climate catastrophe, we will need a big state but we will need to live small lives. So we can hunker down in stilted houses, hybrid cars, and gated communities, throw up more walls like those in Palestine/Israel, Northern Ireland, and the Texas–Mexico border, which keep vulnerable people in vulnerable places; or we can figure out new ways to live together, different relations to money, property, the land, and each other, and demand that the state take control of renewable energy politics and provide living wage, full benefits, substantial green jobs. But it may be that first things first, we must end the war on drugs, and free youthful political actors from the contradiction that they must but cannot rely on the informal economy. The criminalization of the informal economy, especially drugs, the risk and racialization, as well as the mellowing effects, of marijuana, may free participants from the tyranny of the debt-for-sale economy, but makes them more vulnerable to the carceral state and thus demobilizes them politically as well. Along with the political changes described by Michael Katz, these conditions may help explain why American cities do not burn.

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SANA Election Results

Congratulations to the following, who have been elected to the SANA Board:

President (two-year term): **A. Lynn Bolls**.
Lynn "look[s] forward to serving SANA by promoting its efforts of collaboration and advancing new ideas for social justice and equality."

Member-at-large #1 (three-year term):
Brett Williams. Brett is "excited about being part of the SANA board, because it offers the kind of progressive community experience I value. I support Sandy Morgen's aim of increasing membership to earn more time for our sessions at the AAA meetings. I'm also interested in ensuring that, wherever we meet, we reach out to local activists and do what we can to make our meetings inclusive and diverse."

Member-at-large #2 (three-year term):
Ann Bookman. Ann has a broken arm and so couldn't make a statement, but she's glad to be on board.

The Politics of Antiracism & Social Justice: The Perspective of a Human Rights Network in the U.S. South

By Faye V. Harrison

Abstract: Since 9/11 the sociopolitical and legal climate of the country has deteriorated, engendering a moral panic over national security and intensifying a longstanding trend of violating the human rights of a portion of the citizenry and immigrant population. These segments of the

populace lived under de facto conditions of a police state long before the War on Terror and the USA Patriot Act. This repression implicates the War on Drugs and a racially- and class-biased system of criminal (in)justice with which Homeland Security intersects. Problems such as these have attracted the attention of both social scientists and activists mobilizing for social justice. Among the latter is a southeastern network of human rights organizers who map their region as part of the Global South. A multiracial group organized around the vision of three African American women, the Southern Human Rights Organizers Network promotes consciousness and praxis shaped by the vernacularization of international human rights discourse and the reclamation of the history of African American and broader Afro-Atlantic struggles for expanding the terms of what it means to be human.
Keywords: antiracism, human rights, gendered activism, US South

Setting the Context: Moral Panics, Legislated Patriotism, and Racially-Biased Mass Incarceration

Since September 11, 2001 the United States has undergone what many of its citizens and residents are experiencing as a major shift during which the sociopolitical and legal climate has deteriorated in some significant respects. State power has grown more authoritarianized as a result of the legal circumscription of civil liberties that the USA Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) has permitted. Racial profiling has intensified and been extended beyond the harassment of the "usual suspects," traditionally African Americans, Latinos, or Native Americans, depending on the specific local or regional contexts in which the nation's social and economic crisis is policed (cf. Hall et al. 1978). Now the demographic profile of targeted arrests is even more ethnically diverse, and includes Arabs, South Asians, and other immigrants whose phenotypes roughly fit the image of the imagined Muslim terrorist who threatens national security. The moral panic (Cohen 1972; Hall et al. 1978) that has emerged— or been politically orchestrated—has licensed the

state to deprive the citizenry of constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties that provide protection from state intrusions on the freedom to express political convictions—especially when those convictions criticize and contest dominant expressions of patriotism.

Exercising the constitutionally protected right to free speech can get you into trouble as an "un-American" advocate of criticizing—or in even more polemical terms, "God-damning"—America for the kinds of domestic and foreign policies that impelled the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and, more recently, the highly controversial Reverend Jeremiah Wright, to castigate the United States for its ethically, structurally, and legally problematic role as a leading purveyor of violence and militarism throughout the world. In King's perspective, the world community should and could be a common ground of shared values and goals for cooperatively building a "World House" in which there would be no room for the "triple evils" of racism, poverty and militarism (King 1967). While the expansion of the parameters of law enforcement can potentially affect all of us adversely, it is disproportionately inclined to target particular segments of the populace deemed most likely to threaten Homeland Security, as it is broadly and troublingly conceived. Homeland Security and the U.S. military's presence in Afghanistan and war in Iraq are two sides of the same coin. Ironically and sacrilegiously, upon that coin is inscribed the national motto, "In God We Trust."

The moral panic over homeland security, the purportedly menacing role of Islam, particularly radical, militant Islam, and the need to authorize the expanded policing of the national crisis mark a troubling shift in intranational and international directions. However, the current state of affairs can also be viewed as an intensification of a long-standing trend of violating the human rights of a portion of the citizenry and immigrant population. There are minoritized and immigrant communities, especially poor working class and working poor

communities, that lived under *de facto* conditions of marshal law or a police state long before 9/11 and the USA Patriot Act. This repression implicates the War on Drugs and a racially and class-biased system of criminal (in)justice (see Harrison 2002 on the domestic and international workings of the War on Drugs). While American anxieties over demonized Muslims intensify, providing a commonsensical rationale for U.S. policies in the Middle East, from Israel to Iraq, the national security crisis is being dramatically staged across a number of home fronts—from the humanitarian-centered transnational voluntary associations of Arab Americans to the streets, housing projects, and political formations within ghettoes, barrios, and the country's Little Haiti's, where the national borders for illegal drugs, illegal immigrants, and unrecognized refugees are intensely militarized. Here Homeland Security intersects with the longer-established War on Drugs, whose social cleansing campaign is credited with, among other things, a marked reduction of New York City's crime rate since 2001 (Marable 2002).

Political analyst Manning Marable, however, has translated Guiliani's achievement in making the streets of New York safe again into the rising rate of mass incarceration in the neighborhoods that poor, racially marked folk inhabit. In those neighborhoods the boundary between the prison industrial complex and inmates' heavily policed home communities is, in many respects, nebulous. Well beyond the City and State of New York, however, the racial, class, and gender economy of the penal system across the entire country has put Uncle Sam and the feminine symbol of Liberty on the global map for the highest rate of incarceration in the world, exceeding the unconscionable records of China, Russia, and other states against which the United States tends to measure its achievements as the world's leading paragon of democratic freedom. The magnitude of incarceration cannot be attributed to the crime rate; harsher sentences for even small offenses related to the War on Drugs, with its built-in racial/class bias, unequal access

to fair legal representation, and inadequate rehabilitation programs for both prisoners and reentrants are the more likely reason. Particularly in the context of poor communities, which bear the brunt of unemployment and other socioeconomic distress, these trends contribute to the criminalization of survival (Harrison 2007).

Another factor to take into account is the growing significance and value of inmates' labor power in the accumulation of corporate profit, a legacy of the convict leasing system that forced freed people to work without the benefit of wages under slave-like or neo-slavery conditions permissible under the very amendment (the 13th) that granted freedom to the formerly enslaved (Davis 2003, 2005). The 13th amendment allows for involuntary servitude under the condition of imprisonment for crime. In *Slavery by Another Name*, Douglas Blackmon (2008) documents that in many cases during the late 19th century and early 20th century, African Americans were sold into a human labor trafficking system supported by agriculturalists, railroads, mining companies and other corporate interests "intent on achieving the most lucrative balance between the productivity of captive labor and the costs of sustaining them" (Blackmon 2008: 57).

While Blackmon's research ends the neo-slavery era at around the time of World War II, recent analyses suggest that there are contemporary forms of neo-slavery, among them the prison industrial complex, with which we should be concerned. The present population of inmates has been converted to what Pem Davidson Buck (1992) has characterized as "concentrated labor" for corporations that collaborate with the state, and vice versa, to exploit prisoners as a "fourth world" labor force. This fourth world domain, situated in both public and private prisons, can also be viewed as a realm of neo-slavery. Contemporary abolitionists are so named not just for the rhetorical power of a historical metaphor; their campaign to abolish the currently existing prison

system and its collateral damage is a struggle to eradicate slavery and achieve a Second Emancipation.

With privatization as such an important trend in current neoliberal economic restructuring, some firms are building and managing prisons as private enterprises. The phenomenon of company prisons (e.g., Corrections Corporation of America and Wackenhut Corrections Corporation) is highly developed in the United States, but it is also a growing trend in Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand (Davis 2003: 85). The distinction between private and public prisons may not be particularly useful, because even public prisons have become intensely corporatized, "saturated with … profit-producing products and services of private corporations" (Davis: 100). Major transnational corporations (e.g., IBM, Motorola, Compaq, Texas Instruments, Microsoft, and Boeing) have stakes in the prison industry (Davis 1998). Angela Y. Davis argues that it is in these corporations' interest to have a ready supply of prison workers. Criminal justice policies, therefore, ensure that there are sufficient numbers regardless of whether crime rates are rising or incarceration is necessary.

Mass incarceration and what Tony L. Whitehead calls the "prison-community-prison continuum" (Whitehead, personal communication, February 2008) have created the conditions for neo-slavery as a factor in capital accumulation in the United States as well as globally. The incarceration epidemic, another of Whitehead's (1997) concepts, represents a major problem and contradiction for U.S. democracy, because the predicament of neo-slavery accompanies felons even when they are released. In many states, they lose their right of franchise, a basic civil right guaranteed to African Americans only 40 years ago as a victory of the Civil Rights Movement. Now, sizable portions of black and brown communities are disenfranchised, displaced from legitimate forms of wage work, discriminated against in housing markets, and denied access to funding for higher education because of the prisonization syndrome, which affects both males and females.

A recent Pew Center report indicates that one in nine black males between the ages of 20–34 are in jail or prison (Pew Center 2008). If we include the youths under the correctional supervision of juvenile authority and men entangled in the wider criminal justice nexus (probation and parole), then the figures are even more severe, indeed devastating. According to the Sentencing Project, if current trends persist, "[o]ne of every three black males born today can expect to go to prison" (Sentencing Project n.d.). Black males, however, are not the only "endangered species." Black women are now going to prison at astronomically soaring rates that are higher than the rates for men (Davis 2003, 2005). The incarceration of both males and females has serious implications for the socialization of children, the viability of families and households, and the integrity and sustainability of community life.

These are problems that are capturing the attention of social scientists and activists organizing for justice both here in the United States and abroad (Harrison 2007; Sudbury 2005; Whitehead 2007). In what follows I focus on a specific group of activists, whose sociopolitical consciousness is being shaped by their translation, or vernacularization (Merry 2006), of transnationally transmitted human rights discourse as well as by their reclamation of an important chapter in the sociopolitical and intellectual history of African Americans and other Afro-diasporic activists who have long struggled over what it means to be human, to enjoy human dignity, and to have black people's claims to human rights seriously acknowledged and respected. The debate over black dehumanization, raised in the mid-19th century when abolitionist Frederick Douglass contested American anthropology's scientific racism by invoking the notion of human rights (Douglass 1950), was continued well into the 20th century. During the 1940s and 1950s, radical African American activists such as W. E. B. Du Bois and

William Patterson took human rights petitions to the newly established United Nations (Anderson 2003; Civil Rights Congress 1951; NAACP 1947). In so doing, they resisted pressure from liberal proponents of civil rights, notably the NAACP's Walter White and Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of the civil rights organization's Board of Directors. The human question, albeit usually implicit, remains at issue today in the age of mass incarceration, in the midst of what João Costa Vargas (2008) argues is a *genocidal continuum* in contemporary Black Diaspora communities. One of the contexts within which the social, economic, and political implications of these issues are being confronted and mobilized around is that in which a human rights praxis is being deployed.

Antiracist Organizing for Human Rights in the Post-Civil Rights South

For a little more than a decade, a multiracial yet African American women-centered network of activists, working largely but not exclusively in the southeastern region of the country, has been building bridges (cf. Robnett 1996) among a number of interrelated struggles against racism and hate crimes, the exploitation and, in some instances, enslavement of migratory agricultural workers, health disparities (particularly those resulting in disproportionate rates of HIV/AIDS), environmental racism, flagrant inequalities in public education, police brutality, and the death penalty. These multiple yet overlapping struggles are being rethought and reframed in terms of an interrelated web of connection based on international human rights. Human rights violations tend to be most stark in the Global South (or in other peripheries and semi-peripheries like the former Yugoslavia), but the activists working in the Southern Human Rights Organizers Network (SHRON; www.shroc.org) map the U.S. South (along with allied regions such as the southwest) as part of this structural, transbordered, and existential geography, given its long association with flagrant human rights abuse, specifically antebellum slavery, now acknowledged to have been a crime against humanity (WCAR NGO Forum Secretariat 2002:10), Post-Reconstruction era lynching, and the varying forms of everyday violence that marked Jim Crow race relations.

In continuity with this tragic past, the South still "leads the country in the unfair application of the death penalty and in environmental racism. Underdeveloped educational systems, a massive prison industrial complex and lack of unions … for low wageworkers perpetuate a caste system, the remnant of a slave based economy. The exploitation of sharecroppers and migrant farm workers, and the brutality of police repression characterize living conditions for many Southerners"—both old and new (National Center for Human Rights Education 2003).

SHRON is organized around the shared vision and praxis of three African American women who are veterans of the civil rights movement and active in the post-civil rights era black women's health and reproductive rights movement, the labor movement, and now the more encompassing and internationalized movement for human rights. At a moment when civil rights and civil liberties are under assault and national borders militarized, SHRON's constituencies have grown particularly cognizant of the importance of thinking beyond the limits of civil rights "bestowed by nations on those within their territorial boundaries" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights; also see Steiner and Alston 2000: 594).

In recent years, SHRON has joined allied organizations (e.g., Alianza Indígena sin Fronteras [Indigenous Alliance without Borders], Haitian Women of Miami, etc.) in taking direct action against Homeland Security's repressive policies and practices in increasingly militarized border zones in the southwest and Florida. It has sought to bring greater attention to the declining political climate threatening the human rights of both citizens and immigrants in Mexican American, Native American, and Haitian

transnational communities. The collusion between the state and paramilitary vigilantes fighting against the "invasion" of illegal aliens is a serious problem especially in the southwest, where undocumented immigrants, many of whom are indigenous, are hunted like wild animals in desert territories that are often part of American Indian reservations. In the Florida context, SHRON has worked with Haitian American activists on the maltreatment of "boat people," who are often retained indefinitely without access to legal counsel or recreational and educational facilities for children, who are separated from their parents. SHRON has also brought the predicament of Haitian refugees in the United States into conversations on conditions in Haiti and among Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic. SHRON has helped to establish a transborder network that links activists and their subaltern constituencies on both sides of the Haitian diaspora where anti-Haitian, anti-black discrimination operates in parallel but culturally and politically distinct ways.

SHRON's constituent organizations, among them the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Mississippi Center for Workers Rights, have brought to it a concern for economic justice—a working wage and safe, non-hostile working conditions. Workplace hate crimes, harassment, both racial and sexual, inadequate wages, restraints on unionization, and, in the worse cases, slavery-like work and living conditions have occupied the attention of human rights organizers. SHRON has emphasized that human rights are holistic, based on the complementarity that civil and political rights have with the economic, social, and cultural rights that are barely recognized in the U.S.'s bourgeois democracy.

Another of SHRON's important foci has been the largely anti-black human rights violations that internally displaced people, a category protected by humanitarian and human rights law, have faced as a consequence of Katrina's *unnatural* disaster in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast. These mobilizations have been informed by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which the UN developed in 1998 (UN doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2 of February 11, 1998).

Finally, transnational and intercultural alliances are also key to the network's political identity; hence, SHRON has made an effort to cultivate allies in India (e.g., Dalit women's organizations) as well as in the Caribbean and Latin America. The network of allies includes a strong representation of Afro-diasporic and continental African women (e.g., in South Africa) with whom members of, and organizations within, the network have collaborated in antiracist, HIV/AIDS prevention, economic justice, and women's empowerment projects. SHRON is also embedded in a national nexus that brings activists, educators, and students from other parts of the country as well as from abroad to its biennial "regional" conferences.

The Regional Face of Globalization

Central to SHRON's political project is the impact that globalization and its interrelated transnationalisms (demographic, economic, and political) are having on the south (Cobb and Stueck 2005; Harrison 2005; Peacock et al. 2005). The southern population has grown more diverse from new immigration. Latinization (Mohl 2005; Murphy et al. 2001; Smith 2005) is having a tremendous effect, but migration from other parts of the world, including the Anglo- and Francophone Caribbean and Africa, is also noteworthy. On the economic front, the region's economy is being reconfigured by capital movements both in and out of the country. The region is attractive to foreign capital, because it offers First World amenities without First World costs (Smith 1998).

The region's transnationalization is bringing the experiences of old and new southerners into interaction *and tension*. In response to the conflicts that have arisen, especially between blacks and new immigrants—from the lowly-paid Latino migrants to affluent Asian business proprietors and professionals (Subramanian

2005)—SHRON is attempting to provide popular education and consciousness raising that elucidates how the rights of immigrants and refugees and those of citizens (often second class in the way they have been treated) can be understood as interrelated and reconcilable within the international human rights framework.

Demographic Diversification, Restructuring Race, and the Crisis of White Identity

The southeast's demographic, cultural and economic diversification is having an interesting effect on relations of race and racism, which—despite ideological claims of colorblindness—are being restructured rather than dismantled. Since the outset of the post-civil rights period, white privilege has been undergoing a reorganization to accommodate antiracist reforms as well as the changes brought about from recent inflows of immigrants. White privilege has also had to accommodate an inflow of foreign capital that includes investments from Asian countries such as Japan (Kurotani 2005; Shimizu 2005). The national economy's growing dependence on Asian capital and professionals means that white Americans no longer hold the same level of economic clout that was traditionally the bottom line of racial domination. Also, the declining economic security of the white middle and working classes has engendered a crisis of identity that intensifies resentment against the substantive advances that African Americans and other people of color make. Racial others are convenient scapegoats whom racist whites can blame and punish for getting out of their proper place in the normative racial order. The intensification of racial tensions under these circumstances, which are not at all restricted to the South (e.g., the recent incident at Columbia University), has led to ugly conflicts over racially demarcated turfs, noose hangings on school grounds and the imposition of racially differentiated punishments by the courts. The flagrant racism that gave rise to Jena Six and that has led the Ku Klux Klan to diversify the populations its hate crimes target (Harrison 2008a: 250) co-exists alongside more subtle and diffuse forms of everyday racism. These range from interpersonal microaggressions (Sue 2003) that diminish morale and undermine mental and physical health to the institutionalized mechanisms that sustain racially coded privileges and disadvantages across a number of societal domains, from academia (Harrison 2008b) to housing and banking.

Situating SHRON in Space and Time

Beyond the factors related to its immediate history and regional context, SHRON has been influenced by the general post-Cold War trends that have led many social justice struggles around the world to adopt or appropriate the language and instruments of the international human rights movement. Human rights talk has come to be one of the most intelligible political discourses in the world, in some ways filling the vacuum left by the "demise of [the former] grand political narratives" (Wilson 1997: 1).

The regional and world conferences sponsored by the UN have provided another important international influence. Since the 1985 Nairobi Women's Conference, SHRON's founders have participated in UN "prep coms" (preparatory conferences) and international conferences on the rights of women and the racially oppressed. These experiences have exposed them to the transnational construction and mobilization of human rights discourse and a wide spectrum of nationally specific cases of translating and incorporating ideas about those rights into antiracist and antisexist terms amenable to particular on-the-ground struggles. SHRON has conveyed its transnational knowledge and consciousness to community-based audiences through its biennial conferences. For example, one of the main purposes of the 2000 SHROC (Southern Human Rights Organizers Conference) was to publicize the significance of and prepare delegates for the 2001 World Conference against

Racism, specifically the parallel NGO Forum, in Durban, South Africa. The workshops offered on applying for NGO certification and preparing shadow reports were extremely helpful.

SHRON's leading activists are also quite aware of influences that predate the transition from the Cold War. They know of political antecedents whose articulations of human rights have constituted important chapters in the history of the Black Experience. For example, a constituent organization's annual report notes that Frederick Douglass addressed the human rights of Negroes in the 1850s (National Center for Human Rights 2000). Later during the post-World War II years, a human rights agenda was at the center of the antiracist campaigns of the NAACP and other more leftist civil rights organizations, notably the National Negro Congress and the Civil Rights Congress (Anderson 2003). These organizations prepared UN petitions documenting human rights violations, including genocide (Civil Rights Congress 1951). The NAACP eventually moved further to the right as it aligned itself to the Truman administration and against the radical positions of WEB Du Bois, William Paterson, Paul Robeson and other black leftists who, by the 1950s McCarthyist era, were deemed to be "un-American" and deserving of severe penalties. These were the push factors that led Du Bois to emigrate to Ghana, where he died just before the 1963 March on Washington.

The following year, Malcolm X continued to echo the call for human rights. In a 1964 interview with *Monthly Review* magazine, he stated the following:

> Now my address to [the civil rights leadership] was designed to show them that if they would expand their civil rights movement to a human rights movement it would internationalize it. Now, as a civil rights movement, it remains within the confines of American domestic policy and no African independent nations can open up their mouths on American domestic affairs, whereas if they expanded the civil rights movement to a human rights

> movement then they would be eligible to take the case of the Negro to the United Nations the same as the case of the Angolans is in the UN and the case of the South Africans is in the UN. Once the civil rights movement is expanded to a human rights movement our African brothers and our Asian brothers and Latin American brothers can place it on the agenda at the General Assembly that is coming up this year and Uncle Sam has no more say-so in it then. (Spellman 1964)

The significance of this history continues to reverberate in African American and Black Atlantic politics and theorization. For instance, post-colonial theorist Sylvia Wynter (2002) has called for an *after-man* phase of formulating the terms of what it can mean to be and become human. She advocates an ontology and epistemology that are premised on conceptual grounds other than those established in the image and within the parameters of the legacy of the Western Enlightenment. She argues that the model of Man derived from that universalism-claiming trajectory presumes the radical othering and inferiorization of the African and African-derived. As a consequence, full humanity cannot be achieved without the fundamental reconstruction of the terms and conditions of what is human. This theorization has implications for thinking critically about the historical development of and epistemological struggles over the philosophical, legal, and political constitution of the current human rights regime.

Will the vernacularization of human rights discourse among SHRON's constituents and kindred spirits penetrate beneath the text of declarations and conventions to the subtexts, to the underpinnings and deep structural realm of implication? Will debates within SHRON lead to a critical reflection on the human rights system so that its positive possibilities can address the predicaments of the racially oppressed more effectively? Will SHRON be successful in applying a "grounded interpretation of

international human rights standards [that will] offset the decontextualizing, top-down approach that [often] inhibits well-intentioned NGOs from sufficiently taking into account the complex political dynamics and structural processes that shape the specific contours of human rights cases" [that emerge within historically contingent and politically variable contexts]? (Harrison 2005: 247)

Conclusion

SHRON's vision of racial justice is predicated on its notion that human rights, both civil/political and socioeconomic, are necessary if not completely sufficient conditions for social justice, reconciliation, and peace. SHRON also understands that achieving racial justice is inextricably entangled in the pursuit of equality along the lines of interlocking axes of inequality and power, particularly those of gender, sexuality, class, nation and, at this juncture of demonizing Islam, religion. SHRON is making a concerted effort to deploy an intersectional or multi-axial strategy to organize for shared dignity and rights across salient differences in a regional, national, and global context in which pluricultural, multiracial complexity and tensions are growing. These organizers seek to follow a humane path toward ideals of equality, liberty and commonweal rather than succumb to the logic of being divided and conquered once again in the Second Post-Reconstruction. They are working to achieve a Second Emancipation— perhaps the first with a robust repertoire of substantive and balanced rights, especially for the most vulnerable and violated among us, who, as Frederick Douglass clearly understood, have been relegated to the margins of the human family.

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Commentary

The Obama Victory, Asset-Based Development and the Re-Politicization of Community Organizing

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Abstract: In this commentary, I argue that Obama's victory in the recent Democratic primary was largely a consequence of his early experiences as an Alinsky-style community organizer in Chicago. I compare the nature of the broad-based organizing that Obama was trained in to a newer model of "community building" called Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). ABCD promotes the belief that communities suffering the effects of economic restructuring, such as abandoned housing, crime, and deindustrialization among others, can "heal themselves" by looking within for resources—or "assets"—rather than by making demands on the state, a stance its proponents stigmatize as evidence of a "client" mentality. I argue that however chimerical its promises of redemption are, ABCD illustrates an important shift in contemporary understandings of citizenship, away from the possibilities for collective action that characterize Alinsky-style organizing and toward a view that is both radically neoliberal and potentially totalitarian in its homogenizing notions of its two key concepts—"community" and "assets." I suggest that the grassroots nature of the Obama campaign may have the potential to reanimate an interest in broad-based organizing toward the end of creating a more just distribution of resources.

Key words: community organizing, neoliberalism, inequality

"He Community Organized the Nation"

One of the more intriguing aspects of this year's Democratic primary race was the way in which it brought widespread attention to the Alinsky model of community organizing. Both of the final candidates claimed it as part of their personal histories. Hillary Clinton wrote her senior thesis at Wellesley College on Saul Alinksy. Entitled, "'There is Only the Fight': An Analysis of Saul D. Alinksy," the existence of the thesis has been used by the right wing as evidence of Clinton's untrustworthy "radicalism" and by her supporters in the recent race against Obama as proof that Clinton's organizing credentials are on par with his. (See the MSNBC site http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17388372/ for an analysis of the thesis.)

For his part, Obama actually walked the walk; for three years (1985–88), he was employed by the Developing Communities Project, an Alinsky-style organization in South Chicago that still exists and whose mission is described as follows on its Web site:

> Developing Communities Project (DCP) exists for the purpose of effective church based grassroots organizing. Our mission continues to be the development of indigenous community residents and institutions for the purpose of solving urban neighborhood problems. (http://www.dcpincorp.org/)

In his autobiography, Obama describes the arduous work of entering a neighborhood as an organizer, of going door-to-door to set up what organizers call "one-on-ones"—conversations with neighborhood residents intended to give organizers insight into neighborhood concerns, alliances, oppositions, local networks, and resources. He recounts the frustration of a failed community meeting he set up early on with a local police District Officer and of being initially summarily dismissed by a local pastor suspicious of "outside agitators" (Obama 1995). Toward the end of his organizing career, Obama wrote a short article that first appeared in a magazine called