



NYRAG

Voices

FROM THE FRONT LINE

PROFILES OF OUR NONPROFIT PARTNERS

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

“We are involved in youth development because we recognize that youth need a safe space to speak their minds, define their beliefs, and reach their full potential. We recognize that young people need holistic support to combat all the emotional and physical challenges of growing and learning in order to become healthy and whole women and men,” explains Khary Lazarre-White, Co-Director of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol. “[We exist] because our children are faced with the daily specter of violence, of pervasive drugs, of destructive images of manhood, of womanhood, of love, of respect, of responsibility. With all these negative pressures, we provide a positive pressure to make informed choices.”

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol was created in 1994 to offer supportive programs for black and Latino youth in impoverished communities. Co-founders Lazarre-White and Jason Warwin established The Brotherhood at the John Hope Community Center in Providence, RI, while they were seniors at Brown University. They believed that the creation of a strong, supportive community could help

youth overcome the obstacles and challenges of circumstance and succeed in life. They brought their youth development model to New York City in 1995 and began working with about 45 young men in two area public schools.

In 1998, Dr. Susan Wilcox came on board as a third Co-Director, joining Warwin and Lazarre-White in the Directors Circle, the leadership team that provides organizational vision and echoes the organization’s core ideals: commu-

“I took great delight in visiting The Brotherhood/Sister Sol recently. The place felt more like a family than a youth agency. This organization clearly provides real hope and effective guidance in one of the most needed places today.”

— Jenna Ritter, Assistant Secretary,
The Irene Ritter Foundation

In 2001, less than 33 percent of Latino students in New York **earned a high school diploma** in four years, the worst showing of any state. Thirty-five percent of black students in New York **graduated on time**, also the worst showing of any state.

In 2001, only 50 percent of all black students and 53 percent of all Hispanic students in the United States **graduated from high school**.

As of October 2006, 80 percent of Brotherhood/Sister Sol alumni had **graduated from high school**.

On June 30, 2006, about 4.8 percent of all black men and almost 1.9 percent of all Hispanic men in the United States **were in prison**, compared to about 0.7 percent of all white men.

Black men ages 20 to 29 comprised 15.5 percent of the more than 2 million men **in state, federal, or local custody** on June 30, 2006.

As of October 2006, no Brotherhood/Sister Sol alumni **were incarcerated**.





nity, collaboration, and equity. Under Wilcox’s guidance, the organization expanded to include programs for young women and was renamed The Brotherhood/Sister Sol.

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol Rites of Passage is the core program on which the organization was founded. It establishes partnerships with public secondary schools to develop gender-specific (Brotherhood or Sister Sol) chapters, each consisting of 10 to 18 youth members and two adult Chapter Leaders. During an intensive four- to six-year Rites of Passage process, members learn critical thinking and global awareness skills through leadership development, drug awareness, conflict resolution, political education, community service, and other activities. Each chapter develops a Mission Statement and collectively defines what it means to be a sister/brother, woman/man, and leader. Members also create individual Oaths of Dedication—personal testimonies to how they will live their lives. The program is structured around ten curriculum focus issues, incorporating topics such as Pan-African and Latino history, sexism and misogyny, and political education and social justice.

Other essential programs include: an After School Program, in which members receive tutoring and academic assistance and participate in an additional assortment of enrichment classes; a Summer Leadership Program, which provides access to international study, summer day camp (for younger members), intern-

ships, and youth employment opportunities both within and outside the organization; and a Liberation Program, which prepares interested members to participate in community activism and social change through a four-week training course and subsequent participation in a self-governing Collective.

Upcoming special events for The Brotherhood/Sister Sol include a fashion show, “The New Harlem Renaissance,” on August 16, 2007, at 8:00 PM, from which the organization will receive half of the proceeds; and, in November, “The Brotherhood/Sister Sol Living Museum,” where guests will see The Brotherhood/Sister Sol’s headquarters transformed into an interactive exhibition highlighting the written, visual, and oral expressions of its members. There will also be a presentation sharing experiences from the July 2007 International Study Program trip to Ghana.

“Our children have not been expected to survive, but to fill jails and the stories of broken men and women,” says Lazarre-White. “And so we seek to help raise strong young women and young men who embody the spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood and who are committed to creating sustainable and healthy communities. The most rewarding aspect of our work is seeing our members realize their dreams in the face of setbacks, fears, and adversity. Their endurance and ability to overcome inspires us every day.” ▲

NYRAG Members That Fund The Brotherhood/Sister Sol Include:

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Recommended Restaurants Near The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

[Acapulco Caliente Restaurant](#)

Mexican
3508 Broadway
212-926-5558

[Vinegar Hill](#)

Sandwiches, Pizza
3385 Broadway
212-281-2083

To learn more about The Brotherhood/Sister Sol, receive event and programming updates, and receive their e-newsletter, please contact:

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As part of NYRAG’s commitment to philanthropy, we have added a new feature to our website. Each week, **Voices from the Front Line: Profiles of Our Nonprofit Partners** will spotlight an exemplary grantee of one or more NYRAG members.

For more information on a particular grantee, please contact them directly. We rely on you to conduct your own due diligence; NYRAG has not done so. All members are encouraged to submit grantee suggestions—please contact us at talkback@nyrag.org.