

AUDACIOUS THINKING

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FROM OSI-BALTIMORE

SPRING 2009



BOLD IDEAS.

THESE TIMES CALL FOR US TO BE COURAGEOUS AND SMART.

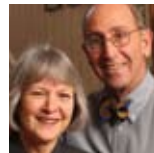
Do we have the imagination to see this as the singular opportunity that it is?

Do we have the courage to rethink our policies and reform our institutions to make them more just and more equitable for all?

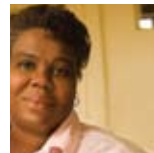
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NEW DYNAMIC TEAM*



from left to right: Tricia Rubacky, Jeffrey Burch, and Jedediah Weeks

Tricia Rubacky has joined OSI-Baltimore as director of development, filling a critical role as OSI-Baltimore continues its fundraising campaign.

A life-long advocate of social justice, Rubacky has succeeded in helping numerous nonprofit organizations dramatically increase revenues and donations throughout her 32-year career. Most recently she spent four years as development director of Advocates for Children and Youth.

Rubacky has hired two development staff members—Jeffrey Burch as senior development associate and Jedediah Weeks as development associate.

Rubacky and her staff are enthusiastic about their charge to raise the final \$8 million needed to meet the \$20 million challenge by 2010.

HELP US MAKING LASTING CHANGE.

Your financial gift to OSI-Baltimore helps us tackle the most challenging issues our city faces—always important, but more urgent than ever before.

No gift is too small or too large. Every dollar given is matched 1:2 by our founder, George Soros. Our donors share a common goal: to revitalize Baltimore. They realize that by investing in OSI-Baltimore, they play a vital role in improving our city's future.

* **CONTRIBUTE ONLINE AT WWW.OSI-BALTIMORE.ORG OR CALL US AT 410-234-1091.**



DIRECTOR'S NOTE*

We are in the midst of startling economic developments that threaten the security of residents throughout the country, including right here in Maryland: soaring levels of unemployment, high rates of foreclosure, and dramatic losses in savings and investments.

As our new president and Congress grapple with solutions, two things become clear. First, we must immediately stop spending public monies on expensive programs and practices that don't work, such as the incarceration of people who commit low-level crimes because they are drug dependent. Second, because the stakes are now so high, we must play out policy choices and choose to spend wisely in the short term to avoid expensive public "fixes" in the future. For example, as we know that addiction treatment works but is not available to all who need it. We must increase public funding for treatment as well as ensure that public (e.g., Medicaid) and private insurance covers it. The math is clear: paying for expanded addiction treatment is a lot less expensive than the overuse of hospital emergency rooms, the cycle of arrest, prosecution and incarceration, the care of HIV transmission, and the foster care and support services required by children of addicted parents.

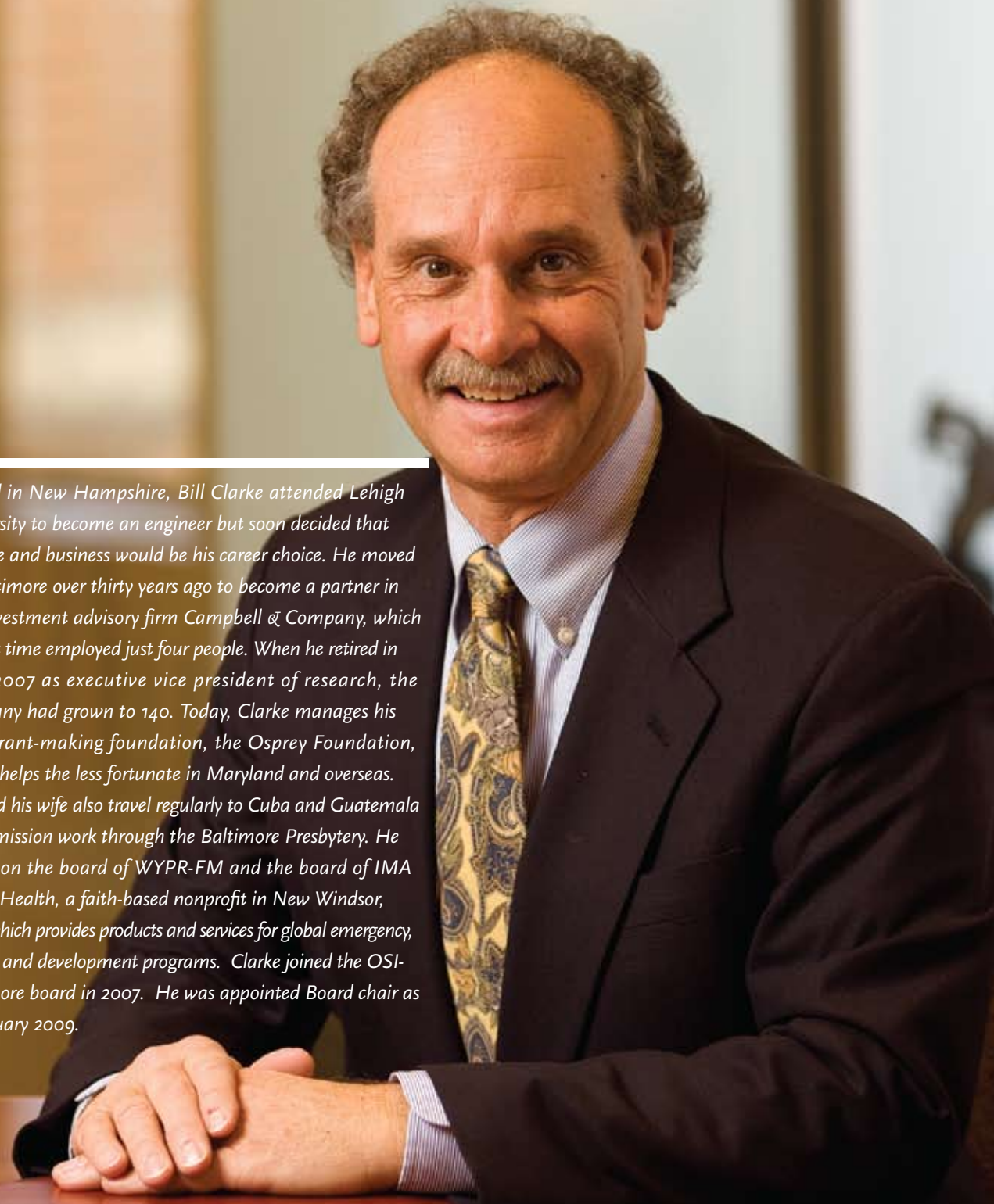
Big problems give us the chance to embrace big solutions right here in Maryland. The scope of the recession—and the time and reinvestment required to recover from it—oddly gives us the freedom to transcend normal constraints in considering what's up for change.

Let's do the math—counting all of the costs of the status quo—and find the courage to endorse solutions that re-envision how we connect residents of this great state to opportunity. We can't let the web of institutions and policies we've dragged into the 21st century block our vision at this historic moment for change. With few other rational options before us, we should have, at long last, the collective will to use public monies differently. By thinking boldly here in Maryland, as well as in Washington, we can redefine the common good and champion those investments that, we know from experience, are most likely to support good health, innovation, prosperity and security for all of our residents.

DIANA MORRIS, DIRECTOR

A CONVERSATION WITH OSI-BALTIMORE'S NEW BOARD CHAIR: BILL CLARKE

Raised in New Hampshire, Bill Clarke attended Lehigh University to become an engineer but soon decided that finance and business would be his career choice. He moved to Baltimore over thirty years ago to become a partner in the investment advisory firm Campbell & Company, which at that time employed just four people. When he retired in May 2007 as executive vice president of research, the company had grown to 140. Today, Clarke manages his own grant-making foundation, the Osprey Foundation, which helps the less fortunate in Maryland and overseas. He and his wife also travel regularly to Cuba and Guatemala to do mission work through the Baltimore Presbytery. He serves on the board of WYPR-FM and the board of IMA World Health, a faith-based nonprofit in New Windsor, Md., which provides products and services for global emergency, health and development programs. Clarke joined the OSI-Baltimore board in 2007. He was appointed Board chair as of January 2009.



NOW THAT YOU HAVE RETIRED AT SUCH AN EARLY AGE, WHAT ENGAGES YOU?

After a career in finance, I really wanted to have a chance at a second career where I could give back. I wanted to work with people to make change and have an effect on lives that were marginalized. What I want to work on is helping disenfranchised people get a break, get a leg up into the economic structure in any number of ways, whether it's through education, employment or the justice system.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO START GETTING INVOLVED TO MAKE CHANGE?

I started getting involved with a church group and worked in Guatemala and Cuba, and ironically, it was by working internationally that I also became aware of what the needs are locally.

BECAUSE YOU'VE NEVER LIVED IN THE CITY, WHAT MAKES YOU CARE SO DEEPLY FOR BALTIMORE?

Most of my interaction with Baltimore for many years was coming in to attend theater or have dinner—not really getting involved in the life of the city. There are so many people who have written off the city, who come in for dinner and say, “Thank God I don’t live in that neighborhood” and go home. Yet we hear Thomas Friedman tell us the world is flat and that concept rings true to me. It applies to the city and urban communities, too, right here in this country. We can’t isolate urban communities and expect that things are going to function right. We have to understand how interconnected we are and how much what goes on in Baltimore affects what goes on around it.

HOW DOES OSI CONNECT WITH YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE?

One of the things that I like so much about OSI is that we’re asking the questions.

We’re planting seeds. We’re trying to make change happen. There are many ways to do things differently, to be much more effective. OSI works with people in the city to make certain they have access to new and different things—not to give handouts, but to empower people. People respond to empowerment no matter what echelon they are in.

One of the difficult aspects of work to make long-term change is that you don’t get to see the end product. If you plant seeds, you may not be around for the end result. And you have to have a modicum of faith that what you’re doing is right. You will probably see some of the change beginning to happen, but you’re not necessarily going to see the end result.

ARE YOU ENCOURAGED ABOUT OUR FUTURE PROSPECTS?

We know the level of the difficulties, the depth of the problems. We know that they are all very deeply rooted and difficult to solve. But I think that, as long as we open new doors and challenge ourselves, continue to find solutions and evaluate what works and what doesn’t work, we will be able to continue to make progress. I know we will have failures—but, in a way, you want to have failures because everything you try will not succeed. That’s okay, because that means if you try ten things, there will be two or three that will produce the change you hope to make. And probably the two or three things that work are really good breakthroughs and are worth going after.

OSI-BALTIMORE WELCOMES TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Robin Williams Wood, an active community volunteer, and Anne Scarlet Perkins, a lawyer and former Maryland legislator, recently joined the OSI-Baltimore Board.



ROBIN WILLIAMS WOOD



ANNE SCARLET PERKINS

CREATING JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY

When Walter Lomax was locked up in the Maryland State Penitentiary in 1969, he was an angry, illiterate high school dropout serving a life sentence for a convenience store robbery and murder he did not commit.

In solitary, Lomax taught himself to read and write by highlighting unfamiliar words in books and looking them up in a dictionary.

It took almost 10 years, but Lomax earned his GED behind bars—as well as a welding certificate and an associate's degree in business administration and criminal justice.

He excelled at his work-release job, moving up from receiving clerk to warehouse supervisor. He became a writer and editor of a prison newsletter, and received dozens of certificates of achievement and letters of support.

The Maryland Parole Commission recommended parole four times for this model prisoner. Yet none of that mattered to then-Governor Parris Glendening who had adopted a policy that no lifers would be paroled unless they were dying or elderly. It seemed Lomax never would be released until a Baltimore judge reopened his case and suspended his life sentence in 2006.

By then, he had served nearly 40 years in prison.

Today, at 61, Lomax is continuing the advocacy work he and other prisoners serving life-sentences began in 1995 while Lomax was still in prison—the year Glendening ended all work-release programs and parole for lifers.

Lomax's organization, the Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative, advocates for humane sentencing policies for prisoners serving long sentences. One specific example is changing Maryland's policy of paroling lifers. Lomax

supports a proposal that would allow a three-judge panel instead of the governor—to consider releasing lifers who have served 20 consecutive years and who have received favorable recommendations from the parole board. This will, he says, “radically change Maryland corrections.” His initiative is organizing prisoners statewide who are currently serving long-term sentences, their families and policymakers. With a database of over 700 names and addresses, the organization provides updates to these stakeholders about various reform efforts and seeks feedback and support. The initiative will also advocate for re-entry/reintegration programs to support those who served long-term sentences as they return to communities. Currently, most programs serve only people who serve short sentences for non-violent offenses.

Lomax's organization is one of three nonprofits that recently received grants from OSI-Baltimore's Criminal and Juvenile Justice Program to support grassroots organizing of people with criminal records and their families to advocate for fair criminal justice policies.

“When I got out of prison, I was able to dive full force into this initiative, which has kept me focused,” says Lomax. “It hasn't really settled in with me yet that I spent 40 years in prison for a crime I didn't commit. All I can do is to move forward. Working hard on this project is the way for me to stay sane.”

Along with the Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative, OSI-Baltimore awarded grants to Alternative Directions and the United Workers Association.

Alternative Directions, a nonprofit that works with prisoners and former prisoners to become independent, responsible citizens, is using the grant to expand its Out for Justice Project. The project brings together former prisoners, their families and friends to advocate for policies that help former prisoners successfully return to society.

The United Workers Association, an organization of more than 1,000 low-wage workers—many of whom have criminal records—is providing leadership training to its members so that they may advocate for better wages and against employment discrimination based on criminal convictions that are old and unrelated to job responsibilities. The United Workers Association is organizing low-wage workers who are employed at businesses in Baltimore's Inner Harbor.



WHY WE FUND IT

“People who have been directly affected by the criminal justice system are intimately aware of its failures and what is needed to improve it. With these grants, OSI-Baltimore is helping to ensure that those individuals—who are too often excluded from public policy debate—play a leadership role in making Maryland's criminal justice system fair and in creating opportunities for individuals who leave the system.”

MONIQUE L. DIXON
Director of OSI-Baltimore's Criminal and Juvenile Justice Program

TELLING THEIR STORIES



MAKING LASTING CHANGE FOR BALTIMORE

When Open Society Institute-Baltimore identifies problems, we dig deep to find solutions. In the next several issues of Audacious Thinking, we will illustrate just how substantial change can occur. More than grantmakers, we are strategic thinkers and conveners, dedicated to working with others to find practical, effective solutions that can be sustained to make lasting change.

On the next pages, you will find a chart that shows how we looked carefully at a very simple concept: students need to stay in school to be successful. Yet Baltimore City Schools were over-using suspension as a disciplinary tool. Here's what we did—together with many partners—to make sure that more kids stay connected to school, teachers have alternative disciplinary tools to use when they confront problems, and our children and schools are daily becoming more and more effective.

Turn the page...



Award-winning journalist Melody Simmons will continue her work exploring the reasons behind Baltimore's attendance, suspension and dropout crisis.

Simmons' recent 12-part radio series, "Not Present or Accounted For: The Attendance Crisis in Baltimore Schools," was supported by a grant from OSI-Baltimore.

The grant underwrote six months of reporting and nearly three months of hard-hitting yet emotional radio spots on WEAA 88.9 FM. The series also appeared on OSI's Web site: www.osi-baltimore.org.

After the documentary series ended in November, Simmons couldn't seem to shake the children and young adults she met while researching.

"These kids have been victims of a broken system and broken families," she said. "There was just a very sad pattern

repeating. Sometimes, I would get in my car and just cry."

Building on the success of her OSI-Baltimore sponsored radio series, Simmons applied for a fellowship at Harvard University, underwritten by the National Education Writers Association and the Nieman Foundation, and spent four days in seminars with Harvard graduate school experts and other journalists, dissecting data and churning numbers.

The result: At least four more stories on the faces and families behind Baltimore's attendance problem. And possibly several more, if future funding permits.

"The stories will air on WEAA in the spring," Simmons said. The spots will also be available on the OSI-Baltimore website.

"This is very important work," Simmons said. "I just wanted to get to the heart of the topic—which is the students and their families. That was the part I thought needed to be heard."

WHAT WE KNOW:

SUSPENSION DOES NOT WORK

While it may seem counterintuitive, reliance on suspension has actually fueled poor behavior, violence, unwelcoming schools, and academic failure. **The overuse of suspension** contributes to a negative, combative school environment and does not teach appropriate behavior, or hold students accountable to redress the harm they cause. **While they are suspended**, few students receive education services, so many fall behind in their studies. **Teachers and administrators have not been given the tools** to engage in positive classroom management. **For the last several years, OSI-Baltimore has strategically engaged** with many partners to create sustainable changes so that students and teachers have many more options. And now, under the leadership of Dr. Andrés Alonso, Baltimore City Schools are working diligently to reduce the overuse of suspension.

“A community wide movement to support alternatives to out-of-school suspensions got under way two years ago, largely at the behest of the Open Society Institute-Baltimore...With a mission to address issues that contribute to chronic rates of poverty, dropouts, and crime, OSI-Baltimore zeroed in on the city school system’s disciplinary record.”

– EDUCATION WEEK



EXAMPLE #1
IN A SERIES ILLUSTRATING HOW WE WORK

KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL 1



In 2006-07, suspension soared. Baltimore City Schools suspended over 9,850 students for minor offences. We knew we had to change this trend.

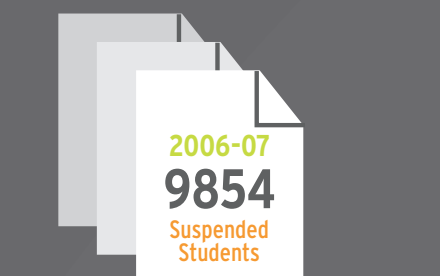
THE PROBLEM 2

Over-taxed teachers sent children out of school for offenses such as disrespect and disobedience. When they leave, students fall behind, engage in risky activity and, ultimately, drop out. And they often end up in the juvenile justice system.



ASKING QUESTIONS & FINDING ANSWERS: OSI TAKING ACTION 3

- > Hold Community Forums
- > Pull data and share numbers with city leaders



- > Publish findings: fact sheets, research papers, op-eds
- > Talk with Baltimore Community Fellows working in the field



DEMONSTRATE GOOD PRACTICE: TO INTRODUCE EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVES 4

GRANTS TO NURTURE ALL SCHOOL CHILDREN

- Sports 4 Kids
- Paths to PAX
Johns Hopkins University
- YOURS Store
Najib Jammal

GRANTS TO TARGET CHILDREN WHO HAVE MINOR BEHAVIOR ISSUES

- Meet Me 1/2 Way
Bernard Fayall
- Baltimore Curriculum Project
Tonya Featherson
- Community Conferencing Center
Lauren Abramson
- University of Maryland

GRANTS TO RECONNECT STUDENTS WHO HAVE FALLEN OFF TRACK

- Connecting Kids Back to School
- Chesapeake Center for Youth Development
- Baltimore City Community College
- Operation Safe Kids (Baltimore Health Department)
- Learning Inc.
- Baltimore City Juvenile Courts, planning grant

= Baltimore Community Fellows working in the field

CHANGING THE RULES: TO ENSURE CHANGE TAKES ROOT 5

OSI-BALTIMORE STAFF LEAD EFFORT, WITH SUPPORT FROM CITY SCHOOLS, TO CHANGE POLICIES



GRANT TO NATIONAL EXPERT, THE ADVANCEMENT PROJECT

- > Research best practices around country
- > Re-write discipline code for Baltimore

RESULTS 6

MORE KIDS STAY IN SCHOOL



Suspension Rates Fall:
 2008/09 Academic year,
 1500 fewer suspensions in the first semester.

- > New discipline code says no suspensions for minor misbehaviors such as tardiness
- > More programs in city schools for students with more serious misbehavior problems



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS 4a



Convene on-going bi-monthly discussions for practitioners.

NEW BALTIMORE CEO FOR CITY SCHOOLS 4b



New Baltimore CEO Dr. Andres Alonso arrives >> Strong believer / champion of keeping kids in school. Unrelated outside influence that gives support to overall initiative.

BUILDING A FIELD 4c



Experienced advocates, practitioners and policymakers who learn from each other and implement change.



KEEPING KIDS IN CITY SCHOOLS

For five years, OSI-Baltimore has led a major initiative to increase the number of children in Baltimore schools each day. It began by exposing Baltimore's heavy reliance on suspensions and expulsions and by promoting more effective alternatives to suspension.

After the Baltimore public school system adopted a new, progressive discipline code last year, OSI expanded its focus to include the overlooked, underestimated problem of chronic student absence. Now, talk and research are leading to action. OSI spearheaded the creation of the Baltimore Attendance Work Group, charged with identifying concrete initiatives and reforms to dramatically increase school attendance in Baltimore.

The Attendance Work Group is a joint initiative of the Mayor's Office, Baltimore City Public Schools, and OSI-Baltimore's Education and Youth Program. Its members include parents, teachers and students, as well as key representatives from city agencies, such as police and transportation, and staff from the city school system, foundations and advocacy and youth-serving organizations.

To understand which students are most likely to be absent and why they don't attend school, the Work Group began with a study of student attendance prepared by the

Baltimore Education Research Consortium, an OSI grantee. BERC's findings on attendance for 2007-2008 school year include the following:

- ▶ 15 PERCENT OF K-5TH GRADERS WERE CHRONICALLY ABSENT-MISSING A MONTH OR MORE
- ▶ 29 PERCENT OF 6-8TH GRADERS WERE CHRONICALLY ABSENT
- ▶ 44 PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE CHRONICALLY ABSENT
- ▶ 10 HIGH SCHOOLS HAD MORE THAN HALF OF BALTIMORE'S CHRONICALLY ABSENT 9-12TH GRADERS, WHILE 12 MIDDLE SCHOOLS HAD MORE THAN HALF OF ITS CHRONICALLY ABSENT MIDDLE GRADE STUDENTS

"We are trying to educate people about the scope of the problem and its complexities," explained Jane Sundius, OSI's director of education and youth development. "We are focusing both on reducing the barriers students face in getting to school, such as walking through unsafe neighborhoods, and on making schools more engaging and attractive to children. Schools are the safest and best place for kids to be, and our goal is to have many more of them attend school every day."

OSI also awarded grants to the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland and the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard to staff the Work Group, organizing its meetings, agendas and participants and researching laws, policies and other key issues.

RESEARCH FOR REFORM



For the past few years, researchers have been crunching numbers about the progress of two large groups of Baltimore students as they moved from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. The researchers believe that these students' paths—both good and bad—will provide insight to reforming the city school system.

The investigators are a part of the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC)—a partnership between Johns Hopkins and Morgan State universities, Baltimore City Public Schools and other organizations.

BERC got its start in 2005 when a group of local stakeholders met to consider founding an organization similar to the Consortium on Chicago School Research. University and

school system staff, along with representatives of the Family League of Baltimore City, and the Fund for Educational Excellence, developed the plan, which received funding from local and national foundations, including OSI-Baltimore. The Board of School Commissioners approved a memorandum of understanding that provides BERC access to student data from the school system.

Last year, BERC shared results of its first study, reporting on the progress of students over seven years, prepared reports on attendance and college access, and developed a three-year research plan to learn what keeps students on track and what leads them to drop out. This study and other BERC projects are designed to help guide future education reform in the Baltimore schools.



WHY WE FUND IT

"Establishing an independent, sophisticated research entity is vitally important for Baltimore. Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC) helps ensure that public education dollars are well spent and that schools have solid data to refine their efforts."

JANE SUNDIUS
Director of OSI-Baltimore's Education and Youth Development Program

PROFILE OF OSI-BALTIMORE INVESTORS:

GAIL+ EMILE BENDIT



“There’s not one problem in Baltimore. There are a lot of big problems—education, drugs and employment—and they are all intertwined.”

Gail and Emile Bendit, married for almost 36 years, are active in many civic organizations. Emile is a psychiatrist with a private practice. He went to medical school at the University of Maryland and did his residency at Johns Hopkins. He serves on several boards, including Jewish Community Services, the Hopkins Hillel, The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, WYPR-FM, and the Sheppard Pratt Health System.

Gail earned her undergraduate degree at Goucher College and studied psychology in a master’s program at Loyola College. She worked at Hopkins’ psych testing lab, where she met Emile. She had a small psychotherapy practice and also worked on Hopkins research projects. She has served on the boards of House of Ruth and Florence Crittenton Services of Baltimore and currently serves on the board of the Edward A. Myerberg Senior Center and the Baltimore Choral Arts Society as well as OSI-Baltimore’s Leadership Council.

Gail chairs the Bendit Foundation, and Emile serves on the board. They have two grown daughters, Sarah and Rachel.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN TRYING TO SOLVE BALTIMORE’S PROBLEMS?

Gail: Years ago, I worked on two Hopkins research projects. One involved interviewing elderly residents of Baltimore public housing. They lived hard lives in poverty but were from a generation when families were more intact. The other project studied inmates at the women’s prison in Jessup. These projects enabled me to see the city’s interrelated problems and to want to intervene.

Emile: There’s not one problem in Baltimore. There are a lot of big problems—education, drugs and employment—and they are all intertwined. But Baltimore is also a wonderful place to live. It is a city with a lot of resources and a lot of potential, and I don’t think we should give up.

WHAT LED YOU TO OSI-BALTIMORE?

Gail: The Sun made me aware that OSI had to raise \$20 million to receive a \$10 million match from George Soros. After meeting Diana Morris and seeing the program, I was sold. Anyone would fall in love with this organization—particularly its prison and school agendas and Community Fellows program. I actually asked some in my Baltimore Community Foundation women’s giving circle if we should consider giving 100 percent of our funds one year to OSI to help earn the Soros match.

Emile: What is especially appealing is that OSI-Baltimore is about the city. The city needs cheerleaders and OSI is a cheerleader.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN PHILANTHROPY?

Gail: Our foundation funds come from Emile’s family. I was a poor scholarship kid raised by a single mother who survived the Depression on beans and rice. But she also believed that even the recipient of charity should give to charity.

Emile: My father left Poland in 1930 and couldn’t get into the United States. He went to Canada and finally ended up in Bethesda in 1940 with \$17 in his pocket. He was in the men’s and women’s ready-to-wear business and was very committed to social issues. He had a foundation and when he died in 1976, I decided to grow the foundation. There aren’t enough governmental resources to do everything that needs to be done. In our city, we are lucky to have people who have resources they can make available and who can make a commitment and participate.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR PHILANTHROPISTS?

Emile: When you are giving away money, you want to feel like it will make a difference. Sometimes, that’s hard to measure. Philanthropists need to take it seriously and get to know the organizations you are going to invest in.

Gail: A dollar can be wasted, and a dollar can be well spent. You want to get more dollars into the well spent column. OSI is expert at doing that. I feel very good about the dollars we have granted to OSI.

10 YEARS DEBATING SUCCESS

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Baltimore Urban Debate League (BUDL) has flourished from a fledgling program of 90 students in a handful of high schools. Now it is a nationally respected organization that annually spurs more than 1,000 students in more than 50 Baltimore middle and high schools to discover their voices, improve their academics and reshape their futures.



Honored two years ago at the White House as one of the nation's most outstanding programs for youth, BUDL's tremendous impact is felt across Baltimore as students from 35 high schools and 25 middle schools engage in after-school debate training, research and competitions.

"Over the course of its ten-year partnership with the school system, the Baltimore Urban Debate League repeatedly has demonstrated powerful results in terms of student achievement, motivation and graduation rates," said Dr. Andrés Alonso, CEO of the Baltimore school system. "Watching these confident young people, I have seen firsthand their determination to succeed and become leaders in school and their communities. When a school has a debate team, I know it will have a "can do" climate with high expectations for students."

In 1999, the Open Society Institute-Baltimore launched BUDL to bring youth debate to the city to improve students' educational experience and to encourage them to develop their own voice.

"OSI-Baltimore launched the league in a way that it was bound to succeed," says Pam Spiliadis, BUDL executive director. "OSI laid the groundwork, built partnerships in the community and provided the funding that allowed BUDL to grow into what it is today."

TEN YEARS LATER, BUDL HAS:

- Brought kids from East and West Baltimore together with kids from around the globe to build understanding among them.
- Helped our community redefine its youth by seeing their spirit, talent and desire for a better community.
- Taught young people to hear and respect differing perspectives and lifestyles.
- Made hundreds of students unafraid to become intellectual extroverts and social activists.
- Helped hundreds of talented Baltimore teachers rediscover the possibility for student growth that first led them to teaching.
- Inspired several area schools, including the Baltimore Civitas School, to use debate as a central piece of the curriculum and mission.
- Developed educational leaders: Currently nine Baltimore principals are former debate coaches.
- Seen 90 percent of participants graduate on time and 80 percent go on to college.
- Developed a responsibility in our debaters to mentor younger participants, encouraging them to set college as a goal.
- Seen its alumni join the nation's top college debaters and eventually lead others as teachers, lawyers, nurses, business leaders and public servants.

In 2006, OSI-Baltimore gave a \$200,000 grant to The Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore to create an endowment to provide more opportunities for students in the Baltimore Urban Debate League to increase their access to college and debate activities. The Special Opportunities Fund helps pay for college visits, debate camp scholarships and associated costs with national and international debate tournaments. The fund has a matching requirement, which members of The Associated and others can help to meet. The Associated also encourages its members to contribute to the fund.

"We are extremely proud that our organization was entrusted by the Open Society Institute to manage this fund for the Baltimore Urban Debate League," said Marc B. Terrill, president of THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore. "The enthusiastic response by youth to BUDL has been truly impressive. We look forward to helping this meaningful and much-needed endeavor enjoy continued success."

Funds also go toward improving BUDL's evaluation system for tracking student success and long-term organizational development and strategic planning.



WHY WE FUND IT

"We saw the Baltimore Urban Debate League as a great tool to engage young people in their own learning and encourage tolerance of opposing views in the process. We also saw the program as integral to the school reform movement. Helping students find their voices in a self-directed activity such as debate has positively changed the way students and teachers relate to one another."

PAMELA KING
Director of OSI-Baltimore's Community Fellowships and Initiatives



AUDACIOUS

“They said they wish the violence would stop. They wish they could live better and that they could go to better schools.”

HELEN KEITH
2006 BALTIMORE COMMUNITY FELLOW ALUMNUS

Helen Keith’s organization is called “Promoting Children’s Voices,” but it could just as easily be called “Supporting Children’s Lives.”

Consider: Keith, a former OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow, recently traveled to Mercyhurst College to attend the graduation of a young man who once penned poems and daily musings in Keith’s after-school and summer programs.

Keith’s trip to the graduation ceremony epitomizes the desired result of her writing program, where she teaches children, ages 8 to 16, from southwest Baltimore to use poetry, journaling and other forms of writing to cope with the stresses of growing up in an inner-city.

“I keep up with all of my kids,” said Keith, 45, who founded Promoting Children’s Voices more than a decade ago. **“If you can keep a couple of kids off the street and can teach them to express themselves through poetry, you can keep them from physically and mentally abusing themselves or others in society.”** Keith hands notepads and pencils to neighborhood youth and urges them to put their feelings to paper.

After a group trip to see “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” at the Hippodrome Performing Arts Center, Keith tasked the youngsters with writing about why they believed the Grinch was so mean.

And for the recent inauguration of Barack Obama, Keith encouraged the children to put themselves in his shoes.

“All the kids wrote poems about if they were president and they drew pictures of things that they would change,” she said. “They said they wish the violence would stop. They wish they could live better and that they could go to better schools.”

With her 2006 fellowship, Keith bought much-needed journals, folders, pens, pencils and games—things she and her husband used to pay for out of pocket.

“Prior to the Fellowship, I had not received a grant for all of the 10 years,” said Keith. “And now that it’s over, I’m still going strong, and am determined to survive.”



INDIVIDUALS

“I’m hoping people will realize they have a voice to change things.”

JOYCE SMITH
2008 BALTIMORE COMMUNITY FELLOW

Joyce Smith has a field trip in mind for a group of young mothers in southwest Baltimore.

First, they’ll travel 20 miles to Wegman’s, the upscale grocery store that boasts a sushi bar, salad, sandwich and cheese stations and a produce department with some 700 varieties. Next, they’ll head to a typical city supermarket, whose limited fare consists heavily of packaged, frozen, canned and starchy foods.

The goal is not to point fingers, but to motivate the young women to do something about the disparity.

“I hope they will start comparing the number of carry-outs and the lack of grocery stores in many low-income communities, especially in my community,” said Smith, of southwest Baltimore. “Then, I want them to look at policies. Go to the zoning hearing when people want to open up a business. Find out what they are planning to sell. I’m hoping people will realize they have a voice to change things, especially for the younger generation.”

As a 2008 OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow, Smith is using her fellowship to try to influence the eating and living habits of those in her community.

As executive director of a coalition of neighborhood associations called Operation ReachOut Southwest, Smith already had been working on health and nutrition issues for several years with the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins University and the Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation.

Since embarking on her project, Smith has met with several groups, including senior citizens, parents and grandparents, and has begun exposing them to healthier lifestyles and introducing them to new ways to shop, cook and eat.

“I’m finding that people have really accepted that diseases and health problems are solely a genetic thing: ‘Oh, it happens in my family.’ But they haven’t connected diabetes with how they cook and the foods they eat, or that you just have to get up and move,” she said. “What’s happened in these communities is that McDonald’s is making money because everybody feels like they deserve a break today.”

WHY WE FUND IT

“The Baltimore Community Fellowships program actually is a social movement of passionate individuals committed to fairness and justice. Our investment enables this cadre of innovators, now more than 100 strong, to take risks and to act boldly—and that’s how change happens in communities.”

PAMELA KING, Director of OSI-Baltimore’s Community Fellowships and Initiatives

SAVE THE DATE *

FOR THE FIRST TWO EVENTS IN THE OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE-BALTIMORE'S YEAR-LONG SERIES "TALKING ABOUT RACE."



TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS AND ELVIS MITCHELL
PHOTO: MARK MAHANEY

A special screening **THE BLACK LIST: VOLUME TWO**

April 28, 7:00 p.m., Brown Center at MICA

In partnership with MICA, the Maryland Film Festival, and the Enoch Pratt Free Library, OSI-Baltimore presents "The Black List: Volume Two," an HBO documentary featuring dramatic portraits of some of today's most fascinating and influential African-Americans, who share their stories and insights into the struggles and triumphs of black life in the U.S. Filmmakers **Timothy Greenfield-Sanders** and **Elvis Mitchell** will introduce the film and participate in a Q & A session.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERIES, CHECK OUT
OUR WEBSITE: WWW.OSI-BALTIMORE.ORG

TALKING ABOUT RACE NOW: HOW TO BUILD SUCCESS WITHOUT FORGETTING THE STRUGGLE

June 4, 2009, 7 p.m., Wheeler Auditorium, Enoch Pratt Free Library

Gwen Ifill of Washington Week and The News Hour with Jim Lehrer and **Sherrilyn A. Ifill**, civil rights lawyer and law professor at the University of Maryland School of Law will discuss this pivotal moment in American history and how to make a new beginning for equity and social justice. Co-sponsored by the Enoch Pratt Free Library.



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