

# FOCUS

Views from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency

## COAST TO COAST: Youth Radio and New America Media in NEW YORK

### *Introduction*

In October of 2006, NCCD celebrated its Centennial, 100 years of working to reform the justice system.

Since its beginnings, the Council has had a focus on youth and has always valued the voices of young people, considering them the highest authority on themselves. In that spirit, NCCD sponsored a forum on youth in the justice system at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan. Local members of the national Community Justice Network for Youth presented their views and their work. To transfer some of this perspective from east coast to west, members of California-based Youth Radio and New America Media traveled to New York to cover all of the NCCD events.

What we present here is a snapshot of events and excerpts from the follow up work of Youth Radio and New America Media. Plus, we spotlight the participant groups from coast to coast.

New York City



## Youth Outlook Goes to NYC

*Story and photos by Krista Kim and Elliott McGregor*

Our trip to NYC wasn't a vacation, it was a business trip. We came to attend meetings on juvenile justice, but got to check out a lot of New York on the way.

This first day of our trip we headed out to see some of the famous sites of NYC. Starting at Ground Zero, we captured some pictures of pictures that were taken dur-



ing the bombing of 9/11 and the site after. While taking pictures, we felt that just being there you can feel the emotions of the people who were there that day when the planes hit the buildings. We noticed the differences in people's accents and styles. New York is a lot more diverse than what we are used to in the Bay Area.

After we left Ground Zero, we headed to the American Express building to visit a friend of our chaperone, Trish. We had to go through a security process that required us to get a temporary picture ID to get into the offices. Once we got our picture ID, it seemed like we had to go through the process of boarding the airplane all over again, because of the high security level that was caused by 9/11. Then we went up to the 41st floor where we looked down at Ground Zero, Wall Street, the Statue of Liberty, Staten Island, the Manhattan Bridge, the Brooklyn Bridge and the Hudson River. While looking down at the city, there was a part missing: the Twin Towers. It felt weird even though it was our first time looking at Ground Zero, just seeing a space in New York that was empty gave us a kind of feeling of missing out. Seeing the two beautiful building is an experience we could never have now.

*continued on 6*

## Community Justice Network for Youth

*This group was the main facilitator and organizer of its partner groups in New York. CJNY pulled together the program that was presented at John Jay College on October 20, 2006.*

The CJNY has been formed to help facilitate, support and expand local, state, regional and national peer-to-peer exchange of best practices amongst community based providers committed to serving communities of color. The CJNY is committed to the empowerment of youth and their communities by promoting the availability of effective, culturally appropriate community-based interventions. The CJNY exists to be a

national vehicle for organizations that are creating real solutions to replace the failed justice model as represented by large institutions, high recidivism rates and poor re-entry services and outcomes. The CJNY aims to reduce disproportionate strict sentencing and the warehousing of children of color across the country, which are some of the contributing factors to the incarceration plague we call "Rail To The Jail." Through the promotion of best practices and strong network connections, we aim to Stop the Rail to Jail for young people of color.

[cjny.org](http://cjny.org)

180 Howard Street, Suite 320 // San Francisco, CA 94105 // 415-321-4100

## *An Interview with Chino Harden, prison activist*

*By Karime Blanco*

Chino Harden is a motivational force. She works with the Prison Moratorium Project in New York. In October of this year, I heard her speak on a panel about juvenile justice that was sponsored by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and the Community Justice Network for Youth.



“My mamma’s been in jail, and my grandmother was in jail. I’m third generation of women incarcerated, so prison is really, really a deep, touchy issue for me.

See, New York City is addicted to incarceration kind of like a person who is addicted to crack. The gangs are a powerful network.

This is like thousands of young people with all of this energy and all of this time on their hands, they can, you know, do some powerful things, and we’re fighting over blocks that we will never, ever own. And when police come on our block we scatter like roaches when

*continued on 4*

## *Voices of Youth*

Voices of Youth was established to advocate for the inclusion of adolescents in all aspects of child welfare practice, policy development and operations by creating a vehicle for young people to share their stories, perspectives and the expertise they have gained by living in the foster care system. Since joining Southwest Key, Voices of Youth has expanded programming to address the same needs of adolescents in the juvenile justice and educational systems. Together we have found that when the youth share their stories, systemic failure becomes crystallized, inadequacies of practice methods are made obvious and most importantly, the simple, but effective gestures of staff are highlighted. How better to understand the effectiveness of a services system than by asking the very people who have experienced the services first hand.

[swkey.org/Voices\\_of\\_Youth](http://swkey.org/Voices_of_Youth)

199 Lincoln Avenue, Suite 311 // Bronx, NY  
10454 // 718-402-5303

## *Correctional Association of New York*

The Correctional Association of New York is an independent, non-profit organization founded by concerned citizens in 1844 and granted unique authority by the New York State Legislature to inspect prisons and to report its findings and recommendations to the legislature, the public and the press. Through monitoring, research, public education and policy recommendations, the Correctional Association strives to make the administration of justice in New York State more fair, efficient and humane.

[correctionalassociation.org](http://correctionalassociation.org)

135 East 15th Street // New York, NY 10003 // 212-254-5700

from 3

the lights come on, so how really gangsta are you, is my pose, is what I'm doing with these young people. Because, when I was locked up I was that young woman chained from my ankles to my waist, with mittens and a mask around my face, because I would spit at guards, I would bite them. I was extremely violent, and I still am. I'm just not violent on the people who are doing the things, I'm violent against the system, and I'm going to stay violent on the system until the system stops being violent on me."

After the panel I got a chance to talk to Chino, one on one. I was curious about her personal story. She told me that she was first incarcerated at thirteen, when she got into a fight at school and broke a friend's nose. His parents decided to press charges, and she ended up at a juvenile incarceration facility for over a month.

"And then they took away my clothes, and made me put on these little paper slippers, that, I'll never forget, just these little paper slippers that had a little smiley face on them. And I kept thinking to myself, 'What the f\*\*k are you smiling at?'"

The first time that Chino went to jail, she wasn't an inmate, but a visitor.

"When I was younger I used to go upstate to Bedford Hills, which is a correctional facility, upstate New York, to visit my mother who was incarcerated there. And I remember going through all these procedures, and having all these little tags that said, hello, with my name, and being in this area with all these other kids and so many other women seeing their kids. And people were laughing and crying, I just couldn't figure out why it was set up like that. Like how come nobody can see their parents at home. I just couldn't understand that that's where she had to stay even if she wanted to come home."

continued on 5

## Voices UnBroken

Voices UnBroken is a community-based organization dedicated to providing under-heard members of the community with the tools and opportunity for creative self-expression. Through creative writing workshops in jails, prisons, group homes, residential treatment facilities, and various other transitional and alternative settings, Voices UnBroken nurtures the inherent need in all people to tell their stories. It is our belief that through this telling of stories and sharing of dreams community growth becomes possible.

[voicesunbroken.org](http://voicesunbroken.org)

370 E. 149th Street // Bronx, NY 10455 // 718-292-3018

## Friends of the Island Academy

Friends of Island Academy (FOIA) reaches out to youth prior to their release from Rikers Island. Our name reflects the Board of Education school located on Rikers Island Academy, which is attended by many of the youth while incarcerated. Upon discharge, FOIA provides job training, counseling, education, mentoring, and youth leadership development. In return, participants are expected to stay out of trouble, take responsibility for themselves, and work to rebuild their lives.

FOIA is built on the belief that young people need to be helped, guided, empowered and challenged. Through the support of staff, each FOIA member takes responsibility, first for themselves and later for their peers and community.

[foiany.org](http://foiany.org)

330 West 38th Street, Suite 301 // New York, NY 10018 // 212-760-0755

from 4

Chino's been incarcerated eight times, but arrested 16 times.

"Going through the system, as a juvenile, it led me straight to the adult system. And the adult system left a long-lasting effect. I mean, I still walk on the right side, of a hallway or a street block. But I think the biggest effect that juvenile and adult incarceration had on me is that...I got used to it. I got used to going back to jail. And the fact that I got used to that is the biggest devastation I think you could do to anybody. Get somebody used to being an animal."



Chino doesn't believe that we can tweak the system. At this point, she is calling for a complete overhaul.

"I would flourish all the community-based initiatives that have taken place and alternatives to incarceration programs and alternatives to detention programs that have taken place. You know, I would build things for young people, community centers, housing, schools. We need to be able to self determine our destinies for ourselves, as a people, as a community, as an individual."

That was Chino Harden. For Youth Radio, I'm Karime Blanco.



## Prison Moratorium Project

Founded in 1995, the Prison Moratorium Project (PMP) is a multi-racial group of youth, community members and formerly incarcerated persons. Based in Brooklyn, New York, we work locally and nationally to stop prison/jail expansion and mass incarceration – particularly of youth – and empower communities most directly affected by the criminal justice system through education, advocacy, leadership training and technical assistance.

[nomoreprisons.org](http://nomoreprisons.org)

388 Atlantic Avenue, 3rd Floor // Brooklyn, NY  
11217 // 718-260-8805

## Bronx Connect

*Urban Youth Alliance International*

Urban Youth Alliance is an indigenous, multicultural, cross-denominational urban youth ministry that equips and empowers youth and youth workers to bring the transforming presence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to urban high schools, colleges, and communities.

We desire to be a model of how young lives and church communities living under the Lordship of Christ can usher in the Kingdom of God in to urban centers in the United States and worldwide.

[uyai.org](http://uyai.org)

442 East 149th Street, 4th Floor // Bronx, NY 10455  
// 718-402-6872

from 2

Then, we took a ferry to the Statue of Liberty. Once on the ferry we took a lot of pictures of Manhattan. It was a beautiful sight-seeing the whole Manhattan Island. We got up close and personal with the famous shots you see in movies all the time. When we got off the ferry, we walked around the Statue, took pictures and noticed tourists from all over the world had come to see Miss Liberty. Being on the island was a cherishable moment.

Just thinking about all the movies and history that happened in this spot, right where we were, made it an even greater experience.

Then we rushed back to Manhattan to go to a meeting

held by an organization named Each One, Teach One. They invited us to join their juvenile justice leadership group, where they spoke about the “prison industrial complex” and how much money is spent on jails and prisons. Getting a chance to meet an organization that was similar to ours was really cool. We noticed how much different the youth out in the East Coast are compared to West Coast youth. Their slang sounded like a whole different language. It sounded funny to our ears, both the accents and the words they chose. It seemed like we were more exposed to the juvenile justice issues than them. It made us realize how much we’ve learned about the system from being involved in nonprofit organizations. It seemed like we’ve learned more from our peers through our experience than they’d learned from each other.



We read a comic called “Prison Town,” which was based on poverty and building up the prison system. Then we discussed the topic that came from the comic book: “If You Had A Million Dollars How Would You Spend It In Your Community?” We listened to them share their ideas on how they would spend the money on their community. The East Coast youth said they would give the money to single mothers or to create jobs for youth.

Our ideas were based on what we see in our community, which we think about every day. We are always thinking about issues like poverty, the lack of resources for parents, jobs, education, money, housing, good role models, after-school programs, resources for people who were incarcerated, lack of gun control, and no way to keep drugs off the street. Then everyone watched “Beatin’ Tha System,” the documentary that Krista made about the foster care system.

In the morning, we experienced windy New York weather when we were heading down to the John Jay

College of Criminal Justice, where we attended the “Stop the Rail to Jail” conference on criminal justice, which was interesting because we got to listen to some really talented speakers. Our favorite speaker was a guy named Asad Muhammad who was the instructor of the Each One, Teach One program. He said some really powerful things and that gave us an idea on why he ran the program. He spoke about how we were caught in the system and how we make the prison system work and how we try to get out but always get caught back in it. Afterwards, some of the youth and Asad offered to give us a tour of Harlem.

*continued on 7*

As the day went by time went with it and we realized that we had one more visit we should make while we were in Harlem, which is a multi-media youth program named Harlem Live. It is similar to our programs here in San Francisco, YO! Youth Outlook and Conscious Youth Media Crew, where we worked to create our short films. So as we talked with the members from Harlem Live, they presented us a short film they threw together to give an example of what they do. Then we showed them a film by Elliott, “The Real State of Emergency” to show what we do. We learned about their program and realized that time had disappeared so we had to run back to the subway and get to our hotel to get ready for the big dinner.

Once we were ready, we caught a taxi to the Essex House, where there was a big fancy dinner for the 100-year anniversary of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. We sat with Youth Radio and a man from Washington, D.C., who works with battered women. It was an honor to be invited to the NCCD awards, which we took as a great opportunity to brush shoulders with elders and to be the link between youth and adults.

We thought New York was going to be big and fancy and everyone would have all the new things and be ahead of everyone and everything, but it wasn't. It looked like what you see on TV, but it was not something to be all “wow” about. It's similar to the Bay in many ways: Bridges connect Manhattan, which is surrounded by water, to other parts of New York just like San Francisco is connected to Oakland. But there were

no hills, just flat blocks, which made it seem easier to get around. But their poverty seemed more obvious than ours. Out here in California, even broke kids keep up their appearances like they have money. The kids in New York didn't have cell phones or brand new clothes,



but we didn't really get to ask them a lot of questions so all we can do is guess why. Maybe because it's harder for them to get jobs—or maybe street hustles are more serious to life and death than out here. The older homeless people seemed to have a better hustle. They had ID cards to show you when asking for money on the subway.

Next time we go to New York hopefully we'll be old enough to go to the clubs and get the full experience—a real vacation. But as our first business trip, it felt important to be in New York as guests to visit organizations and talk to people.



*This project was made possible by a generous grant from The California Endowment.*

## Youth Radio

1809 University Avenue // Berkeley, CA 94703 // 510-841-5123

[youthradio.org](http://youthradio.org)

Youth Radio's mission is to promote young people's intellectual, creative and professional growth through training and access to media and to produce the highest quality original media for local and national outlets. Through hands-on practice, working relationships with industry professionals, and production of award-winning programming, Youth Radio students learn the basics of broadcasting. In the process, they're exposed to a broad spectrum of media-related careers.

But technical training is only part of the picture. Through their journalism education, Youth Radio students also strengthen their foundation in basic "life-skills": verbal expression, writing, computer technology, critical thinking, conflict resolution, and more. What about life-after-Youth Radio? Graduates emerge with a new confidence and hope for creating a positive professional future for themselves, and with concrete skills and contacts to get them there. Youth Radio contributes to the empowerment of teenagers by giving them tools they'll need for success. We also bring youth perspectives to the airwaves, shedding light on the concerns and interests of our young people.

Northern California // 275 9th Street // San Francisco, CA 94103 // 415-503-4170

## New America Media

a project of *Pacific News Service*

[newamericamedia.org](http://newamericamedia.org)

New America Media is the country's first and largest national collaboration of ethnic news organizations. Founded by the nonprofit Pacific News Service in 1996, NAM is headquartered in California, where ethnic media are the primary source of news and information for over half of the state's new ethnic majority.

NAM's goal is to promote the editorial visibility and economic viability of this critical sector of American journalism as a way to build inclusive public discourse in our increasingly diverse, global society. NAM produces and aggregates editorial content from and for the ethnic media sector and develops pioneering marketing services on behalf of corporations, foundations, and non-profits who are targeting ethnic media and ethnic communities.

NAM also distributes multilingual polling to bring the voices of ethnic audiences into national focus and organizes events to give ethnic media direct access to decision makers in government, business, academic and foundation/non-profit worlds.