



## Youth In Focus

December 2008

Dear Youth In Focus Community of Supporters, Partners and Allies,

Greetings to you all in this holiday season! We are so happy to introduce ourselves to you as the new Co-Directors of Youth In Focus during this exciting time of transformation and possibility in our organization, as well as in our country. We want to tell you a bit about ourselves and how our combined skills are supporting the growth of YIF's work in youth-led participatory action research, in youth leadership and development, and in community organizing.

*Jayeeshha:* I'm a New York City native with South Asian roots, and have been a social justice advocate since as far back as my memory serves me. I've worn many hats in the last decade across the country, spanning a legal firm and a mayoral office in New York, a high tech start-up, web design firm, preschool and alternative university in Colorado, and a special needs inclusive childcare center in San Francisco. Most recently, I coordinated the project management of a comprehensive urban school district redesign in Oakland and coached strategic planning and facilitation for systemic change in Alameda County. I am also the Co-Founder of Mind Power Collective as well as the Global Link of World Educators (GLOWE) Project. I graduated from Cornell University with a Bachelors of Science in Industrial and Labor Relations and am about to finally complete a Masters of Arts in Social Justice and Equity in Education at San Francisco State University.

*Alyssa:* I grew up in California's Antelope Valley (in southern Kern County) and have since had the privilege to develop as an organizational leader and advocate for social and environmental justice across the U.S. and internationally. Some examples of my previous work include mentoring young people at an outdoor education center in New Jersey; facilitating community development projects in West Africa and in Mexico; and serving as board member and president of a non-profit dedicated to affordable, cooperative housing in Davis, California. From 2002 to 2008, I earned a Ph.D. in Geography at the University of California, Davis, during which time I collaborated with multiple youth, community, and organizational partners in the Central Valley. My dissertation tells the story of creating a community mural in Knights Landing, California based on the results of a youth-led participatory action research project I helped organize. My master's degree in Experiential Education (Minnesota State University, Mankato) and bachelor's degree in Religion (Princeton University) combine with my

various life experiences to reflect my passion for inspiring diverse groups of people to work together to create a more just, healthy, and loving world community.

As we write, the wonderful staff members at Youth In Focus are creating impact through their youth-led participatory action research projects; making cutting-edge contributions to the fields of participatory action research and youth development; and collaborating with youth and adults across California's Central Valley and Bay Area to build movements that create the conditions for social justice. They have done all this while co-creating our new strategic plan! We both feel extraordinarily lucky to join such a talented, passionate, and committed team of incredible individuals.

We are looking forward to getting to know you and how, together, we can continue to build the field of youth-led participatory action research while furthering the movement for social justice across our country. Thank you for your partnership and involvement with Youth In Focus, and happy holidays!

Saludos desde Sacramento,  
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Peace,  
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