

civic participation
and the promise of democracy

by Craig McGarvey





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acknowledgements

This report could not have come to life without the help of three institutions. The James Irvine Foundation afforded me the opportunity of the seven plus years of program work on which the piece is based. The Marguerite Casey Foundation commissioned the report's original version. And the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, a major partner in much of the effort described here, has given the piece a chance to spread its modest wings. I owe thanks to all three organizations and am particularly grateful to the hundreds of Californians whose work in civic participation I have been privileged to observe. Theirs is the story of democracy, and they are telling it in their communities every day.

CONTENTS

7	Preface, Donald E. Miller
9	Introduction
11	Civic Participation and the Country Now
14	Communities as Places of Learning: A Conceptual Case
25	Roots and Branches: The Lay of the Land and its History
37	Philanthropy and its Current Conversations
40	California: Who is Who and What They are Up To
49	A Time of Opportunity in America
51	Case Studies
	1. Tamejavi: Civic Participation and Cultural Exchange
	2. Organizing Across Ethnic Lines
	3. From Community Problems to State Politics.
55	About Craig McGarvey
56	About the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture

preface

Craig McGarvey is a visionary, but he probably won't admit it. As the director of the Civic Culture program at The James Irvine Foundation, Craig was one of the leading funders of civic participation and efforts to engage members of the faith community in issues of the day. Today, Craig remains one of the most knowledgeable experts in the field.

In 2001, McGarvey received the Council on Foundations's Robert W. Scrivner Award for Creative Grantmaking for his work with the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship. He also deserves recognition for the many other ways that he has supported democratic principles in California.

The USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture is pleased to publish "Civic Participation and the Promise of Democracy." We agree, as McGarvey writes, that America is "presented with a chance to build broader public understanding of and support for civic engagement." We are grateful to Craig McGarvey for his efforts to promote collective learning in California and for his support of our research.

Donald E. Miller
Executive Director , Center for Religion and Civic Culture
Chair of the School of Religion
University of Southern California

INTRODUCTION

This paper has been drawn from seven years of professional experience as Program Director in Civic Culture at The James Irvine Foundation, a California-wide philanthropy. Irvine's Civic Culture program in these years supported Californians who were working to build a durable pluralism from the State's unprecedented demographic diversity.

One of the great privileges of philanthropic work is the vantage point it offers—program officers are able to build relationships with community geniuses of varying vision and strategy, consequently building overview understandings of their work in communities. The resulting view of civic participation presented here does not necessarily use the language of any particular community organizer or popular educator.

It is important to note that there are also inherent limitations imposed by the professional perch from which the report has been written. Community practice outside California is necessarily slighted; labor organizing and issue-based organizing are treated with less knowledgeable care than other approaches.

Throughout, there has been an attempt to temper attitude with sound judgment, but the essay's value-laden worldview will become clear from the outset. Here is a first assumption: positive social change in communities can only be achieved when community residents learn how to make the change. From that axiom flows all that follows.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND THE COUNTRY NOW

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TRONG EVIDENCE SUGGESTS that we are at a

moment of opportunity for civic participation strategies in America.

Not all of the converging trends are positive, certainly, but in our time we are arguably presented with a chance to build broader public understanding of and support for civic engagement. Among the currents flowing in our society now:

- > It has become common wisdom that something is unraveling in our social fabric. Since the decade of the sixties we have seen voting and volunteerism rates fall, levels of cynicism and disaffection with institutions rise. And while it's likely true that whenever common wisdom becomes as ingrained as this view, it is time to start looking more carefully at the data and analysis. These are clear public views that create public opportunities. People are looking for solutions to these perceived problems.
- > Largely because of the work (and the public relations work) of Harvard Sociologist Robert Putnam and his colleagues, the concept of "social capital" has entered public consciousness. Putnam has given us a data-driven analysis to undergird our

common sense. Social networks of human and institutional relationships matter to a society; when they are strong, everything else in the community is strengthened.

- > Income gaps have been rising dramatically in our country. No one, on the left or right, can ignore the fact, and few can argue that we can afford to ignore it. Mainstream media are running stories; conservative analysts (Kevin Phillips, *Wealth and Democracy*) are writing books.
- > Due to immigration, our demography has been diversifying at an accelerating rate. Historical receiving centers are becoming majority-minority; significant immigrant populations live and work almost everywhere now, North Carolina, Colorado, Nevada. Certainly there are accompanying backlashes and conflicts. But there is also a rich ferment of reinvention of civic life. From around the world, many of the world's best people make it to our communities.
- > We have shared the trauma of September 2001. Clearly there are big negatives: vengeance and xenophobia are abroad, and we will look back on this era as one of our most politically conservative—possibly, considering our treatment of non-citizens, one of our most shameful. But there is a shared acknowledgment that a problem exists and a shared desire to be part of its solution. There is an important case to be made that stronger communities make more secure countries. And there is an opportunity to make this case in a productive way.

Making the case productively is of course no trivial undertaking. In response to any of these trends (rising income gaps included), human nature makes it fascinatingly easy for mainstream people to further marginalize, patronize, or ignore low-income people. Democracies have their inherent means of keeping poor people poor. Yet the vision of democracy inherent in community organizing and popular education strategies is one both of practical utility and, if the argument is framed with care, potentially broad public support.

communities as places of Learning: A conceptual case

IN THE SUMMER OF 1992, when the smoke had not yet finished rising from Los Angeles, an anguished civic leader, in one of the many meetings civic leaders were holding, said the following: “If we want to find common ground, we have to dig deeper.” The sentiment was moving and often repeated. An expression of the profound spiritual faith of the speaker, it expressed a broad faith in the human spirit. Common ground was the goal, and values mattered in its pursuit: the value of human dignity despite difference, the value of connection across dividing lines of class and cultural background.

Yet, as a strategic tool in the practical work of building community, an appeal to values seemed interestingly unhelpful. Possibly necessary, it seemed insufficient. As a “market force,” it successfully attracted acknowledged leaders into meeting rooms and, for limited periods of clear crisis, volunteers with brooms into the streets. But at the task of bringing regular residents—the poor, the disenfranchised, the newcomer, along with those more established—into

sustained relationships toward positive community change, an appeal to values was, empirically, a failure. Digging deeper had established itself as a respected forum for discussing social injustice. But it was not a proven laboratory for creating social justice.

POVERTY, INEQUITY, ENGAGEMENT

There are arguably three approaches available to those who wish to address issues of economic and social injustice in our communities.

To the person in poverty, one can hand a dollar bill. Morally compelling, the act is sometimes absolutely necessary; consider the work of Mother Theresa. And by keeping the individual whole for one more day, a case can be made that time has been bought for positive community change. Yet this approach—charity, service delivery—can never alone create positive change. At its worst, it might generate an unintended expectation of the source of the next dollar.

To the person suffering inequity, one can hand a placard, saying, come with us to city hall, here is the chant for the march along the way. When we get there, turn your placard toward the television cameras. Once again, this is a morally compelling and sometimes necessary act; consider the work of the Civil Rights movement. Bad laws that need improving will always be with us, and policies made better can create opportunities for positive change, as Title Nine has created a generation of women athletes. But if all the person has learned to do is carry the placard and chant the chant, the community has not been strengthened. Advocacy alone does not make change.

There is a third way. One can sit down in the living room of the person and learn the family’s dreams and aspirations, problems and frustrations. One can say, you know, I heard the same issue from a neighbor three blocks over, would you be willing to come to a meeting in the library next week to talk about a possible solution?

And I notice that you have special skills: you are bilingual. There are neighbors interested in learning a second language, would you be willing to be a teacher in our program? Yes, you'd likely need to develop some further skills to take on that role, but there is another neighbor who can help you learn.

Only this approach—engagement through collective problem solving—can create lasting positive change in communities. The “theory of change” might be worded as follows: to get people out of poverty and inequity, get them getting themselves out of poverty and inequity.

Instead of digging deeper to find common ground, civic engagement starts smaller. The “market force” for change is the problem that people identify in common, the issue that more than one person wants to address in order to improve quality of life in the community, the dream that can drive the group. The task is to find the problem that is compelling enough to bring people out of their living rooms into meeting rooms, broad enough to bring people from different backgrounds, and manageable enough to create success and consequent momentum.

Engagement has twin goals. The product goal (the solution to the problem) and the process goal (the bringing of people together to solve the problem themselves) are of equal importance and in dynamic relationship with each other. Without taking eyes off the prize of excellence in problem solution, the product is used always as an opportunity to motivate the process. Along the way the collective problem solvers might well use strategies of service delivery or advocacy, but not at the expense of engagement. The “iron rule” of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), one of the major faith-based community organizing networks, says it this way: “Don’t do for others what they can do for themselves.”

It needs to be noted that in the real world of organizing there is of course an ever-present tension between process and product. Balancing leadership-development and learning goals with the desire

to win campaigns is an inherent part of the work. The relative necessity to solve the problem excellently and/or expediently will always be present, as will consequent judgment calls and tactical decisions. Asked whether there was tension of this sort in his organization’s work, the director of a popular education effort for tenants and workers in Northern Virginia answered, “every minute of every day.” This section could be expanded because it is a very interesting point.

A further word is also in order on service delivery and advocacy. Many excellent advocates and service providers care about community building and incorporate organizing approaches into their work. At the same time, however, the experience of community practice demonstrates clearly that it is relatively easy for organizations to believe that they are actively engaging their constituents, when what they are really doing is providing residents with services or advocating on their behalf.

The civic-participation approach is that of adult, community-based, experiential education. The approach starts always where people are—with their current understanding of community problems. It aims, always, to move people forward—to encourage them to educate themselves through the shared experience of civic action, building deeper understandings of problems, building more powerful and strategic solutions. The group that is putting in a stop sign at the intersection this year will be working on traffic flow patterns next year, on issues of urban sprawl the next.

BARN RAISINGS, PLURALISM, AND DEMOCRACY

Importantly, the participants get to know one another through the collective problem solving. The objective is to bring people together across natural dividing lines of ethnicity, class, generation, etc., to develop networks of relationships among those unlike one another. As demographic diversity increases in American communi-

ties, civic engagement of this sort strengthens the pluralism, assimilating newcomers, reaching across difference of cultural background.

Ultimately, this vision of communities as places of learning—positive change, self-education, and relationship building through collective civic action by people of unlike backgrounds—is a definition of democracy. For well over a century two cultural metaphors have offered competing images of American democracy. Both have assumed the status of cultural myth.

One metaphor is the town hall meeting. In the local town hall residents gathered to make decisions about their community. It is an early image for us, a northeastern story from our founding era that speaks of a time of relatively homogenous demographics, of cultural continuity. We town residents made our decisions in this way because our grandparents had done so. Historians of civic engagement in the U.S. might tell us that the egalitarian dimensions of the image are indeed mythological. One aspect of the country's early cultural continuity was that local elites were doing most of the deliberation.

The other metaphor, barn raising, is more western, more diverse, arguably more robust. Residents on the frontier gathered to build one another's barns. There was a market force for the effort: I helped you build your barn because I needed your help in building mine. We got the barns built, we learned how to do it together, and we, whose grandparents had come from various places around the country and the world, got to know one another in the process. Likely as not there is plenty of idealization in this myth as well, but it is possibly a more useful image for our time of communities of people whose grandparents grew up in Laos, Vietnam, China, India, Russia, Mexico, Guatemala, etc.

The modern barn raisings of community organizing and popular education share several characteristics. Leaders are defined as those who develop leadership in others. The organizers and popular educators on paid staff of community institutions are working in the

community to identify and encourage indigenous leaders to emerge and grow. As the work gets going, staffers disappear into the woodwork. They attract participants, help consensus to develop, provide strategic guidance, and, very importantly, create a framework of intentional learning for the shared experience. They train local leaders to take on these roles.

At its best, outreach is continuous. By definition there is always another bridge to be built across cultural dividing lines. By design, leaders are being developed to seed further efforts, developing in turn the next generation of leadership. Ripples expand.

The challenges of inclusion should not be oversimplified; there is a difference between an ideal and an idealization. (Native Americans had been displaced from the land on which those barns were being raised.) Many cultural communities remain unreached by organizers and popular educators. But the best of the institutions, as will be described below, are challenging themselves, learning how to work with unfamiliar cultures, how to work with cultures unfamiliar with civic participation.

An implicit assumption is embedded here that needs to be named, for reasonable people disagree on the matter. There are models of intercultural work that begin with recognition of structural societal racism and work to uncover, to bring to personal realization, the psychological patterns that society has imprinted on the individual. The organizing model begins with a problem that will attract unlike people to build something together. Endemic societal issues and their influence on the problems and the participants become some of the many things to learn along the way. Faith-based efforts, with their strong foundations in values, are especially effective at bringing people together across dividing lines, and, once again, the best of the civic-participation organizations (youth organizing institutions, in particular) are excellent at enabling people to develop appropriate skills of political analysis and personal insight.

WHAT ART HAS TO DO WITH IT:
CULTURAL EXPRESSION AND EXCHANGE

In the drawing of diverse peoples into collective action, the arts and humanities have an important role to play. Art is a particularly powerful vehicle for turning communities into places of learning. Through art we express our understandings of the world, we interpret the experiences of others, we create new understandings. Culture roots us to our heritage and supports our journeys into a broader world. Cultural exchange connects us to one another, enabling interpersonal communication and providing insight into the universals we share.

The expressive, interpretive, and creative aspects of art carry special utility when dividing lines have been etched deeply in communities. Often with greater power than other modes of human discourse, collective engagement with art can heal wounds, break log-jams, build bridges.

It is not only at the extremes of experience, though, that the arts and humanities are important to collective life. Art is community's growing edge, at which the culture is continually reinvented. Nor does art's importance lie only at the extremes of talent or achievement. Expression, interpretation, and creation through art are ways in which we learn, all of us.

With ancestry in the Federal Theater Project of the thirties and the Civil Rights and Farmworkers movements of the fifties and sixties, more and more civic action in America is drawing on the resources of the arts and humanities: cultural exchange festivals, theater drawn from oral histories in the community, joint artistic projects across cultures, hip hop performances.

IMPACT, METRICS:
THREE INTERLOCKING OUTCOMES

Further words are in order about intentional learning, a defining aspect of the model. To one extent or another, all civic-participation organizations are focused intentionally on individual and collective learning. A lead organizer of a major national network was recently asked how he would describe this dimension of the work. His reply: "Think, act, reflect." The cultures of learning of the various networks are bedrocks of strength and, if the prospective partners can negotiate the challenges facing them, offer great opportunities for funder-practitioner partnerships in formal learning through evaluation.

In the negotiation, the interplay of process and product is once again central, surfacing in several ways. Foundations, concerned with the impact of their investments, tend naturally to focus on product in their evaluations. The questions they ask are about outcome. Practitioners, concerned with their ability to achieve mission, tend in evaluation to focus on process. Their questions are about organizational and programmatic capacity. But if a learning partnership can be forged toward the interrelated improvement of capacity and outcome, it is possible for philanthropy and organizations promoting civic engagement to ask together the questions of formal evaluation:

- > What change, explicitly, are we trying to make in the community, and why do we think it is important?
- > How, explicitly, are we trying to make the change, and why do we believe this is the best strategy?
- > How, once again explicitly, will we know whether we are accomplishing the change, so we can make improvements along the way and we can best describe our work to those to whom we are accountable?

Because the change that is sought is community learning itself, the challenges of the partnership are deeply associated with our views of learning. Product often is the first way Americans think of learning: the accumulated achievement of the great minds of history. To the extent we acknowledge learning as process, it is something done in a formal institution, a school or college or university or training program, and even on this familiar ground we are much better at describing (and assessing) teaching than learning. We put the term lifelong learning to relatively regular use, but in truth it's a fuzzy concept for us; adult, community-based, experiential learning is not its common definition.

The organizers, themselves, at times don't have explicit language for what they are up to. They are more often inclined to speak of leadership development. Fascinatingly, many evaluators seem uncomfortable with the idea of "learning." Business people at board levels can find it contemptibly soft, an evasion of responsibility for the demonstration of impact. "The learning excuse for lack of focus," a director at a foundation once put it to a program officer on staff.

Yet learning is the heart of the matter, and it is no more difficult—and no easier—to measure than achievement at any institution thereof. Among the skills being acquired through civic engagement: research, analysis, evaluation, team and consensus building, leadership, agenda development and meeting facilitation, strategic planning, cross-cultural communication, English language, public speaking, relationship building with those in authority. These are the skills of the workplace, and there is an important case to be made that civic participation is the most powerful form of adult education.

In the assessment of the work, learning forms the first of three interlocking outcomes, all of which have associated metrics:

- > HUMAN CAPITAL. The development of individual potential, with measures of acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
- > SOCIAL CAPITAL. The development of networks of human and institutional relationships, with measures of depth, breadth, diversity, and durability.
- > COMMUNITY CAPITAL. The development of positive change in communities, with measures of problems solved or prevented, policies improved, systems and institutions made more accountable.

Of the three, community capital is the "hardest" outcome, that is, the easiest to measure, and therefore the one on which foundation boards tend naturally to alight. A program director at a national philanthropy supporting organizing uses the concept of adult education to describe the work to his board. But the only measures of success that bring real comfort to his directors are the changes that are taking place in the community: more families covered by health insurance, more money for after-school programs.

Indeed, there is a strong prevailing wind, in this era for philanthropy in which business models dominate and projected outcomes drive all program design and assessment, for foundations to want to pick a single desirable, easily measurable community change to accomplish—a "needle" to "move." Foundation staff members and community organization leaders live in this era and must learn to navigate within it. The purest form of counter-argument from those concerned with the promotion of civic participation is that philanthropy cannot pick the issue being addressed; because it is the mar-

ket force for civic engagement, the issue must arise from the community. Clearly, there is some room for negotiation between foundations and communities on this matter. But the danger is that civic participation will be relegated to the status of strategy, rather than goal. As such, it can be discarded in favor of other strategies. At best, then, real community change is not being achieved. At worst, the needles get moved and poor people stay poor. Only charity and/or advocacy are at work.

The overall argument being made here is that, in order to achieve lasting positive change in communities, all three measurable outcomes of human, social, and community capital must be pursued simultaneously, the pursuit of the third motivating civic engagement and therefore the pursuit of the first two.

Attention turns now to the kinds and characteristics of community institutions devoting themselves to this work.

Roots and Branches: The Lay of the Land and its History

THE TWO TRADITIONS of popular education and community organizing have taken different historical routes into our country. Although many community based organizations have borrowed from and blended both traditions—the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment in South Los Angeles, the Dudley Street Initiative in Boston, the Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee in Northern Virginia—there is often little communication or cross-learning among institutions self-identifying in one or the other camp. (Indeed, there is little communication among different faith-based organizing networks—more on this later.) The phrase “community organizing and popular education” doesn't roll easily off a lot of tongues in the community or in philanthropy.

But the work of the popular educators and community organizers exists along a spectrum that is much more continuous and coherent than not. On the spectrum—this is an overgeneralization

with nevertheless some utility—the popular educators tend toward the human capital end, the organizers toward that of community capital. Roots and branches follow.

POPULAR EDUCATION

The heritage of popular education goes back to 19th Century Europe, but its towering figures in this century have been Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and American Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Research and Education Center in Appalachia. Highlander was started in 1932 to “educate rural and industrial leaders for a new social order,” and for the next twenty years worked to develop a progressive labor movement in the South. In the early 1950s Highlander’s focus shifted to the Civil Rights movement, and Rosa Parks was among the thousands of people who attended its residential workshops and Citizenship Schools. Freire developed his “pedagogy of the oppressed” as an educational philosophy and program to help poor people rise from what he called the “culture of silence” through self-education, literacy, and political consciousness and participation. Exiled from Brazil in the mid-1960s, he went on to work in Chile and teach at Harvard.

Popular education, in the words of the Highlander mission description, “brings people together to learn from one another,” shaping “educational experiences that empower people to take democratic leadership towards fundamental change.” Hands-on, community-based, and participatory, it pursues what Freire called “praxis,” a cycle of action-reflection-action. Often characterized in practice by great pedagogical creativity, popular education is in general collectively directive in nature; it starts, to underscore an earlier point, where people are, and encourages them to develop their own curricula.

At the American Friends Service Committee’s Pan Valley Institute in Fresno, for example, Hmong women and Latinas, to learn one another’s cultures, conducted oral histories, took photographs, and developed an annual calendar together. At the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment in Los Angeles, to develop an understanding of the political, social, and economic currents affecting their neighborhoods, residents do research to map the location of banks, supermarkets, and other institutions in the decades of the Forties through the Nineties. At the *Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California*, also in Los Angeles, day laborers learn civics and English through a locally invented board game. At the Tenant’s and Worker’s Support Committee outside Washington, D.C., members conduct a participatory action research project on the role of class in political decision-making called “The Hidden Politics of Barbecue Grills.”

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Organizing’s towering figure is Saul Alinsky, who pioneered its approaches in Chicago’s Back of the Yards neighborhood (Upton Sinclair’s Jungle) beginning in the late 1930s. Following his graduate degree in criminology from the University of Chicago, the lessons Alinsky learned through participatory community research on juvenile delinquency and the Capone mob led him to new strategies against what he saw as the causes of criminal behavior: poverty and powerlessness. The Back of the Yards Council was an “organization of organizations,” comprised of labor unions (the Congress of Industrial Organizations), small businesses, youth committees, and, importantly, the Catholic Church. It drew Lithuanian, Polish, Czech, Croat, and Serb participants into collective democratic activity across ethnic dividing lines as formidable in their day as any of our time.

Alinsky started the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in 1940, developing it around the principles that came to define community organizing: one-on-one relationship building, mutual self-interest, power in numbers, hard-ball negotiation with private groups and public officials in position of political authority. Alinsky went on to organize in black Chicago communities, and his disciples spread throughout the country (Fred Ross and Cesar Chavez in California, for example). New institutions split off and grew. The IAF, itself, evolved over time, shifting eventually to a congregation-based model, but it has remained something of the “mother church” of community organizing through the various reformations that have followed. Here is an overview of the current landscape.

- > There are five major FAITH-BASED ORGANIZING networks in the country: the IAF, still based in Chicago; the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO), founded and based in Oakland; Direct Action Research and Training Center (DART), with headquarters in Miami, Florida; the Gamaliel Foundation, with roots in Chicago and the Midwest; and Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations Training Center (RCNO), from Philadelphia, with Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM) and two other Southern California affiliates. Each is a multi-site (almost all multi-state, the IAF multi-country) network of networked congregations, consisting of twenty to forty or more multi-denominational churches in each community. All provide centralized support and mentoring to affiliates and conduct leadership-training workshops. Although the networks differ in emphasis or tactic (LAM, for instance, targets small to midsize African American congregations), and each can describe in detail and with gusto how it differs from its cousins, all base themselves in the church, building on the strengths of organized religion: a membership-based, “mediating” institution with congregants interested in

voluntary civic action, with a social-justice value system, with interest in reaching out to those from different backgrounds, with political power in the community. Participating religious institutions pay annual dues to the network. Catholic, mainline Protestant, and black Baptist churches predominate.

- > NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ORGANIZING does its work door-to-door. Much of the demography of the field is inhabited by individual place-based community-organizing institutions, such as the Community Coalition or Strategic Concepts in Organizing & Policy Education/ Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives (SCOPE/AGENDA) in LA, but the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) has been working in multiple states since its founding in Arkansas in the early Seventies. With a strong base in the African American community, ACORN has in recent years launched several coordinated national campaigns, including work on living wage ordinances and predatory lending practices. Members pay family dues.
- > One critique of organizing is that its Saul Alinskys have generally been radical middle-class white men; most of the top leaders of the networks, if no longer all of the lead organizers, are Caucasian males. The Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO), based in Oakland, has taken a leadership role in defining what some have called RACE-BASED ORGANIZING, championing multi-cultural approaches, training a generation of organizers of color who have moved into staff positions in institutions around the country. The National Organizers Alliance (NOA), a networking and cross-learning professional association, has also provided leadership in the promotion of diversity among organizers.

- > The young leaders of YOUTH ORGANIZING institutions have observably leap-frogged their parents' generation in matters of race. Led often by mid-twenty-something, college-educated sons and daughters of immigrants, working with middle- and high-school youth, these organizations combine a worldview that creates space for individuals to assume multiple identities (ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc.) with laser-like political analyses along all of these lines. With strong bases in the Bay Area and New York City, the groups sprang up throughout the country in the late Nineties. California's proposition wars catalyzed many of them in this state. The issues around which the organizing takes place are generally those of interest to young people: school improvement, the criminal justice system, the environment. Very new, many of the organizations are very fragile, with relatively small annual budgets.
- > Mike Eichler, the founder of CONSENSUS ORGANIZING, was trained originally in Alinsky-style tactics. Dissatisfied with confrontational approaches that did not produce for him enough success, he perfected his consensus techniques while working with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), and made a name for himself organizing in the Mon Valley outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which had been devastated by the regional demise of the steel industry. Consensus organizing trains low-income and more elite residents to work together on community problems, identifying revenue streams to fund projects that will provide solutions. A major objective is to change the behavior of government agencies, moving their hearts and minds from case-management, service-delivery approaches to that of organizing. From a base at the School of Social Work at San Diego State University, Eichler is now trying to infuse organizing principles into the way in which social work is taught in the country. The Consensus Organizing

Institute (COI), from which he has stepped down as president, has been transitioning from national to regionally based work in the San Diego and Southern California area.

AMONG THE PLAYERS: POLITICS AND TRENDS

Each of these organizing approaches distinguishes itself from the others with greater ease and facility than it describes common characteristics. Intramural competition is a distinguishing and arguably debilitating trait. Lead organizers of different faith-based networks have switched affiliations over the years, taking loyal congregations with them; there is blood on the floor of interpersonal histories. Traditional confrontational organizers fear that consensus approaches will be more palatable and therefore more attractive to funders. Youth organizers are wary that adult groups will only give lip service to power sharing with young people.

Many observers believe that there is more in heaven and earth than was dreamt of in one organizing philosophy, and demonstrably more than enough poverty and inequity to go around. Nevertheless, the strains are real, and they can have negative consequences in communities. Some of this infighting is attributable to a relatively immature field of emerging players, former colleagues who, having taken different paths, are jockeying for position. Philanthropy has contributed to the competition by underfunding organizing. Organizers have perfected a language that talks about power more powerfully than it does about human and social capital building, frightening off mainstream funders and further marginalizing the work. The middle-of-the-road foundations that remain interested often take categorical interest, forcing organizations to twist themselves into project work and predetermined outcomes. Progressive funders have fed the cycle, unable to find a language of their own that will attract more moderate colleagues.

Yet at the same time there are today very promising currents in organizing and popular education, waves that can be caught and can enhance larger waves in society. Among these trends are the following:

- > **COLLABORATION AND COALITION BUILDING.** Competitiveness notwithstanding, impressive experiments with collaboration are unfolding. Like the organizing they pursue with community residents, these efforts in collective problem solving are built around mutual interest. In San Diego, Gamaliel and ACORN have struck up a partnership between their congregation- and neighborhood-based approaches. In California's Central Valley, PICO and the IAF are working together at the same table, as are traditional community organizers and popular educators. PICO, the IAF, Gamaliel, and LAM have all been participating in an Irvine Foundation-sponsored, California-wide collective evaluation. In Los Angeles and elsewhere around the country, labor organizers are reaching out to new immigrant populations, joining hands, as they do so, with community organizers (when the AFL-CIO came out in favor of a new amnesty program in 2001, these collaborations were given a huge boost). The Figueroa Corridor Coalition in LA gathered popular education, community organizing, labor and other groups in a successful effort to bring community benefit to city-subsidized development. Several labor and community organizing groups are working together in California to move new ideas on accountable development, linking public benefits with public subsidies. The National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, convened by the Center for Community Change, has been an ambitious effort to bring together national and regional institutions, many of them with organizing bases in their communities, into a movement addressing welfare policies.

- > **OUTREACH AND INCLUSION.** Latino and African American coalitions have led the way in the last decade. In Sacramento, brown and black residents (newcomers and old-timers) are collaborating on church-based, one-stop, welfare-to-work job-training programs; in Los Angeles they are building youth soccer leagues and stadiums together. Asian American residents have also been included, as in Los Angeles, where, in an attempt to force a run-off with an incumbent, a district-focused organizing effort ran a multiracial trio of candidates for city council, with the understanding that the candidate of the three with the most votes would carry the platform into the runoff. New populations are being reached with new strategies. Learning its way into working with refugees, PICO has launched a Southeast Asian Organizing Project in California's Central Valley, hiring Hmong organizers and bringing Southeast Asians into collective effort with Latinos, African Americans, and Caucasians. The Sacramento Valley Organizing Committee (SVOC), an IAF affiliate, has teamed with a tenant association to organize Slavic immigrants. Youth organizing is thoroughly embedded in ethnic populations: young Cambodian and Lao women in California have organized around reproductive rights and other health issues, and all of the multi-issue institutions are thoroughly multi-ethnic.
- > **THE RISING GENERATION.** Youth organizing, itself, represents one of the most promising and inspiring current trends in civic participation. In some cases intergenerational as well as interethnic, the groups are democratically governed and staffed, with leadership ladders for participating youth and, in many cases, high school students serving on their boards. They are collaborative, collectively creative, and bold (given an opportunity to manage a California Fund for Youth Organizing, leaders from around the state leapt out of the starting blocks,

mapping the state, identifying emerging regions, strategically targeting their grantmaking, and getting grants out in less than a year, following closely with technical assistance support). Because of the age group with which they are working, the organizations by necessity must attend with care to matters of human development. They offer a model of authentic, community-based education for young people, in particular poor, marginalized, hard-to-reach youth who have been failed by their schools, and over time they may well help adult organizers to think and speak more compellingly about human capacity building.

- > **THE ROLE OF ART.** Younger people, in part because it is such an important aspect of their culture, are reviving the use of cultural expression in organizing, integrating the arts seamlessly into their outreach, recruiting, educating, and campaigning. Spoken word, hip hop, mural painting, theater, etc., are tools they use naturally and powerfully in their work. Youth media represents an exciting, related field of effort. And, although they are often marginally funded, many community-building arts institutions created by the preceding generation remain vibrantly active.
- > **BROADER REACH.** Organizing, in starting where people are in their understandings of the world, must help participants learn their way into larger issues: the topics of conversation around low-income kitchen tables are more likely to be education, employment, and safety than they are smart growth or globalization. But the best of the organizing networks are learning, themselves, how to hold fast to their grassroots base while tackling larger issues with savvier strategies. Most of the faith-based networks are now taking a regional organizing approach. The Gamaliel Foundation has worked with

researchers Myron Orfield, John Powell, and others, reshaping its work around regional issues. The IAF has moved to metropolitan organizing. PICO has a mature statewide California Project, successfully moving legislation in Sacramento. LAM has also moved legislation in Sacramento on criminal justice issues. ACORN in Sacramento participated in the development and promotion of groundbreaking smart-growth, revenue-sharing legislation (it failed first time out). One of PICO's Bay Area affiliates, Oakland Community Organizations, has developed a widely followed partnership with the education-reform organization Coalition for Equitable Schools and the Oakland School District to create smaller, more intimate schools. The youth and intergenerational organizing group Californians for Justice, joining in a coalition with statewide labor, helped to increase the minimum wage in the state. These are exciting developments.

- > **LEGAL SERVICES AND ORGANIZING.** A growing number of public service attorneys are partnering with community-organizing efforts to move beyond service delivery and build something of lasting value in communities. "Louder Than Words," a report from the Rockefeller Foundation, has recently documented these trends, and a national funders collaborative has been created (Funders' Collaborative for Racial Justice Innovation). In California the Immigrant Legal Resource Center has been a pioneer, working with both IAF and PICO (and prospectively ACORN) affiliates in their organizing of newcomers.
- > **RESEARCH, EVALUATION, DOCUMENTATION.** More researchers are turning their attention to civic participation, and they are publishing more books. Recent works have appeared on PICO and the IAF, joining a growing body of schol-

arly analysis of organizing and popular education. New university-based applied research centers have been created, and they have been publishing. Foundations, funder collaboratives, and affinity groups are producing reports and evaluations, building a more articulate description of the work and contributing to the development of the field. A selected bibliography appears as an appendix here.

- > FOUNDATION INTEREST. Although foundations across the board have not yet acknowledged the full potential of organizing, there has been increasing dialogue and interest among philanthropy in the past five years, led generally by the activity of affinity groups and collaborative funds. The next section treats this trend in more practical detail, with contact information captured in an appendix.

Philanthropy and its Current Conversations

The locus of discussion about **faith-based organizing** is Interfaith Funders (IF), a national regrantee collaborative fund of some ten foundations, including Needmor, Veatch, the Jewish Fund for Justice, and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. Based in New York and directed by Jeannie Appleman, IF has published a survey report and two overview brochures (please see Appendix B for bibliographic details), sponsored panel presentations at national conferences, and hosted two recent meetings with national foundations.

Neighborhood Funders Group (NFG) has provided leadership in recent years for conversations on **community organizing**, in general, building its 1998 annual conference around organizing, publishing a "Community Organizing Toolbox" in 2001, and hosting presentations at each of its last several annual conferences, including most recently, in November 2002, a day-long learning session on grassroots leadership development through organizing. Spence Limbocker, Executive Director of NFG, has been a prime mover.

The **youth organizing** field has the national Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO), based at the Jewish Fund for Justice in New York and directed by Vera Miao, an extraordinarily talented young leader. Surdna, Ford, Hazen, Open Society Institute, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Merck Family Fund, Mott, Irvine, and several other foundations are joined on the board by youth organizing practitioners from around the country. In addition to its regranteeing, FCYO is devoting itself to research, evaluation and documentation of the field. It has produced the proceedings of two FCYO gatherings and is commissioning a major research effort and publishing a series of "occasional papers." The California Fund for Youth Organizing

(CFYO), which includes Tides, Hearst, and Irvine moneys thus far, is governed and administered by leading practitioners from the state, housed at Tides, and facilitated by Taj James, executive director of the Movement Strategy Center, based in Oakland. CFYO provides a forum for discussion of youth organizing in California.

Several other foundation groups have begun to take notice. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) is developing an interest in immigrant civic participation as a potential strategy for community assimilation, cultural preservation, and immigrant power; Funders Committee for Citizen Participation (FCCP) has explored organizing as a strategy to move from dialogue to political action in communities. The Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service has published a recent report on youth civic engagement. The new National Rural Funders Collaborative (NRFC) is looking at organizing strategies in rural areas. The Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities has published a paper on community organizing. As mentioned above, the Funders' Collaborative for Racial Justice Innovation has been drawing together foundations interested in promoting community-building work among legal services attorneys, including partnerships with community organizers.

Among the national foundations, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (program officers Ron White, who has recently moved to the Tides Foundation, and Chris Doby) of Flint, Michigan, has played a leading role in the support and promotion of faith-based organizing. The Surdna Foundation (program officer Robert Sherman) and the Edward W. Hazen Foundation (president Barbara Taveras, program officer Nat Williams) are both knowledgeable leaders in youth organizing. By policy, The Ford Foundation regularly rotates program directors and therefore programs, but several staff members (Alan Jenkins, Director of Human Rights and International Cooperation, is still there) recently made cross-program grants toward organizing in three or four areas of the country, including the Southeast and Los

Angeles, where the Liberty Hill Foundation is the lead organization; these grants have embedded evaluations and represent an excellent learning opportunity.

A number of smaller, progressive foundations move the conversation and field forward, including French American Charitable Trust (FACT, president Diane Feeney, which itself has been evaluating the work of its community partners nationwide), The McKay Foundation (program officer Karen Byrne), Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock (executive director Margie Fine), The Needmor Fund (program officer Frank Sanchez, who is very knowledgeable), and LA's Liberty Hill Foundation (executive director Torie Osborne, who had a *New York Times* op ed piece on community organizing published on the ten-year anniversary of the LA riots, and who is an articulate spokesperson for organizing).

California: Who is Who and What They are Up To

EXEMPLARY PRACTITIONERS representing every

branch of the civic participation tree are at work in California.

Although any list is necessarily incomplete, any taxonomy ultimately inaccurate, here are some of the best, with brief, telegraphic descriptions of their work. Also included are relevant applied research centers.

POPULAR EDUCATION

The approach of popular education has particular power to reach to the grassroots, including newcomers and semi-literate peoples.

Center for Popular Education and Participatory Research (CPEPR) at University of California, Berkeley. National and increasingly international clearinghouse and intellectual center for popular ed; training center and major promoter of participatory research approaches, which build research capacity in community residents. Applied research partnerships with several community-based organizations. Dynamic group of graduate students.

Centro Latino de Educacion Popular (CLEP). Los Angeles. Literacy for immigrants in Pico Union, addressing health, education, economic advancement. Innovative use of on-line technologies.

El Colegio Popular (ET Learning). Fresno. English language and naturalization work, in collaboration with the Fresno Catholic Diocese. Reaches the very hard-to-reach, teens through septuagenarians. Runs a charter school for last-chancers. Member of the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship (CVP).

Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA). Los Angeles. Creative work with day laborers. Contract with the city for the maintenance of several humane and progressive day laborer sites.

Pan Valley Institute (PVI) of American Friends Service Committee. Fresno. Culturally based work in women's leadership development with Hmong-, Lao-, Indigenous Mixtec-, and Mexican-Americans.. Member of the CVP: sponsor of cross-learning workshops and trainings for (over one hundred now) grassroots small grantees of the CVP's Civic Action Network; sponsor of Tamejavi, the successful CVP/CAN cultural exchange festival.

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE). Los Angeles. Successful statewide policy work on banking issues/welfare reform (direct deposits). Very successful sponsor of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition, which won major public-benefit concessions in that major development region.

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

All of the major networks but DART have active presences in California, for which a case can be made as the state in which some of the most extensive, diverse, and creative work is taking place.

Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Applied research center, building knowledge while it builds partnerships in the community. Documentation and dissemination, through its publications, of best practices in faith-based organizing.

The Gamaliel Foundation. Oakland Coalition of Congregations, a small affiliate; the new Gamaliel-ACORN partnership in San Diego. Strong presence in the Midwest and expanding presence in California (Greg Galluzzo and Mary Gonzalez, the husband-and-wife team at the top of the network, are in the process of moving to San Diego). Known for its regional smart-growth work.

Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). Four regional affiliates: Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC), Bay Area Organizing Project (BAOP) in San Francisco, Central Coast Organizing Project (CCOP) in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, Los Angeles Metropolitan Project (LA Metro). SVOC (member of the CVP) is one of the most creative efforts in the country, with affordable housing, welfare-to-work, worker cooperatives, immigrant organizing, ESL/naturalization work. LA Metro is led by Ernie Cortes, MacArthur award winner and somewhat legendary IAF organizer, who has brought back with him from his Texas years the models of the Alliance Schools reform project and the Quest workforce development project, both of which have gained national reputations. Coalitions with schools and unions.

Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations Training Center (RCNO). Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM) and two affiliates, United African American Ministerial Action Council (UAA-MAC) in San Diego and Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE) in the Inland Empire. Original roots in the Philadelphia area. Works a niche of small- to moderate-sized, low-income, often relatively socially conservative African American churches. Excellently led and politically very savvy. Criminal justice issues: GED legislation has made obtaining high school equivalency a condition of parole or alternative sentencing and turned participating churches into learning centers; new related initiative targets unconscionable sums of money tacked on as surcharges to collect calls coming from prisons. Interethnic work with Latinos through soccer clubs, highly successful in funding stadiums.

Pacific Institute of Community Organization (PICO). Headquarters in Oakland with now a total of 17 statewide affiliates, from Contra Costa to San Diego Counties, and the California Project, bringing people from around the state to Sacramento. Multi-issue in its multiple sites: health care, crime and safety, school improvement, etc. Very sophisticated and successful. California Project is particularly exciting, moving legislation on after-school programs, teacher home visits, health care, etc. An innovator and early adopter in the use of applied research partnerships and evaluation. Innovator in outreach to Southeast Asian refugee populations. A couple of affiliates have youth organizing efforts.

NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ORGANIZING

There is an enormous amount of grassroots activity in Los Angeles, much of it interrelated. Using this category as a bit of a catchall, included here are race- and ethnicity-based programs and some further examples of the diversity of approach in California communities.

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). State headquarters in Los Angeles, affiliate chapters in Sacramento, Oakland, San Jose, San Diego (the San Diego partnership with Gamaliel has the direct attention of national leadership). Welfare reform, predatory lending, living wage, affordable housing, etc., including the Sacramento smart growth work mentioned above.

Center for Community Change (CCC). Los Angeles. Training and technical assistance intermediary for organizing approaches.

Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO). Oakland. Training and internship programs. Youth organizing, local Oakland organizing project.

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, Inc. (CBDIO). Also known as Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional FIOB). Throughout rural California (and the West and Mexico), San Joaquin Valley. Civic participation among indigenous Oaxacans, among the large group of indigenous migrant workers from Southern Mexico who constitute the latest wave of farmworker demographics.

Coalition LA, sponsored by Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates of Southern California (KIWA), Los Angeles. Precinct-based (in three City Council precincts), multi-ethnic organizing. Electoral work, development of green space through "pocket parks," etc.

Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment. South Los Angeles. Excellent leadership, exemplary, innovative neighborhood organizing among African Americans and Latinos. Creative popular education program. Early adopter, innovator of evaluation, which has been embedded in the ethic of the organization. Very exciting youth organizing chapter, working on school reform.

Hometown Association Organizing Project sponsored by the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at USC. Los Angeles. An entry point to Hometown Associations, a diverse and active bed of civic participation by immigrants in California.

Lideres Campesinas. Pomona. Throughout much of rural California, in particular the Central Valley. Women farmworker organizing, often around health-related issues.

Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE). Excellently led, innovative labor/community-organizing alliance working on living wage, accountable development, etc.

New California Media project of Pacific News Service. San Francisco. Extraordinarily exciting and extensive organizing project of ethnic media throughout California, the media of choice of the new majorities in the state. Website for story sharing, newsmaker press conferences, annual awards ceremony and expo, one-stop advertising as revenue producer.

Northern California Citizenship Project (NCCP), sponsored by Immigrant Legal Resource Center. San Francisco. Training immigrant service organizations to promote immigrant civic participation.

Parents Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER). Los Angeles. Multi-issue, multi-ethnic organizing effort in low-income neighborhoods of Venice and Mar Vista, moving into Inglewood and Lennox. Public housing and school improvement. Effective alliance building with other institutions.

Proyecto Campesino of American Friends Service Committee. Visalia. Farmworker organizing, sponsor of Tulare County Civic Action League. Member of CVP.

San Joaquin Valley Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights. Fresno. Grassroots farmworker organizing, including ex-braceros. Member of the CVP.

San Joaquin Valley Organizing Project (SJVOP), sponsored by the Great Valley Center. Fresno. Linking the networking of major institutions with organizing of low-income people. Member of the CVP.

Strategic Concepts in Organizing & Policy Education/Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives (SCOPE/AGENDA). Los Angeles. Extensive multi-issue grassroots organizing and alliance-building. Fascinating new Labor-Community Precinct Project to build non-partisan political power.

YOUTH ORGANIZING

It would be impossible to cover the ground responsibly here; there are scores of vibrant organizations and several intermediaries at work in the state. The California Fund for Youth Organizing is an excellent entry point.

California Fund for Youth Organizing (CFYO) at the Tides Foundation, San Francisco. Collaborative regrants fund, governed and administered by leading practitioners from around the state. Representatives from each of the following five organizations, among others, sit on the board.

Californians for Justice Education Fund (CFJ). Oakland. Statewide intergenerational organizing, with additional offices in Fresno, San Jose, Long Beach. Education reform and school improvement, in particular.

Movement Strategy Center (MSC). Oakland. Intermediary technical assistance, throughout California and nationally. Coordinates the California Fund for Youth Organizing.

Southern Californians for Youth, sponsored by Community Partners. Los Angeles. Regional networking and training.

Youth Empowerment Center (YEC). Richmond. Umbrella organization of organizations. Regional networking and training.

Youth in Focus (YIF), sponsored by the Tides Center. Davis. Trains youth in research, evaluation, and planning. Member of the CVP.

Youth United for Community Action (YUCA) sponsored by the Tides Center. East Palo Alto, with office in Los Angeles. School improvement, environmental issues.

CONSENSUS ORGANIZING

Consensus Organizing Center at San Diego State University. Links the teaching of Social Work to organizing training. Creating a pipeline of organizing education that reaches into diverse, inner-city high schools, leads through undergraduate and graduate degrees in Social Work at SDSU, and places interns and graduates back in community positions.

Consensus Organizing Institute (COI). San Diego. Still several projects in cities nationwide, but increasing focus on San Diego regional work. Excellent ties with local government and business. Strong work in low-income San Diego neighborhoods.

All of the organizations listed here are doing very effective civic participation work, actively engaging participants. Many are exceptional leaders on the national scene.

A Time of Opportunity in America



IF THE CHINESE ARE CORRECT that danger and

opportunity comprise equal parts of crisis, those interested in the promotion of democratic civic participation have arguably entered a critical period. Business and war have been our country's business recently, and each has more interest in efficient product than organic process.

Yet there has perhaps never been a time in America of more grassroots activity in organizing and popular education. In some areas of the country, this activity has become a grassfire. Networks are developing of historically unlikely allies, and philanthropy has a chance to enhance these relationships and build momentum to critical mass.

The trends cited earlier are real and provide a broader opportunity to describe democracy in its true terms. Not simply something worth defending, not simply a platform for economic growth, democracy is both of these because it is the system that says all people have the right and should be afforded the opportunity to learn. Freedom of ideas, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom of political participation are the freedoms of community education, an education through engagement in the civic realm.

Society will always have problems to solve, always barns to build. Human nature is with us to stay: power will coalesce, revolution will become institution will become bureaucracy. Yet with us to stay also is our inherent nature as learners. When the community organizers say that all organizing is reorganizing, they are speaking of a society in which the need for barns is the opportunity for barn raisings, in which collective problem solving is at once birthright, vehicle for human development and interaction, and engine for positive change. They are speaking of democracy.

Case Studies

1. *Case Study* TAMEJAVI: CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE

From April 26 through 28, 2002, in Fresno, California, Oaxacan-American dancers, Hmong-American comedians, African-American spoken word artists, young Laotian-American actors, Mexican-American mariachi players, and Cambodian-American opera performers joined other ethnic artists, amateur and professional, in the production of a first-ever cultural exchange festival in California's Central Valley. Called Tamejavi, coined from the word for cultural marketplace in the Hmong, Spanish, and Mixteco languages, the event, which drew a broad and diverse audience, was a milestone in a continuum of inter-cultural organizing reaching back more than two years.

That organizing had begun with small grants in support of civic participation projects throughout the Valley. The grants of up to \$5000 each—well over a hundred of them over time—were themselves an organizing effort among a sponsoring collaborative of some fourteen institutions called the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship (CVP). Recipients of the CVP grants, many of whom were using arts or humanities projects to promote civic participation in their local communities, were brought together in a network of training seminars and cross-learning experiences hosted by the Pan Valley Institute, a popular education program of American Friends Service Committee.

Artistic expression proved to be a powerful force in the lives of the network participants. Cultural preservation was important to individual identity, family cohesion, cross-generational relationships, and community strengthening. At the same time, cultural

exchange opened lines of communication across ethnicities that were unavailable by any other means. Art was a common language that fostered understanding, empathy, and human connection. Culture opened a door through which marginalized people could enter public space.

Sparked at these seminars, the idea for Tamejavi drew participants into collective problem solving that deepened their relationships and motivated self-education. Outreach brought more planners and performers of many ethnicities into the mix. The great success of the festival created momentum that continues to engage diverse Valley residents in the planning of future events.

2. *Case Study* ORGANIZING ACROSS ETHNIC LINES

Throughout the country, immigration has made neighbors of Latinos and African Americans, with attendant tensions surrounding access to services and political power. California has been a leading edge for these demographic changes, as well as for organizing strategies to bring people together in common purpose across the lines of ethnicity.

When Congress and the Clinton Administration changed welfare as we knew it with historic reform in entitlement programs, the Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC), an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation, used the new problems that were created to draw African American congregations into problem solving. One-stop welfare-to-work training centers were set up at the churches, contracting for integrated child care, transportation, skills training, and job placement in business sectors with entry-level openings. Latino members of SVOC, some of whom were themselves affected by the changes and all of whom understood the need for good jobs, joined in the collective work. At the same organization, when the

prospect of a new federal amnesty for undocumented people was creating hope, and the inability to obtain drivers licenses was creating challenge, Latinos were drawn into organizing campaigns of civic activity. African American members of SVOC, who understood the meaning of civil rights, played important roles of solidarity in the campaigns.

A different strategy has been pursued by Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM), an affiliate of Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations. LAM's organizing base is among small African American churches throughout South Los Angeles, where many of the neighborhoods have become majority Latino. To bring people together LAM hired soccer-coach organizers and created the Antes Columbus youth soccer league. Antes Columbus has attracted Asian-Americans as well as Latinos and Blacks and been extraordinarily successful in directing state funds to the building of soccer fields in South Los Angeles.

3. *Case Study* FROM COMMUNITY PROBLEMS TO STATE POLITICS

Community organizing and popular education build intentional learning into the civic activity of participants, so they can deepen their analyses and strengthen their strategies as they work together to solve community problems. Power to affect positive change is developed through the knowledge and the numbers of the participants, and the path of civic activity leads ultimately to policy work at local, regional, or higher levels.

From 17 regions and more than 70 cities across the state, representing 350 congregations and 400,000 families, the California Project of the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) has

engaged diverse, low- to moderate-income residents in successful Sacramento policy advocacy. Educating themselves as they worked, PICO's members have won significant gains in health care and education, including \$50 million for afterschool programs, \$30 million for the nation's first parent/teacher home visit program, an increase of \$50 for expansion and building of community health clinics, and a commitment to use \$400 million annually of the state's share of tobacco settlement for health care.

The Sacramento affiliate of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) has done similar work with its constituents on proposed groundbreaking legislation that would address issues of suburban sprawl by sharing sales tax revenues across existing jurisdictions. Although the legislation has yet to be enacted into law, ACORN's participation in the campaign has involved hundreds of low-income Californians of color in the smart growth/sustainable development movement, adding an important and previously missing voice to the debates.

ABOUT CRAIG MCGARVEY

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR RELIGION
AND CIVIC CULTURE

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