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### We Want to Create Our Own History: Youth Power and Leadership in the Boston Youth Justice Movement 2005-2008

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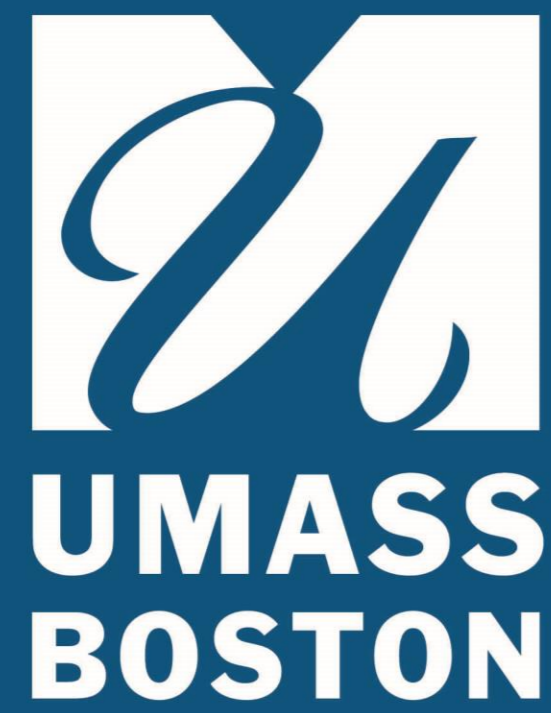
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# We Want to Create Our Own History: Youth Power and Leadership in the Boston Youth Justice Movement, 2005-2008

## Collaborators

Boston Youth Organizing Project (BYOP)

ACE's Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project (REEP)

The City School

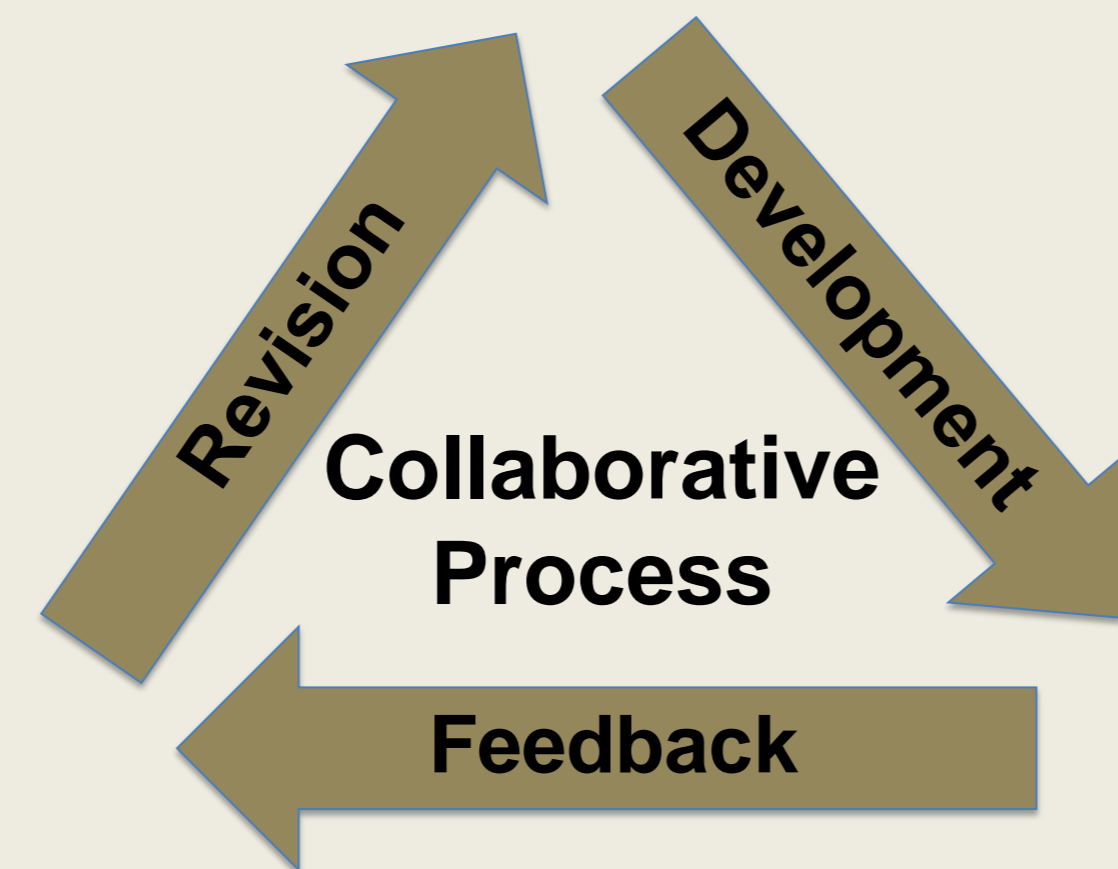
Interdisciplinary practicum research team from UMass Boston



## Purpose

This collaborative research project aims to co-create new knowledge on the youth justice movement in Boston that will be useful to partner organizations in advancing their goal of building a stronger movement as well as to contribute to academic and broader public understanding of youth justice.

## Research: Design & Process



## Design

- Qualitative research
- Semi-structured interviews
- Observation, archived records
- Use of [MAXQDA](#) software

## Outcomes

### Community

- Identified themed practices effective in movement
- Developed a report that will inform funders and the field

### University

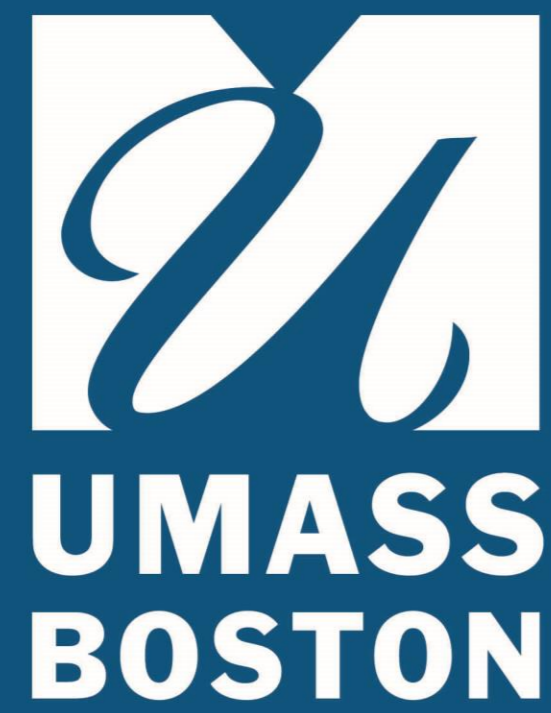
- Trained 6 PhD students in community-based research methods

## 3 Emerging Themes

Collaboration

Youth Impacts

Youth Power & Leadership



# We Want to Create Our Own History: Youth Power and Leadership in the Boston Youth Justice Movement, 2005-2008

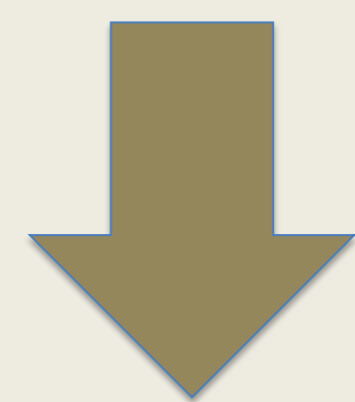
## The Process

**Regular meetings** between partner organizations and practicum team

- Build relationships and trust
- Increase understanding of youth justice work in Boston (organizations, timeline, networks)
- Determine the kind of product that would be valuable to our team and to our partners
- Logistics
- Develop a research plan and questions

**Series of campaigns** in 2006-08 emphasized as high point by partners

- Why was this time special and what lessons could we draw for youth justice today?



**Informs Research Questions**

## Stages of the Research



### Planning Development – Feedback – Revision

- Memo of Understanding
- Interview Questions
- Interview List

### Interviews and Document Collection

- 29 with youth, alumni, staff, city officials, funders
- Documents (flyers, photos, meeting notes, campaign posters)

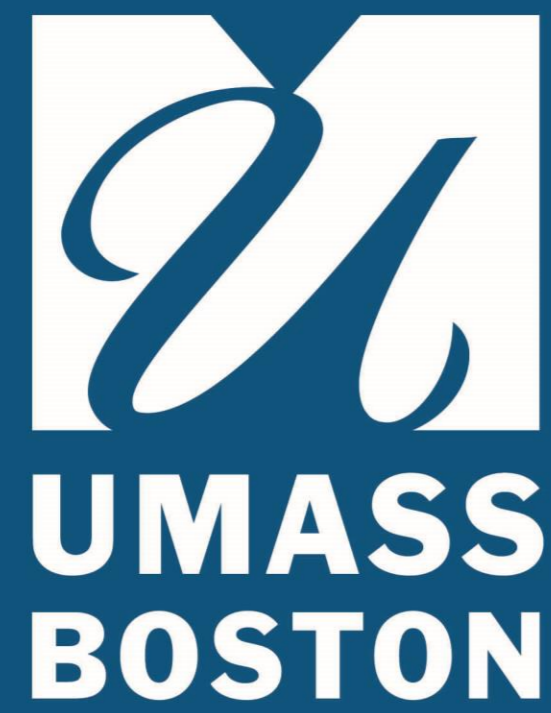
### Analysis

- Developing codes
- Initial coding
- Re-coding
- Developing Themes

### Feedback

- Reunion Event





# We Want to Create Our Own History: Youth Power and Leadership in the Boston Youth Justice Movement, 2005-2008

## Collaboration Within The Youth Justice Movement



The United Youth and Youth Workers of Boston (UYYWB) was created to build structure and relationships across youth justice organizations in order to unify for collective messaging, identity, and power. The research team coded interviews to understand the elements within this emerging theme of “collaboration.”

### Support and Relationships

“...we’d have these other youth organizations that would join our initiative, but we’d make sure that we return the favors for all the different issues they had going on. We’d make sure we support them, and to let them know that we’re kind of all in this together...”

- Amilton Pires

### Staying on Message

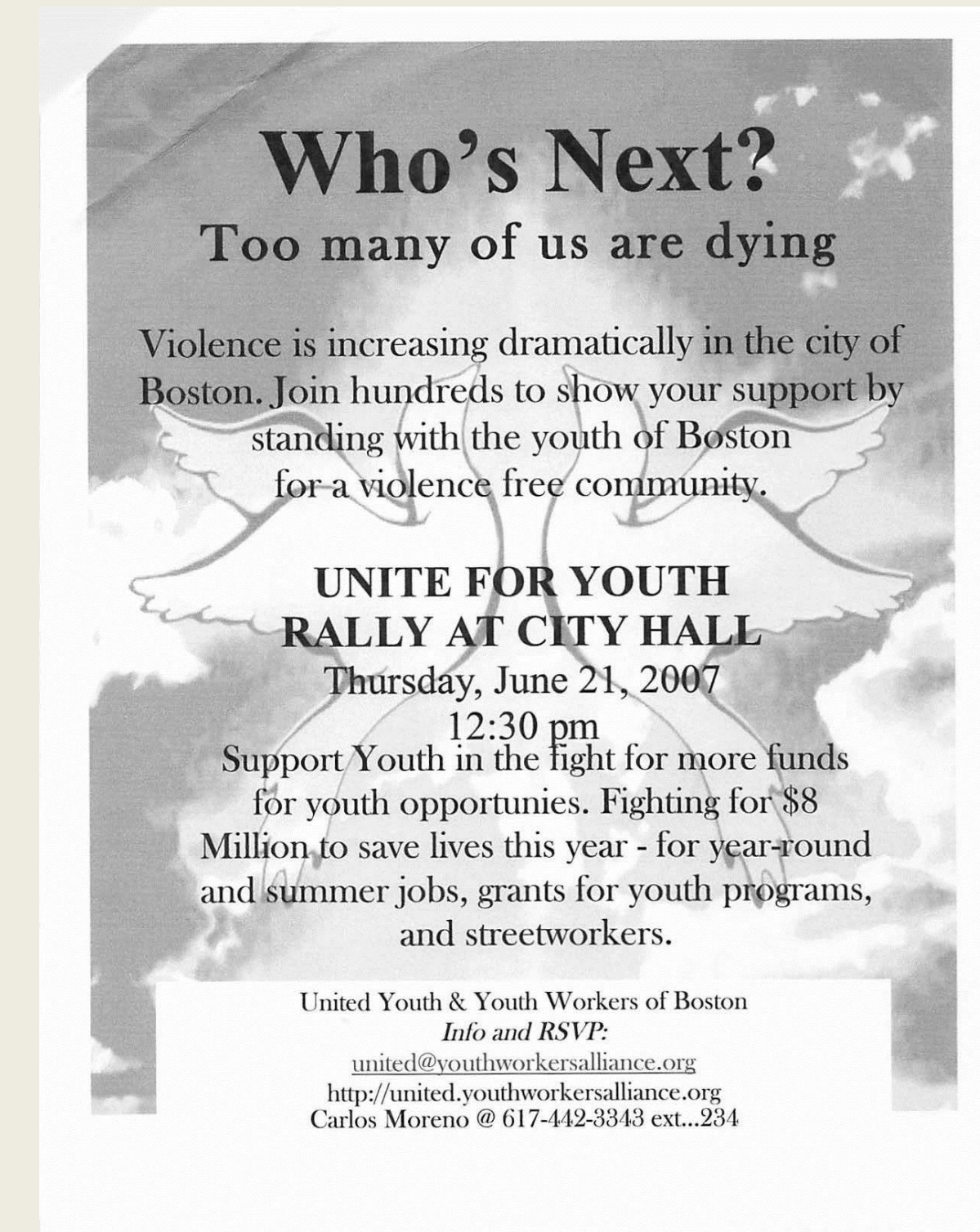
- The situation is urgent; the time to act is now. Friends and fellow community members are dying, getting wrapped up, etc. – share stories if you feel strongly about this.
- We’re asking for \$8 million for year-round and summer jobs, grants for youth organizations, and streetworkers.
- We need a structured year-round jobs program, not just summer jobs.
- Youth and youth workers know the solutions and must have a voice. We have the direct experience to know what works.
- A solution to violence has to be multifaceted – opportunities for youth, not just police, are the answer.
- We can’t focus on reacting to short-term violence; we need a long term solution that builds young people’s strengths.
- We are united across the City – Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, Roxbury, East Boston, Charlestown, Mission Hill.

**Creates Space for Common Messaging and Common Identity**

### Collaboration for the Cause and Power in Unity

“...I remember in a meeting with the Mayor, we had a group at City Hall...People would see us. We would see ourselves as part of something bigger and not repping for just our interests.”

- George Lee



**Crisis of Youth Violence Affects Everyone**

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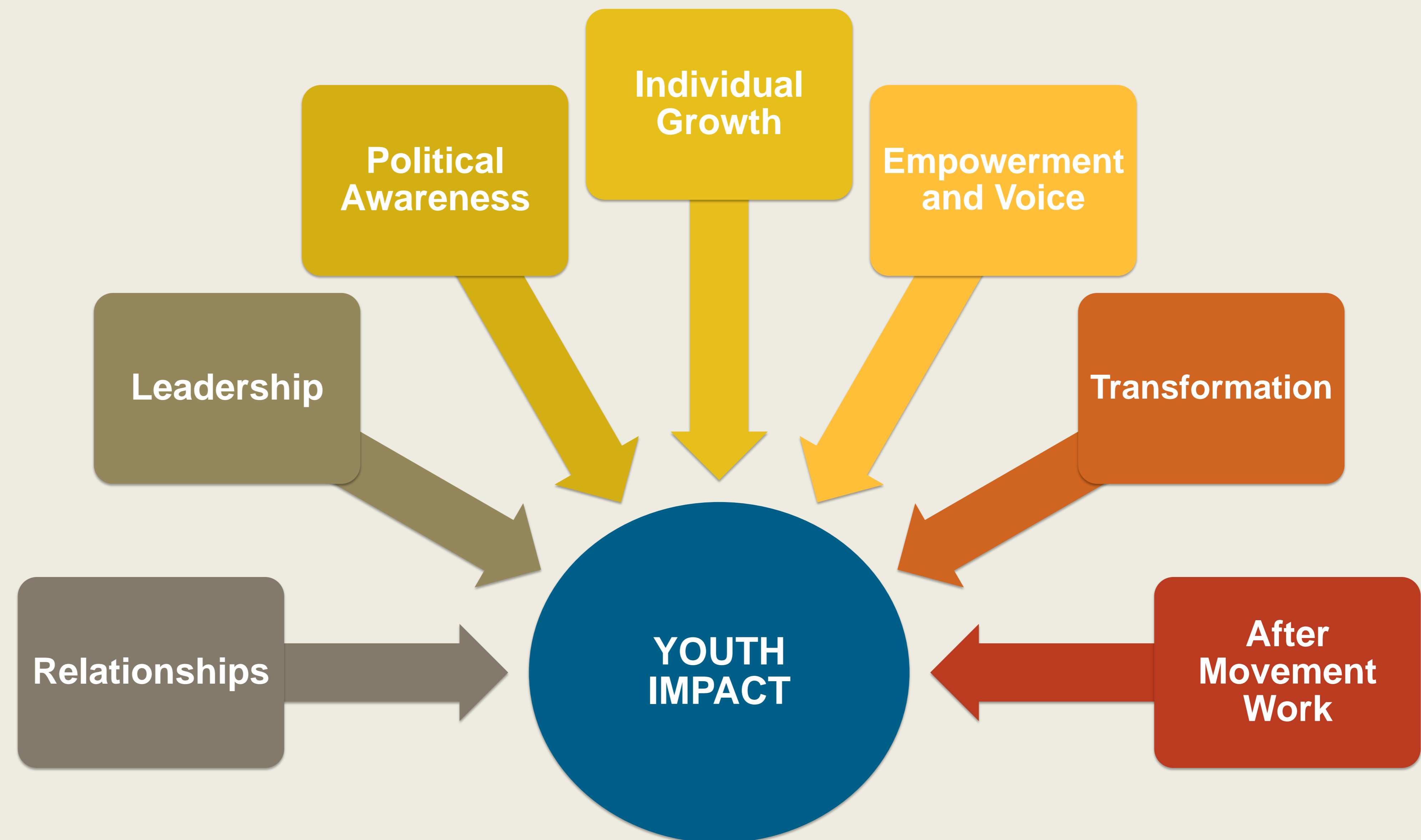
## Themes of Youth Impacts – Then & Now

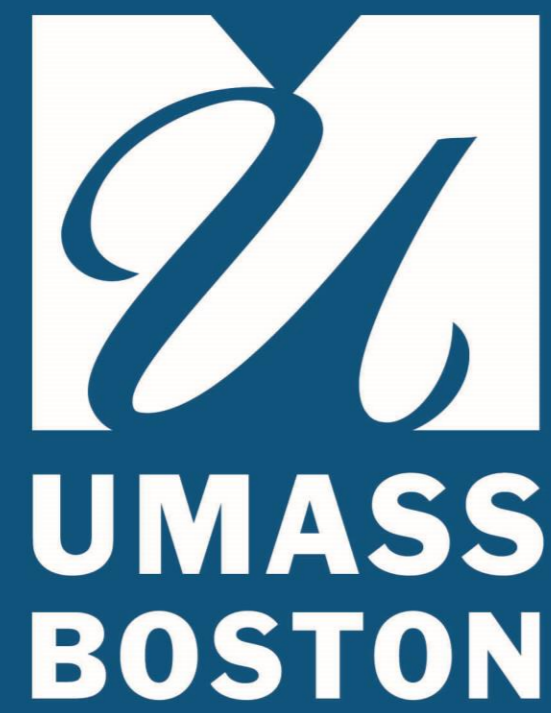


- All young people interviewed and majority of adults discussed impact – mostly positive
- Impacts ranged but rarely referenced a specific “win” or “gain”
- Many indicated transformation that carry in on college majors, careers, community engagement, among others

	Youth	Adults
Positive (+)	13	8
Negative (-)	2	4
Total mentioning impact	13	8
Total interviewed	13	11

Breakdown of Quotes Relating to Youth Impact





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## Youth Power & Leadership Themes



### Young People Making their Voice Heard

*“Youth justice basically meant young people are taking action, doing something that was created by the young people for the young people.”*

- Carlos Moreno

*“The magic itself was youth had the space to define their own agenda...a game changer for even the way the field of youth work was approached.”*

- Allentza Michel

### Adult-Youth Relationship as a Continuum

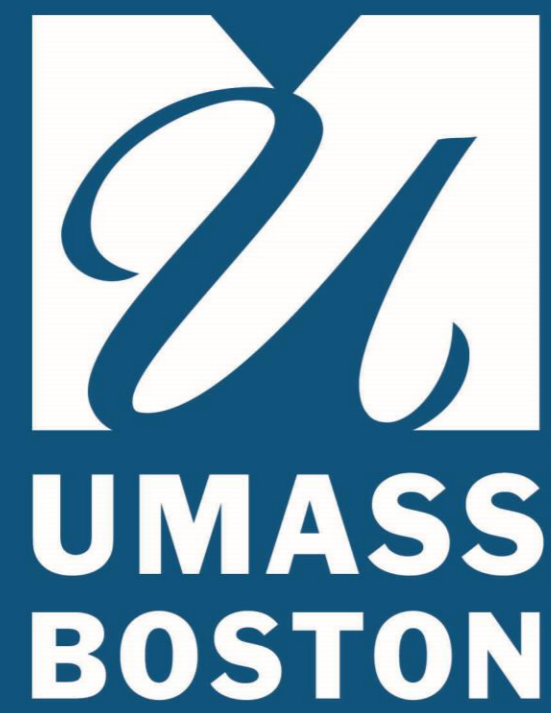
*To me, it means pushing back a little bit more. To me, youth led means treating youth like you would talk to your peers.”*

- Maria Domingus-Gray

### Exerting Power

*“Even if adults didn’t support us, we were going to do it anyway.”*

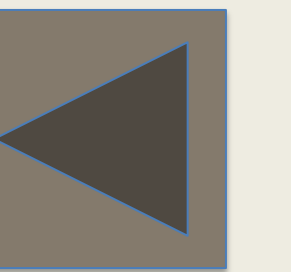
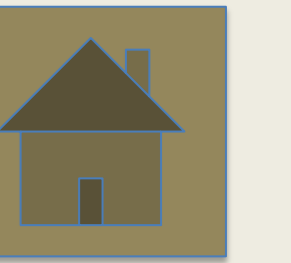
- Indira Baez



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## Possible Research Questions

- What were the roots of the movement in the prior work of the 3 groups and in the context of Boston at the time?
- How did youth and their allies, inside and outside these groups, contribute to the emergence of a youth justice movement?
- How did youth emerge as leaders and build power?
- How were independent groups able to work together to create a unified youth justice movement?
- What impact did the movement have on the city of Boston, the three groups, and the youth?
- What was the aftermath of this time period, and what lessons can be learned and applied in the current context?

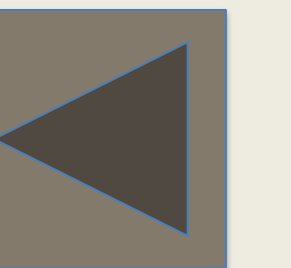
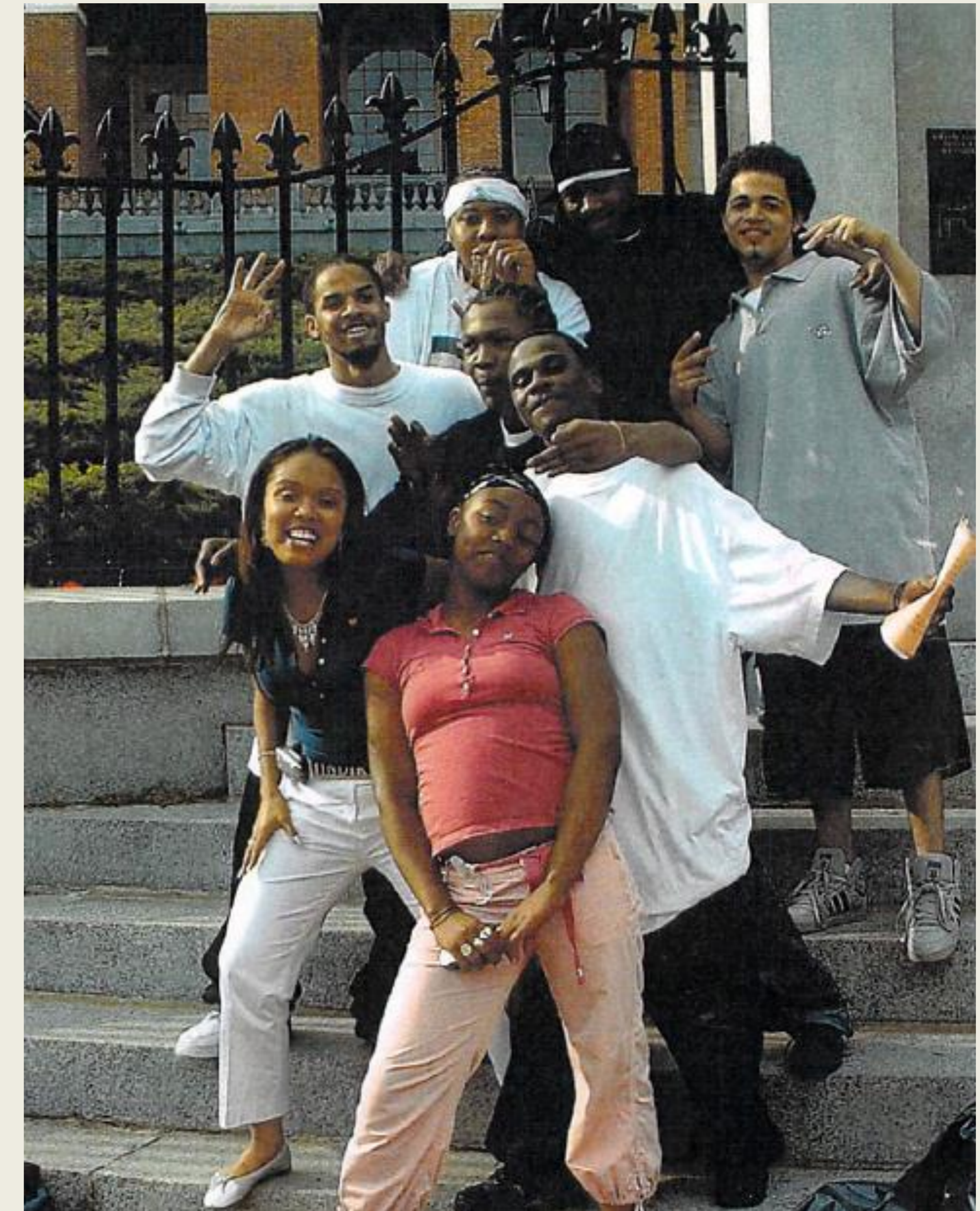


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## Relationships

“...We’re all still attached to the hip and these are our lifelong friends. These are the people who are going to be at our wedding party. They're going to be our Maid of Honors and they're going to be our kids’ Godfathers and we spend time in each other’s homes and we're roommates and we live together. We've cultivated that sense of community life long and we're all committed to making change in the community for a life long time and if we can do that with the lives of however many other people we touch, then we can actually change the face of the whole city as opposed to just from 2006 to 2008.

– Kendra Lara



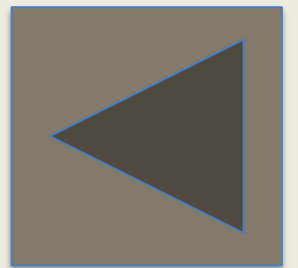


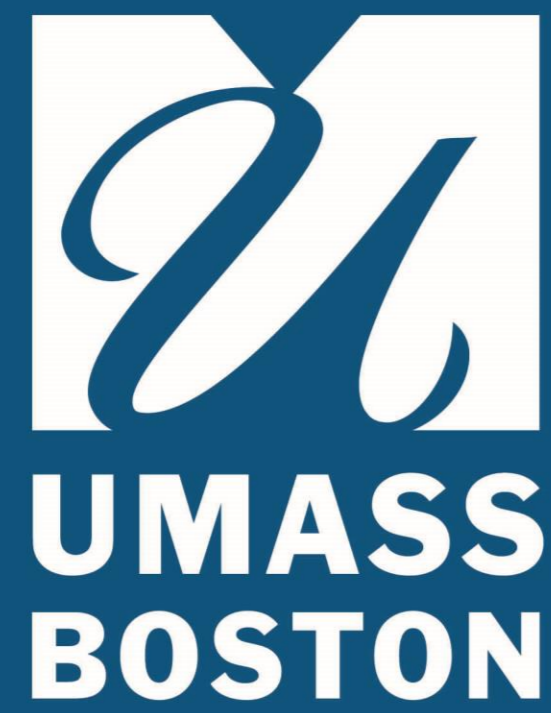
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## Leadership

“...Just the immense leadership development that happened with a set of probably 20 to 30 young people, many of whom are now long term invested in building a social justice movement in different areas, many of whom you’re interviewing. Just tremendous leadership development where they drew their own leadership and where they were supported by really loving, awesome people to build their leadership and analysis and stuff like that.”

– David Jenkins



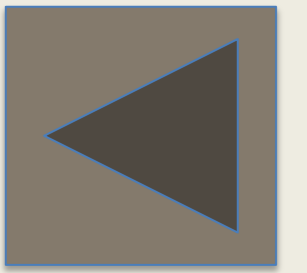


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## Political Awareness and Community Organizing

“That was something completely new to me, something I never thought I would be able to do, and it gave me that insight. And also learning about the budget system – I didn’t know, you know, how it all worked. I didn’t know much about politics. I didn’t know much about how money was distributed. So learning about that, being part of that group I really learned about it. So reading, being knowledgeable about how much money really is going into policing, going into education, going into these jobs, going into all these different resources that didn’t even have to do with what I was focusing on. But just learning about that really made me think, wow, probably I could be a politician one day, and I really was.”

– Jackie Fontes

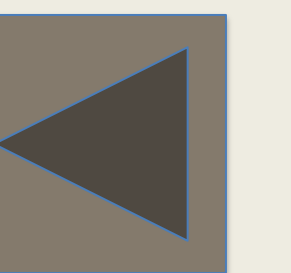


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## Individual Growth

“My whole identity now is...I consider myself an activist. And that’s a strong identity to take on. And I never would have done that if it wasn’t for the youth power movement. I am conscientious about my own dynamics. I am light skinned. I am a man. I present myself as heterosexual. All of these different things I am conscientious about so as a result, I try not to...it doesn’t mean I won’t play out my part in it; I am just saying if I do I will reflect on it and I try not to at all times. And it also means that the way I interact with my family and with my peers it’s always going to be around this idea of social justice.”

– Rafael Feliciano

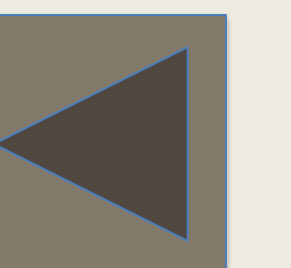


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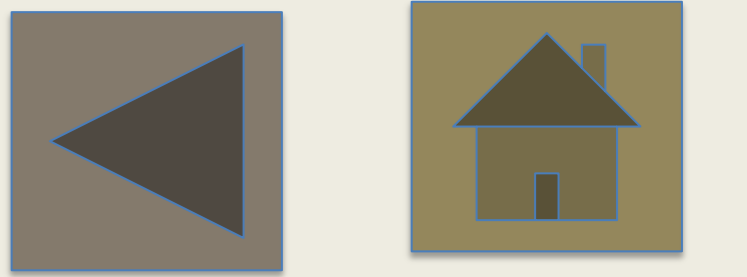
## Empowerment and Voice

“They are not a little child or a little kid; they are a youth; they are a person. They have value. They have thoughts. They have opinions. I can learn from them. And to me it's just the idea, the whole notion of the youth movement is young people coming together making a change, a positive change in their communities and knowing that they have power.”

– Jessica Cetoute



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## Transformation

“Before I got to the City School my grades weren’t good at all. I really had nothing going for myself. I didn’t have anything positive to do. I didn’t have my mind set on what I actually wanted to do with myself period. I feel like coming to the City School that this was like one of the biggest changes in my life.”

- Shane Bass



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## Impact After Movement

In general, the whole event influenced me in everyday life, the decisions that I made, how I personally fight against oppression, against stereotypes especially here at school and Union is a very privileged school, very classists for lack of better words. Being able to share my perspectives with people and also being able to be at this school and not go crazy at times, I think that a lot of it has come from things that I've learned in the movement. A lot about fighting against oppression, how to do that, what it looks like. Things from every day interactions from very much like, a lot of times when we go to the privileged school, people stick within their own race and I've made it, at least part of my personal mission, not to do that. I'm very involved in school, in different clubs and in a lot of different activities with a lot of different people.

- Carolyn Infante

