Community Health

Community health organizing can take on a variety of forms, from preventative to nutritive to different degrees of care. This section shows presents documents from different grassroots programs organizing for community health.

Essential questions:

1. Why have individuals organized to ensure the community’s health?
2. How has economic oppression specifically affected children with regard to their health and welfare?
3. RE: “New York’s Chinatown,” Akwesane Notes, Black Panthers: How in particular have marginalized groups created awareness and constructed methods to tackle health issues?

Secondary sources:
Akwesasne Notes, Basic Call to Consciousness, 2005.
Bonnie Tsui, American Chinatown: A People’s History of Five Neighborhoods, 2010.
http://artasiamerica.org/documents/6422

"America's Children," 1976

Pamphlet: "America's Children," 1976
There are many aspects of child health in this country of which Americans can justifiably be proud: mortality of infants and children is decreasing, and medical knowledge is available to wipe out or greatly diminish the incidence of disease and disability.

The pages that follow summarize the hazards to the survival of infants and children, and document the general state of child health or illness. They also outline outstanding health problems, and major federal health programs now in place to meet them.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from these statistics:

- Americans know more about good health than they put into practice; better delivery systems are more important than more medical knowledge.

- Poor health among America’s children today is often bound up in the conditions of life: poverty, social stress and mores, the absence of good health education, marketing of valueless or damaging products, environmental pollution.

- Proper preventive care and treatment are only available to some of us: the poor, racial minorities, and those who live in certain parts of the country lack the services and manpower that are available to others.

- Rising costs may increase these inequities and make progress in good child health care more elusive.
THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS GOVERNING CHILD HEALTH COME INTO PLAY BEFORE BIRTH. MANY OF THEM WE KNOW HOW TO CONTROL, BUT NEGLECT DOING SO. A BABY IS LIKELY TO GROW INTO A HEALTHY CHILD AND ADULT WHEN ITS MOTHER:

- had good nutrition as a child
- has good nutrition during pregnancy¹
- begins pre-natal care early in pregnancy
- is between 20 and 35 years old
- has a good education
- is in good health
- has not been pregnant recently²

LACK OF THESE CONDITIONS GREATLY INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (UNDER 5 1/2 LB.) AND BIRTH DEFECTS.

Low birth weight:
- is associated with almost half of all infant deaths³
- substantially increases the likelihood of birth defects⁴
- is three times as likely when mothers have no pre-natal care⁵
- is proportionately highest among children whose mothers are under 15.²

Birth Defects:
- afflict 200,000 new-borns every year⁶
- are found in highest proportion when mothers are under 17 and over 35⁷
- result from environmental factors alone or in combination with heredity. 50 percent of the time, it is estimated⁸
- happen less often when the mother has pre-natal care⁹
- are closely linked to maternal nutrition; mental retardation is especially closely linked.¹

¹National Foundation, Leaders Afer Bulletin #25.
ALTHOUGH WE ARE OVERCOMING SOME TRADITIONAL
CHILDHOOD DISEASES, A NUMBER OF GROWING HEALTH
PROBLEMS WITH ROOTS IN OUR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
CONDITION, THE "NEW MORBIDITY", CAUSE INCREASING
CONCERN. NEW ALIGNMENTS OF EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES
ARE REQUIRED TO COPE WITH THEM.¹

• Behavior problems, learning disorders, and school problems form a con-
  stellation that acutely troubles parents and community;² children who
display these problems need more than traditional medical attention.

• The mental health needs of children are increasingly acknowledged.
  New federally sponsored community mental health centers in the last
decade have made help available where there was none before; in
1971, 200,000 children were served in these centers.³

  It is estimated, however, that only 10 percent of the children who need
  help are getting it,⁴ and of course real progress in this area will only be
  made by tackling the social and economic stresses that underlie so
  many mental health problems.

• Child abuse is a recently recognized phenomenon of national scope,
  involving both disability and death. We are just beginning to investigate
  its dimensions; its origins are largely in the pressures of the society in
  which we live. (See p. 83)

²Ibid. p. 316
³HEW, Statistical Note #192, August. 1973, Table 2
⁴Kane, Morton, Sc.D., Historical Tables on Changes in Patterns of Use of Psychiatric Facilities 1946- 1971-73. NIMH,
  December 1975, Table 13

1. How do socioeconomic factors affect early child development?
2. Why do you think the artist decided to depict the women the way they are seen in the poster?

3. What do you think the poster represents about the tone of the conference it was promoting?

“Setting Up a (Womyn’s) DIY Health Collective”
Setting up a (womyn's) DIY Health Collective

All you need:

- interested people
- speculum, mirror and flashlight for cervical exam
- there are lots of great zines and books on this subject that you might want to look at (see info below)
- safe space (you define what this means!)

Information and accounts based on experiences from the Down There Health Collective, Washington, DC
4. Why do you think this Collective listed the items a potential collective would need? Why do you think these were chosen?

5. Why do you think the Down There Health Collective formed?

The Black Panther, front page, June 13, 1970
The Black Panther, June 13, 1970, cover. “People’s Free Health Center.” Man helps two women down the steps of a trailer. Inset quote: “The Free People’s Health Center occupies this land illegally according to the law, but we feel that the people’s authorization is the only authorization necessary.”

The Black Panther newspaper was published from 1967 - 1980 by the Black Panther Party. It was nationally and internationally circulated, and was the most widely read Black newspaper from 1968 to 1971. This cover of the Black Panther promotes the People’s Free Health Center, a major component of party chapters across the country. As noted in the Panthers’ Ten Point Plan, “We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but which will also develop preventative medical programs to guarantee our
future survival.” The People’s Free Health Centers were the establishment of this vision.
6. What do you notice in this image? Why do you think it is important to conveying the goals of the People’s Free Health Center?

7. What do you think were the reasons and some of the challenges related to the illegal occupation of the space that held the Center?

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Akwesasne Notes, “The Oppression of the Unborn: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome,” 1981

Since 1995, Akwesasne Notes (published on the Akwesasne Mohawk Reservation) has been a voice for issues and concerns of Native Peoples. In this article, the journal discusses fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS).
8. What are the symptoms of FAS? How could it be prevented?
9. Do you think the article sufficiently discusses why FAS occurs? Why/why not?

The Black Panther, March 16, 1969
Page 22. Two cut-out calls for donations, one for the Huey Newton Defense Fund and one for the Free Breakfast for School Children Program.

In this document, the newspaper calls for donations towards the Free Breakfast for School Children Program, which began in Oakland and expanded across the country to provide breakfast to children before school (based on research at that time noting a good breakfast as essential to learning).
BREAKFAST FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

OAKLAND, California -- The National Advisory Cabinet to the Black Panther Party is working with and for St. Augustine's Episcopal Church's program: breakfast in the morning for Oakland's school children in the black community.

All children in grammar schools and growing young adults in Junior High Schools can receive free, FULL BREAKFASTS in the mornings before they go to school. The first of these breakfasts will exist one hour before school hours at St. Augustine's Church, 27th and West, and the Black Community Center, at 42nd and Grove Streets, EVERY SCHOOL MORNING.

The National Advisory Cabinet and church members are calling on all mothers and others who want to work with this revolutionary program of making sure that our young have full stomachs before going to school. The schools and the Board of Education should have had this program instituted a long time ago. How can our children learn anything when most of their stomachs are empty? Black people in the Black Community—mothers, welfare recipients, grandmothers, guardians, and others who are trying to raise children in the Black Community where racism oppresses us—are asked to come forth to work and support this needed program. Soul food: grits, eggs, bread, and meat for the stomachs is where it's at when it comes to properly preparing our children for education. LET'S DO IT NOW. Support this community program.

Those who want to volunteer their work every morning or every other morning can come to the BLACK PANTHER PARTY CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS at 3106 Stockholm Ave., Berkeley or contact Father Niel at these numbers: 534-6584, 493-1015. Interested persons may also contact Ruth Beckford Smith at 893-8511 or sign up with other community peoples and citizens for full stomachs and better education of black children.

We urge as many mothers and other black citizens as possible to unite with this COMMUNITY-BLACK PANTHER PROGRAM. We are also asking all businesses throughout the black community to donate the necessary food and utensils to prepare the foods for our children. Call the Black Panther Office at 845-0104 or 846-0104. Everything of value donated to BREAKFAST FOR CHILDREN is tax deductible. Items or funds may be sent c/o St. Augustine's Episcopal Church. Just let us know, both black and white communities and citizens, what you can donate in money, time, etc.

Thank you

BREAKFAST FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN
I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE
SEND DONATIONS TO ST. AUGUSTINE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 2924 WEST ST., OAKLAND

☐ Money Enclosed is $ __________
☐ Time
☐ Food or Utensils, Kind and Quantity Below

If Business include for your tax exemption ___________

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ________________________________
State ____________________________ Zip _______

MAKE CHECKS TO: BFSC - ST. AUGUSTINES CHURCH
10. What is the significance of a call for support of the free breakfast program sharing space in the newspaper with the Huey Newton Defense Fund?

11. The piece argues that, “The schools and the Board of Education should have had this program instituted a long time ago.” Why do you think it took the school system so long to develop a Free Breakfast Program?

The Black Panther, June 14, 1969

In this piece, party members in the Southern California chapter describe the formation of the free breakfast program in Los Angeles, CA, and call on party members to boycott Safeway grocery stores.
L.A. PANTHERS BEGIN
FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Tuesday, April 2nd marked the beginning of the Los Angeles - Southern California Chapter Free Breakfast for Children Program. We named our program in honor of Jean Nagette, Deputy Minister of Information - Southern Chapter, who was assassinated in January for her efforts in winning the National Free Breakfast for Children Program.

Several weeks before we started the program, we sent letters to approximately 300 in 50 retail and wholesale stores in the community, requesting donations for the program. The response from these letters was nil. Given the program was under way, however, we did receive a visit from an official of the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, who suggested that we was merely challenging the system. We felt this was a high compliment. Yes, the fact is that in the days of our struggle, whether we were feeling sick because they were hungry or because we wanted "something to bite our teeth into" wasn't an easy situation.

We, nevertheless, did formally on April 2nd, start our first free breakfast program in Los Angeles at the University 7th Day Adventist Church (Olive Street and Western Avenue) and all the people in attendance from all the churches and people from all the churches and people who attended the first day's program said it was a success and we are going to continue this program.

Because of its success and its extremely conservative political attitudes, Los Angeles has been a target for the government. In order to organize a free breakfast program, we have had difficulty in raising funds. In L.A. there are no churches and only a small percentage of the population is involved in this program. However, we have also had difficulty in getting assistance from the churches in Los Angeles and several churches in the United States. The churches have given us a small amount of assistance, but they are not contributing as much as we had hoped.

Several churches in Los Angeles voted unanimously in favor of the Free Breakfast Program and gave their endorsement and contributions. This will make it somewhat easier for us to continue our efforts. In addition, the churches have contributed food supplies and financial support. We also need to get the full support of the community by putting various housing projects, police and other projects in the Free Breakfast Program. The people are easily satisfied by the fact that the program helps the community.


doctor

BOYCOTT SAFEWAY STORES

The Black Panther Party calls on the community to boycott Safeway stores in the East Bay. Why? They will not contribute to the Free Breakfast for Children Program.

For the Safeway boycott, we call on all Safeway stores to donate to the Breakfast for Children. We want all Safeway stores to donate to this program. We also ask all Safeway stores to contribute to the program. We want all Safeway stores to contribute to the program and we want all Safeway stores to contribute to the program.

Safeway stores whose breakfast program is in operation will have to contribute to the program. If the breakfast program is in operation, it will continue to operate. We are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program and we are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program.

The Black Panther Party is committed to the free breakfast program for children. We are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program. We are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program. We are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program.

The Black Panther Party is committed to the free breakfast program for children. We are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program. We are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program. We are asking all Safeway stores to contribute to the program.
12. What were some roadblocks to the Black Panthers’ free breakfast program? What were some of its goals and outcomes?

13. Why did the Black Panthers’ call on party members to boycott Safeway?

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Bridge Magazine was a publication of the Basement Workshop, an Asian-American arts organization active from 1970 through 1986. The first issue of Bridge, published in 1976, featured a piece providing an overview of Chinatown in Manhattan.
NEW YORK'S CHINATOWN

AN OVERVIEW

by Robin Wu

New York's Chinatown—that living anachronism perpetuated through the myths of an ignorant public and glamorized by the mone-
tary interests of its mercantile class—has, until recently, eluded exten-
sive examination. Several explanations can be deduced: either nobody cared or, for some reason, personal data could not be gathered.

Attempts have been made to render Chinatown less "mysterious." The 1960 U.S. Census and the 1962 Casetti Report provide information on Chinatown prior to 1962. However, the Census Report is none too precise since all minority groups, with the exception of blacks, are under the category "non-white." The Casetti Report emphasizes the attitudes of a particular group toward illnesses and medical care and the reasoning behind these attitudes.

For data after 1962, the Chinatown Study Report (1969), a sample survey of 565 families in the Chinatown area, and the Chinatown Health Survey (1970), as yet unpublished, provide a closer and wide-ranging examination of Chinatown.

The Chinatown Health Survey is a two-part study. Part one is a sample survey of 100 families, with data gathered on the respondents' housing conditions as well as their age, education, health, dialects spoken, etc. Part two is a survey of Chinese patients in the three health units around Chinatown.

The Chinatown Study and the Health Survey were done by college students. Because the Study Report has not been widely disseminated, information from it and the Health Survey is culled here for those interested in the conditions in Chinatown. It is hoped that this will narrow the information gap about Chinatown and explode some of its myths.
Since the official lifting of the immigration quota in 1965, the rate of influx of Chinese immigrants has increased sharply—22,318 Chinese entered the U.S. in 1966. Previously, the annual rate never exceeded 5,700. An estimated one-fifth of these new immigrants arrived in New York, most of them settling in Chinatown, thus expanding its population twelvefold again estimated, 55,000. Originally bounded by Worth Street in the south, the Bowery in the east, Canal Street in the north and Mulberry Street in the west, Chinatown has now expanded considerably to as far as 14th Street to the north and the East River banks to the east.

The sudden, large influx made the demand for housing greater than it already was. It also created a careless attitude on the part of landlords towards the upkeep and renovation of their buildings. As a result, housing conditions are deteriorating. Many buildings do not have intercom and buzzer systems to the locked front door. The Chinatown Study Report shows 62 percent of the respondents reporting that their apartment houses have not been painted in the past three years—which is a breach of the rent control law. Many apartments have no shower or bath tub facilities; shower faucets are sometimes found hanging from the ceilings of some living rooms. Private toilet facilities are also lacking in some households, as 6.2 percent reported sharing the use of a common bathroom.

Pest control is another grave problem. Rats and mice are found in 35 percent of the households reported by the Chinatown Study, while cockroaches infest over three-quarters of the homes.

In addition, burglaries occur frequently. A fifth of the residents interviewed has been burglarized; successive (three or four) burglaries have stripped some apartments of most of their furnishings. The Chinatown Study revealed that more than half of the respondents felt that police protection was inadequate and that Chinatown was not a "safe neighborhood."

Rents, on the average, are lower than the city average. The medium rent is $50 a month. However, "key-money" is notoriously high; eight times the monthly rent is not unusual.

**ECONOMIC ASPECT**

Chinatown is a self-contained community. There are more than 200 restaurants which provide the main source of income for the majority of the male working force. Close behind are the garment factories, numbering over 100, and the more than 50 noodle manufacturing concerns, as well as food and grocery stores, pastry and gift shops. In addition, there are sundry book, liquor, drug and hardware stores; movie houses; beauty parlors; barber shops; laundries; travel agencies, and printing companies.

Of the residents interviewed in the Chinatown Study, 54 percent are between the ages of 18 and 64. Of these, 56 percent are full-time workers; 7.9 percent are part-timers, and 10.5 percent are either retired, on welfare, unemployed or refused to volunteer information. Of the men who are employed, 35.5 percent work in restaurants. The women, on the other hand, are more homogeneous as a working force: 75 percent of them work in garment factories. However, the fluctuating economic condition of the clothing industry leaves many of the less skilled jobless for periods of up to several months.

Working hours usually average over 40 hours a week, since a five-workday-week is more often the exception than the rule and since a twelve-hour-workday is accepted without question. The Health Survey found that of those over 65 (which is approximately 11 percent of the respondents), only about 64 percent receive Social Security. Many are still working, perhaps not so much for the money as to stave off the uselessness of old age. Many of them came to the U.S. alone, leaving their families behind.

Regarding welfare assistance, the percentage of Chinese recipients is, according to the Health Survey, negligible. Welfare assistance is often looked upon as charity and as such is rejected out of innate Chinese pride. On the other hand, of the families interviewed, 13 percent indicated that they know of friends who receive welfare assistance. But, in the actual survey, such "friends" are very hard to come by.

**MEDICAL ASPECT**

Generally speaking, the Chinese community seems to be rather healthy. Half of those interviewed in the Health Survey indicated that they have had medical checkups within the past twelve months, and only about 14 percent reported serious illnesses in the same period. However, the figures may be misleading since a routine visit to a doctor is sometimes considered a medical checkup and serious illnesses are not reported until they may have become very, very serious. Part of the reason for the latter is the lack of Chinese doctors who speak the native language. It is reported that some patients have to wait for weeks, sometimes months, before they can get an appointment. All told, there are about 20 Chinese physicians (mostly full-time) in the immediate vicinity.

A number of the older people still have a strong faith in traditional Chinese medicine. The Chinatown Study indicated that 7.6 percent of those interviewed usually visit one of the approximately nine "herb doctors" for medical diagnosis and treatment, as against the 85 percent, in the Health Survey, who preferred Western medical treatment. Recent immigrants are of the younger age bracket and most of them prefer Western to herbal medicine.

As regards dental care, a sphere where the influence of the herb healers is practically nil, about 40 percent of those interviewed in the Health Survey reported checkups between 1969 and 1970. Fifty percent indicated their preference for Chinese dentists and for the same reason: a common language. But, in this case, there are only five Chinese dentists in the area.

Despite the high percentage who care about their health, only about two-thirds of those interviewed in the Health Survey are covered by some form of health insurance. The remaining ones simply cannot afford medical attention, which may be another factor for the low rate of serious illnesses reported. The most common insurance policy carried is Blue Cross, followed by Blue Shield. Only one-tenth of the respondents receive Medicaid assistance.
14. What were the effects of housing situations in Chinatown on public health?

15. How did Chinatown residents balance use of traditional Chinese medicine with more Western methods?

16. Why did only 40% of the survey respondents visit report visiting the dentist over the course of a year? How do you think that could have been resolved?

Concluding Questions

17. Which of these documents most interested you, and why?
18. **What challenged you the most or made you want to learn more, and why?**