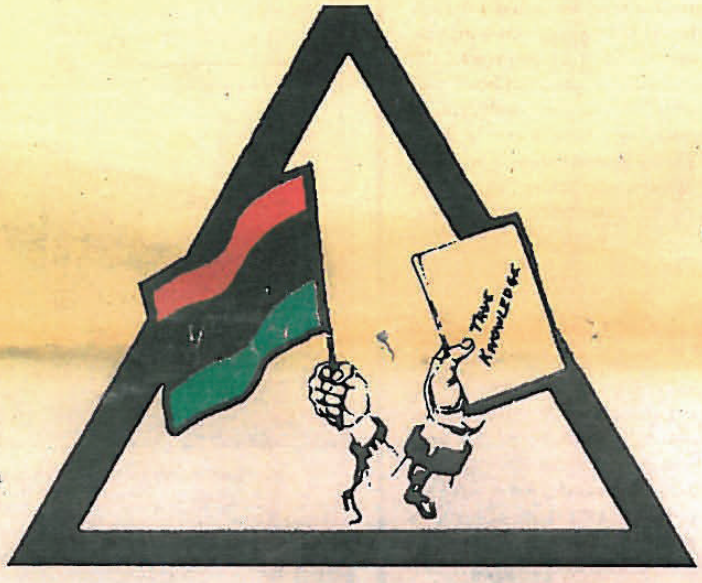
ORGANIZATION FOR BLACK STRUGGLE

OBS: 1980-2000
20 YEARS OF STRUGGLE

20TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE EDITION



The Organization for Black Struggle was founded in 1980. A group of new and veteran activists was seeking an organization that addressed the needs and issues of the black working class. There was a vacuum of radical leadership that could boldly speak and act, independent of the government or corporate structures. In retrospect, this was a challenging period. It was one of regrouping by the forces that chose to continue the struggles of the 60's and 70's.

The FBI's CounterIntelligence Program, known as COINTELPRO, had wreaked havoc on the leaders and organizations of the Black Liberation Movement. Aggressive tactics of the government in a search and destroy mission decimated groups like the Black Panther Party, nationally and the Zulu 1200, locally. Even more moderate groups, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and non-violent, civil rights activist, Dr. Martin Luther King, did not escape the wrath of FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover.

Politically, the right was beginning to consolidate its power with a Republican in the White House for the next 12 years.

Economically, the country was struggling to get itself out of a recession. The hopes and aspirations of the black masses, as well as other people of color, were temporarily dashed. It was from this abyss of darkness that **OBS** was born.

OBS had studied the organizations of the past to glean from them the lessons and practices on which to build a solid foundation. This included groups like the Panthers, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Council (S.N.C.C.), A.C.T.I.O.N., and the Black Nationalist Party. The above organizations' life spans varied, but their histories provided valuable information that prevented **OBS** from having to re-invent the wheel and make costly mistakes.

Key to **OBS's** 20 years-and-still-going strong survival is their uncompromising principles, tenacity, vision and deep roots in the community. **OBS** has grown into a grassroots organization that is well respected in many spheres. It has become an influential force in the fight for political power, economic justice and cultural dignity.

"BLACK PEOPLE ON THE MOVE!"

This commemorative newspaper is a modest attempt to honor the organization's vibrant past, celebrate its unwavering present, and uphold its promising future.

FROM THE CHAIR

The Organization for Black Struggle presents this commemorative edition with both pride and humility. Our goal was to capture 20 years of history in as many pictures and with the fewest words as possible. It was a task that we really felt was important for the Movement. There is still much to "show n tell". This special edition covers the extensive life of **OBS** from the years of 1980 through 2000.

The process was invigorating and affirming, and also a lot of fun. There were people, places and events that had long slipped our fragile human memories. The sheer volume alone of activities, campaigns and struggles were mind-blowing for a group whose operations depend solely on committed, unpaid members.

Our responses to injustice were varied in length of time and resources. Some were behind the scenes, while others were well publicized. For example, a single letter from **OBS** in 1982 freed up an ambulance license that Central Medical Center had been seeking for months.

Conversely, the struggle to bring justice to Ellen Reasonover and her family took nearly 20 years (1983-99). Each act of resistance and every voice of dissent added to the blows against the perpetrators of racism, sexism, homophobia, as well as other forms of oppression and repression.

OBS realizes that it would take a multiple volumes to do justice to our history. Perhaps one day we will make the time to sit, reflect and write. We sorely underestimated the time and effort it would take to review the depth and breadth of our archives. For over a year, we sifted through literally hundreds (maybe thousands!) of photographs, documents and notes. It was obvious that this commemoration issue would not be final until it went to press. There was always one more important photo, one more untold fact, or one more worthy event that could be included.

This commemorative edition is our best effort to showcase the lessons, successes and impact of the organization. We also know that there will be people and things that were unintentionally omitted. We tried to include as many of you as possible who have been part of the **OBS** Family. The reality is that our project is the victim of bad photography or worst, no photography. We promise to do better in the future. And we promise not to wait so long either. Next time, it will be a FIVE-year historical edition.

We hope you enjoy this glimpse down our memory lane. If you weren't a part of the first twenty years in some way, here's an open invitation to join us today. A luta continua—the struggle continues!

Jamala Rogers
February 2002



OBS has fundraiser at Black Repertory Theater



Phone-a-Thon coordinator gives instructions to member ('96)



Members chilling at annual picnic ('98)

INSIDE THE ORGANIZATION

Vision and Mission

The vision of **OBS** is to contribute to the creation of a society free of all forms of exploitation and oppression. Its mission is to build a movement that fights for political empowerment, economic justice and the cultural dignity of the African-American community, especially the black working class.

Structure

The structure of **OBS** has changed several times over the last twenty years to adjust to the changing conditions both inside and outside the organization. The flexibility allows the organization to met existing needs as well as new challenges. The general committees are Communications, Economic Development, and Political Action. **OBS** relies heavily on formal and informal input from the African American community in order to make informed decisions about strategy and tactics. This ensures the organization always has its finger on the pulse of the masses.

Membership

OBS members come from diverse backgrounds; the majority is black and working class. Most reside in the metropolitan St. Louis area. There are others who are scattered in cities throughout the country. Membership ranges from welfare mothers to college professors, from gay to straight, from Muslim to atheist, from youth to elders. They are united around the mission, goals, and activities of the organization. Categories are Askari (Active), Tayari (Support) and Nafasi (Sustainer). Membership is taken seriously and candidates go through an orientation process. Active members strive to give at least four hours a week to the organization, while supporters help when they can. The leadership's task is to juggle the precious time and energy of individual members with their interests, talents and skills into moving the Organization's work forward.

Training and Leadership Development

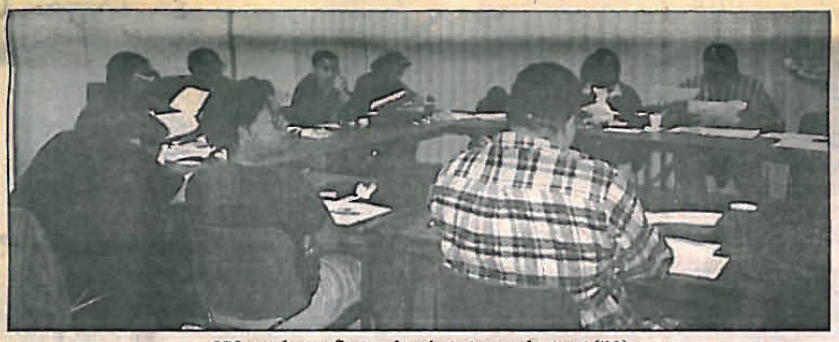
Political education is an ongoing component in the organizational life of **OBS**. Members are encouraged to participate in study sessions and workshops. These help to raise their level of consciousness and enhance their organizing ability. The Funding Exchange has underwritten several projects. These include the "Black Liberation and Technology" project that upgraded the skills and equipment of the organization. Classes, such as photography, computers, etc., were also open to other activists in the community. Members also attend workshops, seminars and conferences to share information and experiences with other activists around the city, the country and the world.

Finances

OBS prides itself on their financial autonomy that is necessary for political independence. The organization needs to be able to speak boldly and act decisively on behalf of the black working class. Fundraising is regular and an integral part of its activities. Creative and diverse funding sources give the group its basic operating budget. Membership dues and general contributions comprise an important percentage of the revenue. Annual fundraisers include the Anniversary Celebration and the Phone-a-Thon. Monies are also raised from Reggae Nites and Pamoja Sessions. For special projects, members seek grants and other funding opportunities.



OBS member soothes anxieties of new computer users ('97)



OBS members reflect and project at annual retreat ('99)



Members discussing materials at study session ('00)



Members get out a bulk mailing ('00)

Setting the Tone and Direction for the Year

The Anniversary Celebrations play a key social, political and economic role for the organization. It is an annual dinner program that celebrates the 1980 founding of **OBS**. Since the first program at the old Page Park YMCA, the celebrations have always taken place the last Saturday in January. Supporters have come from near and far to share in the festivities and the accomplishments of the organization. The AC has become one of the highlights of the organization's yearly activities.

The celebrations have been a traditional networking of "Who's Who" in the progressive movements. New and seasoned activists, as well as every day people, attend the celebrations as a show of support for the work of **OBS**. They also come to seek additional information, views and to check out the cultural inner-attainment. As one of the first events of the year, the AC has become an energizer for the Black Liberation Movement and helps to set the political tone for the upcoming months.

Careful thought and much discussion goes on both in and outside **OBS** to select a theme that is timely and relevant. The themes and speakers have put forth a perspective or direction that gives the social justice movement a rallying call around a current issue or trend. After the theme is selected, a national search takes place within the activist community to identify the speaker. A connection must always be made between struggles locally and those around the country so that it is clear that our issues are a part of the larger movement. Speakers have been renown or lesser known, but the bottom line is that they come with an activist knowledge and a well of experiences on the topic. The Infrared Rockers and the Youth Cultural Theater are annual favorites for cultural inner attainment. The programs are always held at venues that are accessible and that represents working class interests, such as community centers or union halls.

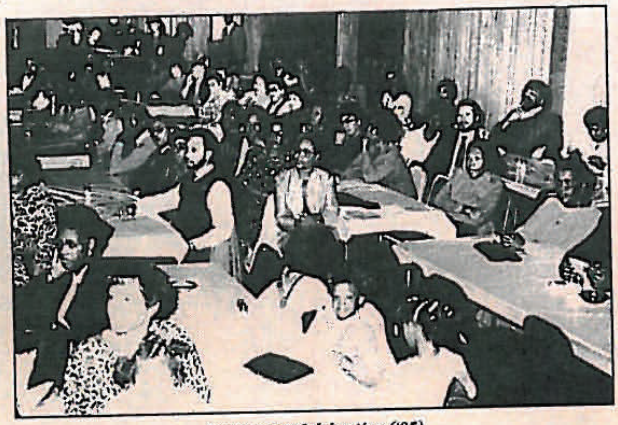
Lastly, the ACs have been an important fundraiser activity for **OBS**. It is one of several ways that supporters can contribute to the organization's ongoing work. If you've never attended the dinner program or haven't done so in a while, check out the next one. Each year, they are bigger and better than the year before! Remember, the Anniversary Celebration is always the last Saturday in January.



The AC Planning Committee poses with speaker, Eve Thompson ('94)



Keynote Speaker, Temba Vilakazi of the African National Congress, gets a warm welcome from Clifford Wilson Center supporters ('86)



Anniversary Celebration ('85)

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



Loretta Ross, Center for Human Rights ('89)



The late St. Louis alderwoman, Mary Ross ('82)



Dr. Conrad Worrill, National Black United Front ('90)

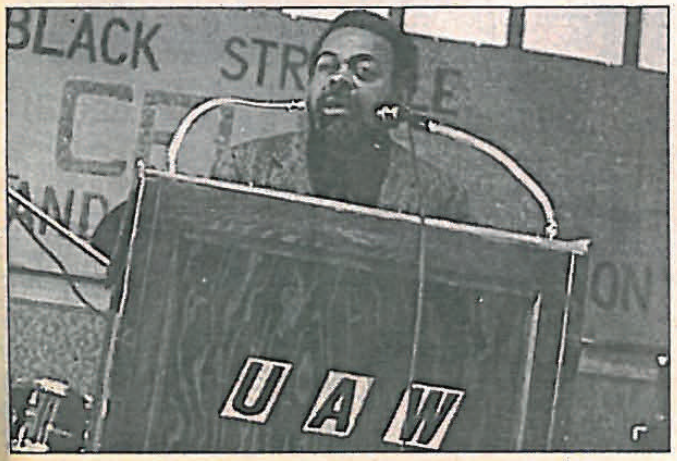


Rose Sanders, New South attorney and activist ('88)

A GLIMPSE OF GUEST SPEAKERS



Emcee Bernie Hayes checks in with speaker, Shafea M'Balia ('96)



Reknown poet and activist Amiri Baraka ('84)



Elizabeth Sibeko, Pan African Congress-Azania ('87)

OBS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS: 1980-1990

Themes & Speakers

1st Bennie Lenard

2nd "Year of the New Grassroots Movement"
Kalimu Endesha

3rd "Black Consciousness in the 80's: The Struggle for Survival"
Jamala Rogers & Al Lumpkin

4th "Reagonomics, Election '84 & Black Liberation"
Amiri Baraka

5th "Blacks , Politics & 3rd World Solidarity"
Freeman Bosley Sr. & Dr. Tsegay Mogo

6th "Africa - Caribbean -U.S.:One Love, One Heart, One Struggle"
Themba Vitakazi

7th "Our Future is One - Youth on the Rise!"
Elizabeth Sibeko

8th "Black Liberation: Banner of Invincibility"
Rose Sanders

9th "In the Tradition: Malcolm, Martin & Mandela"
Loretta Ross

10th "A Decade of Struggle: Forward Still!"
Conrad Worrill & Sadie Sanders

11th "The African Tradition: A Liberating Force Towards Empowerment"
Joy Lovelace

12th "The Malcolm X Legacy & Black Liberation"
Chokwe Lumumba

13th "Building A New World Order"
Molefe Tsele

14th "The New South Africa: Where Do You Stand?"
Eve Thompson

15th "Black Empowerment: The Future Is Now"
Mayor Freeman Bosley Jr.

16th "Black Workers & the 21st Century: The Fight for Jobs & Justice
Shafeah M'Balia

17th "From Black Consciousness to Reality": Rebuilding the Road to Freedom
State Rep. Lloyd Daniels

18th "Beyond the Marches: Black Liberation & Human Rights"
Jaribu Hill

19th "Renewing the Black Freedom Agenda
Ajamu Dillahunt

20th "Black Liberation & Human Rights: A Vision for The New Millennium"
Loretta Ross (Jamala Rogers)



Bennie Lenard, 1st Anniversary keynote speaker, was a victim of police brutality



Ellen Reasonover Family at 9th Anniversary Celebration ('89)



Infrared Rockers performs at Anniversary ('82)



Youth Cultural Theater performs at Anniversary ('83)

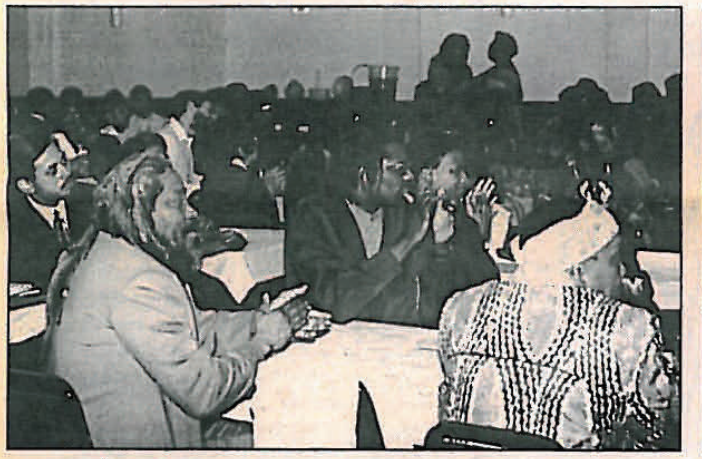
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



Youth Cultural Theater gets attention at 8th OBS AC ('88)



Tumaini Meta gives special recognition to OBS Advisory Board ('00)





Anniversary Celebration ('93)

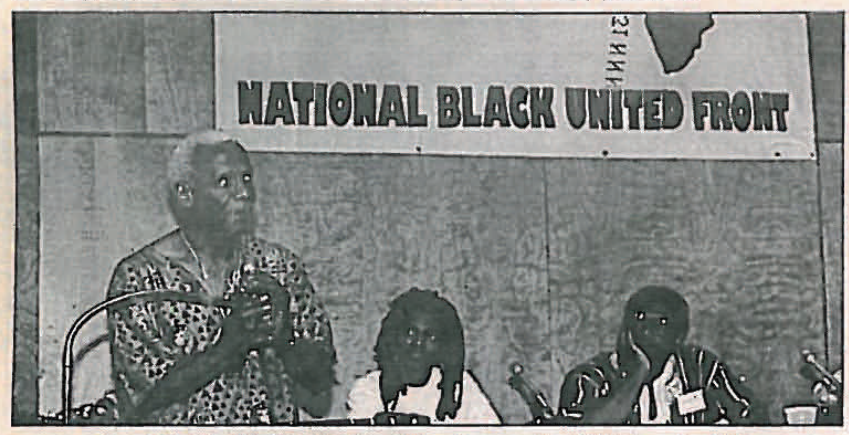


Infrared Rockers beat it up at 9th OBS AC ('89)



Bill Batley, civil rights activist (2nd from left), receives recognition by OBS members ('89)

COALITION BUILDING



Omari Obadele of the Republic of New Africa gives remarks at NBUF Convention ('93)



Kathleen Cleaver and Angela Davis were two notables at the founding of the Black Radical Congress, Chicago ('98)



Unsung Human Rights S/Heroes recognized at Celebration for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ('97)

Unite the Many to Defeat the Few

OBS strongly believes in the time-tested strategy to "unite the many to defeat the few." Building coalitions and united fronts are indispensable tools in the fight against injustice and for human rights. Their summed up experiences over the past twenty years of struggle bear out the fact that hard fought victories would not have been possible without the broadest unity possible being forged. The diverse organizations and individuals within the Black community and progressive movements can have a decisive impact when they work towards a common goal.

OBS is proud to have been a part of numerous coalitions and united fronts, some of which they were founding members. One such formation was the National Black United Front in which participation spanned nearly 15 years. The St. Louis chapter hosted both the 7th NBUF Convention ('86) and the 12th ('82), as well as gave leadership to the local anti-apartheid movement.

The list of formations is much too long to detail here. A more exhaustive list appears under the Rowan Community Center section. In addition to NBUF, other coalitions include the Atlanta Missing & Murdered Children ('81); Anti Workfare Campaign ('82); Tiffany Neighborhood housing struggle ('84); Free South Africa Movement (the 80's); the united effort to defeat the 3/8 cent sales tax ('89); Martin Luther King Holiday Committee (1980-85); Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression (1983-1989 & 1998-present); and the Coalition for Free Speech ('97) to name a few. A delegation of **OBS** brothers attended the historic Million March March ('95)

Currently, **OBS** is affiliate members of the Coalition against Police Crimes and Repression, Eastern Missouri Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the St. Louis Coalition for Human Rights, the Work Team and the Black Radical Congress.

OBS continuously sums up its valuable united front experiences and shares them with the various movements. This must be done in order to avoid repeating old mistakes and re-inventing the wheel of struggle. One big lesson learned is that it is okay if everyone doesn't agree on every tactical point. More important is to be principled in those disagreements so that they don't undermine the work and keep the group from reaching its goal.

COALITION BUILDING (CONT.)



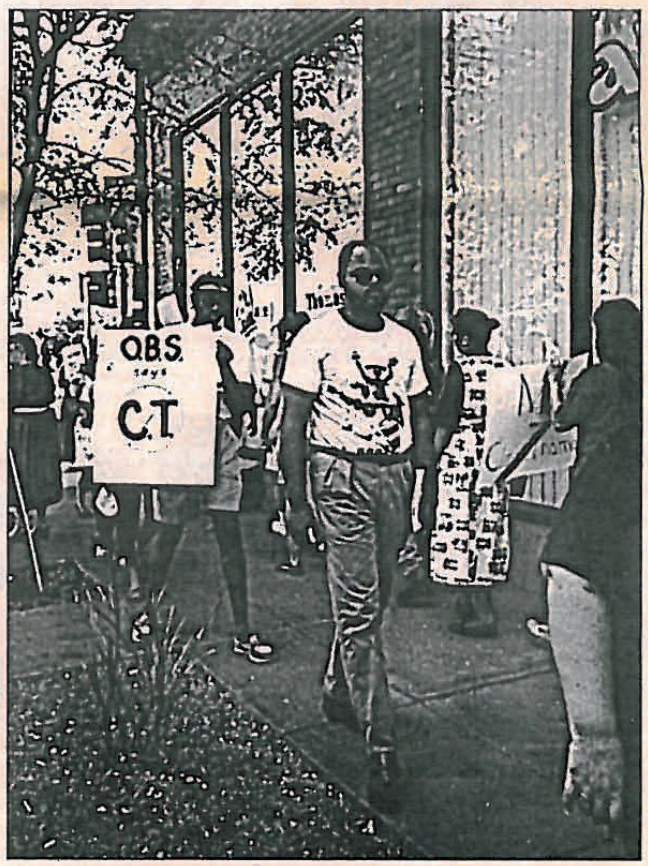
Dr. Martin Luther King Holiday Committee at planning meeting ('85)



Members march with Citizens to Re-Open Homer G. Phillips Annie Malone Parade ('80)



Infrared Funk (Rockers) performs at Atlanta Missing and Murdered Children rally in nation's capitol ('81)



OBS joins protest of Clarence Thomas' nomination to U.S. Supreme Court ('91)

Culture: A Weapon for Black Liberation

Amilcar Cabral was a noted strategist in the liberation struggle of the New Guinea people. He believed that culture reflects the ideas of one's class and is either progressive or backward. It could serve as an inspiration in the fight for national liberation or promote the interests of those who would side with the enemy and sell out the struggle. **OBS** has always believed that culture must be used as a weapon for the liberation of the African American people. Culture should highlight values and ideas of a people doing the right thing. It should lift up the fight for freedom, justice and human rights. The organization uses the Nguzo Saba (The 7 Principles of Kwanzaa) as one of its cultural pillars and encourages its members to live by it. Several members **OBS** were among the first St. Louisans to hold a Kwanzaa celebration in the early 70's.

Cultural workers have worked to weave culture into the organizational fabric. Black Truth Poets are the in-house group who perform at the various **OBS** activities. Members who are poets, dancers, drummers, and writers, etc. have helped to enrich the internal and external life of the organization. They have played a leading role in nurturing and developing the Youth Cultural Theatre as well as other aspiring cultural workers.

OBS has utilized cultural events to raise people's consciousness and to raise funds. We have sponsored street festivals, biz whiz tournaments, African fashion shows, record spins, etc. **OBS** and the Infrared Rockers have always had a reciprocal support relationship, as the core of the Rockers is founding **OBS** members. Infrared Rockers are more than just musicians; they have been called "purveyors of the culture."

Ongoing cultural components are included the Anniversary Celebrations, Pamoja Sessions (formerly called Freedom Sessions), the annual Family Picnics, Kwanzaa Karamus and Reggae Nights. The organization has hosted several book signings, such as Sounding Off! ('94). They also sponsored an African Film Festival that featured poet and author, Kalamu ya Salaam ('98). **OBS** also hosted Canadian-based dub poet, Lillian Allen ('99).

These gatherings and others have provided a positive atmosphere for enlightenment, rejuvenation and entertainment for members, their families, and supporters. Culture provides a creative outlet/outlook for those committed to the ongoing fight for freedom and justice.



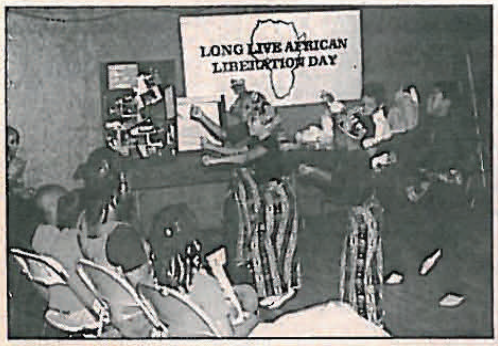
Fanny Lebby becomes Sojourner Truth ('98)



Mama Blue at October 22 Day Against Police Brutality ('00)



Black Truth Poets perform at the 4th OBS AC ('84)



Youth Cultural Theater performs at African Liberation Day program ('00)



Eugene Redmond at Black Radical Congress community forum ('99)



Members and supporters hail up the Infrared Rockers at their 1st CD Party ('98)



Ngoma pulsates at 13th OBS Anniversary Celebration ('93)



Members join Kalamu ya Salaam for a discussion at the African Film Festival ('98)



Percy Wells blows lyrical fire at OBS AC ('93)



Dub poet Lillian Allen hosted at Reggae Nights ('99)



M.P.E.R.O.R. at Human Rights Celebration ('98)



Raggamuffins perform at the 13th OBS AC ('93)



OBS is represented at 25th Anniversary of Kwanzaa press conference ('91)

Electoral Politics and the Struggle for Democracy

The electoral arena is a place where African Americans have historically struggled for equality and democracy. The right to vote was won through the blood, sweat and tears of our people. **OBS** does not believe that the Black community can vote its way out of racist oppression. It sees the Black vote as a valuable tool in fighting for greater democracy and equality. Every victory within the electoral arena enables our people to see who are our friends and who are our enemies. Through collective work and organizing, though laden with twists and turns, victories can be won by and for the people.

OBS support for electoral candidates has never been based on just their popularity or ability to win. There are three criteria that **OBS** uses when asked to endorse a candidate. Candidates must have a known, progressive track record on the issues that affect the black community; they must have a viable campaign organization; and their platform must articulate concrete solutions to the burning issues we face. They also must be accountable and accessible to the community regularly—**not just during election times!**

OBS has supported the candidacies of African American candidates on the local, state and national levels. Independent formations and candidates have also been supported. These include the National Black Assembly, the National Black Independent Party, and the Green Party. On the local scene, support was particularly given to black females, such as Irene J. Smith, Sharon Tyus, Velma Bailey, Paula Carter, and others. Support was also given to the candidacies of Charles Quincy Troupe, William Lacy Clay and others on the state level. **OBS** will continue to support those persons and ballot issues that move the black agenda forward. That task is becoming more and more difficult as the ability to run for office is open to those with lots of money, not necessarily to those with principles. In addition, the corruption that permeates public office is a repellant to those who want to truly serve the people.

Sometimes the legislative path is part of a multi-faceted strategy for justice and equality, such as with the Living Wage Bill ('96 &'00), the Racial Profiling Bill ('00) the exemption of the mentally retarded from execution and the proposed aldermanic bill for a civilian police oversight committee. The three former bills passed, and now their enforcement must be monitored. The passage of the latter, Board Bill 71, is still pending and is being given leadership by the Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression.

Every day, the legislative and judicial branches make decisions that negatively impact our lives and our destiny. Capable and committed people must come forward as change agents inside the system, while agitation and organizing puts pressure from the outside. We must support those ballot issues that guarantee our civil liberties and human rights.

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE ELECTORAL ARENA

(Note: Most of the work around issues happened through various coalitions that OBS either helped to form or participated in)

1981-
- Supported Eddie Carthan for Mayor of Tchula, MS
- Opposed federal Workfare Bill

1982-
- Supported Freeman Bosley Jr. for Circuit Clerk

1983-
- Supported Walter Daniels of University City School Board
- Supported Michael Roberts for President, St. Louis Board of Alderman

1984-
- Supported Jesse Jackson for U.S. President
- Participated in the 1st Black People's Political Statewide Convention
- Supported Zaki Baruti for Governor
- Gave leadership to formation of Progressives United

1985-
- Supported Freeman Bosley Sr. for Mayor
- As part of Coalition of Concerned Citizens, opposed Harold Dodge as superintendent of U City School District

1986-
- Supported Paula Carter
- Supported Freeman Bosley Jr. for Circuit Clerk
- Supported Betty Thompson for U City Mayor
- Supported Harold Washington for Chicago Mayor
- Opposed plan for Board of Freeholders
- Supported Walter Daniels as U City School Board candidate
- Participated in 2nd Black Peoples Political Statewide Convention

1987-
- Opposed nomination of Judge Robert Bork to U.S. Supreme Court
- Supported St. Louis school board slate of 4 Candidates 4 Kids

1988-
- Supported Jesse Jackson for U.S. President

1989-
- Supported Michael Roberts for St. Louis Mayor
- Supported Freeman Bosley Sr. for 3rd Ward alderman
- Supported Terry Kennedy as 18th Ward alderman
- Supported Virvus Jones as St. Louis Comptroller
- Helped to defeat city sales tax
- Participated in Peoples' Inauguration Ball (to oppose re-election of Vince Schoemehl to 3rd term as St. Louis mayor)
- Supported UNITY slate for St. Louis School Board

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE ELECTORAL ARENA (CONT.)

1990-
Gave guidance to local and state elections

1991-
Opposed Clarence Thomas' nomination to U. S. Supreme Court
Supported Paula Carter for President of St. Louis Board of Alderpersons

1992-
Participated in Redistricting fight for black representation
Published voter guide for elections
Supported Ron Daniels and independent candidate for U.S. President

1993-
Supported Freeman Bosley Jr. for Mayor
Supported Lee Goodman for 1st Ward Alderman
Supported Virvus Jones as St. Louis Comptroller

1994-
Supported Mavis Thompson for St. Louis Circuit Clerk
Supported Virvus Jones against his legal lynching and conviction

1995-
Supported Darlene Green as St. Louis Comptroller
Supported Velma Bailey for President of the St. Louis Board of Alderpersons

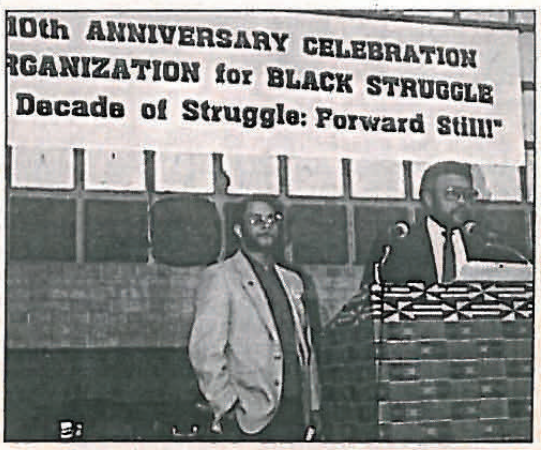
1996-
Helped to collect 122,000 signatures to put Living Wage on state ballot
Supported Donnell Smith for Circuit Attorney

1997-
Supported Freeman Bosley Jr. for St. Louis Mayor
Supported Darlene Green as St. Louis Comptroller

1998-
Participated in formation of St. Louis Independent Coalition

1999-
Supported Ronnie White for federal judge
Supported Kayla Madkins team for 22nd Ward alderwoman

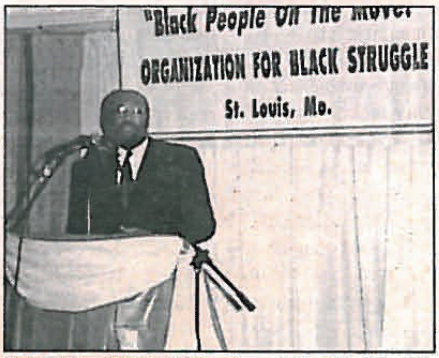
2000-
Supported Jerryl Christmas for Circuit Attorney
Supported Living Wage for St. Louis City
Supported Madkins-Harris ticket for 22nd Ward Committee people
Opposed Home Rule Plan
Supported Ralph Nader as U.S. President
Supported William Clay Jr. for Congressman



Circuit Clerk Bosley and Rep. Troupe present proclamation to OBS at its 10th AC ('90)


Donnell Smith answers questions at on OBS candidates forum ('96) during his run for Circuit Attorney


Circuit Clerk, Mavis Thompson, gives remarks at 14th AC ('94)



Community activist and state representative, Lloyd Daniels (Kansas City), keynotes 17th AC ('97)

ELLEN REASONOVER

Collision With an Unjust System



Perhaps the longest battle and sweetest victory for the **Organization for Black Struggle** came with the Ellen Reasonover case. The case had its humble beginnings in 1983 when a young African American woman was falsely accused of murdering a gas station attendant in Dellwood, MO. An almost deadly conspiracy between police and the courts ended with Ellen receiving 50 years without parole. She was one vote shy of receiving the death penalty.

The case best exemplifies the character of **OBS**—its tenacity, its arsenal of organizing tools and its deep community roots. Many ardent supporters believed Ellen was framed and innocent of all crimes. However, the years of legal disappointments began to take its toll on people's hope that Ellen would ever be free. **OBS** was steadfast in its support and played a leading role in galvanizing community support for almost two decades. A stunning defeat for the St. Louis County Prosecutor's Office took place on August 3, 1999 when Ellen walked out of Chillicothe Correctional Center a free woman.

Over the 17-year struggle to prove Ellen's innocence, **OBS** engaged in a number of media and outreach activities. It was a high visibility strategy that kept Ellen's case alive, and eventually caught the attention of Centurion Ministries, based in Princeton, New Jersey. CM is a non-profit organization whose mission is to prove the innocence of those wrongfully accused of murder.

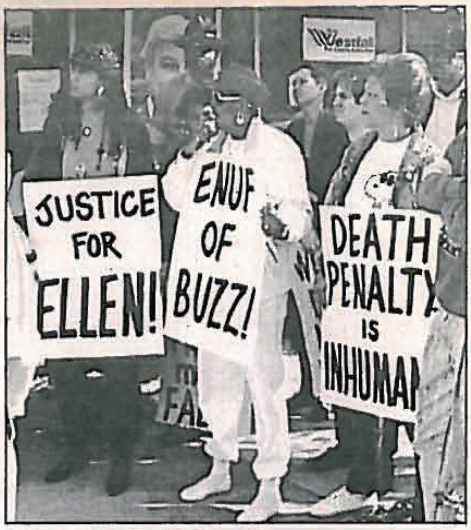
During the course of Ellen's unjust incarceration, **OBS** distributed thousands of leaflets and brochures on the case. The group organized numerous demonstrations. They held Reasonover Weeks, Reasonover Sundays and any other day that would garner support. Dozens of fundraisers were held from raffles to dances to bumper stickers. **OBS** has written about the case to whoever would print it and talked about it to whomever would listen. Feature articles have appeared in every major newspaper in the St. Louis metro area, as well as national outlets like Jet Magazine and the Washington Post. The St. Louis African American press corps played a critical role in covering developments in the case and activities planned by **OBS**. At every legal maneuver, supporters were organized to flood the courtroom. To the extent possible, **OBS** gave emotional support to both Ellen and her family, especially to her daughter Charmelle. She was only two years old when her mother was snatched from her. **OBS** also had to intercede on Ellen's behalf when prison conditions were a problem. It was a true case study in how to organize against the criminal just-us system.

Ellen's travesty is no freak accident. There are many more brothers and sisters who had been wrongfully sucked into the system where they currently languish. All of the elements for justice came together for Ellen. Accused citizens should not have to rely on the throw of the dice. Police, prosecutors and judges must be held responsible for destroying lives as they climb the backs of the innocent or under-represented to seek fame and stature. You are Ellen. We are Ellen. We must work together to dismantle the prison industrial complex and build a genuine "corrections" system that is humane and just.



Photo by Wiley Price

Press conference after Ellen's release ('99)



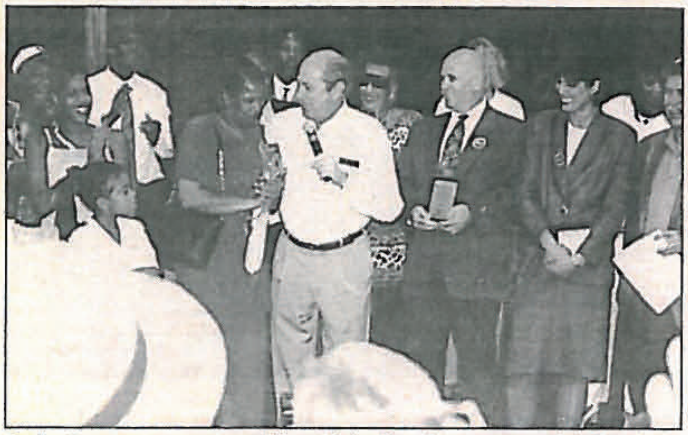
Family members join picket at office of County Prosecutor, Buzz Westfall



Ellen receives briefing from Jamala as she boards plane to appear on the Today Show in New York ('99)



Jazz recording artist, Joan Cartwright, salutes Ellen at fundraiser on her behalf ('99)





Coming Home party to re-connect Ellen with family and community. On left photo is Jim McCloskey (Centurion Ministries) and members of the legal defense team. On right photo is the Reasonover Family ('99)



Ellen' daughter, Charmelle and niece, Tiffany conduct a science experiment during the Ma'at Youth program ('81)



Ellen tries on an OBS 20th Anniversary T-shirt.



Ellen joins OBS in its support for Ronnie White to federal bench ('00)



Ellen holds up photo of Winnie & Nelson Mandela after his release from prison ('90)

OBS: OVER THE YEARS















OBS: OVER THE YEARS



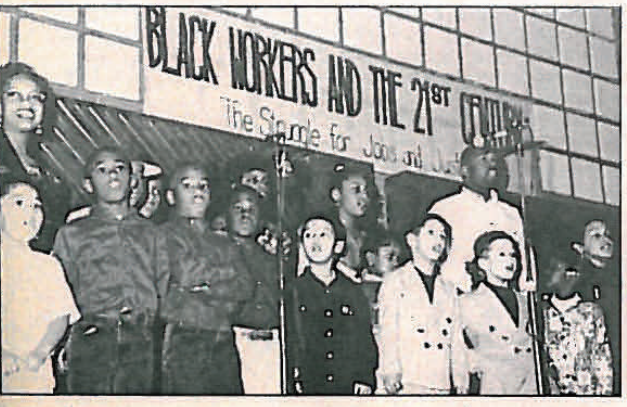














The People's Demand: Community Control of Police

The fight against police violence is a cornerstone of the **Organization for Black Struggle's** work. They have continuously organized resistance to the armed occupation of police in the black community. **OBS** educated and agitated that the primary role of police was to control and terrorize neighborhoods of color and working class whites. On the other side, police work hard to protect the property of businesses and the rights of the wealthy. **OBS** has been a consistent voice in the struggle against police misconduct and abuse, especially since police are generally the first point of contact into the Prison Industrial Complex.

Veteran activists with a history in that arena were founding members of **OBS**. They came from campaigns like Stop Killer Cops! and formations like People Fighting Repression (PFR). They brought with them their organizing skills and volumes of summed up experiences. A good thing too, because the young organization would be tested early in its infancy with the brutal shooting of Mary Frances Beasley by the Berkeley police.

Frances Beasley was a Kinloch, MO resident who had a history of mental illness. On a cold, fateful and near fatal day, Beasley was reported to police walking in the middle of a busy street in her nightgown. In her hand, she had gathered up items along the way, including a toy gun and tree branches. Killer Cop Hackmeyer from Berkeley answered the call and immediately proceeded to fire rounds at Beasley. The first shot struck her wrist, knocking all the items out of her hand. It should have been enough. Witnesses reported Hackmeyer discharged six more shots, as if he was dealing with a savage animal. Beasley miraculously survived, but not without permanent paralysis to her arm.

OBS organized the outrage of the Kinloch community into a fighting unit. They conducted their own investigation of the police crime. They knocked on every door in the historically black town to get signatures demanding that Hackmeyer be fired. They organized fundraisers for legal fees. **OBS** received the overwhelming support of Kinloch residents, including its Mayor, and was successful in reaching its two main goals. Hackmeyer was fired under intense community pressure. Beasley received compensation for her injuries in a civil suit. The victory from the six-year struggle gained the group much respect for its thorough and persistent workstyle.



October 22 National Day Against Police Brutality, St. Louis ('99)

In 1983, Joseph Ferarrio killed Marilyn Banks as she sat on her porch. Ferrario was shooting at a black girl-child that he was chasing through a residential neighborhood. **OBS** was a leading force in the Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression that formed in the aftermath of the Banks tragedy. The Banks case had some historic firsts. It was the first indictment ever of a white police officer for the murder of a black person. The half million-dollar settlement of the civil suit was the largest in Missouri's history at that time.

Ferrario was acquitted of criminal charges, but the pressure was too great to keep him on the St. Louis police force. He was fired for violations of police procedures and policies. CAPCR introduced the first state legislation for a civilian review board. **OBS** stayed on the case until end almost five years later when the Coalition had achieved most of its goals and agreed to disband. It would be forced to re-emerge later.

Since the Beasley case, **OBS** has taken on numerous other cases of police harassment, brutality and murder, too many to detail here. Police departments and districts have been targeted based upon excessive cases of abuse, as in the campaign against Berkeley Police Department ('82). The **OBS** archives illuminates the breadth and scope of their police brutality struggles. Some of these include, Vann Johnson and Maurice McAllister ('81); Corliss Young and Janice Phillips ('82); George Boulton, Marilyn Banks. Laura Gregory, Keith and Jerry Morehead, Martha Cannon ('83); Kenny Joseph, Riley Lee Brown, Derrick Kimble ('86); Taylor and Joseph Carmichael ('87); Nathaniel Branch and Reginald Smith ('88); Quanetta Fields, Keith Turner ('89); Garland Carter, Randolph Vance ('96); Gregory Bell ('99); Arthur Dobbins, Ed Beasley, Murray ('00). Innocent black men, women and even children are ongoing victims in the wake of police violence. Once **OBS** showed that the police were not invincible, victims and their families got the courage to take them on with minimal direction from the organization. This was a critical development because it meant that **OBS** didn't always have to lead the charge. However, all the efforts were unified in the demand for community control of the police.

On October 22, 1998, **OBS** participated in St. Louis' first National Day Against Police Brutality. The groups involved agreed that the current level of police abuse required them to stay together beyond one day of activity. And so the Coalition Against Police Crime & Repression was reconstituted. It came back bigger and stronger, and included groups from the American Civil Liberties Union to the All African Peoples Revolutionary Party. The group joined the successful efforts to pass legislation to set up a civilian review board and to make racial profiling illegal in the state of Missouri.

OBS has been vocal against racism inside the departments as well in the community. They advocated for more blacks at all levels of police departments. **OBS** opposed the selection of Berner as SLPD police chief over qualified black candidates ('82). In 1991, **OBS** brought former Los Angeles police officer Don Jackson to St. Louis. Jackson had gained national prominence when rogue cops were videotaped pushing his head through a plate glass window upon randomly stopping Jackson's personal car. He was the first black officer to document cops actively engaged in racial profiling. **OBS** has always supported police officers who stood up against the "blue wall of silence" like Jackson and, locally, Dennis McLin. As a result, there has been growing pressure to bring accountability to the police ranks.

The increase in police violence, especially in times of economic downturn, means no rest for **OBS**. They will continue to work with others to empower the community and to organize against racist acts of police violence. Black life must be respected and human rights protected.



Photo by Maurice Meredith

Press conference to express outrage for not guilty verdicts of police involved in Rodney King beating ('92)



Black community swarm downtown streets to protest police murder of Marilyn Banks ('83)



OBS members join protest at Dellwood police station on so-called suicide of Willie Turks ('98)



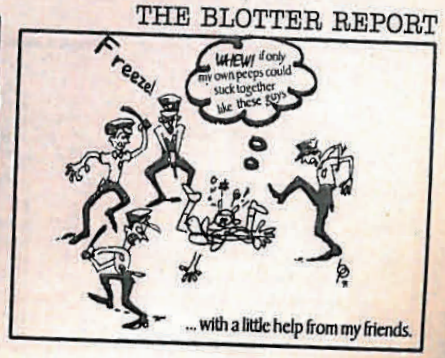
OBS member participates in annual Dr. Martin Luther King march ('89)





Pamoja Session features panel on police violence with Tim Kaminski and Dennis McLin ('00)

THE BLOTTER REPORT



Finding Humane Solutions to Crime

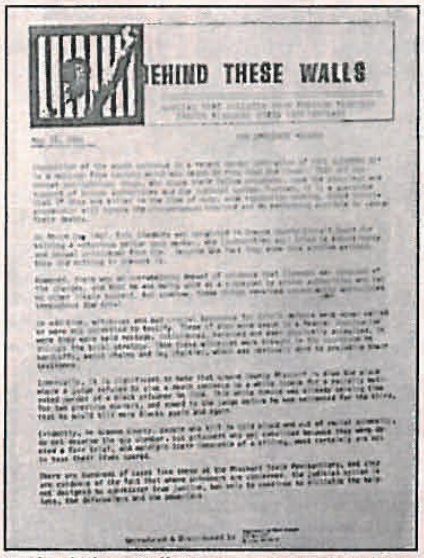
The **Organization for Black Struggle** inherited prison support activists who brought with them their expertise and compassion for those behind "the walls". These activists had been the backbone of formations such as the Missouri 9 Support Committee ('75) and People's Coalition Struggling in Missouri's Prisons ('77). Their unwavering stands and persistent protests against the brutal and inhumane conditions in the prisons were hailed by prisoners and despised by prison officials.

Donald "Wicked" Wyrick was once the warden at Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City, MO. During this time, he was known far and wide for his reign of terror. **OBS** targeted Wyrick and exposed the despicable conditions at the prison. **OBS** was relentless in its efforts on the outside while inmates turned up the heat on the inside. Wyrick retaliated by banning Jamala Rogers from the prison. When an assault charge by an inmate went all the way to the Missouri Supreme Court, Wyrick was forced to resign. His naked brutality and arrogant disregard of laws were finally put to rest.

In the mid-80's the Missouri Department of Corrections hired its first African American Director, Roy Black. Black lifted the ban against Rogers and attempted to implement much-needed reforms. His tenure was short-lived.

The Organization continued its prison support work in various forms. Through the assistance of Rep. Charles Troupe's office, **OBS** facilitated tours to designated prisons so that the public could witness for themselves the inhumane conditions paid for with their tax dollars. The group also published "Behind These Walls" during the 80's, a publication that addressed prison issues and that presented the perspectives of inmates, as well as those of **OBS**.

OBS corresponded with many inmates and responded to numerous individual requests. These requests for help by inmates would range from lack of medical attention to assaults by guards. In most cases, relief was found, even if temporary. Families of prisoners were organized and educated about how to advocate for their loved ones. As in the cases of police brutality, black women often headed these families. **OBS** refused to allow their gender to be played against them. The women had an important role to play in the non-negotiable fight for justice on behalf of their sons, brothers and partners.



"Behind These Walls" gave voice to prison issues during the early '80s.



The 90's saw a dramatic change in the prison landscape. Mandatory sentencing laws were the great promise of the so-called War on Drugs. By 2000, the number of prisons in Missouri nearly doubled to 21 and the number of inmates tripled to about 30,000. The sheer volume of inmate letters received by **OBS** came not just from Missouri prisons, but from across the country. This soon proved too much for the volunteer-based group. Once able to respond to each prisoner's letter, **OBS** was now only able to keep their letters and documents on file, except in the need to respond to life-threatening circumstances. It began to take up issues that affected prisoners as a class, such as legislation or helping to organize conferences that raised prison concerns.

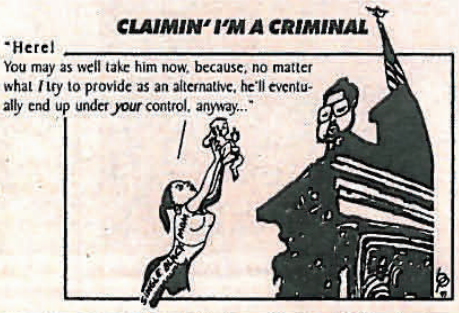
The alarming incarceration rates were now including women in their numbers. This called for new strategies as the needs of women and their children differed from those of male prisoners. **OBS** and groups like Mothers in Prison Children in Crises had to tackle this challenge.

The Organization struggled for those inside the walls as well as those being railroaded to prisons. The case of Ellen Reasonover will be dealt with in a separate section. Another clear example was the case of Gerald Garrett. At 16 years old, he was convicted of murdering an elderly, white neighbor in 1976. Garrett's conviction was finally overturned in 1987. Family and supporters urged Garrett to leave the city in fear of police retribution. A '95 conviction and sentence sealed Garrett's fate when a judge gave him life plus 102 years for robbery. The prison industrial complex is a monster system designed to swallow black and brown men. Sentences are usually longer and more severe than their white counterparts. Social opinions and political policies condone the lockdown and dehumanization of millions under the guise of crime control.

Young brothers, like Reginald Clemons, Marlin Gray and Antonio Richardson found themselves caught in death traps set by police and overzealous prosecutors. In a railroading reminiscent of the Scottsboro Boys, many believe they were wrongfully convicted of the Chain of Rocks murder. The case involved the Kerry sisters, who were allegedly raped and pushed off the Chain of Rocks Bridge. The Kerry sisters are white and the defendants are black. Clemons and Richardson are currently on death row, awaiting the end to legal appeals that could result in new trials.

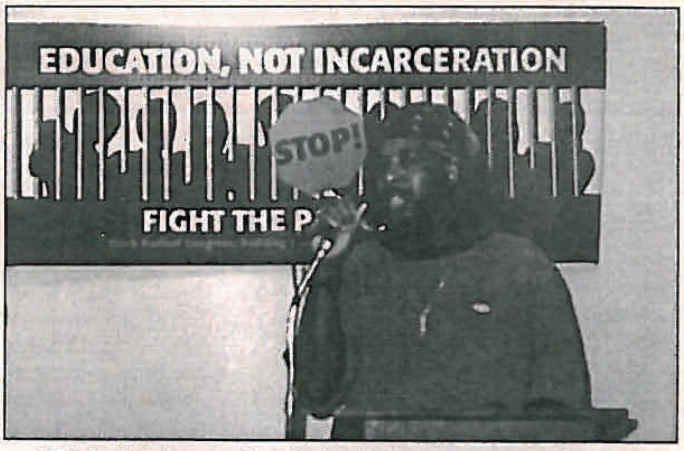
The re-institution of the death penalty in Missouri ('78) began to see a rise of executions. Again, people of color were over-represented. **OBS** is a member of the Eastern Missouri Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. **OBS** played a leading role in organizing for the national conference of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty held in St. Louis ('98). **OBS** uses cases like Ellen Reasonover and the Chain of Rocks locally, and Mumia Abu Jamal nationally, to educate the black community about the racist application of the death penalty. The group mobilizes for the candlelight vigils that take place the day of each scheduled execution. A moratorium on the death penalty is the current rallying call. A small victory came when the Missouri State Legislature exempted the mentally retarded from execution in 2000.

As an affiliate member of the Black Radical Congress, **OBS** helped to launch its national campaign "Education not Incarceration, Fight the Police State!" **OBS** actively organized and coalesced in the metro area to address issues of the campaign. As a part of groups like Citizens for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), their work is cut out. Public consciousness must be changed to realize that social control policies are no crime deterrent. People's needs must be met, whether those be a job or mental health care. The $35 billion dollars currently being spent nationally on incarceration must be re-allocated to education, job training, health care and housing.

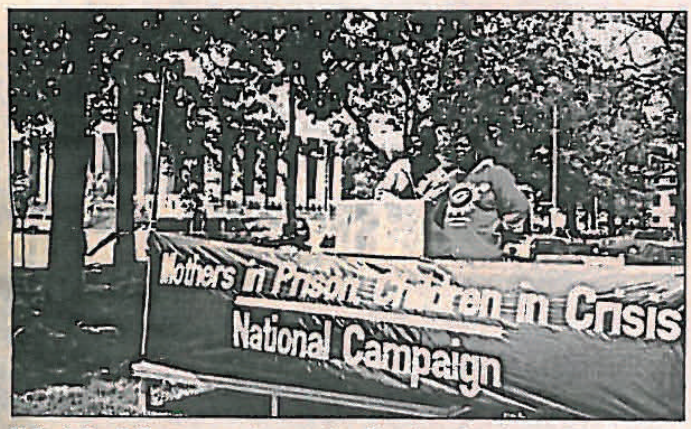




Actor and death penalty opponent, Danny Glover, at St. Louis rally to kick off National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty National Convention ('98)



Melvin Hackett gives remarks at Black Radical Congress community forum ('00)

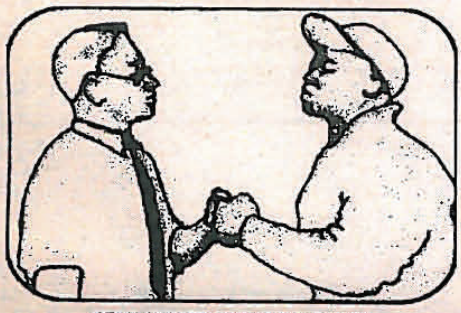


Mother's Day Rally expresses the struggles of imprisoned mothers and their children ('98)



OBS members and prisoners participate in Hardin wedding at Potosi Center ('92)

BLACK ON BLACK



SELF-RESPECT & SELF-LOVE.
THE ENEMY IS NOT MY BROTHER



Prisoners at Missouri State Pen reflect the human drain on our community ('86)

ROWAN COMMUNITY CENTER

1973-1998: 25 Years Of Commitment & Service

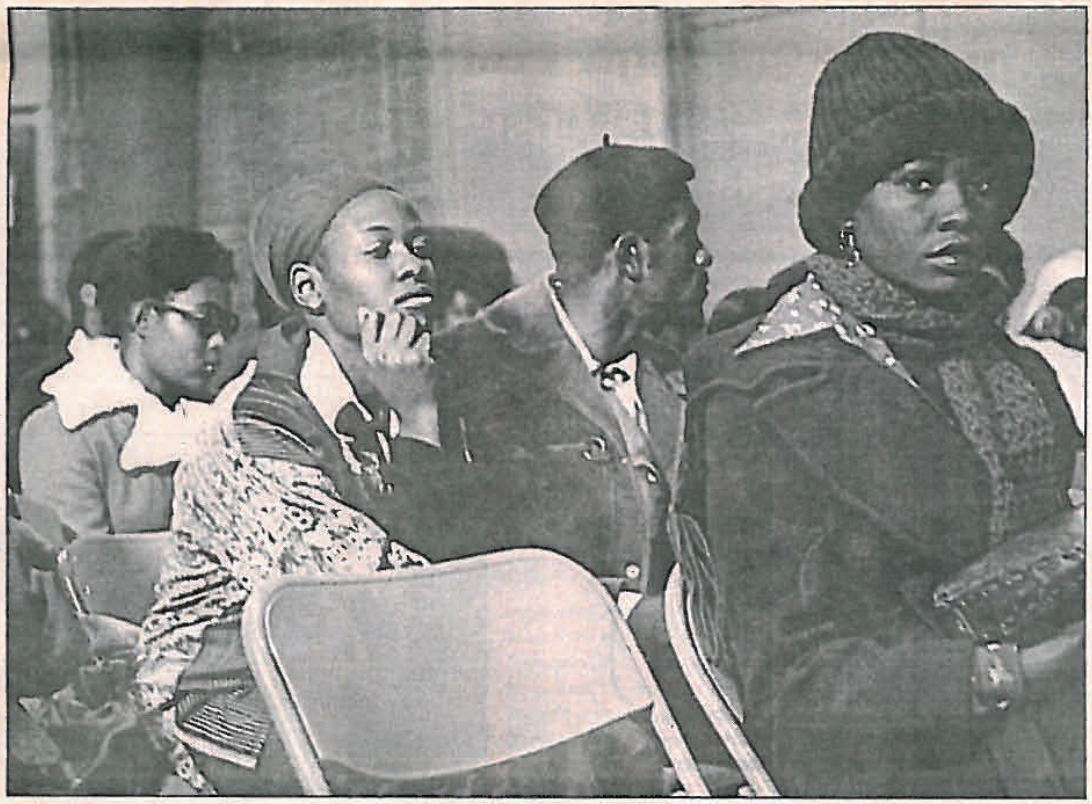


The Center is the scene of social events, such as dances and receptions.

The Rowa Community Center is located in the heart of the Black community at 1401 Rowan (at the corner of Ridge). For over 25 years has been not only a base for the **Organization for Black Struggle**, but an institution serving the area's progressive movements. RCC began as the headquarters for St. Louis Chapter of the Congress of African People in 1973. It has since been the site many meetings, political, cultural and social events. It presently houses the activities and meetings of organizations such as the Youth Council for Positive Development, Infrared Rockers, the Coalition Against Police Crime & Repression, etc. Since 1994, **OBS** has had a capital fundraising drive to renovate the building. It has been a slow process but there has been significant progress towards improvements. At the 25th Commemorative program, held May '99, many of the people who supported and attended activities at the Center shared their memories of its beginnings. It was heartfelt moment that generated pride and tears of joy. The Center looks forward to providing space and refuge for community groups who are on the battle front for human rights, justice and peace.

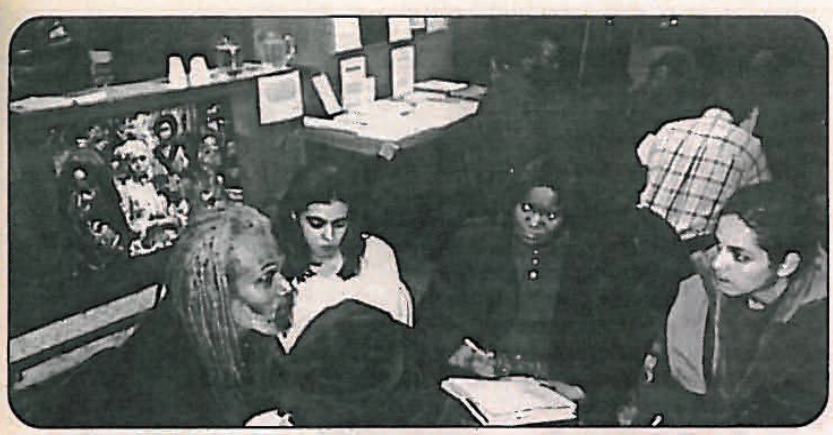


Youth working their summer money-maker, selling snowballs ('72)



Education advocates, Hattie and Ron Jackson attend community forum ('74)

History of Groups & Issues Associated with the Rowan Community Center



Center is often the scene of community meetings to inform, strategize ('99)



Friends of the Center celebrate its 25th anniversary ('99)



Getting ready for the annual Kwanzaa Karamu ('97)

(Partial Listing)

*First City-wide Kwanzaa Celebration
*Taifa Drummers
* Malaika Dancers
* Skuli Mahiri Taifa
*Working Always Through Unity
* United Community Youth
*St. Louis Congress of African People
* Stop Killer Cops Campaign
* African Women's Conference
* Missouri Nine Support Committee
* Welfare Rights Support Work
* St. Louis African Liberation Support Committee
* St. Louis Black Women's United Front
* St.Louis Black Political Assembly
* People Fighting Repression
* African Americans Against the Famine
* Revolutionary Communist League (MLM)
* People Coalition Struggling Against Missouri's Prisons
* Justice for Frances Beasley
* Concerned Auto Workers
* KATZ-AM "What's Happening Now" Radio Program
* Castlepoint Committee
* Freedom Session s
* Atlanta Missing and Murdered Children's Committee
* Rowan Neighborhood Association
* St. Louis Black United Front
* Youth Council for Positive Development
* South African Cultural Boycott
* African Liberation Day
* National Campaign Against Racist Genocide
* Youth Cultural Theater
* Wrightsville March Against the Klan
* United Sound
*Proletarian Ensemble/Infrared Funk/ Infrared Rockers
* Ma'at Youth Program
* Rites of Passage
* League of Revolutionary Struggle (ML)
* Ellen Reasonover Support Committee
* Pamoja Sessions
* St. Louis Coalition for Human Rights
* Women's Support Group
* Coalition Against Police Crime & Repression
* Culture Crafts
* St. Louis Black Radical Congress
* Reggae Nights
* And Much More.....



Poet Haki Madhabuti joined a long line of cultural workers who have performed at the Center ('73)

Equality through Development

The **Organization for Black Struggle** has always had women in leadership, giving more than just lip service. The Organization came into being with women's equality and development at the center of the group's politics. Special attention has been made to include women in the life of the organization and its activities, especially at the leadership level.

The women in grassroots or militant organizations of the 60s and 70s rarely held leadership or shared power, yet they were the backbone. Their political development and self-confidence suffered, as did the Movement. **OBS** did not want to repeat this relationship dynamic. The fight against sexism and misogyny are central to the organization's overall struggle against all forms of oppression and economic exploitation.

Early activities of the organization's women were the celebration of the March 8 International Women's Day with other coalition partners. Later, **OBS** women moved on to sponsor their own IWD activity in the form of "Affirmations!" Since 1990, women have come to Affirmations to engage in lively political discussions, get health screenings and information, support sister-vendors and get pampered. They have celebrated "the lives of women in a cultural and political way."

OBS is a steadfast advocate of women's reproductive rights and freedom to make decisions about their body. The group supports the Equality Rights Amendment (ERA) and is Pro-Choice, defending the woman's right to choose. Women participated in NOW's Women of Color Reproductive Rights conference in Washington, D.C. ('87), March for Women's Equality/Lives, Washington, D.C. ('89) and Mobilization for Women's Lives, Jefferson City, MO ('89). They were also founding members of African American Women for Wellness ('84) that raised HIV/AIDS awareness.

OBS women have reached out to give mutual support to the struggles of women from other nationalities and countries. They participated in international women's conferences that addressed the global issues of women. These included the United Nation's Women Conference in Nairobi, Kenya ('85) and in Beijing, China ('95), the Uganda Women's Conference on Health ('93), and the Sheba 2000 Women's Conference in Jamaica ('99). The group also supported other local women's conferences, such as the Women's Union of the All-African Women's Revolutionary Party.

OBS is against all forms of violence against women. It participated in "Take Back the Night" marches in the late 80's. The group participated in a rape awareness campaign by black psychologist and feminist, Dr. Aaronnette White, to open up dialog on the problem in the African American community. The organization has given personal support to its female members and other sisters who have been victims of domestic abuse, rape, sexual harassment and discrimination. **OBS** joined forces with other community groups in shutting down the Red Fez Lounge when its negligent owner refused to open its doors to a woman who was subsequently raped.

OBS women started a discussion group to deepen their understanding of the conditions working class black women face ('98). The women named the session Sistahs Talkin' Back, a title of a writing by black feminist, bell hooks. At STB sessions, there's political education as well as personal support for one another. Women also review videos and other materials that deal with women's issues. Foremost, it is a time to strengthen the mind, body and spirit for the struggle ahead.

The organization understands the need for women's development and the freedom to participate in the political and social life of the community. Most **OBS** activities have an on-site childcare component to facilitate consistent involvement of female members and other sisters. During the "Affirmations!" program, **OBS** male members carry out childcare as one way to support women's full participation. **OBS** strives to carry out the African proverb, "Educate a woman and you educate a nation."



Eddie Mae Binion speaks on the impact of welfare "deform" at Affirmations! ('96)



Sisters greet Jaribu Hill, keynote speaker at 18th AC ('98)



OBS women train as labor coaches at Regional Hospital ('94)



Health worker, Peggy Calvin, gives AIDS test at Affirmations!



OBS brothers persevere in childcare ('99)





Sisters networking with Salvadoran women ('95)

YOUTH

Anyone familiar with the **Organization for Black Struggle** is well aware of the organization's commitment to the development of youth. What started as a loose collection of children performing at the annual Anniversary Celebrations eventually turned into an autonomous group. As the children grew older, they began to shape the organization, chart its direction, and select their own leadership. The **OBS** Youth Group became the Youth Council for Positive Development. The YCPD focuses on character development, academic achievement and community involvement.

YCPD has four basic components. Advocacy and Education (A&E) addresses broader issues that bring youth and adults together to work for a better community. Youth Empowerment Series are community forums to get out information on youth concerns and public policy. It also gives youth the opportunity to express themselves. The belief is that conscious and active youth will grow up to be adults dedicated to the upliftment of our community.



Photo by Bob Williams

Kay Lovelace, Anniversary Celebration speaker, answers questions from youth ('91)

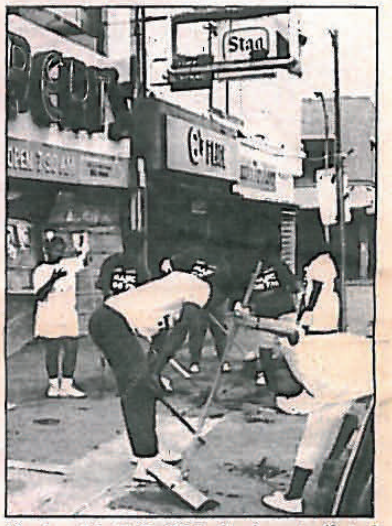
The Ma'at Development Program is based upon the ancient African principles that should guide one's life. The 7 Principles of Ma'at and the 7 Principles of Kwanzaa (Nguzo Saba) are enduring reference points from a glorious past. They teach healthy relationships between people, and between us and Mother Earth. Young people between the ages of four and sixteen years old meet weekly in the year round Ma'at program. The younger ones are called the Owusu (followers) and the Mfuasi are the older youth "leading the way." They are engaged in activities and field trips that enhance learning about the world they live in. These include Ki-Swahili, Black history, math & science projects and arts & crafts. They take part in educational field trips, perform community service and organize fundraisers. Through these experiences, they learn such skills as teamwork, time management and self-expression.

The third component is the Youth Cultural Theater. Youth learn African dancing and drumming, as well as drama. The group performs around town, and also travels to other cities. The Youth Cultural Theater is one of several ways that the YCPD raises money to continue its work.

Lastly, the Rites of Passage are an African ritual symbolizing the passing from childhood to adulthood. Youth generally go through the Rites at about age fourteen or fifteen years old. The process culminates in a ceremony that calls for commitment from both the "village" and the young person that will ensure his or her safe passage into the adult world.

Whether it's the Dr. Martin Luther King march or at Earth Day, chances are you'll see YCPD represented. The Youth Council has traveled to Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City and Washington, D.C., to participate in various conferences and programs. Members of YCPD have had the privilege of listening to and/or meeting such luminaries as Amiri Baraka, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Bishop Desmond Tutu's daughter, Nelson Mandela, members of the Congressional Black Caucus and St. Louis' first African-American mayor, Freeman Bosley, Jr.

Many former members of the Youth Council for Positive Development have gone on to become productive members of the African-American community across the country. Most have gone on to college or other post-high school institutions. YCPD alumni are teachers, entrepreneurs, clergy or other professionals. Several are now parents themselves and their children are part of the second generation of Youth Council members. The circle is a testament to the stable, positive experiences provided by the **OBS** Mamas and Babas.



Members join Majic 108 Radio clean up effort of Dr. King Drive ('88)

YOUTH CREED

I WILL STRIVE TO BE A ROLE MODEL IN MY COMMUNITY
OR WHEREVER I GO.

I WILL COMMUNICATE AND INTERACT WITH OTHER YOUTH
BY BEING RESPECTFUL, BY BEING RESPONSIBLE
BY PROMOTING BLACK UNITY AND PRIDE
BY PRACTICING SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-DISCIPLINE.

I WILL STRUGGLE TO IMPROVE MYSELF & MY LIFE
BY BEING OPEN TO NEW CHALLENGES & NEW IDEAS
BY TAKING INITIATIVE
BY ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.

I WILL BE OBSESSED WITH LEARNING, PROMOTING
& PRESERVING BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE.

I WILL BE INFORMED ABOUT COMMUNITY AND WORLD ISSUES & EVENTS.

I WILL FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM, JUSTICE, EQUALITY & PEACE.

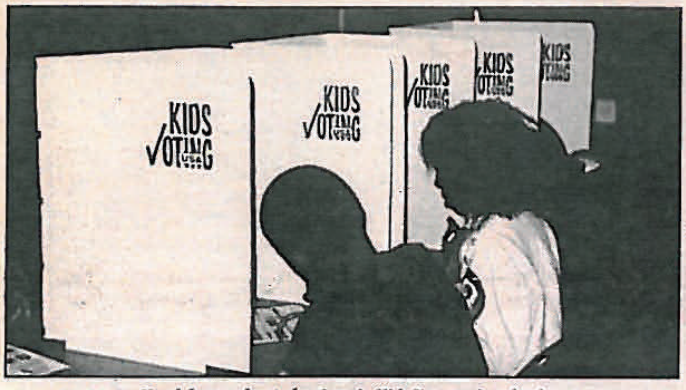
FROM THE MOUTH OF...



"Too bad, Mr. Jim Thorpe isn't here to throw out the first pitch, he'd have liked that, huh Dad?"

Standing on the Shoulders of the Elders

YOUTH



Youth learn about elections in Kids Vote project ('00)



Vernon Smith, artist and historian, gives slide presentation at a Youth Empowerment Series ('92)



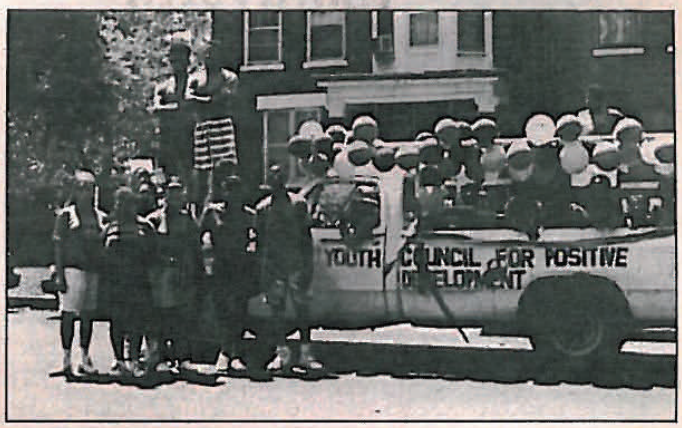
Karl Grice, Grice Group Architects, shows youth how he designed building for Matthews-Dickey Club ('00)



Youth plan for future activities at annual retreat ('89)



Youth Cultural Theater perform the South African National Anthem, NBUF Convention, Washington, D.C. ('84)



Ready for the Annie Malone Parade

INTERNATIONALISM

Connecting the local struggles with global issues

Internationalism has been a driving principle of **OBS** from its founding in 1980 to the present. We live within the "belly of the U.S. imperialist beast". The racist capitalist oppressors we fight against in the USA are the same enemies that Third World nations and people face in their struggle for national liberation and self-determination. It is the U.S. that historically has supported the financial and military dictatorships in Haiti, El Salvador, Chile, the Philippines, South Korea and Nigeria.

It was the U.S. that supported the racist governments in South Africa, Namibia, white minority settler states in Palestine and neo-colonial governments throughout Africa and the Third World. They have worked to undermine, destabilize and overthrow democratically elected governments in Grenada, Cuba and Nicaragua as well as bombed sovereign countries such as Libya, Afghanistan and Somalia under the guise of fighting the "evil communists" and "international terrorists". The United States are the real terrorists and their agenda is robbing countries of the oil and other natural resources they possess.

OBS has participated or sponsored programs and marches commemorating African Liberation Day. **OBS** brought South African liberation fighters to speak such as Elizabeth Sobeko (Pan African Congress), Themba Vilakazi and Molefe Tsele (African National Congress) and Dr. Tsega Mogo (Eritrea). Funds were raised for those freedom struggles and relief supplies sent to the needy in Haiti. The invasion of Grenada, the bombings of Libya and Iraq and other acts of aggression were promptly condemned. **OBS** supports the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, whether it is native Americans or the Palestinians. The group worked within the Free South Africa Movement, opposing the Kruggerand and fighting for divestment of all U.S. companies and universities in apartheid. **OBS** was the first to hold a celebration to commemorate the release of Nelson Mandela from 26 years of prison hell and the overthrow of the wicked system of apartheid. Their years of support were recognized and rewarded when the Organization received an invitation to Detroit, Michigan to welcome Mandela to the U.S.

As long as there is oppression and exploitation anywhere in the world by Imperialism, Neo-Colonialism, their agents and jr. partners, **none of us can be free!** Towards that end, **OBS** joins in solidarity with our brothers and sisters until the head and tentacles of U.S. Imperialism has been severed and its body thrown into the garbage can of history along with the stench of slavery, Jim Crow and colonialism.



Molefe Tsele of the African National Congress, speaks at the OBS AC ('93)



The death penalty case of Mumia Abu Jamal received international attention.



Nearly 1000 St. Louis anti-war activists join in the protest of Gulf War ('91)



The cultural boycott targeted entertainers, such as Paul Simon, who performed in South Africa during apartheid ('85)



OBS and A-APRP come together for African Liberation Weekend

Fighting For the Working Class

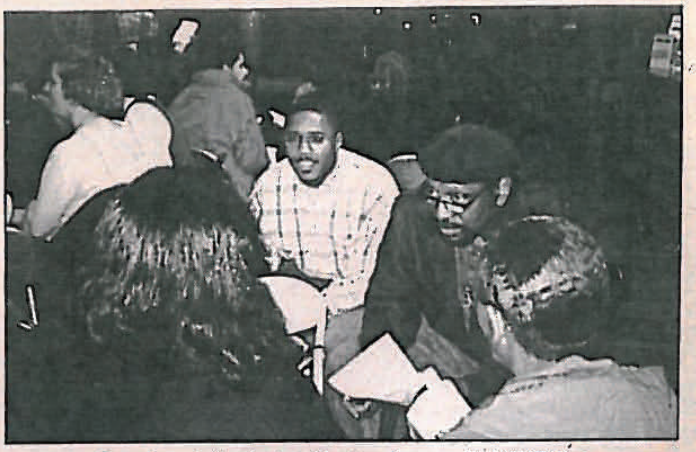
OBS is an organization for the working class, so worker solidarity is a key component. In a ten-year battle with giant multi-national, General Motors (GM), black workers reached into the community for support. Some of these staunch fighters became founding members of **OBS** and were the backbone of our labor work. They led the opposition to layoffs, racist and sexist discrimination of workers, as well as plant closings. Like other union supporters, **OBS** saw the hammer come down on PATCO, the air traffic controllers' union, by President Reagan ('81). This would set the tone for blatant union-busting in the years following.

The formation of the Concerned Auto Workers (CAW) in the early 80's was an effort to force the United Auto Workers (UAW) to be more accountable to its membership. CAW sought to expose the U Ain't White behavior that caused racial division among black and white workers. The caucus (CAW) fought for *fair* wages, safe working conditions, seniority rights and job security. **OBS** strategized with CAW members to win union offices and delegate positions to the UAW national conventions. Those struggles were inspirational to workers in workplaces across the metro region.

OBS joined the Jobs Campaign of 1983. That same year, the organization helped to form the Missouri Black Labor Council as an umbrella for labor activists. **OBS** worked with many labor groups such as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Jobs with Justice and United Food Industrial Employees. **OBS** and its cousin organization, Black Workers for Justice, engage in mutual support activities. **OBS** distributes "Justice Speaks," BWFJ's newspapaer covering workers' struggles in the black belt South. The organization led successful community efforts to win worker demands from Morgan Linen Company, who tried to create plantation-like conditions in their St. Louis plant ('84).

Other activities of **OBS** to advance worker solidarity was to assist the Black workers at the local Ford Assembly plant in developing "the Black Workers Dialogue". **OBS** participated in the "Workers Rights are Human Rights Public Hearing" and worked with other groups to defeat HB29 (anti-Affirmative Action legislation). The group supported the I-70 shutdown for more jobs in highway construction for African Americans. Members worked hard towards the passage of the St. Louis Living Wage Bill. As an affiliate organization of the Black Radical Congress, **OBS** helped to build international support for the Charleston Five, dockworkers who were victimized by police during a righteous protest.

Individual workers also call upon **OBS** when "dogged" in the workplace by their employers. Sometimes these cases end up in court as employees seek redress to their problems. As globalization engulfs the world, no opportunity is missed to coalesce with others for the unification of workers everywhere.



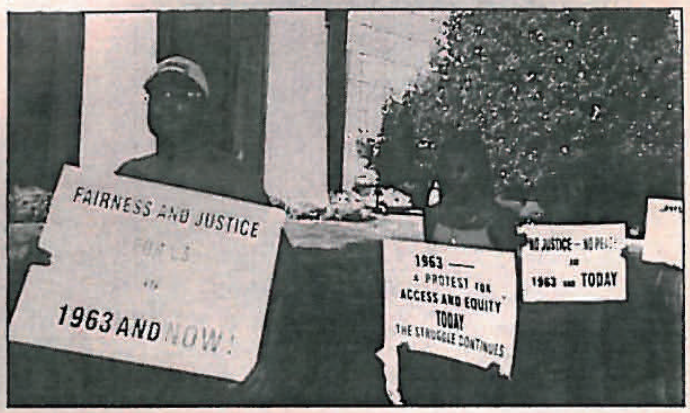
Percy Green talks about worker struggles waged in ACTION days



Ajamu Dillahunt, Black Workers for Justice, keynotes the OBS Anniversary Celebration ('99)



BRC members at a press conference held at St. Louis Arch ('99)

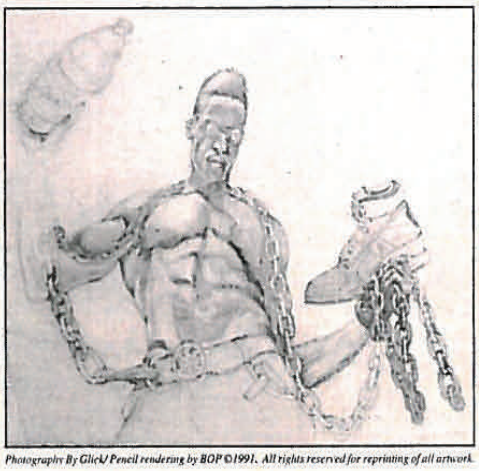


OBS participates in anniversaries of Jefferson Bank Protest that called for the integration of bank tellers

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FREEDOM AIN'T FREE... THANK YOU TO OBS FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS!

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*indicates # of years donations given

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Education

The education of our youth is the single most imporant indicator of their life success. This is both formal education, as well as education about relationships between people, power, the environment and the rest of the world. It's the knowledge of what it means to be a black man or woman in a capitalist society.

OBS has played a role in the school system and the community to advance the education and opportunities for young people. This was evident when the organization successfully helped to organize students, parents and teachers against the closings of Soldan and McKinley in 1982. It also intervened in individual cases of racism and the denial of education as a basic human right. Examples of such cases include the slapping of a 9 year-old black boy by a white teacher in the Jennings School District and the sexual assault of a 9 year old black girl at a St. Louis public school. School drop-out rates, low test scores, suspension and expulsion rates, all point to the failure of the public school to address the educational inequities that persist.

OBS has helped to elect school board candidates who appeared to understand the mission. The group was commissioned to conduct a grassroots campaign for the 4 Candidates 4 Kids when it was apparent that a traditional campaign strategy had not penetrated the African-American community. **OBS** was publicly (and privately) acknowledged for its critical role in helping to elect the slate and beat back the racist Metro slate in 1991

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Black Press and Alternative Press-St. Louis American, St. Louis Metro Sentinel, St. Louis Argus, Take Five, Unity, and the Riverfront Times for their positive ink and space.

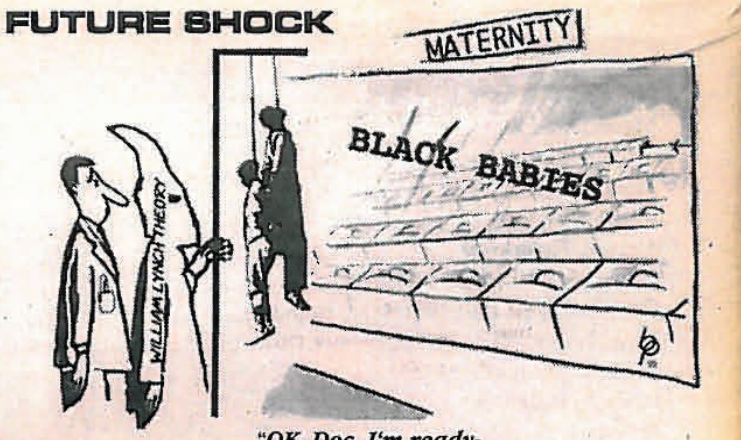
To past and current Advisory Board members-Percy Green, Thomas Mines, Inuka Mwanguzi, Uvee Hayes, Tim Person, Charles Quincy Troupe, Hattie Jackson and Marie Fowler for their guidance.

To the ears and eyes watching out for us and over us in the churches, unions, professional clubs, fraternities, sororities, businesses, neighborhood groups, political clubs, universities, social service agencies, and the like.

To Dr. Don Suggs and the Funding Exchange for financial contributions towards the 20th Commemorative Edition

To Mindgame Visuals for creative advice, and for design and layout of the special edition

To Glenn Muhammad, Mickey Dean, and others for their photography over the years.



"OK, Doc, I'm ready- Wake 'em all up!"

Financial contributions to the **Organization for Black Struggle** and the Youth Council for Positive Development are always welcome and needed. The YCPD is 501C3 and donations are tax-exempt.