

many voices, one movement



# First Generation

a performing arts project

A newsletter for ensemble, families and friends of First Generation

APRIL 2010



**We** would like to express our gratitude to you for supporting First Generation with

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- Martin Carrera for your generosity with our TShirts!
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**"Visioning", New Members, T-Shirts!**

## ANNOUNCING - SATURDAY, APRIL 24th "VISIONING"

A Benefit for First Generation and **BAKOK!** An evening of song, dance, poetry, food and drink, celebration and community at the Northampton Center for the Arts. The event is a benefit for First Generation and our newly formed intergenerational performing ensemble **BAKOK!**

The evening will include Master of Ceremonies Sid Ferreira and performances by special guest artists, including master drummers Joe Sallins, Jullissa Rodriguez; Tem Blessed and members of Rebirth; storyteller Onawumi Jean Moss; Senegalese musician Sana NiDiaye; Afro-Caribbean dancer, Mellissa Craig; and pianists Ruth Bass Green and Dan Belmont; as well as the First Generation youth and **BAKOK!** ensembles.

First Generation has been blessed with many amazing new volunteers, interns and staff members! We welcome and thank volunteers and interns Kara Serasis (Springfield College), Jeanette Somers (Bay Path), Remy Ketzner (Hampshire College) and Jayme Winell (Hampshire College).

**Leah Kabue!** Welcome to First Generation and **BAKOK!**  
And welcome to **Julissa Rodriguez** as our 2010 Artist-in-Residence!

**HELLO!** My name is Jayme Winell and I am currently working with the Performance Project. I am a native to California but have been in Amherst, MA, for two years now and I'm really happy and excited to find new projects to put my time, energy and heart into ... like The Performance Project. I initially came to Julie, the director, as an administrative assistant. After some time, I was needed in a support role for the arts-based youth leadership program that meets in Springfield, called First Generation. I thought that my first encounter with the youth was going to be one of a rare set of experiences but since then, I have been spending a

lot of time with the First Gen group!! I am so happy that I have more time with the youth and see this as a beautiful opportunity for growth for all involved, me as a new group facilitator included.

When I am at Hampshire College, I take a range of classes including history, social movements and political philosophy. I also take dance classes and what I love about First Generation is the possibility of overlap between discussions of large forces that affect our lives and the real need for creative expression. "Politics" are not at the forefront of group work, but the kinds of spaces that are opened up lend themselves to discussions around discrimination, struggle, dreams, personal stories and much more.

I think that social change and social justice can happen at so many complex levels, it is fairly impossible to give a closed definition of what social change or justice is. I would solidly place the work that happens within The Performance Project as within social justice, since a major hurdle for all of us is feeling heard and having our story expressed. What I find most exciting about the work that The Performance Project does are the relationships that build over time and the spaces that open up for honest sharing and dialogue.

**We will soon have two beautiful T-Shirts for sale!**



**Our** next newsletter will feature four First Generation youth, Terrell Jones, Monique Wilson, Parsu Koirala and Iyawna Burnett who are mentoring students at Rebecca M. Johnson School!



## Mural, Artist's Speak, Poetry!



Photo by Ed Cohen

The Mural Painting Project was a collaboration between The Performance Project, Center for Human Development, and the Department of Youth Services, supported by Commonwealth Corporation.

Four artists and seven youth were involved in conceiving and painting the mural: Shareef Ibrahim, Shawn Parfumi, Ricky Brown, Camry Starks, Ky Dahn, Abraham Guzman, Mike Higgins (Jr), Julie Lichtenberg, Carla Wojczuk, Tony Lugo and Julissa Rodriguez

### MURAL PROJECT

By Carla Wojczuk

The mural making process always surprises. We each come with our own stories and experiences. Together we start identifying ideas, feelings, and messages we want to communicate. We create concepts that organize and form the expression of these ideas, feelings, and messages. After designing the mural and beginning to paint, we let the creative process take-over ... new images and new layers of meaning emerge.

What emerges through the mural will be interpreted in different ways. We see many things because we are many things. Look at the young man holding the glowing universe in his hand. Imagine he is talking to his friend, showing him what is possible in our relationships. The stars from this universe of possibilities interact with other figures in the mural: one figure reaches for a cluster of floating stars; another clenches them in her fist; you can find them rising from one of the hands inside a figure and in the mind of another; a group of stars play in the lock on the prison bars inside yet another figure. A child screams stars into the universe. We have all been this child once ... coming out of powerful struggle, birth, and into a world of roots, tradition, support, everyday life, struggle and pain, creativity, dreams, and the future ... with a universe of possibility inside of us. We reach for, clench, and are inspired by connection. Connection holds a key for us even when we feel like it's nowhere to be found. This is the internal universe of a young man in Springfield's cityscape, at the bottom of the mural.

For me this mural project is about connection. Developing connection is not pure and simple. It can be fun, but it can also be complex and sometimes connection comes through difficult experiences. But we find tools that guide us through the process. W. E. B. DuBois said, "Begin with art, because art tries to take us outside ourselves. It is a

matter of trying to create an atmosphere and context so conversation can flow back and forth and we can be influenced by each other."

**MURAL** My name is Tony "ELO" Lugo. I was one of the artists that worked on the mural project.

I started doing art at a very young age. Graffiti art at the time was my preference and the seed that was planted and inspired by the amazing murals I seen created by graf artists in new york city. the seed grew and branched out into different art categories like oil painting, mosaic art, sketching, etc. When i was younger i didnt have the resources or opportunity to do mural projects "legally" so my friends and I created beautiful colorful murals "illegally". There were no mural projects available to the youth and if there was more than likely i wouldnt have done the so called "illegal art". art is a great and serious form of expression that i think everyone has whether its martial arts, creativity, painting, singin, playin music instruments, dance, and the list goes on. i think more programs such as this mural project should be made available to the youth whether in schools or community centers across our communities. we need to plant more seeds that create and teach unity, mentorship, inspiration, and accomplishment. the mural project was an inspiring and an amazing experience for me. it was the first time in a while that i worked with amazing artists that i bonded with and was amazed and inspired by the creativity of the youth we worked with. it helped build and create friendships and unity that is very important in our communities today. murals are an amazing way to express happiness, pain, struggles, culture, and how we individually look at the world and everything around us. in the future i hope to see more mural projects created and more youth involved in them. i want to thank julie, carla, and julissa for inviting me in to work with them on this project and anyone else that had to do with getting this project off the ground. once again it was an amazing experience and one i hope to relive again. p.s. i would also like to thank evelin aquino for the inspiration and planting the seed that helped me get involved with the mural project.

peace, ELO

### POEM

Take a look at my life  
 I might be different from you  
 But I still live the same everyday life that you do  
 I too was born with the need for connection  
 It's so hard  
 When I was a baby everybody wanted to hold me  
 Now they say I am a danger to society  
 I'm no different I'm just like you  
 I bet we feel the same pain  
 Been through the same struggles  
 Struggle from bondage  
 Struggle to break through  
 Lost of connection  
 Looking for our roots  
 And reaching for the truth  
 Let me ask you a question  
 Do you have a dream?  
 Well I do...  
 I sit back close my eyes paint a picture in my mind  
 Time  
 After time  
 - by Shareef Ibrahim



This program is supported by the Springfield Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council

**First Generation** is an intensive, arts-based and youth leadership-development program. **First Generation** provides a platform for young people to have a public voice in their community, and beyond, through creative expression and thoughtful exploration of what it means to be **First Generation**.

The Performance Project creates theater about oppression and liberation. Through our multi-generational collaborations we examine the effects of racism, economic oppression, bigotry, and violence, and create compelling works of theater, movement, and spoken-word. Our performances engage audiences in dialogue about critical social and cultural issues.