

Student Handout Student Citizenship Example #1

Student Civic Examples

Excerpted from: Youth Venture <http://www.youthventure.org>. Permission Pending.

BLAZEN

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. based students, Chanel, age twenty, Mylinh, age twenty-one, and Klarisse, age nineteen, launched **BLAZEN**, a performing arts troop designed to give young people an opportunity to develop as performers, and as individuals. Members of **BLAZEN** take ideas that emerge from workshops and real life situations, then transform them into original, issue-based poetry, drama, song and dance. The team endeavors to engage and develop diverse groups of young people through art, and to help youth see that they can positively impact themselves, their community, and their world. Through their work, members communicate positive messages and important issues to the surrounding community. “This organization, above all, provides youth with an alternative to the negative, but understandable high risk, street activity,” explains Chanel.

Earth, Air, Water, Fire/Environmental Awareness with Friends

Washington, D.C.

New York based student, *Nancy*, age seventeen, launched **Earth, Air, Water, Fire/Environmental Awareness with Friends** to promote environmental awareness within her high school community. Nancy and team members *Neal* and *Nicole*, observed that fellow students were unaware of current environmental issues that impact them on a daily basis and created a venture to enable teens to make positive and informed decisions about their community. **Earth, Air, Water, Fire/Environmental Awareness with Friends** aims to increase awareness of issues among the Loyola school students, especially issues regarding the environment, culture, religion, and world and local events that impact their lives. The club also provides opportunities to partner with local organizations and carries out projects with food banks, homeless shelters, etc., in the community.

English as a Second Language

Little Neck, New York

Little Neck, New York based student, *Hydie*, age seventeen, created **English as a Second Language** (“*ESL*”) to assist non-English speaking young adults in their language development. *Hydie* has created a free English tutorial program, which pairs a high school student or an adult volunteer with a non-English speaking young adult. “I would like to help minorities in New York to achieve more of an equal footing in a socioeconomic sense by taking this first step to educate, alongside my peers, as many individuals as possible in the language the professional world around them employs,” explains *Hydie*. **ESL** strives to assist young adults in gaining basic conversational and grammatical English skills. In order to measure effectiveness, the tutors maintain logs which measure students’ progress and ensure that they are progressing towards the achievement of their goals.

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Filling the Generation Gap

Bronx, New York

Ijah, age seventeen, launched *Filling the Generation Gap* to link seniors with active teens. The venture aims to provide seniors with care and companionship, while closing the community's generation gap by helping seniors and teens recognize the value each provides to society. According to Ijah, *Filling the Generation Gap* “links seniors and teens to form a relationship that entails the younger helping the older with tasks, and the older transferring knowledge to the younger through experiences. The intent of my venture is not for community service hours or for recognition,” explains Ijah. “I want to help the community. I want to link those seniors who would like to participate, especially those who find certain tasks difficult, with teenagers who genuinely care and want to make new friendships.”

Latin Artist

Brooklyn, New York

Youth Venturers Jeffrey and John created *Latin Artist*, a for-profit air-brush art business as a means to change their neighborhood. Jeffrey and John’s team of young artists volunteer their time twice a week to teach art classes to children in their Brooklyn community. The goal of the business, according to Jeffrey, is to teach art skills and “keep these kids off the dangerous streets of my neighborhood. There are a lot of kids with talent that just need someone to help them out so they will gain a better view of themselves, learn some skills, and hopefully make a little money legally for their work. . . because in my neighborhood, there are too many young kids selling drugs.” To further involve the community, *Latin Artist* sponsors an annual “We Are M.A.D.” (Making a Difference) street festival on their block in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Outreach Community Program

New York, New York

New York based Joshua, age seventeen, created the *Outreach Community Program*, a mentoring/tutoring program for fifth and sixth grade students requiring attention and enrichment opportunities. Designed to connect high school students with middle school youth, the *Outreach Community Program* aims to address specific environmental and cultural issues that exist in New York. The program teaches cultural awareness, addresses environmental problems and consequences, incorporates interesting projects for each age group, and focuses on helping youth solve problems. “With an increased understanding of their own community and a comprehensive definition of what community means, these middle school students can develop a greater control over their surroundings,” explains Joshua. “This understanding will allow them to play a role in the workings of their community and neighborhood, and to have a greater influence over events occurring around them.”

Student Handout Student Citizenship Example #2

Student Civic Campaigns

Excerpted from: Youth Venture <http://www.youthventure.org>. Permission Pending.

Caring for the Coastal Environment (CCE) Pacifica, California

In December 2001, Joseph Pirolo, age sixteen, started *Caring for the Coastal Environment (CCE)*. Joseph and team members Paul McGinty and Gene Ma created *CCE* to spread awareness of global and local environmental problems. The Venturers pursue their mission by hosting regular “cleanup” events around local beaches and creeks.

CCE aims to alter community habits by building awareness of the local environment. Cleanup sessions thus focus not only on the removal of waste but also on educational workshops designed to inform the community about daily habits that ruin the local environment. By fostering increased conscientiousness, the *CCE* team aims to protect local beaches and to facilitate the return of steelhead trout to local creeks.

Through their efforts, the *CCE* team hopes to increase understanding of local environmental issues and to build awareness of global environmental issues.

Columbia Pike West Newsletter Arlington, Virginia

In January 2001, Margot Paz, age eighteen, along with team members Weyni Ghebremedhim, Rahwa Eyasu, and Adriana Torres, created the *Columbia Pike West Newsletter* to inform community members of local news and upcoming events.

Launched through the Urban Alternatives-Youth Venture Partnership, the *Columbia Pike West Newsletter* aims to provide critical information about events, problems and issues that affect the community. Moreover, by informing local youth, the Venturers hope to foster active youth participation in all aspects of the community’s development. Margot and her team launched the *Columbia Pike West Newsletter* to provide youth a voice within the community, and to demonstrate to others that youth can and do make a positive difference.

Student Handout Student Citizenship Example #2

Neighborhood Cleanup Campaign. Costa Mesa, California

California based Tai, age seventeen, launched the *Neighborhood Cleanup Campaign* to alleviate the overflow of trash throughout his community. By hosting bi-monthly neighborhood trash cleanup runs, Tai and *Neighborhood Cleanup Campaign* team members collect neighborhood trash, than transport all recyclable waste to the community recycling center. Tai created his venture based upon the recognition that the city’s weekly public trash collection was insufficient. Citizens were stuffing trash into overflowing receptacles or disposing trash in the streets and alleys due to the lack of waste disposal areas.

Collaborating with student volunteers and other community members, Tai decided to beautify his community by hosting bi-monthly trash cleanup sessions. “This will make a difference in my community because it will allow community leaders to unite in an effort to solve the trash problem,” explains Tai. “*Neighborhood Cleanup Campaign* will increase volunteerism among students and others, increase awareness of existing trash management services, decrease the amount of improperly discarded trash, and promote a better public image.”

Pesticide Awareness Marina, California

In December 2001, seventeen-year-old Cassandra Cuellar created *Pesticide Awareness* to educate her community about the dangers of pesticides.

Living in the “artichoke capital” of the U.S., many local schools and gathering spots are surrounded by agriculture fields and, in turn, pesticides. Schools have been evacuated due to pesticide leaks, and overwhelming numbers of students complain of headaches when crops are sprayed nearby. *Pesticide Awareness* aims to educate the public and raise awareness of pesticide use on the foods the community purchases and consumes.

By creating flyers and handouts, and by delivering addresses at local schools and community meetings, Cassandra hopes that *Pesticide Awareness* will influence citizens to buy and support organic food products. “Everyone should care about their health and the health of those that they love,” explains Cassandra. “Being informed is the first step towards positive change.”

Student Handout Student Citizenship Example #3

Quincy High School, Quincy, Washington Students

Excerpted from: Miller, Elise, and Jon Sharpe. “When Youth Lead.” *Yes!*, Spring 2003.

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/25environmentandhealth/millersharpe.htm>. Permission Pending.

Quincy is a small town in the heart of Washington state’s wheat and potato country . . . A string of chemical and food-processing companies lines the railroad tracks through town. When Quincy’s mayor began uncovering a shocking story about fertilizer companies adulterating their products with toxic waste as a way of cheaply disposing of it, few believed her. When she began claiming that some land in Quincy was contaminated with waste, and then recruited an investigative reporter from the Seattle Times to substantiate her claims, many in the town were enraged

at the mayor for stirring up trouble. The reporter, Duff Wilson, eventually discovered . . . companies throughout the US were exploiting legal loopholes to turn industrial waste into fertilizer . . . But the story began with a chemical waste pond near Quincy High School. No one knew exactly what was in it — perhaps not even the company responsible for it knew . . . Eventually, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scientists showed up in full chemical protection suits and began taking samples from the capped-over pond . . .

When a group of Quincy students was looking for a local issue to research for a science class, their teacher suggested they study the waste pond. Although high school runners on the track had sometimes complained of fumes from the pond, the student researchers had never heard of the issue. When they learned of the investigation, they were skeptical and angry at the controversy stirred up. They wanted to check for themselves the validity of the scientific methods investigators had used, and their conclusions.

It is just this kind of project that Washington state’s Youth Network for Healthy Communities (YNHC) encourages. Through this program, the Quincy students were connected via videoconferencing with university scientists. They prepared a presentation of their research for a panel of experts assembled at the University of Washington by the Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health. The panelists queried the students about their work, pushing the students to engage in critical thinking.

. . . They researched the chemicals involved in the leak, gathered documents from state and federal agencies, and scrutinized air sample analysis. Their research showed that the plume of contamination from the waste pond did not make a right-angle turn as scientists had predicted, but instead flowed straight under their high school.



© By Rob Stagg
Camille Grigg and Chelsea
Dannen analyze data.

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One student, Camille Grigg, went to city hall to check correspondence between agencies and learn about the public process that led to the scheduled clean-up. Another student, Chelsea Dannen, checked what the government knew about the health effects. Her analysis of documents found that little was known.

At first the students refused to believe that school could be in session if the contamination were so bad. Rob Stagg, the science teacher who worked with the students, said, “They used to think that environmental issues were just dreamed up by people with an agenda and that if there were a real problem we would all know about it. Now they know that these issues involve real data and that most people will never know about the issues unless they look and listen for them.”

The students concluded that much more research needed to be done about the health effects of the leak, and they learned something more: “They learned that it is within our power to become aware of these conditions, share their understanding with others, and influence actions taken to alter the conditions,” said Stagg. He plans to continue working with YNHC in years to come, helping class after class of students to study the health effects of the chemical leak over the years, building a deep community understanding of the issue. Already, one of his students, Rose Gonzales, has analyzed the methods used to evaluate air quality samples collected by previous Quincy High School students working with Washington State University scientists.

For more information on environmental health efforts with young people, see the Center for Ecogenetics & Environmental Health (CEEH), <http://depts.washington.edu/ceeh>; Institute for Children’s Environmental Health (ICEH), <http://www.iceh.org>; Project WILD, <http://www.projectwild.org>; and YMCA Earthservice Corps, <http://www.yesc.org>. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences funds the CEEH and the YNHC program.

Jon Sharpe is curriculum manager for the CEEH. Elise Miller is executive director of ICEH.

Student Handout Student Citizenship Example #4

Board OKs CCA Students’ Wetlands Plan

By Deidre Bello

Excerpted from: Bello, Deidre. “Board Oks CCA Students’ Wetlands Plan.”

Permission Pending.

TIFFIN — A persuasive student presentation on the benefits of using wetlands to treat wastewater convinced the Clear Creek Amana School Board not to cut the design option from a new alternative learning center.

“It was a real experience for the students to participate in civic government,” teacher Ellen Hartz said about the student’s one-hour presentation. “I was so impressed.”

The School Board’s unanimous decision came after a February 20 presentation by eight students at ECHO Alternative High School. The students spent several months researching the septic system through consultations with local experts, said Hartz, an environmental and science specialist.

The wetland system uses plants to consume and remove solids from wastewater. It will have an estimated 10-year cost of \$13,500, not including maintenance. Connecting to the city sewer system, by comparison, would cost \$24,690 for the same period, students and school officials said.

In addition to cost savings for the school district, the wetland system could act as an educational tool. The school district is planning to use a \$1 million grant from the state’s Vision Iowa program and a matching bond issue to build a 4,800-square-foot learning center on 59 acres adjacent to the high school. The building will accommodate a maximum of 45 students and four teachers for ECHO, as well as before- and after-school programs and continuing-educational programs offered by Kirkwood Community College.

Student Handout

Citizenship Profiles

NAME OF PROFILE	HOW DID THE PERSON/PEOPLE PARTICIPATE? WHAT DID THEY DO?	WHAT VALUES MOTIVATED THE PERSON/PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE?	WHAT DID THE PERSON/PEOPLE HAVE TO KNOW OR BE ABLE TO DO IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE?

Teacher Resource

Citizenship Profiles

NAME OF PROFILE	HOW DID THE PERSON/PEOPLE PARTICIPATE? WHAT DID THEY DO?	WHAT VALUES MOTIVATED THE PERSON/PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE?	WHAT DID THE PERSON/PEOPLE HAVE TO KNOW OR BE ABLE TO DO IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE?

Student Handout Citizen Profile #1

Candy Lightner

Excerpted from: Wolfson, Steven C. *Civics for Today: Participation and Government*. Amsco School Publications, 2001. 56. **Permission Pending.**



Why do people become involved in public affairs? Some have a special desire to follow a career of public service. Others enjoy the give and take of politics. Still others have a passion for a single cause that they believe is not being addressed by the government and society at large.

Such a person is Candy Lightner, the founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), a special interest group dedicated to protecting people from the tragedies caused by drunk driving. One Saturday in 1980, Lightner and her family suffered a terrible tragedy. Her 13-year old daughter Cari was killed by a drunken hit-and-run driver as she walked to a nearby church carnival. The person who drove the car had been convicted of drunk driving three times in four years, but had never been put in jail.

From this tragedy came Lightner's commitment to do something about the penalties for drunk driving in the state of California, where she lived. She believed they were too lenient. Lightner decided to form what became a major national organization. Early in the development of MADD, Lightner tried to see then California Governor Jerry Brown to get his support for a commission to investigate drunk-driving laws. At first, Lightner found it difficult to see the governor. Newspapers publicized her plight, and the governor finally met with her. He agreed to create a commission to deal with issues related to drunk driving and make Lightner a member.

One of the earliest campaigns that Lightner and her organization started was to pressure individual states to raise the legal drinking age from 18 to 21. Statistics showed that many accidents occurred among drunk drivers under the age of 21. As time went on, chapters of MADD spread throughout the nation. Currently, there are chapters in all 50 states and related groups in other nations.

During the eight years that Lightner headed MADD, she campaigned for a national law to raise the drinking age to 21. This was difficult to achieve because such authority is actually in the hands of state legislators. MADD chapters pressured legislators in the states, but Lightner believed Congress and the president also had to take a stand. The liquor and beer lobbies worked to undermine her efforts.

In December 1983, a presidential commission recommended federal penalties for states that did not enact a minimum drinking age of 21. Lightner personally lobbied senators and representatives in an effort to get their support for a bill to turn this recommendation into a law.

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Although the law could not require the states to raise the legal age for drinking, it did threaten to cut off federal highway funds to those states that did not comply. Since then, every state has made 21 the legal drinking age.

Schools throughout the nation have created chapters of Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD). These groups educate students about the dangers of drunk driving. Both MADD and SADD urge people who are going to “party” to choose one person to be the designated driver and refrain from drinking.

Now residing in Dallas, Texas, Lightner spends much of her time traveling around the nation on speaking tours and writing articles about issues related to drunk driving. Her work over the years has been credited with saving hundreds of lives.

Student Handout Citizen Profile #2

Craig Kielburger/Founder of Free the Children

Adapted from: <http://www.freethechildren.org>

Permission Pending.



Craig Kielburger is 18 years of age. Craig first became a spokesperson for children’s rights when he was 12 years old and read about the murder of a young boy from Pakistan who was sold into bondage as a carpet weaver and murdered for speaking out against child labor. Craig gathered a group of friends and founded the organization *Kids Can Free the Children* (KCFTC), which is now the world’s largest network of children helping children with over 100,000 active youth in 27 countries around the world.

Over the past five years, Craig has traveled to more than 30 countries visiting street and working children and speaking out in defense of children’s rights. He has addressed government officials and business leaders, educators, and students around the world. *Kids Can Free the Children* has initiated many projects all over the world. *Kids Can Free the Children* has raised funds for the construction of more than 300 primary schools in the rural areas of developing nations, providing education to over 15,000 children. They have, moreover, distributed approximately 50,000 school kits and in excess of 2.5 million dollars worth of medical supplies to needy families. KCFTC currently supports portable water projects, health clinics, alternative income cooperatives, and primary schools in 21 developing nations.

Furthermore, KCFTC’s advocacy campaigns have led Canada, Mexico, and Italy to pass legislation in order to better protect sexually abused children. It has also lobbied, in addition, corporations to adopt labels for child-labor free products. *Kids Can Free the Children* was selected in 2001 by the United Nations and the Office of the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict to be the lead NGO coordinating youth outreach for the decade of peace and non-violence towards children. (From Kielburger posting online at *Fast Company Magazine*, 2001.)

Craig’s first book *Free the Children*, which outlines his journey from the suburbs of Toronto, through the slums and sweatshops of South Asia, to the world stage of international human rights, has won critical acclaim and has been translated into seven languages.

Student Handout Citizen Profile #3

Warm, Dry and Noble

By Andrea Dean

Excerpted from: Dean, Andrea. “Warm, Dry and Noble.” *Yes!*, Summer 2002.
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/22art/dean.htm>. **Permission Pending.**

In HALE COUNTY, ALABAMA, you see ghost buildings: abandoned barns, tumbledown shanties, and rusted trailers — fragile remnants of a more prosperous agrarian past. You see old people sitting quietly on sagging porches and scruffy chicken hens noisily pecking and wandering on hard dirt yards. Hale is a left-behind place. But it is also a land of dense piney woods, fragrant crop furrows, and hypnotic rolling hills. In Hale County the architect Samuel Mockbee found “an almost supernatural beauty,” and mainly for that reason he decided to locate his Rural Studio there.

Naive as it may sound, Mockbee, a MacArthur “genius grant” recipient in 2000, is battling for convictions. One is that the architectural profession has an ethical responsibility to help improve living conditions for the poor. Another is that the profession should “challenge the status quo into making responsible environmental and social changes.” Hence his belief that architectural education should expand its curriculum from “paper architecture” to the creation of real buildings and to sowing “a moral sense of service to the community.” Architecture students are typically middle-class youngsters working on theoretical designs. But those at Auburn University’s Rural Studio are engaged in hands-on design and construction and in nose-to-nose negotiations with impoverished clients. You will find Mockbee there bucking his profession’s prevailing emphasis on fashion, frantic speed, and superstardom to devote himself to the patient work of getting inexpensive but striking structures shaped and built by students while teaching them the fundamentals, not only of design and construction, but also of decency and fairness.

Slowly, the Rural Studio is inscribing its mark on Hale County. Into the community of Mason’s Bend and the towns of Newbern, Sawyerville, Greensboro, Thomaston and Akron, the studio has inserted simple but inventive structures made of inexpensive, mostly salvaged or donated, often curious materials — beat-up railroad ties, old bricks, donated lumber, hay bales, baled corrugated cardboard, rubber tires worn thin, license plates and road signs. The studio’s esthetic vocabulary is modern, but its buildings, with their protective roofs and roomy porches, shedlike forms and quirky improvisations, look right at home here. In Mockbee’s view, “The best way to make real architecture is by letting a building evolve out of the culture and place. These small projects designed by students at the studio remind us what it means to have an American architecture without pretense.”

Although he did not take an active part in the civil rights struggle, Mockbee began in the 1980s to look for ways to help redress the wrongs perpetrated by his kin against “a whole army of people who’ve been excluded and ignored forever, people who are left over from Reconstruction.” He concludes that addressing problems and trying to correct them is “the role an artist or architect should play.”

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More than 350 second-year students and 80 thesis students have now participated in the Rural Studio. So why have other architecture schools not spawned similar programs? Mockbee, who has lectured at architecture schools nationwide, says almost all have similar curricula and risk-averse faculty. “Most of them dress all in black; they all seem to say the same things. It’s become very stale, very unimaginative.”

If architecture is going to “nudge, cajole, and inspire a community or challenge the status quo into making responsible environmental and social structural changes,” he says, “it will take the subversive leadership of academics and practitioners who keep reminding students of the profession’s responsibilities.” No one, says Mockbee, loves to draw and make models more than he, but model-making and drawings are not architecture.” The Rural Studio, he says, takes education out of the theoretical realm, makes it real, and shows students the power of architecture to change lives. “Through their own efforts and imagination,” Mockbee says, “students create something wonderful — architecturally, socially, politically, environmentally, esthetically. That’s the mission of the Rural Studio. And once they’ve tasted that, it’s forever there. It may go dormant for a while, but at least they’ve experienced and created something that they’re not going to forget.”

Excerpted from Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency, by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean and Timothy Hursley. Copyright 2002, Princeton Architecture Press. Andrea Dean is former executive editor of Architecture magazine. Timothy Hursley is an architectural photographer who regularly contributes to the international press.

Samuel Mockbee died in December, 2001 at age 57 of leukemia.

Student Handout Citizen Profile #4

Marian Wright Edelman

Adapted from <http://www.nolamarie.net/causes/mwe.html>.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional career. Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation’s strongest voice for children and families. The mission of the Children’s Defense Fund is to *Leave No Child Behind*® and to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life with the support of caring families and communities.



Beginning at an early age, Mrs. Edelman knew that she wanted to help children, especially the children of the poor. Mrs. Edelman was brought up in the segregated South being taught to believe that it was every person’s duty to help improve the lives of others. She derived a personal philosophy that has guided her throughout her life: “If you don’t like the way the world it, you have an obligation to change it. Just do it one step at a time.”

Mrs. Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School, began her lifetime career of protecting America’s children and families in the mid-1960s when, as the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C., as counsel for the Poor People’s March that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began organizing before his death. She founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and the parent body of the Children’s Defense Fund. For two years she also served as the Director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University and in 1973 began CDF.

Mrs. Edelman’s advocacy through the CDF has sought to bring the plight of children to the attention of policy makers and the public, and has been an enthusiastic advocate for the creation and funding of programs to improve children’s lives, for strengthening families and for weaving a web of community support for children. Mrs. Edelman has received many honorary degrees and awards for her dedication to protecting the rights and meeting the needs of America’s children including the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Prize, the Heinz Award, and a MacArthur Foundation Prize Fellowship. In 2000, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian award, and the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award for her writings, which include seven books.

Student Handout Citizen Profile #5

James De La Vega

Adapted from <http://www.facing.org/facing/fhao2.nsf/0/af6c41d87add3c485256a100050a4e4>.



James De La Vega is an artist, painter and a poet who grew up in Spanish Harlem. De La Vega's primary canvas is the public spaces of New York City. His "fish-tank studio" on 103rd Street holds many of his works of art and serves as a center for all of his community projects.

His methods include spraying stencils on the streets, chalking the sidewalks with his proverbs, and hanging his mural paintings in the world's largest museum from 96th to 125th

Streets, painting in his studio, organizing school yard art shows, and interacting with his Spanish Harlem community.

De La Vega was raised by a single mother in Spanish Harlem. His passion for art and his creativity led to a full scholarship at York's Preparatory Academy where he was class valedictorian. After receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Cornell University, De La Vega moved back to Spanish Harlem to teach art and Puerto Rican History to give back to the community he grew up in. In 1993, De La Vega painted his first mural on the wall of a building on 102nd street depicting a local sixteen year old youth who had been killed in a drug deal. He continued to paint when he returned to New York to instill pride in the community and to address community problems of drugs, crime and poverty.

While some of De la Vega's murals and quotes may only last a few days, the impact that his art and quotes have can last forever. His artistic imagery has become legendary throughout the city. He also travels the country as a motivational speaker, but his main focus is on his neighborhood.

De La Vega has taken on the responsibility of working as a street artist, monitoring young people whose lives are threatened by the realities of crime, AIDS, drugs and prison. He works on many community projects involving art and raising community awareness on certain issues.



Student Handout Citizen Profile #6

Danny Glover

By Sarah Ruth van Gelder

Adapted from: Ruth van Gelder, Sarah. "Danny Glover: An Interview with Sarah Ruth van Gelder." *YES!*, Spring 2001. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/17work/vangelderglover.htm>. **Permission Pending.**



Danny Glover is best known as the co-star of the Lethal Weapon series and for his leading roles in the films Beloved, Places in the Heart, Witness, The Color Purple, Buffalo Soldiers and Freedom Song. What is less well known is that Danny is also a life-long activist. His involvement ranges

from raising awareness about the AIDS crisis in Africa, to literacy, to the well being of African Americans and impoverished communities in the U.S.. Here, Danny Glover speaks about his choice to blend a life of activism with his career as an actor.

Most people know you as an actor, but you've also been an activist all your adult life. Was there a particular event that politicized you? I went to college at a time of the civil rights movement, the student sit-ins in the South, the anti-war movement, and the free speech movement. Freedom Summer, the massive voter education project in Mississippi, was 1964. I graduated from high school in 1965. So becoming active was almost a rite of passage.

When I was 20 years old, still in college, I began working in a tutorial program. The program was in the Western Addition — the Filmore area of San Francisco — a primarily black community that was in the midst of a relocation and redevelopment battle over who was going to control what the city looked like, what kind of jobs were going to be available, who was going to be displaced, and what the displacement was going to cost....

... This experience was key to those of us who got involved. We weren't just students, we were actively engaged in issues relevant to real people and real lives.... We were going to meetings, helping the tenant association write pamphlets, marching.... That experience formed the foundation of my work as an activist, as a student, and after college doing community development work.

Was there a link between that activism and the launching of your acting career? I think so. My first work as an artist was protest art, agitprop (agitation propaganda) theater, political theater.... After a time of doing community development work, I came into contact with a great writer — Athol Fugard. Fugard's work transformed how I saw art. What I saw in Fugard's work was how the highest level of art could be protest art but also tell universal stories about human relationships, about the human spirit, about the struggles and conflicts that make us each both unique and universal.

Student Handout Citizen Profile #6

You’ve been involved in so many issues — literacy, poverty, apartheid, AIDS, globalization. What is the common thread? They all represent major concerns about creating institutions that are life-affirming. If we talk about literacy, we have to talk about how to enhance our children’s mastery over the tools needed to live intelligent, creative, and involved lives. If we talk about HIV/AIDS, we have to talk about who has access to health care and who doesn’t. We have to talk about the death penalty from the standpoint that 85 percent of the men and women incarcerated are functionally illiterate. I don’t believe you can separate education from incarceration rates. So there are all these inter-relationships.

You’ve used the expression, “leadership of the whole.” Could you say more about what you mean by that and how you see your own role? ... I mean participation on a far greater level than we ever imagined in our system of government and the institutions within our communities. That leadership has to be focused on some very radical ideas that only we as 21st century people can talk about: making sure people have a livelihood, making sure people receive a living wage, making sure the environment, the Mother Earth, is embraced and cherished and not destroyed. Making sure people are healthy in what they eat, making sure we hold people and corporations accountable for the damage they do not only to our environment but to our institutions. This requires an enormous level of participation of the whole....

You’re in a position now, you’ve paid some dues, you’re very successful. You could easily kick back and enjoy your accomplishments. Yet you travel in some of the poorest parts of the world. What is it like for you to go into places where there is such enormous hardship? It is emotionally exhausting, not because of my position but because I know the scenario. Whether I am in Georgia or South Africa, the stories I hear about homelessness, jobs, and an adequate diet are the same. Certainly it is difficult to see that kind of abject poverty. But I [am] strengthened by how, despite the despair and despite the challenges, people are the orchestrators of their own change. In South Africa, women who had lived in shantytowns of cardboard or corrugated steel organized the South African Homes Women’s Association. When I was there, these women had built around 100 homes.

Where do you see possibilities for a change that is fundamental enough to address the kinds of issues we’ve been talking about? What remains alive is the illusion — primarily here in the western world — that we can continue this rampant consumerism.... We know the system does not provide economic stability and progress for everyone, only for a limited few. People are working more hours and they have less leisure time, while many working people are further than ever from getting a living wage. Are we capable of change? I don’t know.... But in the western world, it means having less. It means having fewer cars, less conspicuous consumption, less waste....

What forces will lead to a breakthrough? I think the strongest argument is that we all share this planet, and this planet cannot sustain itself at the rate we’re going. It’s the one argument that

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philosophically connects all of us, and it has to be the starting point out of all the other things we talk about. I’m not diminishing the concerns about race and gender and all those other struggles. But I believe we have to start where we feel that we have a common thread — the limiting of our possibilities, even our existence, here on the planet.