

# PUTTING FAITH FIRST

Traditions and Innovations in Organizing within  
Religious Communities



**USC Center for Religion  
and Civic Culture**

**USC Program for Environmental  
and Regional Equity**

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April 2012

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## Background and Overview

**While faith groups are an important part of the larger social fabric of a community, they are also unique in their composition, their commitments, and their confessional orientation — and are likely unique in their contributions to and style of community organizing and movement-building.**

Faith communities have always played important roles in this country's social movements, inspiring people to action based on deeply held values and providing immediate vehicles for engaging constituencies. Partly because of the latter, organizing models have tended to view faith communities as just one of many civil society groups to be leveraged in efforts to bring citizens into closer relationship with each other and with the public processes that govern their lives.

But while faith groups are an important part of the larger social fabric of a community, they are also unique in their composition, their commitments, and their confessional orientation—and are likely unique in their contributions to and style of community organizing and movement-building. Increasingly, community organizers are becoming attuned to these different attributes of faith communities and looking for ways to incorporate these into existing as well as innovative models of their work. At the same time, faith leaders are looking for new ways to engage constituents, aligning and allying with other movements while hanging on to their own specific concerns, skills, and strengths—as well as their starting points in faith traditions.

This report provides a brief overview of several organizing groups that are grappling with the challenges and opportunities of organizing efforts rooted in faith traditions and committed to deepening the relationship of transformational work at the intersection of religion and organizing.

The contents of the pages that follow were adapted from a November 2011 video conference between academics, organizers, and funders interested in exploring this work more fully. The conversation was organized by Alexia Salvatierra (formerly of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice), the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture, and the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. The event was sponsored by Alta Starr of the Ford Foundation, Kathy Partridge of Interfaith Funders Network, and Ned Wight of The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.

In the coming pages, we essentially follow the logic of that meeting. The conversation began with each of the participants telling their own story, pointing out what they had learned in their attempt to take a faith-rooted approach to organizing and movement-building. We then turned to the research on this topic, pointing out both the current state of work and future directions. We then opened to a provocative set of questions—and equally thought-provoking answers. The conversation itself ended with just some simple thanks and the promise to follow up and somehow spread the word—an effort of which this document is a part—but we close this document instead with some broader reflections on what all this means for faith-rooted organizing in particular and movement-building in general.

We had not initially intended to make this conversation more widely available—but it was so rich, so new, and so important that we thought it worth the effort. Our hope is that this document will provide a glimpse of the work taking place across the country, across religious traditions, and across organizing groups—and will deepen a discussion about the ways in which faith and organizing may intersect in the coming years.

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# Introduction and Framework

**Their sense of connection to all children was very real; they were willing to risk their lives. And I had to step back and say, “That’s much closer to my beliefs and values than some of what I had learned in traditional organizing.”**

Rev. Alexia Salvatierra  
Co-Founder, Faith-Rooted Organizing; Trainer/Consultant  
Los Angeles, CA

I was trained many years ago in Alinsky-style organizing—based on the notion of getting community leaders to recognize their self-interests and act on them. I then went to the Philippines and was “retrained” in the Base Christian community movement. I always remember the moment when the retraining started. I was organizing a group of urban poor squatter women to come out for a march, and I was trying to agitate them around their self-interest. They laughed at me. I was young and I was very offended.

“Why are you laughing?” I asked.

“Do you realize that if we come out for this march, that we may be killed, we may be shot?” they replied.

“Yes, of course,” I said.

“We’re not thinking about our self-interest,” they said.

“You know I don’t mean it like that. I mean, you know, common self-interest,” I said.

They said, “The phrase is silly.”

“Why don’t you tell me what would make you come out?”

“We would come out for the love of our children,” they said.

“Wait a minute, if you love your children, why don’t you take your children away from here, go to America, do something?” I replied.

And they said, “But doesn’t our faith teach us that all children are ours?”

Their sense of connection to all children was very real; they were willing to risk their lives. And I had to step back and say, “That’s much closer to my beliefs and values than some of what I had learned in traditional organizing.”

What does it look like if we do organizing differently? I came back from the Philippines and a few years later established Clergy

and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), which I co-founded with Rev. James M. Lawson Jr. When I came to CLUE, I brought what I learned from the Philippines along with liberation theology from Central America. We joined these insights and strategies with what Rev. Lawson brought from Gandhi and the civil rights movement, and we started to form a faith-rooted organizing model. Then with a grant from the Ford Foundation, through Alta Starr, we gave the model to six young women who were faith leaders from different cultural and religious backgrounds. What they said was that the model had to be open source, which meant that the commonalities between all faith-rooted organizing practitioners would be formed around answers to two basic questions:

- How can all aspects of our organizing be completely shaped and guided by our faith?
- How do we organize people of faith so that they contribute all of their unique gifts and resources to the broader movement for social and economic justice?

What we found is that wherever people were doing this kind of organizing, three things happened. First, we are able to organize a broad spectrum of faith leaders; moderates and conservatives, evangelicals, and others. Secondly, that we were able to organize very deeply, where people could sacrifice in profound ways and could sustain the organizing for generations. And thirdly, that we were able to really focus organizing on racial justice, on economic justice, and on justice for immigrants.

After seeing this work around the country there was a collective moment of reflection where we said, "Wow, this is really something worth taking a look at." Funders like Alta Starr (Ford Foundation), Ned Wight (The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock), and Kathy Partridge (Interfaith Funders Network), started talking about holding a briefing call that would pull together some of the best examples around the country of faith-rooted organizing, of organizing that was really enabling people of faith to bring all of our value-added, our unique and best gifts, to the broader movement for social and economic justice. And that's what this conversation is all about.

**How do we organize people of faith so that they contribute all of their unique gifts and resources to the broader movement for social and economic justice?**

## Model Projects from Across the Country

**We wanted to be able to forge relationships that would be transformative, both at the pastoral level and at the congregational level, so that we can begin to build a movement for immigration reform.**

**W**hat follows are examples from across the country where people are engaging in organizing that takes the unique attributes of faith communities seriously

Wendy Tarr  
Executive Director  
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice-Orange County (CLUE-OC)  
Orange, California

Orange County is well-known for having a politically conservative and affluent population. There is also a history of anti-immigrant activity in this area. But 45 percent of the county's population is made up of immigrants and their children!

We have a lot of religious faith traditions here, but we have a very high concentration of conservative evangelical churches. Orange County has a high concentration of "megachurches," non-denominational Christian churches with over 2,000 members. Some of the churches, including Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, have more than 10,000 members. There are 32 megachurches in Orange County with total of about 150,000 members. So CLUE-OC began to focus our energy and attention in the more conservative evangelical churches to be able to expose these people of faith to the pain and the reality that immigrants are facing here as their neighbors. We wanted to be able to forge relationships that would be transformative, both at the pastoral level and at the congregational level, so that we can begin to build a movement for immigration reform.

We recognized that many people do not know the reality of the challenges within immigrant communities and the pain faced by many individuals and families. We knew that we needed to build authentic relationships where people could hear one another, and where they could have the type of love that would cause them to sacrifice and take risks. We also needed to be patient and build over the long haul. And through that process, people began to under-

stand the perspective of the poor, of the oppressed, and of the immigrant. Soon, they desired to create a better immigration system that is more humane and that upholds the values of our faith.

We also made a critically important decision to foster peer relationships, not just create opportunities to become more informed about the perspectives of immigrants. That was not only the right thing to do, but it was also theologically correct. In the Christian tradition, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. And so we started out by having a pastors' breakfast. One half were immigrant pastors who had congregations that were highly impacted by various policies and one half were pastors from other churches that did not have the same difficulties. We had about 55 pastors at a three-hour breakfast and they were very energized.

As a result of this meeting, people began to see different perspectives and develop peer relationships, but also recognized that immigration was what we call a *kairos*\* issue. These pastors began to recognize that this is something where God is really moving, and started to form a commitment to work on a longer-term project. Out of that we devised a detention ministry focused on children who have been separated from their families and have been apprehended by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We began sending people in from congregations to work in teams, again focusing on peer relationships. The teams are made up of individuals from a Caucasian community as well as individuals who are immigrants whose goal is to visit children in these detention facilities so they can build relationships and also study scripture together.

One important factor in working with evangelicals is that issues must be depoliticized. It has to be relevant to people through their understanding of people. Understanding that gives us entrée into working with this community.

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\**Kairos* is a Greek conception of time used by early Christians. As opposed to *chronos*, which is the chronological order of events, *kairos* is used to describe the timing of God's interventions in history. CLUE's training materials explain, "At any point in a community, there are *kairos* issues – issues with greater capacity to unlock the processes of change towards justice." Identifying *kairos* issues helps CLUE organizers prioritize which issues around which to organize.



*Immigrant rights march in Los Angeles.  
Photo by Donald Miller*

We've seen that this ministry transforms people, not only the youth, but the people involved in ministry. "Marisol" is one example of someone dramatically changed by her experience on a ministry team. She is an immigrant who crossed the border and had a traumatic experience of crossing. Through the detention ministry, she saw her own story reflected in the children that she was serving. It was healing for her, helping her overcome a lot of the pain and rejection that she had faced. She has been able to move beyond her own fears and begin to tell her own story. So not only is it transformative for folks that are not immigrants to begin to see those issues, but it's also transformative for immigrant people who need to gain courage and gain their voice. That is done, in part, through these strong relationships where people can find that God loves them and sees them. And because of this, we can work together to create a more just and humane immigration system.

**We've seen that this ministry transforms people, not only the youth, but the people involved in ministry.**



*Immigrant rights march in Los Angeles. Photo by Donald Miller*

Rev. Troy Jackson  
Faith Outreach Director, We Are Ohio  
Co-director, Ohio Prophetic Voices  
Cincinnati, Ohio

We've been involved in growing levels of faith-rooted organizing here in Ohio over the past several years. Our biggest attempt to do this type of work was a strategic prayer initiative at Cincinnati's city council meetings. We assigned a church to each city council member and to the mayor. We declared that we would be praying for them over the next week to adopt a fair hiring policy that focused on supporting returning citizens, ex-felons, in Cincinnati. There was a lot of organizing done around turning this very resistant city council to support a fair hiring policy. But the climactic moment of the campaign was our prayer initiative. Eventually the council voted 9-0 in favor of the policy, which showed the impact of leading with our faith.

Last year, I was involved with a young Guatemalan immigrant who was undocumented. "Melvin" was arrested for a fender-bender car accident and put on a fast track for deportation. At the time he was 18 years old; he graduated fifth in his high school class and was a star soccer player. His dad is a pastor of an immigrant congregation in the Cincinnati area. We decided to develop a campaign around him that was all about the faith community. We were able to get the pastor of the second-largest church in Cincinnati, Dave Workman of the Vineyard Community church, the pastor of the leading Assemblies of God church, Pastor Chris Beard, a leading rabbi in town, a leading African American pastor, to meet with a journalist from the *Cincinnati Enquirer* to share why we were calling not only for Melvin's release, but for the passage of the Dream Act. We were also able to get other evangelical megachurch pastors around the state to come out in support of the Dream Act.

A lot of our success was not beginning with a political conundrum, but with our faith and with scripture, which is a key element. It was not a radically new organizing practice, but it was basically going into the public arena with faith first. Dave Workman was one of the people who was quoted most significantly in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* article, and he took a lot of heat in his congregation as a result. (He took even more heat when he said that following Glen Beck is not following Jesus.) But this is emblematic of the trajectory that we are beginning to get folks on: helping them to think about some of the big issues of the day, even political issues, from a faith perspective, first.

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One last story is from the We Are Ohio campaign, was the successful push back of Issue 2, Senate Bill 5 (Ohio Collective Bargaining Limit Repeal) in Ohio. We were trying to figure out how to engage evangelicals who are not usually out front on labor issues. Walter Brueggemann, a world-renowned biblical scholar, joined us, as he happens to live in Cincinnati. We asked him to lead a conversation about faith, labor, and justice. The conversation took place at an Assemblies of God congregation and we provided lunch to the more than 60 clergy who attended. Over half of the clergy were evangelical charismatic clergy, and overwhelmingly, the response was very positive. Brueggemann's first line of the speech was that our biblical faith is rooted in a labor struggle. He talked about the beginnings of the exodus and how labor was part of that. What it demonstrated is when you get a leading scholar to start unearthing scripture and rooting their comments in our faith tradition, in our scriptures, there's much more willingness to get engaged in the public arena.

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*Million Signature March, We Are Ohio. Photo by Lori McCarthy*

**Lisa Sharon Harper**  
**Director of Mobilizing**  
**Sojourners**  
**Washington, D.C.**

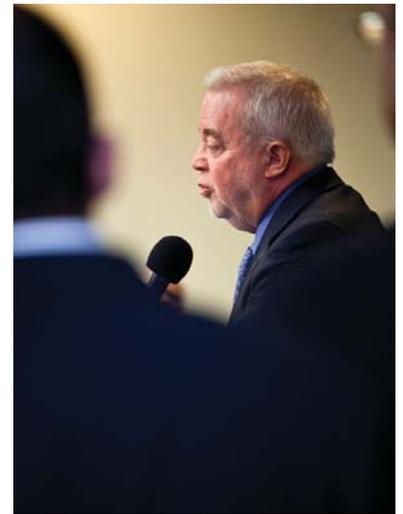
I am so thankful for the faith-rooted organizing methodology. It is kind of a paradigm shift for us and for many around the country who are beginning to see organizing in a new way. No longer are we just organizing people of faith, but we are helping people of faith to dig into the roots of their faith, to get the marching orders for how to organize. This particular way of organizing people of faith has helped us tremendously in reaching out, particularly to evangelicals, and moving them into the public square in a new way.

Sojourners has been organizing people of faith for 40 years, and we realized that we have to put more resources toward mobilizing boots on the ground. In February 2011, we organized a campaign called What Would Jesus Cut? It was a media campaign that asked a very clear question. When we look at the budget debate that has been going on, what are the things that Jesus would hold as a priority, and which are the things that Jesus would cut?

Over the course of Lent, in March, Jim Wallis and several other faith leaders from across the country engaged in a Lenten hunger fast for a moral budget. It began with Jim and a few other faith leaders like Tony Hall (Alliance to End Hunger) and David Beckmann (Bread for the World), putting their heads together and saying, "How can we, through the liturgies and practices of our faith, communicate to Congress, the media, the world, the dire circumstance that we are in right now with regard to our budget?" And their fast did that, and within one month we had 30,000 participants who joined that hunger fast.

In fact, the leader of MoveOn.org also joined the hunger fast. He told an amazing story about how he was walking through the park with his daughter in the middle of the fast and he realized he was hungry. He looked down at his daughter, and thought, "What if my daughter had these hunger pangs and couldn't have them satiated, and didn't know where her next meal was coming from?" That is when he realized, "This is real. This is no joke." He went back to his staff very soon after and talked with them about Queen Esther and how she was put in place for "such a time as this." MoveOn.org then encouraged all of its followers to join the hunger fast.

In April of 2011, as a result of the hunger fast, the Circle of Protection was formed, which was a formalization of the group that participated in the hunger fast. In August, Sojourners launched the National Mobilizing Circle where we brought 26 regional organizers



*Jim Wallis, president and CEO of Sojourners, at the National Press Club, March 28, 2011. Photo by Laura Elizabeth Pohl, Bread for the World*

together who are faith leaders. We trained them in faith-rooted organizing, and as a result of that, we were able to launch an initiative called the Human Circles of Protection Project, where over the course of one day, November 16th, twelve cities were organized to create human circles around buildings or in front of buildings that house services that protect the poor. And through though human circles, we were able to say to Congress, "Do not balance the budget on the backs of the poor." That was the main message that day. And we want Congress to abide by the principles of the Circle of Protection, which are rooted in scripture.

I'll share with you something that happened related to this. Richard Kohng is an organizer out of Chicago from North Park University, a Christian university. He was one of our organizers that came to us for training. In the middle of the super-committee's budget debates, he was able to organize 200 evangelical students to march out of their chapel service into the streets carrying banners that said, "The budget is a moral document," circle up in front of a soup kitchen in the area, and pray that God would protect the poor. This organizing is still going on, and it's encouraging and empowering people of faith, particularly those who are deeply rooted in their faith, to engage in issues of justice around the country.

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*David Beckmann, Bread for the World president, announces the launch of a hunger fast by a coalition of faith-based organizations at the National Press Club, March 28, 2011. Photo by Laura Elizabeth Pohl, Bread for the World*

Rev. Dr. Peter Heltzel  
Director  
Micah Institute, New York Theological Seminary  
New York, New York

Inspired by the Hebrew prophet Micah's call to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God," our mission is to educate faith leaders to fight poverty and injustice. Our niche in the faith-rooted organizing movement is in leadership formation. Since we are based at a seminary, we are seeking to be a bridge between institutions of higher education, the faith community, and government. In the course of our work, we focused on the Living Wage New York City campaign. It has been exciting to see the role that faith can play in our work as we try to advocate for the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act.

I want to tell a story about one of our organizers and illustrate the role prayer has played in his life. His name is Edison Bond, and he is the Ella Baker Fellow at the Micah Institute. When we think of the civil rights movement, we think of Dr. King, but there were a lot of women folk who were leading this movement, like Fannie Lou Hamer, Septima Clark and Ella Baker. So Edison serves as Ella Baker Fellow, and we actually made our deepest connection when he went down south with me on a trip I teach every spring on the civil rights movement and prophetic religion. I'm from Vicksburg, Mississippi, and we go down into Memphis and Alabama and walk the Freedom Trail. We study not just the history of the civil rights movement as a theological narrative, where the power of God moved against the powers and principalities of white supremacy, bringing down those strongholds of racism, but we also look at the way in which the civil rights movement organized so that we can learn lessons from the way they did faith-rooted organizing.

Edison was inspired by this, so he decided to do our Micah Doctor of Ministry degree, which is a three-year program for folks that have a master's degree. The program, which I run with the help of Alexia Salvatierra, trains students to be transformational leaders and orients them to the faith-rooted model of organizing as a way of equipping them to do the work of community-building, advocacy, and mobilizing people for justice in their community. Now, Edison is a Church of God in Christ (COGIC) minister, and he has emphasized prayer in this movement, and every step of the way in this campaign we have emphasized prayer. At St. Peter's Cathedral, we gathered and then marched to city hall in silence. Silent prayer was very unique in New York because of all the hustle and bustle. Before the first public hearing, we held a rally in front of city hall, and we had

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Pentecostals, Baptists and Methodists praying to the Lord, and about 15 councilmembers were speaking at that rally. From there, they went straight into the public hearing and blasted—with prophetic passion—the Bloomberg economists who were against a living wage for city-subsidized development projects. The councilmembers were inspired by the prayer and passion of our group.

So the power of prayer has been instrumental to us. We are excited about the faith-rooted model, because we don't see people as targets. So, Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Christine Quinn are not targets, they are children of God. We try to treat them with love and respect. We also do not care if we win or lose. Unlike the Alinsky model in which it's important to select a winnable battle, we say that all that matters is that we're in the right fight and we will continue to struggle for justice in New York in a spirit of prayer and we will continue to learn from our colleagues about the transformational potential of faith-rooted organizing.

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*November 2011 Living Wage meeting at Riverside Church, New York.  
Photo by Steve McFarland/Living Wage NYC*

Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews  
Director of Outreach and Recruitment  
PICO Network  
San Jose, California

I am on the national staff of PICO and I've been a part of PICO since 1996, when I first was introduced to its model of organizing while I was in seminary. I was born and raised in the Los Angeles area and grew up in a church on Jefferson Boulevard just two miles west of the University of Southern California (USC). I am also a graduate of USC. During my middle year in seminary, while looking at how the church can be more connected to the community and how churches might partner with communities, I met an organizer in Oakland who was connected with the PICO organization. He showed me the ropes and helped me understand how organizing works.

What I found in organizing was a powerful integration of both my sense of call as a pastor, and my sense of call as a prophet—to speak out against injustice. For the past four years, I have been on the national staff of PICO. (I was a leader for a number of years, and now I serve on the staff.)

I want to share a little bit about PICO's story, our foray into issues around racial and economic justice, how we've been bringing a racial lens and an economic lens to our work, and about how that lives in our work organizing clergy across the nation. Our journey began with a struggle around staffing in the network, seeing people of color turn over quickly and not seeing people of color move into leadership roles directing organizations in the network. We were first exposed to a multiculturalism model to help us begin to talk about this, and so we looked at how issues of oppression play themselves out at the personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural level. We had to be clear about the level where oppression was occurring in order to intervene. That was a helpful model because it helped us begin to work with organizers of color around their own sense of power and how they dealt with internalized oppression as well as the oppression they might experience in their staff culture. And it also helped us engage white staff around their own privilege and around issues of how they might avoid conversations about race.

We kept asking the question: how does this issue of race and the oppression of difference live inside of our work, the organizing issue that we are working on? We ended up working with Dr. John Powell of the Kirwan Institute at The Ohio State University to learn how implicit bias works, and understand structural racialization. But, most importantly, we worked on understanding opportunity structures. We sought to understand how those opportunities are about

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public decisions, not just private, about policies that shape our livelihood in our communities and across our nation. For the past year and a half, we have been working with staff as well as with clergy in our network to understand opportunity stories, to understand race, to understand the economy, and to understand that the economic crisis that we face now is the result of many public decisions. Now staff and leaders in our network and clergy are bringing a racial and economic analysis to all of the various campaigns that we work on inside the network.

Two weeks ago we held a large 500-participant clergy gathering in New Orleans where pastors, rabbis, imams, ministers and other people of faith were getting their heads wrapped around this “land of opportunity” narrative that we are pursuing as a network through our Prophetic Voices campaign. We are trying to figure out how it is that we can organize a set of clergy in our nation who can organize a prophetic, moral voice that can shape the debate that we are having about social, economic, and political opportunity in this country. We see the crisis as one that is not just social and economic, but a crisis that is spiritual, because it's about all of who we are.

So we are trying to build a multicultural, multi-faith table in key states across the country where clergy will provide significant prophetic leadership to a number of signature campaigns in 2012 that may be playing out at the local level in different states. We are working to see how clergy will be able to coordinate together to teach and preach around themes of economic opportunity, and about how clergy will engage media around these things as well. There is also a civic engagement component to this campaign that looks at voter education, voter registration, voter turnout, but also issues around the suppression of voters in this current moment. We recognize that this is a very messy endeavor—simultaneously paying attention to faith, multi-faith, and race—but we trust that as a learning community we can create the space at the table where all the voices, all the bodies, and all the histories that are representative of our network can be present.

Sameerah Siddiqui  
Campaign Director  
Oxfam  
Washington, D.C.

Working within the Muslim community can be challenging. First, it is important to recognize that often our religious centers and organizations are not as mature as many of our Christian and Jewish partners, so there is an imbalance. The second challenge that is important to note is that the manner in which organizing is currently framed—particularly in interfaith circles—can be largely inaccessible to Muslims. And finally, there is a lack of Muslim-centric tools and resources to build organizing capacity within our community.

As an organizer on the ground working with CLUE-Los Angeles beginning in 2005, I was faced with a very clear challenge of a lack of resources that I could draw upon to help me navigate the day-to-day work of organizing. Many of the basic concepts of organizing, such as building power or even conducting one-on-ones, were difficult for me to teach and to practice since there was no shared understanding of the purpose of organizing within our community. But most of all, I didn't have access to other Muslim organizers or the opportunity to seek mentorship from a seasoned Muslim leader working on issues of social or economic justice.

From out of the experience of working in Los Angeles, I began to realize that we needed to create an organizing manual that was written specifically for the Muslim community by Muslim organizers and religious leaders involved in the work. The purpose of this manual would be twofold. First, it would situate the goals of organizing within a Muslim theological framework where it could be more easily understood that the practice of organizing would enable a realization of our faith values. And second, the manual would provide very practical advice on how to recruit and sustain leaders, create strategies and accompanying tactics that would draw from our own prophetic tradition. This is something Muslims could recognize right away.

As I began to work on this manual and continued my work as an organizer, I began to draw on my own religious faith and my own religious stories. I began to discover that there were tactics within our tradition and the tradition of Muslim communities that I could employ in my own work. This was very exciting to me.

For example, I was working on the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports, a campaign that required us to build solidarity across socioeconomic divides within the city of Long Beach for the longevity of this campaign. Faced with this goal, I employed the tactic of coupling.

**As I began to work on this manual and continued my work as an organizer, I began to draw on my own religious faith and my own religious stories.**

This is a very famous tactic known by Muslims to bring two seemingly disparate individuals into a closer bond of mutual reliance. It is good for not only their growth as individuals, but for their community. So I would bring together the wife of truck driver and a Long Beach lawyer so they would learn their stories and they would fight for each other. They had a very tangible bond to this campaign. And so this proved to be a very successful Muslim contribution to the field of organizing in America.

Right now the Muslim organizing manual is in its development, but I see that the end product will be a resource for professional Muslim organizers to use in their work in addition to our Muslim leaders who are running our religious institutions. My hope is that this product would become part of the curriculum we use to educate and train our America Muslim leaders. Others can also benefit by borrowing from these Muslim ideas and practices.

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*Fellows of the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute meet at USC.  
Photo by Sumaya Abubaker*

**Nadia Roumani**  
**Co-Founder and Director**  
**American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute (AMCLI)**  
**Washington, D.C.**

AMCLI provides a nine-month leadership program for Muslim civic leaders across the country. We are currently in our fourth year, and we have graduated three cohorts of fellows from 17 states who are leaders of nonprofit organizations or in public service positions. We are very grateful to the Ford Foundation for their initial launch grant in 2007, and a recent grant from The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.

As we observed the national landscape, in our research and work with Muslim leaders, we found the same issues that Sameerah mentioned: different levels of maturity of organizations, accessibility to existing community organizing frameworks, and a lack of resources on organizing. These were the same three issues that were inhibiting Muslims from participating in organizing or explained why they had not integrated organizing into their organizational models and their theories of social change. We also found very similar narratives to Sameerah's across the country of Muslim organizers who were isolated and looking for mentors, resources, and peer networks.

Through AMCLI, we identified three different ways we could help advance the field of organizing in Muslim communities across the country: exposure, immersion, and building a network of organizers. *Exposure:* We try to expose all the fellows that come to the program to the field of organizing and provide them training on specific organizing skills. For many of them, it is the first time they are exposed to organizing as a field.

*Immersion:* We partnered and are working with Jewish Funds for Justice on their Community Organizing Residency (COR) program to give Muslims who are rooted in their faith an opportunity to have a residency in a community organizing institution. And we have been able to graduate five and now have five fellows in that program as full-time organizers.

*Networking:* We stress the need to connect organizers to one another. We are helping facilitate the first meeting of Muslim organizers in Los Angeles in January. Our hope is to bring together 15 organizers from across the country that we've been able to work with through COR, through AMCLI, or through other means to try and build this network of Muslim organizers that can both inform each other, but also to help inform the field of organizing and figure out a way to make those connections with many of the groups that are on this call.

**Through AMCLI, we identified three different ways we could help advance the field of organizing in Muslim communities across the country: exposure, immersion, and building a network of organizers.**

**Rev. Phil Lawson**  
**Steering Committee, Council of Elders; Co-founder and Co-chair, California**  
**Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights; Co-Founder, Black Alliance for**  
**Just Immigration**  
**Oakland, CA**

**The Council of Elders' goals are to have ongoing critical reflection of the defining movements of the twentieth century so that we might make those available to the twenty-first century.**

We are an organizing committee of 15 people, and this group has accepted the responsibility to issue a call to elders across the nation to gather in June of 2012 and become an independent body of leaders from the defining movements of the twentieth century. We developed this idea through several conversations that intensified in 2009 with Reverend Jim Lawson, Dr. Vincent Harding and myself. Over teleconferences, we began to discuss who should be on an organizing committee. In October 2011, the organizing committee members met face-to-face for the first time after several conference calls. We met in Chicago and began to look through the proposal, talk about it and flesh it out.

We decided to accept the task as an organizing committee for the formation of a Council of Elders. The Council of Elders' goals are to have ongoing critical reflection of the defining movements of the twentieth century so that we might make those available to the twenty-first century, taking our experiences the wisdom of our questions, as Vincent Harding called it, improving listening to the twenty-first century movements, understanding, teaching, training.

Some of the activities we want to get into are listening and seeking to understand current movements. We want to be a resource and to invite younger leaders to a place where they can be refreshed and learn. We intend to have a national gathering of elders and to produce materials that would be disseminated through the web and speak to the national agenda boot camp. One of the projects is to do a boot camp, an in-depth, long-term nonviolent training based on combining analysis of successes, failures, and lessons. The Council of Elders will gather in June 2012 to solidify the vision about what the council will become.

*The council includes James Lawson, Vincent Harding, Dolores Huerta, Nelson Johnson, Joyce Johnson, Mel White, John Fife, Arthur Waskow, Grace Lee Boggs, Joan Chittister, George Tinker, Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Bernice Johnson Reagan, Marian Wright-Edelman, and Phil Lawson.*

# Research Questions and Opportunities

**Richard Flory, Ph.D.**  
**Director of Research**  
**Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC)**  
**University of Southern California**  
**Los Angeles, CA**

It is exciting to hear all these different stories of what we might call faith in action from different parts of the community. We're particularly excited about the potential for better understanding of faith-rooted groups organizing in the public sphere who are working for social and political justice and, as several people said, taking their faith seriously. The Center for Religion and Civic Culture had its founding in the mid-1990s, and in the aftermath of the civil unrest in 1992 in Los Angeles. Since that time, we've followed a number of different trends within religion and religious groups, and how they work with the public sphere.

Certainly since 1996 and the Welfare Reform Act under Clinton and then in 2001 the faith-based initiatives under Bush and extended under Obama, faith has become an increasingly public part of our culture and dialogue. What we find from many of the different groups that we work with and have studied, is that there is what we might call a latent desire among religious people to "do something" publicly based on their faith, wanting to act in the public sphere for something beyond just feeling good because they're saved or whatever that might happen to be. This represents a fairly large group of people, but often because they don't have the resources, whether that's knowledge, physical resources, money, or even the social and cultural capital to know how to go about acting in the public, they often remain on the sidelines.

So we're particularly interested in how to understand all the stories that were shared today in a much more systematic way, theorizing about them. We need to examine the broad picture but also to get underneath the stories to understand what patterns emerge in terms of the underlying mechanisms that can mobilize people of faith, how those mechanisms may be the same or similar or different across different faith lines, and ultimately, ask how are people motivated, how faith functions as an actor, and how faith motivates public action.

**We're particularly excited about the potential for better understanding of faith-rooted groups organizing in the public sphere who are working for social and political justice and, as several people said, taking their faith seriously.**

Manuel Pastor, Ph.D.  
Director  
Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE)  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, CA

**Understanding faith-rooted work helps us understand the broader spiritual basis for social movements and makes us better partners with faith-based organizers. And this is exactly the set of intersections that we think may be important for building a deeper and stronger movement for justice.**

PERE's focus has been on social movement organizing. We have done a series of reports, mostly for foundations but highly utilized by movement builders, looking at the key elements of movement building, the particularities of youth organizing, and the emergence of multi-issue and multi-constituency alliances.

One thing that we have learned along the way is that people are motivated not because they think a progressive approach social justice issues is somehow smarter—even if they feel that it is true that this is a more intelligent way to address our nation's challenges. Motivation does not come out of a class you took on Marx in college—although for some people it did, probably! Rather, for most of the key leaders we have profiled, their commitment comes out of really deep notions of justice and wanting to be connected with others, and that broad sense of values has driven us to think more seriously about faith-based, faith-rooted organizing as part of the social movement tradition.

Recently in work that we did for Alta Starr and the Ford Foundation, we looked at what we called the “metrics of movement-building”—essentially evaluation measures. We wound up with this frame of transactions, transformations, and translations. Transactions are, “You do this, I'll do that.” That's really interest-based organizing—tit for tat—in the Alinsky style. Transformations are about really transforming relationships and making sure that people experience personal transformations as part of their organization process. Faith definitely fits into that.

Translation is about taking this important work of social movement organizing and making sure that other people can understand it, including the general public, and there's no better vehicle for doing that than working through these existing faith institutions. So we're a research center that has been taking faith-based and faith-rooted organizing very, very seriously, even though just a few members of our research team actually come out of a faith tradition themselves. However, understanding faith-rooted work helps us understand the broader spiritual basis for social movements and makes us better partners with faith-based organizers. And this is exactly the set of intersections that we think may be important for building a deeper and stronger movement for justice.

**Brad Fulton**  
**Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology**  
**Duke University**  
**Durham, North Carolina**

The focus of our project is to conduct a national census of all of the congregation-based community organizing. It is a follow-up from a 2000 study where the researchers identified 130 congregation-based community organizations, and from that, they surveyed 100 such organizations. We've so far identified 220, so the field has grown, almost doubled.

We have surveyed 200 organizations, and from that we are beginning to glean the data and look at different trends of changes over time, and examine the types of congregations that are becoming involved in this form of organizing. We are also looking at the interaction of faith in organizing. Some of the groups I would describe as highly secular, where faith is a secondary or tertiary part of the organizing model. There are other organizations where faith is central and integral to the process of organizing. What we want to look at is the differences in outcomes based on how faith is integrated into the organizing practice.

We are very pleased that we have a response rate of over 80 percent of the organizations throughout the country that have participated in the study. From that, we can say with authority, this is representative snapshot of the field in 2011. We are able to paint broad-strokes picture and examine individual cases of organizations. We can identify trends, and then to look at individual organizations to know the nuanced differences between the organizing models and practices.

**The focus of our project is to conduct a national census of all of the congregation-based community organizing.**

# Discussion

*Alta Starr, Program Officer, Ford Foundation, New York, NY:*  
“What is compelling to me about this transformative work, whether it is faith-based or not, is that link between actually transforming people at an intrapersonal level, in terms of their relationships in the community while simultaneously addressing the social context which is creating them.”

**This is a wonderful group of people to talk about the challenge of particularity and a broad inclusion as principles of organizing.**

*Ned Wight  
The Unitarian Universalist Veatch  
Program at Shelter Rock,*

*Ned Wight, Director, The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, Long Island, NY:* “It seems to me that there’s some tension between the value-added of a particular faith tradition and the potential value conflicts that come with orientation for particular issues. For example, our congregations champion gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender rights and affirms that across the board. That puts us in a place of great tension to do interfaith work with faith traditions that find that anathema. This is a wonderful group of people to talk about the challenge of particularity and a broad inclusion as principles of organizing.”

*Lisa Sharon Harper:* “Before I came to work at Sojourners, I was in New York City and served as the executive director of New York Faith and Justice, a group that began with a core group of evangelicals but grew outward from there to be very interfaith focused. We started with environmental justice work, but also reached out into immigration work. We found that some of our strongest partners, even though our base was really evangelical, were from the liberal churches in New York City, in particular Judson Memorial Church, which is known to be one of the most liberal churches in New York.

What was so wonderful about it was that we organized around common interests. We allowed the things that we did not agree on to remain at the door. The central thing we could all agree on was that we are all made in the image of God and therefore worthy of equal respect and equal dignity, we were able to organize around immigration in a very powerful way, around environmental justice in a very powerful way because we were able to agree on some certainties that we could all work on.

We held a candlelight prayer vigil out in front of Senator Schumer’s office with regard to the Secure Communities (S-COMM) legislation that we were fighting against (S-COMM mandates a higher level of immigration enforcement by facilitating the sharing of information between immigration and local police authorities). Judson Memorial was there and other liberal congregations were

there, and pastors from other evangelical congregations that you would not expect to be partnering together were there. But we were able to do that because we all agreed on simple things that brought us all together and that we wanted to see done. I think that in our current age we're no longer necessarily bound by either/or mantra. We can accept and embrace a both/and world."

*Rev. Alexia Salvatierra:* "I'd like to say something about the direct relationship between prayer and humility. We were organizing in Whittier, California, around nursing home workers. We had the head of the Whittier Evangelical Association, who was also the director of the Faith-Based Initiative for Southern California for Bush and an Assemblies of God pastor, and the Metropolitan Community Church pastor. We did a prayer service for a nursing home worker that was fired that ended up being a profound, passionate experience of prayer. People were praying in different ways, but we felt like we were on common sacred ground. It was a very powerful experience of being united in the compassion that came from prayer. But prayer in itself is a humbling experience.

Coming out of that, there was a relationship that was built between those two pastors, the Metropolitan Community Church pastor, which is an LGBT congregation, and the Assemblies of God pastor, after praying together. There was something that happened between them, and when he ran the Easter sunrise service, which had always been purely evangelical, he invited her to come pray, which was a very courageous and extremely controversial move. It came out of having been united in this experience of humility that comes out of prayer. That doesn't solve the problem; I agree that there's a tension. But I think that some people can say that as we move away from faith, we become more tolerant. But there's a way that moving more deeply into faith makes you not more tolerant, but more profoundly respectful of each other."

*Manuel Pastor:* "How do these issues also work with the particularities of organizing in Muslim communities?"

*Sameerah Siddiqui:* "I think if we were to start on these issues that are much controversial internally within communities, we end up getting polarized. And you're not actually able to mobilize a lot more of the mainstream. Some of those conversations, especially within the Muslim community on LGBT issues, haven't really been had — there isn't a public discourse about it. There hasn't been a resolution in many of these communities about how they want to address these issues, or whether they want to at all.

**I think that in our current age we're no longer necessarily bound by either/or mantra. We can accept and embrace a both/and world.**

*Lisa Sharon Harper*  
*Sojourners*

**What we try to do is break down the need for litmus tests and also to recognize that the issues that exist between communities also exist within communities.**

*Brie Loskota  
USC Center for Religion and  
Civic Culture*

So I think the question is, where do these communities come to the same table and on what issues to start to become more familiar with the other communities and find the points of commonality. On issues like economic justice, housing, immigration, those are much easier starting points that will ultimately lead to conversations about the issues that have far more tension in them. So it's the sequencing and where we start and ultimately get there."

*Rev. Phil Lawson:* "I recognize that we need to know where we are when we enter into a relationship and be respectful of where we are, but I think the real crux of the matter is, do you stay in the relationship? Because the real important thing is how you end up, not how you begin the journey. One of the great things of the movements of the '60s and '50s, people stayed with each other even though they had major disagreements around various tactics and ways of being. They stayed with each other. They didn't separate; they didn't leave the group. For me, the key thing is that we make a commitment to each other that we will stay with one another in the journey. Because we don't know where we're going to end up."

*Brie Loskota, Managing Director, USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture:* "In a lot of the work I do, particularly on Muslim and Jewish dialogue, there are many litmus tests that happen before dialogue partners are accepted. "Where do you stand on this issue or that issue?" This is particularly true around the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. What we try to do is break down the need for these types of tests and also to recognize that the issues that exist between communities also exist *within* communities.

It's very important to recognize that if we create boundaries by using litmus tests in the beginning, it reifies the notion that there is a particular stance within each community that is the "right" one, as opposed to recognizing differences and allowing those differences to come to the fore. It's important to be mindful that what happens between two groups is also happening within a single group, to ensure that we allow for the discussion to come from within communities, and to make sure that we don't have a checklist for who sits at the table when."

*Carol Been, Communications Director/Senior Organizer at Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice- California (CLUE-CA), San Jose, CA* "Crisis creates relationship in no other way, and when a society is in the level of crisis we're in, it certainly helps us come together than to separate on our differences. This work does take sometimes organizing within a faith community, and language, a culture within

that community, before you can bridge it into organizing with other faith traditions. It takes time and relationship-building and then out of that place you can forge relationships with others.”

*Alexie Torres-Fleming, Executive Director, The Sister Fund, New York, NY:* “One of the tensions that comes up is about race and class. Traditional organizing says that people need to speak for themselves, and that organizing needs to be led by folks who are most affected. I’m often asked, “How does a white, middle- and upper-class congregation support poor people of color with their work? What are appropriate ways to get involved and ways that are not appropriate?”

I want to also say that one of the powerful things that the faith community brings is just sheer presence—large numbers of people—when it knows how to partner correctly with groups. At the same time, one of the phenomena I see emerging within faith-based organizing movements is churches and people of faith feeling that they can’t and don’t want to work with the secular left, even though they’re working on the same issues—immigration reform, economic justice, etc. And the emergence of these parallel organizing movements that I think take up a lot of space and a lot of resources.

I’d love to hear your reflections on this idea of partnering with the “secular left” on some of the faith-based work. I heard from both the Christian community and from the Muslim community the importance of grounding and inspiring this work from the place of our sacred texts. I find that incredibly important and I’m wondering if folks know what is out there, who’s compiling, perhaps in your research, this type of work, this type of way in which organizing is done and can be grounded in our sacred texts.”

*Wendy Tarr:* “It’s a very relevant question. There is a need for deep humility and coming to the table listening with a great deal of respect and prayer with and for the other side is really important.

Recently, we had a panel of people from our program in Chicago talking about this partnership. I had the senior pastor from a large megachurch with over 10,000 people who are predominately wealthy, middle-class, and white, on a panel saying that they had experienced over time how they have failed to do that well. There’s a lot of desire for people to try to keep thinking about how we can follow the lead of the people who are impacted most. He said, “We can’t do anything outside of partnership. We have nothing to bring to the table outside of what we can do in supporting the people who are being oppressed, the immigrant communities.” They would say very honestly that they’ve made a lot of mistakes in the past, in their history, but there is that level of awareness. There’s this con-

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*Alexie Torres-Fleming  
The Sister Fund*

**Instead of creating one model that creates an image of the Muslim community being monolithic, when in fact it is not, [we] gather stories from very different communities throughout America about how they organize their community, how they're reading their religious texts.**

cept theologically about putting yourself on the cross and dying to yourself and that the immigrant community needs to experience the resurrection, the idea of having empowerment to be leaders. So we're practicing that death and resurrection piece, so each side has to be more keenly aware of where they're coming from. I think faith helps us come into that space more effectively.

And then as far as working with the secular left, there is a need to do organizing within your community first before you can bring that community into partnership with other faith traditions. That also is helpful in bringing them into collaborations with more secular organizing around issues of immigration. We have been working really closely with the immigrant rights organizations that are not faith-based here in southern California, and have found staff in some of these organizations that are themselves personally people of faith. So those bridges are happening. I agree that there's a concern about these parallel groups, but I think the partnerships are working and people are collaborating. Certainly we are here in Orange County."

*Sameerah Siddiqui: "In my attempt to create an organizing manual for the Muslim community, I encountered that very tension, and that conundrum of, what type of organizing model could you create that would be representative of the Muslim community? The way I am trying to resolve that is saying that the reality is that, depending on your position socio-economically, you are going to read politics very differently, read your faith very differently. So instead of creating one model that creates an image of the Muslim community being monolithic, when in fact it is not, actually gather stories from very different communities throughout America about how they organize their community, how they're reading their religious texts, so the manual more reflective of the difference we see in the Muslim community in America. I think that would be much more useful for the American community."*

*Kathy Partridge, Executive Director, Interfaith Funders Network: "At Interfaith Funders, we think a lot about conveying the power of faith-based organizing to secular grant-makers. We just talked about the secular left; the grant-making community is also very secular. An important issue to address is how funders think about the wealth and richness of experience that existing in this type of work. We need to be able to convey this to some of our colleagues who are often completely unaware that this kind of work is going on, who might consider it exotic or perhaps a threat to their more secular social change agendas."*

I do not have a clear divide in my mind between secular and faith-based funders, although I know what you are describing. It does seem that where the partnership begins to emerge on the ground and in the movement, then it is possible for funders to respond to those partnerships. There are links being made in ongoing work, whether it's work around economic justice and living wages in New York City or the ports in Los Angeles. There is something concrete that has drawn people of faith and so-called secular organizers into conversation and collaborative work. I think when they can reach out together to funders, that is when the education happens. We do not necessarily want to privilege either side of it, but to develop and grow it all. It is a struggle for all of us in the funding community to be aware of the resources, the fact that secular foundation resources are often not addressed to faith-based community work, and that there is a divide between secular and faith-based work, while there is such a strength to the work in the faith community and among community organizing in general."

**There is something concrete that has drawn people of faith and so-called secular organizers into conversation and collaborative work.**

*Manuel Pastor:* "I would add that you need to think about the differences and commonalities between groups from faith-based or secular traditions. Because what is going on in the general social movement organizing world is a movement away from interest-based to values-based organizing. People are really understanding that it's values that move people to be able to put themselves out, not just for themselves, but for others, not just for their self-interest, but for the common good, not just for the one percent, but for the 99 percent. And this is exactly the call of the faith-rooted organizing – it's part of this larger swing to a sense that we are interconnected, that our actions flows from our values, and that our social justice commitments are soulful not utilitarian."

## Closing reflections

**By utilizing these networks and relationships, [faith leaders] can mutually inform each other on ideas, tactics and practices that emerge from within particular faith traditions that may be adapted to other faith traditions and contexts.**

The descriptions of the efforts by the different organizers suggest some common themes across their varied programs. First, all of the conversation participants emphasized the importance of situating community organizing and social justice work in the deep faith commitments of different faith communities, rooting ideas and practice in the core values of these traditions. Thus a key component of these organizing efforts includes instruction on the social justice teachings that are found in the sacred texts of different religious traditions, such as care for the poor, children, and the less advantaged – as well as the simple concept, which goes by many names, of a “beloved community” in which there are deep connections between all social actors and so we look out for each other.

Second, although each of the projects that have been described have as one of their ultimate goals social and political change, this is somewhat de-emphasized in favor of following implications of particular faith tradition first, with social change framed as secondary, and a product of, their being true to their beliefs and commitments. In this, the role of faith-rooted organizers, indeed the faith community more generally, is on the one hand to provide a moral voice in, for example, budget or labor discussions, while still working toward change and a more just society. In a related manner, this conversation has shown that the faith-oriented actions of organizers have “real-world” effects on public agencies. For example, telling city council members that they will be prayed for individually by members of the organizing effort changes the dynamic from one dominated by an adversarial spirit to one that focuses on commonality and humanity.

Finally, it is clear that the networks and relationships of faith leaders help to bring them together in common action. By utilizing these networks and relationships, they can mutually inform each other on ideas, tactics and practices that emerge from within particular faith traditions that may be adapted to other faith traditions and contexts. This is particularly important in an increasingly religiously pluralistic environment in the United States, where community organizing is being challenged by changing demographics.

Indeed, this conversation has opened up an opportunity to connect this strand of work with a broader effort to for thinking about new trends in organizing that go beyond what can be thought of as “interest-based organizing.” Newer secular approaches are also much more rooted in values than ever before and movement

organizers dealing with issues ranging from structural racism to environmental justice pay more attention to the dimension of “soul” in their efforts. Faith-rooted organizing, of course, to one that focuses is especially clear about instead focusing on the values inherent in different religious traditions as motivators and instigators of community organizing and social justice work and so it can contribute to this evolution of movement organizing.

In any case, the conversation recorded here suggests that there are many opportunities for organizers to develop new ties between organizers from different religious traditions and organizations, for researchers to try to understand better what this new form of organizing actually means, and for funders to think about how they could step in and participate with these new efforts. We believe that additional efforts and resources in this arena would be well worth the time of organizers, researchers, and philanthropist alike.

After all, the current crisis in America goes far beyond the very obvious sense of economic dislocation. The nation also sometimes feels fragmented, adrift, anxious, and polarized – and that makes it all the harder to address our common challenges. While some may think of religion as yet another element of division and difference, faith-rooted organizing offers an alternative route, one that uses core values to achieve the sort of connectedness that can pull us together.

From whatever tradition or non-tradition we may hail, we hope (and some of us pray) that it will be part of a broader effort to do to forge a stronger and more just future for this country and this world.

**From whatever tradition or non-tradition we may hail, we hope (and some of us pray) that it will be part of a broader effort to do to forge a stronger and more just future for this country and this world.**

# Appendix 1:

## Partial list of participants

**Rev. Carol Been**

*Communications Director/Senior Organizer  
Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice- California (CLUE-CA)  
San Jose, CA*

**Arrington Chambliss**

*Executive Director, Life Together, Boston, MA*

**Richard Flory**

*Director of Research, Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC),  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA*

**Brad Fulton**

*Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology, Duke University,  
Durham, North Carolina*

**Lisa Sharon Harper**

*Director of Mobilizing, Sojourners, Washington, DC*

**Rev. Peter Heltzel**

*Director, the Micah Institute, New York Theological Seminary, New  
York, New York*

**Rev. Troy Jackson**

*Faith Outreach Director, We Are Ohio; co-director, Ohio Prophetic  
Voices, Cincinnati, Ohio*

**Rev. Phil Lawson,**

*Steering Committee, Council of Elders, Oakland, CA*

**Brie Loskota**

*Managing Director, Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC),  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA*

**Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews**

*Director of Outreach and Recruitment, PICO Network, San Jose, Cali-  
fornia*

**Kathy Partridge**

*Executive Director, Interfaith Funders Network, Longmont, CO*

**Manuel Pastor**

*Director, Program in Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE),  
Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern  
California, Los Angeles, CA*

**Nadia Roumani**

*Co-founder and Director, American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute,  
University of Southern California, Washington, DC*

**Rev. Alexia Salvatierra**

*Co-Founder, Faith-Rooted Organizing & Faith-Rooted Organizing  
Trainer/Consultant, Los Angeles, CA*

**Sameerah Siddiqui**

*Former Organizer, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice-Los  
Angeles (CLUE-LA), Los Angeles, CA*

**Alta Starr**

*Program Officer, Ford Foundation, New York, NY*

**Wendy Tarr**

*Executive Director, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice- Or-  
ange County (CLUE-OC), Orange, California*

**Alexie Torres-Fleming**

*Executive Director, The Sister Fund, New York, NY*

**Ned Wight**

*Director, The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock,  
Long Island, NY*

## Appendix II:

### Presenter Biographies

**RICHARD FLORY** is director of research in the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture and Associate Research Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California. His Ph.D. is in sociology from the University of Chicago, and his primary research and teaching interests are in the intersection of religion, culture and urban life. He is the author of *Growing up in America: The Power of Race in the Lives of Teens*, (Stanford University Press, 2010), *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation* (Rutgers University Press, 2008) and *GenX Religion* (Routledge 2000). His current research is focused on several projects that investigate the role of religion and religious institutions in the civic life of Los Angeles. These include an investigation of the role of faith-based organizing in Los Angeles since the 1992 riots, an ethnographic study of the “Dream Center,” a large-scale Pentecostal ministry in Los Angeles that includes a church and dozens of social outreach programs in the city, and a project investigating the current landscape of Pentecostalism in Los Angeles. His research has been supported by grants from the University of Southern California, the Louisville Institute, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Lilly Endowment, the Haynes Foundation, and the John Templeton Foundation.

**BRAD FULTON** is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at Duke University. His research focuses on the intersection of religion and social inequality, and he has recently completed two projects related to congregations and social service provision. One study demonstrates how congregations’ collaborator networks shape their social service activity and the other study analyzes the factors influencing black churches’ responsiveness to people living with HIV/AIDS. Fulton’s article on black churches and HIV/AIDS recently received an award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems. As a follow-up to this study, Fulton is collaborating with researchers from the RAND Corporation to evaluate the effects of community institutions working together to address public health issues. For his dissertation Fulton is working with Interfaith Funders to conduct a national census of congregation-based community organizations. He has collected detailed information on 4,000 churches and community organizations engaged in community organizing. With this data, Fulton is analyzing how the racial, class, and religious composition of these coalitions shape their

understanding of social problems and influence their effectiveness in addressing them. Fulton's research is being funded by Interfaith Funders, the Hearst Foundation, the Religious Research Association, and Duke University.

**LISA SHARON HARPER** is the director of mobilizing at Sojourners. Prior to coming to Sojourners, Lisa was the founding executive director of New York Faith & Justice, an organization at the hub of a new ecumenical movement to end poverty in New York City. For nearly 40 years, Sojourners has been a connecting point for faith, politics and culture in the United States and globally. Sojourners, which seeks to speak and act upon political, social, and economic issues in a social justice, values-oriented context, reaches millions of people through the media, campaigns, events, activism, resources, and its online network. Sojourners. Its action alerts and our award-winning Sojourners magazine reach more than a quarter of a million constituents. Sojourners faith-rooted mobilizing work includes our Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform advocacy work, national Mobilization to End Poverty, Justice Revivals in major cities, and our newest mobilizing initiative the National Mobilizing Circle.

**REV. PETER HELTZEL** serves as the director of the Micah Institute as well as an associate professor of Theology at New York Theological Seminary. Inspired by the Hebrew Micah's call to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God, the Micah Institute educates faith leaders to fight poverty and injustice. We are the lead organizers of clergy for the Living Wage NYC campaign, training clergy in faith-rooted organizing. Our coalition is an interfaith alliance that includes Jews, Muslims and Christians and people from other faith traditions working together to advocate for the rights of low-waged and immigrant workers in New York City.

**REV. TROY JACKSON** serves as the faith outreach director for We are Ohio, as well as co-director for the Ohio Prophetic Voices Campaign. Troy Jackson has served as Senior Pastor of University Christian Church (UCC) in Cincinnati, OH for fifteen years. UCC is a part of Christian Community Development Association, a network of churches and organizations working to reshape urban neighborhoods. Under Troy's leadership, UCC established Rohs Street Café, a seven-day-a-week community coffee shop committed to community engagement, the arts, and social justice. In addition to his work with UCC, Troy has been very involved in calling for comprehensive immigration reform and the Dream Act, and recently finished serving as faith outreach director for the highly successful We Are Ohio

campaign which led to the repeal of Ohio Senate Bill 5 by a 61-39 margin. Troy is now serving as co-director of the Ohio Prophetic Voices campaign, an initiative to gather over 500 clergy in Ohio to organize for racial and economic justice. Troy is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and earned his Ph.D. in United States history from the University of Kentucky. Troy's book *Becoming King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of a National Leader* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2008) explores the critical role the grassroots Montgomery Movement played in the development of King. Troy's other publications include his work as an editor on *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume VI: Advocate of the Social Gospel (September 1948-March 1963)* (University of California Press, 2007). Troy is also a regular blogger on Sojourners "God's Politics Blog."

**REV. PHIL LAWSON** is on the steering committee of the Council of Elders, a newly formed independent group of justice movement leaders from the 20th century. The current organizing committee of the Council of Elders includes: Rev. James Lawson, Rev. Phil Lawson, Rev. Vincent Harding, Dolores Huerta, Grace Lee Boggs, Joan Chittister, Rev. Nelson Johnson, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Joyce Nelson Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Mel White, Rev. John Fife, Rev. George Tinker, Marian Wright Edelman and Rabbi Arthur Waskow. The Elders engage in critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the justice movements of the 20th century, highlighting the critical role of spirituality and non-violence, offer their collective influence and experience to current movements for justice, identify and address the major causes of human suffering and promote the dreams and visions of our peoples for the beloved community, a multi-racial, compassionate and democratic society with equality, liberty and justice for all.

**REV. MICHAEL-RAY MATHEWS** is the director of outreach and recruitment for the PICO Network. In PICO's congregation-community model, congregations of all denominations and faiths serve as the institutional base for community organizations. Rather than bring people together simply based on common issues like housing or education, the faith-based or broad-based organizing model makes values and relationships the glue that holds organizations together. The recent PICO clergy conference gathered over 500 clergy to initiate a Prophetic Voices project, which explicitly engages pastors in living out their calling by speaking up from a theological and spiritual perspective about PICO's issues – both for the media and in their pulpits. The immediate issue on their plate is economic justice, specifically the behavior of banks. This faith-rooted approach, in ad-

dition to an institutional commitment to a racialized lens, attracted a record number of African-American pastors – many of whom had never been involved with organizing before.

**MANUEL PASTOR** is Professor of American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Founding Director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Pastor currently directs the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at USC and is Director of USC's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration. He holds an Economics Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and has received fellowships from the Danforth, Guggenheim, and Kellogg foundations and grants from the Irvine Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the California Environmental Protection Agency, the W.T. Grant Foundation, The California Endowment, the California Air Resources Board, and many others. Pastor's research has generally focused on issues of environmental justice, regional inclusion, and the economic and social conditions facing low-income urban communities. His most recent book, [Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America's Future](#) (W.W. Norton 2010; co-authored with Angela Glover Blackwell and Stewart Kwoh), documents the gap between progress in racial attitudes and racial realities, and offers a new set of strategies for both talking about race and achieving racial equity. Another recent book, *This Could Be the Start of Something Big: How Social Movements for Regional Equity are Transforming Metropolitan America* (Cornell University Press 2009; co-authored with Chris Benner and Martha Matsuoka), suggests how regional organizing is charting a new path for progressive politics and policies in America's urban areas.

**NADIA ROUMANI** is the Co-Founder and Director of the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute (AMCLI), a program housed at the University of Southern California that builds the human capital and leadership potential of emerging Muslim leaders in America. Nadia has worked with a wide range of organizations over the past decade to better understand the needs of Muslim communities across the United States, and develop strategic, structural solutions to address these needs. Nadia is also the Consultant Program Officer for the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art's Building Bridges Program, which aims to improve American's understanding of Muslim societies through arts and media. She has worked with several grantmaking foundations that are supporting Muslim communities in America and/or addressing US-Muslim World Relations, including the Four

Freedoms Fund, Rothschild Foundation, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, California Community Foundation, Ford Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Jewish Funds for Justice. Nadia is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Nadia received her master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and her bachelor's degree in economics and international relations from Stanford University.

**REV. ALEXIA SALVATIERRA** directed CLUE-CA for eleven years, founding an alternative faith-rooted organizing model in the process. The model integrates insights from the civil rights movement, Latin America and the Philippines to equip faith leaders to contribute their unique gifts and resources to larger movements for economic and social justice. CLUE-CA was the initial lead agency for the New Sanctuary Movement, in which congregations in 37 cities around the country accompany and support immigrant workers and their families facing deportation. She has taught at Vanguard and Biola Universities in Orange County and New York Theological Seminary in New York. She has been awarded the Changemaker award from the Liberty Hill Foundation, the Stanton Fellowship from the Durfee Foundation, the Amos Award from Sojourners and the Prime Mover award from the Hunt Alternatives Fund. She is currently consulting with several evangelical and other national organizations, including World Vision, and writing a book for Intervarsity Press on Faith-Rooted Organizing

**SAMEERAH SIDDIQUI** is a campaign coordinator with Oxfam America in Washington, D.C. on GROW, a movement building global campaign for a better food system that sustainably and equitably feeds a growing population. Before joining the GROW campaign, she was a Fellow with Oxfam America's Climate Change campaign. Prior to working with Oxfam America, Sameerah was a faith-rooted organizer with Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice in Los Angeles (CLUE-LA) as the first organizer for the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports (CCSP), a coalition of faith, labor, environmental and community groups working together to end the economic and environmental injustices of the broken harbor trucking industry. With CCSP, Sameerah created an interfaith religious leaders council in support of port truck driver's rights and the policy goals of the campaign, bringing together disparate communities within the South Bay. In addition to working with faith communities with CLUE-LA, Sameerah also worked with the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) as a community organizer to deepen the grassroots and organizational participation with CCSP. While at CLUE-LA, Sameerah worked

with former executive director Rev. Alexia Salvatierra to create the concept paper for CLUE's faith-rooted organizing manual. As an outgrowth of this project, she is currently working to develop a faith-rooted organizing manual specifically for the American Muslim community. Throughout her organizing and campaign work, Sameerah continues to foster engagement and conversation with American Muslim organizations on issues of economic and social justice. Sameerah holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of California, Davis in International Relations.

**WENDY TARR** is the director for Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice- Orange County (CLUE-OC). CLUE is a network of 13 grassroots faith-based organizations that has developed a specifically faith-rooted organizing model which is shaped entirely by faith traditions and designed to equip people of faith to contribute their unique gifts to the broader movement for social justice. CLUE-Orange County is known for utilizing the model to build a diverse network of immigrant and non-immigrant evangelical churches engaged in the struggle for immigration reform, including five mega-churches. CLUE-OC organizing strategies were just highlighted in a national Evangelical Summit on immigration as a best practice for organizing moderate and conservative congregations for justice.

# Appendix III

## Organizations

### PRESENTER ORGANIZATIONS

**American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute**

[www.usc.edu/amcli](http://www.usc.edu/amcli)

**Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice- Los Angeles**

[www.cluela.org](http://www.cluela.org)

**Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice- Orange County**

[www.clueoc.org](http://www.clueoc.org)

**Council of Elders**

[www.nationalcouncilofelders.com](http://www.nationalcouncilofelders.com)

**Faith-rooted Organizing**

<http://faithrooted.org/>

**Micah Institute, New York Theological Seminary**

[nyts.edu/the-micah-institute/](http://nyts.edu/the-micah-institute/)

**PICO Network**

[www.piconetwork.org](http://www.piconetwork.org)

**Sojourners**

[www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)

**We are Ohio/Ohio Prophetic Voices Campaign**

<http://ohorganizing.org/>

### SPONSOR ORGANIZATIONS:

**Ford Foundation**

[www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org)

**Interfaith Funders Network**

[www.interfaithfunders.org](http://www.interfaithfunders.org)

**The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock**

[www.uucsr.org/veatch.asp](http://www.uucsr.org/veatch.asp)

# Appendix IV

## Research Organizational Descriptions

**National Study of Congregation Based Community Organizing** In conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the groundbreaking Faith-Based Community Organizing State of the Field 2000 study, Interfaith Funders and the Southwest Institute on Religion and Civil Society (SIRCS) at the University of New Mexico have conducted a follow-up study entitled Congregation-Based Community Organizing State of the Field 2011. This study is comprised of two phases – Phase I is census of all CBCOs in the U.S. and Phase II is in-depth phone interviews with key leaders in the field. This study is sponsored by Interfaith Funders and by researchers at the University of New Mexico and Duke University. Send inquiries to: Kathy Partridge (interfaith-funders@gmail.com), Dr. Richard L. Wood (rlwood@unm.edu), and Brad Fulton (brad.fulton@duke.edu)

The **Center for Religion and Civic Culture** ([www.usc.edu/crcc](http://www.usc.edu/crcc)) was founded in 1996 to create, translate, and disseminate scholarship on the civic role of religion in a globalizing world. CRCC engages scholars and builds communities in Los Angeles and around the globe. Its innovative partnerships link academics and the faith community to empower emerging leaders through programs like the Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement and the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute. Since its inception, the Center has managed over \$25 million in grant-funded research from corporations, foundations, and government agencies. In 2002, CRCC was recognized as a Pew Center of Excellence, one of ten university-based research centers. Currently, the Center houses more than 20 research initiatives on topics such as Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, faith-based non-governmental organizations, and the connection between spirituality and social transformation. CRCC is also involved in the creation of scholarly resources, including the [International Mission Photography Archive](#), the largest online repository of missionary photographs that document social change in non-Western cultures. The Center for Religion and Civic Culture is a research unit of the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

**The Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE)**  
(<http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/home/>)

Established in 2007, the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) is a research unit situated within the University of Southern California's Dornsife College of Letters, Arts & Sciences (see <http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere>). PERE's research faculty and staff are explicitly committed to a broad social justice agenda even as we also remain committed to the highest standards of technical academic research. Within that broad social justice rubric, we conduct research and facilitate discussions on the specific issues of regional inclusion, environmental justice, and social movements. We generally work with community-based organizations in our research and other activities, trying to forge a new model of how university and community can work together for the common good. PERE's first report on social movements, *Making Change: How Social Movement Work and How to Support Them* (March 2009), has become influential and resulted in more specific strategic advice for supporting social movements to Atlantic Philanthropies, The California Endowment, Public Interest Projects, and the Ford Foundation. Supported by Ford, our latest report, *Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements* (October 2011), has been received enthusiastically by organizers nationwide who are eager to measure the transformational aspects of their work.

# Appendix V: Sponsoring Organization Descriptions

## **The Ford Foundation**

[www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org)

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For 75 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

## **Interfaith Funders Network**

<http://www.interfaithfunders.org>

Interfaith Funders (IF) is a network of faith-based and secular grant-makers committed to social change and economic justice. IF works to advance the field of congregation-based community organizing (CBCO, also known as Faith-based Community Organizing, FBCO) and to educate and activate IF members' constituencies. Membership is open to grantmakers who share our mission and make a significant commitment to our joint work.

## **The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock**

<http://www.uucsr.org/veatch>

Drawing upon the generous bequest of Caroline Veatch, the UU Veatch Program at Shelter Rock supports organizations that put Unitarian Universalist principles into practice. The Veatch Program funds Unitarian Universalist and community organizations working on a variety of issues in different parts of the country. A professional staff works with the elected Board of Governors to fund organizations advancing public policies and organizing at the grassroots to address the causes of social problems.

# Appendix VI

## Further Reading

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**USC Dornsife**  
*Center for Religion  
and Civic Culture*

Center for Religion and Civic Culture  
825 Bloom Walk, ACB 439  
Los Angeles, CA 90089-1483  
<http://crcc.usc.edu>  
[crcc@usc.edu](mailto:crcc@usc.edu)  
T: (213) 740-2311  
F: (213) 740-5810



Program for Environmental and Regional Equity  
950 W. Jefferson Blvd., JEF 102  
Los Angeles, CA 90089-1291  
<http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/>  
[pere@college.usc.edu](mailto:pere@college.usc.edu)  
T: (213) 821-1325  
F: (213) 740-5680