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Volume 35, Number 1

CCA To Celebrate 35th Anniversary With Gala Ball, Auction on February 23rd. Special Guest: Ossie Davis

Celebrating the Love of Families

Christian Community Action (CCA) will be observing its 35th anniversary of serving families in need in New Haven with a gala ball and silent auction Saturday, February 23, 2002 at the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale.

Featured guest of the evening will be noted actor, author and social activist Ossie Davis.

The theme for the evening will be "Celebrating the Love of Families," in keeping with CCA's mission. Since its founding in 1967, CCA has provided more than 35,000 parents and their children with emergency food and housing, transitional housing, advocacy and other programs.

"In every case, our goal is to help those in need maintain their dignity and attain self-sufficiency," noted CCA Executive Director, Reverend Bonita Grubbs. "It is also to work to change the systems that perpetuate poverty and injustice."

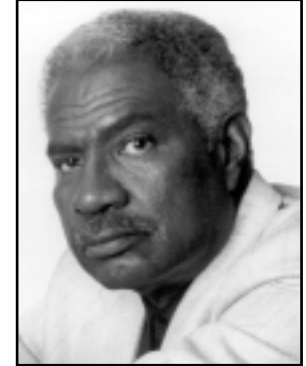
Major corporate sponsors for the evening include Citizens' Bank; The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven; Yale New Haven Hospital; Encon Construction, Inc.; New Haven County Credit Union, Inc., and Yale University.

The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a cocktail hour and silent auction, followed by dinner and dancing at 7:30 p.m. Master of ceremonies for the evening is WTNH-TV Anchor Keith Kountz. Among the items scheduled to be auctioned are use of a vacation home on Martha's Vineyard, a tour of a New York City radio station and a boxing glove signed by Muhammad Ali.

Individual tickets for the evening are \$75, with tables of 10 available for \$750. To purchase tickets, call CCA at 777-7848.

Ossie Davis is perhaps best known for his roles in such films as Dr. Doolittle with Eddie Murphy; I'm Not Rappaport with the late Walter Matthau and Get On The Bus, directed by Spike Lee. His television credits include Roots: The Next Generation, the CBS mini-series Promised Land, and most recently, a guest appearance on the ABC hit series, Philly.

Together with his equally well known wife, Ruby Dee, Davis produced several television specials, including Martin Luther King: The Dream and The Drum, and two segments of A Walk Through The



Noted actor, author and social activist, Ossie Davis will be the featured guest at CCA's Gala Ball, Saturday, February 23rd.

20th Century With Bill Moyers.

A personal friend of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a participant in many of the major civil rights marches of the 1960s, Davis is also the author of a children's book about Dr. King, Just Like Martin, as well as two other children's books, Escape From Freedom (honored by the American Library Association and recipient of the Jane Addams Children's Book Award), and Langston (about Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes).



CCA Wish List

Hillside Family Shelter

- pots and pans
- new mops
- cleaning supplies
- toiletries
- new shower liners
- new trash baskets
- twin size sheets
- full size sheets

Social Justice Project

- drapes
- office furniture

Afterschool Program

- craft supplies
- new educational games

General CCA

- 35mm film
- video camera

Struggling With the State Budget Deficit

The state's growing budget deficit and what can be done about it will be the all-consuming focus of state legislators during 2002 General Assembly session now underway in Hartford. Solutions to this dilemma will not be easy to find.

According to current estimates, the state is likely to find itself more than \$300 million over budget by June 30, the end of its current fiscal year, unless ways are found to offset the flow of red ink.

For the fiscal year that begins July 1st, the outlook is even grimmer -- a \$650 million gap between revenues and expenditures, assuming the current drop in tax monies and other income continue.

Human services advocates recognize that this situation will have to be addressed and that remedies will involve tough decisions regarding funding for future programs. They worry, however, that any cuts, rather than being fairly apportioned among all segments of society, will instead target shelter, healthcare and other programs designed to serve the most

vulnerable among us.

Advocates are also concerned that, coming on top of cutoffs in federal assistance that many poor people experienced October 1st, as part of the federal welfare reform law, additional cuts at the state level would leave families with no "safety net" whatsoever.

"Among the cuts already being proposed are ones focused on mental health and substance abuse services, housing and homeless services, workforce training and development," noted Cheri Quickmire, CCA's Social Justice Project Co-Director. "All of these programs are designed to serve people most in need.

"Imagine if your household was facing a situation like that facing the state, i.e., one in which your expenses were exceeding your income," Quickmire noted. "Would the first things you would cut back on be food for your family, medicine or items such as fuel that you need to maintain your home? Yet that is exactly the types of spending some state legislators say we need to look at first."

Rather than looking at such funding as simply "assistance" or "support," Quickmire said, such funding should be viewed as "investments in the future," that is, investments designed to help people become self-sufficient and productive, not simply to "get by."

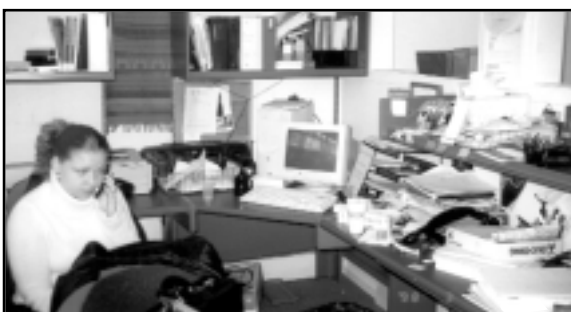
To lessen the negative consequences that any funding cuts might have, legislators are looking to tap into sources of revenue such as the State's \$595 million "rainy day" fund, which was created several years ago in anticipation of periods of economic downturn such as the current one.

Other actions, such as an increase in the state's tobacco tax, are also being examined, along with delays in the phasing-in of already approved tax cuts.

Most economists agree Connecticut is in much better shape to deal with the current recession than it was a decade ago, when it had no special fund to turn to and was heavily reliant on the sales tax for revenue.



CCA Social Justice Project Staffer, Cherie Mazzoni, (above) diagrams the inside of the Project's new office on Willow Street. Below, Mazzoni in the Project's former cramped office at CCA's main headquarters.



CT Food Bank provides Freezer for CCA Food Pantry Program

Christian Community Action recently received a loaned upright freezer from the CT Food Bank. This freezer will be used in the distribution of frozen seafood, chicken and other produce to CCA Food Pantry participants. Funding for this new program was made possible through a grant to the CT Food Bank from The Kraft Community Nutrition Program.



Tito Gonzalez, CCA Food Pantry Coordinator, stands in front of the pantry's new freezer, filled with food from the CT Food Bank.

No room in the inn” a note from Rev. Bonita Grubbs, CCA Executive Director

Every Christmas, Christians gather to pray and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Oftentimes this involves the recitation of many reverent and, some might say, romanticized notions about this event. Among them is that there was no room in the inn for him to be born.

Theologians have argued for many years about the meaning of this statement. The traditional interpretation is that, although he was the Son of God, Jesus allowed himself to be born in a lowly manger, almost in what some might consider a place of dishonor. This year, however, I read an article that suggested that the Jesus' birthplace should not be considered a place of dishonor, but rather a place of honor, protecting Mary's privacy. It is an interesting thought, one that might be worthy of further theological consideration.

But not by me. Turning reverent

recitations into practical applications is how I spend much of my time at CCA.

The staff members at CCA and I have long been concerned about and committed to providing a room at our own "inn" (our shelters) to keep families from being homeless.

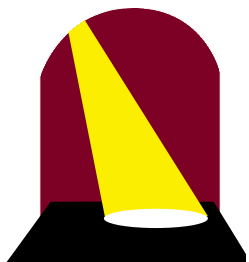
Seems to me that no one should be homeless. But it happens, all too often, to too many people. During the last few months, there has been an increase in the number of people seeking housing. They are both calling and coming into our office a lot more.

Statewide, within the last year, there has been an 86% increase in those using both single and family emergency housing. What that means is that, even in the emergency shelter arena, there are times when there is no room in the inn.

What can we do in those situations? Help people as best we can, given the resources that we have. In that enterprise, we are not alone. Shelter providers in the state and other concerned individuals have long been and will continue to be committed to this.

What further can we do? Advocate for economic justice in its various forms (wages, training and education and tax/spending initiatives) and for affordable housing (subsidized housing, and housing development), so that individuals and families can have their own rooms in their own inns.

For 35 years, we have done both. And there is no reason, given the growing demand, that we should stop now. In fact, during these times, there is every reason to continue and redouble our efforts to respond to those who are homeless and in need. We ask for your support and prayers as we continue to do so.



Social Justice Project Moves To New, Larger Site

A long-time dream will soon become a reality when CCA's Social Justice Project moves to its own offices on Willow Street this month.

The new 3,000-square-foot of office space will include room for the Project's staff of three persons, plus meeting space for advocacy groups such as Mothers for Justice. Mothers for Justice is an action and advocacy network of New Haven area women who are working to empower themselves and their families.

"The new office space, by increasing our capacity, will dramatically increase our capability to respond more quickly and comprehensively to the needs of groups such as Mothers for Justice," noted CCA Executive Director, Reverend Bonita Grubbs.

CCA's Social Justice Project focuses on issues such as empowerment, grass-roots organizing, leadership training and economic justice in its effort to promote social change and justice for all. It is co-directed by Gracie Brown and Cheri Quickmire.

"While we will miss the close day-to-day interaction we had with CCA staff at 168 Davenport Avenue, we are excited about having our own space and the breathing room it offers to further develop our programs," noted Quickmire.

(See "Before/After" photos, page 3)

"Reaching this point in our development represents a real milestone for the project," added Brown. "It shows we have truly reached a new level in our efforts to help women develop the leadership and other skills they need to be heard in the halls of government and to attain self-sufficiency."

CCA's Social Justice Project started as the Welfare Reform Project in 1977. In recognition of its displeasure with the federal welfare reform law passed in 1996, the project changed its name to the Welfare Justice Project. It changed its name again in 2001 to Social Justice Project, in recognition of the need to broaden and deepen its mandate from simply changing the welfare system to promoting social change and justice overall.