



With Dignity, Hope, and Joy

*The Latin American Youth Center:
A Case Study*

By Marcia Bernbaum and Isaac D. Castillo

Cover photograph: LAYC youth painting mural on Adams Mill Road NW, Washington DC, under the supervision of Centro de Arte staff, early 1980s (Rick Reinhard)

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Acknowledgments

This case study would not have been possible without the interest, support, and investment of time of many people.

From the moment the idea of the case study was conceived and in the characteristic fashion that she takes on all new and innovative ideas, Lori Kaplan, executive director of the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), lent her full backing to the project, provided guidance and support when we needed it, and encouraged us to take initiative and be creative in collecting data for the case study. Lori took time out of her busy schedule to be interviewed, suggested individuals whom we should contact and introduced us to them. Her insights have been invaluable.

We are very grateful to the members of LAYC's Board of Director and staff who took time out to be interviewed, some for three and four sessions. In particular, we would like to recognize Gabriel Albornoz, Raul Archer, Jasmin Benab, Noel Bravo, Patricia Bravo, Ronald Chacon, Dianne Cottman, Yanira Cruz, Rick England, Anita Friedman, Marie Moll, Luisa Montero, Millie Perez, Lupi Quinteros, Linn Shapiro, and Alex Wilson. (The full list of individuals interviewed may be found in Appendix A.)

Former Board members and staff also gave generously of their time to be interviewed, as did individuals from outside LAYC. All provided unique perspectives. Over 50 current and former youth participants in LAYC agreed to share with us their personal stories, including the impact that LAYC has had on their lives.

We thank the many individuals who reviewed and commented on the case study in its various draft versions: Patricia Bravo, Noel Bravo, Olivia Cadaval, Ronald Chacon, Dianne Cottman, Marta Estarellas, Anita Friedman, Julie Jensen, Lori Kaplan, Brenda Mejia, Marie Moll, and Enrique Rivera.

A special note of thanks to Terri Elders and Linn Shapiro, who edited the case study.

Marcia Bernbaum and Isaac D. Castillo
July 17, 2007

Guide to Acronyms

AHA	D.C. Administration for HIV and AIDS
APRA	D.C. Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration
CBO	Community-based organization
CDC	Centers for Disease Control
CETA	Comprehensive Employment and Training Act
CFSA	D.C. Child and Family Services Agency
CHSFSC	Columbia Heights-Shaw Family Support Collaborative
CLA	Council of Latino Agencies
CSA	Core Service Agency
DHS	D.C. Department of Human Services
DMH	D.C. Department of Mental Health
DOES	D.C. Department of Employment Services
DOH	D. C. Department of Health
DYRS	D. C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
ERC	Evening Reporting Center
ESL	English as a Second Language
FOK	Focus on Kids
GED	General Educational Development
GIP	Gang Intervention Program
HCOP	Health Careers Opportunities Program
HUD	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
ILP	Independent Living Program
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Administration
LAMB	Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School
LAYC	Latin American Youth Center
LEAD	Leading, Educating, and Advocating against Drugs
LEDC	Latino Economic Development Program
MS 13	Mara Salvatrucha 13
OLA	DC Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
RED	Revolutionizing & Educating the District
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SOP	Street Outreach Program
SYEP	Summer Youth Employment Program
THP	Teen Health Promoters
TLP	Transitional Living Program
UPO	United Planning Organization
VPP	Venture Philanthropy Partners
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WISE	Workforce Investment and Social Enterprise
YO!	Youth Opportunities Program
YSA	D. C. Youth Services Administration

Executive Summary



Susan Evan, Principal of the Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School, guides student on the computer, 2005 (Rick Reinhard)

This case study of the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), conducted between November 2005 and November 2006, was designed to meet the following objectives:

- (1) Chart the evolution of LAYC over the 37-year period since its birth within the context of international, national, and local developments and with an emphasis on the Latino community in the District of Columbia;
- (2) Profile youth who participated in LAYC programs;
- (3) Explore LAYC's impact on those youth; and
- (4) Identify lessons learned that can be helpful to other youth development programs taking a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of youth.

LAYC's goal is to help youth become successful and happy young adults by providing a comprehensive set of programs to meet youth where they are and help them build the skills they need to succeed and become engaged in their communities.

In an effort to measure impact, LAYC conducted an in-depth strategic planning exercise between July 2003 and March 2004, which identified six desired programmatic outcomes and began designing systems

to measure progress against these outcomes. In 2007, as part of a second strategic planning process made possible by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, LAYC further defined its outcomes for each youth who walks through the agency's doors:

- Academic success;
- Post-secondary education or work;
- Healthy behaviors.

Additionally, LAYC has one organization-wide advocacy outcome: to promote positive change in conditions, policies, and laws affecting youth in the District of Columbia and in Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

LAYC came into existence in the summer of 1969 at Lincoln Junior High School, on the corner of Fifteenth and Irving Streets in Northwest Washington, D.C., under the auspices of Roving Leaders, a D.C. Department of Recreation program that works with at-risk youth.

Beginning as a grassroots organization with a small staff and a limited number of programs funded exclusively by the D.C. government, LAYC has evolved to its current 2007 status as an organization with an annual budget of almost \$11 million financed by over 100 funders. LAYC's 50 programs in Washington DC, and Maryland's Prince George's and Montgomery Counties provide youth with a multiplicity of services. These include job placement and preparation for employment, with a link to social enterprises; a wide variety of education, health, and mental health services, focusing on both prevention and treatment; programs in the arts; and a comprehensive approach to gang prevention and outreach. In addition, LAYC has founded three charter schools, with a combined annual budget of \$6 million. LAYC has a staff of over 150 in its family of organizations, approximately 30% of whom are former participants in LAYC programs.

In its early years, LAYC served immigrant youth primarily from the Caribbean and Central America who had full immigration status and whose families were in search of better social, educational, and economic opportunities. Many of these youth lived in two-parent families where both parents worked in blue collar jobs. Somewhat lost and lonely, not fluent in English, and unfamiliar with American culture, they found themselves a small minority in their schools and neighborhoods. LAYC was a place they could go to socialize with other Latinos, receive assistance with acculturation, and emulate the college students on LAYC staff who served as role models.

In the 1980s, as thousands of immigrants from the civil war in El Salvador and other nearby countries arrived in Washington, D.C., LAYC faced an influx of youth who had been traumatized by their experiences before coming to the U.S. In addition, many had harrowing experiences crossing the border into the U.S. As these young people swelled the Latino population of public schools near LAYC, tensions between African American and Latino youth became more pronounced. Most of the newly arrived youth lived with one parent, usually their mother. Others lived in reconstructed families with a birth parent and a step-parent previously unknown to the youth. Most parents worked long hours, leaving children unattended after school and often well into the evenings.

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, as immigration continued from Central America, many Latino youth, primarily males who felt lost and disenfranchised, found themselves attracted to gangs and to crack and other drugs. Gangs provided a sense of belonging, and crack and other drugs a means of escape. Some young people who badly needed income began to sell drugs.

By the late 1990s and into the 2000s, the backgrounds of youth using LAYC's services again changed. Latino immigrants were replaced by their sons and daughters born in the United States and for whom.

English was the primary language. In FY07, youth served by LAYC were 55 percent Latino, 38 percent African American, three percent of African descent, one and one half percent each multiracial and Caucasian, one percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than one percent each of Arab descent and Native American.

LAYC currently has facilities in the Columbia Heights and Petworth neighborhoods of Northwest D.C; in Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland; and Langley Park and Riverdale, Prince George's County, Maryland. LAYC staff is also based in District of Columbia public schools.

Highlights of findings:

- LAYC places youth as top priority. Programs are designed to address the needs of youth. The agency initially served immigrant Latino youth in its immediate neighborhood. Over the years, LAYC has expanded to serve youth from all backgrounds and neighborhoods and to meet changing needs.
- LAYC has developed comprehensive services to respond to the needs of youth. Services include job training and placement, education, temporary shelter for homeless and runaway youth, mental health counseling, health education programs focusing on HIV/AIDS and drug use and prevention, gang outreach and prevention, and a variety of innovative programs in the arts, leadership development, and civic engagement.
- Many youth, former program participants, and staff consider LAYC their second home. LAYC provides a nurturing, caring, and safe environment where youth have access to other youth and adults who interact with youth in positive ways and who can serve as role models. These individuals listen to youth and give them positive direction, inspire them with confidence to attempt new things, challenge them to grow, give them responsibility, and encourage them to exercise it. These characteristics reflect what the youth development literature indicates to be best practices.
- LAYC staff has created an asset-based environment that focuses on the positive. Staff encourage youth to build on their strengths and provide opportunities to develop new skills, abilities, and talents, and help youth build self-confidence and pride. This also is in keeping with what the youth development literature suggests are best practices.
- Creative, innovative risk-takers who encourage creativity and innovation in others have been at the helm of LAYC and key to its success. Former LAYC program participants remember most fondly programs run by creative and innovative staff and believe those programs to have had the most impact on their personal and professional development. Staff with those characteristics thrive in LAYC, which gives them substantial latitude to exercise initiative and creativity.
- LAYC has responded to and been affected by international, national, and local changes that have impacted Latino youth and their families in the Washington metropolitan area. Such factors include the large immigration of Salvadorians in the 1980s to the Adams Morgan-Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights neighborhood, the growth of the drug trade in Columbia Heights in the late 1980s, the formation of Latino youth gangs, and struggling public school systems. Neighborhood gentrification is LAYC's most recent challenge.
- LAYC has gone through and continues to experience stages of growth. Evolving from a staff that could be counted on the fingers of one hand to over 150, LAYC has reorganized to deal with its steady expansion. Between July 2003 and March 2004, LAYC conducted comprehensive strategic planning exercises that influenced senior management to decide to restructure the agency, expand and strengthen the senior management team, more clearly define the model for delivery of youth

development services, and expand into Maryland. A new planning process began in spring 2007, stimulated by a business planning grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

- Like most non-profit organizations, LAYC faces multiple challenges related to funding. Obtaining the money needed to keep its doors open and manage an increasing number of funding streams has confronted LAYC since the beginning. Recently, LAYC has also had to develop means to maintain program continuity in light of limited funding timeframes and respond to funders increasing reporting demands.
- Other challenges that LAYC is addressing include assuring quality through assessing program outcomes, maintaining high expectations for youth, ensuring that innovative programs generated by creative and committed staff continue when they leave, articulating a youth development model that incorporates engaging parents, effectively managing gang outreach and intervention programs that require a multi-service approach and are staff-intensive, hiring and maintaining qualified and committed staff, grooming former program participants to move into managerial and leadership positions, providing mid-level supervisory staff with needed support, and providing for leadership succession.

Highlights of lessons learned:

Lessons applicable to grass-roots community-based organizations:

- It is important to develop and clearly communicate a vision, a mission, and a set of values that all stakeholders agree upon.
- It is important to find a visionary and competent executive director who stays with the organization for an extended period of time to provide continuity.
- It is important to cultivate a strong relationship between the board of directors and the executive director and senior staff.
- It is important to have strong leadership at all levels in networking and building relationships for both credibility and fundraising.
- It is important to find a balance between wanting to meet all identified needs and not overwhelming the organization.
- It is important to be flexible enough to recognize signs of change, quickly identify what needs to be done, and promptly take action.
- It is important to address the needs of growth without compromising an organizational culture that rewards creativity and risk taking.
- Organizations that have gone through multiple stages of growth need to have the ability to assess and put in place systems required to operate at each stage.
- Assessing and reporting on outcomes and securing staff to oversee this process is important in order to assure program quality and to respond to funders reporting requirements.
- Maintaining a diverse funding base is critical to an organization's longevity.
- It is important to have a reputation as an organization that delivers.
- It is necessary to be strategic in seeking funding, to resist adapting to momentary trends if they do not fit within the organization's vision.
- It is important to identify and hire capable senior staff as the organization grows.

Lessons applicable to organizations that provide comprehensive services for low-income and at-risk youth:

- Youth must be the priority. It is important to reach out constantly to youth in order to identify their needs and reflect their voices in programming.

- It is critical to maintain a welcoming environment and to provide a sense of home and safety for youth.
- It is critical to attract and maintain qualified staff who care strongly about youth and who are committed and able to serve as role models and mentors.
- Promoting youth leadership and advocacy must remain an integral part of programs that provide comprehensive services for youth.
- It is important to set high expectations for youth.
- It is important to articulate and implement effectively a youth development model that incorporates engaging parents.
- The organization needs to be able to open doors, know how to navigate the political system, and be able to play a role in shaping policy that benefits the Latino population in general and Latino youth in particular.
- It is valuable to incorporate former youth participants as staff.
- While being held accountable for quantifiable outcomes is important, funders need to be made aware that outcomes not easily quantifiable are also important.
- The organization needs to recognize the tremendous value that the arts can play as a means of self-expression and as a programmatic tool to address problems and challenges faced by multicultural youth.

Chapter I

Introduction

A. *Setting the scene*



Alvin “Pibe” Alvarado serves low-cost snacks to youth at the juice bar of the LAYC Teen Drop-in Center at La Peña, early 1990s (Rick Reinhard)

It is Thursday, December 7, 2006. As I, Marcia Bernbaum, one of the co-authors of this case study, drive towards the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) I am struck by the vibrant and diverse surrounding neighborhood. Mount Pleasant Street, two blocks from LAYC’s anchor location, remains a hub of small Latino stores still run by immigrants or their offspring who arrived from Central and South America and the Caribbean in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. A mere half a block away, along the Fourteenth Street NW corridor, laid to waste in 1968 by riots following Martin Luther King’s assassination, new construction is the motif: a shopping complex that takes up almost a complete city block and several high-rise condominiums. As I turn left from Mount Pleasant Street onto Irving Street NW and cross Sixteenth Street NW, I see to my right a boarded-up row house. This house, once the manse to the former church next door, served as LAYC’s home between 1975 and 1997. I can’t help but conjecture about the memories that inhabit the rooms behind the boarded windows.

I park my car and walk towards 1419 Columbia Road NW, the four-story building that since 1996 has been LAYC's home. I am greeted with a mixture of old and new: run-down apartment buildings, home to low-income residents, are interspersed with buildings being refurbished and made into high-priced condos.

It is early in the morning. Children are walking to school. Women are pushing strollers with their babies and toddlers to CentroNía, a day care center located across the street from LAYC, where they will drop off their children on the way to work.

Three police cars are blocking traffic on Columbia Road. From one of the older slightly run-down apartment buildings, I see a young man in handcuffs emerge, followed closely by a policeman who guides the youth to one of the police cars and pushes him into the back seat. I wonder what this young man did to get himself into this fix.

I arrive at LAYC. Colorful two-story banners on either side of the building's entrance catch my attention: *Latin American Youth Center, Centro Latino para la Juventud.*

Color follows me into LAYC's entry way. As I walk in the front door, to my immediate right I see a large wall mural depicting four youth. One types. A second plays soccer. A third plays the guitar. The fourth holds a dove. In front of the mural behind a desk sits, somewhat incongruously, a security guard. I notice a collage of photographs of youth. I see LAYC's vision statement in bright yellow, orange, and green, "*Strong youth, strong families, strong future, strong communities.*" Next to the receptionist's desk, I see in the same bright colors LAYC's mission statement, "*To support youth and families in their determination to live, work, and study with dignity, hope and joy.*" I glance across from the receptionist's desk and see LAYC's mission statement in Spanish, equally colorful. Next to it, a display contains LAYC program brochures. Over the archway that leads to the rest of the first floor I see yet another colorful banner reading, "*Welcome to LAYC.*"

A large glass frame lists the many donors who contributed to the capital campaign that made this building a possibility. Surrounding the list of donors is a series of small glass boxes. One contains an old computer keyboard, a second a compass, a third a Macarena CD, and the last, a Lilo Gonzales CD.

Making the decision to journey to a new place for opportunities means experiencing different cultures, languages, and people...It takes courage to face the unknown in these journeys as we cross physical and mental borders to improve our lives.

Covering the first floor hallway is a nearly floor-to-ceiling portrait of four youth made from a woodcut. The artist is Judy Byron, a member of the neighborhood who has been a friend of LAYC since its inception and whose words close this case study. All four in the portrait were formerly LAYC youth participants. Three now work at LAYC. Ronald Chacon is fine arts coordinator at LAYC's Art + Media House located in a recently been renovated building on Fifteenth Street NW. Alvin (Pibe) Alvarado works in the Teen Drop-in Center located in the basement of LAYC's 1419 Columbia Rd. headquarters. Alex Iraheta works in one of LAYC's residential sites.

Five matching posters catch my eye. The posters' themes relate to courage: "facing discrimination," "courageous journeys," "what is courage," "faces of courage," "courage in conflict." Prepared by LAYC youth, the posters are the product of collaboration with specialists from the Smithsonian, who have worked with LAYC on arts projects for several years.

I am struck by the poster entitled “courageous journeys”:

Making the decision to journey to a new place for opportunities means experiencing different cultures, languages, and people. We have needed courage to leave our families alone and confront solitude. It takes courage to face the unknown in these journeys as we cross physical and mental borders to improve our lives.

Below are two black and white pictures. One is of a scantily dressed man and woman crossing a river holding their clothing in their arms. The other is of two border guards at dusk shining their flashlights in search of undocumented individuals crossing the river. At the bottom of the poster is a quote:

When you cross the border you know you can die or you can lose one leg because there are so many dangers. You have to confront the fear in the face and make your dreams come true.

At the bottom is a simple signature of the author: Wilmer.

B. Objectives and methodology

The objective of this in-depth case study, the product of 137 interviews and a review of existing documentation carried out between November 2005 and November 2006, is to share LAYC’s story. Specifically, this document will:

- Chart the evolution of LAYC over 37-years period, within the context of international, national, and local developments, with an emphasis on the Latino population in the District of Columbia.
- Draw a profile of youth who have attended LAYC;
- Explore LAYC’s impact on these youth, and
- Identify lessons learned that can be helpful for other youth development programs taking a comprehensive approach toward addressing the needs of youth, particularly multicultural and Latino youth.

Interviewees included: (a) LAYC senior staff, former youth participants who are now on staff, and a sampling of team leaders and junior staff; (b) current and former members of LAYC’s Board of Directors; (c) former LAYC staff; (d) representatives from the surrounding community, including individuals who are executive directors of other community-based organizations working with the Latino population; (e) representatives from foundations and other LAYC funders; (f) individuals from academia and the consulting world with extensive youth development experience; and (g) individuals who work with the District government.

Interviews followed a set of protocols developed in advance for each target group of interviewees. Subjects were asked initially to share something about themselves, including where they were born and if born outside the U.S. how they got to the U.S. and what life was like when they arrived. The interview then focused on the interviewee’s connection to LAYC and on reflections about their LAYC experience. Current and former youth participants in LAYC programs were asked what they contributed to LAYC and how the LAYC experience contributed to their lives. Interviewees were asked to reflect on what they saw as LAYC’s strengths, challenges, and lessons learned from the LAYC experience that would be

helpful to other youth development organizations providing a comprehensive approach to working with multicultural youth

Most interviews lasted approximately one hour. In a number of cases, individuals were interviewed several times. All interviews were confidential, and quotes included in this case study have been approved by the individuals quoted.

A list of those interviewed and a description of the interview methodology and of how interview data was analyzed are provided in Appendices A and B. Information on the case study authors may be found in Appendix C.

C. What this case study is and what it isn't

This case study is:

* An attempt, through the eyes of those who participated in or know the organization closely from the outside, to get a sense of what LAYC is and how it has grown over the years.

* An attempt, through interviews conducted with youth, to get a flavor of the impact LAYC has had over the years on the lives of participants;

* an opportunity to get describe what LAYC has done right, what challenges it has faced, and most importantly what lessons it has learned that can serve as a resource for other programs that provide comprehensive services for youth.

This case study is not:

* An evaluation of LAYC or its specific programs. While some evaluative data were collected, that information was used primarily to determine strengths and challenges;

* A definitive attempt to assess the impact of LAYC on the lives of youth who have passed through the agency. To have done so would have required selecting a random sample of a much larger number than the 53 youth who were interviewed. Given that LAYC's database on participants goes back only to 2000, it would not have been possible to select former youth participants in a truly random fashion.

D. Audiences

The case study was written with these audiences in mind:

- LAYC staff and Board of Directors to provide: (1) a document that incoming staff and new board members can read to gain an appreciation of how LAYC has evolved, including the successes and challenges encountered; (2) an appreciation, from the perspective of those interviewed for the case study, of what others see as LAYC's particular areas of strength as well as areas that need to be strengthened; and (3) insights on the impact LAYC has had on youth who have participated in programs over the years.
- Current and former LAYC youth participants may be particularly interested in the data and analysis of how participating in LAYC has impacted the lives of youth who have taken advantage of its

services, not just in the near term but over the years, as LAYC graduates assimilate into the broader community and raise their own families.

- Organizations that provide comprehensive youth development programs are likely to be interested in: (1) strategies LAYC has used to adapt to challenges faced, with a focus on best practices and lessons learned; and (2) impact that services provided have had on youth served.
- The community at large may be interested in a history of a community-based organization that has survived and grown over 37 years.
- Foundations and other funders that support or have supported LAYC are likely to be interested in: (1) how LAYC has evolved and (2) how services provided by LAYC have impacted the lives of youth who have participated in its programs.
- Policy, research, and academic communities will be interested in (1) LAYC's impact on youth served, and (2) how organizations such as LAYC have contributed to addressing the challenges faced by communities that absorb significant waves of immigrants and in so doing provide a safety net both for the immigrants and the communities into which they are absorbed.

This case study is oriented primarily toward the first four audiences. Documents using the contents of this case study as a point of departure will be written for foundations and other funders and for the policy, research, and academic communities.

E. Organization of the case study

Chapter I sets the stage.

Chapter II provides an abbreviated story of LAYC's birth and evolution through 2006. LAYC's evolution is divided into four periods: 1969-1977, LAYC's founding and early years; 1978-1987, LAYC's revitalization; 1988-1997, when LAYC's deputy director became executive director, a position she holds to this date; and 1998 to the present, marked by LAYC's move to its current location, strategic planning initiatives, and continued growth and transition.

Each period begins by setting the context of international, national, and local developments and how LAYC through its programming responded to the challenges and opportunities posed by these developments. The agency's story is told in large part through the testimonies of people interviewed.¹ The oral histories are supplemented by available documentation primarily found through Internet research. (A companion document, available through LAYC's website, <http://www.layc-dc.org>, tells the story in more length, using a larger number of interviews.)

Chapter III focuses on the youth served by LAYC. First, a profile of these youth, using the time periods that guide Chapter II, is developed: where they were born, if outside the U.S. how they got here, and what they encountered upon arriving in the U.S. A review of how LAYC has contributed to their lives follows. Interspersed are examples of how data obtained from the case study supports statements in youth development literature about important characteristics of successful youth development programs.

Chapter IV addresses LAYC's strengths, the challenges it has faced, and what it has done or is doing to address these challenges, along with the lessons learned. These lessons are divided into three sections: (1)

¹ All quotations have been approved to appear in this publication by the individuals interviewed.

general lessons applicable to all grassroots community-based organizations, (2) lessons applicable to programs that like LAYC provide a comprehensive approach to working with youth, and (3) lessons specifically applicable to programs that work with multicultural, and in particular, Latino youth.

Chapter V examines how LAYC addresses two significant challenges that it currently faces, challenges that will be key to its future viability as an organization. One challenge is enlarging the managerial and administrative structure and systems to keep pace with the recent dramatic growth that has taken place in programs, staffing, and funding, which are projected to continue to grow in the foreseeable future. The second challenge is how addressing changes in demographics among the Latino population in the Washington DC area. In order to address both sets of challenges LAYC has built on the multiple lessons it has learned over nearly 37 years of existence. In addition, LAYC has wisely sought the advice of outside expertise in areas where it has determined it needs assistance.

Chapter II

Birth and Evolution of LAYC



Youth sketch a model in after-school art class, 2000 (Ronald Chacon)

Highlights of LAYC's birth and evolution

- **Early September 1968:** A fight between African American students (then in the majority) and Latino students (then much in the minority) at the newly opened Lincoln Junior High School, located on the corner of 15th and Irving Street, NW, leaves most of the windows at the new building broken.
- **October 1968:** The D.C. government sends Garry Garber, a Chicano social worker employed by the Roving Leaders program, to the Columbia Heights neighborhood where Lincoln Junior High School is located to see what can be done to prevent escalation of the conflict.
- **Summer 1969:** Garber, with the assistance of two Latino college students and a Latino graduate student, launches a summer recreation program for Latino youth at Lincoln Junior High School. The program is staffed primarily by volunteers, many of them Latinos attending university in the D.C. area. Participants are youth primarily from the Caribbean, with some from Central America. They receive tutoring; participate in classes in art, dancing, and music; and have access to summer employment
- **Fall 1971:** With additional funding from the D.C. government, the youth program rents a building on 18th Street NW, hires a director, and expands its focus to include community outreach. The organization also formally takes on its current name, the Latin American Youth Center.

- 1973: Needing more space and a less expensive locale, LAYC moves to Columbia and Ontario Roads NW.
- 1974: LAYC moves to the former Manse of the Presbyterian Church at 15th and Irving Streets NW where it remains until the late 1990s. LAYC also receives 501c3 status, which permits it to seek funds as a non-profit institution.
- 1975-77: Program offerings diminish with a change in leadership and cuts in D.C. government funding. By the end of 1977, all that is left of LAYC is the building on Irving Street NW, into which it had moved a few years earlier. A monthly check from the D.C. government continues to pay for rent and basic utilities.
- 1978: Enrique Rivera, an activist from Philadelphia, is recruited to help re-launch LAYC. With the assistance of a small dynamic Board made up of other activists, Rivera obtains funding from the D.C. Department of Employment Services to finance three training programs: automobile mechanics, catering, and clerical skills.
- 1979-1982: LAYC's job training program expands to include classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), a program to assist Latino youth pass the GED, and youth employment opportunities after school and during summer.
- Early 1980s: Tapping the talents of young activist Latino artists from the Centro de Arte, housed next door at the Wilson Center, LAYC begins providing immigrant youth with opportunities to express activism through the arts. LAYC youth paint street murals, publish a monthly newspaper for the emerging Latino community, prepare an oral history of the surrounding Latino community, and become involved in street theater.
- Mid-1980s: LAYC initiates a series of programs to promote leadership and advocacy among youth.
- Mid-1980s: LAYC creates a social services and mental health counseling program to assist traumatized immigrant youth fleeing the civil war that is engulfing the Central American region.
- 1988: Lori Kaplan, Enrique Rivera's deputy since 1981, assumes the position of executive director when Rivera leaves the agency. LAYC arranges to rent the basement of the Wilson Center to serve as a Teen Drop-In Center. Latino youth start flocking to the Drop-In Center.
- Early 1990s: LAYC initiates a series of initiatives to meet emerging community needs: a program to address Latino gang violence and drugs that are becoming endemic in the neighborhood, housing for runaway and homeless Latino youth, and an educational and parenting program to assist Latina youth who are teen mothers.
- Mid-1990s: LAYC receives its first federal grants through AmeriCorps and YouthBuild.
- Mid-1990s: LAYC partners with the Corcoran Gallery of Art, which sends artists to work with youth enrolled in LAYC programs.
- 1996: The teen mothers program is converted into the Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School, one of the first five public charter schools established in the District of Columbia
- 1997: LAYC initiates what has become an ongoing relationship with the Smithsonian Institution, which makes available curators and other staff to help youth develop skills in community research and production of community exhibitions and public programs.
- 1997/8: LAYC expands its senior management team to include a deputy director and a director of planning, embarks on a capital campaign, refurbishes an old apartment building on Columbia Road NW between 14th and 15th Streets NW, and moves its programs into the building. For the first time in years, all LAYC programs are under one roof.

- 1999: In response to the shooting of a staff member in front of its building, LAYC collaborates with neighborhood organizations and schools to address gang violence. LAYC undergoes an internal reorganization sparked in part by the violence and in part by the need to address changes in internal structure brought on by significant growth.
- 2001: LAYC establishes the Latin American Montessori Bilingual (LAMB) Charter School, the first public bilingual Montessori school in the District of Columbia and the second in the nation.
- 2002: LAYC assumes an existing Ben & Jerry's franchise located in D.C.'s Eastern Market, as a site for job training.
- 2003: A series of Latino gang killings in the neighborhood results in the formation of the Gang Intervention Partnership, a multi-pronged effort on the part of the D.C. police, the D.C. justice system, and local non-profits, including LAYC, to halt the wave of killings. This partnership is credited with playing a significant role in stopping gang shootings.
- 2003/4: LAYC, with funding from Venture Philanthropy Partners, undergoes a comprehensive strategic planning exercise. The outcomes are a new vision, mission, and goal statement; establishment of a social change model; a set of cross-cutting program outcomes; integration of outcomes and data collection; a decision to expand LAYC's Board of Directors; and the decision, given changing demographics, to expand to Maryland and eventually to Virginia.
- 2004: With financial support from Venture Philanthropy Partners, LAYC expands its senior management team to include a managing director of LAYC's D.C. programs, a director for the newly created Maryland offices, a chief financial officer to handle the increasingly complicated financial structure that has come with growth, and a learning and evaluation expert.
- 2004: LAYC refurbishes one of its buildings to establish an Arts + Media House designed to bring LAYC's arts and media programs under one roof and to establish stability and continuity among a number of creative initiatives that have peaked and waned over the years.
- 2004: LAYC opens its second Ben & Jerry's on Connecticut Avenue NW, next to the Avalon movie theater.
- 2004: A funding agreement with the Department of Mental Health permits LAYC to expand its mental health services.
- 2005: LAYC redesigns its job training programs into the Workforce Investment and Social Enterprise (WISE) division and begins actively to seek funding from the private sector for job training.
- 2005: YouthBuild becomes a public charter school, opening its doors in September.
- 2005: LAYC opens new sites in Washington D.C.'s Ward 4 as well as in Silver Spring and Langley Park, Maryland, in response to significant migration of the Latino population.
- 2006: LAYC opens site in Riverdale, Maryland.

A. 1969-1977: Founding and Early Years



LAYC youth visit office of Congressman Bob Gorero in the early 1970s (Garry Garber)

Context:

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson launched the War on Poverty through the Economic Opportunity Act. That same year, the D.C. government created the Youth Services Administration to coordinate youth programs and channel War on Poverty funding to those programs. As well, the D.C. Department of Recreation began a Roving Leaders program to work with at-risk youth.

On April 4, 1968, the Reverend Martin Luther King was assassinated. Riots in Washington, D.C., followed, resulting in massive destruction of businesses along the 14th Street corridor in Northwest D.C. When middle class residents abandoned the city, newly arrived Latino immigrants moved into properties in Adams Morgan, Mount Pleasant, and Columbia Heights. With the assistance of a Latino minister, a building at the corner of 15th Street and Columbia Road NW that had been shuttered were reopened. The Barbara Chambers Day Care Center, Centro de Arte and what would become LAYC moved into buildings on that corner. Eventually, D.C. government funds began to flow into the area with the objective of revitalizing neighborhoods adversely affected by the violence.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Washington, D.C.'s incipient Latino community area began to assume a more visible role. The population was highly diversified, with people from the Caribbean, (Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic), and Central and South America. As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans often were employed by the federal government, which enabled them to take leadership roles. Many of the Latinos studied in local universities or worked as domestics for Latin American diplomats. Several of

the embassies where they worked as domestics were located on Sixteenth Street near Columbia Heights, Adams Morgan, and Mount Pleasant. Many remained after their employers' tour of duty ended.

Churches began to provide services in Spanish for low-income Latinos living in the Adams Morgan-Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights area. In the mid-1960s, the seeds were planted for the first generation of Latino organizations in the city such as the Spanish Educational Development Center, and AYUDA, and LAYC. The first Latino agency in DC opened its doors in 1967. Others followed in the early 1970s. Together, these organizations provided English language instruction, health services, day care, and linkages with employment opportunities for the increasing number of Latinos moving into the area.

In 1969, the Office of the Spanish-language Advisory Committee, later renamed the Office of Latino Affairs (OLA), was established. The following year, a group of Latino residents organized the first Latino Festival in Kalorama Park to celebrate the first anniversary of the Committee's establishment. Opening with a parade that started in Mount Pleasant, this and subsequent annual Latino festivals drew hundreds of thousands of residents from the District and outlying areas of Maryland and Virginia, bringing broad awareness to the existence of an increasing Latino population in the District.

In 1973, the United States Congress passed the D.C. Home Rule Act, allowing citizens of Washington, D.C. to vote for their mayor.

In September 1973, General Augusto Pinochet staged a coup against Chilean President Salvador Allende. A number of young Chilean leftists who fled Chile in fear of being arrested and "disappeared" under the Pinochet regime came to Washington D.C. and made the Adams-Morgan, Mount Pleasant, and Columbia Heights neighborhoods their home. Many were artists. With other leftist-leaning artists from Latin America, they formed a Latino cultural center called Centro de Arte. The innovative art forms they brought with them -- mural painting, street theater, protest music inspired by indigenous music of the Andes -- became a major source of inspiration to the Latin American Youth Center.

In 1974 the Commission on Latino Community Development was established to advise the D.C. government on Latino affairs. With OLA and the Commission, the Washington Latino community now had vehicles to put pressure on the D.C. government to assist the Latino population.

By 1977, prompted in part by funds flowing from the D.C. government to serve the needs of Latinos, and in part by increased immigration to the area, the Council of Latino Affairs (CLA) was formed to coordinate service-delivery among Latino grass roots organizations in Washington, D.C. This council made it possible for Latino agencies in the Adams Morgan-Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights area to multiply their purchasing and bargaining power, as well as to share information and resources.

LAYC's Founding and Early Years

Starting in the 1960s, youth from the Caribbean, Central and South America began to populate the D.C. public school system. They attended Wilson and Western High Schools as well as Gordon, Francis, and Lincoln Junior High Schools.

In early September 1968, Lincoln Junior High School opened its new building at the corner of 15th and Irving Streets, N.W., in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The first day of school, a group of Hispanic students, a small minority, and a group of African American students, then the majority, got into a fight, resulting in broken windows throughout the new school.

I have always felt that one of the big problems is that when kids become adults we have a tendency to forget how it was when you grow up. I never lost that.

Garry Garber, LAYC founder

Concerned, the D.C. government responded through the D.C. Department of Recreation by bringing in Garry Garber, a social worker and former lightweight boxer employed by the Roving Leaders program, which targeted at-risk youth. Garber, who had extensive experience working with troubled youth, specifically with gangs in Southeast Washington, was asked to come to Columbia Heights to see what could be done to calm the situation.

Garber began by spending time getting to know the community, identifying youth who were having difficulties, and establishing informal relationships with them based on trust. Garber reflects on those early days:

I went to work, little by little establishing rapport with the kids around Lincoln School. Then money started to become available through the Youth Services Administration. Roving Leaders approaches me and says "Hey, would you like more people?" I said yes. That's when I hired Arturo Griffiths. I knew Arturito from the community. He was born in Panama and came to the U.S. as a youth. He was in high school when I first met him. Then he went to Howard University." Arturo had a knack for interacting with people. He knew a lot of people in the area, especially a lot of kids.

As Garber and Griffiths were getting to know the community and establishing linkages with Latino kids and their parents, Mario Belizaire, a Panamanian working on an MA and employed by the D.C. Department of Recreation but not with Roving Leaders, was establishing his own contacts with Latino youth through a program at Lincoln Junior High School. Belizaire reflects on his experience at Lincoln and how he joined with Garber:

I was hired in May of 1969 by the Recreation Department. The guy who was in charge said, "I am looking for someone who speaks the language, knows the culture, has teaching ability, and is good at social interaction." He said, "We're going to place you at Lincoln School"

Lincoln had a playground, a basketball court, and a swimming pool. It was an area where the Latino kids would come and try to play. However, the larger non-Latino kids would push them away. I thought, "How can I integrate the Latino kids?"

One day I saw one of the Latino kids kicking a ball. I asked if he played soccer. He said yes. I needed to have a spot where the kids could play soccer. I asked for a slot in the morning. Eventually the Latino kids began to come, along with their younger brothers and sisters. More and more kids came. The parents allowed the kids to stay longer.

After I established this group, I set up a classroom. We did math and science. We taught the kids a little about sex education. That's when Garry comes and says, "Hook up with me" Eventually, we formed a softball team. The parents needed assurance it was safe. We had the parents backing us.

Meanwhile, Griffiths had identified Roberto Baquerizo, incorporating him into the group. Baquerizo, an Ecuadorian who was getting a B.A. in sociology at Catholic University, had prior experience working with youth from high school days when he attended a Salesian school in Quito, Ecuador.

In the summer of 1969, Garber, Griffiths, Belizaire, and Baquerizo launched a program at Lincoln Junior High that included cultural awareness, English classes, tutoring, sports, camping, and outings. Youth who wanted to work also were enrolled in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) funded by

the D.C. government. The goal was to make available to Latino youth multiple opportunities that parents could not provide.

LAYC is where we got to meet everybody we know now. They were able to have people who spoke our language. Some had been in the U.S. many years. They introduced us to a lot of things.

Morena Serrato, former LAYC youth participant

The program extended beyond the summer, becoming an after-school program during the 1969/70 school year. It continued through the summer of 1970, and into the next school year. Griffiths, Belizaire, and Baquerizo identified young college students in the D.C. area from a variety of Latin American countries to help as volunteers.

Morena Serrato, who emigrated from El Salvador as a teenager, recalls LAYC in its early days:

We arrived in the U.S. in May of 1971. I was so disappointed. We didn't know the language. We stayed in the apartment. We didn't know anybody. It was terrible. We would cry. Then my mother heard through the Spanish Catholic Center that there were programs for teenagers. "Maybe you want to go to give it a try? I will enroll you in this program" she said.

LAYC is where we got to meet everybody we know now. They were able to have people who spoke our language. Some had been in the U.S. many years. They introduced us to a lot of things. We would go to the library, get projects, and go out on the streets. Some of us would patrol the community with orange jackets.

Garry Garber used to organize fun trips on the weekends. We would get buses from the Recreation Department to take us to the beach. We were able to meet people from Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Honduras. For us that was great. We were used to being with people from El Salvador. Garry was such a great person. He would always make sure we were doing what we were supposed to be doing. He was so caring. He loved to help the Latinos.

We wanted an institution that responded to the needs of the community, a program of cultural awareness of the area, how to interest youth in politics, community activities.

Arturo Griffiths, LAYC co-founder

Griffiths and Baquerizo joined Garber and Belizaire on the Roving Leaders payroll. They decided to provide more than recreation and tutoring. They wanted to expose Latino youth to cultural awareness and community activism.

As Griffiths recalls:

The idea was to create a community conscience. Many Latinos were recent immigrants. There was little organization among the Latino community in the area, much less among the youth. They needed to be oriented and organized. We wanted an institution that responded to the needs of the community, a program of cultural awareness of the area, how to interest youth in politics, community activities.

By 1971, two years into the program, the four men decided to find their own locale and started to look for money for rent and to hire additional staff. They used Baquerizo's college thesis on acculturation of Latino youth to the U.S. as the basis for their proposal to the Office of Youth Opportunities Services. It was funded.

In the fall of 1971, they rented a store front on 18th Street NW, and started the Courtesy Patrol, which had elimination of crime as its primary objective. They put young people to work after school in activities that

would help the community. Activities included cleaning the streets and helping the elderly cross at busy intersections.

Hoping to expand community activism beyond the Courtesy Patrol, the four used some of the funds from the Office of Youth Services to hire as director of their program Erasmo Lara, an activist with community development experience in the Dominican Republic who was attending the Catholic University, working on an MA in education. Lara expanded the after-school tutoring program, tapping volunteers from the Washington Free University where he also was taking classes. Not long after Lara joined, the program took on the name that it has maintained until today, the Latin American Youth Center.

In 1972, as the War on Poverty began to wane and funds from the Office of Youth Opportunity Services diminished, LAYC established linkages with PRIDE, established in the 1960s by Marion Barry, who later became Washington, D.C.'s second elected mayor. The link was facilitated by Carlos Rosario, then leader and spokesperson for the low-income Latino population in Washington DC. LAYC became PRIDE's first Latino group. Donning PRIDE's orange jackets, up to a hundred LAYC youth went to work in the Adams Morgan/Mount Pleasant neighborhood where they cleaned alleys and fixed up buildings.

Also in 1972, Lara hired a young Spaniard Jose Sueiro, a university student at George Washington University interested in integrating theater with reading and writing, so that Sueiro could introduce educational theater to LAYC. With the arrival of Sueiro, LAYC began what became a three-decades-long involvement in the arts. The theater program, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, eventually gave birth to a music program.

LAYC was very instrumental for my being involved in music. They tried to encourage what you were naturally inclined in.

Rafael Solano, former LAYC youth participant who is now a successful musician

Sparked by the music that the youth brought from their countries and nurtured by Sueiro's increasing interest in Caribbean music, LAYC became a mecca for young musicians, primarily from the Caribbean.

Rafael Solano, a Dominican whose family emigrated to the U.S. in the mid-1960s and

who now is a well known musician living in Florida, was one of the youth attending LAYC at the time who became caught up in its music activities. Thanks to LAYC, he began what has become a successful career in Latin jazz as well Latin and American pop music. Solano remembers engaging in many activities at LAYC:

Through school or word of mouth we used to gather in a place where LAYC was originally located, right off Irving Street. They had tutoring, different types of activities to keep us off the streets, out of trouble.

Like myself and others since the beginning of the program, we became youth leaders, helping other kids coming along, younger brothers and sisters of former members. In the summers we would have different activities. We would go to the parks, museums, somewhat like big brothers and sisters.

LAYC was very instrumental for my being involved in music. They organized Latino festivals. They encouraged youth to get involved in different things, whatever they were inclined to do. They had a photography class and a dark room. We used to walk around the community and take pictures of different things. We would display our photos at LAYC, as a little expo. There were guys who were good at writing, a vast number of things. Everyone had a different skill. They tried to encourage what you were naturally inclined in.

There were other things they encouraged us to take advantage of. There were college tuition programs for the youth. I went to American University for a couple of years.²

In 1972, Belzair left to start post-graduate work. Later in 1972, Baquerizo, having graduated from Catholic University, became director of the Spanish Education Development Center, a community-based organization that has played an important role over the years in promoting and supporting early childhood and adult bilingual education. In July of 1973 Lara completed an MA at Catholic University and returned to the Dominican Republic, leaving Sueiro as director of LAYC. Griffith's sister, Jasmine, became Sueiro's deputy.³

Between 1974 and 1975, LAYC changed locations twice. The moves were prompted by a need for increased space and reduced funding, which forced the agency to find a less expensive rental. In early 1974, LAYC moved to a building on the corner of Columbia and Ontario Roads NW, sharing the second floor with Roberto Baquerizo and his staff at the Spanish Educational Development Center. A year later, LAYC moved to a row house on 15th Street NW that had served as the manse for the Presbyterian Church then located at the corner of Fifteenth and Irving Streets NW.

In 1974, Sueiro took a job at American University and was replaced by Ivan Atensio. Combined funding from Roving Leaders and the Youth Services Administration was paying for little more than the rent for the 15th Street NW house and Atensio's and Griffith's salaries. The pair decided to develop by-laws so that LAYC could get 501c3 status to qualify for foundation funding. In late 1974, LAYC was granted tax exempt status.

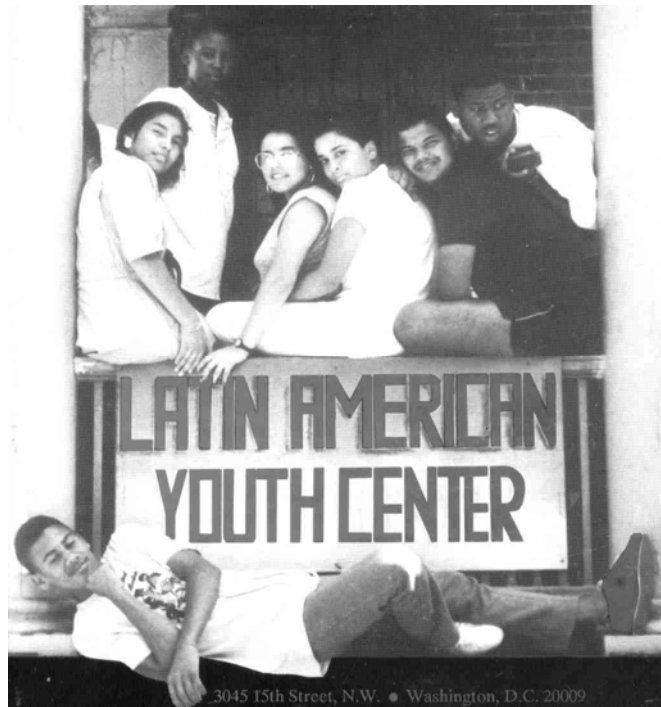
In 1975, Griffith left LAYC, moving next door to become administrator of the Wilson Center. By this time, Garber had been assigned by Roving Leaders to another neighborhood in Washington, D.C. Activities dwindled, and only a trickle of youth dropped by LAYC.

Atensio left LAYC in 1977. All that remained of what had been a busy hive of activity was an empty building with desks and chairs and a monthly check from the D.C. Department of Recreation to pay the rent.

² While director of LAYC, Sueiro was able to enroll over 20 LAYC youth in a special scholarship program at American University.

³ Baquerizo eventually got an M.A. in International Finance at American University and returned to Ecuador, where during the 1990s, he was president of the Central Bank of Ecuador. He now works in New York as Managing Director for Latin America for Pro-Ventures. After returning to the Dominican Republic and spending a few years working there, Lara began a career at the United Nations in human resources development. After retiring in 2005, he was named as Ambassador to the United Nations from the Dominican Republic.

B. 1978 – 1987: LAYC is Revitalized



Youth on front porch of LAYC, Irving Street NW, early 1980s (photographer unknown)

Context

The years between 1978 and 1987 were marked by violence and upheaval in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. As the civil wars in these countries worsened, an increasing influx of undocumented Central American refugees came to the U.S. Washington, D.C. was one of the main destinations, especially for poor rural Salvadorians looking for safety. Despite their political situation, these young people and families were not granted official refugees status.

In 1978, Marion Barry became the District's second elected mayor. Upon taking office, Mayor Barry promised a job to every youth in the city aged 14 and over. An immediate outcome was increased funding under the D.C. government's Summer Youth Employment program. LAYC, along with other community-based organizations that had been implementing the Summer Youth Employment Program, received increased numbers of youth employment slots.

Under Mayor Barry, the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities continued providing funds to foster the arts in an attempt to lure people back into Washington, D.C. Finally, Barry took steps to support the growing Latino population and court their favor. This translated into new funding sources for LAYC.

As federal funding from the War on Poverty continued to level off, private foundations in the D.C. area, many of them family-based, became more supportive of grassroots organizations that helped the poor. This included grassroots organizations that delivered services to low-income Latinos.

The late 1970s witnessed an influx into DC of young post-Civil Rights Movement activists. Many settled into group homes in the Adams Morgan-Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights area. In search of causes that met their ideals, many of these U.S.-born activists joined forces with Latin American activists. LAYC's leadership from 1978-1987, a combination of Latino activists and activists born in the U.S., reflected this orientation.

Several new community-based organizations emerged to address the multiple needs of the growing numbers of poor, undocumented Latinos living in the Adams Morgan-Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights area. Services provided by these organizations focused on helping individuals address the effects of the human rights violations they had experienced in their countries before fleeing to the U.S., meeting their emergency needs, enhancing long-term family stability, and promoting the growth of community support among parents.

LAYC is Revitalized

In 1978, Luis Rumbaut, a young lawyer recently graduated from Antioch Law School, arrived at Ayuda, a legal aid organization established by George Washington Law School as a clinic to assist Latinos with consumer issues. Rumbaut, who later became Executive Director of Ayuda, soon was approached by a colleague and invited to become a member of LAYC's Board of Directors. Rumbaut agreed. When he went to visit LAYC's headquarters on 15th Street NW, near the corner of Irving, he found an empty building. In Rumbaut's words:

When I arrived at LAYC in 1978, there was nothing there but a building and pieces of furniture. Nothing was happening there we started piecing it together. "I have 25 cents; you have 75 cents." I remember asking myself, "What does it mean to be a director of a non-entity? This involves a lot of responsibility. Where does the money come from?" Little by little things started happening.

I met Enrique Rivera through friends. He looked like someone with the outlook and lifestyle who would qualify to restart the Youth Center. When I asked him if he would take over LAYC, he said, "Sure, let's do it" None of us had training in details of management, how to write a grant.

Enrique just started doing it. He was very good with people. Enrique and I both played the guitar. We performed together. I went to the Youth Center, and we played the guitar.

LAYC was not a place where one came grumbling in the morning and punched in. Instead, it was a place where you hung out. You came in late but you didn't mind staying late. We were friends among ourselves. There was informality, a purpose to it, a mission. It had not coalesced into something really organized. It was a long time before we started writing personnel manuals.

Beginning in 1973, South Americans started coming to Washington. It was a much politicized immigration. These were university students, graduate students who were studying the arts. They came with a particular view of the world. They found a more welcoming reception at the Youth Center than any other place.

At the time we had a small Board, some of whom are still friends. We did physical work. We would stay the weekend sanding the floors. We rented the sander. Everyone came in wearing sneakers. We were a very hands-on kind of Board.

Invited to participate in LAYC, Rivera assessed the situation. He went to the D.C. government to obtain misplaced corporate files and prepared a proposal for funding from the D.C. Department of Employment Services (DOES) under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

LAYC turned out to be a little house on 15th Street N.W. There was no staff. There were just three members of the Board and an empty building.

Enrique Rivera, director of LAYC from 1978 to 1987

Rivera had left his job as a community organizer with Adelante, a housing advocacy organization, and was waiting to start a new job doing educational research. Instead, he became LAYC's director. Rivera recalls his early days as director of the revitalized LAYC:

A few days after leaving my job at Adelante, Luis Rumbaut, a friend of mine who was one of the few remaining members of LAYC's Board of Directors, asked me if I would help out with fundraising for LAYC, drawing on my experience with youth programs in Philadelphia. I said, "Sure."

LAYC turned out to be a little house on 15th Street NW. It was vacant and only had a few desks, chairs, and tables spread around the house. There were files but nothing of substance. There was no staff. There were just three members of the Board and an empty building.

We found out that the DOES had funding for vocational training, so we decided to put in a proposal. We initially asked for funds to train people in 50 skills areas. We had lined up a bunch of tradesmen: carpenters, shoemakers, chefs, printers, constructions workers, cobblers, graphic artists, retail merchants and others. DOES came back and said, "You can do just three trades." We selected typesetting, catering, and auto mechanics. We hired Camboy Esteves, a famous Dominican singer who was also a mechanic, to teach auto mechanics, Doña Beatriz Mujica to teach catering, and the Centro de Arte graphic artists to teach typesetting.

We wanted to involve everybody at LAYC in everything we were doing. We would gather the youth participants and tell them, "This is where we are: We are preparing invoices to go to the D.C. government," and so forth. We would keep them abreast of everything we were doing with regard to programs. When we heard of a new funding opportunity, we would ask them for help in putting together the proposal.

I came to LAYC for the Summer Youth Employment Program. It provided an opportunity to earn money for the summer and get to do something constructive, creative, something healthy that helped me develop as a youth.

Yanira Cruz, former LAYC youth, former member of LAYC's Board of Directors

In 1979, the Taller de Artes Gráficas (Barrio Graphics) was formed, headed by Carlos Arrien, a Bolivian artist who worked next door at the Centro de Arte. With Arrien's assistance, LAYC youth began to do typesetting for local newspapers, starting with *El Pregonero*. Later on they started their own newspaper, *El Barrio*.

Yanira Cruz, currently executive director of the National Hispanic Council on Aging and a former member of LAYC's Board, had been part of LAYC's Summer Youth Employment Program:

It provided an opportunity to earn money for the summer and get to do something constructive, creative, something healthy that helped me develop as a youth. LAYC exposed me to theater, dance, to the arts, and gave me a chance to earn money.

She was offered an after-school job with Barrio Graphics:

I would leave Wilson High School and come to work in the graphics department from 3 to 6 p.m. I did typesetting. This experience gave me a good set of skills that I could use in any graphic design center. I used these skills throughout college to earn extra cash.

Artists at the Centro de Arte were influenced by the Mexican muralist movement and trained youth at LAYC to make murals, among them Jorge Somarriba who has gone on to become a well-known local artist.

In 1979, José Sueiro returned to LAYC. With funds from the D.C. National Endowment for the Arts, Sueiro started the Escuela de Rumba in LAYC's basement, with the objective of linking youth with professional musicians.

Enrique Rivera recalls Sueiro's return and the establishment of the Escuela de Rumba:

We were looking at doing programs in the arts and humanities. Jose Sueiro came to me and said, "I have a good funding possibility. There are funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. We need a channeling organization." I said, "Go for it. Set it up here."

Sueiro brought musicians to teach the kids about music and how to play different instruments. It was very popular. One of the musicians was Don Luis Salome, a star Cuban musician who had played for several internationally famous Cuban bands and had worked with artists like Celia Cruz and Mongo Santamaria. At the time, he was retired and not playing with anyone. Sueiro brought him in and he started playing again."

What attracted me to LAYC was that it was really fun because of the people there. I was also attracted by the challenge. I saw there was a lot of work to do; the need was huge.

Lori Kaplan, LAYC volunteer in the late 1970s and executive director from 1988 to the present.

In 1979, Lori Kaplan, a young non-Latino woman who had recently graduated from Antioch College, wandered in to check out the Youth Center. She liked what she saw, signed up as a volunteer, became engaged in LAYC activities, and in 1980 was hired as Rivera's assistant.

Reflecting on her early experience of LAYC, Kaplan introduces a theme that reverberates throughout the testimony of many individuals interviewed: that LAYC was a home away from home.

I came to D.C. in 1976 after graduating from Antioch College. I got a job as an office manager downtown. I started volunteering at a juvenile runaway house. I was offered a paying job and stayed there two years. Then I had a job as a counselor in a bilingual literacy program.

I met Enrique and found out about the Youth Center. I started volunteering there in 1979. As a volunteer I wore many hats including counselor, fundraiser, administrator, and more. After a year, I was offered a paying job. I quit my other job.

What attracted me to LAYC was that it was really fun because of the people there. I was also attracted by the challenge. From day one when I walked in, I saw there was a lot of work to do; the need was huge.

A lot of Chileans lived in the community. In addition to community work, there was an international solidarity community. It was a hub of organizing around Nicaragua, El Salvador, Puerto Rican independence, and Chile. As a result, I developed an interest in international work. There were a lot of activists in and around the Youth Center.

After work, people would pull out guitars. The youth and adults would be together having fun. The notion of a “client” was not on our radar screen. LAYC was a home away from home. The youth would come out of ESOL class, and we would all sit on the front steps and just laugh and have fun. The youth would answer the telephone. We called it “clerical training.”

How do you pick yourself up after a tragedy? I am constantly blown away by young and not-so-young people saying, “I’m not going to let anyone else define me; I am special; I’m here for a reason.”

Diane Cottman, early staff member, now director of the Latin America Montessori Public Charter School

In 1982, Diane Cottman, just back from Spain and looking for an opportunity to use her Spanish, wandered in to LAYC. Lori Kaplan, by that time Rivera’s deputy, hired Cottman to run ESL and GED programs. Cottman began to provide training for those involved in the clerk-typing, and catering programs.

Cottman reflects on her early days at LAYC:

“In 1982, I saw an ad for a position at LAYC. I walked into LAYC. It so much reminded me of a one room schoolhouse that I fell in love with it.

In the early years, I was teaching ESL and GED. It was great because I taught and created the program. We had some Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) money. We were doing skills training and typing using old IBM Electrics. I then became Director of Employment and Training. I was really successful at matching students to their aptitudes and placing them in jobs. From there, I became deputy director.”

Through it all, an incredible group of people were put in my path. How do you pick yourself up after a tragedy, how do you beat the odds, how do you not become the statistic everyone wants to make you into? I am constantly blown away by young and not-so- young people saying, “I’m not going to let anyone else define me. I am special. I’m here for a reason” although it is not always clear what that is. We have to continue knocking on doors, trying new things.

Most youth attending LAYC ranged in age from early teens to mid-twenties and were from the Caribbean and Central America. The latter, for the most part, had arrived in the U.S. with full immigration status. In the early 1980s this began to change as large numbers of youth, primarily poor and undocumented, began to arrive from Central America to escape the war. Most came from El Salvador. In response, LAYC added programs as needs were identified.

Cottman likens LAYC’s growth to the construction of a house:

How a house is built is very symbolic of the growth of LAYC. LAYC began with a base program. People came in presenting an issue: I need a job. We would ask, “What skills do you have?” We would give them skills training. “Now you have the skills. How are you going to communicate? You need language skills in English” Then, “What are the obstacles you face?” This is real life that people are trying to survive in. They have child care issues, social services issues, legal aid issues. A social services component was created, then a legal aid component, to respond to the influx of immigrants from Central America.

Job training and placement:

By 1983-84, LAYC's job training program had expanded to include an In-School Work Experience program for youth under 18, funded by the D.C. Department of Employment Services and the Summer Youth Employment Program. Youth 18 and older could be in a federally funded Job Training Partnership Act program or the District's Out-of-school Work Experience program. LAYC found private funds to run a Summer Enrichment Program for undocumented youth.

Kaplan recalls:

It was a robust time. There were lots of dollars for job training. What made In- and Out-of-school Job Training different from prior job training programs was that they were based on mentoring and job shadowing. We placed a young person in a work environment where hopefully the employer would hire the person after the job training experience. These programs lasted five to six years.

We were given tremendous responsibility. But they believed in us. If they believe in us we can believe in ourselves.

Rosa Flecha, former LAYC youth participant

Rosa Flecha, born in Washington D.C. of Puerto Rican parents and involved in LAYC since she was 12, reflects on another theme that emerged over and over in the interviews: the responsibility that LAYC staff vested in youth and the belief that they could "make it." After spending several years as participant in LAYC programs, Flecha was tapped at age 18 by LAYC senior management to organize and run the Summer Enrichment Program.

Private monies were allocated for youth who weren't documented and wanted to work. We provided youth with enrichment skills. We taught them English or a trade, and we would pay them a stipend. It was minimal but something that they could have in their pockets.

It was exciting. They said, "Rosa and Claudia, you want to run the program?" They gave us the tools, and we went and did it. It was a great experience: communicating with different organizations in the community, getting them to open doors so the kids could have a job, checking up on them to see how they were doing, paying them.

Arts, community history, activism, and civic outreach

Through its linkages with Centro de Arte next door and LAYC remained actively involved in the arts. Funding came from small grants from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and the D.C. Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities. Youth were paid for participation through the Summer Youth Employment Program.

Between 1982 and 1986, LAYC's Oral History Project focused on capturing the history of D.C. Latinos. Under the supervision of Dr. Olivia Cadaval, then a graduate student and Director of The Centro de Arte and currently Latino liaison for the Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and other scholars from The George Washington University, the University of the District of Columbia, and Catholic University, youth armed with pens and cameras interviewed Latinos in the community. The products of the oral history program -- a slide show and teachers' guide, an exhibition, and a publication series --, were taken to schools to demonstrate the richness of Latinos contributions to the community. Through this program, LAYC entered a new period of civic activism.

Lisa Wheaton, born in the Dominican Republic to American missionary parents, was employed by the LAYC in 1982.⁴ Her first assignment was to manage the Oral History Project:

We would bring kids in and teach them skills such as interviewing, photography, research. Through photos and interview, we would document the Hispanic community, then take our work around D.C. and talk about it. I went to junior high schools and spoke to classes. We invited them youth to come to LAYC with a stipend.

Olivia Cadaval is absolutely brilliant. She is a true folklorist. She would get the kids to think about things in a way they hadn't. Olivia would take them to the festivals. "Who is having a Quinceanera? Let's see how your mom is making pupusas." We would go to homes and do the interviews. We did this for three years. Each was a different grant and a different project with the National Endowment for the Humanities."

Flecha has fond memories of her involvement in 1982, first year of the Oral History Project:

They armed us with tape recorders and camera, which they taught us to use. We went around interviewing people on how they got to the U.S., how they started their business, their culture. The focus was on Hispanic businesses and how the Hispanic community came about. We learned that we tend to migrate where we are close to one another. I was impressed with the sense of hospitality, feeling of safety, how that neighborhood grew.

As I was going around, I also learned about other Hispanic agencies in the neighborhood. That's when a lot of Central Americans were coming in. More and more organizations were popping up to serve people from war-torn countries.

Latinegro was one of the most creative things LAYC has ever done. Latinegro was youth-born and youth-driven. It was made up of Latino and African American artists. Their primary audience was young people. The youth tackled in a heads-on manner issues that adults tiptoed around.

Diane Cottman

In 1985, as an outgrowth of youth involvement in Teatro Nuestro, a street theater group which formed part of the Centro de Arte, two LAYC youth participants established an interactive theater project: Latinegro. Latinegro represented one of LAYC's most creative endeavors to marry the arts with issues faced by youth, beginning with the tensions between Latino and Black youth. Latinegro continued until 1992.

Diane Cottman recalls:

Quique Avilés, a recent immigrant from El Salvador, and Michelle Banks, an African American from Southeast Washington, conceptualized and ran the program. They created their own scripts and wrote lyrics to their own songs. They did skits, primarily at junior high and high schools. Issues were presented and then they went out to the audience to get them to participate. Topics included anything: an African American girl pregnant by her Latino boyfriend; neither of the parents liked the other; the teens need to decide whether to abort the child or give birth. High school and junior high school students were saying, "No, abortion is not the answer." I was speechless by the incredible things they could do.

⁴ When she left LAYC in 1986, Wheaton went to George Washington Medical School. She is currently an Internist practicing in Washington, D.C.

Latinegro went out and worked with males in the detention center at Oak Hill. They created a theater troop with inmates called the Oak Hill Players. Latinegro trained detainees who wrote their own script. They sent invitations to their parents, and the parents came. They did a whole play. You could see for some of these kids that this was the most powerful thing they had ever done.

Latinegro did pieces on race relations, on teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDs prevention, and education. Their work in this field was ground- breaking. No one else was doing this. The radio piece, "A Loud Voice Speaking Softly" was brilliant.

In 1985, LAYC's leadership program, the Latin Youth Action Project was born as an outgrowth of the Oral History Project and LAYC's activist orientation in the arts. In charge was Pedro Avilés, Quique's older brother. Pedro had been part of Teatro Nuestro, an initiative of the Centro de Arte. He was also a former youth member of LAYC's Board when LAYC was revitalized in 1978.

Avilés recalls:

The Latin Youth Action Project grew out of need to give young people opportunities to do things. Immigrant youth were not taking advantage of extra-curricular activities in their schools.

I brought together 12 young people. We provided them with employment from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. They would do whatever they decided to do. I facilitated the process. We didn't provide direct services. Instead when we saw a need to raise money, I would say, "What do we do to raise money?" We would do a rummage sale. We would do a Saturday program. I would say, "What does it look like? Who wants to organize it?" LAYC would support our activities.

LAYC's leadership and youth were also active in advocacy, especially when it had to do with the LAYC's welfare. Rivera recalls a visit he received soon after Barry was sworn in as mayor:

Marion Barry was elected mayor in 1978. Come February 1979, we hadn't received a single cent under our new CETA job training grant. The kids were expecting a stipend, the teachers as well. We organized a protest march. We invited a bunch of student organizations in the area to protest treatment by the D.C. government of Hispanic youth.

Marion Barry sent a member of his cabinet to talk to me, to get me to stop the march. I said we would only stop if we got the check for back payments. The cabinet member told me that he couldn't promise that. The next thing I knew, Barry showed up at the Youth Center. A whole bunch of kids were there in training. We called everybody together and met with the mayor. He wanted to know more about the program.

As a result of that meeting, we called off the demonstration and instead held a press conference, where we let people know that the mayor had committed to funding the program. We got a check the next day. After that, the D.C. Department of Employment Services kept providing funds to LAYC for skills training.

Social services

The social services division at LAYC was developed in 1985 as a response to the urgent problems of refugees coming from El Salvador. Many of the youth were traumatized from things they had seen or had directly experienced as a result of the war in El Salvador or coming over the border to the U.S.

After courting the D.C. Department of Human Services (DHS), in 1985 LAYC received a substantial grant of \$400,000, fully half the agency's budget, to start a counseling program. Since there was no space at LAYC's 15th Street location, space was rented on 18th Street. LAYC called the program Horizontes.

LAYC faced the challenge of finding social workers who spoke Spanish and who could relate to the youth. Most social workers had academic degrees or experience working with youth in the U.S. but lacked experience working with Latino youth who had experienced trauma associated with war.

Administering growth

LAYC's director Rivera took on other important leadership functions, which gave LAYC increased visibility. He used these positions, such as president of the Latino Festival in 1982 and 1983, and director of the Council of Latino Agencies in 1984, to link the organizations to LAYC.

While LAYC maintained its informal style of operation, increased reporting demands from funders required that LAYC hire an accountant. A Director, Deputy Director, and individuals in charge of discrete programs completed LAYC's formal administrative structure.

In 1987, Rivera took a job with Mayor Marion Barry's administration. At Rivera's recommendation, Kaplan, who had been functioning as his deputy, became LAYC's new director. While some outside LAYC thought it would have been better to select a Latino, LAYC's Board of Directors differed and hired Kaplan as LAYC's Executive Director. For those who knew Kaplan and her capabilities, there was no question that she was the right person to move LAYC to its next level.

At the time Rivera left, LAYC had a job training program primarily funded by DOES, a burgeoning social services division funded by DHS, and activities in the arts, thanks in large part to linkages with the Centro de Arte, and funded primarily through the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. LAYC was composed of a group of idealists with an activist orientation who realized that with their growth they needed systems to manage the organization.

C. 1988-1997: LAYC Has a New Director and Begins to Grow



Quique Avilés and Michelle Banks, founders of Latinegro, late 1980s (Rick Reinhard)

Context

Children who came undocumented and distraught from Central America in the early 1980s were teens by the late 1980s. Disenfranchised and traumatized and with no safety net to support them, these youth were highly vulnerable to urban ills such as the availability of weapons and drugs in the District of Columbia. By the late 1980s, the corner of 15th and Irving Streets NW, two doors from LAYC, had become a central point for crack dealers. Increasingly, Latino youth became involved, not just as consumers of crack but as drug dealers, many operating in gangs. Latino gangs began to fight over turf, but instead of fists, these fights began to involve knives and guns.

Many young women in Central America choose to have children at a younger age than in the United States. Because family support systems were not in place in DC, LAYC began to see more teen-aged mothers requiring help.

In 1991, the Mount Pleasant community was rocked by riots provoked by a rookie policewoman shooting a drunken Salvadorian man on Mount Pleasant Street. Three days of conflict ensued, the worst riots to occur in the District of Columbia since those along the 14th Street corridor that had followed Martin Luther King's 1968 assassination. These riots brought to citywide attention issues facing youth, especially Latino youth, in the Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights neighborhoods.

Hearings held by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights after the riots resulted in a study documenting disparity in services to and funding for the Latino community in Washington, D.C.

Spurred in part by increased funding available for the Latino population and in part by the flow of low-income Latinos into the area, many new social service agencies opened between 1988 and 1997. They focused on providing assistance to Salvadoran refugees, including Spanish-language maternal and pediatric services to children and families from child abuse and neglect and promote healthy families.

In 1963 President Bill Clinton signed the National and Community Services Trust Act which established the Corporation for National and Community Service and which brought the full range of domestic community service programs under the umbrella of one organization. This legislation formally launched AmeriCorps, a network of national service programs designed to engage young Americans in intensive service to meet the nation's critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.

In 1996 the U.S. Congress approved D.C. Charter School legislation. This opened the door to the creation of publically supported Charter Schools in Washington, D.C.

LAYC Has a New Director and Begins to Grow

Job training, education and employment

Between 1988 and 1997, job training and employment remained a cornerstone of LAYC's programs. The Summer Youth Employment program continued, as did funding from DOES for after- school programs and ESL.

LAYC instituted literacy programs for Latinos who had come to the U.S. unable to read or write and was one of the first agencies in the neighborhood to provide youth with an opportunity to become computer literate

Woven through YouthBuild is personal and community transformation. What I find striking about YouthBuild is that it gives young people an opportunity to give back to their communities as a way of building themselves. They have heard they are worthless, but here they are building a house for someone else.

Patricia Bravo, Director of LAYC's YouthBuild Public Charter School

In 1995, in one of its first attempts to participate in large federally funded programs, LAYC became part of YouthBuild. YouthBuild is a national program initiated in 1990 in East Harlem by Dorothy Stoneman with funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and currently funded by the Department of Labor. YouthBuild's purpose is to "engage unemployed young men and women, most of whom have not completed high school and all of whom come from low-income families, to serve their

communities by building affordable housing, and assisting them in transforming their own lives and roles in society." (www.youthbuild.org)

Kaplan reflects on LAYC's decision to become part of YouthBuild:

Ernest Yombo and other youth went to see New York to see the program. They loved it. They said, "We have to bring YouthBuild to our neighborhood." In the early years, we couldn't do it as it is very expensive to run. However, once the founder of Youth Build got the federal government to provide a \$50 million line item under HUD, we applied and received a grant. We were interested in the program because so many youth were dropping out of school and many vocational schools had closed. YouthBuild offered young people vocational training, educational opportunities and a chance to transform their lives.

Patricia Bravo, who took over YouthBuild in 2002, describes the program and how LAYC has approached its implementation:

YouthBuild is for out-of-school youth. The program mixes academics with physical labor. The three elements are (1) construction training (2) leadership development, and (3) academics. Construction training is taught through taking vacant, sometimes rat- infested buildings and transforming them into clean, safe, beautiful housing for low-income families.

A lot of kids don't like the physical labor. They have to go to work when it is raining; they get cold, wet and dirty. But they come home, and they have accomplished something that day. You mix that with academics, and you have achievement and accomplishment in two arenas.

YouthBuild also focuses on leadership development. There is an elected student policy council that gives feedback to the staff. We also provide a lot of opportunities for public speaking. There are a lot of opportunities in Washington, D.C.

In 1996, LAYC decided to apply to become part of another federally funded program, AmeriCorps, which provides youth with community service opportunities. LAYC recruited area youth to serve as teachers aides in local public schools. As well, some Corps members taught health education in Spanish at area schools. Jasmin Benab, who participated in LAYC's first AmeriCorps program and now coordinates LAYC's Girls Leadership program, recalls her experience:

We had intensive training before we started working. We were sent for training to Nitza at the Washington Free Clinic. She asked us to create our own curriculum on pre-natal care so that we could go into schools to work with pregnant girls. We worked our butts off. We were at the Free Clinic until 9 p.m. It was intense. We finished the curriculum after a few months. We also assisted doctors at the Free Clinic.

Social Services and Teen Drop-In Center

In 1988, LAYC moved its Social Services Division from a stand-alone office on 18th Street to LAYC headquarters at 15th and Irving Street. Suann Hecht, a social worker who headed the division, seized the opportunity to connect with youth by working with them to start an after-school Drop-In Center

Hecht, fondly called "Mama Suann," remembers the early days of the Drop-In Center:

When I started at LAYC, I noticed there were very few clients coming for mental health counseling. I tried to reorganize, but the kids just weren't coming for counseling. I would see all these kids hanging out with nothing to do on the street, about 25 of them. I struck up conversations with them. They wanted a center to call their own and they wanted to play soccer.

I said, "OK, let's get an after- school Drop-In Center" Lori got the Wilson Center basement. I was the main organizer. They called me "the coach." I hired the kids. My theory was that if we have a place where the kids can come after school for recreation, we can use this as a base to start other things. We started with 40 kids. By the time I left in 1992 we had 150 to 200 kids every day. It was great!

Concerned with the burgeoning problem of drugs and weapons, Kaplan hired a consultant from Chicago who had experience with youth, drugs, and weapons to advise LAYC. With funding from the D.C. Department of Human Services diminishing, LAYC sought out and began to receive funding from the

Addiction Prevention & Recovery Administration (APRA) to work on substance abuse and the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) to work with youth in trouble with the law.

In 1991, the Mt. Pleasant riots took place just two blocks from LAYC. One of the ways the city addressed issues raised by the riots was to provide emergency funding to address gang and drug issues among high risk Latino and African American youth.

LAYC was the first Latino service agency to assist homeless and runaway youth. Between 1992 and 1997, LAYC developed four programs for those young people: (1) Transitional Living Program (TLP), funded in 1992 by US Department of Health and Human Services to provide housing for youth for up to 18 months and an array of support services;⁵ (2) Foster Care, initiated in 1996 and funded by DC's Children and Family Administration (CFSA) to recruit, train, and license Spanish-speaking individuals interested in becoming foster parents and to place youth in the CFSA system with foster parents; (3) Host Homes, also initiated in 1996, which addresses the immediate needs of runaway and homeless female youth and their families through emergency shelter, counseling, referrals, transportation, and case management; and (4) Street Outreach Program (SOP), funded in 1997 by the US Department of Health and Human Services, which provides temporary housing for runaway and homeless youth, many of whom have been or are at risk of being sexually abused and exploited.

LAYC hired Carla Branch, who had a background in juvenile justice and child abuse, to direct Social Services. Branch hired José Carlos Vera, a psychologist who had recently arrived from Peru, to work with homeless and runaway youth. She also hired Najiya Shana'a, who was born in Lebanon and grew up in the U.S., to serve as an outreach worker with at-risk youth and youth in trouble with the law.

Shana'a, who worked closely with Jose Carlos Vera, recalls her initial contacts with youth in detention centers:

The idea was to give young mothers another option for the future. The option was education and a broader vision of what they can do for their future. Education is the best form of birth control. It gives you a choice.

Linda Ohmans, founder of the Teen Mothers Program

I spent a lot of time in the youth detention centers. I went out there once or twice a week. My job was to make sure the kids had a lawyer, basic services, and contact with their family – if they had one. A lot of times, I would take their mothers out to see them. I did some basic counseling to help the youth come back to society in a productive way. I would talk to them about what they would do when they got out, like going to school, getting a job, having a decent place to live. I would even do

some tutoring. The youth detention centers had little to nothing to offer young Latino kids.

The objective, once the kids got out, was to keep them involved and engaged. I would try to keep them on track, get them back in school, or getting their GED, working or doing something. Sometimes I got them into LAYC programs.

⁵ Support services include case planning and monitoring; employment, educational/vocational, health, and psychosocial assessments; nutritional counseling and food preparation; life skills and employment training; drug and alcohol abuse intervention and prevention; assistance in locating permanent housing; and referral to other LAYC programs.

The Teen Parent program began in 1993. The program arose out of a concern at LAYC with the number of teenage Latina girls who were becoming pregnant while in high school. The program provided counseling, wraparound support, education and pre- and post-natal care. Linda Ohmans, who had been working with pre-school children at the SED Center, started the program. She reflects on the program's objectives:

One of the main goals of the Teen Parent program was to prevent subsequent unplanned pregnancies. Was it because of us a girl didn't get pregnant again? I would like to think it was in large part due to the Teen Parent program. The idea was to give young mothers another option for the future, not have them think they would have another baby. The option was education and a broader vision of what they can do for their future. That in essence was the program: education is the best form of birth control. It gives you a choice.

Health

LAYC's health activities, focused on prevention and health education, began in 1992 with a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to start the Teen Health Promoters (THP) program. Programs subsequently added included the Health Career Opportunity Program (HCOP) and the Saturday Academy, both funded from 1996 to 2002 by the Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. LAYC also had a small grant to work on an HIV outreach program in partnership with the Whitman-Walker Clinic. The Teen Health Promoters program continues to operate.

Cristina Encinas was hired in 1994 to manage Teen Health Promoters. She created a manual to enable other communities to implement the program and developed partnerships with community clinics so that the teens could run peer education workshops and shadow professional personnel at the clinics. She also worked on starting HCOP and the Saturday Academy. In 1997, Encinas became director of the Health Division. She recalls:

The objective of HCOP was to increase the number of minority students in the health professions. We partnered with The George Washington University. We developed the application; we hired the teachers. At the beginning, our youth were able to see operations done at The George Washington University Hospital. We then went to Fairfax Hospital to see operations ranging from open heart surgery to brain surgery. We developed the Saturday Academies in 1998. They were also geared toward promoting health careers. We invited guest speakers like doctors, nurses, and paramedics.

Arts

In the early 1990s, LAYC became involved in a variety of photography and video projects. Marie Moll, who worked on and off with LAYC in the 1990s and since 2004 has been Director of LAYC's Arts + Media House, recalls some of LAYC's early projects and partnerships with Shooting Back, the Video Action Fund, and Whitman-Walker Clinic:

Shooting Back was started by UPI press photographer Jim Hubbard, who went to homeless shelters and documented the shelters through the eyes of young people. Shooting Back wanted to expand and work with other sites. LAYC was one of the sites. Through Shooting Back, I taught photography part-time at LAYC through the mid-1990s.

In 1993, I started working with the Video Action Fund doing a summer multi-media project that involved teaching video at four youth centers in D.C. LAYC was one of those sites. At the end of the summer, funding was available to continue working with one site. We chose LAYC because of the

history of my relationship with them, and that they were best suited to collaborate.

*I and another producer worked with young people for six to nine- months, teaching them video. We produced *Que Pasa*, which premiered at the Lincoln Theater that had just been renovated. The youth also wrote poetry and did some photography. Their photos were projected as the backdrop when each youth went on stage to read their poem. The video was one of twenty films that were selected to be part of the Rosebud Film Festival, a local independent film festival in D.C. The kids were very proud of it.*

The next project I did with the Youth Center was public service announcements focusing on HIV/AIDS. We worked to get the funding and then collaborated with the Whitman-Walker Clinic. LAYC youth created a survey and then interviewed kids in the neighborhood. They produced two public service announcements (PSAs) that were featured on Channel 4 and presented at Gala Theater. Preparing the PSAs, the kids learned more about the subject and the phases of video production.

In the mid-1990s, LAYC began a partnership with the Corcoran Gallery of Art that evolved into an Artists in Residence program, which continued through 2007. One of LAYC's many collaborations with the Corcoran was a 1997 project called Kommunity where youth worked with professional photographers.

Marie Moll remembers this program:

The Corcoran lined up a professional photographer to mentor each youth. During the course of the six-week program, each youth had a week working with a professional photographer. One of the participants went on to study photography at UDC, and another graduated from the Corcoran with a BFA in Graphic Design. The project got written up in the Washington Post's District Weekly.

The people at the Smithsonian really put you under their wing. This experience provided me with a chance to work with real artifacts. I worked on some of Woody Guthrie's original documents. My job was to wrap them in Mylar to preserve them. It was awesome.

Ronald Chacon, former LAYC youth participant, currently Fine Arts Coordinator at LAYC Arts + Media House

In 1997 the Smithsonian Institution, at the instigation of Olivia Cadaval, working at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and Susan Arshack, with the Smithsonian Office of Education, linked up with LAYC to create a Latino Community Hispanic Heritage Center at LAYC. This started a continuing collaboration between LAYC and the Smithsonian Institution. Ronald Chacón was LAYC's initial link with this program:

The Youth Center approached me about working in the humanities. They wanted my help in putting together an exhibit called "Our Voices, Nuestras Voces" that they were doing jointly with the Smithsonian Institution. They had a paid internship at Smithsonian in the graphics department to do this. I was the intern for six to eight months.

I worked with the curator, Olivia Cadaval, and other great people at the Smithsonian to do the exhibit. Olivia had a genuine way of teaching, showing me things. I learned some skills that I have gotten good at: graphic design, silk screening, matting and framing-- skills that I currently use in my job.

Leadership Training

Jennifer would toss out an idea. If we wanted it, we went with it. There were no boundaries. She led us to believe we could do anything. We would train other youth, do different workshops, different fora.

Lupi Quinteros-Brady, former LAYC youth participant, currently Deputy Director of LAYC's Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers

In the late 1980s, Jennifer Chase picked up Pedro Avilés's work with the Latino Youth Action Project and continued providing leadership training at LAYC until 1993. Chase, who had extensive experience as an activist both in the U.S. and overseas, played a formative role in the lives of many young people enrolled in her program. Claudia Cárcamo recalls the leadership training she received under Chase:

Chase was very involved in the community. She made us see things that happened in the community: with the elderly, with people who didn't have money. We did community work; we kept diaries; we went to protest marches.

LAYC establishes its first public charter school

Immediately after passage in 1996 of DC legislation allowing for creation of charter schools, LAYC applied to charter the Teen Mothers Program, began in 1993 as a social service program, as the Next Step / El Próximo Paso Public Charter School. The first of LAYC's three public charter schools, Next Step was one of the first five schools to become chartered under the District's new law.

The new school's first students were teen mothers enrolled in the Teen Mothers Program. Recent immigrants and young people who were born or grew up in the U.S. but found it difficult to achieve success in traditional school settings were progressively added.

At Next Step, students work toward individual goals. Some students are building basic literacy in their native language or working to improve English fluency and grammar. Some are working toward a GED so they can get the necessary credentials to find employment to support themselves and their families. Others are gaining needed skills to further their education or move on to vocational training or secondary education.

Next Step has grown to provide a full-time academic program for over 80 students, using a flexible, practical, individualized curriculum designed around students' needs. Students receive five and a half hours of instruction each day in basic literacy, English, English as a second language, math, GED preparation, social studies, science, life skills, computers, parenting, and reproductive health. Next Step also conducts literacy and social studies classes in Spanish.

In addition to academics, through Next Step's Work Experience Program students learn about the world of work and participate in weekly internships in a variety of workspaces. These internships often lead to full- or part-time employment. Next Step students receive comprehensive case management support to address the many issues in their lives that challenge their ability to attend school. The school furnishes funds for emergency babysitting and stipends for teen parents to help defray the costs of childcare.

D. 1998 – 2006: LAYC Continues to Grow in Programs and Opportunities



LAYC youth standing in front of 1419 Columbia Road NW, LAYC's new home as of 1998 (Rick Reinhard)

Context

One aftermath the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. has been increased scrutiny of immigrants. Related to this has been the political debate over immigration, with resulting uncertainty among undocumented immigrants regarding their status.

LAYC staff and youth joined the thousands who demonstrated in support of passage of the Dream Act, legislation to permit undocumented immigrants to attend universities in the U.S. Youth and staff also participated in demonstrations that took place in 2006 to promote creation of a pathway for undocumented immigrants to become legal residents and eventually U.S. citizens.

In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to “consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States.” WIA, which replaced the Job Training Partnership Act that had funded LAYC in the past, provided states with federal grants from the Department of Labor to sponsor comprehensive employment and training programs.

Gentrification began with the opening of the Columbia Heights Metro station on September 18, 1999. Low-income Latinos and African Americans have been forced out to other areas of Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia where rents are lower.

Continued growth in the population of Latinos within the District and the surrounding metropolitan area also had direct bearing on LAYC and its operations. The Census Department estimated in 2002 that there were over 53,000 Latinos in the District, a 56 percent growth rate from 1990, making the Latino population the fastest growing ethnic minority in the District. The same 2002 estimate indicated that there were 120,000 Latino residents in Montgomery County, Maryland, and that Maryland's Prince George's

County had 78,000 to 80,000 Latino residents. Latino residents were estimated to be 68 percent and 55 percent respectively of the populations of Langley Park and Silver Spring, Maryland.

In the late 1990s, LAYC was among the first community-based organizations to purchase and renovate property in Columbia Heights. Other agencies followed including CentroNía, La Clínica del Pueblo, and Carecen.

Shortly after LAYC moved to its current location at 1419 Columbia Road NW, the Columbia Heights Metro opened one block away. Gentrification began. Within a block of LAYC, older buildings have been torn down and are being replaced by new luxury condos and a large shopping center. Up and down the block where LAYC is located, apartment buildings have been refurbished and either sold as condos or rented out at high prices. Low-income Latinos and African Americans who have lived in this neighborhood for years have been forced to relocate to other areas of the District or to Maryland or Virginia, where rents are lower.

With the growth of the Latino community in and around Washington, D.C., has come both an increase in funding for programs that target Latinos and an increase in the number of community-based organizations offering services to the Latino population.

LAYC Continues to Grow in Programs and Opportunities

Job training and placement

In 1998, LAYC offered several job training programs. YouthBuild, first funded through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and now by the Department of Labor, provides job readiness, GED examination preparation, and construction training for out-of-school youth. Summer Youth Employment Program has been funded by the District government since LAYC's inception in the late 1960s. After-school jobs are available through the DC Department of Employment Services. Computer training, supported by private and corporate foundations, began in the early 1990s.

In 1998, Lori Kaplan and other non-profit directors in the District put pressure on local government to apply for funding to participate in a nation-wide five-year pilot program called YO!, Youth Opportunities, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. With YO!, LAYC acquired an additional funding stream for its employment and job training programs for out-of-school youth.

The District government applied for and received \$32 million for YO! Monies became available toward the end of 2000, allowing LAYC to expand job training programs for youth facing the most severe life challenges. LAYC also began to create social enterprises with the goal of decreasing dependency on federal and local funds. Kaplan hired Jennifer Shewmake to develop this new LAYC initiative.

Community Wealth Ventures selected LAYC as one of eight non-profits in the D.C. region to participate in a year-long seminar on capacity building and social enterprise development. As a result of attendance at the seminar, Kaplan and Shewmake began to discuss purchase of a Ben & Jerry's Partner Shop as LAYC's entry into social enterprise. Shewmake recalls:

I was charged with thinking through the possibility of alternative revenue streams, including earned income. We had individual consulting and an all-day meeting once a month. All the topics concerned capacity building and starting a social venture. We looked at LAYC's assets. We mapped out ways to distill opportunities we had thought of to develop a separate venture. In the meantime, we became heavily involved in an application to Ben & Jerry's to establish a Partnership in D.C. By the end of the year, we had launched a Ben & Jerry's Partnership as well as an earned income element at the Art + Media House, which has gone through a lot of iterations.

In late 2004, after Shewmake's departure, Laurie Mittenthal was hired to further develop LAYC's two Ben & Jerry's Partnerships and the Art + Media House. Mittenthal was a recent graduate from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government with a Master's in Public Affairs focusing on social enterprise and corporate social responsibility. After further study and strategic planning, LAYC redesigned YO!, which had ended in September 2005 due to lack of government funds, into a Workforce Investment and Social Enterprise (WISE) division and incorporated the Ben & Jerry's programs into that division. WISE was launched in September 2005, and classes formally began in November of that year. The Art +Media House became an independent program

WISE offers job readiness and life skills training, job placement services, computer instruction, GED preparation, and support services. The goal is to provide youth with the necessary skills and credentials to obtain and retain meaningful employment.

Laurie Mittenthal, former Director of LAYC's Workforce Investment and Social Enterprise Division (WISE)

Mittenthal reflects on what the importance of real-world job training sites such as Ben & Jerry's:

We primarily serve out-of-school youth, ages 16 to 24. Our two Ben & Jerry's shops provide job training and employment opportunities to youth who graduate from the WISE program and to youth who come to us through other programs at LAYC and DC agencies. The Ben & Jerry's training component consists of out-of-store training in soft skills such as customer service and conflict resolution, in-store training in hard skills such as scooping ice cream and making cakes, and on-going skill-building workshops throughout the year. These training sessions are conducted by the WISE Job Developer and the Ben & Jerry's store manager.

Mittenthal and her team developed partnerships with employers around the city and region, including Target, CVS, IKEA, and Radio Shack. Corporate partners are invited to make presentations to WISE students on employment opportunities and career paths within their industries. Mittenthal comments:

Often these companies sign our students up for interviews on the spot. This is a wonderful way for our students to connect directly with potential employers. We also take WISE students on field trips to employer sites and to DC job fairs.

Social Services

After significant expansion during the 1990s and with plans for further expansion, the Social Service Division was reorganized in 1999 into three teams, Prevention, Treatment, and Housing, each with a team leader.

Prevention: In 1999, LAYC received funds from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a comprehensive peer-to-peer HIV/AIDS and substance abuse education and prevention program entitled “Focus on Kids”. Focus on Kids, an eight-week program for youth ages 11 to 14, and ages 15 to 18, is based on an approved Centers for Disease Control HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum, adapted to target substance abuse as well. When funding ended in 2005, LAYC obtained a grant, also from SAMHSA, to carry out a similar program that added education on hepatitis prevention.

Youth LEAD (Leading, Educating, and Advocating Against Drugs) initiated in 2004, and funded by the Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration (APRA) of the D.C. Department of Health, made it possible for LAYC to provide substance abuse prevention services for youth. This six-month program conducted twice a year consists of on- and off-site substance abuse prevention education; extensive peer-education and leadership training for youth; risk management and referrals, decision-making and critical thinking skills; and field trips.

Treatment: To continue providing substance abuse treatment through APRA, in 2001 LAYC was required to become certified to provide substance abuse treatment through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. LAYC also sought and obtained certification through the D.C. Department of Health as a Level I outpatient substance abuse treatment center for youth. LAYC was the first Latino-serving agency to accomplish this.

LAYC’s Substance Abuse Treatment Program provides outreach and outpatient treatment services to youth and their families. The goal of the program is to provide counseling services to youth who are abusing alcohol and/or other drugs. Counselors provide intake and assessment; individual, group, and family therapy; case management; and school-based groups and referrals.

You have these kids. They need someone who believes in them, someone that doesn't judge them. You have the possibility of creating a relationship based on trust. This is basic. LAYC provides youth with many options to see that they are capable, that their futures have possibilities.

Dora Guevara, clinical psychologist in LAYC’s Social Service Division

Since 2003, LAYC has been a Certified Core Service Agency through the D.C. Department of Mental Health. As a Core Service Agency, LAYC can provide Medicaid-reimbursable: prevention and education services, as well as treatment interventions including counseling, medication, and other rehabilitation services. Mental health services provided by LAYC include

psychiatric evaluation and medication management; individual, group and family counseling; community support; and crisis intervention and referrals. Services are provided at homes, schools, in neighborhood

sites, and at LAYC's many locations throughout the District and Maryland. Again, LAYC was the first Latino-serving agency to receive such certification.

Dora Guevara, from Peru, has been at LAYC since 1999, working as a clinical psychologist. In 2006, she began coordinating LAYC's substance abuse program. Guevara reflects on her work with parents and youth and her underlying philosophy:

You have these kids. They need someone who trusts and believes in them, someone who doesn't judge them. I try not to judge. All families do not have to be like my family. You can find different mothers and fathers. I say, "It's not good for you in this moment to have babies," but if they get pregnant and o have the baby, it's OK. You have to be positive. They say, "Now I believe in myself; it's something I can do."

The advantage we have with these kids is that you are not their mother. You have the possibility of creating a relationship based on trust. This is basic: "You are not going to defraud us." This is key. In some cases, I see a change in the kids in a week. It's not just the therapy. They need someone to confide in. LAYC provides youth with many options to see that they are capable, that their futures have possibilities.

To continue to access federal funds, in 2003, the DC Department of Mental Health changed its funding approach from a social service grant-oriented model to a medical fee-for-service model. Under a social service model, LAYC could permit clients to show up at any time to receive the services they needed and be seen for as many sessions as the social worker determined necessary. LAYC applied to become and was accepted as a Core Service Agency, able to provide Medicaid-reimbursable mental health services. But the fee-for-service model required that LAYC and other agencies institute chargeable and non-chargeable diagnoses and procedures. Medicare reimbursement is allowed only for specified diagnoses and procedures. Therapy sessions are limited to a 60-minute visit. To continue to serve all youth who needed mental health counseling, LAYC began the difficult search for private funds.

In fiscal year 2006, the DC Department of Mental Health instituted yet more restrictive criteria for receiving reimbursement under its fee-for-service plan. Task orders were issued at the beginning of the year specifying that only 30% of reimbursements could be for non-Medicaid clients. With significant numbers of youth not eligible for Medicaid, LAYC faced the possibility of further rationing mental health services. LAYC brought this limitation to the attention of the Department of Mental Health, which agreed to make adjustments.

Housing: In 2005, LAYC added the Independent Living Program (ILP) to its residential services. ILP is funded by the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). However, unlike LAYC's Transitional Living Program, which limits stays to 18 months, ILP makes it possible for male youth between the ages of 16 and 21 in the foster care system to remain in a stable home-like environment for up to four years. As with TLP and LAYC's other housing programs, ILP provides funding for case planning and monitoring, educational assistance, career development, psychosocial assessments, and life skills training. Youth in ILP also can benefit from all of the resources that LAYC offers, such as educational opportunities, recreational activities, work skills training, and substance abuse treatment and prevention. In 2007, LAYC received CFSA funding for a Teen Bridge Program to provide comprehensive transitional living housing services to female youth, ages 16 to 21, in the foster care system.

Education

In 1998, in collaboration with the National Council of La Raza and The George Washington University, LAYC applied to participate in Upward Bound. Founded in 1965 as part of President Johnson's Higher

Education Act, Upward Bound is national program that provides academic support to low-income high school students who wish to attend college.

I knew I wanted to go to college, but my Mom and I didn't know how to do it. The biggest thing I am thankful for is college prep. Our classes opened up the way for everyone to explore our different cultures.

Karen Hinklin, LAYC Upward Bound participant now attending Spelman College.

LAYC's program was designed to support the youth who would be the first in their family to enter college.

Karen Hinklin, who participated in Upward Bound between 2000 and 2004 and is now a junior at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, describes her experience in the Upward Bound activities at LAYC:

I liked that we had a stable place to go to every Saturday and that in the summer I had something to do. I always appreciated the teachers. They were cool, laid back. They really cared about what we learned and our future. All the classes, while they had different areas, were integrated into what is going on currently. This made it more important/beneficial to learn. I was able to relate what I was learning with the world.

I really enjoyed the cultural diversity. I am African American but LAYC is more for people of Hispanic descent. Our classes opened up the way for everyone to explore our different cultures. We learned about the African Americans and Hispanic cultures and different countries.

They took us on college tours. The summer before my senior year I had opportunity to come to Atlanta to visit colleges. I wanted to see Spelman, and I got to see it. We also went to Pennsylvania (U. Penn), New York (Columbia), Delaware, and Virginia.

In 1999, LAYC's educational programs split off from employment and job training to become its own division. Programs carried out in the Educational Enhancement Division include AmeriCorps, Upward Bound, Bard College Clemente Course in the Humanities, Teen Drop-In Center, Stages of Life health education, computer literacy, Summer Youth Employment, and DC DOES In-School educational and job training assistance.

Teen Drop-In Center and gang-related youth

In July 1988, with the move to smaller quarters in LAYC's basement on Columbia Road, the number of teens coming to socialize or play pool slackened in summer months. In the late 1990s in coordination with counselors from the Social Services Division, Drop-In Center staff became actively involved in gang outreach and prevention. This focus has become an important and visible part of LAYC's work in recent years. Youth outreach workers and counselors often find themselves attending to emerging crises in the middle of the night or on weekends. Boys' and girls' leadership programs target youth at risk of joining gangs and gang-involved youth.

We get into intense rap sessions on everyday life. We deal with behavior, anger issues. We go out into the street and talk to kids who are actually in gang activities. We say, "We're here to help you."

Edwin Pérez, former LAYC youth participant, who currently works with gang-related youth at LAYC

Edwin Pérez, a former LAYC youth participant, describes the Boys Leadership Program, which he ran with Alex Arevalo, also a former LAYC youth:

Alex and I have boys' groups in schools in northwest Washington. We meet with up to fifteen kids, two times a week for eight weeks during lunch break. The school identifies the kids who are at risk: they are not coming to school; they have behavioral issues; it is suspected that they are involved in gang activities.

Alex and I go into our own experiences. We try to give them alternatives. You want to drop out of school, maybe you want a GED. If there is an altercation with several groups in school, we mediate. We recruit kids for the Summer Youth Employment Program. We take them on trips. We invite them all the time to come to the Teen Center. We tell them that it is open, that it is a good recreational spot. This is the place you want to be at.

Jasmin Benab, describes the Girls' Leadership Program that she manages:

We got a grant to start a girls' group three years ago. It was supposed to be fifteen girls for six weeks, meeting twice a week. We were supposed to have in- and out-of-school groups. I changed it. We now meet every day from 4 to 6:30 p.m. We have a twelve-week curriculum. We discuss issues girls face around violence. The girls get workshops on public speaking and dance. We have a dance group. Each performance is based around violence prevention: a skit followed by a dance performance.

Drop-In Center staff have been heavily involved in the Weed and Seed Project, a federally funded public safety initiative, as well as in the Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP) that began in 2003. With both programs, LAYC has taken the lead with the Columbia Heights-Shaw Family Support Collaborative and the Metropolitan Police Department. The GIP has become a national model of how civil society and the police and justice structure can effectively work together to deter gang homicides.

The GIP's Cool-Down Unit is composed of fifteen youth outreach workers from community-based organizations and public schools, including five staff from the Teen Drop-In-Center. In addition, the head of the Teen Drop-In Center, Raul Archer, attends weekly GIP meetings.

Through its participation in the GIP, LAYC is credited with playing a significant role in stopping a series of gang shootings that culminated in a spate of homicides in front of and near LAYC in 2003.

LAYC is critical. It is at the center of how young people can have an opportunity to be safe and come up with solutions for how community can address this problem. The outreach workers at LAYC have been forging relationships with young people from multiple gangs. They have been spreading the message that the Drop-In Center is a place where you can be safe. You have to put down your colors while you are there.

Rev. John DeTaeye, Director of Community Capacity Building, Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative.

Rev. John DeTaeye has been in the neighborhood since 1987, first in a ministerial role with All Souls Unitarian Church and since 2001 with the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative. Rev. De Tease, who has worked closely with LAYC and its youth outreach workers since 2001, reflects on gang issues in the neighborhood and LAYC's role in addressing these issues:

Our relationship with LAYC deepened with the implementation of Weed & Seed, a US Department of Justice public safety initiative that brings together community

residents and representatives from schools, public agencies, and law enforcement communities from targeted high crime neighborhoods. The objective of Weed and Seed is to build relationships of trust between police and community and to build multi-agency approaches to addressing crime. Through Weed and Seed we have been able to leverage a lot of resources that we wouldn't have been able to access before.

In the summer of 2003, there were five back-to-back gang-related homicides. One of the most critical parts of efforts to get the violence under control was through the establishment of the Cool Down Group, which is composed of youth outreach workers from multiple organizations, including LAYC. We met with the Cool Down group every day. The members of the group were traumatized. They knew the kids who were killed. Through the group they were able to share information and be a support/grief group to deal with grief and anger. The group has continued to meet over the last three years.

For awhile, it seemed LAYC was known as territory for a particular gang, a particular group of young people, and others were not allowed; they wouldn't be welcome. Over the last three years, we have been able to shift that because of the commitment of LAYC management and the effectiveness of LAYC outreach workers to reach young people well beyond the Center. LAYC outreach workers are community-based as opposed to center-based.

LAYC continues to provide mental health and substance abuse counseling programs to gang-involved youth. Bilingual counseling services are available to youth from ages 12 to 21, who abuse alcohol or other drugs, engage in high-risk behavior, such as drug use and delinquent activities, or whose parents abuse drugs. Based on individualized assessment and treatment plans, services include individual, group and family counseling; psychiatric services and medication management; crisis intervention; case management and referrals, therapeutic groups focusing on alcohol/drug education, anger management, acculturation, parent support, violence prevention; introduction to AA/NA groups; and referral to other in-house programs and external organizations.

Programs for Adjudicated Youth

The After-Care Reentry Program provides comprehensive, intensive, and culturally sensitive services to adjudicated males and females between the ages of 14 to 21. The program is designed to reduce the rate of re-arrest and re-incarceration.

LAYC's intervention aims to strengthen four areas of self-development: competence, usefulness, belonging, and power. Services include psychosocial assessment, individualized case planning and case management, assistance with attaining employment or enrolling in educational programs, tutoring/mentoring, violence and gang prevention/intervention activities, health and life skills, and referrals to individual, group, family, and substance abuse counseling and mental health services.

In the words of program coordinator Carmen Walls:

We have 15 youth enrolled in the program between the ages of 15 and 17. All are males. They come to us court ordered, on probation. We hold group workshops once a week. Youth talk about what is happening in the community, the challenges they face as young Latino gang-involved or affiliated males. They must come to each and every session until their probation ends. If they don't come, we contact the probation officer.

As a Case Manager, I often accompany these youth to court, make home visits, school visits, and keep very detailed case notes about each client. I also work very closely with the client's social workers, probation officer, DYRS monitor, and all others involved in the progression of the client's transition back into society.

One client is now in the process of obtaining his GED while learning the construction trade. Another who had dropped out of school is now with YouthBuild; he wants to go to school in North Carolina. Another has an apprenticeship with an uncle who is a mechanic. He is planning to go to Montgomery College.

Evening Reporting Center (ERC) is a community-based program for youth committed to the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Service's custody who are awaiting trial or require supervision and support during the evening hours. Between 4 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., ERC offers recreational, rehabilitative, educational and cultural programming in a nurturing and structured environment. Individual service plans developed for each youth include components such as individual and group therapy often by LAYC's Social Services staff, substance abuse and HIV prevention, peer group interaction, educational support, job and employment training, transportation and meal services, and aftercare planning. Youth are taken once a week to LAYC's Art + Media for art therapy. DYRS enrolls youth in the program and mandates a stay of 30 to 45 days. The program operates from LAYC's Ward 4 satellite site, a newly renovated police sub-station.

After LAYC successfully piloted the program at the request of DYRS, a competitive bidding process was held. There are now two ERCs in DC. LAYC's program services youth in Wards 1 and 4, while another nonprofit works with youth in other wards. Mike León, who manages LAYC's Ward 4 activities, describes ERC as "a needed program."

LAYC Establishes Two New Public Charter Schools

Having converted the Teen Mothers' Program in 1996 to the Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School, LAYC decided in 2001 to create the Latin American Montessori Bilingual (LAMB) Public Charter School. Directed by two former LAYC staff members, LAMB opened in 2003 to provide current and former LAYC youth participants who are parents with an alternative to the DCPS Oyster Bilingual Elementary School, which has a long-waiting list.

LAMB, which will eventually accommodate 160 students from pre-K to 6th grade, currently has three classrooms of three, four, and five-year-olds, and one classroom of first- and second-graders, with two trained instructors per classroom. The Montessori curriculum is used. Students receive a full day of

instruction and activities. Sessions are conducted in Spanish in the a.m. and English in the p.m. LAMB's students are 50 percent Spanish-language dominant and 50 percent non-Spanish language dominant, providing a multicultural and diverse student body.

Principal Cristina Encinas recalls LAMB's beginning:

Having practiced as a Montessori teacher before coming to LAYC, I start thinking about Montessori and how beneficial it would be to have a Montessori school for LAYC. Instead of intervening when they are teenagers, I believe we should start from a young age.

The National Council of La Raza had planning money from the Walton Family Foundation to assist us in the start-up phase of the school. Diane Cottman, who was still LAYC Development Director, wrote an application that was unanimously approved by the D.C. Board of Education. This was 2002.

We just moved to our own building. I'm amazed that we have been able to accomplish so much. I think that Diane and I have become stronger as a team. I have learned a great deal since the beginning. I see every year getting easier.

In 2005 LAYC decided to convert YouthBuild, a program it had operated for 10 years, to a charter school. Lori Kaplan describes the rationale:

After we brought YouthBuild to LAYC and were running a successful program, we found that we were very dependent on HUD for the program's financing. We started by garnering local dollars for job training from DOES to provide the counterpart needed for the program. That's how the idea came to charter it. In part we chartered for sustainability, but we also saw that as a charter school we could expand our staff, offer more educational opportunities, and create a strong learning environment for students.

Arts and Culture

Between 1998 and 2003, LAYC continued offering photography taught by Corcoran School of the Arts artists in residence, as well as drawing and painting classes. Arts programming was housed in a room in the basement of the newly renovated building on Columbia Road, where LAYC had relocated in 1998.

The Latino Community Heritage Center was a highlight of these years, part of an effort by the Smithsonian Institution and the City Museum of Washington DC to establish heritage centers throughout the city that would appeal to tourists as well as local residents. Ronald Chacón, a former LAYC participant with a strong interest in the arts, served as liaison to the Smithsonian. In Chacón's words:

I would bring school groups to the exhibit and talk about it. I would teach them what I had learned on exhibit design. The kids had real Smithsonian professionals to work with them, promote the Heritage Center, and create programming around it. We made heritage boxes as a basis for exhibit design. Olivia Cadaval and her colleagues would teach these kids how to do interviews and how to record, how to do editing.

I wanted the kids to have the opportunity I did. I wanted to connect Smithsonian professionals to youth and have young people do paid internships at the Smithsonian. It is called the Latino Community Heritage Center Program. Jill Bryson from Next Step Public Charter School is running the program. Next Step kids go for the summer to the Smithsonian Office of Exhibits Central, the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and the Museum of Natural History.

The seeds for the Art + Media House were sown in 2000. LAYC was conducting after-school classes in drawing, photography, and silk screening in cramped quarters at the Teen Drop-In Center. The classes were close to Drop-In Center activities, and the area also was used for office space. Noise and other distractions were continual challenges. Kati Regan, then the Director of Arts and Recreation at LAYC, recalls:

We were trying to organize the arts program. We didn't have big city funds or federal funds. We always had support from Lori and Mai but we were plodding along a bit. We felt that the arts had a significant history with LAYC. When LAYC purchased two additional row houses on 15th Street, one was up for grabs.

My hope is that by studying art or media a young person gains skills they can use whatever they do in life, that they communicate better, work as a team better, acquire problem solving skills. When teaching photography, I often wait until a problem surfaces and then get the young person to think about ways to solve it. I want young people to think creatively: what are the choices, what are the pros and cons of each option?

Marie Moll, Director of the Art + Media House established in 2004

Alfredo, Marie, Ronald, and I were talking one day. Someone said, "Go ask Lori for our own house." If the arts could get its own space, we felt that would really get the arts program to a different place. Being run out of a couple of rooms in the Teen Drop-In Center was far from ideal. I went to Lori and said, "We want that other house." Lori said, "OK, write me a proposal."

Initial financing was for a barebones program. Limited funds from the Smithsonian were combined with small grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The program originally was conceived to be a 50-50 partnership with the Corcoran. The Corcoran was to provide

instructors, and LAYC was to provide the supplies and space. This did not occur because the Corcoran suffered a financial crisis, resulting in a downgrade of their community outreach arts program.

Marie Moll, who became director of the Art + Media House when opened in fall 2004, reflects on the future:

I want the Art + Media House to be a vibrant space where young people have a feeling of belonging. I want it to be a place where youth can develop creatively. Youth have the opportunity to gain skills to better express themselves and have their perspective seen or heard. Many of the young people who come here are very focused and seek support in developing their portfolio or skills to produce a music demo. Not all the young people who come here seek to move on to careers in the arts. Art or being creative allows young people to explore themselves or issues around them.

Many artists who taught in the past were very intuitive in their approach. I want the Art + Media House to have set goals and curriculum as a foundation that can be built on by future artists and instructors. I want us to be building something lasting.

The Art + Media House has given permanence and a home to what the Center has been doing since it began. One of our first exhibits was a retrospective of the Youth Center's art work over the past 30 years.

Ronald Chacón, today the director Fine Arts at the Art + Media house, recalls:

Lori was all for the idea from the get-go. She had heard my complaints that LAYC wasn't a place for the arts. We wanted to create a space that was solely for the arts and where young people could take arts to the next level.

The idea for the art house was to have teachers who are true artists, who know their work, are passionate, and have an interest in teaching in the neighborhood, people who want to make a difference. We have found people like this. They know their work from A to Z, and they know how to transfer that knowledge to young people. It's been about relationships and personalities. We're promoting arts as a way of living, as a way of doing, and of growing up to become an adult.

Art+ Media House classes include drawing, painting, graffiti, media action, DJing, beat making, music recording, photography, and hip hop dance. The two-hour classes are held after school twice weekly. Youth between the ages of 12 and 16 are eligible to enroll if they are in school. Classes are offered in art therapy for ERC participants. Classes in graffiti are offered at Wilson Senior High School and Alice Deal Junior High School. A class in mixed media is offered at McFarland Junior High School.

Making and performing music has been a hallmark of LAYC from its onset. Chacón observes:

We are getting all these kids who play instruments. Because we have donated guitars, we are getting the spark to start a guitar program. The kids are jamming on the guitars. Our DJ musical recording classes got started because the kids kept asking me, "You have these great computers. What are you going to do with them?" I sent out an e-mail and asked: Is there a volunteer who would like to work with the kids on DJ musical recording? I got someone. I know there are people out there who want to work with young people. We are able to attract a good base of volunteers who bring talent and knowledge.

Re-invigorated youth leadership and advocacy

Factors in the external environment required LAYC to take a strong advocacy position in its early years. The violent overthrow of the Allende government in Chile in 1973 led many young leftist Chileans to seek refuge in Washington, DC. Civil wars in Central America throughout the 1980s brought to LAYC's immediate neighborhood thousands of refugees, especially from El Salvador and an influx of youth and their families whose lives had been affected forever by this upheaval. These years were also periods of intense activism in the U.S, and the neighborhoods of Adams-Morgan and Mount Pleasant, close to LAYC, became a Mecca for individuals committed to social justice causes.

By the early 1990s, the high visibility issues that prompted public outcry in the 1970s and 1980s had begun to dissipate. Also, many of the young activists, including several individuals employed by LAYC who had played a key role in encouraging leadership and activism among LAYC youth, had either moved out of the neighborhood or on to other pursuits.

By no means though had LAYC ceased advocating for issues of importance for its constituency. Rather, it focused its advocacy efforts on topics and issues directly related to its areas of programmatic emphasis: foster care, homelessness, teen pregnancy, violence prevention, alternatives to incarceration, immigration reform.

LAYC senior staff has been active in advocating on these topics and issues, organizing meetings with high-level officials in the District government, Cabinet officials, and Congressional representatives and staffs. Not infrequently, LAYC staff would bring youth to speak on the topic or issue at hand. Senior staff also sought out opportunities to participate in coalitions or serve on Boards of Directors of organizations that had similar concerns, in order to add LAYC's voice to a larger set of voices.

What did diminish, beginning in the early 1990s, were efforts by LAYC staff to involve youth in advocacy and civic engagement with the objective to educate youth on social issues and provide them with advocacy skills.

In 2006, LAYC engaged Pedro Avilés, an activist who during the late 1970s and 1980s had engaged LAYC youth in leadership and advocacy efforts, to take an inventory of what LAYC was or was not doing in the area of advocacy and to explore with LAYC senior management what LAYC might do to reinvigorate its efforts to provide youth with an opportunity to practice their leadership and advocacy skills.

Youth ownership is a critical component of this program. The seven radio shows we've done thus far have explored issues of youth violence, immigration, public education and gentrification. The youth enrolled in the program are very engaged, opinionated, and intelligent. Our motto this semester is Advocacy in Action.

Aqila Coulthurst, Coordinator of LAYC's Youth Leadership & Advocacy Program

The outcome of this effort was a proposal to establish an Advocacy Division at LAYC. Funding was obtained to hire a division director, who came on board after this case study was completed. In the interim, in October 2006 LAYC launched in collaboration with the Art + Media House a Leadership Development and Advocacy Program. Participants meet three times a week to identify, explore, and discuss issues in their communities, such as homelessness, immigration gentrification and juvenile justice. They then produce a weekly Web radio show with the objectives of inspiring, educating, and

entertaining other youth. Shea Shackelford, an audio specialist at the Art + Media House, is an integral part of the program, managing the technical aspects of radio broadcasting.

Coulthurst describes the program:

To kick off the program, we had students meet on a Saturday for a brief orientation, lunch, and a community asset-mapping activity. We divided the group into three subgroups, each assigned to a different area in Ward 1. Students were responsible for observing the infrastructure of the buildings in the communities, finding out about construction prices, checking rental rates, etc. Each group presented to their peers on the community they had explored.

Youth ownership is a critical component of this program. We encourage decision-making skills and try to provide guidance rather than instruction. The seven radio shows we've done thus far have explored issues of youth violence, immigration, public education, and gentrification. Additionally, we had guest speakers discuss homelessness and the juvenile justice system in DC. We have also worked closely with a group of American University students who are producing a documentary on youth and immigration.

During our exploration of juvenile justice, we visited the Oak Hill Detention Center located in Laurel, Maryland, as a part of our juvenile justice segment. We were privileged to meet with eight youth there and have a discussion about stereotypes of youth, rehabilitation while incarcerated, reentry into society, etc. We also collaborated with Justice4DC Youth to distribute surveys in high schools to collect data on youth-police relations. Once tallied, these will be presented to the appropriate person/agency.

Strengthening the institutional capabilities of other youth development organizations

LAYC played an important role in nurturing and fostering Asian American LEAD, established in 1998 by Sandy Dang, a social worker who arrived in Washington in 1995 and began working with the Indochinese Community Center. The Indochinese Community Center, an organization with a mission that went far beyond working with youth, was attempting to address the needs of thousands of Vietnamese-American refugees who began arriving in the Washington, D.C. in the mid-1990s. Until Dang was able to get her own organization started, LAYC provided her and the Vietnamese-American youth a place to operate. In some cases, the Vietnamese-American youth were integrated into LAYC programs, alongside Latino and African American youth. In other instances, Vietnamese-American youth had their own programs. Kaplan helped Dang find sources of funding and provided advice and guidance on what she needed to do to establish an independent organization. In Dang's words:

The Indochinese Community Center had a gang prevention project called Youth Leadership Project. They were working with LAYC. Lori was concerned about the Vietnamese-American youth who needed help; she was glad to help us figure out what to do with the five to six thousand Vietnamese-American youth who had come to Washington, D.C. in the 1990s. We didn't have a lot of space. LAYC offered to house our case management component within one of their buildings on Irving Street NW. I stayed and worked alongside some of the case management staff.

Lori was instrumental in helping me start Asian American LEAD. Lori taught me how to write grants. She looked over them and helped edit. She would recommend foundations to go to for funding. In 1998, Lori recommended forming an advisory board that would help us figure out the next step. I formed the board. Lori was one of its members.

After LAYC moved to its new building in 1998, they gave us their old building. We used the first and second floor. We then asked for the third floor where we had our administrative offices. We had classes on the first floor and in the basement. We operated out of there until 2003, when we were able to purchase the building we are currently in. LAYC charged us minimal rent.

LAYC's valued added to us has been the help we have received with strategy development and funding. Lori helped me to develop Asian American LEAD based on her experience. She encouraged me to find a building. Sometimes I got Lori's help in negotiating with the city. Lori is very good at getting city money. She pointed to where we should go.

Lori has always been a strong advocate, who is effective in building relationships with public and private sector partners. Lori is always where she should be, challenging public officials about quality services for youth. Whenever I need support, Lori is there for me. She is a gift to the city and to young people.

*Judy Dobbins, Executive Director,
Covenant House*

Judy Dobbins, executive director of Covenant House that with LAYC and Sasha Bruce Youthwork form the three largest and most comprehensive youth development organizations in the D.C. area, reflects on the relationship between Covenant House and LAYC and, in particular, the relationship between herself and Kaplan:

As the leader of youth services with the Washington Urban League, I attended meetings at LAYC when it was located on 15th St N.W. Lori and I connected from the beginning. We became supportive partners, agreeing that we had a shared vision for the youth we served.

We pick up the phone when we need to share info or to get advice. There is no feeling of competition because we serve different youth populations even though they share many challenges in common. Truly, there is enough work for both of us and we gain greater benefit by being supportive of each other.

Chapter III: LAYC's Impact on Youth



LAYC youth participating in Youth Radio transmit a radio program. (Rick Reinhard)

Thirty-eight youth participants were interviewed. Five of the youth interviewed in each time period were women and five were men with the exception of 1988-1997 where eight participants were interviewed. An additional 15 youth participants currently employed by LAYC (seven women and eight men) were interviewed. (For detail on sample selection, please see Appendix A.)

Highlights: LAYC's impact on youth (in descending order of frequency of mention)

- LAYC provided a caring environment, a place where adults cared about youth, could talk to and give advice to youth.
- LAYC opened doors to youth, gave them opportunities, knowledge, and professional skills that are useful to them today.
- LAYC provided youth with a second home, a welcoming environment, a place where they felt safe; through LAYC, youth were able to make friends, were challenged/pushed to succeed, and gained

familiarity with community issues along with an appreciation of the need to give back to their communities.

- LAYC played a transformational role in the lives of many youth, who believe that they are whom they are today in large part due to the opportunities at LAYC.
- A small number of youth interviewed said that thanks to LAYC they didn't get involved in gangs, drugs, or drop out of school.
- These data corroborate what the literature highlights as key factors in effective youth development programs: consistent and caring relationships with adults, high expectations for young people to succeed, a sense of belonging and membership, active and engaging youth-adult relationships and environments, and high quality information and services.
- The data also suggest, again in keeping with youth development literature, that the key attraction for youth coming to LAYC has been having access to adults who became confidants and mentors.
- The fact that LAYC is seen as a safe, welcoming, and nurturing place is particularly important to the youth interviewed, many with troubled pasts and living circumstances, and at risk of getting involved in gangs or drugs.

A. *Profile of Youth Interviewed*

Youth who attended LAYC between 1968-1977

All of the ten youth interviewed for this time period were first-generation immigrants. Seven lived with both parents. Two lived with their mother and one with an aunt. All arrived in the United States not speaking English. Several of those who arrived as teenagers went to Americanization school for the first several months to learn English before being assigned to a junior high or high school. When they did enroll in public school, most recalled that there were few, if any, other Latinos in their school. Four of the five boys interviewed recalled being picked on or getting into fights with their primarily African American classmates. None of those interviewed recalled any problems with drugs.

Six of those interviewed completed high school but did not go beyond; one has some college credits; one has a post-secondary degree, and two have M.A.s. Current occupations include: supervisory position in the Federal Drug Administration, loan investigator for Wells Fargo, insurance benefits specialist at GEICO, former vendor who now takes care of her grandchildren, aide in a day care center, assistant inspector general in the U.S. Army, musician, fireman, systems manager at the National Institutes for Health, and billing clerk at the American Pilots Association.

Morena Cerrato: *We arrived in the United States in May. I was so disappointed. I didn't know the language. I stayed in the apartment. I didn't know anybody. It was terrible. I would cry. Then my mother heard through the Spanish Catholic Center that there were programs for teenagers at LAYC. "Maybe you want to go to give it a try? I will enroll you in this program," she said.*

Oscar Najera: *We didn't have an identity. We weren't black and we weren't white. We didn't know what being Hispanic was about. We tried to assimilate to one or the other ethnic groups. I tried to assimilate to the whites but they didn't want me. I sat at the same table with them at lunch and no one spoke to me. So I sat by myself.*

Salvador Canas. I didn't like the environment at Lincoln Junior High School. There was no discipline and respect for teachers, students, and no school pride. I came from a school in El Salvador where there was discipline, respect, and pride for teachers, students, and school. For me, school was a place where you go to learn and do work. The teachers were very good. The problem was more with the environment.

Youth who attended LAYC between 1978 and 1987⁶

Thirteen of the 16 youth interviewed were first-generation immigrants: nine came from El Salvador, one from Honduras, one from Mexico, one from Nicaragua, and one from the Ivory Coast. Three were born in the United States of immigrant parents. Unlike those interviewed who during the prior decade, the majority, 10 of 13, came to the United States undocumented. Those who came from El Salvador, all during the peak years of the civil war, had vivid memories of the violence they observed or experienced before emigrating or of the dangers that they and their families encountered when crossing into the United States from Mexico. Not all felt comfortable sharing these memories.

Marta Ferman: Things went crazy. The war exploded. I had always heard stories but we felt we were isolated and hidden from that commotion living in the countryside. But this was no longer the case. The war was coming closer and closer to us. We were seeing more. We weren't involved politically. We were just living there. Then we started seeing things. While we were riding a bus we saw a bus that two hours before had been burned with bodies inside. We started to see things like that. It shocked us. Oh m goodness, it's real! It's here!

Chico Díaz: I was going to school in San Sebastian. There were confrontations. Everyone ran except for me. I told the guardias I couldn't run because my legs were crippled from polio. I lay low. When things cooled off I went home.

Most of those who entered the United States undocumented were brought by their mothers who had left them behind in El Salvador in the care of relatives while they came to the United States to earn money. Most worked as domestics. Upon accumulating enough money, they returned to El Salvador to bring as many of their children as they could to the United States.

Chico Diaz: My mother was worried. She sent for me. In order to bring me here I had to be able to walk long distances but I couldn't because I had polio and my legs were crippled. My mother got a plane to Mexico and then to Baja California. We tried a few times to get over the border, but the lady with us couldn't cross the border because she was too heavy and couldn't get over the fence. They crossed me through the main border in a car. The lady suffered. They put her in the trunk. She had burns on her.

Edwin Perez: We came here in 1979. I was 5 years of age. Everything was fine until we crossed the border. It was my mom, my sister, my cousin, and me. We worked our way up by bus. We hired a coyote with my grandfather's help. He didn't know my mom was coming with her two children. My dad couldn't come. Mom says, "I won't stay here to die. I am leaving without you." My grandfather stopped providing help when he found out she was bringing us kids. We

⁶ For this section, we have pooled the 10 former youth chosen randomly with the 6 former youth now on LAYC's staff, for a total of 16 youth, 8 females and 8 males.

crossed the border in a truck, in the engine compartment. All four of us were in there. The fan belt almost grabbed the leg of my cousin.

As with those who came in the 1960s and 1970s, all came speaking no English. They found themselves in small crowded apartments, often sharing a one-bedroom or efficiency with relatives who had already come to Washington. Their mothers were working day and night, holding two to three jobs in order to be able to provide for their recently arrived families. Many lived in areas where their neighbors were African American. They weren't used to seeing people with such dark skin.

Jeannette Perez: We lived on 14th Street NW, with my grandfather and an uncle in a small efficiency. In El Salvador we had a house. Moving from a house and private school with uniforms to an efficiency apartment that we shared with my grandfather was hard. I went to H.D. Cooke Elementary School in Adams Morgan. It was hard in the beginning. I was made to feel like I was a child with a disability. The teachers didn't understand what I said or wrote. Other kids were predominantly African Americans. There was one Caucasian and a handful of Latinos.

Pedro Avilés: In retrospect, the images I had of the U.S. were created by a mission of Mormons in Santa Ana. They would come to our house. I was 6 or 7. I remember seeing this gadget that projected images on the wall. They projected slides about universities in the United States. The people had crew cuts. When we arrived in Washington, I asked my mom where the white people were.

Of the participants who attended LAYC between 1978 and 1987, two never completed high school; two are high school graduates; three have had some post-secondary education; two have B.A.s; and five have M.A.s. Current occupations include a bilingual speech therapist in a hospital, a social worker who works with immigrants and with foster care, a computer programmer, a clerk/receptionist at the Department of Employment Services, a computer systems manager at the National Institutes of Health, a freelancer in organizational development, a poet and playwright, a porter. Participants from this period who are currently employed by LAYC work as a teacher at the LAMB Charter School, as the Deputy Director of the Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers in Silver Spring, as a teacher at the Next Step Charter School, as systems manager for LAYC, and as assistant principal at McFarland Middle School, until recently director of educational enhancement at LAYC.

Youth who attended LAYC between 1988 and 1997 ⁷

Of the 15 youth interviewed who attended LAYC between 1988 and 1997, five were born in the United States of parents who were immigrants and 10 were born overseas. Eight arrived undocumented to the United States, five from El Salvador and three from Mexico. When they arrived, three were in their early to mid-teens; two were 12; one was 11; one was eight, and one was four.

Similar to the youth who attended LAYC in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, several of those who came undocumented to the United States have vivid memories of life in El Salvador during the war and of coming over the border from Mexico.

Alvin Alvarado: When I was around 12 or 13 the lady who took care of us had a cousin who

⁷ For this section, we have pooled the 10 former youth chosen randomly with 7 former youth now on LAYCs staff, a total of 17 youth, 8 of whom are females and 9 males.

worked for the army. He was a civilian. The army and civilians who worked for it would go out and grab people. They had a specific date when they did that. He used to let us know when this was going to happen so that we did not to go out. I didn't go to school. I had to stay in our house. For my age, I was tall, and because of my height, they assumed I was older. Sometimes they grab you because of your height.

Ronald Chacon: We came because of the war. My father worked at a printer. They made fliers for the FMLN. I had two uncles in the university who were very involved in the guerilla movement. Problems began, and the military started killing their companions in the university. I remember they removed a woman naked from the university and put her in a car. She was not heard of again. I remember seeing dead people. Sometimes they arrived at night with torches. There were confrontations in the streets; a state of emergency was declared. We began sleeping on the floor when we heard gun fights at night. I remember playing with bullets that we found on the ground. We exploded them with stones but weren't hurt.

Marta Sanchez: We went to Tijuana. It was a long bus ride. We came with our aunts, uncles, and cousins, 25 in total. My mother, who had been in the United States for several years working as a domestic, paid for everyone to come with her life savings of approximately \$30,000. I remember us looking for a coyote to bring us over the border. We got someone. We went under a tree to avoid the lights. We got in a car and went to a laundry where we hid. In California, we had to run across a big highway. There was a helicopter overhead.

Upon arriving in Washington, D.C., 10 of 16 lived with their mothers who worked long hours as either domestics or as cooks in restaurants. They lived in cramped quarters and at times found themselves lacking food.

Marta Sanchez: When I came, one of my older sisters was already here. She had come here with my mom when she was 12. She was now 19 and married and with a baby. We all came to her apartment. My mom was a live-in housekeeper. We were 15 people living in a one-bedroom apartment on Columbia Road. We were unsupervised.

Jesus Amaya: Since I can remember, life hasn't been that easy. We were very poor. My mother was working two to three jobs. She hardly got to see us kids. There was limited food on the table. On Saturday mornings, we would go to the Clínica del Pueblo to get leftover groceries.

Life continued to be tough on the streets and in school, especially for the boys. Many recall being hassled by their African American classmates and taking steps to defend themselves. Most recall being exposed to gangs and drugs.

Rudi Contreras: School was a little rough when I was growing up. The African Americans bullied the Hispanics. They were nasty to us. They were the majority in the school. We were the underdog. I remember getting bullied. They would take my lunch money. It was hard for me to focus, as young as I was. There were gangs, drugs, everything.

Alvin Alvarado: I went to Cardozo High School. There was segregation, also, in the neighborhood where we lived. There were bad experiences. I got tired of what was happening in the neighborhood. I and my friends decided to do something. We got golf clubs, machetes, and went outside. The African Americans came towards us. We started throwing stuff at them. When they saw we had all this stuff, they started running. We all had our own sling shots. We started throwing rocks at them. Some got hit on their ribs. They fell down. The next day everything

went to normal. There were no more incidents. We wanted respect from the African Americans.

Several of the former youth interviewed got involved with gangs and drugs. One of the more popular places for the drug dealers was at the corner of 15th and Irving Streets NW, two doors away from where LAYC was located.

Alex Iraheta: Through a friend, I met a group that I wanted to meet. I wanted to be friends with them because they were “cool.” We wanted to be like them. They were also Hispanics but they were different. To be their friends, you had to dress like them. I started working part-time to earn money to buy the type of clothing they had. Little by little, I found out they were smoking marihuana, that they were selling drugs. I started becoming familiar with drugs.

Luis Castellanos: From the time I was 13, I didn’t get along with my stepdad. I hung out in parks, played football, did a little drugs, some drinking. I got involved with certain friends who grew up playing basketball. We had to protect our ass if we are out there at night. Another group of guys were thinking we were a gang. For some reason, we were labeled as a gang. This was 1993. We listened to a rap group. We all wore similar shirts. We started getting into conflicts, primarily after dark. The conflicts were primarily between Latinos. We had gangs in the streets. They were drug dealing. Most needed people to look out. There were a growing number of gangs formed and violence. The violence was over turf and drugs.

Of the participants who attended LAYC between 1988 and 1997, four dropped out of high school; one has a GED; four are high school graduates; one has some college; one is in college; and two have B.A.s. Occupations include: cash register clerk, relationship person at BB&T, special education consultant academic dean of the Cesar Chavez Public Charter School, Roving Leader, server in a restaurant, and car parker at an automobile dealer. Former participants now on LAYC’s staff have the following positions: assistant director of LAYC’s AmeriCorps program, youth outreach worker with gang-related youth and director of girl’s leadership program for gang-involved youth, administrative assistant to the director of the Social Services Division, artist and night shift supervisor at ILP, youth outreach worker working with gang-related youth, computer programmer, coordinator of the fine arts program at the Art +Media House.

Youth who attended LAYC between 1998 and 2006

With the exception of two youth LAYC who appear to live middle class lives, living at or below the poverty line continues to be the norm. As with youth in prior years, parents work in blue collar jobs, and families tend to be crowded into small apartments. Some of the youth interviewed are faced with drug and gang issues on a daily basis. Others are aware of drug and gang issues but do not have to confront them. Eight of the ten youth interviewed were born in the United States, two of African American parents whose families have lived in the United States for generations and the remaining six of parents who immigrated either from Latin America or Africa. Two came to the United States undocumented, both from El Salvador.

When interviewed, six were in high school; one had dropped out of high school but subsequently got a GED through LAYC; one was a junior in college; and one had recently graduated from college.

Although they were born as the civil war was coming to a close, the two youth who came from El Salvador had recollections similar to those of Salvadoran youth from earlier periods.

Hector Umana: Life in San Miguel wasn’t that good. I didn’t have freedom. I didn’t have much in the way of clothes. There wasn’t much money. Sometimes I would go out with my friends I used to work in the fields on the farm. I began working when I was 10 years old. The war was

going on when I was born. I have no memories of the war.

Jose Rosales: I came to the United States in 1994. We crossed a river. The coyotes paid the immigration cops. After crossing we were staying at this place, my mom, my aunt, and myself. The guy staying with us told my mother and my aunt that if they didn't sleep with him he would call immigration. My stepdad came the next day and put us on a Greyhound bus, and we came to D.C. Immigration stops the bus. They locked us in rooms and interrogated us. They let us go, but we had court dates.

The transition to life in the United States was difficult for these youth:

Jose Rosales: We got to Washington, D.C. The first night we stood outside of 7-Eleven. It was freezing. It was the end of February, and we had no coats. We were getting coffee. My stepdad was going crazy looking for a place to stay. The next day he got a place. We stayed there for a week. Eventually, he started working again. We got an efficiency apartment on 16th Street. For a while after that my mom got odd jobs. They eventually got work permits and through the help of many people they got a lawyer and eventually got papers.

Females and males have different observations regarding the gang and drug scenes at their schools.

Catherine Mithita, a junior at Wilson High School: Were there gangs and drugs? Not anymore. Things have gotten better over the years. The gang thing will come and then go. People aren't into gangs these days. They don't bring it into school. Drugs have also decreased from last year. These days it's smoking.

Reginald Taylor: We returned to D.C. when I was 15. We moved to Maryland where I went to Fairmont Heights. It was a rough school. I focused on my work, and that's what made me do well. There were a lot of fights; the teachers didn't handle the students. I didn't get into gang stuff because I was playing sports.

B. LAYC’s Contribution to the Lives of Youth Interviewed

<i>Responses in descending frequency order</i>	<i>Number of youth</i>
• At LAYC, people were caring; there was someone to talk to, listen to, give advice	28
• I acquired knowledge, professional skills	19
• I was given opportunities, exposure, LAYC opened doors	18
• LAYC provided me a second home, a welcoming environment, a place where I felt safe	15
• Through LAYC, I made friends	13
• At LAYC, I was challenged/pushed to succeed	13
• Through LAYC, I gained familiarity with community issues/an appreciation of the need to give back	11
• Through LAYC, I was able to increase my self-confidence/acquire a sense of identity	8
• At LAYC, I was able to learn about/respect other cultures/ traditions	7
• The LAYC experience was transformational/life changing; it made me what am today	7
• Thanks to LAYC I didn’t get involved in gangs or drugs or drop out of school	7
• Through LAYC, I acquired role models/mentors	6
• Adults at LAYC provided me with guidance/support that my parents couldn’t provide	5

A summary of youth development literature by Bonnie Polity, Director of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development, corroborates what data from this case study demonstrates regarding how has LAYC contributed to the lives of youth interviewed:

What you need is consistent and caring relationships with adults, high expectations for young people to succeed, having a sense of belonging and membership, having active and engaging youth-adult relationships (and with the environment in general), as well as good information and services.

People were caring; there was someone to talk to, listen to, give advice

Twenty-eight of the youth participants interviewed stated that at LAYC they were able to find one or more adults who cared, who they could talk to, who would listen to them, give them advice. This observation was made by youth who attended LAYC in all four time periods and more frequently by females (16) females than males (12). This is consistent with one of the central tenets of youth development literature. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time, one of the leading national organizations focused on the evaluation of out-of-school programming, found that supportive and caring relationships “are perhaps the most fundamental components of any successful programmatic environment.”⁸

Jeannette Perez (1978-87): *The adults at LAYC were friendly to the youth. I could walk into Lori’s office as a 15-year-old, and she would say “How is it going?” You never saw her as a distant director but as someone you could easily sit down and talk with. It was true of everyone at LAYC.*

⁸ National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and Forum for Youth Investment, *Promoting Positive Youth Development as a Support to Academic Achievement*, September 2002.

Jessica Osorio (1988-1997): *What I like is that you can always go to people like Lori, Diane, Millie, and Chico and talk to them. If they couldn't be right there to help you, they would figure out how to help you with whatever problem you had.*

Karen Hinklin (1998-2006): *I really appreciated the fact that they cared. For students whose parents did not go to college, they provided a great guidance in the college process. They even assisted my mother in filling out paperwork.*

Acquire knowledge, professional skills

Thirteen women and six men commented that LAYC provided them with an opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge. While mentioned across all time periods, this observation came most frequently from youth currently enrolled in or recently at LAYC. Five youth, four from the 1980s, indicated that LAYC had been particularly helpful to them in terms of assisting them with public speaking.

Ronald Chacon (1989-1997, currently employed by LAYC): *I acquired many skills: typing, graphic design, coordinating, management, being able to talk eloquently to others. LAYC allowed me to learn these things on my own.*

Reginald Taylor (1998-2006): *LAYC has helped me. I had interviews last week at CVS at Dupont Circle. All the questions they gave us for practice interviews at WISE were actually asked. It made me feel calmer since I had the questions before. It helped me look for jobs that are better paying.*

Alba Ramirez (1998-2006, currently employed by LAYC): *LAYC developed me professionally. The way you talk to parents is different than the way you talk to employers. The way you dress, how to talk to organizations, how to ask for donations, networking skills.*

Opportunities, exposure, opened doors

Ten of the interviewees who made these comments were women, and eight were men. They came from all time periods.

Quique Avilés (1978-1987) *I'm independent. I do my own thing. I'm an artist. I'm not a janitor or a mechanic. I'm a poet and an actor. I owe it to the many doors that the Youth Center opened for me or pointed me to.*

Marta Sanchez (1989-1997): *All you see is kids not going to college. You need to be exposed to something different, for someone to say, "Here it is; take it". That's all we needed. That's what made the change in others. Someone who guides you and tells you, "You can do it. Here it is. You are going to do it."*

This finding also is supported by The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST): “Children and youth need challenging experiences that are appropriate and diverse and that provide them with opportunities to try new things, build skills and experience an increasing sense of competency.”⁹

Provided a second home, a welcoming environment, a place where one felt safe

Mentioned by 15 youth, 11 men and four women, this was a frequent theme among youth at LAYC in the 1980s and the early 1990s. Many of these youth had come traumatized from the war in Central America. Most lived with one parent, usually the mother, who was working and not always available.

Quique Avilés (1978-1987): *I don't think I could have gone someplace else. It was my family, my life. I felt safe, secure. It was energizing.*

Maria Bernal (1989-1997, currently a member of LAYC staff): *I feel like LAYC is my home. It's here that I spend most of my time. It's like this is a very close family, a place with a great deal of warmth.*

Edwin Perez (1988-1997, former member of LAYC staff): *Everyone plays a role. When I was a part of the Youth Center, I used to love coming here. It was a home away from home. I had brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles that I didn't have in real life. It was a warm family feeling. Everyone was so nice. You could talk to people. They were always smiling. There was a sense of caring.*

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time has determined that youth need to feel both physically and psychologically safe in the settings where they receive their programming. In addition, “it is critical that programs provide a predictable structure and caring adults that children and youth can expect and rely on.”¹⁰

Challenged/pushed to succeed

Thirteen of the youth interviewed, mostly from the 1980s, pointed out that one of the things LAYC did was to challenge them, to push them to succeed. Eight of 13 who made this comment were males.

This, again, is supported by the NIOST study: “Young people benefit from being in settings where adults have high expectations and hold them to clear standards. Effective after-school programs are intentional about creating a culture of high expectations that affirms the potential of each participant and communicates clear expectations and standards concerning participation and behavior.”¹¹

⁹ National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and Forum for Youth Investment, *Promoting Positive Youth Development as a Support to Academic Achievement*, September 2002.

¹⁰ National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and Forum for Youth Investment, *Promoting Positive Youth Development as a Support to Academic Achievement*, September 2002.

¹¹ National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and Forum for Youth Investment, *Promoting Positive Youth Development as a Support to Academic Achievement*, September 2002.

Samuel Mercedes (1978-1987): *I felt challenged. Every single time you went there you felt challenged. It wasn't like overbearing. You would want to be challenged. I enjoyed it. I had a good time.*

Rosa Flecha (1978-1987) *The Youth Center was involved in so many things, teaching everyone freedom of speech. For some of our parents, it worried them. They thought we would get killed if we speak out. LAYC was pushing the envelope. We rallied and petitioned. {When the Department of Health Services cut LAYC's funding abruptly} we had youth out there picketing to get our money back.*

Ernest Yombo: (1978-1987, continued as LAYC staff and then as LAYC senior management until 2005). *They see what I can do. They always challenged me to see if I can do this. They told me: Be a risk taker; do what you want to do. I am a risk taker. I believe in choice, challenge, chance, change, and communication. I have a choice to do whatever I want to do, can do it or not. They gave me chance to do it. They gave me an opportunity to change. They challenged me, and I challenged myself.*

Make friends

Thirteen of the youth interviewed, mostly from the 1970s and 1980s (eight women and five men), mentioned that LAYC was a place where they could make/hang out with friends.

Ana Maria Aguilar (1968-1977): *The Center gave me a lot of good friends, and that is very important. Through the years, we have been in contact.*

Maritza Mercedes (1988-1997): *I couldn't wait to go there. I had a lot of friends. On days that I didn't have to go to work still we went, just to see Dianne and Lori, to hang out.*

Learn, gain familiarity with community issues, appreciate the need to give back

Twelve of the former youth interviewed, nine women and three men, commented that their experience at LAYC opened their eyes to community issues and the need to give back. Civic conscience and activism was deliberately woven throughout the LAYC curriculum in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. It was also an important theme in arts and leadership programs throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s.

Sonia Picado (1968-1977): *There was always a purpose. We had projects that helped the community. We were not just going for the sake of going there.*

Claudia Carcamo (1978-1987, currently a teacher at LAMB Public Charter School): *There were many things I didn't know. LAYC helped me keep my mind open on a lot of topics, not to look at things in black or white but instead see all sides, be conscious of everything that was happening in the community, all that one can do to be an agent of change, be aware of not only what is happening here but what is happening in other countries.*

Jeannette Perez (1988-1997): *In Latinegro we dealt with social issues that affected the community. They were teaching us to let others know this is going on: racism; HIV/AIDs, which was huge; police brutality. Through theater you were getting your message across. It was a different way of looking at theater. Being able to carry that message to other communities was a good experience.*

Increase in self-confidence/identity

Eight women and two men commented that the LAYC experience had given them an opportunity to increase their self-confidence. For some youth recently arrived from Latin America and much in a minority in their communities and schools, LAYC helped give them a sense of identity.

Oscar Najera (1968-1977): *It gave us a sense of identity, who we are. Arturo had a lot of ideas on how to promote ourselves as Hispanics. He would select four or five kids and say, "This is what we are going to do to promote this idea. We are going to try to get this for the community." He was going to change things in the community.*

Marta Ferman (1978-1987): *One day Lisa found me crying in her office. She said, "Don't be afraid. Why are you crying? Let's find something you want to do. This is a learning experience. I don't expect you to have everything perfect."*

Ensa Ortiz (1988-1997): *I was a victim of domestic violence. LAYC helped me to believe in myself, exercise self control and not hurt others, as well as move forward without having someone who was helping me all the time.*

Opportunity to learn about/respect other cultures/ traditions

Seven of the youth interviewed, five of them women, commented that at LAYC they learned about other cultures and traditions. Although this was particularly important to youth attending LAYC in the late 1960s and early 1970s, LAYC has continued to place a strong value on the importance of respecting other cultures and traditions.

Leyla Perez (1968-1977): *I came to know people from many nationalities; I made friends with them. I learned about other cultures. I had never been to El Salvador. I didn't know their customs. The same was true for the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and other countries.*

Jose Rosales (1998-2006): *LAYC made a huge difference for me. It is hard to see kids on the streets and judge them without knowing where they come from. At LAYC I learned enough stories, excuses for what they were doing, that it is not OK to steal, stab, and vandalize. Some of them didn't know another life.*

Reginald Taylor (1998-2006): *I really liked the place. It's like a mixture of different races, black people, white, Hispanics. Everyone gets along. Everyone is there for the same reasons. No one can down you about you are getting your GED because they are there for the same reasons.*

Transformational/life changing experience; LAYC made me what am today

Seven of the former participants interviewed, two women and five men, commented that their affiliation with LAYC had been life-changing.

Rafael Solano (1978-1977): *Through Jose Sueiro, there were music programs, clinics. That's how I got started in my musical career. I guess I owe a lot to the Youth Center for that. As a result I have been able to work with a lot of name acts, important people in the industry: Ricky Martin, Paquito de Rivera, Placido Domingo, Gloria Stefan, Stevie Wonder. I have toured the world, Africa, Latin America, various countries in Europe.*

Marta Ferman (1978-1987): *LAYC contributed to making me who I am. It was through LAYC that I got myself involved in different things. I was told, for example, that I could volunteer to interpret for doctors at La Clínica del Pueblo who didn't speak Spanish. I got training for six to eight weeks on how to do intake, take temperature, blood pressure, medical history. It gave me great satisfaction that I could help people, satisfaction in women's faces when I interpreted for them with a male doctor: the look of "Thank you. You have made a great difference."*

Quique Avilés (1978-1987): *If I hadn't been there, I wouldn't be the artist I am now. LAYC gave me the opportunity to believe in my voice. It reassured me that my voice did matter, that kids could be taken seriously. It gave me a lot of tools that to this day I have to go back and re-use for my own artistic survival. I don't think I would be sitting with you here if Latinegro hadn't been possible. It could only have happened in the context of the Youth Center.*

Kept me from getting into gangs or drugs or dropping out of school

Seven of the former participants interviewed, all men, commented that LAYC helped them avoid getting into gangs or drugs. Five of these seven also volunteered that LAYC was home to them. Four reported that in LAYC they found people who believed in them, cared about them, gave them hope and help when they needed help. Three indicated that LAYC challenged them, gave them responsibility.

Rolando Villars (1968-1977): *I didn't end up in jail. I went to high school. I got a good job. The talks LAYC did shaped a part of this.*

Nestor Flores (1978-1987): *I would have been out on the streets with friends. I probably would have gotten into trouble. A lot of my friends are either dead, in jail, or deported.*

Chico Diaz (1978-1987, currently on LAYC staff): *If there hadn't been a place to protect me, I might have done bad things. I would have had more time to go out with friends. I might have gotten into trouble. There were always problems with drugs and gangs. The era of crack had begun.*

Role model/mentor

For six of the youth interviewed, three women, three men, what stood out was they found role models and mentors in LAYC staff who through their actions inspired young people to want to follow their footsteps.

Ana Maria Aguilar (1968-1977): *It gave me the opportunity to develop myself. At that age, I needed guidance, and I needed people to look up to. I had Erasmo and Arturo who were a bit older than us. They went through things before we did. They could advise, guide us.*

Alex Iraheta (1988-1997, and former LAYC staff member): *It was our home. They were my mentors. It has been a source of inspiration to me to move forward. If I hadn't had the support I received from LAYC, I would be on drugs, in jail. They saw the potential in me. Within six months, I had learned the guitar and was singing in festivals. This makes a young person believe in what he is doing. He sees himself as someone who is worth something, that there is a mission in life.*

Adults provided me with guidance/support that parents couldn't provide

Five of the youth interviewed, three women and two men, pointed out that through LAYC they were able to get help that their parents, due to lack of knowledge of the United States and/or their low level of education, couldn't provide.

Isabel de la Rosa (1968-1977): *Arturo and Garber helped us. My parents only went to first grade. Many of our parents were poor; many were illiterate. The Center was a great help to us.*

Marta Ferman (1978-1987): *There were things my parents didn't expose me to. LAYC gave me great exposure to these things.*

Overall, the most significant impacts were reported by youth who had participated at LAYC for a long period of time or had exposure to a number of LAYC's programs.

- Five of the seven youth who reported that LAYC had a transformational impact on their lives were hired as staff. Their total time with LAYC, as youth and employees, ranged from 16 to 22 years.
- The other two youth who reported that LAYC had a transformational impact on their lives participated for five and six years respectively and in three to nine program offerings.
- For those that reported that LAYC kept them from getting into gangs or doing drugs, the data are similar: four of seven subsequently joined LAYC's staff. Their total time with LAYC ranges from 13 to 20 years. The other three youth participated at LAYC between four and seven years.

Chapter IV

LAYC's Strengths, Challenges, and Lessons Learned



A Geography class at LAYC's Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School (Rick Reinhard)

Highlights

Strengths

- LAYC's top three strengths as seen by those interviewed: (1) a competent and visionary executive director, (2) an organizational culture that listens to youth and places youth as its number one priority, (3) an organizational culture that encourages creativity and risk-taking.¹²
- Other strengths mentioned: (1) solid reputation, (2) perceived as an organization that deliver, (3) networks and builds relationships at all levels, (4) welcoming and safe homelike environment, (5) caring and committed staff, (6) capable, operational board, (7) qualified senior staff, (8) a highly diverse staff serving diverse youth.
- Strengths mentioned less frequently but worthy of note: (1) financially solvent with a steadily increasing budget, (2) hires former participants and moves them into leadership positions, (3) holistic approach to youth development, (4) policy advocate for Latinos in general and Latino youth in particular, (5) designs programs to attract multicultural youth, (6) adapts and evolves with changing times.

¹² Please see Appendices A and B for a description of methodology and a list of individuals interviewed.

Challenges

- Challenges related to growth: (1) maintain a homelike atmosphere, seen by many as a strength; (2) maintain coherence and linkages between many programs; (3) maintain a pulse on the needs of youth; (4) deal with increased external scrutiny; (5) install systems to address increasing growth; (6) balance increasing requirements of funders with creativity and risk taking; (7) convey clarity of vision and mission; (8) convey social change model.
- Challenges associated with funding: (1) manage constant pressure to raise funds in order to assure program continuity; (2) manage multiple funding streams, along with funders' multiple demands and reporting requirements; (3) avoid appearance that funding dictates programming.
- Other challenges: (1) assess outcomes to ensure program quality; (2) address youth advocacy and youth leadership systematically; (3) manage highly innovative, creative staff members ; (4) maintain continuity of innovative programs and other initiatives when staff leave; (5) manage wide-ranging staff-intensive gang outreach and intervention programs; (6) address leadership succession, especially for executive director; and (7) address impact of gentrification of LAYC's neighborhood.

Lessons learned

Applicable to all nonprofit organizations: (1) vision, mission, and set of values that everyone agrees to and understands; (2) visionary, competent executive director; (3) capable and operational board; (4) relationship building at multiple levels to ensure credibility; (4) flexibility to recognize changes, to seek solutions, and take action; (5) ability to grow without compromising an organizational culture that rewards creativity and risk taking; (6) evaluate at each stage of growth what new systems must be developed and implemented; (7) assess and report on outcomes; (8) maintain a diverse funding base; (9) maintain reputation as an organization that delivers; (10) be strategic in fund seeking; (11) establish tiers of capable senior staff.

Applicable to other youth development organizations: (1) youth as number one priority; (2) holistic approach to youth development, that includes parent involvement; (3) safe and homelike welcoming environment; (4) youth advocacy as part of a comprehensive youth development program; (5) high expectations for youth; (6) gang outreach and intervention is complex, requires a wide-ranging approach, and is staff-intensive; (7) qualified staff , including former participants, who care strongly about youth and who serve as role models and mentors; (8) know how to interact with the political system and be able to play a role in shaping policy that benefits the Latino population in general and Latino youth in particular; (9) recognize value of the arts as a means of self-expression, establishing identity, and to address problems and challenges in a multicultural youth program.

A. STRENGTHS

LAYC is among the top youth development organizations in Washington, D.C. because:

- **LAYC has a competent and visionary executive director.** (25 interviewees.) Lori Kaplan began as a volunteer at LAYC in 1979. Since 1987, she has been executive director. She is seen as a visionary who is not afraid to take risks and try new things. She is extremely well-connected, is always a step ahead looking at needs, is a champion for Latinos and Latino youth, and does an exceptional job of managing her Board. Kaplan also goes out of her way to help executive directors of other community-based organizations in both the Latino and youth development communities in Washington, D.C. Maria Borrero, a former LAYC Board member, who has served on many Boards and is herself an executive director, says "*Lori is a leader, a visionary. She isn't patronizing; she believes with proper support people can do for themselves. Lori definitely pushed the envelope; this*

was her strength. Lori has positioned herself and the LAYC as an agency that can respond quickly, can do new things, is willing to try to see how a new initiative could be fit into the agency.”

- **LAYC has an organizational culture that listens to youth and places youth as its greatest priority.** (23 interviewees.) LAYC commits itself to the needs of youth, is open to their suggestions, and responds to them. This sentiment is reflected in an observation made by Patricia Bravo, a senior manager from LAYC who is now the executive director of the YouthBuild Public Charter School, “*It is very clear from the top down that what we are looking for is the best for our youth. We are always trying to do what is best for them. Youth are Job One. This makes it an easy environment to work in; we are clear on what is important.*”
- **LAYC has an organizational culture that encourages creativity and risk-taking.** (22 interviewees.) This culture, promoted by the executive director, attracts creative people willing to try new things and gives them the space to experiment, make changes, make a mistake or two. Susan Evans, when interviewed a teacher and now principal of the Next Step Public Charter School says, “*I like the freedom of being able to create based on the needs of kids, the autonomy. This is not a stagnant job. Things are always changing. I can constantly make improvements. We’re allowed to do that.*”
- **LAYC has a solid reputation; it is seen as an organization that delivers.** (13 interviewees.) Alex Wilson, a current member of LAYC’s Board of Directors and until last year Board chair, comments on LAYC’s reputation and how it has been earned: “*The core asset of LAYC is its reputation. It is true to community service. It has been honest in its practices, aggressive in advocacy when needed, collaborative in its approach to working with neighborhood services, and smart as an organization. There is strength in Lori’s leadership. It keeps growing. It has sterling credentials within the philanthropic community and city government.*” His views are echoed by Noel Bravo, current chair of LAYC’s Board: “*LAYC has a tremendous reputation. It has a very strategic focus. They never do anything just to do it. They do what appears will best benefit the youth. LAYC is also very entrepreneurial. They do more and more all the time in a bold way. In addition, LAYC has a huge capacity to be successful in fundraising, operational management, delivering on results.*”
- **LAYC provides a caring and welcoming and safe environment; it is considered by many as home.** (12 interviewees.) A senior manager explains, “*From the moment I walked in, I was welcomed. You felt part of the community right away.*” A former participant currently on staff adds, “*There is a feeling that one belongs here, that you are part of a family, a special place. The Center continues to be my family.*” In addition, several staff indicated how much they appreciate the flexibility that LAYC has given to them to adjust work hours to deal with child care and schooling.
- **Qualified senior staff.** (12 interviewees.) Over recent years, LAYC has hired individuals with excellent credentials to fill newly established senior staff openings. Staff serving as team leaders are equally well-qualified. Isaac Castillo, director of Learning and Evaluation for LAYC comments, “*I am very impressed with the people on the senior management team. People are well qualified in terms of credentials, training, and common sense. This spills to the team leader level. A lot of middle management at LAYC could function as senior level staff in other organizations.*”
- **LAYC has been effective in networking and building relationships at all levels.** (11 interviewees.) This has been a key factor in sustaining credibility. It also has opened doors for funding. According to Gustavo Velasquez, former director of the District’s Office of Latino Affairs (OLA), “*OLA would be ineffectual at the community level without the support of LAYC. LAYC has developed the ability to work at multiple levels (individual, community, policy maker) to build partnerships and develop strategies for providing and improving services. OLA has worked with*

LAYC to develop and deliver the same message to the mayor. This unity of message is important, as it helps with the development of policy.”

- **LAYC has a capable, operational Board.** (8 interviewees.) The nature, composition, and role of LAYC’s Board have evolved. The executive director and Board leadership have done an excellent job selecting a wide range of qualified people to serve on the Board, listening to them, and putting them to work.
- **LAYC has highly diverse staff and youth.** (6 interviewees). Staff as well as its youth are diverse in terms of ethnic background, socio-economic level, and education. This offers many advantages to an organization that prides itself in reaching out to a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic community.
- **LAYC has managed to maintain itself as a financially solvent organization with a steadily increasing budget.** In the early 1970s, LAYC had one funding source, the D.C. Department of Recreation. By 2006, LAYC had a diverse base of well over 80 funders, including national government agencies, D.C. government agencies, Montgomery and Prince George’s County, MD agencies, national foundations, local foundations, corporations, and faith-based groups. In addition, LAYC receives contributions from hundreds of individuals. To maintain its priority programs, LAYC has been able to creatively mesh funding from different sources and adapt different funding streams to meet programming needs. LAYC also has been able to respond to numerous funding sources and their often changing requirements. Finally, LAYC has established a reputation with funders as a quick and reliable responder.
- **LAYC makes an effort to hire former participants as staff and to move them into leadership positions.** Since the organization’s inception, LAYC staff have invested time and effort mentoring participants, several of whom have moved into positions of high responsibility within the agency. In the words of Cynthia Sanchez, a former LAYC youth participant who is currently a member of the LAYC staff, *“They are very caring; they want to see youth succeed. They motivate, and they open doors. The youth might not have experience, but they are willing to give them an opportunity instead of automatically saying no. “You are a youth with a future; let’s see what you have, what we can work with.”*
- **LAYC provides a holistic approach to youth development.** LAYC has developed over time a wide array of programs to serve the diverse needs of youth, addressing education, employment, housing, social services, gang outreach and prevention, and the arts. According to Bonnie Politz, vice president and director of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development, *“LAYC embeds youth development principles and practices throughout the organization. Adults show care and concern for all youth; youth experience a sense of belonging and membership; visible and positive youth-adult interactions are evident on a regular basis; expectations are high for all youth to succeed; and practical, quality services and information are provided.”*
- **LAYC has played an important role in policy advocacy for Latinos in general and Latino youth in particular.** LAYC has positioned itself as a key player, challenging the city to provide services to Latinos. It has a seat at the table on debates concerning the Latino population. According to Roland Roebuck, an employee of the D.C. government who has collaborated for many years with LAYC, *“LAYC becomes sort of a magnet for the government to provide services to the Latino community. LAYC has helped to force the government to focus on that community. Without the Center, I don’t think Latinos would have been as visible.”*

- **LAYC has gone out of its way to attract youth of all ethnicities.** While having special expertise addressing needs of Latino youth, LAYC has always opened its doors to youth from other backgrounds. Sandy Dang, former executive director of Asian American LEAD, started providing services for Asians at LAYC and received extensive assistance from Lori Kaplan to create Asian American LEAD. In line with changing demographics, LAYC attracts a mixture of Latino, African American, African, and multicultural youth.
- **Perhaps most importantly, LAYC has been able to adapt and evolve with changing times.** That LAYC still exists after 37 years and has continued to grow is a testament to its ability to address changing needs and challenges (international, national, local) over the years.

B. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

Growth: A number of challenges relate to LAYC’s astronomical growth. Well aware of these challenges, at times overwhelmed by some, LAYC continually takes steps to address them:

- **The sense of home or belonging, a strength identified by many interviewees, risks getting lost as LAYC grows.** A number of the former youth participants interviewed fondly reminisced on the early days when LAYC was small enough to serve as a substitute nuclear family. Today, with over 150 employees, a family-like environment is difficult to maintain. A number of LAYC’s units, however, especially those with effective leaders, do act as small cohesive families. Lori Kaplan explains, *“As we grow, we are striving to maintain this vision in a multi-site family type environment. We are better able to keep this fabric sewn together if we integrate into our staff people who grew up in the context of the organization and who understand and value the importance of the LAYC family.”*
- **Maintaining coherence and linkages between many programs.** While several LAYC programs do an excellent job of referring youth internally a key finding of the 2003-04 strategic planning exercise was that a number of LAYC’s programs tend to operate in isolation. A coordinated intake system is currently being developed. When operational, this system will assign staff members to act as *promotores* or guides to youth at highest risk, facilitating their enrollment in and movement through the array of appropriate LAYC programs.
- **Maintaining a pulse on the needs of youth as the organization grows.** LAYC has adopted mechanisms that include (1) undertaking needs assessments when designing programs, (2) collecting national and local data to guide programming, (3) holding focus groups designed to explore the specific needs of youth. In addition, staff continues to invite youth to come directly to them to express needs.
- **Dealing with the increased external scrutiny that comes with growth.** As Maria Borrero, former chairman of LAYC’s Board, explains, *“The bigger you are, the more funding you get, the more people who are going to be looking at you: what are your protocols, standards, quality control, hiring practices, education of staff. With more scrutiny, you can’t bring in that recent high school grad with no experience. If you bring that person in, you are competing with folks with a lot more skills.”* To address this challenge, LAYC has increased its ability to create and measure program outcomes. The agency has also increased capacity in its Financial Services and Human Resources departments.
- **Installing systems to address challenges of increasing growth.** Based on recommendations from a 2003-04 strategic planning exercise, LAYC has hired an evaluation staff, a director for its Maryland Multicultural Centers, and a communications expert, all of whom have developed or upgraded

operating systems. In addition, LAYC has expanded its capacity in its IT and Development offices and will hire a human resources director.

- **Addressing funders' requirements that could inhibit creativity and risk taking.** Funding strictures include regulations such as reporting requirements that require staff to spend time behind desks rather than working with youth, rigid guidelines for staff qualifications that make it difficult to groom former participants for staff positions, and limits on populations that can be served. Particularly challenging for LAYC's Social Service Division has been the recent shift in DC Department of Mental Health guidelines from a social service grant delivery model to a fee for service medical model.
- **Addressing funders' increasing demands for quantitative targets, which may be difficult to achieve for those youth at highest risk.** In gang outreach and prevention programs, for example, LAYC is but one of several actors involved and much is out of the control even of the collective actors.
- **Adequately communicating clarity of vision and mission.** While LAYC has written vision and mission statements and organization-wide outcomes, there is a sense among some of those interviewed that vision and mission statements have not been communicated adequately to staff and youth within LAYC or to key individuals outside the agency.
- **Adequately communicating LAYC's youth development model.** An important outcome of LAYC's first strategic planning exercise, conducted between July 2003 and March 2004, was articulation of a social change youth development model. This model operates on the premise that once youth get in the door, their problems and needs will be identified and a program or sequence of programs developed and implemented that addresses those needs. Desired outcomes then can be identified and achieved. A second strategic planning process, undertaken while this case study was in progress, will allow LAYC to create programmatic pathways based on assessment for youth facing the most severe life challenges.

Funding: LAYC is far from alone in its continual struggle to meet payroll and maintain program continuity. That the agency in its 37-year history has yet to lay off any staff member because of lack of funding speaks well for LAYC's ability to attract and manage funding. Nonetheless, challenges remain.

- **Constant pressure to raise funds in order to assure program continuity.** Successful programs require time to develop, yet most funders provide money for short periods, often only one year.
- **Managing multiple funding streams and the consequent reporting requirements of funders.** This challenge has increased as LAYC's portfolio has grown to incorporate more and more programs supported by an increasing variety of funders. As a LAYC senior manager comments, "*How do you make all of this work? It is a complex organization. At first glance people think it's a youth development agency; they have no idea of the complexity of it, the multiple funding stream that in and of itself is incredible.*"
- **Perception that availability of funding dictates LAYC's programming.** LAYC has a disciplined approach for deciding which funding opportunities to pursue: potential funding must support LAYC's mission statement as well as one or more of its outcomes. And yet, as Diane Cottman has observed, LAYC remains open to criticism that it chases funding. She says, "*The challenge remains of making sure that funding supports programs versus dictating programs. We have taken hits from time to time. We are accused of going after the dollar, not looking at the complexity of what we do and how we support what we do.*"

Other challenges:

- **Assessing outcomes and assuring program quality.** Several interviewees within and outside LAYC expressed concern that the quality of LAYC's programs is uneven. One of the outcomes of the strategic planning exercise was a decision to hire a full-time director of evaluation and learning to address this concern and to improve the tracking of results. Since this individual came on board over a year and a half ago, LAYC has made significant progress in establishing a center-wide data base and outcomes tracking system. LAYC can now track demographic information on all participants, as well as program output, such as attendance, and outcome information. Through work with the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation during 2007, LAYC is clarifying its outcomes and deepening its commitment to evaluation.
- **Systematically addressing youth advocacy and leadership.** From LAYC's earliest days, youth were active in promoting youth leadership and advocacy. Today, LAYC continues to play an active role advocating for Latino youth. However, this task is primarily vested in the executive director. Pedro Avilés, a former participant and staff member who played an active role in promoting advocacy with youth in the 1980s, says, *"People with a fire in their belly for community advocacy and organizing are few at LAYC. What can we do to have youth be members of a community, take part in strengthening the community? LAYC has incorporated advocacy into its overall strategy, but they have not been able to do it systemically. Advocacy takes place sporadically and at the staff level. In order to function, advocacy has to be systemic and include the voices of youth."* Recognizing it is missing opportunities to promote youth leadership and civic awareness through advocacy, LAYC recently initiated a youth advocacy program that operates in connection with the Art + Media House. In addition, LAYC plans to hire a director of advocacy.
- **Managing highly creative staff members that are attracted by LAYC's focus on innovation, risk taking, and creativity.** While an organizational culture that rewards creativity and risk taking is a recognized strength of LAYC, there can be risks to hiring highly creative individuals. Diane Cottman, director of the LAMB Public Charter School who has been with LAYC for over 20 years, explains, *"Who does the Youth Center attract as staff? A lot of times, it's this combination of fire fighters, frontier folk. When you have a core of people who are from the Wild West they are not waiting for a trail; their approach is "We'll make a trail." You get five people who want to make trail: How do you manage them? I can be challenging to rein people in. It's OK to be a trailblazer, but not everything has to be a trail."*
- **Maintaining continuity of innovative programs and other initiatives when creative and committed staff leave.** A flip side of encouraging innovation and risk-taking among staff, seen as one of LAYC's biggest strengths, is maintaining the momentum built by these staff after they leave. A number of staff-designed innovative programs in the arts and in leadership ceased to exist after the responsible staff left and were replaced by staff who had other interests or lacked the skills of their predecessors. Recognizing this, the executive director would like to see LAYC establish a culture that values capturing knowledge to assure that when staff move to other positions they leave behind adequate documentation of what they have done.
- **Effectively managing gang outreach and intervention programs, given that they require multiple collaborations and are staff-intensive.** LAYC has in recent years done good work in addressing the needs of gang-involved youth by tapping a wide variety of LAYC and external resources. Examples include provision of mental health and drug treatment services, placement in LAYC's residential housing and two public charter high schools, access to GED and job training programs, and access to LAYC's Art + Media House. Such work is complex, extremely staff-intensive and seriously under-funded.

- **Articulating a youth development model that incorporates parents.** LAYC's strategic plan calls for incorporating parents. Yet this is not yet fully articulated throughout all programs. At the initiative of staff, some programs actively reach out to parents; others do not. A few programs focus specifically on parenting. Aware of this discrepancy, LAYC is working to increase the inclusion of parents and to improve documentation of what it currently does to incorporate families within specific programs.
- **Hiring and maintaining qualified and committed staff.** Like many community-based organizations, LAYC hires as entry level staff young people recently out of college or who have experience working in the community. Entry salaries are low, so many of those hired stay for a few years and then move on to obtain better paying positions, pursue graduate degrees, or due to burnout. For youth who develop close mentoring relationships with these staff, their departure can be quite frustrating. LAYC recently conducted a salary review to determine where salaries are not competitive with the market. Once a human resources director comes on board, that person will assess the agency from an organizational development perspective, be responsible for developing and implementing a staff development plan, and make recommendations for strategies to keep talented young people on for a longer period of time.
- **Grooming former youth participants to move into managerial and leadership positions.** Youth interviewed for this case study suggested that over the years specific staff have gone out of their way to help youth within qualify to become staff members. There is a sense, though, that while this has been done with some youth, others have been left to struggle on their own, and in some cases even fail. The executive director has pointed out that it is important to infuse this ideology of grooming former participants into the operations of LAYC. A priority of the new human resources director will be to develop and implement a program for mentoring former participants who have joined the LAYC staff.
- **Supporting mid-level supervisory staff.** New mid-level staff are often given a great deal of responsibility without having appropriate back-up supports in place. Some thrive in this highly stressful yet highly empowering atmosphere. Others feel overwhelmed, quickly burn out, and then leave. In several cases, senior staff has reached out to mentor and guide new staff, but this seems to depend on the individuals involved. Aware that this is a challenge, the chief operating officer has begun to hold monthly training sessions with team leaders to assist them with on-the-job challenges.
- **Leadership succession: what will happen when the executive director leaves?** Lori Kaplan has been LAYC's executive director since 1987. The LAYC Board is developing a planning document that will articulate the characteristics to be sought in Kaplan's successor when she decides to step down. The document also will specify a time frame for preparing for and hiring her successor once Kaplan makes the decision to leave.
- **Neighborhood gentrification.** When LAYC moved into Columbia Heights in the late 1970s, the neighborhood was a low-income area where a number of Latinos, many of them undocumented immigrants, resided. Over the years, as a Metro stop was opened on the corner of 14th and Irving Streets NW, the neighborhood has become fashionable, and property values have risen. Low-income Latinos have moved to outlying neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, where rents are lower. To address this, LAYC has decided to maintain its current anchor site, while establishing programs in other D.C. areas, such as Ward 4, and in Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

C. LESSONS LEARNED

The growth and evolution of LAYC since its inception in 1969, its many successes, and the opportunities and challenges it has faced along the way serve as a rich laboratory for garnering lessons that can help other programs that adopt a comprehensive approach to assisting youth. A number of the lessons learned are generic and have relevance to any nonprofit organization that has gone through the growth that LAYC has experienced over its 37 years of existence. Several apply specifically to organizations that focus on assisting youth.

Lessons learned applicable to all nonprofit organizations

Vision and leadership:

- **It is important to develop and clearly communicate within and outside the organization a vision, mission, and set of values that everyone agrees upon.** A part of a comprehensive strategic planning exercise carried out in 2003 and 2004, LAYC developed a vision and mission statement. Communicating this statement within and outside of the organization in the face of dramatic growth and a constantly changing external environment has not been easy. The executive director is aware of the importance of clearly communicating LAYC's vision within and outside the organization and, with senior staff, is taking steps to address this challenge.
- **A visionary, competent executive director who remains with the organization for an extended period to provide continuity is critical, but it is important to prepare for succession.** Kaplan is one of several highly competent and visionary nonprofit executive directors in the District of Columbia. She is highly regarded within and outside LAYC. Her presence at LAYC for over 27 years, 19 of those as executive director, has provided valuable stability and continuity. However, there will be a time when a successor will have to be named. It will be critical to select the right person who can continue to move this complex and dynamic organization forward.
- **A capable, operational board that has a good relationship with the executive director and is used well can be of enormous help to an organization.** Identifying and attracting qualified individuals with the mix of needed skills to serve on a Board of Directors of a community-based organization always is a challenge. Equally challenging is to find people who have the time to contribute, as is getting them to become substantively involved in roles within the organization that are appropriate for Board members. Finally, it is important to find Board members who are able to be supportive of the executive director and at the same time provide that leader with constructive feedback and guidance. To Kaplan's credit, the executive director and the Board members have achieved these delicate balances and the Board has played an important role in moving the organization forward.
- **Leadership in networking and building relationships at all levels is important for credibility and fundraising.** This has been a key strength of LAYC. There is no substitute for the trust and good will that is built by actively networking and building relationships with other organizations and key leaders in one's community.
- **It is important to find a balance between a desire to serve all identified needs and an obligation not to overwhelm the organization.** LAYC has grown rapidly in the last 19 years, from an organization with a budget of \$600,000 and 12 to 15 programs in 1987, to a budget of \$11 million and 50 programs in 2006. It has been quick to respond to needs that emerge among youth and to take advantage of opportunities. At times this stretches existing staff who are asked to incorporate new

initiatives into their existing portfolios. Balancing growth to respond to identified needs without stretching staff beyond their capacity or risking dilution of program quality will always be a challenge faced by any agile organization undergoing rapid growth.

Management:

- **Flexibility is critical to continuity and longevity, enabling the organization to recognize signs of change, seek out solutions, and take action.** LAYC would not be the organization that it is today had it not maintained throughout its growth a posture of accepting and seeking to meet challenges. This has required flexibility, openness to change, and an ability to take action and risks, often within an uncertain context.
- **An organization geared to meeting evolving needs must be prepared to go through multiple stages of growth and at each stage assess and put in place appropriate systems.** LAYC was established as an informal grouping of creative, idealistic individuals with a vision and a passion for youth and social change. At the beginning, there were few, if any management systems in place. Over the years, LAYC has had to put in place management systems that correspond to the organization's stage of growth.
- **It is important to provide structure in a growing organization without stifling creativity and risk taking.** Multiple demands of funders accompanied by increasingly cumbersome but necessary management systems can easily put a straightjacket on an organization that prides itself on and has grown and thrived by hiring and rewarding staff who are creative and risk takers.
- **Assessing and reporting on outcomes, and securing staff to oversee this process is important for assuring program quality and responding to funders' reporting requirements.** LAYC is has (a) hired a full-time senior manager to assume responsibility for quality oversight and outcomes reporting; (b) obtained funding for additional staff to assist in this area; (c) identified three common outcomes that all programs should address; (d) created systems to collect data to report on these outcomes. However, as LAYC is finding, it is important to develop and present to funders outcomes that make sense for the organization, as opposed to taking valuable time to collect and report on outcomes driven by funders.
- **While being held accountable for quantifiable outcomes is important, funders need to understand that not-so-easily quantifiable outcomes also are important.** Funders applying undue pressure on organizations to reach unrealistic targets would be advised to revisit the literature, talk to staff, and consider the best approach for assessing accountability and measuring results.

Funding:

- **Having a reputation as an organization that delivers is important.** This reputation has made some funders who ordinarily might not fund a new initiative more comfortable with opening a door to LAYC, an organization that thrives on taking risk—and produces results.
- **Maintaining a diverse funding base is critical to an organization's longevity.** This is the only way that LAYC has been able to grow and thrive. LAYC has over 80 funding sources supporting its 50 programs. To assure continuity in funding important programs and to reduce stress on the organization and staff, it would be ideal to have an endowment that permits the organization to reduce its dependence on short-term grants and on funders' changing priorities.

- **It is important to be strategic in seeking funding and to resist adapting to trends that don't fit the agency's vision.** Realizing how important it is to be strategic in both seeking and accepting funds, AYC has created a matrix of criteria to be used for deciding whether or not to embrace new programmatic opportunities. The elements of this matrix are listed in Chapter V.

Staffing:

- **As an organization becomes larger and more complex, it is important to establish a tier of capable senior staff.** LAYC's current executive director has been open to suggestions regarding the need to establish new senior management positions, to fill them with qualified people, and to delegate to them responsibility to develop and implement needed systems. In 1997, at the urging of the Board, Kaplan hired a deputy director to assume oversight of internal aspects of the organizations while she focused on fundraising and external contacts. Further senior staff positions were established following the strategic planning exercise carried out in 2003 and 2004.

Lessons learned for youth development programs.

Vision/leadership:

- **It is important to keep youth a number one priority, to constantly reach out to youth and identify their needs, and to reflect their voices in programming.** As the literature has shown, the most effective youth development agencies are those that program activities around the needs of youth, reflecting the suggestions of youth in this process. This has been a strength of LAYC. Former participants tell many stories of how in early years they identified new program needs and in several cases helped develop grant proposals for programs. It is also an area of challenge, as funding opportunities often must be responded to quickly, at times without the desired input from youth.
- **While LAYC's focus has been on Latino youth, it had the foresight not to restrict its programs to Latino youth.** All low-income immigrant and minority youth are in need of the multiple services that LAYC provides. It would be inappropriate for a youth development agency to turn non-Latino youth away when needed services are not available in the community. In its expansion to Montgomery and Prince George's counties, LAYC has made a decision to reflect its focus in its title: Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers.
- **It is important to be able to open doors, to know how to interact with political systems, and to be able to play a role in shaping policy that benefits the Latino population in general and Latino youth in particular.** LAYC has been adept over the years at identifying the needs of Latino youth and playing a policy role to encourage the D.C. government to bring needed services to these youth. That LAYC has reached out to advocate not just for Latino youth but for the needs of the Latino population in general has brought credibility and a sense that the organization is not operating merely out of its own interests.

Management:

- **It is vital to take a holistic approach to youth development, ensuring that youth voices are heard in all that the organization does.** Such an approach makes possible a successful transition to adulthood, where young people are able to support themselves financially, engage in healthy social relationships, and contribute to their communities. Taking such an approach, constantly reaching out to meet the changing needs of youth has been an LAYC strategy since its early years, long before this became a widely acknowledged axiom in the youth development literature. Maintaining this holistic approach and in the process assuring that programs offered are developed in a comprehensive and

integrated fashion is a challenge for youth organizations such as LAYC that undergo rapid expansion. Further, it is important to track organizational effectiveness and take action to ensure that there are appropriate linkages between programs.

- **As service delivery expands, it is important to ensure that programs that promote youth leadership and advocacy remain a part of a comprehensive youth development program.** Programs that promote advocacy are important vehicles for team building, for challenging youth, and for encouraging critical thinking. They also provide important opportunities for youth to acquire skills in leadership and public speaking. Youth advocacy also can be an important vehicle for social outreach. One of LAYC's early strengths was its ability to involve youth in community advocacy as part of its leadership programming. The impact on youth who participated in leadership and advocacy programs attest to the benefits

Program:

- **It is important to maintain a welcoming environment, a sense of home and safety for youth.** Being a welcoming, safe place, a home away from home, has been an important priority for LAYC since its inception. Maintaining a welcoming environment and a sense of home as an organization undergoes dramatic growth requires special attention..
- **It is important to set high expectations for youth.** A repeated theme in interviews with former participants, echoing the youth development literature, is that LAYC set high expectations for them and challenged them to meet those expectations. Maintaining this kind of environment continues to be a priority and a challenge for LAYC.
- **A youth development model that incorporates parents should be effectively articulated and implemented.** Again a lesson learned from the youth development literature, LAYC has incorporated parents into its youth development model, and a number of its programs are doing so. Assuring that other programs appropriately incorporate parents remains a challenge yet to be addressed.
- **Effective gang outreach and intervention is complex, requires a wide-ranging approach, and staff-intensive.** There is no magic bullet for weaning youth from gangs. Trust must be established, and this often does not come easily. Each youth's situation needs to be carefully assessed, and a strategy needs to be developed to assist the youth to unlink from gang life. This work requires patience; good weeks when youth seem to be making progress may be followed by bad weeks when they appear to backslide. Equally important, experience shows that organizations like LAYC are just one part of the equation. To be effective in gang prevention and intervention, it is necessary to collaborate with other community-based organizations and with local police and other justice authorities, which may be difficult.
- **The arts can be of tremendous value as a means of self-expression, establishing identity, and addressing problems and challenges faced by youth in a program that serves youth of various ethnic backgrounds.** What makes LAYC's arts experience perhaps unique is the comprehensive approach it has taken to weaving arts into its programming. Over the years, the dramatic and visual arts have become a vehicle for instilling in Latino youth reaffirmation and pride in the rich artistic heritage of their countries. For example, mural painting and street theatre, introduced to the U.S. in the 1970s and early 1980s from the Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina, Peru), was early on incorporated into LAYC's programs. Art has been used to help youth address racial issues and tensions, a prime example being the Latinegro street theater program that from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s helped participating Latino and African American youth work through their conflicts.

Art has also served as a way of helping youth address health issues. Finally, for many of the youth interviewed, through LAYC they have been able to identify and develop their talents and move into successful careers in the arts.

Staffing:

- **Incorporating former youth participants as staff can contribute tremendously to a youth development organization.** Former participants are in the best position to understand the needs and desires of youth, to relate to them, and to represent their needs in programming. LAYC, from its inception, has made a special effort to move promising youth into staff positions and where appropriate to groom them to assume positions of increased responsibility. As LAYC has learned over the years, it is important to think strategically and not to move former participants into positions of increased responsibility before they have the needed skills.
- **It is of critical importance to attract and maintain qualified staff who care strongly about youth and who serve as role models and mentors.** Interviewed youth indicated that having staff who were there for youth, who challenged them, was critical in making a difference in their lives. Most troubling for youth who had developed trusting relationships with staff they saw as mentors were situations where the staff member would leave after a short period of time.
- **A staff development program is vital.** Given that staff are the number one asset of a youth development organization, a culture should exist complemented by adequate funds that provides staff with the mentoring and training they need to be effective in their jobs. LAYC always has tried to create staff development opportunities. This can be difficult in an atmosphere with limited funding where funders feel that administrative costs must be kept to a minimum. With new funding from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, LAYC will hire a human resources director responsible for designing and implementing a comprehensive staff development program.

Chapter V: Looking Toward the Future



Youth enrolled in the LAYC YouthBuild Public Charter School at work in housing construction. (Rick Reinhard)

That LAYC has continued to grow and thrive for 37 years is a testament to its ability to identify and take prompt action to address key challenges. LAYC has time and time again shown the agility to recognize

the evolving needs of its client population: low-income immigrant and minority youth. As new youth needs have emerged, LAYC quickly has found resources and developed programs. Also, LAYC's leadership has recognized the need to progressively develop structures and systems to be able to effectively manage growth.

LAYC faces two significant challenges that will be key to future growth:

- (1) Adapting its managerial and administrative structure and systems to keep pace with the dramatic growth that has taken place in programs, staffing, and funding and that is projected to continue in the foreseeable future;
- (2) Addressing changes in demographics among the Latino population in the Washington area.

To address both sets of challenges, LAYC has built on the multiple lessons it has learned throughout its existence. In addition, LAYC wisely has sought out the advice of outside expertise in areas where it has determined it has needed assistance.

A. Adapting LAYC's structure and systems to keep pace with growth

When LAYC began in 1969, the organization was composed of a full-time professional and three part-time college students. In 1978, when LAYC was revitalized, it began with one staff member: a full-time director. By 1987, when Lori Kaplan became director, LAYC had 10 full-time staff on board, 12 to 15 programs, and an annual budget of approximately \$600,000.

By December 2006 when this case study concluded, LAYC had grown exponentially. Including the three public charter schools that it has founded, LAYC had a staff of 150 employees, nearly 50 programs, and a \$17 million a year budget fed by over 100 funding streams, including the D.C. government, several federal government agencies (including two congressional earmarks), private foundations, corporate donors, and individuals. LAYC's Board had also recently made the decision to establish a reserve fund. Seven full-time staff manage LAYC's increasingly complex financial and administrative structure, including a chief financial officer, an office manager, a senior accountant, a director of financial accounting, a bookkeeper, a payroll and benefits manager, and an accounts payable clerk.

Along with the financial and administrative challenges associated with growth came the need to expand senior management. In December 1997, at the urging of the Board, LAYC hired Mai Fernandez, a lawyer working with the Department of Justice, to oversee day-to-day operations. With Fernandez's assumption of the role of deputy director, Diane Cottman, who since 1988 had been serving as deputy director while additionally preparing grant proposals, became development director, working full-time on proposal writing. Kaplan, in turn, now could focus her efforts on strategic aspects of running LAYC along with external representation and fundraising. Two years after Fernandez came on board, LAYC underwent an internal reorganization designed to streamline staff reporting.

Between July of 2003 and March of 2004, LAYC, with funding from Venture Philanthropy Partners, undertook a comprehensive organization-wide strategic planning effort. LAYC hired three firms to assist with this endeavor. The Monitor Institute was hired to do a diagnostic and assist with strategy development and implementation planning. Policy Studies Associates was hired to assist LAYC to identify desired outcomes and design an information system. The Finance Project was hired to do an audit of current resources and needs, identify funding gaps and develop strategies for addressing gaps, and analyze the costs of expansion. LAYC's senior staff and Board were closely involved in the exercise.

This comprehensive exercise had the following outcomes: (1) update and reaffirmation of LAYC's vision, mission, and goal statements; (2) articulation of a social change model to guide program development; (3) identification of a set of overarching outcomes to steer all LAYC programs; (4) a decision to expand and enhance the Board; (5) recognition that LAYC needed to clarify its relations with the public charter schools it had founded; (6) a decision to further revise LAYC's organizational structure and reporting relationships to enhance management capabilities; (7) the decision to hire a new echelon of senior managers; and (8) a decision to expand LAYC's radius of operations into communities in Maryland in order to respond to demographic changes in the area's Latino population.

LAYC's updated vision, mission, and goal, outlined in the text box below, is one of the most visible products of this exercise. They are among the first images one sees upon entering LAYC's flagship building on 1419 Columbia Rd.

LAYC's Vision, Mission, and Goal Statements

Vision:

Strong Youth
Strong Families
Strong Futures
Strong Communities

Mission:

The Latin American Youth Center is a multicultural community-based organization that supports youth and families in their determination to live, work, and study with dignity, hope, and joy.

Goal:

To help youth become successful and happy young adults by providing a comprehensive set of programs to meet youth where they are and help them build the skills they need to succeed educationally, professionally, and personally and to become engaged in their community.

In addition, this strategic planning exercise and an update conducted in 2007 led to the articulation of four overarching program outcomes that LAYC believes must be achieved if youth are to become successful adults.

Program Outcomes

For each youth:

- Achieving academic success, including graduation from high school and at least two years of post-secondary education;
- Obtaining and retaining employment with long-term career potential;
- Gaining the skills necessary to lead healthy and happy lives.

- Additionally, LAYC has one organization-wide advocacy outcome: To promote positive change in conditions, policies, and laws affecting youth in the District of Columbia and in Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

The decision that it was time for LAYC to expand and strengthen its board has been another important outcome of the strategic planning exercise. Executive Director Kaplan describes in the text box below the actions that she and the board have taken since the strategic planning exercise was carried out:

Expanding and Strengthening LAYC's Board

As a result of the strategic planning exercise, we decided to increase the size of the Board by 50 percent. We established a new leadership team for the Board. We also made the decision to bring in new talent and capacities that would help strengthen us as an organization. For example, we brought on Tony Marquez who is a banker and knows about real estate. We brought on Brian Gaines who has a background in small business. Ken Keating has a background in human resources. Rosario Lodoño has a background in international youth development.

With the help of the Board we have established a reserve fund. We also made the decision to expand into Maryland.

Given that some of our new members have never served on a Board before, we plan to do Board training. The training will focus on the roles and responsibilities of a Board.

Subsequent to the strategic planning exercise, and based on recommendations emerging from the exercise, LAYC has taken a series of steps to expand and strengthen its senior management. Existing and new senior staff positions are listed in the text box below. Several of the new senior management positions have been made possible through funding from Venture Philanthropy Partners, which financed the strategic planning exercise.

Actions taken to expand LAYC's senior management

Recently established positions

- Anita Friedman, with extensive international development experience, including having served as Peace Corps director in the Dominican Republic, was named chief operating officer.
- Linn Shapiro, with over two decades experience working with community-based organizations and international NGOs, was hired as the director of development.
- Ron Elum, who has experience in executive financial positions in health systems in several cities around the nation and who has served as a Board member and treasurer of a community health center, has been hired as chief financial officer.
- Jim Whitney, with extensive communications experience in politics, government, and the private sector, became communications director.
- Isaac Castillo, who has extensive experience doing program and cross-site evaluations for community-based organizations on topics such as youth development, violence prevention, and health promotion, was hired as director of learning and evaluation.
- Luisa Montero, with extensive international and D.C. government experience, has been hired as director of LAYC's new Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers.

Several of the new senior management positions have been made possible through funding from Venture Philanthropy Partners, which financed the strategic planning exercise

Senior level positions to be established in the near future:

With funding that has become available from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, LAYC will hire:

- A director of human resources who will be responsible for staffing and staff development; and
- A director of advocacy.

Implementing the various recommendations that have emerged from the strategic planning exercise continues to be a work in progress. As of the time this case study came to an end, there are a number of achievements to report.

Additional LAYC Strategic Planning Accomplishments to Date

- LAYC now has a fully functional data management and outcome tracking system. LAYC began using this system in June 2005, and since that time has dramatically improved its ability to collect and report demographic information on participants. LAYC's programs have also begun to process output and outcome data.
- Team leaders throughout LAYC currently receive monthly training on a variety of topics designed to improve their management skills. Training topics have included staff management and supervision, grant and contract management, tracking program budgets, and the use of data to inform programmatic decisions.
- A decision-making matrix has been developed that establishes criteria for funding opportunities in order to ensure that LAYC pursues appropriate new sources of funding. This matrix includes (1) whether the funding opportunity fits with LAYC's social change model, (2) LAYC's organizational capacity to carry out the proposed program, (3) the organizational effort required for the proposed program to be successful, (4) the impact of the proposed program on LAYC's external image, (5) the impact of the proposed program on other LAYC programs.
- LAYC has significantly shored up its financial management and tracking capacity. LAYC's newly hired chief financial officer now has six staff: an office manager, a director of financial accounting, a senior accountant, payroll/benefits managers, a bookkeeper, and an accounts payable clerk.
- LAYC is in the process of building its development capacity. Until 2005, LAYC's development staff was limited to one grant writer. In 2006, the Development Office had a full-time director, two full-time grant writers, and a part-time development assistant. Writing grants to maintain programs, seeking out new programmatic opportunities as well as increased support for on-going programs, creating a major donor program, and conducting special events and mailings geared to new and on-going funders are some of the efforts it has undertaken.
- LAYC has made progress in clarifying its relationship with the three public charter schools that it has established. In December 2006, LAYC conducted a series of meetings with its three charter schools and arrived at a written agreement that outlines financial and managerial relationships between the schools and LAYC.

Anita Friedman, former chief operating officer, reflects on the key ingredients necessary for LAYC to expand while maintaining its cutting edge in the field of youth development:

LAYC is in the unique position of having seasoned staff as well as a wealth of programmatic experience. We have grown to be a very large organization, with 50 programs and over 150 staff. With size comes the need to have processes and systems in place to make our organizational

life smoother. The trick is to find ways to do business that makes life easier for staff, so that they are free to focus on the youth and the quality of our programs.

As we grow, we must continue to be proactive and agile in order to respond to the needs and interests of the young people in our communities. As we become a premier youth-serving organization, we need to ensure that we have well trained staff, research-based curricula, and cutting edge youth development methodologies in place.

It is my hope that our organization's "youth voice" continues to remain a central focus of every program so that we are guided by the active participation of youth in the future direction of the organization.

B. Extending LAYC's radius of action to Maryland

At the turn of the millennium, LAYC began see demographic changes taking place in Columbia Heights. Gentrification resulted in the inability of parents of LAYC youth to pay the increasing rents that were being levied on apartments. Families began to move in increasing numbers out of the District to Maryland and Virginia. New immigrant families arriving from Latin America were no longer selecting the Adams-Morgan-Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights neighborhoods as their destination. They, too, were increasingly joining family and friends in lower rent neighborhoods in outlying suburbs in Maryland and Virginia.

In 2001, the LAYC Board formed an ad hoc committee to address this challenge. This committee's research, information collection, and analysis served as a basis for LAYC's decisions during the 2003/4 strategic planning process about a potential move to Maryland.

Kaplan reflects:

The neat thing about the strategic planning process was that it gave us an opportunity to get more people to help us figure it out. We knew we wanted to expand, but we didn't know how to do it, what it would look like. The strategic planning exercise gave us a social change model, which we decided we wanted to replicate in Langley Park, Maryland. Once the strategic planning process was finished, Venture Philanthropy Partners, our financier for this process and interested in examining the regional impact of their work, decided to put money into funding key positions so that we could initiate the expansion.

The start-up phase included carefully reviewing 2002 Census data to pinpoint areas in Maryland, based on demographic trends, where expansion could begin; establishing contact with individuals knowledgeable about issues related to youth and services available in these areas; and holding extensive meetings with leaders, politicians, and non-profits in the area to determine a strategy for expansion. Eventually, along with Langley Park, Riverdale in Prince George's County and Silver Spring in Montgomery County were selected as program sites.

LAYC launched its expansion into Maryland in the summer of 2005, using as a point of departure lessons learned from its growth in Washington, D.C. The first program offered was a summer camp in Silver Spring. In September 2005, operating out of a small cottage off Georgia Avenue, LAYC started offering a core set of programs similar to those it had offered when it was revitalized in the late 1970s and early 1980s: GED instruction for in- and out-of-school youth, job training and placement, computer skills, and mental health counseling. LAYC also simultaneously launched life skills training and career readiness training in Wheaton and Montgomery Blair high schools. At the end of 2006, LAYC opened a Langley

Park site in an office building and in the process of refurbishing an unoccupied public school in Riverdale.

LAYC's vision for its Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers over the next three to five years is to create an anchor site where most staff and programs are based, with two or three smaller entities strategically placed around Prince George's and Montgomery counties; a staff of 30 to 35 working with 1,500 to 2,000 youth; and a program portfolio similar to LAYC's current portfolio in Washington, D.C.

C. Lessons continue to be learned as LAYC expands to Maryland

- When expanding into a new environment, it is important to judge accurately the political climate ; it is also important to get to know the players within that environment. LAYC staff agree that it was critical to spend time become familiar with the different political climates in each new area. A substantial block of time needed to be set aside to identify key players, meet with them, and gain their trust.
- When expanding into a new environment, it is important to spend time talking to other non-profits, identifying what others are doing, defining how to best bridge the gaps. While the regions where LAYC decided to initiate expansion do not have a saturation of non-profits, senior management believe it was critical to spend time up front identifying existing non-profits and seeing what they were doing so as to initiate collaboration, as opposed to unnecessarily entering into competition. Given LAYC's size and track record, it has been important to ensure that stakeholders in the areas where expansion is to take place do not see LAYC as a powerful agency coming in to take over.
- Having a start-up team is essential. Mai Fernandez, who was heavily involved in planning and implementation of the expansion to Maryland, reflects on how LAYC got started on the nuts and bolts of expansion: *"We had problems finding the original executive director so we formed a start-up group. It was composed of me; Paul Cooper, who has been a long-time LAYC consultant; Lynn English, our development director; and Gabriel Albornoz, who we had recently hired to head our advocacy effort. Paul focused on the budget; he literally took disparate grants and put together a cohesive budget. Gabe was the man on the ground. Lynn was doing fundraising. Having a start-up team was very helpful. When Luisa Montero came on board as director, she didn't have to start from scratch."*
- It is extremely valuable to have sufficient seed money at the onset. LAYC has been fortunate to have seed funding from Venture Philanthropy Partners to finance key positions in Maryland. This has enabled the new director, Luisa Montero, and her deputy, Gabriel Albornoz ¹³, to continue the networking started by Kaplan and Fernandez, as well as to establish logistics before launching programs.
- Expansion into a new and unknown area is staff-intensive, especially for the senior management of the mother organization. While Kaplan and Fernandez did not regret the time they have put into--and continue to put into--expansion into Maryland, both have had to set aside significant amounts of time for this purpose. Others such as Isaac Castillo, learning and evaluation director, have also spent much time assisting MMYC senior management to establish a comprehensive program.

¹³ In 2007, Albornoz accepted a job with Montgomery County. He was replaced by Lupi Quinteros Grady, a former LAYC participant and staff member.

D. In closing

This study is told primarily through the views of individuals who know LAYC from different perspectives. It is therefore fitting to close with observations made by two individuals from outside of LAYC, a couple from the Mount Pleasant community who have been collaborating with LAYC, at times for pay but mostly as volunteers, since the late 1970s. Both consider LAYC their second home.

Rick Reinhard, a former Peace Corps volunteer who served in Honduras in the late 1960s, is a photographer. Many times over the years he has taught photography to LAYC youth and taken photos at key events. His wife, Judy Byron, is an artist. Her woodcut of four LAYC youth in the late 1980s is displayed in a prominent position on the first floor of LAYC's Columbia Road anchor site building. Over the years, Reinhard and Byron have mentored many LAYC youth.

Reinhard pinpoints various threads that have held LAYC together over its many years of existence and have, in large part, made LAYC what it is today:

LAYC provides a bridge from the experiences that young people have had, depending on how long they have been here, a way into mainstream or semi-mainstream Washington, D.C. LAYC provides a culture that acknowledges and reinforces youth's own culture. LAYC isn't just for Latinos. There is this mix of stuff that supported the roots but wasn't exclusive to the roots.

LAYC was a safe haven, a clique-free zone, a way for people who had their differences (African Americans and Latinos, both Dominican and Central American) to be together, a place where they could come together through arts, English language, theater. LAYC gave them ways to bond, to knit this fabric together.

At various times when the Latino community was in distress, LAYC provided support, connection, a way out. LAYC was also the product--through the waves of refugees that came from Chile, then from Nicaragua, and then from El Salvador and other parts of Central America-- of the collateral damage caused by U.S. policy in Latin America.

Byron adds:

And then there was the friendship. All of us are in this work for the right reasons. We are willing to go that extra mile—including taking a call on Friday evening from a kid in trouble.

People have a lot of humility from the top down. It starts with Lori, a humble person who is not afraid to let others take credit as long as the work gets done. LAYC provides a flexible environment, a place where people feel supported. Any member of LAYC, if they come up with a great idea, they're going to be heard.

Appendix A

Case Study Methodology

The case study was conducted between November 2005 and November 2006. We reviewed existing documentation, reports, and evaluations of ongoing and prior programs, and descriptive data on youth served by LAYC. In addition, Marcia Bernbaum, who was new to LAYC, spent time familiarizing herself with select programs, observing activities where possible.

Data Collection

General approach

The principal data collection mode was semi-structured and open-ended interviews. 137 individuals were interviewed: a list of individuals interviewed may be found in Appendix B. Interviewees included (a) 16 LAYC senior staff, 14 former youth participants who are now on LAYC's staff, and a sampling of 15 of LAYC team leaders and junior staff; (b) 19 former LAYC staff; (c) five current and eight former members of LAYC's Board of Directors; (d) 11 representatives from the surrounding community, including six individuals who are executive directors of other community-based organizations working with the Latino population; (e) five representatives from foundations and other sources that provide funding for LAYC; (f) three academics and consultants with extensive experience in youth development; and (g) three individuals who were employed by the District government.

Interviews, which lasted on average one hour, followed a set of protocols developed in advance for each target group of interviewees. A number of individuals were interviewed two, three, or more times. Detailed notes, ranging from two to 11 pages single-spaced, were taken during each interview. In many cases, interviews were recorded. Each individual interviewed was told at the beginning that the interview was strictly confidential and that the only two individuals to see the interview would be the authors of the case study. All persons interviewed were offered the opportunity to review and comment on the write up of their interview. Approximately 60 percent responded that they would like to see their interviews and comment on them. Ten percent of those that received their interviews responded, providing edits to their interview. Interviewees were also asked if they would like to review the case study in draft.

Interviewees were asked to share something about themselves: their life story; where they were born; if born outside the United States, how they came to the United States; and what life was like when they arrived in the United States. The interview then turned to how the interviewees got connected to LAYC and reflections on their LAYC experiences. Current and former youth participants were asked what they believe they have contributed to LAYC. They were also asked how the LAYC experience contributed to their lives.

Interviewees within and outside of LAYC were asked to reflect on what they saw as LAYC's strengths and challenges and what they saw as the lessons learned from the LAYC experience that would be helpful to other youth development organizations.

Collecting data on LAYC's establishment, growth, evolution:

This involved review of the little written documentation available complemented by interviews with LAYC staff, Board members, volunteers, and individuals outside of LAYC. In a number of instances, it was necessary to triangulate among interviewees. A key factor for this portion of the case study was not only tracking LAYC over multiple time periods, but establishing the context in which LAYC made decisions: what was happening internationally that was relevant to LAYC, what was happening

nationally, what was happening in Washington D.C., and what was happening within the Latino community surrounding LAYC.

Collecting data on impact on youth:

Thirty-eight current and former youth, ten (half male, half female) from each of the four time periods used as a basis for reporting on LAYC's birth and evolution in Chapter II,¹⁴ were interviewed in order to assess individual impacts. For 2000 to the present, interviewees were selected based on a random sample drawn from LAYC's database. Since this database did not exist prior to 2000, youth participants were identified by asking LAYC staff, especially those who were former youth, to identify individuals that they knew how to contact. Individuals identified were ordered alphabetically and a random sample of names on the list was drawn. Youth from 1988 on were offered \$15 for their time. Most current participants accepted. Former participants in most cases demurred.

Challenges encountered in identifying youth prior to 2000, connecting with them, and in some cases getting them to agree to be interviewed make it impossible to assert that youth prior to 2000 were selected in a strictly random fashion.

Collecting data on strengths, challenges, and lessons learned.

Insights were drawn primarily from interviews. 57 individuals were interviewed: 33 current LAYC staff (14 senior staff, six team leaders, 13 former youth participants currently employed by LAYC); eight former LAYC staff; eight current and former members of LAYC's Board of Directors; and 10 individuals from outside LAYC, all of whom were familiar with LAYC. Tabulations based on the interviews (see below) were supplemented with the views of the authors based on information collected on LAYC's establishment, growth, and evolution and on agency impact on current and former youth.

Data analysis

To report on impact on youth (Chapter III) and strengths, challenges, and lessons learned (Chapter IV) it was necessary to summarize, order, tabulate, and analyze the data obtained. This was done by:

- reviewing information obtained;
- drawing from the information repeated themes
- coding data by themes;
- tabulating frequencies of response.

Impact data from interviews with 15 former participants currently on LAYC staff were pooled with data from the 38 youth drawn randomly. Differences in responses according to gender or time frame of LAYC participation were noted and reported in Chapter III. Individuals interested in seeing the tabulations may contact Marcia Bernbaum at mbern362@aol.com

Three-step final review process

- Initial review of draft text by Lori Kaplan and Isaac Castillo;
- Subsequent review by five members of LAYC's senior staff;
- Review by individuals interviewed who indicated they would like to read the draft. Comments were received from nine individuals.

¹⁴ The only exception was 1978-87, where it was possible to interview only eight former youth participants, four women and four men.

Appendix B ***Individuals Interviewed for the LAYC Case Study¹⁵***

LAYC STAFF

Senior staff

Patricia Bravo, Executive Director, YouthBuild Public Charter School
Isaac D. Castillo, Director of Learning and Evaluation
Diane Cottman, Executive Director, LAMB Public Charter School
Cristina Encinas, Principal, LAMB Public Charter School
Susan Evans, Principal, Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School
Ron Elum, Chief Financial Officer
Lynn English, Development Consultant, Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers
Mai Fernandez, Legal and Strategy Director
Anita Friedman, Chief Operating Officer
Lori Kaplan, Executive Director
Marie Mall, Art +Media House Director
Laurie Mittenthal, WISE Director
Luisa Montero, Managing Director, Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers
Geraldine Schaeffer, Educational Enhancement Director
Linn Shapiro, Development Director
Carlos Vera, Social Services Director

Team and Program leaders

Raul Archer, Prevention and Recreation Team Leader
Steve Chaplain, ILP Coordinator
Aqila Coulhurst, Leadership Development and Advocacy Program Coordinator
Meredith Harris, Prevention Team Leader
Jeanne Konicki, AmeriCorps Program Coordinator
Michael Leon, Ward 4 Program Coordinator
Macletus Dejoy Smith, Social Service Division Clinical Psychologist

Mid-level staff

Hermense Matsutsa, Senior Youth Developer and Coordinator, Focus on Kids program, Social Services Division
Kenya Medina, Intake Worker/Case Manager, Social Services Division
Maribel Ochoa, Office Manager, Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School
Franklin Peralta, Youth Outreach Worker, Educational Enhancement Division
Millie Perez, Special Events Coordinator
Alison Powers, Family Development Specialist, Social Services Division
Dora Rodriguez, Youth and Family Counselor, Social Services Division
Desmond Thomas, ERC Program Coordinator, Social Services Division
John Van Zandt, Youth Developer and Youth L.E.A.D. Coordinator, Social Services Division

Former Youth Participants on LAYC staff

Alvin "Pibe" Alvarado, Youth Outreach Worker, Education Division
Jesus Amaya, Desktop Support Technician
Jasmin Benab, SYEP/Girls' Leadership Program
Maria Bernal, Administrative Assistant, Social Services Division
Ronald Chacon, Fine Arts Coordinator, Art + Media House

¹⁵ Some individuals are listed in more than one category, given their multiple affiliations.

Jose “Chico” Diaz, Systems Administrator
Alex Iraheta, Night House Supervisor, Social Services Division
Claudia Luna, Teacher, LAMB Public Charter School
Edwin Perez, Outreach Worker, Educational Enhancement Division
Lupi Quinteros-Grady, Deputy Director, Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers
Alba Ramirez, AmeriCorps Assistant, Educational Enhancement Division
Cynthia Sanchez, Accounts Payable Clerk
Rocio Tyler, Teacher, Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School

FORMER LAYC STAFF

Founders/former Executive Directors

Roberto Baquerizo, LAYC founder
Mario Belizaire, LAYC founder
Enrique Rivera, Executive Director, 1979-1987
Garry Garber, LAYC founder,
Arturo Griffiths, LAYC founder
Erasmus Lara, Executive Director, 1971-1973
Jose Suiero, Executive Director, 1973-1975

Others

Gabriel Albornoz, Deputy Director, Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers
Carlos Arrien, Director of Barrio Graphics
Pedro Avilés, Director of the Latino Youth Action Project and youth representative on LAYC Board
Michelle Banks, Co-founder of the Latinegro Theater Program
Suann Hecht, Director of Social Services
Maritza Hoquee, Director of Educational Programs
Sergio Luna, Youth Outreach
Brenda Mejia, Instructor, Summer Youth Employment Program
Fred Mills, Director of Education
Linda Ohmans, Principal, Next Step Public Charter School
Diane Orellana, College Preparatory Advisor, Upward Bound Program
Barry Lynn Tapia, founder and Director of the Foster Care Program
Kati Regan, administrative assistant to Lori Kaplan, Director of Arts and Recreation Division
Najia Shana’a, Case Manager, Social Services Division
Jennifer Shewmake, Director, Creative Enterprises Division
Lisa Wheaton, Youth Developer, Coordinator of Oral History Program
Jakeline Yanes, MIS Coordinator, YouthBuild Public Charter School
Ernest Yombo, Director, Educational Enhancement Division

LAYC’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Current

Alex Wilson, Chairman of the Board from 2000-2005; Director of Academic Development, Wilson Senior High School
Noel Bravo, Chairman of the Board since 2006; Senior Associate, Center for the Study of Social Policy
Yanira Cruz, Director of the National Hispanic Council on Aging
Rick England, Board Treasurer: President of the Lois and Richard England Family Foundation
Julie Jensen, President of the Jenesis Group

Former

Maria Borrero, Chair of LAYC Board, 1995-2000; Manager, World Bank’s Mediation Program

Heleny Cook, Chair of the English Department, Wilson Senior High School
Cleve Harrigan, Chair of LAYC Board in the early 1980s; attorney
Maritza Hoquee, Spanish Instructor, Penn State University
Brenda Mejia, youth representative to the Board
David Osher, Managing Director, American Institutes for Research
Luis Rumbaut, former Executive Director of Ayuda
Yvonne Vega, former Executive Director of Ayuda

YOUTH

1969 - 1977

Ana Maria Aguilar
Vicente Cabrales
Salvador Canas
Morena Cerrato
Leyla Perez
Sonia Picado
Oscar Najera
Isabel de la Rosa
Rafael Solano
Rolando Villars

1978 - 1987

Pedro Avilés
Quique Avilés
Marta Ferman
Rosa Flecha
Nestor Flores
Samuel Mercedes
Maritza Mercedes
Jeannette Perez

1988 - 1997

Mike Clagett
Rudi Contreras
Luis Contreras
Myra Gonzales
Arturo Martinez
Marta Martinez
Gerald Mendizábal
Ensa Ortiz
Jessica Osorio
Jakeline Yanes

1998 - present

Tonya Gregory
Cynthia Gutierrez
Karen Hinklin
Miranda Hoes
Catherine Mithita
Eric Rivas
Jose Rosales

Nancy Soriano
Reginald Taylor
Hector Umana

INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF LAYC

Academia/consulting

David Osher, Managing Director, American Institutes for Research
Bonnie Politz, Vice President and Director of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research,
Academy for Educational Development
Lizbeth Schorr, Director of the Project on Effective Interventions at Harvard University, and the
Pathways Mapping Initiative

Community-based Organizations

Lucy Cohen, Professor of Anthropology, The Catholic University
Sandy Dang, Executive Director, Asian American LEAD
John DeTaeye, Director of Community Capacity Building, Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support
Collaborative
Judy Dobbins, Executive Director, Covenant House, Washington, D.C.
Maria Gomez, Executive Director, Mary's Center for Family and Child Development
Sonia Gutierrez, Executive Director, Carlos Rosario Public Charter School
Vera Johnson, Deputy Director, Sasha Bruce Youthwork
Bibi Otero, Executive Director, CentroNía
Juan Romagosa, Executive Director, La Clínica del Pueblo
Marian Urquilla, Executive Director, Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative
Yvonne Vega, former Executive Director, Ayuda

Other

Alfonso Aguilar, writer, community historian
Eugenio Arene, Executive Director, Council of Latino Agencies
Olivia Cadaval, Folklorist, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution;
former director of the Centro de Arte
Marta Estarella, Advisor, Office of the External Relations Advisor, Interamerican Development Bank
Marie Moll, former instructor at The Corcoran Gallery of Art

Government:

Maria Borrero, former Director of the D.C. Department of Employment Services, currently Director of
Mediation at the World Bank
Officer Sean Dennis, Metropolitan D.C. Police
James McGiveny, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
Roland Roebuck, Department of Human Services, former staff member of the D.C. Office of Latino
Affairs, D.C. Government
Gustavo Velásquez, Director of the Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs, DC.

Philanthropic community:

Rick England, President of the Lois and Richard England Family Foundation.
Julie Jensen, President of The Jenesis Group
Shirley Marcus Allen, Partner, Venture Philanthropy Partners
Julie Rogers, President of the Meyer Foundation

Appendix C

About the Authors of the Case Study

Marcia Bernbaum: Born and raised in Latin America as the daughter of a U.S. diplomat, Dr. Bernbaum served as an education advisor, and subsequently as a senior manager in the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for nearly 20 years. Her overseas posts with USAID included Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua, and Kenya. Since retiring from USAID in 1996, Dr. Bernbaum has split her time between volunteering in the D.C. area and conducting overseas consultancies with a focus on program evaluation, organizational development, and strategic planning in areas of continuing interest including education, human rights, and social justice. Dr. Bernbaum conducted this case study as a volunteer.

Dr. Bernbaum derives her greatest satisfaction from carrying out case studies that document impacts, lessons learned, and best practices of grassroots programs that promote leadership and empowerment. Case studies, conducted both as a volunteer and for pay, include a program to train community leaders in Peru as human rights promoters, a girls' education program in Malawi, a program in the Dominican Republic in which private sector leaders promote basic education and education reform, civil society observation of Peru's controversial 2000 elections, and a pilot case study to explore the impacts of the Georgetown University Law Center's Street Law Clinic.

Before joining USAID, Dr. Bernbaum worked as an evaluation specialist in Head Start's research and evaluation unit where she designed impact evaluations of pilot Head Start programs. Since retiring from USAID, consultancies have taken Dr. Bernbaum to Malawi, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peru, Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic.

Dr. Bernbaum has a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from The George Washington University.

Isaac D. Castillo currently serves as director of research and evaluation for the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC). Mr. Castillo oversees all of LAYC's research and evaluation efforts including the implementation and maintenance of a center-wide database system to track demographic and outcome information on all youth attending programs at LAYC. Mr. Castillo also provides direct assistance to each LAYC program with the intent of improving outcome measures and facilitating effective reporting to funding agencies.

Mr. Castillo's research interests center on identifying effective social service programming for high-risk populations and measuring the outcomes that result. He has completed nearly 50 cross-site and program evaluations in areas including youth development, youth violence, substance use and health service provision, educational strategies for urban youth, and gang prevention and intervention.

Prior to joining LAYC, Mr. Castillo worked with a private research and evaluation firm in Bethesda, MD, and completed program and cross-site evaluations for a wide spectrum of agencies including federal and state governments, private foundations, and community-based organizations. In 2000, he completed an evaluation, "Assessment of State Minority Health Infrastructure and Capacity to Address Issues of Health Disparity," for the U.S. Office of Minority Health. He also worked on an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention-sponsored evaluation designed to measure the effectiveness of school and community-based violence prevention programs on gang-involved youth.

Mr. Castillo received his MS in public policy analysis from the University of Rochester and his undergraduate degree in human resource management from Syracuse University.

Wood cut of LAYC youth by community artist Judy Byron

