

Future Generations Graduate School

Detroit, September 2013

News flash! Detroit, when viewed from the top is seen by most as an abandoned, crime ridden, bankrupt city, BUT - its roots as a cauldron of social activism, whose people are re-defining, re-spiriting and rebuilding their city from the ground up, is still very much alive. From the historic labor movement, to the Black Power movement, civil rights activism, and now to a movement to re-envision work, and "put the neighbor back in the hood" Detroit's social activists are on the front lines of the {re}evolution taking place in America.

Want to study social change in America? Go to Detroit...

The Boggs Center to Nature Community Leadership (<http://boggscenter.org>) was founded by lifelong social activists Grace and Jimmie Boggs. The Center is inspiring community activists and bringing hope and change to Detroit's social and physical landscape. Students visited and learned from a wide array of organizations and social change agents who are working with community and rebuilding Detroit from the bottom-up. The **Urban Agriculture** movement is turning vacant lots into orchards, and plans on feeding the city within 10 years. The **Coalition against Police Brutality** is establishing Peace Zones for Life. **New Work** is part of a charter school, which utilizes 3D printers, solar energy and electronics to train community members in creating livelihoods and building community resilience, instead of looking for jobs. The class visited the **Allied Media Project**, the **Boggs School**, and the former **Packard Automotive Plant**. Once employing 100,000 people, the now abandoned and crumbling Packard plant epitomizes the industrial economy of Detroit's past.

While in Detroit, we experienced a renaissance of African-American culture and art. We stayed at the **Hush House**, a center for training young people in community leadership

which also houses a museum documenting the African American experience in America.

A highlight of the trip was the opportunity to visit with Grace Boggs. Grace, now in her ninety-eighth year, has been on the front lines of every social movement in this country since the McCarthy Days; and she is still going strong. The author of *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-first Century*, Grace just got back in Detroit from a speaking tour in time to meet with our students. In answer to a student's question, she said that we must look back at the long arc of history and social movements and take note that we are now at a critical point in our evolution. She reminded us that change takes time and that "women's ways of working and caring is critical to the process of social change."

Detroit; by walking through the rubble you can begin to glimpse the future. Not a future of Packard plants, but a future of hope, where community members work together to shape their futures.