



## **Global Giving Challenge Project: Develop 20 New Youth Leaders in New Orleans**



Photo by Abdul Aziz

### **Project Summary**

The New Orleans Youth Leadership Project will train 20 youth involved in “bounce” rap culture to use organizing tools, tactics, and strategies for solutions to community problems, including violent crime, domestic abuse, homophobia, and education.

### **Project Description**

The New Orleans Youth Leadership Project is part of Alliance Institute’s youth organizing initiative. In early 2010, members of New Orleans’ Bounce Rap community approached Alliance Institute to assist them in finding productive ways for their audience (youth between the ages of 16-25) to address the problem of violent crime plaguing their communities.

New Orleans youth have developed a rich music culture centered on bounce rap -- a localized sub-genre of hip hop -- that revolves around not only the songs themselves, but also concerts, parties and theatrical presentations.

This project will take 20 young people involved in the city’s bounce rap culture and train

them how to integrate civic engagement tools, tactics, and strategies into that culture to create real-life solutions to their most pressing community problems. Issues that have already been identified include violent crime, domestic abuse, homophobia, and access to quality education.

And just as significantly, the project will also harness the power and passion of these young people to lead New Orleans' resurgence in the short term and help create the city's leaders of tomorrow.

### **Project Need and Beneficiaries**

As federal, state, and local funds for social services dry up, New Orleans youth find fewer access points to opportunities for self and community improvement. Added to this: a) Louisiana's gun death rate is twice the national average, b) New Orleans' police system arrested 1 in 5 residents in 2009, and c) the city's school system ranks near the bottom of most major U.S. cities, and you have a hostile environment for minority teenagers and young adults in New Orleans.

The New Orleans Youth Leadership Project recognizes the pre-existing social and cultural dynamic of the city's bounce rap youth culture and seeks to integrate organizing for change by training youth to advocate for themselves. The project focuses on winning smaller successes leading to more significant changes to build confidence in their ability to make change through civic engagement.

"Our influence as bounce rap artists allows us to reach our fans, in their language, and in a way that no one else can. We have seen too many of our fellow artists and fans die violently. This project is our way of taking all that energy from the clubs and the streets and using it for something positive." --Crystal "Crowd Mova" Dixon, Bounce Rap Artist

We will engage these low-income young people into local decision making processes – electoral, administrative, educational, etc. With a core group of 20 youth leaders, the long term goal (3 years) will be to grow an organized group of 300 dues paying young people who are actively engaged in the decision making processes that affect them and their communities.

### **Project Activities**

The New Orleans Youth Leadership Project mixes existing youth culture and community organizing. Youth participants will receive intensive training in producing informational workshops for personal development, hosting and conducting community meetings, helping their peers to develop and carry out action plans to address community issues, and utilize pre-existing entertainment events for celebrating their work and raising funds towards sustainability.

Activities planned during the project include:

- **Info fairs:** Present information for youth to improve their situation, e.g. educational opportunities, financial literacy, jobs, insurance, etc.
- **Community Meetings:** Participants identify and discuss issues in their lives and communities, receive training, and formulate an action plan.

- Action Event: Carry out an action plan, starting with relatively small, winnable goals to build confidence and create an understanding of how to exert organized influence on their community.
- Leadership Event: Parties, concerts, theater, etc., to bring groups together for a sense of the larger movement and their organizational power; highlight community and organizational victories in a public manner; recognize leadership; move larger issue campaigns; raise funds, increase membership, and community support.

### **Project Budget and Timeline**

\$11,000 over 6 months

### **Long-Term Impact**

The New Orleans Youth Leadership Project, through its repetition and expansion, will move local youth, aged 16-25, towards becoming more civically engaged.

As stated previously, our long-term goal over 3 years will be to grow an organized group of 300 dues paying young people who are actively engaged in the decision making processes that affect them and their communities.

Benchmarks towards that goal include the following:

- 10 new dues paying members per month.
- the formation of no less than 6 local neighborhood groups working on local neighborhood issues.
- increased youth presence at decision making events such as town halls, city hall, school board, etc.
- increase in numbers of youth registering to vote by 20%
- changes in decision making and policy that reflect a consideration for the effects on low and moderate income young people.

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