

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recipient of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities 2011 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award - the Nation's highest honor awarded to outstanding after/out-of-school programs for youth in the arts and humanities - *Sojourn to the Past* (Sojourn) is the longest running human rights/social justice education and outreach program for youth in the country. Unique in its approach to providing youth with a life-changing educational experience, the program is aligned with national curriculum content standards, available to underserved, underprivileged, as well as mainstreamed students, and addresses the well-being of the whole student. Sojourn has been honored by the United States Congress, the National Education Association, and the California Legislature.

Sojourn to the Past is an eleven-year old transformative, empowering educational program that takes high school students out of the classroom, on a ten-day, moving classroom, academic immersion journey along the path of the Civil Rights Movement through five states in the American South. Comprised entirely of interpretation of history and the humanities, Sojourn uses the lens of the Civil Rights Movement to bring the lessons of our shared American history to life by introducing students from diverse academic, ethnic, racial, demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds to a rigorous curriculum, historical sites/museums, and foot soldiers of the Movement; e.g., US Congressman John Lewis, members of the Little Rock Nine who, like the students were young when they became non-violent activists for social justice.

The Sojourn program is significant not only for its historic value but, importantly, for the burgeoning recognition of responsibility for students to put the lessons they learn from history into practice in their lives and in their schools and communities toward creating a more civil society that is free of discrimination, violence, hatred, bigotry, and inequity. Students are challenged to reach within themselves to define the values that drive them and to defend the principles of equality and justice - a deep and personal inquiry that rarely happens in the classroom. "*Programs like Sojourn to the Past ensure America's future as a land of liberty and justice for all.*" - United States Senator Barbara Boxer

Over the past twelve years, more than 6,000 students have participated in Sojourn and more than 300,000 youth and adults across the country have been reached by Sojourn's annual, interactive presentations on the lessons of the Civil Rights Movement and their relationship to current human rights issues and conditions.

At a time when state curriculum standards push educators to teach by the book, to emphasize breadth over depth, and to focus students on test answers, not on life answers, *Sojourn to the Past* provides students with innovative teaching/learning methods that engages them on a path of self discovery, academic success, and in becoming moral decision makers and ambassadors for social change. Sojourn is about making civil rights history relevant to their individual lives and about captivating these students with education, not desensitizing them to it. "*I am consistently inspired when I interact with these students by the preparation they have received, by the empowerment they feel toward societal change, and I truly believe that this program is moving our country forward by changing these students' lives.*" - United States Congressman John Lewis.

In company with skilled educators and lecturers, many of whom are veteran leaders of the Movement, each lesson taught during the ten-day journey includes instructional strategies aligned with national standards in history: decision-making, inquiry learning, issue analysis, and problem-based learning. It is Sojourn's practice of reflective questioning and critical thinking that is at the foundation of Sojourn's learning approach - a formula that combines rigorous study in US history and humanities with dynamic learning environments, amazing surprises, and impressive guest speakers built around curriculum intended to leave students with a lasting cognitive dissonance. Sojourn's long term goal is to become a catalyst for a new generation of civic minded leaders who are intimately familiar with the history of their country and driven to care for all members in their community.

Sojourn to the Past is endorsed by a who's who among civil rights and history scholars and a distinguished and diverse National Advisory Committee and Community Partners comprised of leaders in social justice, education, government, arts, entertainment, and sports including PBS, the Museum of Tolerance and the Southern Poverty Law Center.