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**Community Organizations: White Working Class  
Neighborhoods -- 1970s**

As militant African Americans demanded greater community control and leadership in the late 1960s, many white radicals left formerly integrated organizations and began to focus on organizing predominately white communities. As part of this general development there emerged a series of revolutionary organizations, often imitative of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and Young Lords Party (YLP), that emphasized youth work and were largely disconnected from the broader student-based, white Left. Unpreoccupied with ideology, although generally anti-Soviet and pro-Maoist, they rejected organizing electorally or at the point of production in favor of organizing on a community level. These groups numbered less than a dozen, and had a combined cadre membership of around three hundred, with hundreds of participants in their programs and several thousand community people traveling in their cultural orbits. They represented a significant political trend that continued into the mid 1970's.

Rising Up Angry (RUA, 1968-1976), whose founders included former members of JOIN (Jobs or Income Now) from Chicago's Northside Uptown community, a few SDSers such as Mike James and Steve Tappis, as well as neighborhood people, was the largest and most successful of these groups. RUA published a monthly newspaper for six years, set up well-functioning legal and health clinics, and organized major campaigns against police brutality and slum landlords. First organizing gang members and street people, they eventually built a substantial base in many of Chicago's white working class neighborhoods. At their peak they were able to mobilize up to a thousand people for their mass events.

The Patriot Party (1969-1970), which at one point claimed to have branches in Eugene (Oregon), Appalachia, Chicago, and the Yorkville section of New York City, evolved from the Young Patriot Organization based in Chicago's Uptown community. It adopted much of its platform, program and style from the BPP and for a while was a part of the Rainbow Coalition that consisted of Patriots, BPP and YLP. Patriot serve-the-people-type programs included, a free breakfast program, free medical program, and a free lumber program.

Other important groups comprising this trend of organizing the white working class included the October 4th Organization and White Lightning . The October Fourth Organization (1971-1976) was formed by activist-minded members of the Philadelphia Free Press as well as other community people. O4O, as it came to be known,

centered its activities in the predominately white working class neighborhoods of Fishtown, Richmond and Kensington in Philadelphia. Organizing activities included publication of a newsletter and newspaper, protesting the war in Vietnam, women's rights, legal problems and antiracist activities, such as struggling to integrate the board of directors of a local settlement house. The latter issue earned them the personal animus of right-wing Mayor Frank Rizzo.

White Lightning (1971-1975), was a revolutionary group founded by former drug addicts that published a monthly newspaper and organized in white working class communities in the North Bronx. Its most creative work was to provide a political analysis of drug addiction and traditional forms of substance abuse treatment, as well as to offer support for addicts seeking help. White Lightning also sponsored legal and housing programs, and fought for the rights of Vietnam veterans and farm workers.

The propaganda and practice of this trend helped to raise consciousness about the exploitation of poor and working class white people. It demonstrated that progressive elements did exist in white communities, and helped to create a basis for interracial alliances, based not on guilt and abstract theory, but on mutual respect and the identification of common interests.

— Gil Fagiani

## REFERENCES

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## BIOGRAPHY

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