

Organizing Poor Whites in Chicago: A Chronology

1960

- SDS begins with a focus on anti-segregation in the South

1962-63

- SDS starts ERAP (Educational Research and Action Project) for organizing in the “real world”—placing SDSers in poor communities such as Chicago’s Uptown.

1964

- JOIN (Jobs or Income Now) opens in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood

1965

- JOIN renamed JOIN Community Union, taking on the Montrose Urban Progress Center’s bureaucratic control of neighborhood funds. Later JOIN organizers arrested for demanding a welfare recipient’s right to examine the rules.
- State repression begins early on: JOIN Staff apartment raided and staff arrested on narcotics charges (later dropped for lack of evidence)

1966

- JOIN office gutted by fire of undetermined origin.
- Tenants win contract with landlord after JOIN-organized rent strike (1st such contract in Chicago). Later 2nd and 3rd strikes result in additional contracts for tenants.
- Uptown Goodfellows formed by young JOIN organizers. They start to work getting members jobs, collecting affidavits on police and organizing a patrol of Uptown. Later Goodfellows and residents march on police station demanding an end to police brutality and the firing of one particular officer.
- JOIN and another anti-poverty office raided by police and demolished. Planted narcotics are found. 2 JOIN organizers, a minister and 2 bystanders are arrested (months later charges are dropped).
- Two nights later, police shoot and kill Ronnie Williams, brother of an active Goodfellow. Witnesses testify that he was unarmed at the time of shooting, but was shot twice in the back, once in the arm and once in the head at close range.

1967

- Goodfellows open a Ping-pong Jukebox and band practice hall.
- JOIN organizes food-buying cooperative.
- JOIN paper, *The Firing Line*, founded by JOIN community activist.
- JOIN and Chicago-area Black groups demonstrate in City Council for poor people’s rights. 3 JOIN organizers are arrested.
- National Community Union (NCU) formed by former Goodfellows and others to seed new poor white projects in other cities. NCU school focuses on political education for working class white youth.

1968

- Several ex-students leave Uptown after months of discussion about student involvement in the leadership of JOIN. JOIN energy and leaders focus on other projects—i.e. Peggy Terry nominated for vice president by Peace and Freedom Party, runs with Eldridge Cleaver.
- JOIN office closes.
- NCU becomes NOC (National Organizing Committee), discarding the community union model in favor of organizing networks of radical white working class youth in neighborhoods, factories and schools throughout the Midwest.
- Young Patriots organization formed to “serve the people.” Immediately set up a free breakfast program and health clinic in Uptown. Ally with the Illinois Black Panther Party and Young Lords.

1969

- First issue of *Rising Up Angry*—a paper put out by ex-JOIN organizers and others to “build organization among white working class kids in Chicago and the Midwest.”