



ANSWERING ADVERSITY

Young Photographers Alliance 2010 Mentoring Program

The world is facing economic hardship not seen since the Great Depression. Unemployment, home foreclosures, loss of savings and retirement are leaving communities, businesses, families and individuals faced with tough choices. What are these choices and how will they reshape the future?

PARTICIPANTS

38 college photography students
12 professional photographer mentors

LOCATIONS

Canada

Ottawa
Toronto

United Kingdom

London

United States

Columbus, OH
Dallas, TX
Los Angeles, CA
New York, NY
Pittsburgh, PA
Rochester, NY
San Francisco, CA
Sante Fe, NM
Seattle, WA

Answering Adversity is an initiative of the Young Photographers Alliance with support from ASMP Foundation



Major Founding Sponsor



The Challenge to the Students

Reminiscent of the WPA and FSA photographs commissioned by the US government during the Great Depression to record the lives of everyday Americans, Answering Adversity sent teams of college level student photographers and their mentors into the field to photograph stories of innovation, determination and courage during hard times.

The goal of this project was to shed light on the positive - to capture stories of strength and endurance. Much has been reported on the difficulties people face; but how are they answering the adversity of this economic crisis to emerge even stronger?

Each student was asked to identify and photograph a subject based on the theme to produce a series of images including three powerful selects, and a short essay.

The theme was explored from a variety of vantage points; portraiture, photojournalism, landscape and architectural photography. Each student was encouraged to find his or her own unique perspective and interpretation. The students learned to push the boundaries of how photography can shed light on a subject in new and innovative ways.

About the Program

Answering Adversity is the inaugural mentoring program of the Young Photographers Alliance. The program provides encouragement and assistance to young photographers entering the field, through a project that explores the power of photography to communicate, document and inspire. Talented college students and recent graduates are partnered with leading photographers who act as mentors to collaborate on a photo essay around a compelling social theme.

The program gives emerging photographers the ability to work with successful professionals to fine tune their craft, create images for their portfolios, develop business and skills and explore markets for their work. At the same time they experience the power of photography to build community awareness and support around an important environmental or social issue.



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2010 Mentoring Program**



Above left: Working in the studio, Toronto.
Left: Mentor Trinette Reed meets with student Stefan Jora in San Francisco.
Top: Mentor Vicki Couchman, London.
Above: Students Olmo Reverter and Magnus Arrevad, London.



Top: The team working in San Francisco.
Above: The team from Rochester.



Top: Above a team meeting in Santa Fe.
Left: visiting critic Dan Bradley, Columbus.

Chris Mumma
Columbus College
of Art and Design
Columbus Team



At the beginning of this project, I initially found myself living under a bridge with the homeless for a couple weeks.

Below: After dinner a resident mops the shelter's security office floors.

Bottom: A resident wraps up his list of morning chores before heading off to look for work.

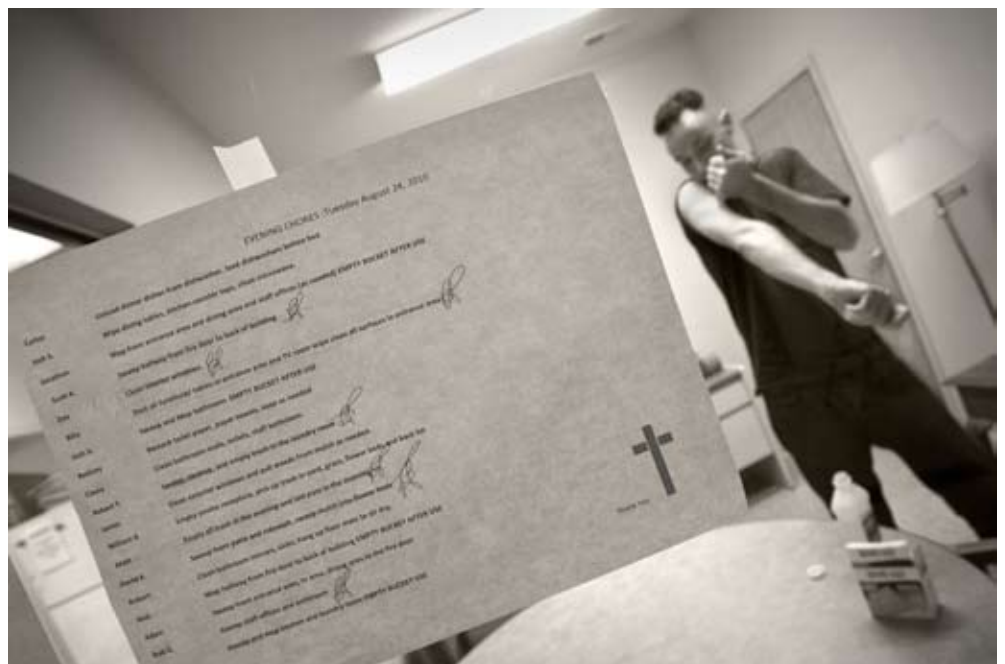
Below right: This was taken late at night in a remote part of the shelter without any residents or staff around. He's using a syringe, what's inside is anyone's guess. Medicine of all forms are kept locked up in the executive director's office.

At the beginning of this project, I initially found myself living under a bridge with the homeless for a couple weeks, searching for people who were looking to overcome their current predicament and were working hard to get off the streets. It was slow going. It soon became clear to me that I couldn't just wait for a success story to fall into my lap. That's when I decided to turn my camera towards those living at St. Vincent Haven, a homeless shelter in Newark, Ohio.

St. Vincent Haven offers services that are geared to motivating it's twenty-four residents toward long-term independent living. Required counseling is structured to help them find employment, as well as improve

their educational skills. In addition to maintaining and cleaning the shelter, it is required that every resident goes out and applies for at least five jobs every week. These efforts have proven to be wonderfully successful.

During my time at the shelter a third of the residents had found jobs and are now in the process of saving up their money. Others, although looking for work, had more immediate problems at hand. A large portion of those at St. Vincent are in the process of recovering from extensive drug and alcohol abuse. The shelter has a no tolerance policy for such substances, and the fact that residents suffering from such vices are still very much present and active at St. Vincent, is a testament to their commitment to a better life.



Olmo Reverter Fernandez

University of Westminster
London Team



The disparities between the richest and the majority of society can be seen in every facet of life; work, food, transportation, recreation and even pets are some thing that we all turn to for solace but in very different ways.

It is those who're least to blame for the current economic disaster the first to feel its effects. Figures for such abstract concepts as "actualised GDP growth", "sovereign debt" and "market exposure" mean little to most people. But with the government forking out £500 billion in bailouts and stimulus packages, one has to wonder where the money has all gone? Better yet, how will it be repaid and by whom?

As British society begins to feel the strain of "austerity measures," the top earners appear to be entirely unaffected and continuing as they always have. There is a bizarre, yet definite humour to be found in the absurd indulgences of the rich, especially during this time of crisis. Two years ago, Icarus looked to have crashed to Earth in hail of toxic debt. He now takes a

helicopter to work in Canary wharf, while the ordinary workers take a bus or train far below.

Amid all the challenges, life goes on. Money may not buy happiness but it can purchase a better class of distraction. It's this fact that informs the central idea of my project The disparities between the richest and the majority of society can be seen in every facet of life; work, food, transportation, recreation and even pets are some thing that we all turn to for solace but in very different ways.

With a series of diptychs that contrast aspects of everyday life seen from the perspective of the most and least advantaged in the capital, I aim to humorously highlight divisions in wealth and the in growing social divide.



Maybe I had a preconceived notion about who the hungry would be. I was totally shocked when I saw the diversity of the people standing in line to be fed.

Below: With the hundreds of people who stand in line every Sunday the coordinators of Food Not Bombs Aglago start their day early, gathering food donated by vendors at the Hollywood Farmer's Market.

Below: Donated seasonal vegetables are chopped carefully and lovingly by the volunteers who come to Aglago to help.



Yasmin Alishav

Art Center College of Design
Los Angeles Team



The first few visits to Food Not Bombs Aglago during the course of this project, I didn't bring a camera. I wanted to go through the process and get to know the amazing people who coordinate the Los Angeles chapter of FNB. Maybe I had a preconceived notion about who the hungry would be. I was totally shocked when I saw the diversity of the people standing in line to be fed. This included jobless Americans and immigrants, the elderly and even people who have jobs but cannot afford a place to stay. I met a registered nurse who is homeless.

Nobody gets paid to help. Every Sunday they cook and serve wonderful organic food left over from the farmer's markets to people who don't have access to good nutrition. I became more and more involved every week I went back.

The organization costs next to nothing to run, and that makes it a brilliant example of finding alternative ways to supplement the waning government aid. They don't rely on state or private funding and the food service is mobile. The food lines are set up in Pershing Square and outside the Union Rescue Mission on San Julian and 6th St., also known as Skid Row.

Food Not Bombs has chapters all over the country, one of many sustainable grass-roots organizations. Being involved locally can change the lives of people around us. It was moving to meet so many people who care about hunger so much they feel the need to do something about it firsthand. They don't preach, they just do. It silenced a deep doubt that I had that people simply don't care. Working alongside these compassionate and proactive people is inspiring each time I go back.



At 28 years, Mike Bailey is the face of young labor in America. He eats, drinks, and sleeps the strike; even going as far as to squat on the picket line, pitching a tent directly across from the same building that he used to work in.

Below right: Michael Bailey gets ready at 5 in the morning for his shift on the strike line. He gets up early to berate the "scabs" who have replaced his labor.

Below: Bailey retires for a smoke after a long night. Dr. Pepper/Snapple Corp. made an offer to the union earlier in the day, but Bailey acknowledged that it would ultimately be rejected; it was too low.



Michael Conti

Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester Team



American Union

Cutting through the midnight silence in Williamson, NY is Michael Bailey; racing along 104 on his bicycle, megaphone in hand. His lean frame rests against the handlebars, as a co-worker grins saying, "Go get 'em Mike!" The former machine operator made his living filling jars of different Mott's products, but after over 100 days on strike with the RWDSU (Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union) Local 220, Bailey has taken on the role of comedian, companion and leader.

"Thanks for bringing back slavery," says Bailey. With the flip of a switch, Bailey launches into a stream of invective against a scab, a worker who has broken the strike lines and has returned to the job. At 28 years, Mike Bailey is the face of young labor in America. He eats, drinks, and sleeps the strike; even going as far as to squat on the picket line, pitching a tent directly across from the same building that he used to work in.

"They're just using the weak economy as an excuse," says Bailey. The Texas-owned parent company, Dr. Pepper/Snapple implemented a new contract that would have eliminated life insurance after retirement, reduced 401K matching, reduced medical coverage, and would have cut wages by \$1.50 an hour. Prior to the strike, workers were complaining of the increased practice of requiring them to do tasks not in their job description.

His fervent devotion to this "defense of the middle class" is rooted in what he sees as protecting his family; his friends and co-workers. In Bailey's tattered tent, the wind and rain are close company. He sleeps briefly, but the morning light only seems to give him more energy. As many on the strike line like to quote, "One day longer, one day stronger."



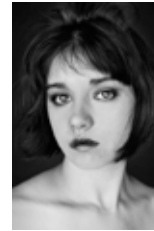
“If you had asked me 5 years ago if I ever thought I would be able to do what I am doing now on a daily basis without my husband, I would have laughed and said no way in hell. But when you have no choice but to do it, you just do it”

Debi LaBell

Below: Debi LaBell (mother) and Presley LaBell (Debi's Daughter)

Below right: Todd LaBell (uncle to Cooper and Presley) and Jackson Dowler (Debi's son from previous marriage)

Bottom right: Cooper LaBell (Debi's youngest son) and Phyllis LaBell (grandmother to Cooper and Presely)



Bonnie Rae Mills

Academy of Art University
San Francisco Team

Blood and Water

My main teacher was and still is, my mom, my hero. She taught me how to get the best deals, mend my socks, respect tradition but be open to new things, and most importantly, to be my own person in a world that wants you to end up as anything but.

This connection to strong individuals is mirrored in all my photography, and Debi LaBell is no exception. She battles her own demons, and all the shit life throws at her, finding her own answers to adversity everyday. She is an ordinary person, dealing with extraordinary challenges- and sticking it out. Her family is evidence to her strong spirit. Her children are learning what it takes to survive by watching mom, holding onto childhood as long as

they can, and Debi works hard to give them a few more years of innocence. Her brother in law acts as a father figure stepping in for his brother called to serve his country, and her mother in law forges new bonds with her grandchildren. Everyone steps up in hard times because blood is thicker than water.

With this project I seek to communicate strength, stress and perseverance, all for the sake of love. Look at these portraits and see the nature of lost childhood, mistakes made and remedied, and the flaws that make us human. One thing I have learned from photographing families is that there is an intangible connection between people who grow together, make mistakes together, and love together. This is what it means to have family.



Brad Curran
Christopher Daniel

Seattle Central
Creative Academy
Seattle Team



Here in Seattle is where he learned a new life. Playing music, writing poetry, painting and eventually screen-printing. If he hadn't come to Seattle he may not have learned all these things.

Boma Cho has always had an answer to adversity. He came to the United States from Cameroon in the 1980s. He grew up in the village of Santa with one brother and six sisters. A sponsorship had helped him get to Gonzaga University in Eastern Washington where he began studying film. There he found himself in an unfamiliar position. The culture was different. The people were different. And the winters were cold. There he got his first interaction with American culture, which he didn't realize would really help shape his future.

Angeles with a job already in line. That fell through. Soon after another one in Vancouver, B.C. fell through due to lack of funding and couldn't get the projects he wanted to do up and running.

One day he happened to find himself in Seattle. He was driving a cab when he picked up his first guitar. Here in Seattle is where he learned a new life. Playing music, writing poetry, painting and eventually screen-printing. If he hadn't come to Seattle he may not have learned all these things. He doesn't have regrets of the things that didn't turn out. This is just his path of life and Boma just keeps on living.

After leaving Gonzaga, he decided to take his film and screenwriting studies to London. After earning a certificate in film he was back. This time he went to Los

Below: Boma, Bonhomme.

Bottom: Working hands.

Bottom right: Boma Cho has found his place.



Christos Spentzos

Algonquin College
Toronto/Ottawa Team



What about the benefits the farms have for prisoner rehabilitation, for the farming community, and for the country? Is it bad that prisoners are less likely to re-offend after learning to care for animals?

My family moved to Greece when I was two weeks old. By the time I returned to Canada in my teens, I had become accustomed to living within a system full of government corruption. My father's favourite expression was always, "while the Greeks were giving birth to civilization and democracy, the Germans were eating their fathers, and now the opposite is true." In comparison, Canada seemed to me to be the land of fairness, transparency, and opportunity.

In the last couple of years I have started to think differently. When I found out about the closing of the prison farms across Canada I was puzzled. Why was the government closing them down? Their reasons did not make sense. Sure, most prisoners don't go into agriculture after being released, but what about the

benefits the farms have for prisoner rehabilitation, for the farming community, and for the country? Is it bad that prisoners are less likely to re-offend after learning to care for animals? Is free labour bad? Is it not beneficial that they make their own food, saving taxpayer's money? Is it bad to keep food local?

The 'Save Our Prison Farms' organization forms human roadblocks to stand up against livestock trucks carrying 300 purebred Holstein dairy cattle and 8,000 chickens off to auction. The battle is lost but not the war. A new banner is raised: 'Restore Our Prison Farms.' The whole community pools its money and buys back as much of the herd as it can. Together a new beginning is captured. The first of many calves is saved, and they call her "Hope."

Below: Hundreds of protesters block the road to support the prison farms and to keep the animals from being taken away.

Below right: A local man, known as Allan, does not hesitate to sit in front of the truck to try and save Canada's last prison farm.



Shifting economic forces and the desire to make lemons out of lemonade have led the arrival of new people to this scene, as they strike out to build their own future independent of an electrical grid, water system, supermarkets, and even traditional construction methods.

Below: Bob Pedersen picks organic vegetables that will be donated to area food banks in Taos, New Mexico.

Right: Recent college graduate Jim Sudderth studies fire ecology for the National Park Service in Pecos, New Mexico



Stuart Palley

Southern Methodist University
Santa Fe Team



The Northern New Mexican landscape is dotted with individuals who choose to go "Off the Grid." Shifting economic forces and the desire to make lemons out of lemonade have led the arrival of new people to this scene, as they strike out to build their own future independent of an electrical grid, water system, supermarkets, and even traditional construction methods. Three subjects stood out; an organic farmer, a recent college graduate, and members of a low energy use community.

Jim Sudderth is a freshly minted biology major who now interns for the National Park Service, training in fire ecology. He hopes to work his way up to a park superintendent one day. Most of the day Jim and his colleagues are out in the field, on dirt roads miles away from civilization.

Bob Pedersen is a veteran of organic agriculture, living in Taos, New Mexico. The need for donated food in Taos has doubled or tripled in the last few years. In his spare time, Pedersen tends to an organic vegetable field that helps fill that need. The entire effort is volunteer funded and operated, with Bob doing the brunt of the work himself to grow produce for donation.

Hummingbird Ranch, near Mora, New Mexico strives to achieve zero energy consumption. Their power is generated from photovoltaic solar panels, their water is taken from rainwater and streams, and their food is grown in their own custom built greenhouses. New members Danielle and Gatlin left their lives in the city to participate in building up the Hummingbird Ranch community.



About Us

Young Photographers Alliance (YPA) is a global community where young photographers connect with the inspiration, resources and contacts they need to build successful and sustainable careers as the great artists and communicators of the future.

Young Photographer's Alliance

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YoungPhotographersAlliance.org

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All across America there are young people who are passionate about expressing their vision of the world through photography – but every year, it becomes harder and harder for them to do so. The photography industry is chaotic and complicated, with no clear track to artistic and commercial success. Survival often depends on one's ability to build a small business independently with limited resources and little, if any, access to advice or direction. This lack of support not only affects aspiring photographers directly, it will also have a long-term negative impact on the future of professional photography.

YPA is an educational foundation dedicated to rallying the resources of the creative community and general public in support of young talent. Our mission is to inspire and empower the next generation of image-makers by offering the real-world knowledge, insight, experience and contacts they need to build sustainable careers as photography professionals.

YPA is unique in its focus on community and the fostering of direct, meaningful connections between emerging and established photographers. Our vision is to create powerful synergies between the two groups, recognizing that collaboration benefits both, and ultimately energizes and advances the profession as a whole. Great talent isn't just born. It's developed.

The Young Photographers Alliance provides financial grants and skill-development opportunities for emerging photographers and photography students enrolled in college programs across the United States.

