profound social divide in America. As a young man, President Barack Obama worked as a community organizer in Chicago. His Republican and conservative opponents **derided** him and claimed his background in community organizing was not "real work." Historically, most community organizing has consisted of campaigns by lower and middle-income people for welfare rights, decent housing, and the ability to have a voice—or some measure of control over institutions in their own neighborhood. However, more **affluent** neighborhood groups have occasionally **appropriated tactics** pioneered by community organizers in order maintain control over their own neighborhoods.

DOCUMENT 1: Excerpt from Reveille for Radicals:

“America's **radicals** are to be found wherever and whenever America moves close to the fulfillment of its democratic dream. Whenever America's hearts are breaking, there American radicals were and are. America was begun by its radicals. America was built by its radicals. The hope and future of America lies with its radicals.

What is the American radical? The radical is that unique person to whom the common good is the greatest personal value. He is that person who genuinely and completely believes in mankind. The radical is so completely identified with mankind that he personally shares the pain, the injustices, and the sufferings of all his fellow men.” (Page 15)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Saul Alinsky is generally recognized as the father of community organizing. Alinsky was born in Chicago to poor Russian-Jewish immigrants in 1909. After earning a doctorate in archeology from the University of Chicago, he became a criminologist and worked in a penitentiary during the **Great Depression**. His time at the penitentiary convinced him that crime was a product of poor social conditions, not poor people. He worked to help the local community advocate for its own needs, and to improve conditions in other poor urban neighborhoods. His work focused on identifying and training neighborhood people to organize and lead local efforts.

Document 1 - Book Excerpt. Alinsky, Saul David. *Reveille for Radicals*. New York: Vintage, 1969. 15.

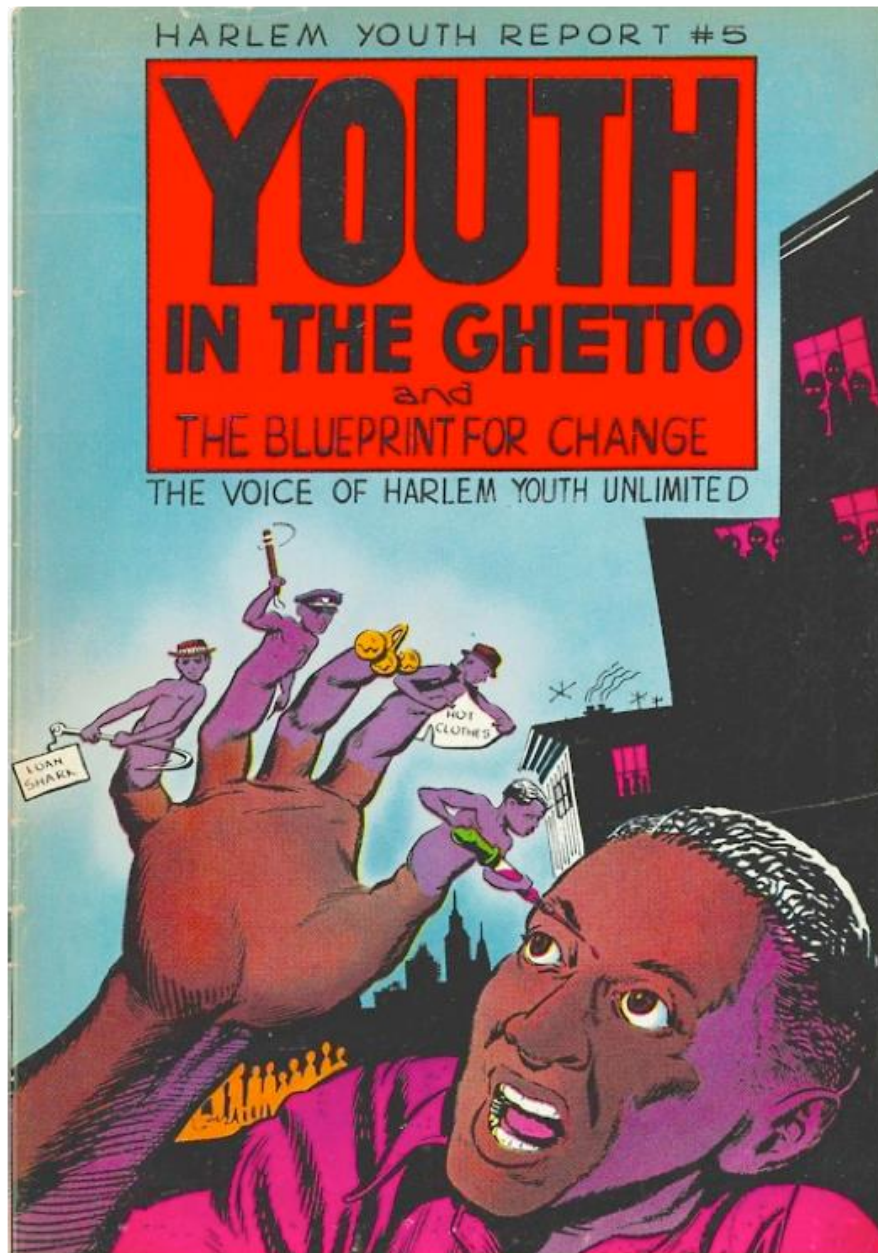
1. Historically, what people does Alinsky say have been involved in community organizing?

2. What does Alinsky think it means to be a radical?

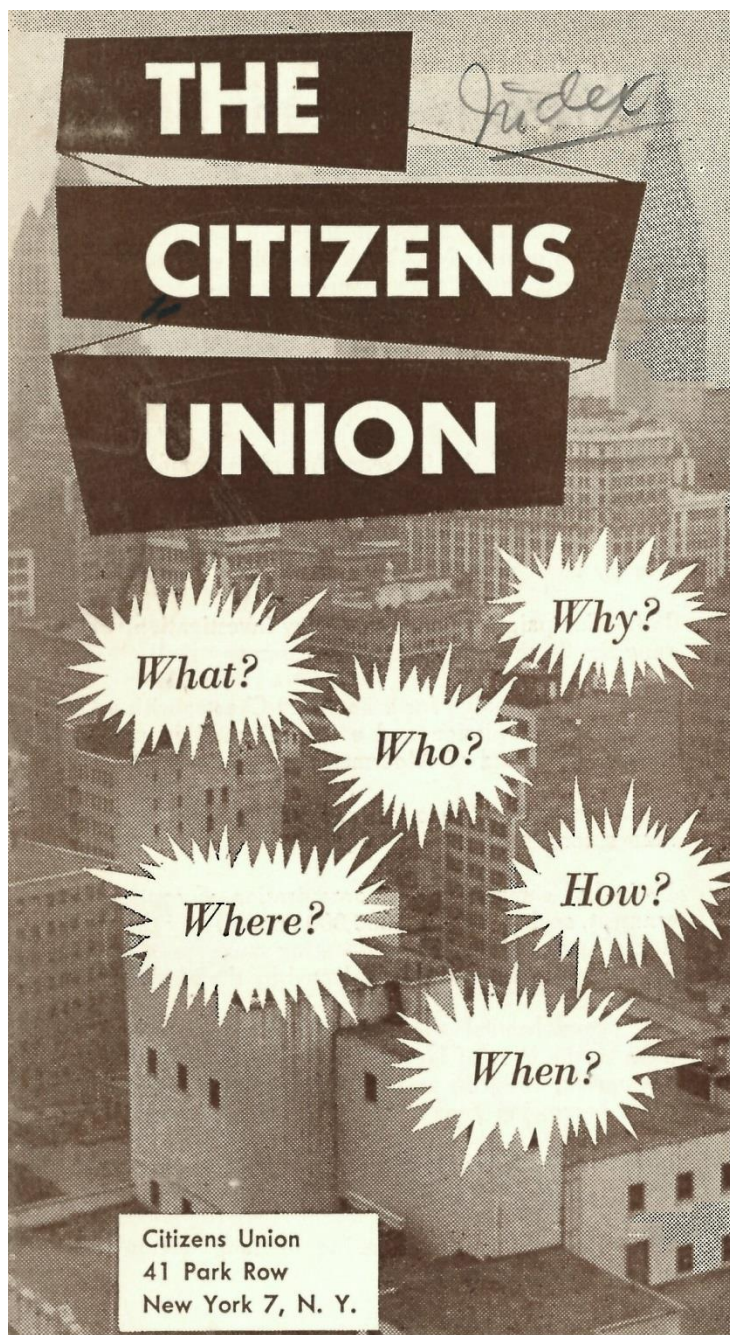
3. Do you think being a radical relates to the work of a community organizer? Why or why not?

4. Who do you think can be a radical? Explain.

HARYOU (Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited) was a social activist organization founded in 1962 by Dr. Kenneth Clark, a prominent educator and civil rights leader. The organization's mission was to empower African American youth in Harlem to fight for educational opportunities and jobs.



Document 2a - Comic. "Youth in the Ghetto." Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU), 1964.



What is Citizens Union?

Citizens Union is an organization of people living or working in or near New York City who want to get and keep better city and state government. Founded in 1897, it has been working systematically ever since as a non-partisan representative of citizens' interests and a staunch fighter against corruption.

A few of the Citizens Union's accomplishments during those years:

1901—Elected Seth Low as the first reform Mayor of Greater New York.

1932—Campaigned for the Seabury investigation, which rang the death knell of the old Tammany Hall.

1936—Led campaign for a new City Charter with a City Planning Commission and a City Council in place of the useless Board of Aldermen.

1938—Helped secure a discriminating revision of the State's constitution.

1941—Led campaign for reorganization of county government, saving the city \$500,000 annually by the abolition of useless jobs and substituting much more efficient departments under officials selected by the merit system.

1947—Spearheaded the transfer of airport development to the Port of New York Authority, coordinating LaGuardia, Idlewild and Newark fields and saving the city's borrowing power for other urgent needs.

1948-1949—Drafted and promoted the new anti-smoke law.

1950—Helped secure beginning of long-overdue civil service reclassification.

Document 2b - Pamphlet. *The Citizen's Union*. New York: Citizens Union, c. 1951. Cover and inside cover.

1. Look at DOCUMENT 2A. What kind of document is it?

2. Who do you think would be interested in reading DOCUMENT 2A?

3. Look at DOCUMENT 2B. What is the Citizen's Union fighting against?

4. Who do you think would be interested in joining the Citizen's Union?

5. Compare DOCUMENT 2A and DOCUMENT 2B. Which group would you be interested in learning more about? Why?

Document 2



THEY WANT ACTION AGAINST HOODLUMS—Women and children in East New York swarm along stairway to Atlantic Ave. overpass, carry slogans calling for police protection against rowdies. In foreground Mrs. Marian Ingeardi of 1493 St. Mark's Ave.—her sign reads "My Son Was Knifed on This Crossing"—stops an approaching pedestrian to explain the reason for the demonstration: Need for cops on the beat. Eagle Photo by Kruh

AUG 9 1953

Document 3 - Photograph. "They Want Action Against Hoodlums." *Brooklyn Eagle*. 9 Aug. 1953.

1. Look carefully at DOCUMENT 3. According to the caption, what are the people in this photo upset about?

2. Describe the people you see in the photograph.

3. These people are organizing to change something in their community. How have they decided to communicate their message?

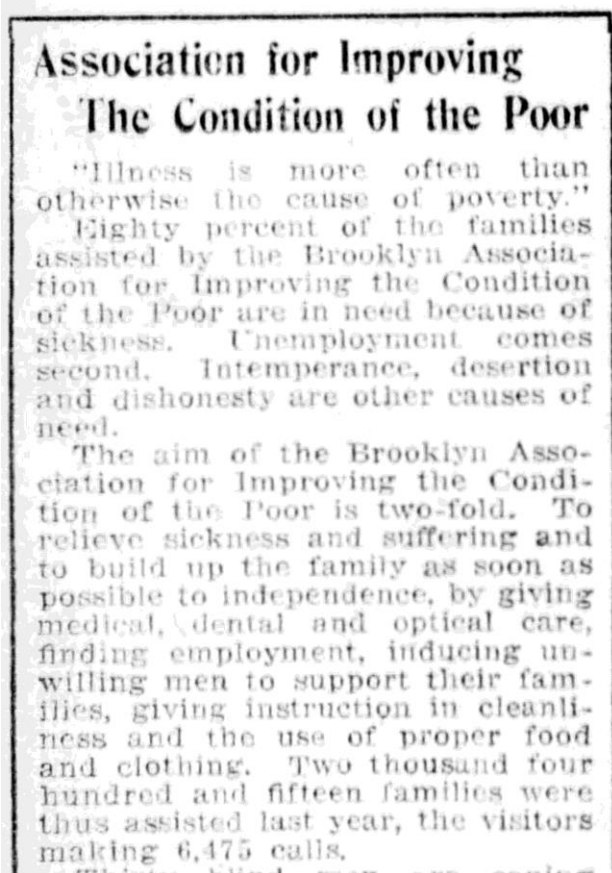
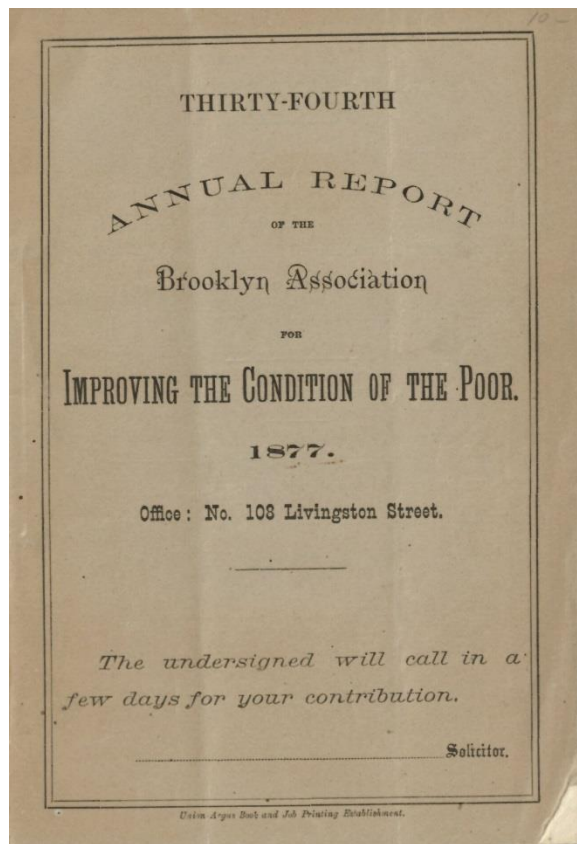
4. Do you think that the people in this photograph fit Saul Alinsky's definition of "radicals" from DOCUMENT 1? Why or why not?

☐ We would direct attention to the advertisement of the "Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor." Now is the time to be active in good works:

Document 4A (above) – "We would direct attention..."
Brooklyn Daily Eagle. 15 Feb 1845.

Document 4B (right) – *Thirty-fourth Annual Report of the Brooklyn Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor*. Brooklyn, NY: 1877. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

Document 4C (below) – "Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 11 Dec 1921.



Transcription of article:

Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor

"Illness is more often than otherwise the cause of poverty."

Eighty percent of the families assisted by the Brooklyn Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor are in need because of sickness. Unemployment comes second. Intemperance, desertion and dishonesty are other causes of need.

The aim of the Brooklyn Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor is two-fold. To relieve sickness and suffering and to build up the family as soon as possible to independence, by giving medical, dental and optical care, finding employment, inducing unwilling men to support their families, giving instruction in cleanliness and the use of proper food and clothing. Two thousand four hundred and fifteen families were thus assisted last year, the visitors making 6,475 calls.

1. According to DOCUMENT 4A and DOCUMENT 4B, how long has the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor been in existence?

2. According to DOCUMENT 4C, what is the most common cause of poverty?

3. According to DOCUMENT 4C, how do members of the Association work to improve the condition of the poor? List three ways.

4. DOCUMENT 4C was written in 1921. How many families had the Association helped the previous year?

How Dirty Is Our Town? Let's Find Out

Edna Ferber who writes books for a living and good books at that is not unaware of the benefits of personal publicity. And she



sure hit the jackpot when she said New York was the most disgustingly filthy city in the world. She got her name in all the newspapers and drew some sharp retorts from Sanitation Commissioner Mulrain.

To my mind Mr. Mulrain's comeback is a statement more from anger than reason. He feels she has insulted his hard working men. And that is something beside the point. I have seen a great many cities of the world and some of them accept filth as par for the course because they have never known anything else. But from personal knowledge I know that the streets of Paris, Rome, London and Athens are far cleaner than anything we have here and with primitive facilities as compared with our own.

And again from personal knowledge I am aware that Edna is not talking through her hat no matter what her motive

may be. To find dirt in Paris you have to travel down Rue Pigalle, only it is the kind of dirt that cannot be swept up by street cleaners. It is dirt for the benefit of tourists who woo a wicked interlude.

Athens shines like a freshly polished window and there is no soot on the floor in the morning after you've slept all night with a window open. In New York it falls like rain which is all the time.

To put it bluntly our town is dirty and that observation includes Brooklyn. The Sanitation Department, like so many other public services, is undermanned and underpaid. But the same thing is true in Paris, Athens and London, where the pay is even worse.

Lack of civic pride is a contributing factor. In some neighborhoods garbage and rubbish is dumped out of windows when there are incinerators in the halls. And I don't care who gets sore. Some of the worst offenders are folks who have been taken out of the slums and placed in neat and comfortable Government housing projects.

I believe I have seen as many Old World cities as Miss Ferber has and I'd like to make a conclusive test. So, Mr. Mulrain, how about a tour of Brooklyn streets in residential neighbor-

hoods so you as a public servant and I as a newspaperman can look at the facts and report them as they are? Edna Ferber has issued a challenge and I believe she had a point just as you did when you complained "in Manhattan the streets are a public dump."

I have seen streets in Brooklyn that looked like a public dump.

Let's see where the fault lies and admit it frankly. Since the greatest city in the world is flat busted I'll be glad to pay for the gasoline. Some day next week maybe. Give me a ring? And I think you should because this discussion should not end in a tie. Only don't ask me to go to any other borough, because what other borough is there than Brooklyn?

While we are on the subject, air pollution in our town is disgraceful. Blow your nose and what do you get? A black handkerchief. Leave anything uncovered when you go home at night and a film of dirt will greet you in the morning. Smoky Pittsburgh has done a much better job than we have. Maybe it is because that town is not in awe of special interests.

Anyway, Mr. Mulrain, let's make that tour and see what the score is. I expect it to be bad, but if it isn't I'll say so.

You Can Do It Too!

Out on MacDonough St., between Howard and Saratoga Aves., the folks are doing something that should inspire residents all over Brooklyn. They've gotten together to clean up their street and—it's as simple as that—they cleaned up their street!

Signs reading "Be Godly—keep your block clean" and "This is your block—keep it clean" have sprung up around this section of town. The 600 MacDonough Association, as the group calls itself, is taking their cleanup campaign seriously and it is paying off.

Moral: This can be done anywhere in Brooklyn and the result could only be a cleaner, brighter, healthier community. Why not try it elsewhere?

Document 5B – "You Can Do It Too!" *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 19 May 1953.

A Practical Solution

We hear constant complaints from people who say "my street hasn't been cleaned in years." And they are angry at the Sanitation Department for the condition. But the department views the site and discovers bumper to bumper cars on both sides of the street. Thorough cleaning is impossible. Once more the way to a solution has been provided by the new test in Harlem where alternate-side parking permitted Commissioner Mulrain's men to do the kind of a job they'd like to do every day.

If the program is extended all over the city there will be no room for complaint by Edna Ferber that New York is the dirtiest city in the world. True, a few cars owned by motorists who refuse to co-operate will have to be towed away. But the cost involved will be small in the light of the major benefits to be achieved.

Document 5C – "A Practical Solution." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 26 May 1953.

1. According to the first paragraph of DOCUMENT 5A, who is Edna Ferber and what did she say about New York City?

2. Why did the author of DOCUMENT 5A think that Edna Ferber said these things about New York City?

3. DOCUMENT 5B describes how people in Brooklyn worked to fix this problem. What did they do?

4. DOCUMENT 5C explains how the city acted to fix the problem, after citizens showed they wanted a solution. What did the city do?



Caption:

How to do it--Bessie A. Kirwa, director of sanitary education of the Sanitation Department, demonstrates how to dump the contents of a receptacle into an ashcan [labeled "Please can your garbage"] without spreading litter in the Brownsville Neighborhood Health and Welfare Council's educational drive for a cleaner community. With her on the demonstration float are, left to right, Mrs. Charlotte O'Shea, chairman of the council, and Mrs. Irene Richardson, co-chairman. *Editor's Note: the correct name of the organization is Brownsville Neighborhood Council*

Document 6: Geller, Jules. "How to do it." *Brooklyn Eagle*. 1954.

1. DOCUMENT 6 is a photograph from the *Brooklyn Eagle*. Describe what people are doing in this photo.

2. According to the caption of DOCUMENT 6, who is Bessie Kirwa and who does she work for?

3. What organization was responsible for the educational drive about a cleaner community?

4. What would you do to convince your neighborhood to clean up the streets?

Mattachine Society

Brooklyn Heights

A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

Brooklyn Heights is a community in crisis. This historic section with which we are all concerned and involved is witnessing a breakdown in freedom. A free community is one in which there is a free exchange of ideas, and where differences of opinion and tensions between groups of citizens are discussed, and a solution is found which respects the rights and opinions of both parties.

This situation does not exist in Brooklyn Heights. A cabal has been formed by the Brooklyn Heights Association, the HEIGHTS PRESS, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Alfred T. White Community Center to keep the homosexual community from publicly defending itself against the slanders of the HEIGHTS PRESS.

The editor of the HEIGHTS PRESS, the Heights Association and the Jehovah's Witnesses have refused to attend a public meeting to debate their stand with members of the homosexual community. We can only surmise that they realize their position is indefensible and that they are afraid to try to defend their position before the critical eyes of the community at large. It is far easier to hand down pronouncements from the editorial ivory tower of the Heights Press than to have to defend those pronouncements from a reasoned and sensible intellectual attack.

A policy based in truth and justice can be defended from any attack. One based on prejudice and ignorance is too emotional to survive logic. We believe the cowardly refusal of the so-called leaders of this community to defend their stand exposes it for what it is - the rankest vendetta north of Mississippi.

We will not close the door to debate and discussion, however. The Brooklyn Heights Chapter of the Mattachine Society and the homosexual population of Brooklyn Heights stand ready at any time to meet the "leaders" of this community in a public place to state our position and to let the members of the general community express their views. Only by free exchange of ideas can truth triumph.

Herman Slade, Acting Chairman
Brooklyn Heights Chapter
Mattachine Society of New York, Inc.
1133 Broadway
New York City

Phone: WA 4-7743

*Recd. at Clark Street,
IRT-7th Ave. Subway entrance
July, 1966*

1. According to the authors of DOCUMENT 7, why is Brooklyn Heights in crisis?

2. How do the authors of DOCUMENT 7 describe a “free community”?

3. Slander is defined as “making a false statement that damages someone’s reputation”. The Mattachine Society was one of the first gay rights organizations. Who do they accuse of slander?

4. In the last paragraph of DOCUMENT 7, who do the members of the Mattachine Society want to meet with, and what would they like to talk about?

Park Slope

CIVIC NEWS

Nov
68

Bllyn Chullen Indication for

NEW COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

The founding of the Park Slope Community Nursery School at 33 Seventh Avenue, in space provided by Grace Methodist Church, is significant. It describes itself as "a neighborhood center for children of early childhood years." Like Old First Dutch Reform School, whose assistance it acknowledges, the new school is a cooperative, initiated and administered through efforts of parents in the community.

The school grew out of the dismay of parents who discovered that public schools in our neighborhood offer no program for pre-school age children and that desirable nursery schools had long waiting lists. People who wanted the advantage of education for their children in the crucial early years sought each other out. The happy result of a year's planning and hard work was the opening of the new school.

Now more of our children will have opportunity to attend nursery school. A non-profit cooperative school can offer lower tuition than private schools with prohibitive costs. Striving for pupils reflecting the composite racial, religious, and economic character of the community, the school offers scholarships. Children from the age of two years, nine months through five are accepted. The school began with an enrollment of thirty-six and has facilities for more. The program aims "to aid the child in discovering and putting into fuller use his various capacities by creating an environment which will stimulate exploration and mastery of the complex world."

The staff consists of a teacher-director, Mrs. Leah Bramante; a group teacher, Mrs. Brenda Hicks; an assistant teacher, Mrs. Carmen Matos, and an educational consultant, Mrs. Pat Greenwald. Mrs. Matos and Mrs. Greenwald are Park Slope residents. The school is administered by parents elected from the parent body, with whatever committees are needed for operation.

Parents' initiative and effort create a cooperative nursery school; its success depends upon partnership between staff and parents. Throughout the year parents are invited to attend meetings and evening workshops as well as individual conferences with the teachers.

The new school "regards itself as a vital part of the community and strives to become an active and viable center for ideas which will have effective reverberations in the community." It takes the child as its center of concern, recognizing, however, that the child lives in a world and a community which exert an impact upon him. Appropriately, open community meetings are planned to discuss issues such as the urban crisis, public education, racial relations, and other aspects of our changing culture.

Interested parents may speak with Mrs. Bramante at the school or telephone 783-7549 or 638-8215.

Marcia Silver

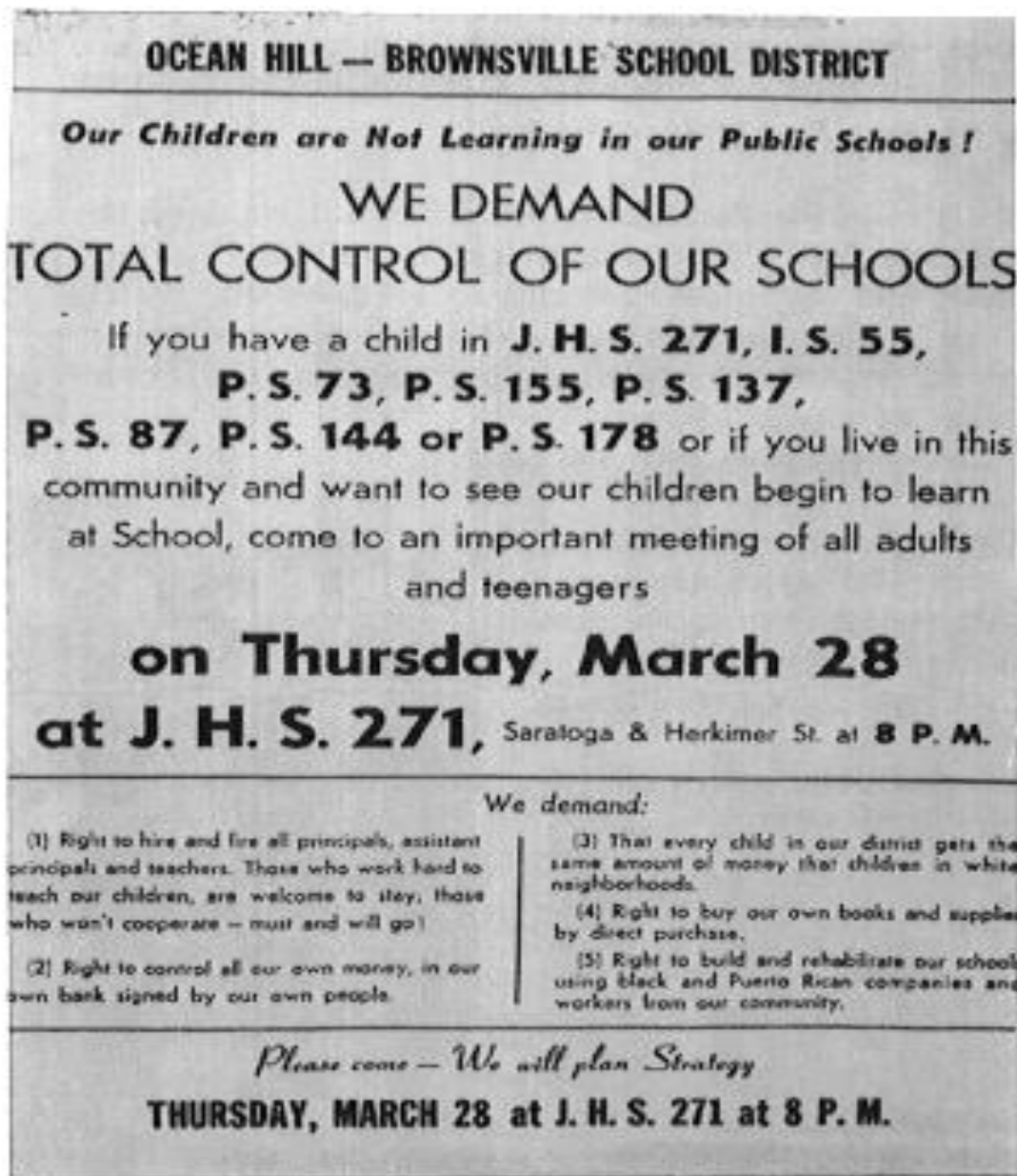
Document 8 – Silver, Marcia. "New Community Nursery School." Pamphlet. 1968. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

1. According to DOCUMENT 8, what is the Park Slope Community Nursery School?

2. According to the second paragraph of DOCUMENT 8, who created the nursery school and why?

3. How many children were enrolled in the nursery school at the time this was written?

4. A “cooperative school” is one that is created and run by the parents whose children attend it. According to paragraph three of this document, what is the benefit of a cooperative school over a private school?



This document references demands by the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Community Board for “community control” of its neighborhood schools’ curriculum, funding and teacher assignments. These demands caused a series of bitter strikes by the Teachers’ Union. The strikes paralyzed the entire New York City school system and left the city deeply divided.

Transcription:

We demand:

- (1) Right to hire and fire all principals, assistant principals and teachers. Those who work hard to teach our children, are welcome to stay, those who won't cooperate — must and will go!
- (2) Right to control all our own money, in our own bank signed by our own people.
- (3) That every child in our district gets the same amount of money that children in white neighborhoods.
- (4) Right to buy our own books and supplies by direct purchase.
- (5) Right to build and rehabilitate our schools using black and Puerto Rican companies and workers from our community.

Document 9 – “We Demand Total Control of Our Schools.” Ocean Hill-Brownsville Community Board flyer. Mar 1968. Flyer. Photo courtesy of the UFT Photographic Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

1. Look at DOCUMENT 9. Why created this flyer? What neighborhood do they live in?

2. According to DOCUMENT 9, who should attend the meeting?

3. What are two of the demands listed in DOCUMENT 9?

4. Teachers did not agree with the demands listed in DOCUMENT 9. Why do you think this was?

Document 9

Citizens Guard Area To Protect Own Lives

Ocean Hill Tenants' Patrol Cuts Crime

By GEORGE TODD

Frightening conditions at a city public housing project in the Brownsville section involving purse snatching, muggings and assaults spurred tenants to do something about it. With the approval of the Housing Authority which could not provide enough housing patrolmen to do the job, the tenants of the 3-building Ocean Hill Houses, got started in setting up their own patrol seven months ago.

Prime mover in the organization of the patrol was John Koonce, a traffic manager, and a husky, dedicated man who spent five years in the U.S. Armed Forces.

"We've cut down on the crime rate in the area," Koonce said proudly. "It's a lot better now, especially for women and children who were afraid to take the elevator at nights."

The patrol had 50 volunteers at the beginning, but only 34 are active at the present in providing guard service from 7 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. ever night.

But patrol work is not all the service received by the 236 tenant families living in the complex at 305 MacDougal St.

Koonce said the organization helps youngsters in other ways,

like a "big brother" group.

"We try to get them interested in community recreation, and also advise them on the dangers of narcotics," Koonce said.

Tenants are urged to establish better relationship with people outside as well as those inside the project, the patrol director pointed out. To help achieve this purpose, Koonce said an organization has been formed outside the project. It is called the Ocean Hill Bushwick Neighborhood Alliance for Progress.

Many other patrols have been organized to guard lobbies and elevators in other projects, and Koonce has been helping to set them up backed by the experience with his own patrol over the last seven months.

1. According to DOCUMENT 10, what neighborhood are the Ocean Hill Houses located in?

2. What did the residents of the Ocean Hill Houses do to stop crime in their area?

3. According to John Koonce, what was the result of their community organizing work to stop crime?

4. According to DOCUMENT 10, what was the organization doing to help youngsters?

WHY THE \$\$ PINCH ?

Your dollar buys less when billions of dollars are spent on materials for war and for the making of war. PRICES GO UP! This is what has been happening in the United States during the Cold War years, and especially during the past five years, with the fighting in Vietnam. In fact, during this five year period, the cost of living has gone up FIFTEEN PERCENT! This alone would mean your dollar of five years ago is worth 85¢ today.

Actually, it is worth less. In addition to the rise in prices there has been a fantastic RISE IN TAXES. These tax increases have fallen MOST HEAVILY UPON THOSE WITH THE LEAST MONEY. AMERICAN MEN ARE FORCED TO KILL AND BE KILLED IN AN IMMORAL WAR IN VIETNAM AND WE PAY FOR IT! New York City residents are not only to pay a city income tax, but all of us who ride the subway must pay an additional tax of AT LEAST \$25 a year-- for that is what the FARE INCREASE MEANS.

LOOK WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR TAXES: REAL ESTATE TAXES IN BROOKLYN went up only 18% from 1900 through 1946. Then, with the COLD WAR and HOT WARS--in the following 20 years--those taxes IN BROOKLYN went up 80%. Just now (in the beginning of July, 1966) the latest real estate tax increase was announced, and it comes to 37.3¢ per \$100, which is the BIGGEST SINGLE-YEAR TAX INCREASE IN THE HISTORY OF BROOKLYN!

WAR MEANS A RISE IN PRICES AND A RISE IN TAXES. THE VIETNAM WAR REDUCES YOUR STANDARD OF LIVING. PEACE MEANS CUTTING PRICES AND CUTTING TAXES.

**End the war in Vietnam
Lower the cost of living
Now !!**

**APTHEKER FOR CONGRESSMAN
722 NOSTRAND AVE, BKLYN, 11216. 493-5889
VOTE ROW 14-G — Peace & Freedom Party**



BROOKLYNITES

H E L P E S C A L A T E T H E P E A C E M O V E M E N T

The Flatbush Committee to End the War in Vietnam is now actively engaged in door-to-door canvassing in Crown Heights.

In talking to people in the community we have found that few of our neighbors really support the Johnson Administration war policy. Many of them feel that they have nothing to gain from the war and think American soldiers should be brought home.

WE NEED YOUR HELP in our work. The more active members we have, the more we will be able to cultivate the grass roots sentiment against this needless war.

We meet and do canvassing every weekend. For exact time and place write or call:

FLATBUSH COMMITTEE TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

240 Crown Street

PR 3 0386

1. According to DOCUMENT 11A, what is the reason for rising prices?

2. Who created DOCUMENT 11A? Who do you think they hoped would read their flyer?

3. Who created DOCUMENT 11B? What is their message?

4. What differences do you notice between the way DOCUMENT 11A and DOCUMENT 11B look?

107 IN BROOKLYN CALL RENT STRIKE

7 Buildings Involved—Court and City Asked to Act

An angry 107 families went on a rent strike in Brooklyn yesterday to protest the condition of seven buildings.

As city officials stood by, tenants complained of falling plaster, broken windows, a faulty heating system and lack of maintenance.

They also accused the Welfare Department of discrimination for referring only Negro and Puerto Rican families on welfare to the buildings in the Brownsville section.

The buildings are 1823, 1839 and 1886 Strauss Street, 1386 and 1392 East New York Avenue and 8 and 20 Herzel Street.

William Booth, the city's new chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, said that his agency would look into the case.

City Council President Frank D. O'Connor arrived at the store front at 1823 Strauss Street later and pledged to do all in his power to correct conditions in the seven buildings. Meanwhile, 20 to 35 persons marched in front of the office of the landlord, identified as Gilbert Wiener, at 1839 Strauss Street.

The tenants had been organized by the Christians United for Social Action, an organization formed by priests, nuns and laymen in Brownsville.

Volunteer lawyers for the organization also petitioned Brooklyn Civil Court yesterday to accept the tenants' rents and appoint an administrator to use the money to make needed repairs.

1. A rent strike happens when tenants withhold their rent. According to DOCUMENT 12, why did 107 families declare a rent strike?

2. According to DOCUMENT 12, what did these families accuse the Welfare Department of?

3. What streets did the striking families live on?

4. Who organized the tenants to do the rent strike?

INFACt

Para INFACt en español,
continúe en la página 9

THE NEWS FROM THE FIFTH AVENUE COMMITTEE

SUMMER 2002

141 Fifth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217 ♦ (718) 857-2990 ♦ www.fifthave.org

Our community tells our politicians: We need action!

Almost 200 community residents came out to the South Brooklyn People's Agenda on May 16 to present their local politicians with seven demands.

The politicians promised to comply with all of them except the Community Stability Tax Credit bill (see page 6) currently before the Assembly, which they said they agreed with in theory but wanted to review before making a commitment.

"We're here to remind our elected officials that when those tough decisions have to be made, they have to go left instead of right," said host and FAC Board co-chair Michelle de la Uz as she welcomed everyone gathered in the auditorium of PS 282 on 6th Avenue.

The five elected officials who appeared during the course of the evening included City Council members Bill deBlasio, David Yassky and Angel Rodriguez, Assemblyman Jim Brennan and State Senator Carl Andrews. None of them stayed for the entire event, citing other commitments as reasons for coming

late or leaving early.

The demands were presented by community members beginning with Nitza Nieves describing how ineffective the city's workfare and training programs for welfare recipients are. "People in the welfare office treat us badly," she said to murmurs of agreement from the audience.

FAC Board member Pat Conway made the case for an equitable city budget in light of the \$5-6 billion deficit. "We are willing to pay our fair share and believe the wealthy are willing to pay their fair share, too," she said.

Board member Chastity Davis, a FAC resident leader, advocated affordable mixed-income housing that can serve as a model for other neighborhoods. Dorothy Hodges, a tenants' rights activist, called for the early renewal of rent regulations and passage of the Community Stability Tax Credit bill. "We



Photo: Kathleen Collins

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER FAC BOARD CO-PRESIDENT MICHELLE DE LA UZ LAYS IT ON THE LINE FOR STATE ASSEMBLYMAN JIM BRENNAN (LEFT) AND STATE SENATOR CARL ANDREWS (MIDDLE).

will ask you in a week where you stand," Michelle said when the politicians ducked the question. "It's not enough to say these are tough budget times."

Criminal justice activist Hulen Ginn spoke about the need to repeal the Rockefeller Drug Laws, describing Pataki's proposed changes as a "sham bill" that will do little for the people serving punitive sentences for minor drug offenses.

Afterwards the audience spilled out into the warm spring night chatting enthusiastically. "Many people are looking forward to next year already," said FAC-Activist organizer Rosemarie Maldonado, who coordinated the event. "We're excited this was so successful."



Document 13 – "Our Community Tells Our Politicians: We Need Action!" *InFACT*. Brooklyn: Fifth Avenue Committee, 2002.

1. DOCUMENT 13 describes a meeting, the South Brooklyn People’s Agenda. How many community residents attended?

2. According to DOCUMENT 13, how many demands did the community residents present to their local politicians?

3. Name three of the politicians who attended this meeting.

4. According to DOCUMENT 13, how many of the politicians stayed for the entire meeting?

GLOSSARY

affluent – having a great deal of money; wealthy

appropriated – take (something) for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission

derided – express contempt for; ridicule

grassroots – the most basic level of an activity or organization

Great Depression – an economic crisis during the 1930s and early 1940s where millions were unemployed, banks ran out of money, and the New Deal was put in place

radicals – a person who advocates thorough or complete political or social reform; a member of a political party or part of a party pursuing such aims

tactics – an action or strategy carefully planned to achieve a specific end