

AUDACIOUS THINKING

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER
FROM OSI-BALTIMORE

SUMMER
2007

Some say we need a miracle. But we want more than that.

We think the city we all deserve can only come from unrelenting, focused, smart thinking—followed by action. For the last nine years, OSI-Baltimore has carefully examined the root causes of some of our city's most intractable problems and, by partnering closely with others, we have implemented solutions to make lasting change here. Inside the premiere issue of *Audacious Thinking*, we feature some of the audacious ideas behind these solutions and the people who are committed to Baltimore.

Read on.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

DIANA MORRIS



Welcome to our first issue of *Audacious Thinking*. We hope this newsletter, which will come out periodically, will give you a good sense of the values and goals that motivate the Open Society Institute-Baltimore, the strategies that structure our work, and the commitment and experience of our grantees and Community Fellows.

For some, the need to build an “open society” in Baltimore, a major city in the United States, might raise questions. Some might believe that the very essence of democracy is an open society. To us, an open society has three components: a transparent, responsive government that sees an active role for itself in protecting basic rights and meeting basic needs; a robust business sector that provides opportunity for economic security and innovation; and a vibrant civic sector that promotes debate so that a diverse set of viewpoints and experiences yield sound public policies and practice. In an open society, each individual has the social and economic security to participate fully in the political life of the community and to realize fully his or her talents.

In Baltimore, the city with the largest percentage African-American population in the U.S., we see too often how discrimination and poverty can intersect to block opportunity and justice. For many residents, the promise of opportunity and fairness that we all believe should be inherent in a democracy is, in fact, not a reality. On a daily basis they face overwhelming challenges for themselves and family members—pervasive, untreated addiction, high rates of incarceration and recidivism, and low educational achievement. These conditions severely compromise many Baltimoreans’ ability to realize the freedom and prosperity that we usually associate with a strong democracy. And perhaps the worst outcome is that many feel so far removed from the mainstream—as part of a what appears to be a permanent underclass—that they no longer have the will, let alone the skills, to speak out, make their experiences and needs known, and participate in civic life.

In one of the wealthiest states in the nation, how could this be true? It is this untenable situation that gives rise to our work.

We carefully examine the role of government and the allocation of public monies, urging government to do better, and, often, to do more. We create pipelines that provide all Baltimoreans with access to good jobs that provide alternative channels for the entrepreneurial spirit and enterprise now sucked up by the drug trade. And, we help give residents the skills to speak in their own voice, collaborate and help formulate policies and practices that are responsive, cost-effective and fair. In the process, we all benefit.

When we opened our doors in 1998, we believed that this city, representative of so many other urban centers, could provide an excellent laboratory to understand how local, state and federal policies can positively interact to promote achievement, health and prosperity. At OSI-Baltimore we are optimists: we think that the knot of problems that hold us back *can* be unraveled with sustained focus and effort. Tackling drug addiction, lowering the social and economic costs of incarceration, helping Baltimore youth to succeed, and creating a corps of social entrepreneurs working with the neediest among us. These are our priorities. We welcome your views on how we are doing and what we should consider doing differently. And, most of all, we welcome your joining our *audacious* effort. Please feel free to email me at dmorris@sorosny.org.

A Conversation with an OSI-Baltimore Board Member: Judge Andre Davis

Judge Andre Davis, U.S. District Court for Maryland, has served on the OSI-Baltimore Board since 2000. Confirmed by the United States Senate in 1995, Judge Davis brought to the federal trial bench the experience gained from eight years as a state trial judge, where he served on the Circuit Court for Baltimore City from December 1990 through August 1995 and on the District Court of Maryland for Baltimore City from August 1987 through December 1990. He also serves as adjunct professor of law at the University of Maryland Law School.

What is an “open society” to you?

To me, an open society is one in which all voices are heard and respected, and public and private institutions exist that further affirmative policies designed to enhance all peoples’ participation in popular governance.



Having been on the bench for many years now, what is one thing you wish you could offer to change the lives of those you see?

The one thing I would offer if I had the power to give it is a deeper appreciation for education as a community enterprise and the role of education in the improvement of life for all segments of the community.

What is the biggest challenge facing Baltimore today?

Undoubtedly, one of, if not the biggest, challenges facing Baltimore today is the challenge posed by entrenched, structural poverty in so many areas of our city. It seems undeniable that this accounts for so many of our social pathologies.

What motivates you to give back to the community?

I cannot imagine living a life in which those of us who are so blessed with many opportunities to serve fail to “give back.” For me, it is in my genetic make-up as one who has been mentored and aided by so many in my life and career.

Why is OSI-Baltimore so important to the future of the city?

OSI presents opportunities for cutting-edge, innovative solutions to some of the most intractable problems we face in the city and the region. Through private and governmental partnerships, OSI has demonstrated, and will continue to demonstrate, that there are few boundaries to what can be achieved in fostering a healthy and thriving community. It is one of kind.

IN THIS ISSUE *



Judge Andre Davis



Power Inside



Job Opportunities Task Force



George Murnaghan



Tonya Featherston



Gin Ferrara

* POWER INSIDE

On any given day in Baltimore, women are detained in the Baltimore City Detention Center, many suffering from mental illness, abuse and addiction. In 2006, Jacqueline Robarge collaborated with faculty from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to produce documentation about this mostly invisible population and to raise awareness of the unmet needs of incarcerated women. Jacqui, who was named an OSI Baltimore Community Fellow in 2002, founded Power Inside. OSI-Baltimore has continued to fund Power Inside to advocate for services and policies to meet the critical needs of Baltimore women detained or recently released from detention.

IT'S 2 A.M. ON A SATURDAY MORNING IN MARCH, AND JACQUI ROBARGE IS STANDING ON A BLEAK CORNER IN THE TOUGH HARWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD, HANDING OUT HOT CHOCOLATE, CONDOMS AND TOURNIQUETS FOR HEROIN USERS. SHE IS TRYING TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUNG WOMEN SELLING SEX FOR SURVIVAL. ONCE ROBARGE HAS GAINED THEIR TRUST, SHE CAN STEER THEM TO SERVICES, SUCH AS HOUSING AND DRUG TREATMENT.

Jacqui runs Power Inside, a nonprofit that works to break the pattern of women cycling through the Baltimore City Detention Center. Power Inside recently received a two-year grant from the Open Society Institute-Baltimore to build the organization's capacity and to do advocacy work around access to drug treatment and issues around women re-entering the community after prison and jail.

Years ago, Jacqui had quit her job and was running a small support group for women at the jail because she saw the same women—extremely poor and drug dependent—get arrested over and over. She won an OSI-Baltimore community fellowship in 2002.

Jacqui has examined what happens to women after they leave the Baltimore jail. About half had no stable housing for a month. More than a third reported recently trading sex for money, housing, drugs, food, or childcare. Women with family support were six times more likely to have housing upon release. Women believed that housing and employment would help keep them out of jail. Health services also were needed, including dental care, drug treatment, and counseling for past abuse.

Jacqui's organization tries to help these vulnerable women find stability by reaching out to them literally on the streets. "The first step is to establish a rapport with them," she says. "We gain their trust, and they start to reveal things about themselves."

We gain their trust, and they start to reveal things about themselves.

WHY WE FUND IT

"As we aim to reduce the number of people cycling in and out of prison, it is important to identify the needs of specific populations—one that is often neglected is women. Jacqui Robarge brings an important, well-informed perspective to help this particular, almost forgotten, population. Not only is Jacqui a very passionate service provider, but also she is a leader who brings a strong public health focus to her work. Her efforts to bridge the gap between the public health and correctional systems will make those systems work better together, allowing these women to get the health care and treatment they need."

—Aurie Hall, Director of Criminal Justice



JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE *

Since its inception, OSI-Baltimore has been committed to reducing the number of people who return to prison because they lack the skills, opportunities and encouragement to secure legitimate, gainful employment. In 2005, OSI-Baltimore gave the Job Opportunities Task Force a seed grant of \$200,000 to help launch JumpStart and in November 2006 an additional \$100,000 of support.

For many low-income Baltimore residents, particularly those with criminal records, finding a job that pays more than minimum-wage can be almost impossible. But for participants in JumpStart, run by the Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) and supported by OSI-Baltimore, well-paying construction careers are within reach.

“It’s not about placing you in an \$8 an hour job.... It’s about placing you in a career path that can earn you a family-supporting wage,” said JOTF Executive Director Jason Perkins-Cohen. “In the building trades, you can earn \$40,000 to \$50,000. But to get on that path is a challenge.”

JOTF’s program, which began last year, provides low-income residents with a “jump-start” to launch a construction career. In 13 weeks of evening classes, JumpStart teaches the basics of electrical work, carpentry and plumbing. Afterwards, participants are given temporary, part-time job placement, individual case management, and finally, permanent job placement. Through a partnership with Goodwill, JumpStart also provides comprehensive support for participants ranging from transportation to education. Upon completion, JOTF and Associated Builders and Contractors then work to place graduates in construction jobs that lead to apprenticeships—and ultimately, well-paid careers.

“There just aren’t many opportunities in Baltimore, or anywhere, really, where you can offer that to an underserved population,” Jason said. “We can only train 20 people at a time. We’re getting calls from 500.”

About 60 graduates have completed the first training component of JumpStart and 71% of those were placed in a job in the construction trades. Ten graduates have already become an apprentice, meaning they work on a construction site during the day and their employer sponsors additional training in the evening. It also means that they are on a clear path to a family supporting wage that can approach \$50,000 per year.

And the positive impact shows. JumpStart graduates’ wages have increased 57%, and those numbers are likely to go up. Under state regulations, apprentices receive steady pay increases as they accumulate hours in work and training.

“If you look around Baltimore, huge projects are going up, and it’s not easy to find workers,” Jason said. “We want employers to realize that when they need a good employee, they should call JumpStart.”

WHY WE FUND IT

“Having a job and a place to live are two key factors that can determine whether someone makes it in the community or returns to prison. JumpStart, based in Baltimore, is a national model. It is a training program designed by employers to meet employers’ needs while it provides former prisoners with new skills for competitive jobs. In sum, everyone wins.”

—Aurie Hall, Director of Criminal Justice



Jump Start

► JOTF Executive Director Jason Perkins-Cohen





OSI-BALTIMORE TOPS \$7 MILLION IN \$20 MILLION FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

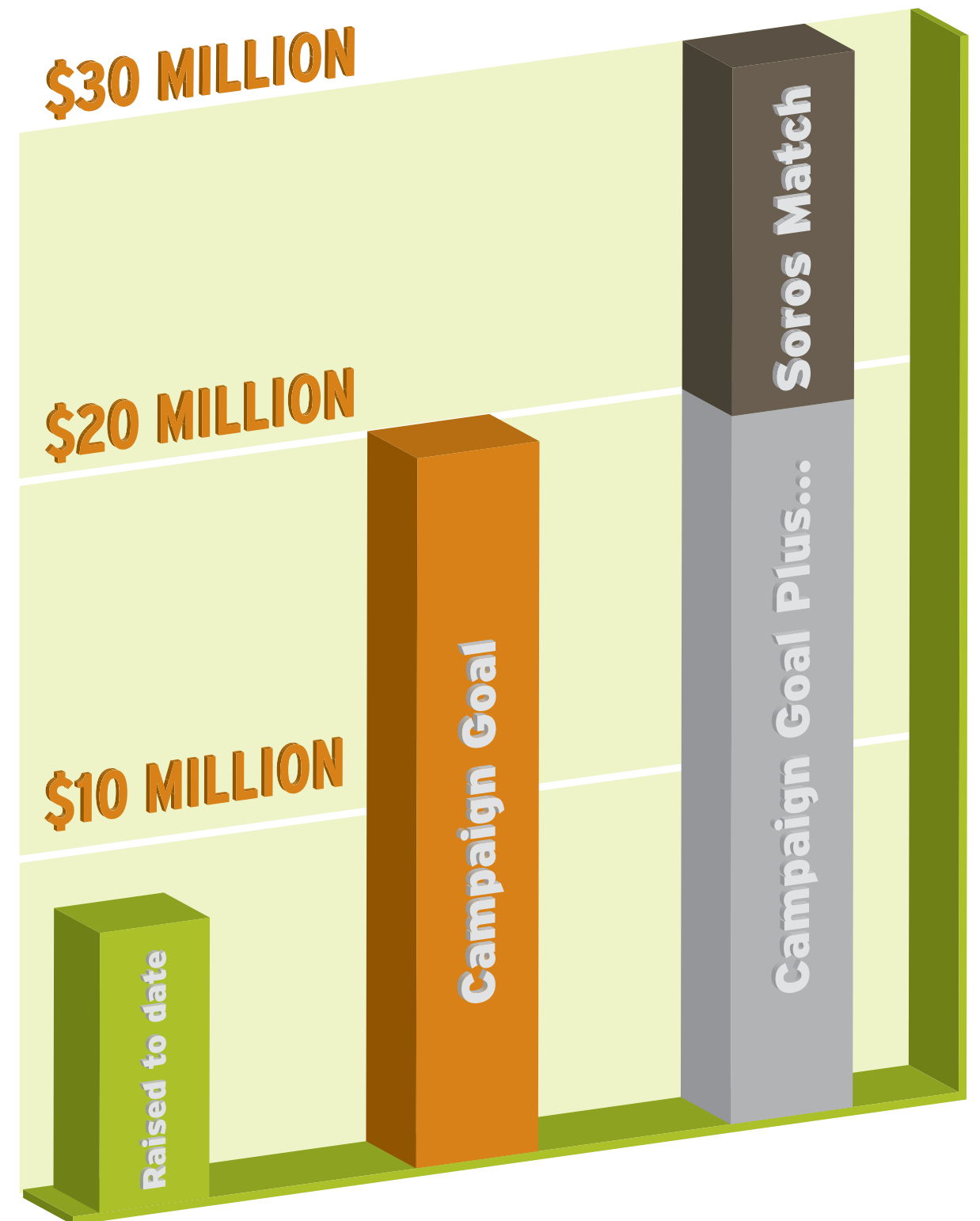
T. Rowe Price Associates Foundation Makes Significant Contribution

Following on the heels of a gift of \$250,000 from T. Rowe Price Associates Foundation in February, three senior executives from T. Rowe Price have just given OSI-Baltimore an additional \$185,000. These combined gifts put OSI-Baltimore over the \$7.2 million mark and have solidified progress toward reaching its goal of \$20-million in its fundraising campaign.

“The work that OSI has been doing has really made a difference in the community and we feel it’s very important,” said Ann Boyce, president of the T. Rowe Price Associates Foundation. “We want to help ensure that the work here continues.”

“Baltimore leaders from all quarters of our city - corporate, philanthropic, and individuals - are responding generously to George Soros’s challenge,” said Marilyn K. Duker, chair of the OSI-Baltimore board of directors and president of The Shelter Group. “People know OSI is working to attack root causes of difficult problems.” Since the campaign began, donors from all segments of the city have given gifts ranging from \$75 to \$800,000.

Individual contributor Charles G. Tildon, Jr., retired president of Baltimore City Community College, noted that, “The Open Society Institute works to support a fair and just society in Baltimore. Its Fellows program attracts committed people willing to tackle tough problems. The Open Society Institute, under the direction of Diana Morris, works to close the gap in unfair disparities.”



*** Philanthropist George Soros founded OSI-Baltimore in 1998 and supported the operating foundation with \$50 million to expand justice and opportunity for Baltimore residents. Soros pledged to give an additional \$10 million starting in 2006, if it raises another \$20 million over five years from the community to continue its work. Since then, the institute has pursued a development campaign to leverage Soros’s continued investment in Baltimore to create lasting change in the city.**

GEORGE MURNAGHAN

Profile of an OSI-Baltimore Investor

George Murnaghan is a self-employed consultant in the investment management industry, focusing on sales and marketing strategy. From 1981 to 2004, George worked for T. Rowe Price Associates in a number of capacities relating to the firm's institutional investment activities, most recently as head of U.S. institutional sales and client service, and also played a key role in establishing and expanding its international investment franchise among U.S. investors. In addition, George is the former board chair and current vice chair of the Fund for Educational Excellence, the local education fund active in school reform in Baltimore. A native and long-time resident of Baltimore, George now resides in Lexington, MA with his wife and daughter.

What motivates you to give back to the community?

As a resident of the city for virtually my entire life, I love Baltimore and all it has to offer—such as its real people, history and civility, and I want to see it prosper and work for all its inhabitants. Cities play a vital function in our society, and many societal ills result from or connect to the failure of cities, from crime to cultural decay to suburban sprawl to air pollution to climate change. We simply have to make our cities work and remain vital and essential population centers.

How did you get started in philanthropy?

Philanthropy often starts at home, and that was how it was for me. I was fortunate to have two parents who understood how important it is to care about others, to give back and to share our blessings. They lived that model in their lives and demonstrated in ways large and small how it important and necessary it is.

Why is philanthropy important?

For society, it is critical to our overall well-being that individuals support initiatives that help others in ways that just wouldn't be done well or even at all otherwise. Government cannot do it all, nor can our collective economic might, and it requires committed individuals to complete the circle through their time and efforts and through their financial resources. For individuals, it provides a way to make a real difference in the world that one simply cannot make through the accumulation of wealth alone.

Any advice for would-be philanthropists?

“Get started!” Even in a small way. That first step will lead to others and you will learn from it. And teach your children about it. It helps ensure that they think about the larger world and their own relationship to it (and that you do, too.)

OSI truly is
smart
philanthropy
at work.

Even though you no longer live in Baltimore, you have chosen to continue to invest both your time and your money here, why?

Baltimore is a special place for me given my historic connections, but more than that, I believe the combination of Baltimore's size and the nature of the issues we face provide an opportunity to make a difference in Baltimore that ought to yield lessons that will help other cities which face the same problems. If we do it right, we have a chance to have a huge impact beyond Baltimore.

What motivated you to be one of the first investors in OSI-Baltimore?

As a board member of the Fund for Educational Excellence, I have seen firsthand how OSI-Baltimore works to bring both financial resources and expertise to bear on issues, in this instance education reform. What impressed me was the effort OSI-Baltimore put into addressing issues comprehensively from many perspectives and into aligning initiatives from various organizations, each addressing some component of a larger and more complex and interconnected problem. OSI-Baltimore's real value extends well beyond the financial resources it brings, welcome as they are, into the thoughtful way they attempt to surround problems and to connect the dots between different aspects of it. It truly is smart philanthropy at work.



AUDACIOUS

Tonya Featherston | 2006 OSI-Baltimore Community FELLOW

Now a corps of over 85 members, the Baltimore Community Fellows are social entrepreneurs working throughout the city with our neediest residents. Read about a new fellow, Tonya Featherstone, and one of our alumni fellows, Gin Ferrara, whose non-profit Wide Angle Youth Media has expanded exponentially since she first started in 2001.

The Baltimore Community Fellowships are supported by OSI-Baltimore and the Alison and Arnold Richman Fund, the Cohen Opportunity Fund, the Commonweal Foundation, the Foundation for Maryland's Future, the Gloria B. and Herbert M. Katzenberg Charitable Fund, the Hoffberger Foundation, the John Meyerhoff and Lenel Srochi Meyerhoff Fund, and the Lois and Irving Blum Foundation.

Former science teacher and principal Tonya Featherston, a 2006 OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow, believes schools need a new approach toward discipline. A suspension, for example, is the typical punishment for fighting, but doesn't really solve the underlying conflict.

Tonya is pursuing the Restorative Schools Project to help school administrators, teachers and students at three schools change their thinking about discipline and school culture.

She already has trained the teachers and administrators at City Springs and Collington Square schools. This spring, she did the same at Hampstead Hill Academy. A central part is a "peace-keeping" or "peace-making" circle, in which students sit in chairs or on the floor, and openly discuss conflicts while respecting each other. The circle doesn't end until there is a plan for moving forward, often a written agreement.

Teachers at City Springs are using the circles daily—not just to resolve conflicts but to build relationships with students. Some teachers start or conclude the day with a circle, posing a question, such as: What is something you are struggling with?

At Collington Square, a circle addressed deeper issues after an ugly fight among five eighth-grade girls. Tonya, two teachers and an administrator participated in the circle, with girls sharing their feelings, actions and possible remedies. "A lot comes out," says Tonya. One aggressor who had yanked out another girl's hair offered to pay for repairs to the damaged spot. "The young lady was very remorseful," says Tonya. Since the first circle, the girls have asked for additional ones to talk through other issues. "These young girls have become ambassadors for the circle process," says Tonya. "I knew it has the power to change behavior, but I never expected that to take place so quickly."



WHY WE FUND IT

INDIVIDUALS

2001 OSI-Baltimore Community FELLOW ALUMNA | Gin Ferrara

Seven years ago, Wide Angle Youth Media began with Gin Ferrara running weekly video workshops out of her living room. "We had a budget for pizza, and that was about it," said the 2001 Community Fellow. Now, Gin's organization has morphed into a growing community of more than 700 Baltimore youth who have been trained in video production, public speaking, team-building and media literacy in intensive workshops.

Through Wide Angle, students learn the ins and outs of creating videos—but also much more. The medium empowers youth to express their thoughts and opinions and impact their communities in a unique way. "Nobody walks into a room and ignores a television," says Gin. "That doesn't happen with other media."

Every year, Wide Angle trains about 130 students in video production and operates programs such as the high school video mentoring project, in which students create a Baltimore public access television show.

The organization's reach extends far beyond its workshops. Through its signature annual Youth Media Festival—a citywide festival featuring youth-created art ranging from videos and photography to paintings and poetry—Wide Angle provides the opportunity for hundreds of youth across the city to share their creative projects before a large audience. The second Who Are You? Youth Media Festival, held earlier this month, featured works by more than 200 young Baltimore artists. At the festival, many students expressed amazement after realizing that they were not alone in their experiences. "There were quite a few young people who said things like, 'I didn't know that other young people felt the same way I did,'" Gin said. "You feel connected to this community of people who are supporting you, and I think that's really, really big."



Pictured here: Gin Ferrara at right with students from Wide Angle Youth Media.

OSI-Baltimore's support was crucial to Wide Angle's growth, Gin said. Thanks to her fellowship, she dedicated herself to the program full-time and more than doubled the number of students she worked with that year. "We really jumped to a whole new level," she said.

From the start, Gin envisioned a program that would provide city youth a creative outlet and create a sense of community ownership. The growth and continued involvement of youth in Wide Angle Youth Media and the Youth Media Festival attest to Gin's vision.

"We have students who come back to us for two, three, four years," she said, adding that two Wide Angle instructors are former students. "It's really neat to watch them grow up, and it's great to realize how much a part of their life we are."

"What we now see is a corps of people who are working throughout the city to make real change for Baltimore's most underserved residents. And now this group has become a strong, supportive network with original ideas and resources for each other, too. After nine years, it's exhilarating to see that they will not abandon their compelling visions no matter what the obstacles and that they are incorrigible in their belief that social conditions can be improved."

—Pamela King, Director of Community Fellowships and Initiatives



The Washington Post

The following op-ed by OSI-Baltimore's Jane Sundius appeared in *The Washington Post* on Sunday, February 11, 2007. It is reprinted here with permission.

Too Many Suspensions

Maryland Public Schools Need to Turn to Alternative Punishments

The Maryland State Department of Education recently posted its annual report on school suspensions on its Web site. There was no public announcement. In fact, you really have to hunt for it. Perhaps that's because the 20-page report shows that Maryland continues to rely excessively on a seriously flawed form of punishment that hurts students and does little to improve school climate.

Maryland public schools doled out 127,002 suspensions to 72,609 students in the 2005-06 school year. That's nearly 9 percent of all students, which would be comparable to suspending almost all students in Anne Arundel County public schools. This is not a one-year blip. Maryland schools have been suspending a similar percentage of students for a decade.

This reflects our entrenched national "zero tolerance" disciplinary policies that are a misguided reaction to violent tragedies such as the 1999 Columbine High School shooting.

The reality is that these get-tough policies ensnare students who commit minor infractions as well as the few who are violent. In Maryland, most suspensions were imposed for nonviolent offenses, such as disrespect, insubordination and poor attendance—hardly the Columbine-style incidents that prompted the policies.

Clearly, schools must remove violent or dangerous students from classrooms. But they also must educate all of our children—and that rarely happens for those who are sent home. According to the annual report, more than three-quarters of students suspended in Maryland received no education while out of school, even though legally they are entitled to it. Those children missed days, weeks and even months of lessons.

Some argue that children forfeit their right to be educated in a classroom when they misbehave. But suspension has severe consequences outside the classroom. Suspended children often are from families that don't have supervision at home, according to the 2000 Census. When children aren't in school, they are far more likely to become involved in fights, carry weapons, have sex, smoke cigarettes, and use alcohol and drugs. And they're on a track toward jail.

Nor is suspension much of a deterrent. If it were, few students would be suspended more than once. However, more than 4,300 students in Prince George's County were suspended at least twice in 2005-06; 480 of them, five or more times.

How does sitting at home teach a child to respect his teacher? How does suspending a child with excessive absences improve her attendance? Instead of suspension, schools must set consequences that prevent and remediate inappropriate or dangerous behavior.

Schools and teachers need other strategies, and, fortunately, there are many that work, such as in-school suspension, mental health counseling, peer mediation and supervised recess to let kids blow off steam. Another approach focuses on "restorative" consequences; it moves away from punishment toward a model in which teachers, students and families solve problems together.

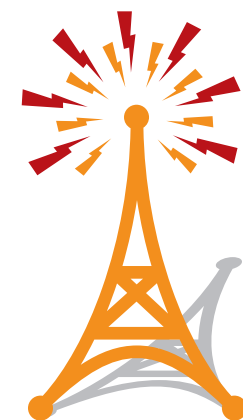
The message that alternatives to suspension are needed isn't getting across to Maryland educators and policymakers. The onus is on state policymakers and local school systems to communicate that message louder and clearer.

—Jane Sundius

The writer is director of the Education and Youth Development Program at the Open Society Institute-Baltimore.



For several years, Open Society Institute-Baltimore has deliberately focused on the extent to which public schools use suspension and expulsion and how this practice pushes young people onto the streets and into the juvenile justice system. Last year in response to a call for action by OSI-Baltimore, the Abell Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ben & Zelda Cohen Charitable Foundation, the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation, United Way of Central Maryland, the Zanyvl and Isabelle Krieger Fund, and an anonymous individual, along with OSI-Baltimore funded approximately \$1.3 million towards exemplary programs, both local and national, to address this problem. This initiative is complementary to the efforts already underway by the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) to reduce suspension and expulsion across the system, and is designed to be sustainable within the existing BCPSS budget.



JUST WORDS on the radio.

Just Words, a production of the Center for Emerging Media, featuring Marc Steiner and produced by Jessica Phillips, is sponsored by OSI-Baltimore. A weekly public radio program, **Just Words** focuses on the struggle, challenges and successes faced by a larger sector of our society that rarely has a voice, that of the urban poor.

Tune in on Thursdays at 6:33 a.m. or 5:45 p.m. at FM 88.1.

To hear past episodes, visit our web site at www.osi-baltimore.org.

OUR GOALS

As OSI-Baltimore moves forward, it is pursuing four main objectives:

- * Increase access to high-quality drug treatment to achieve a “tipping point” where 75% of Baltimore’s drug-dependent population is in treatment.
- * Increase public high school graduation rates from 59% in 2004-05 to 80% in 2008-09.
- * Decrease incarceration and recidivism while protecting public safety by reducing the number of people entering and returning to prison by 5%.
- * Populate Baltimore’s struggling communities with a strong network of proven, social entrepreneurs by awarding up to 10 Community Fellowships per year.

Founded by philanthropist George Soros, Open Society Institute-Baltimore is a private operating foundation that supports a grantmaking, educational and capacity-building program to expand justice and opportunity for Baltimore residents. With support from a range of investors, its current work focuses on helping Baltimore’s youth succeed, reducing the social and economic costs of incarceration, tackling drug addiction, and building a corps of Community Fellows to bring innovative ideas to Baltimore’s underserved communities.

To learn more about Open Society Institute-Baltimore, visit our web site at: www.osi-baltimore.org.

Please sign up for our periodic e-news on our home page.



201 North Charles Street
Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21201

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID

Baltimore, MD
Permit # 7317