

NIGHTSTAND

This issue of *Views* features three books that you'll want to take off of your nightstand and out into the field. In the pages that follow, three organizers from our region profile books that offer inspiration, models for action, and research data that supports their organizational work. Terenie Faison reviews **A Taste of Power** by Black Panther Party leader Elaine Brown, read by many members of Sisters in Action for Power. The Rural Organizing Project's Grace Taylor describes Bill Moyer's **Doing Democracy**, which is the subject of ROP study circles around Oregon. And Brigette Sarabi introduces the **The Prison Index: Taking the Pulse of the Crime Control Industry**, a joint publication of the Western Prison Project and the Prison Policy Initiative that provides data designed to support organizing campaigns.

A TASTE OF POWER

by Terenie Faison

A Taste of Power by Elaine Brown tells the story of the Black Panther Party through the author's eyes.

Brown grew up poor and was raised by her mom, a single parent. I liked how she told about her life before the Black Panthers and then explained how she got involved in taking action and ultimately became a key leader in the Party. Most of what we learn or see in photos about the Black Panther Party is about men. This book is told from a woman's perspective and shows the important role women played in the organization.

Brown gives the reader a "taste" of what power is and what it *really* looks like. I was able to pull several things from her testimony. For example, the Black Panthers were politically educated, determined, fearless and had an undying fire within them that you don't see in many community-based organizations today. They were able to address the immediate needs of people in the community, get them involved and still do direct action. It reminded me once again of how important organizing is.

A second thing I got out of the book was how in many ways the Black Panthers had "tunnel vision." They *never* lost sight of what they were fighting for. They weren't just fighting for African Americans' rights, they were fighting for human rights. It

reminded me of the need to collaborate and support one another instead of being like the world: on one planet yet isolated by the water between us. Even after things went crazy in the Party, they never gave up. They were targeted by the government—from police harassment, to the murder of key leaders, to infiltrators, and even spies. They still never gave up. Panther members were loyal to the Party, its politics and beliefs.

In reading this book I thought about why today we can't just see what needs to get done and do it.

Why is there no larger collective? We are so wrapped up in our individual campaigns and organizational activities that it seems there is no room for anything else. We are lacking a movement that would enable us to change things in a larger way. While our campaigns are important we need to remember we can't build a movement without each other or a real commitment to building one.

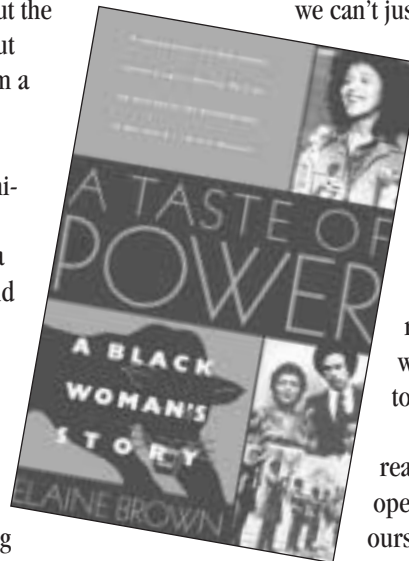
I strongly recommend all organizers read **A Taste of Power**. This book will open your eyes to the things we need to ask ourselves. It speaks to the need for a fire that continuously burns in our souls when

we think of organizing and mobilizing the people in our communities to make change and reshape dominant culture.

Terenie Faison, 19 years old, joined Sisters in Action for Power at 12. After graduating the organization's advanced leadership program, Girls in Action for Power (GAP), Faison worked as an Intern for over two years. She is currently completing her second year at Portland State University.

"...a fire that continuously burns in our souls..."

— Terenie Faison



DOING DEMOCRACY

by Grace Taylor

What does a democratic social movement look like, and how do we know when the one we're in is working?

Bill Moyer's book, **Doing Democracy**, outlines the phases movements go through to create long-term social change and alerts activists to strategies and pitfalls unique to each phase. Many organizers have encountered the rigid ideologue or the eternal idealist somewhere along the way, or experienced the letdown when our issue drifts from the heat of the headlines and fewer people turn out at our meetings and demonstrations.

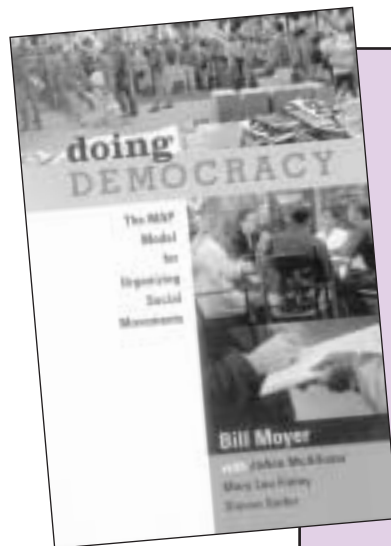
The book helps put these personality types and typical problems in perspective. **Doing Democracy** challenges activists' tendency to believe that we are powerless and ineffective, instead encouraging us to see how smaller victories fit into a long-term movement.

The book proposes a "Movement Action Plan" that comes out of 30 years of Moyer's activism within the civil rights and anti-nuclear movements. The model describes likely responses from the opposition, power-holders and the public to each stage of an eight-stage change process, plus possible goals and effective roles that activists and organizations can play. Case studies of the civil rights, anti-nuclear, gay and lesbian, breast cancer and globalization movements illustrate his observations.

The roles Moyer describes include: citizen, rebel, reformer, and change agent. Groups or activists may use multiple roles, according to the needs of the movement at a given stage in the struggle. All are necessary, he argues, but there are effective and ineffective ways to carry them out. For example, people

and organizations that play the role of "rebel" can spotlight abuses of power through demonstrations and civil disobedience. However, when the "rebel" role becomes habit, and angry, dogmatic or powerless attitudes prevail, it can turn people off from getting involved. Radical activists and groups tend to criticize the "reformer" for being "too mainstream," or for allowing movement goals to be co-opted by power holders, but the reformer can help institutionalize movement goals through introducing legislation or using the legal system to challenge injustice.

Grace Taylor is Program Director for the Rural Organizing Project. For study guides, contact grace@rop.org or call (503) 543-8417.



RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT members have been using *Doing Democracy* study circles as a way to reflect on their work in the context of current social movements. Gaston, Oregon resident Alana Graham of the West County Coalition for Human Dignity reports:

"I find myself referring to the book and using its examples. It gave me hope knowing that what we are doing now is laying the groundwork. Knowing the timing of the stages that need to occur to create lasting changes in society is a valuable tool. We are seeing 'trigger points' now, with the war and with the budget crisis, but we're still in the stage of raising consciousness for changes that will come in the future. It's so easy to get discouraged, but then we have to think back to where we were 50 years ago and see how much more horrible it was for women and poor people of every hue wherever the white male elite was ravaging the planet. Making connections for people between D.C., Iraq and our own homes is an impossible jump for most people. That is the educational part of our work right now. We need to be making deep connections for people both mentally and emotionally so we can have lasting change. Educate and liberate. Democracy and discussion."

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THE PRISON INDEX: TAKING THE PULSE OF THE CRIME CONTROL INDUSTRY

By Brigette Sarabi

Over the last twenty years, the U.S. has embarked on an unprecedented incarceration boom that is the most visible part of a broader expansion of policing and social control.

Activists from many sectors are aware of some of the effects of this expansion—for example, the massive transfer of public resources away from education and into incarceration; the gross disparities in incarceration of people of color; the political repercussions of mass disenfranchisement. But accessing solid facts and statistics on these issues has often been a challenge.

Now, through the publication of **The Prison Index: Taking the Pulse of the Crime Control Industry**, activists have a source of timely, hard-hitting data and source information to help them pursue their own research in greater depth. Accurate information helps build the knowledge base of our constituents and allies, informs our strategy decisions, and builds credibility with the media and policy makers. Successful organizing on hot-button issues like prison conditions and criminal justice reform is doubly dependent on accurate and accessible research and statistics that help counter media distortions and political opportunism.

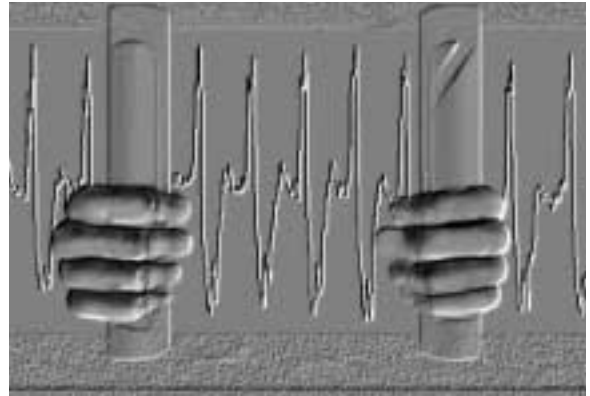
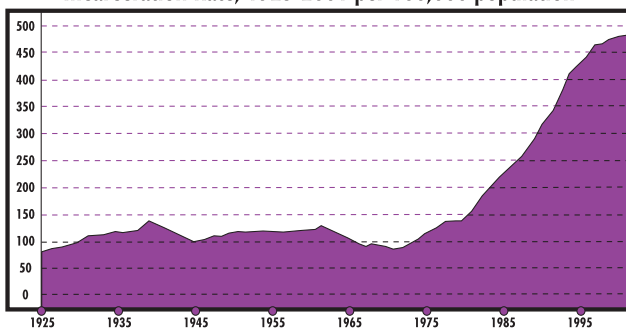
Authored by Peter Wagner, **the Prison Index** is a collaborative project of the Western Prison Project (based in Oregon) and the Prison Policy Initiative (based in Massachusetts). A user-friendly, index-style compilation of facts and statistics on the crime control industry, **The Prison Index** presents information in four broad categories: Crime & Punishment in the U.S.; Incarceration & Its Consequences; the Prison Economy; and Global Comparisons.

Brigette Sarabi is Executive Director of the Western Prison Project. The Prison Index can be ordered for \$10 (plus \$2 shipping) from: www.westernprisonproject.org

CRIME & PUBLIC PERCEPTION

- Percent of the public that forms their opinions about crime based on what they see or read in the news: 76%
- Percent of California news stories on violence that involve youth: 70%
- Percent of California violent crime arrests that were of youth: 14%

Incarceration Rate, 1925-2001 per 100,000 population



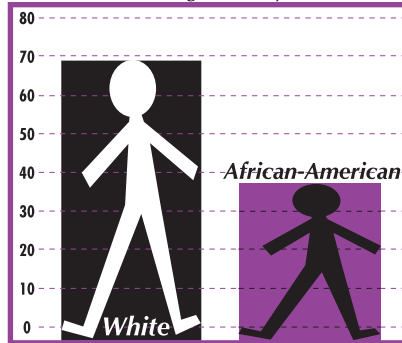
SAFETY

- Percent of people in 1965 reporting they were afraid to walk alone in the dark near their homes: 34%
- Percent change from 1965 to 2000 in the number of people reporting they were afraid to walk alone in the dark near their homes: 0%
- Percent increase in the incarceration rate, 1965-2000: 343%

RACE

- Percentage of U.S. population that is African-American, 2000: 12.3%
- Percentage of adults in state prison who are African-American, 1997: 45.6%
- Percentage of U.S. population that is White, 2000: 75.1%
- Percentage of adults in state prison who are White, 1997: 33.3%
- Number of times an African-American was more likely to be sent to prison than a White person in 1930: 2.9
- Number of times an African-American was more likely to be sent to prison than a White person in 1986: 5.4

DO THE POLICE TREAT ALL RACES FAIRLY?
Percent answering "YES" by race, 2000



EMPLOYMENT

- Percent of civilian labor force unemployed, United States, 2000: 4.0%
- Percent of civilian labor force unemployed, if prisoners were not in prison but unemployed: 5.3%
- Estimated percent of civilian labor force that is in prison, or works in corrections, private security, or in the portions of the police and courts related to crime control: 3.9%
- Percent of civilian labor force that works in farming, forestry or fishing, 2000: 2.4%

BUDGET PRIORITIES: EDUCATION VS. INCARCERATION

- Amount spent nationally in 1997 on corrections: \$43.5 billion
- Average percent increase in state spending on corrections, 1985-2000: 175%
- Average percent increase in state spending on higher education, 1985-2000: 29%
- First year that the 50 states combined spent more on building prisons than colleges: 1995

ELECTION 2000

- Margin of victory, George W. Bush over Al Gore in Florida, 2000: 537
- Number of Floridians disenfranchised (lost their voting rights) by reason of a felony conviction: 827,207
- Number of Floridians free of prison, parole or probation who are disenfranchised for life: 613,514
- Percent of African-American adult males in Florida who are disenfranchised: 31.2%
- Without disenfranchisement, probable margin of victory for Al Gore over George W. Bush in Florida: 80,000
- If Florida had allowed ex-felons (but not prisoners, probationers or parolees) to vote in 2000, probable margin of victory for Al Gore over George Bush in Florida: 40,000

STATE FELONY CONVICTIONS (1996)

- Percent that were for violent offenses: 16.8%
- Percent that were for weapons offenses: 3.3%
- Percent that were for drug offenses: 34.8%



Number of Burglaries per 1,000 households by income level

