

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE!

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**Mississippi Action for Community Education, Quitman County
Development Organization and The Workers' Center
LAUNCH CAP!!!**

Through a grant from the Racial Justice Collaborative Fund, three community-based organizations, located in the Mississippi Delta, have teamed up to launch the Community Advocacy Project (CAP). The Racial Justice Collaborative Fund supports partnerships between lawyers and local community-based organizations that are using legal tools to advance fair resource distribution and equity, improve policy outcomes, and increase government and corporate accountability for communities marginalized by race, color, ethnicity, immigration status or citizenship status.

CAP is a collaborative initiative between the Mississippi Workers' Center, Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE) and Quitman County Development Organization (QCDO). The primary goal of CAP is to work with communities to insure greater access to information and systems that control their lives. Through CAP, the partnering organizations will join with legal services lawyers, private members of the Bar, religious leaders, labor leaders and community activists, to develop and implement a state-wide "Know Your Rights" campaign. Community canvassers will conduct needs assessments in more than 21 counties, with a special focus on the Delta, which is the poorest region in the state. Organizing sessions, public hearings and trainings will be held in communities across the state. A volunteer legal network will be established to evaluate possible legal actions, provide free legal consultations, operate a legal hotline and identify lawyers to represent those whose rights have been violated.

CAP will focus on areas where "rights" are most often denied and/or violated, e.g. voting

rights, workers' rights, parents' and children's rights and consumer rights. Local residents in the targeted areas will get information needed to address predatory lending, unfair credit ratings, denial of voting rights, employment discrimination, unequal access to quality health care, discriminatory discipline practices in public schools, e.g. zero tolerance and much more. Information will be distributed to thousands of low wage workers and others who have historically been "locked out" of equal access to the systems that control their lives.

"CAP" is needed in our communities to enable us to understand the forces and systems that work against us. The only way we can change conditions and improve the quality of our lives is to have access to knowledge. Knowledge is power and we must obtain it in order to make sure, we don't look up "50" years and find out we're in the same shape all over again. Knowledge is power and we need that kind of power." Wendall Paris from CAP Partner MACE, Greenville, MS.

NOTE: CAP partners kicked off the project with a commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* on Monday, May 17, 2004, held in Greenville and Metcalfe, Mississippi.

CAP Partners:

Jaribu Hill, Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights; CJ Jones/Wendell Paris, Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc. and Bernard Handy, Quitman County Development Organization, Inc.