

IAF 50 YEARS

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE



INDUSTRIAL AREAS FOUNDATION



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YEARS

POWER ♦ ACTION ♦ JUSTICE

1990

INDUSTRIAL AREAS FOUNDATION



The Next Fifty Years

The first fifty years have been filled with struggle and adventure. As we move into the next fifty years, the danger is that safety will replace the struggle and success the adventure.

Our next fifty years should be about cultivating and deepening the art of public relationship: belonging to, not just existing in, an organized community; having the right to act in, not just gaze at, a public arena in which discourse is paramount and there is real negotiation, compromise and reciprocity.

The IAF philosophy stands counter to the dominant culture where progress and growth vie to

replace community and the common good; where government control coupled with military might push out the meaningful scale of human action and moral limits; where corporate greed and electronic images replace sacrifice and relationships. An invitation to participate in our society must mean more than the ability to select from a panoply of consumer choices and to vote occasionally. Participation must include an invitation to power, to resources, and to community.

The IAF is looking for organizers and leaders—from business, academia, religious congregations, unions and communities—who will take the necessary risks to rebuild an active democracy, to initiate new solutions and to engage in public transformation, not just in market transactions.

IAF organizations create the space in which people can think, develop their public life and be loyal to themselves. Our leaders and organizers use their local organizations and relationships as that public space to build and rebuild their communities.

The IAF is open to new ideas, new approaches, and new allies so that the movement can continue to grow and change. We welcome new challenges and confrontation to enable the organizations to stretch themselves and, we hope, the country with them.

Edward T. Chambers
Executive Director

Edward Chambers: "We welcome new challenges and confrontation."





Organizing for Change

The First Fifty Years

The Industrial Areas Foundation is the largest and oldest institution for community organizing in the United States. For fifty years, the IAF's mission has been to train people to organize themselves and their organizations, to take responsibility for solving the problems in their own communities, and to renew the interest of citizens in public life.

The IAF goal is empowerment—making democracy work through a restructuring of power and authority relationships so that the powerless can come to understand for themselves that they not only can but should actively participate in the economic and political structures that affect their lives.

The IAF was founded in 1940 by

the late Saul Alinsky, who created "People's Organizations" in the urban slums, including the much-ballyhooed Back of the Yards Neighborhood in Chicago. His best-selling book, *Reveille for Radicals*, was an account of his work in this neighborhood behind the stockyards. Alinsky and his associates went on to other cities, assisting poor and working people so they could exercise power to improve their social and economic conditions.

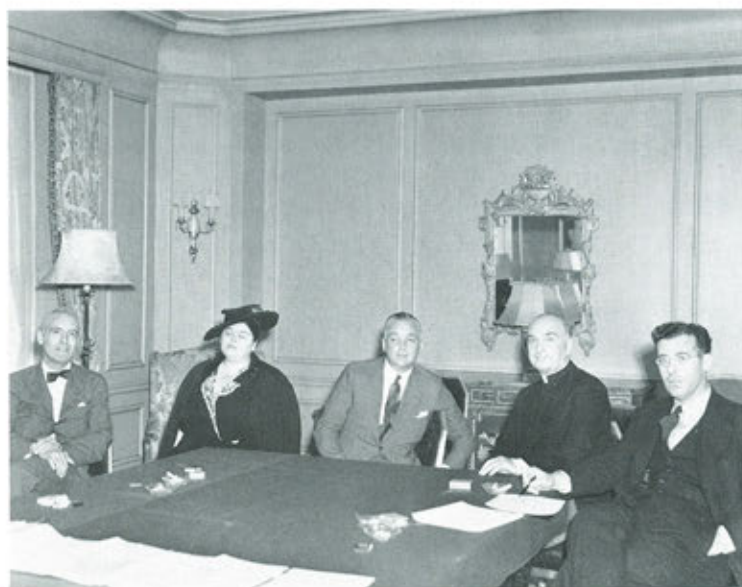
The Modern IAF

Since Alinsky's death in 1972, the IAF has been headed by Edward T. Chambers, who worked with Alinsky for sixteen years, building organizations around the country. Before he died, Alinsky named Chambers as his successor. The modern IAF has taken Alinsky's original vision, refined it and created a sophisticated national network of citizens' organizations.

The national headquarters, under the direction of Chambers, coordinates and administers the IAF. The Board of Trustees, in conjunction with the national leaders team and the national staff, sets policy and directs operation including national ten-day training, holds workshops and retreats for key leaders and staff, initiates sponsoring committees and special projects nationwide and coordinates regional strategies.

There are now twenty-eight IAF organizations nationwide, located in New York, New Jersey, Maryland,

First IAF board meeting, Aug. 24, 1940. From left: Howland Shaw, U.S. State Department; Kathryn Lewis, daughter of John L. Lewis; Marshall Field; Chicago Bishop Bernard Sheil; Saul D. Alinsky.



The First 25 Years

Saul Alinsky organized the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council in 1939, and incorporated the Industrial Areas Foundation as a nonprofit organization in 1940. Throughout his life, until his death in 1972, Alinsky and his small staff of two or three organizers formed community organizations around the United States. Some of those still exist today, and although not affiliated with the modern IAF, share its history. Additional information on these organizations can be found in two of Alinsky's books, *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals*, and in Alinsky's biography, *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, by Sanford Horwitt.

Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council	Chicago, Illinois 1939-present
Community Service Organizations	California 1949
Citizens Foundation of Lackawanna	Lackawanna, New York 1957-1967
Organization for the Southwest Community	Chicago, Illinois 1959-1972
Northwest Community Organization	Chicago, Illinois 1962-present
The Woodlawn Organization	Chicago, Illinois 1961-present
BUILD	Buffalo, New York 1965-1971
Council for United Action	Kansas City, Missouri 1965-1970
FIGHT	Rochester, New York 1965-1978

Texas, Tennessee, Arizona and California, representing more than 1.5 million families.

The IAF organizes people and their institutions. It forms broad-based community organizations, not traditional civic organizations or groups founded to fight a particular issue or cause. With a broad, powerful base, IAF organizations can relate to other power centers such as government, school systems and corporations.

Leadership Development

The IAF contracts with people in poor and working-class communities to provide years of intensive leadership development training by professional staff organizers. IAF's commitment is to train people to maximize their potential as leaders and to effect change.

Through its fifty years of experience, the IAF has found that when people unite, fight for—and

win—improvements that they care about, they become self-assured and self-reliant, and become more in control of their personal lives.

They learn that the art and skills of politics are far more multi-dimensional than just the act of voting. They become more effective in making changes on issues that are important to them. These community leaders, trained in IAF's "schools of public life," learn how to work with others, often from widely varied backgrounds and ethnic groups, to jointly decide the fate of their community.

For the most part, IAF organizations are made up of members of multi-denominational groups of religious institutions. These include Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim congregations, as well as other groups and associations, and are financed primarily from dues paid by these organizations. The membership crosses ethnic and racial lines, and

includes both middle class and poor people. Members are moderate, liberal and conservative.

The organizations are run by the community leaders themselves, with a minimum of paid staff. Last year, IAF volunteer leaders invested over 850,000 hours in their organizations.

The IAF and all its member organizations are nonpartisan and not-for-profit.

Major Victories

The IAF organizations nationwide are not based around single issues or causes. They have broad agendas for change, based on what local people have chosen as their priorities. And they have won important victories.

The following projects and scores of others around the country dealing with such problems as toxic waste in neighborhoods, lack of city services in housing projects, and low voter turnout among the poor, have characterized the work of the leaders in the IAF organizations nationwide.

East Brooklyn: Nehemiah Homes

In Brooklyn's devastated Brownsville section, East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC) established Nehemiah Homes, building 2,100 single-family houses that low-income families could buy for about \$49,000. Many of the new homeowners had been living in nearby public housing. This "critical mass" of homeowners has revitalized the community, making it a model for similar efforts in Baltimore and California, and for national legislation that is encouraging Nehemiah housing in other cities. On Aug. 4, 1985, 8,500 members of EBC assembled at the site where the houses were to be built to celebrate the completion of the first 500 homes.

Capital grants (or loans) of \$10,000 per home were provided by the city of New York. The city keeps a lien on the \$10,000 and recoups its contribution if the buyer decides to sell the home. This feature was replicated by the National Nehemiah Housing Opportunity Act of 1988.

Row of Nehemiah homes in Brooklyn, model program for federal housing law of 1988.





In the Texas colonias, dishes and clothes are washed without running water.

Texas: Statewide Power

Leaders of nine IAF organizations in Texas started working together in 1983 to initiate state legislation to subsidize water supply and sewer development in the *colonias*, unincorporated subdivisions along the Mexican border where over 150,000 people live without sewers and running water. In 1989, the Texas Legislature passed a bill that requires the state to provide

those services. After an intense get-out-the-vote and civic education campaign, the voters overwhelmingly approved \$200 million for improvements.

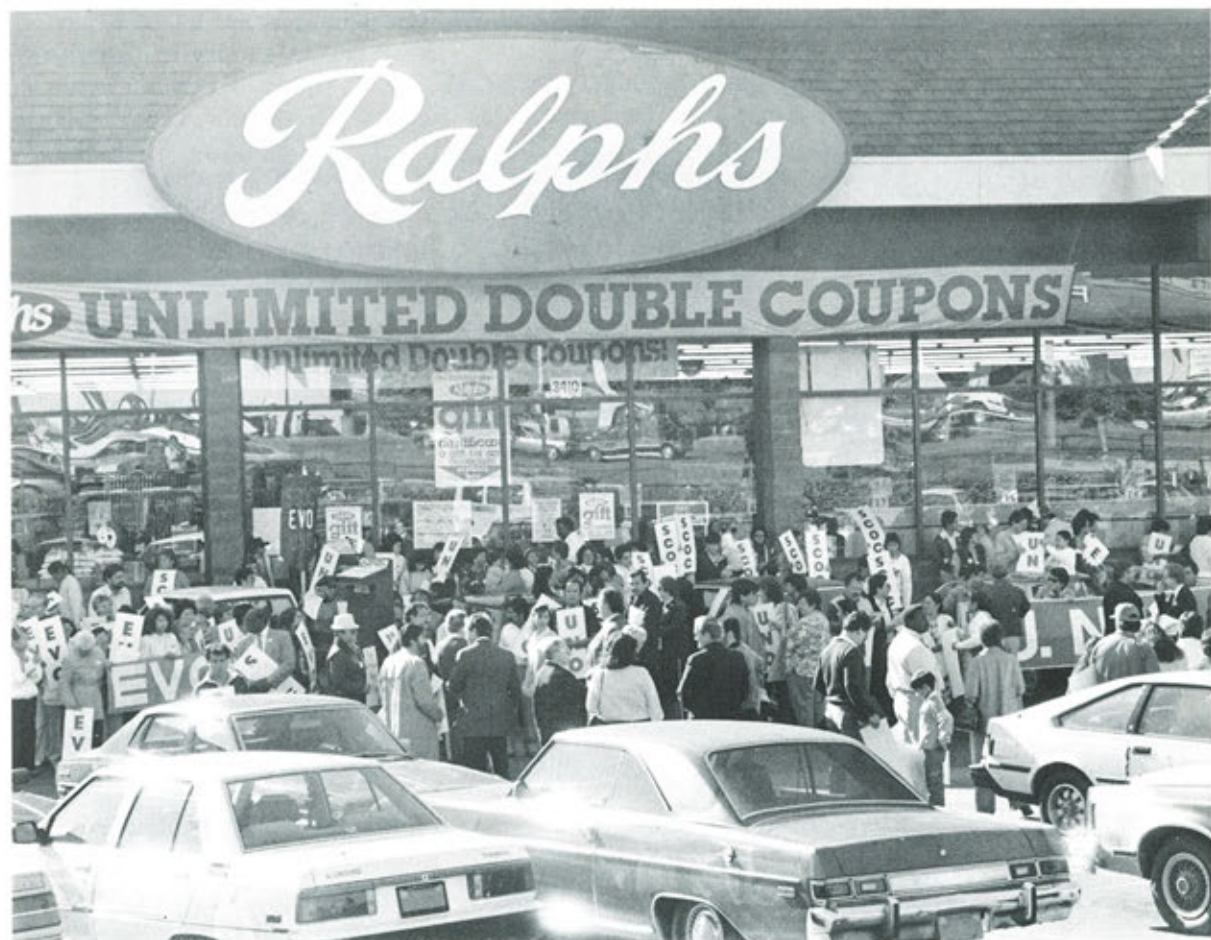
The Texas IAF organizations will continue to work together to effect changes in Texas public policy. In 1990, they will hold a statewide convention of 10,000 leaders from all ten organizations. The convention, to be held in San Antonio, will solidify the power and the impact that the organizations now have statewide.

Baltimore: Commonwealth Project

Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD) has made significant first steps in school reform in inner city schools in the Commonwealth Project. The organization brought together the mayor and local business leaders in a districtwide project that guarantees a scholarship or other financial aid to any student accepted into a college. Through the participation of sixteen colleges and the formation of the Collegebound



Students from Baltimore attending Morgan State University, thanks to BUILD's Commonwealth Project.



Southern California IAF organizations demonstrate at a Ralphs supermarket, seeking support for raise in state's minimum wage.

Foundation, \$12 million has been raised toward a goal of \$25 million.

Every student who graduates with a 95% attendance rating in their junior and senior years will be guaranteed three job interviews with local participating corporations. The students get prepared for these interviews by the Office of Economic Development and by representatives of the corporate community. Currently, there are 130 participating companies. If the graduate is not qualified for any of the jobs, city agencies will work with that student, providing training in the areas needing improvement, until the student qualifies for a job.

In the class of 1988, there were 1,407 students who participated in the Baltimore Commonwealth. Of those, 883 went on to college, 474 accepted

jobs with participating corporations, and 50 are receiving some form of additional training to increase their qualifications for employment. By the end of 1989, only seven remained without a job. Initial reports reveal that the Commonwealth graduates are considered good employees by the companies that hired them.

California: Minimum Wage

Three IAF organizations in California—United Neighborhoods Organization (UNO), Southern California Organizing Committee (SCOC), and East Valleys Organization (EVO)—combined their efforts during 1987 in a nine-month campaign to raise the state minimum wage to \$4.25, highest in the nation. The Southern California IAF

*O see our wretched
plight. The city
lies in ruins, its
gates destroyed
by fire. Come, let
us rebuild the walls
of Jerusalem and
be rid of the
reproach . . .*

The Book of Nehemiah

organizations' effort was widely recognized as the most influential factor in the passage of the California minimum wage law. This translates into an increase of nearly \$1,800 per year per worker. The federal minimum wage will be raised to the same figure in 1991. Nearly 7,000 members of the Southern California IAF Network attended the Minimum Wage Raise kick-off assembly in the Shrine Auditorium on July 14, 1987.

California IAF has helped lower auto insurance rates, forced passage of tight restrictions on liquor stores, equalized school maintenance dollars and the allocation of police officers, forced passage of California's first law outlawing laundering of drug money, secured excess Olympics funds for inner city youth programs, strengthened penalties for drug pushers, and helped pass initiatives to add more dollars to public schools and affordable housing.

Special Projects

The IAF Network sponsors local, regional and international programs that extends its mission to the poor and powerless.

Citizens Organizing Foundation

A three-year relationship with United Kingdom leaders, clergy and organizers to assist, through training, the formation of U.K. independent citizens organizations. Principal initiators of the project are Eric Adams, Neil Jameson and Mary McAleese.

IAF Reflects

An experimental program of intense and challenging seminars for experienced leaders that gives them the opportunity to meet as a group several times a year with experts in such fields as economics, political science, theology and philosophy. Leaders then return to their local organizations and mentor others. The project is supported by tuition grants and loans

from religious orders and other groups, and is directed by Edward Chambers, Dr. Leo Penta, Rev. Peter Gavigan and Mary Ellen Kane, CSS.

IAF Nehemiah Homes

- EBC Nehemiah: East Brooklyn Congregations—the first and largest Nehemiah project to build and finance 2,100 affordable homes in East Brooklyn. The houses, which have been completed, were built through the efforts of a complex network of church organizations, including the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and individuals, including the people of Saint Paul's Community Baptist Church, Pastor Johnny Ray Youngblood, Nola Southerland, I.D. Robbins, developer, and Mike Gecan and Stephen Robertson, IAF organizers.

- SCOC/UNO Nehemiah West: Organized on the model of EBC Nehemiah, Nehemiah West proposes to build 1,000 homes in the Los Angeles/Compton area, under the direction of Rev. William Johnson, Grace Trejo, Rosalinda Lugo, Lou Negrete, and organizer Larry Fondation.

- BUILD Nehemiah: A project similar to EBC Nehemiah that will provide new homes that can be purchased by low-income people in Baltimore. It is under the direction of Rev. Vernon Dobson, Carol Reckling, and organizer Gary Rodwell.

Texas Interfaith Education Foundation

A training and educational program for Texas IAF leaders and organizers in conjunction with the LBJ School of Public Policy, University of Texas, Austin. The project is directed by Andres Sarabia, Juanita Mitchell, Javier Parra, Margaret Martinez, and organizers Ernesto Cortes and Christine Stephens.

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Political virtue is the commitment to, knowledge of and ability to stand for the whole, and is the necessary condition for democracy.

George Lummis,
Democracy, Fall 1982

Leaders and Organizers

Standing for the Whole

We who lead and organize with the Industrial Areas Foundation may be considered presumptuous for talking about "a commitment to, knowledge of and ability to stand for the whole."

If you added up the budgets of our 28 affiliate organizations, the total would not reach \$5 million per year—a pittance by corporate, church, union, or political party standards. All of our full-time organizers and support staff number no more than 75. Our offices are in some of the most neglected and devastated corners of America's central cities and written-off rural areas. And our names do not appear with any regularity in the po-

litical or social or celebrity columns of major newspapers.

Yet, we do presume to describe our commitment to, our knowledge of, and even our ability to stand for the whole. Here's why:

Our organizations are made up of 1,200 congregations and associations; tens of thousands of ministers, rabbis, pastors and lay leaders; and nearly two million members and associates from Brownsville, Texas, to Brownsville, Brooklyn. Our members are black and Hispanic, Asian and white; they are individuals on the edge of homelessness as well as families in stable middle-class communities in the San

Key leaders from around the country meet as part of IAF advanced training.



"We Expect to Be Taken Seriously"

This is a favorite story of Fort Worth Mayor Bob Bolen, who uses it to illustrate ACT's confrontational style:

Early in ACT's history, the organization had scheduled a meeting with the mayor in his office. Fifteen minutes before the meeting, he called the ACT office to cancel, because he was involved in an extended meeting on the city's budget. His call came too late to intercept the ACT delegation, which was already en route to his office. They received notice of the cancellation after they'd arrived at City Hall.

According to the mayor's version, the ACT leaders then surrounded his secretary's desk and informed her that they were there for the meeting. Seeing the commotion, the city manager came out and demanded to know what was happening.

Rev. Gordon Roesch said, "We have a noon meeting with the mayor." The city manager told him the mayor could not be disturbed. Rev. Roesch repeated, "We are here for our meeting."

Within five minutes, the mayor was motioning the ACT leaders into his office. He asked them why they had come to a canceled meeting. They explained that they had arrived at City Hall before hearing of his attempts to call off the meeting. He said, "Look at my desk. I have over 50 calls to return. I am in a serious budget meeting. I cannot meet with you now!"

Rev. Roesch replied, "We are busy people. We have calls to return, sick to visit and work to be done. We expect to be taken seriously."

The mayor apologized and has never missed or canceled another meeting. Once, he even canceled a meeting with Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby to keep an ACT appointment.

Fernando Valley and Prince Georges County. We are Democrats and Republicans and Independents, most of us in the moderate middle of the political spectrum.

Taken together, with our millions of hours of practical, nonpartisan activity, we are as diverse, as determined, and as vital a network of related and relating citizens as exists in our nation today.

What We're Not

We are not, fundamentally, materialists. We don't believe greed is good. We don't worship profit. Wall Street isn't sacred, and stock transfers aren't liturgy. We believe the sector of voluntary associations—family, congregation, and other institutions—gives the market its meaning, not the other way around. This sector is most precious to

the majority of Americans. This sector is where we grow and see our children grow. This sector is the soul of the whole.

Nor are we citizens who worship another false idol: the bureaucratic state. We don't want a society of empty programs and do-nothing administrators. (We don't believe that bigger government is always better.) We don't value paper and procedure and patronage.

We also are not people anxiously awaiting a charismatic leader—a savior who will lead us to a political promised land. We believe that no one leader is needed, but a collective of leaders. We believe no one person should stand for us and speak for us and broker for us—thus depriving us of our dignity and our stake in our own futures—but that we should learn

to stand and speak for the whole ourselves.

Finally, we do not see ourselves as another faction or party or sect, not another issue group or special interest or lobby. We don't view the public arena as a piece of limited turf. We are not trying to squeeze one of our leaders into one of the rooms where power people currently meet.

Then who are we?

IAF's Iron Rule

We believe in what we call the iron rule: Never do for others what they can do for themselves. Never. This rule, difficult to practice consistently, sometimes violated, is central to our view of the nature of education, of leadership, and of effective organizing. This cuts against the grain of some social workers and program peddlers who try to reduce people

and families to clients, who probe for needs and lacks and weaknesses, not strength and drive, not vision and values, not democratic and entrepreneurial initiative. The iron rule implies that the most valuable and enduring form of development—intellectual, social, political—is the development people freely choose and fully own.

We believe that most leaders are made, not born, and that the majority of men and women have the ability to understand, to judge, to listen, to relate, to speak, to persuade, to confront, and to resolve. We find in our congregations and our blocks, in our public housing projects and barrios, a vast pool of citizens, able-bodied and able-minded men and women. They are often untrained and untaught. They are ignored by almost everyone. They are even redefined as a new class

IN ACTION

SCOC

Larry Fondation

Money in Your Pocket

Dec. 17, 1987—The nine-month Moral Minimum Wage Campaign of IAF in Southern California was nearly over. The proposition was simple: bring a pillow, some blankets and a change of clothes. We would ride all night on chartered buses to San Francisco. We would arrive around five in the morning. A local YMCA would provide coffee and doughnuts; that's it. At nine, we would rally in Union Square. At ten, there would be the vote: the California Industrial Welfare Commission would take a final vote to set the state's minimum wage.

It was a Thursday evening. After work, the crowd began filtering into the auditorium of Salesian High School in East Los Angeles. By 7:30, over 500 people were gathered in the hall. The caravan of buses was parked outside. The press had assembled to cover the send-off; some would ride all night with the IAF leaders to witness the vote. Prayers and speeches would build the spirits for the long ride. Speculation ran through the ranks of the leaders. \$4? \$4.15? \$4.25?

As Roman Catholic Archbishop Roger Mahony and CME Bishop E. Lynn Brown asked the crowd to rise for a parting blessing, the meaning of the campaign came clear in one visual image: men, women and children rose to pray, struggling to clasp their hands while holding their belongings in the only luggage they had to carry them in—hefty bags and plastic bags from the grocery store, stuffed with their pillow, their blankets, their change of clothes.

By 10:30 the next morning, after a nine-month fight, the Industrial Welfare Commission, before 500 tired IAF leaders, voted 3 to 2 to raise California's minimum wage to \$4.25, highest in the nation.

or underclass, but time and again they have proved their ability to grow and develop if invested in. The heart of our organizing is the finding of talented potential leaders, the inviting of those leaders into training and relationship, and the enabling of people to decide whether they want to develop, and where, and when, and how fast.

Creating the context for leadership development is in the core of our work.

Pay Our Own Way

We believe in a sense of ownership of our own development and ownership of our own institutions. We believe in dues. We believe in paying our own way. We neither solicit nor accept governmental monies for our central organizations. Without financial independence, there is no true political independence.

We believe in an educational

process that has little to do with traditional classroom approaches. In local areas, every night and most weekends, scores of local and national training sessions take place, analyzing public agencies, tracing the connections between public and private power players, designing strategies, planning action. We also conduct ten days of training three times a year, where several hundred leaders and organizers from around the country systematically probe the central issues of democratic politics and effective action.

But the greatest percentage of learning and tutoring takes place in the field, in the city halls and housing agencies, in state legislatures and bank board rooms, in television studios and editorial boards. The materials that we and our fellow leaders use are the unlimited examples of failure in our cities: the bankrupt programs

IAF leaders Josephine Torres, Alice McCollum and Armelia Goffe testify before Congress, one way of standing for the whole.



Banking on Victory

Discriminatory practices in the banking industry had prevented many Baltimoreans from purchasing homes. BUILD vowed to put an end to this and to see that Baltimore residents received fair treatment.

For months, BUILD leaders had been attempting to set up a meeting with the president of one of the largest banks in the city. Leaders had frequently written and phoned him. BUILD members became incensed at his consistent refusal to meet with or recognize the organization. BUILD had taken enough.

After several strategy and training sessions, 60 leaders gathered at the bank on an appointed date. Lining up single file outside of the bank, they shuddered as carloads of police with K-9 dogs on leashes came to "maintain order." Armed with the fact that they all had accounts at this bank, they filed in to "conduct business." The bank tellers and managers were totally unnerved as they attempted to serve their customers. Some brought in 500 pennies that they needed converted into dollars. Some wanted balances checked. Some wanted to talk about new or old accounts. Some were clumsy and dropped their change; others were forgetful and forgot their account numbers. All, however, after conducting one transaction returned to the back of the line to wait their turn to conduct more business.

At the same time, a delegation of leaders went upstairs to the office of the president. They said they wanted an appointment, and that the BUILD members who were in line downstairs could certainly conduct "business" as customers all day. They had brought lunch.

Responding to the phone calls from the frenzied employees downstairs, the president offered to meet immediately. BUILD leaders replied that they had come to schedule an appointment for a meeting. He quickly gave them a date. The delegation returned to the BUILD members who were still in line downstairs and reported their victory. Much to the relief of the besieged bank employees, they all exited to the front of the building. Outside, they joyfully greeted members of the media to report the great success.

As a result of that action, early in the history of BUILD, over 250 families received mortgage loans in the city at affordable rates. The BUILD organization sent initial signals to Baltimore city power brokers that the new "kid" on the block was the BUILD organization and it was there to stay!

and grounded pilot projects, the political fixes and insider deals. We don't have to look far for issues. They surround us.

We believe in the individual meeting, a contact that is face-to-face, one-to-one, for the purpose of exploring the possibilities of a public relationship. It is a 30-minute opportunity to set aside the pressures and tasks and deadlines of the day and to probe another person, to look for their talent, interest, energy and vision. The other person's perspective is of primary value. Their stories and insights and

memories are more important than a name on a petition or contribution to a cause.

Building for Power

We believe in building for power that is fundamentally reciprocal, tempered by the teachings of religious traditions and exercised in the context of ever-changing relationships with our fellow leaders, allies and opponents. We value the public sphere; we want to build a larger table in a more spacious room, but we don't kid ourselves about the tone of discussion that will

Teaches Mayor About Politics

In the early weeks of 1978, New York City's newly elected Mayor Ed Koch fulfilled a promise he had made to the leaders of a nascent but growing political force in Queens politics—the Queens Citizens Organization. During his campaign, he had pledged that if he were elected mayor, one of his first acts would be to meet with the QCO leaders.

At 8 p.m., 1,500 leaders were seated and ready at St. Thomas the Apostle auditorium. Mayor Koch was led in by a procession of local school children followed by an army of TV cameras. As soon as the mayor had taken his seat on the dais, Father Eugene Lynch as co-chair of QCO rose to begin the meeting.

Koch had other ideas. Rising from his seat, he announced that he had a speech he wanted to give before the meeting went any further. Father Lynch replied that there was a full agenda of QCO issues and ideas that were scheduled to be addressed during the meeting. Koch would be given a chance to speak at the end of the meeting.

The mayor countered that if he were not granted ten minutes to speak immediately, he would walk out. Father Lynch and the strategy team caucused and decided to grant Koch two minutes to speak. When Lynch announced their decision, Koch replied that it wasn't good enough. To the boos and hisses of the 1,500 gathered there, he walked out. As he proceeded out the door, he turned to the press and snarled, "These people don't seem to understand. The election is over!"

It soon became apparent that what at first seemed to be a terrible blow to the new organization would actually turn into a great victory. That evening on the 11 o'clock news and the next morning in the *New York Times* and *The Daily News*, reporters depicted an arrogant politician thumbing his nose at hard-working Queens families. Such words as "emperor" and "arrogant" appeared in headlines describing Koch's behavior. Day after day, reporters and columnists wrote about the future implications of Koch's shoddy behavior. Finally, Koch capitulated. He invited the QCO leaders to City Hall to reconcile. With its first major victory, QCO exploded into the New York City political arena with unprecedented fanfare.

take place at that table. We accept the tension, emotion, conflict and uncertainty that are part of political life. We are prepared to argue, listen, revise our views, and compromise in exchange for respect and a willingness to compromise from those who now hold power. What matters to us is not consensus, but a stake in the ongoing dynamic of controversy, resolution and change.

What We Do

We do not want to dominate. We do not want to be the whole. We want and will insist on being recognized as a vital part of it—and as capable as others of standing for it.

We are building a new kind of organization. It is rooted in families, congregations and associations. Our organizations are dues-based. Our organizations have very small professional staffs. Our organizations are fueled by the hundreds of thousands of volunteered hours of talented men and women in local communities. Our organizations work on a wide range of issues—from getting cities to replace stop signs to getting states to restructure and refinance their school systems; from pressuring to get a drug den demolished to rebuilding entire neighborhoods with new affordable homes; from reducing exorbitant water rates to figuring out the financing for a new

SCOC leaders take back the streets of Los Angeles.



water and sewerage system.

We are constructing a classroom without walls where the truly best and the brightest citizens of our republic—parents, teachers, teen-agers, factory workers, bus drivers, garment workers, secretaries, nurses, dignified people on public assistance—come and learn through their own experiences how to translate their values and dreams for themselves and their communities into concrete reality. We use issues as

a means to advance our knowledge of the whole, how that whole works and fails to work, and how the whole may be shattered.

We see ourselves as building a vital, powerful, voluntary third sector that will confront, compete with, collaborate with the partisan public and private sectors at different times. We intend to hold the other two sectors accountable. We challenge the public sector—undermined by privatization,

IN ACTION

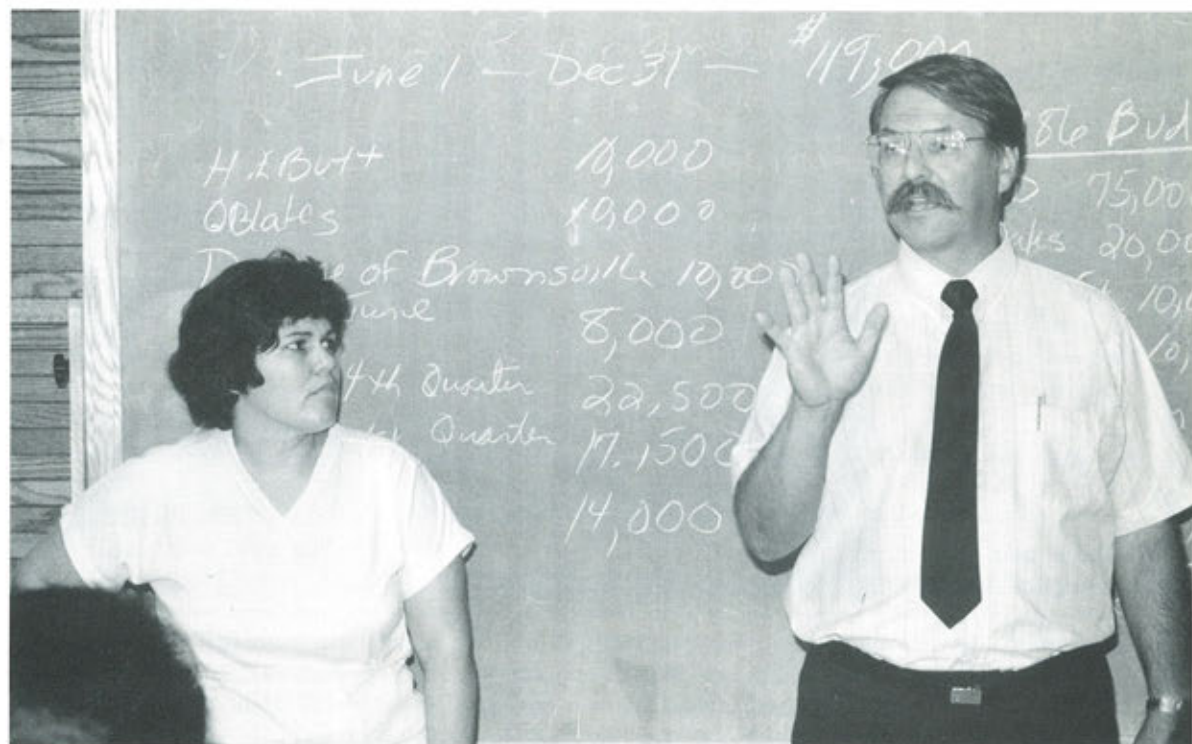
SCOC

Tony Massengale

Ganging Up on the Gangs

In fall 1988, a small team of elderly women led by 65-year-old Claudia Ghesse were confronted by gang members while they were collecting signatures and registering voters during SCOC's Sign Up and Take Charge Campaign. One of the women was so frightened that she had decided not to return to the door-to-door campaign. Ghesse reported the incident at the next Core Team meeting and recommended that SCOC leaders return to the streets to confront the gang.

This particular gang happened to be the Rollin' 60's Crips, the most notorious black youth gang in Los Angeles. Claudia and her team returned to the gang turf that following Saturday with a bull horn, SCOC placards, chants and songs shouted by 150 members of the SCOC organization in a "walk against fear" to reclaim the street and complete the campaign. Signatures were gathered from numerous residents, including members of the Rollin' 60's Gang!



National staff organizer James Drake works with leaders at IAF Ten-Day Training, Brownsville, Texas.

corruption, celebrity-worship, and a loss of citizens' confidence—to redefine its role in the 1990s.

Why We Do It

Some of us organize and lead because our faith, our religious belief, impels us toward this work. The words we read in the Old Testament and New Testament or Koran haunt us as we walk the streets of our cities. We are compelled by their injunction to relate, to reflect, to take action and risk; to make the dry bones of our shattered communities rise up, connect, and live.

Some of us organize out of anger—out of the root meaning of that word, grief. We move into the public arena grieving for all the opportunities lost and to be lost, for all the careers stunted and shortened, for all the hopes and dreams denied. We have looked into the eyes of undamaged children and looked again, years later, to find those eyes deadened by drug addiction or dimmed by inferior

schools or degrading work. We have looked in the mirror and seen ourselves isolated, disconnected spectators watching the play of public life on a television screen, and have looked again and seen the same selves engaged in the drama of pressure and progress and change.

We organize because there were moments in our lives—often long buried—that told us that we could lead, moments like this one described by one of our fellow leaders:

As a young girl in North Carolina, my sister and I began to attend the local Roman Catholic Church. In those days, blacks sat in the back pews. Now I was a very large young girl, rather heavy, and so was my sister. When we went to that church, I saw no reason why my sister and I should sit in the back. So one Sunday we went right up and sat in the first pew. The pastor and ushers were upset. The pastor came over before Mass and asked if we would please sit in the back, like all the other blacks. I was as scared as I could be, but I just couldn't see where

God would care where we sat, and so I said, "No." Finally, the ushers came and carried my sister and me to the back. Carried us right down the aisle of the church.

On the next Sunday, my sister and I sat in the front pew again, and the priest came and the ushers came and they hauled us off again, them huffing and puffing, to the back. On the third Sunday, the same thing happened. By this time, we were pretty well known. Two black girls who got carried to the back of the church every Sunday. My family, my mother particularly, was frightened at what we were doing, but said that we were doing the right thing.

On the fourth Sunday, the priest and the ushers didn't do a thing. The Mass started, the choir sang, we took our seats, and from then on we sat where we wanted in that church and in any Roman Catholic Church we ever attended.

We organize and lead out of love and stubbornness, out of joy and near despair, out of clarity of purpose and, sometimes, simply because we don't see who else will do what needs to be done at a point in time.

We organize and lead because we know, or sense, that there won't be a whole—a whole nation or whole city or whole community greater than the sum of its parts—unless many millions of Americans feel that the land is theirs, ours, and that we are in it, of it, and willing to know it, commit to it, and stand for it.

We organize and lead because we see our participation as a necessary condition of a healthy democracy and a dignified life.

Statement by IAF leaders and organizers written by Michael Gecan.

IN ACTION

VALLEY INTERFAITH

Consuelo Tovar

Senator Learns We Mean Business

Valley Interfaith was having a difficult time establishing a relationship with state Sen. Hector Uribe, a young Mexican American lawyer from an upper-middle-class family from Brownsville, Texas. He would not come to Valley Interfaith meetings. He did not like the fact that the organization holds politicians accountable, yet does not endorse candidates or help them get elected. He made unsubstantiated remarks such as, "Valley Interfaith is that organization that claims credit for everything, but does not produce." He didn't like the fact that Valley Interfaith runs a tight agenda and sets limits on the time that politicians are allowed to talk at meetings.

Finally, at a small meeting with the Valley Interfaith board members, Sen. Uribe agreed to attend a larger meeting of Valley Interfaith leaders.

From the onset, confrontation was inevitable. Uribe arrived dressed in a casual, short-sleeved shirt, most unlike the business suits he always wears. The leaders felt insulted, since his dress clearly indicated that he was not taking them seriously. Carmen Anaya, a Valley Interfaith leader, pulled him aside and asked if he carried a tie in his briefcase and, if so, would he put it on. She added that Valley Interfaith leaders were dressed for conducting business and that the meeting was formal and public. Needless to say, he felt embarrassed and apologized.

At that meeting, Uribe committed to sponsor the Colonias Bill, which eventually became a much needed law that provided water and sewers to poor Mexican American families. Since then, he has always attended their meetings. He may not like Valley Interfaith, but he respects Valley Interfaith.



Building a Foundation

The IAF is unique in that it helps people to organize their organizations. To participate in the democratic process, people must have some ongoing and fundamental connection to each other. One way people have traditionally had a sense of community is through mediating institutions—churches, synagogues and schools, unions, service and interest clubs, ethnic and neighborhood associations.

Historically, these institutions have been the means through which people could participate in a public life. Based not only on relationships of economic necessity and utility but also on relationships of affinity, medi-

ating institutions expanded peoples' sense of belonging, of membership, and of ownership in the society. They stretched boundaries beyond family and clan, and were the link to the greater power structures of government and big business. But these vital institutions have become weakened in the past few decades.

Organize Organizations

The IAF helps mediating institutions, in particular religious congregations, to build broad-based community organizations. Building an organization of organizations increases the strength, power and credibility of

BUILD members from Baltimore travel to New York City to support East Brooklyn Congregations.



those institutions. The IAF traditionally has concentrated on organizing within a broad spectrum of religious congregations, because in many communities the churches and synagogues and mosques hold out hope. They have people who are organized and they have money, the two critical elements of power, and frequently they are the only institutions left in abandoned inner cities. Of equal importance, religious congregations embody a rich tradition of values that link power to justice and love. (See *Organizing for Family and Congregation*, 1978, published by IAF Network.)

The Industrial Areas Foundation typically comes into a community at the invitation of a group of churches and synagogues that have decided to organize for change on behalf of their

community. The IAF then encourages this group to form a "sponsoring committee."

Sometimes, the IAF conducts its own preliminary exploration in a community to determine if there is a group of like-minded people willing to initiate the sponsoring committee process. If so, the IAF enters into a formal relationship with that group and helps them to raise seed money and recruit additional member churches for a three-year effort until a critical mass is formed.

The Essential Elements

Certain elements must be present, however, before the IAF will accept a sponsoring committee's invitation to come into a city and begin to organize:

- The IAF is committed to reli-

WHY I'M AN ORGANIZER

ARNOLD GRAF

Supervisor, Southeast Region

"To See Real Change"

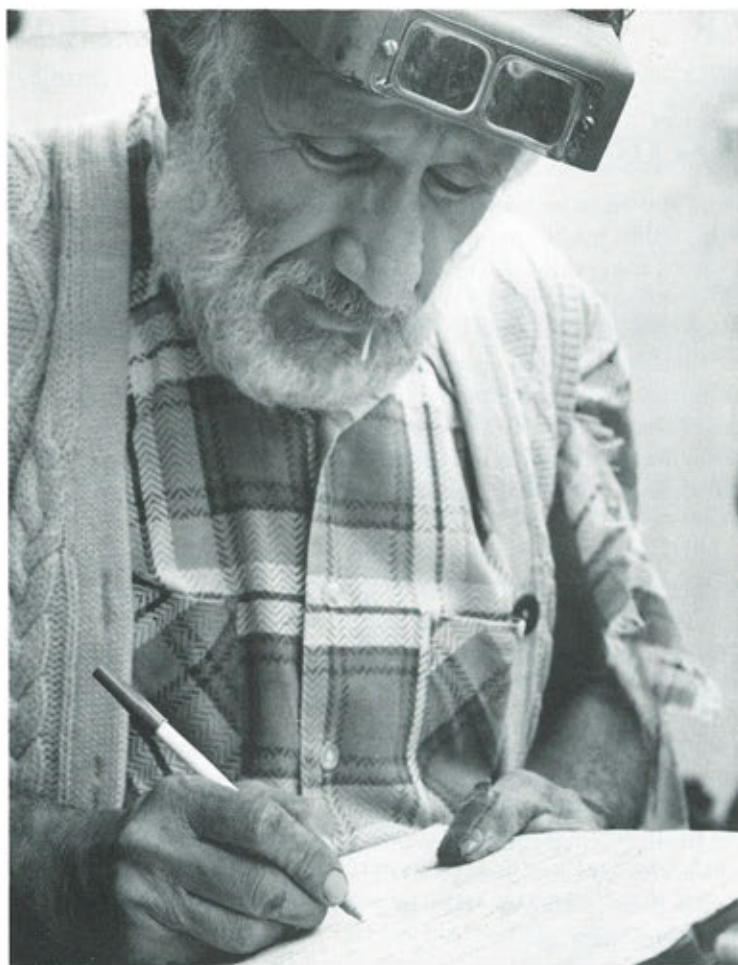
I have been organizing with the IAF since 1971. Before that, I organized off and on for seven years. Some of the reasons I do this have remained the same, some of the reasons have changed. What remains constant is how I feel when I confront poverty and injustice. The places I organize may change, the conditions that oppress them may differ, but the constant that hits you in the face is their hurt.

To me, organizing as I have experienced it over the past 18 years with the IAF continues to attempt to free people from this oppression by freeing the potential that is locked inside of them. It imposes nothing on them other than the challenge to take control of their lives by working for themselves in a collective with other like-minded people.



The work has been greatly enhanced for me because the ethos of the IAF not only encourages this, but it does so in a way that challenges my intellect, imagination and values. In the '90s, I feel the potential for tremendous growth and opportunity for the IAF and myself. We have developed a talented collective that I feel challenged by and enjoy. To make some kind of difference for others and myself has always been very important to me. To work with a collective leadership, whether that is with the leadership in a local project or with the collective talent of the IAF Network, is the most enduring way to make that difference.

The politics of office are very narrow. The politics of people are as wide and as deep as you can make it. That is the most nourishing element of my work.



Registering to vote during Sign Up Take Charge campaign.

religious diversity in all organizations. In the case of church and synagogue-based organizations, at least four denominations must be involved.

- There must be a strong racial and ethnic mix of people in the organization. A mix of people and institutions, with their diverse interests and perspectives, has more power to command real change; it also avoids organizing one group at the expense of another.

- There must be a mix of goals and interests for the organization. This is to avoid single-issue movements and to ward off a narrow, parochial, or limited focus, and to ensure continuity and longevity.

- There must be an independence of political electoral parties, religious

denominations, or ideologies from either the right or the left.

If these elements are present, the task of building a new organization begins.

Under the guidance of an organizer, a group of leaders will hold hundreds of individual meetings and "house meetings" with members of the congregations to determine a common agenda for meaningful action on issues and goals. It is at these meetings of ten to twenty people at a time that members and leaders decide which issues the organization will tackle. In the South Bronx, for instance, house meetings were held with a total of over 4,500 people to determine an agenda for the organization.

The Training Starts

Potential leaders then begin to attend a series of training sessions, and work with an organizer to design strategies to take action on the agenda.

People who have felt alienated, powerless and disconnected from the system and from each other join IAF organizations and take action on issues that they care about. They then are able to cooperate with each other, even though they are from different racial, religious and economic backgrounds and even though they might initially have had great resistance to working together.

Currently, there are sponsoring committees in Philadelphia, Northern California, Harlem and Dallas. And recently, new organizations have begun in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, in Prince Georges County (suburban Washington, D.C.), in Phoenix and in Memphis.

Founded in 1973, Community Organized in Public Service (COPS) in San Antonio, Texas, is an example of a mature and very powerful organization that after seventeen years is now an initiator of public policy in

Bringing Hope Where It Seems Hopeless

Rev. John Heinemeier knew what he wanted to be from as early as he could remember. He wanted to be a Lutheran minister, like his father, his brother and his grandfather.

He also knew he wanted to work among the poorest and most disadvantaged people in America. Rev. Heinemeier believes the church and its ministers, as well as the society, are evaluated by their stance toward the poor. After he graduated from the seminary in 1963, he asked to go to a poverty-stricken inner-city area and was sent to Brooklyn, where he remained for twenty years.

It quickly occurred to him that he did not want to confine his community work only to social ministry . . . soup kitchens, clothing drives and the like. He also wanted to effect social change in those neighborhoods that seemed without hope. He wanted affordable housing, jobs, schools that teach, police that protect, hospitals that heal. He saw these also as the agenda of the church among the poor.

Soon after arriving in the devastated Brownsville section of Brooklyn, he realized that he could not make this kind of social change by himself. He reached out to other churches—Catholic, Baptist, Pentacostal, Presbyterian. They reached out to the IAF and the East Brooklyn Congregations organization was born. During the time that Rev. Heinemeier was a leader with EBC, the organization built the model Nehemiah Homes and scored smaller victories in food services, park renovation, street sign placement and police responsiveness.

Rev. Heinemeier is now the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in the South Bronx, and a leader with South Bronx Churches. He says it is his toughest challenge—that this is the most blighted, dispirited community he has ever seen.

In January 1990, his church was deliberately set on fire and sustained so much damage that services cannot be held there. He has lived with his wife and children in the rectory next door to that church since 1983, as the first pastor to live there in 13 years. He says if it weren't for his participation in SBC he would have become discouraged long ago.



"It would be so easy to become numb to what the South Bronx is like, but the organizers continue to wake me up. They won't let me settle for doing things the old way. They continue to energize and challenge me."

Rev. Heinemeier devotes at least ten hours a week as a leader of South Bronx Churches, fighting for better housing, health care and living conditions. There are 300,000 people still living in the South Bronx. They are the survivors, he says. "The acceptance and stimulation I have experienced from the other leaders, both the clergy and the lay people, is what keeps me going. But my greatest joy is that I have seen a revival of spirit and hope in the community. It's actually tangible. And if that can happen here in the South Bronx, it can happen any place."

that city. There are now twenty-six member churches in COPS, representing about 50,000 families. Over its long history, the organization has not only forced the city to act on drainage problems, dirt roads and schools, but is a full participant in every major San Antonio decision.

From 1975 to 1986, COPS was responsible for more than \$500 million in flood control money being made available in the poor sections of San Antonio. The success of COPS inspired the formation of nine other IAF organizations in Texas cities, representing over 400,000 families.

IAF Fundamentals

IAF has been able to build a national network of effective citizens organizations because it is committed to the following concepts and methods of operation:

Accountability

From childhood, everyone dislikes accountability. IAF organizations thrive on it. Every person in the organization is held accountable for time, quotas, commitments, money and relationships. The flip side of freedom is responsibility. We can't be free unless we are accountable to ourselves, our loved ones, our neighbors, our community and our society.

Action

Action is to organization as oxygen is to our bodies. It is the willingness to act that is at the heart of the IAF. Meaningful action is aimed, deliberate, calculated and focused. The IAF believes that all action elicits an inevitable reaction. The action that an organization takes is not as important as the reaction it elicits. It is through action that decision makers

are brought into direct contact with the people affected by their power. No significant social change can come about without pressure and confrontation.

Broad-Based Organization

Saul Alinsky invented the building of a broad-based organization by utilizing the leaders of existing organizations.

The modern IAF has perfected the constructing of an organization of organizations by bringing differing institutions and self-interest groups to the same table over issues of mutual concern. This mix of interest and values are traded and negotiated with everyone benefiting and empowering one another.

The Network is amassing and organizing power on a scale and depth that can compete with school board members, hospital administrators, government officials, housing developers, corporate executives, and others. The new leadership with their institutions connect around their values, talent, energy and power.

Brick by brick, through the efforts of a network of church organizations, 2,100 Nehemiah homes went up in East Brooklyn.



Collective Leadership

Most people have leadership qualities, but often their talents are unrecognized and undeveloped. IAF has no traditional officers. Seven to nine people serve for short, revolving periods, sharing the operation of the organization with one or two organizers. A core collective of 35 to 55 design actions. An assembly of 90 to 200 leaders affirm organizational actions.

Hundreds and thousands of people execute them. In this way, many people, not just one or two "stars," are able to lead.

Evaluation

The organizations carefully, formally and systematically evaluate everything that is done, both locally and nationally. From a small meeting to a huge, yearlong project, every ac-

WHY I'M AN ORGANIZER

ERNESTO CORTES

Supervisor, Southwest Region

"Career Is Consistent With My Values"

My three passions in life are teaching, politics and action. What draws me to do this work and what sustains me is that I can act on these three passions in a career that is consistent with my values.

In the early '60s, I began graduate study in economics at the University of Texas. I hoped to become an expert in solving the problems of Third World development. I began to develop an appetite for scholarship, teaching and public debate. I loved the give and take of public discourse that I thought was the stuff of politics, but an intense but short-lived involvement in electoral politics soon discouraged me from taking that approach.

I was heavily influenced by the farmworkers movement and the civil rights revolution, but although they had their appeal, I found that neither went beyond the issue or the cause. Ultimately, what attracted me to organizing was the opportunity to take ideas and knowledge and test them out and use them in ways that would be meaningful and useful to people. But even more important is that the work gives me the opportunity to teach.

We often say that the organizations are like a university. I take that very seriously. I relish the way that preparation, training and agitation can play a role in changing people's lives.

But the real value of teaching comes in the action. I never get over the joy in seeing public officials and corporate executives having to deal with people that a few short years ago they regarded as their inferiors, and therefore unimportant to the public dialogue. Some of the happiest moments of my life were when an arrogant chairman of the San Antonio City Water Board had to negotiate with the COPS leadership, and when public utilities executives had to negotiate with the leadership of Valley Interfaith. It is very rewarding to know that prospective candidates for governor now feel compelled to meet with the leaders of Texas IAF organizations.

Because I am able to do this very fulfilling work that allows me to engage in my three passions of teaching, politics and action, I think that I have a glimpse of what it means to have life and have it abundantly: good friends and associates involved with me in work that is meaningful and challenging. More often than not, we obtain a sense that our efforts are making a difference. We are also coming to terms with the tension between the world as it is and the world as it should be, and the virtue that can be arrived at when power and love are held in proper perspective.



tivity includes a minimum of one evaluation, including feedback to each participant, regarding his or her performance. It is as important to assess and learn from each activity as it is to plan and implement it. In the words of one leader, "This is the first organization which insists that I think and reflect, not just act."

Ownership

IAF organizations adhere to an "iron rule:" Never do for people what they can do for themselves. The IAF does not go into a community to impose an agenda on the people who live there, or to "fix things" for residents. Local people are the best judges of what they want and need and, if given the opportunity, they will be able to get it for themselves. The use of paid staff is kept to a minimum; most of the work of the organizations is accomplished by unpaid leaders.

Power

The purpose of organizing is for power. Power is to human experience as energy is to physics. Good intentions, good values, or good ideas are not realizable unless accompanied by power. The IAF teaches people that unilateral power is not as productive as reciprocal power based on mutually beneficial relationships. Power tends to come in two forms: organized money and organized people. IAF believes small amounts of organized money, coupled with large amounts of organized people, can open the door for meaningful participation. The IAF believes there can be good or evil in the exercise of power and, in reality, power generally is used ambiguously.

Professional Organizers

The IAF national supervisors and a team of leaders continually recruit, train and oversee the work of highly qualified organizers, with a particular emphasis on recruitment from the

poor and working class communities in which the organizations are located. There are currently 45 men and women working as organizers. It is a career and a life's work for most of them. A competent organizer is the linchpin of organizational success.

Public Life

Democratic politics is not only an engagement among people with differing self-interests, issues, approaches and opinions, but an encounter in which these people exchange, trade off, revise interests and change opinions. It is also a setting or situation that is nearly always one of tension, emotion, or conflict. Uncertainty rules the day; the resolution is never clear-cut. What matters, however, is not unanimity or consensus, but discourse, exchange and temporary resolution. Democratic politics realizes itself through agitation, struggle, conflict, forced revision and mutual respect. It is dynamic. It is the immutable law of change at work. As in physics, political encounter means change, change means movement, movement means friction, friction means heat, and heat means conflict and controversy.

Self-Determination

The IAF will remain nonpartisan and non-ideological, committed to a free and open society, and has no permanent opponents or allies. The IAF organizations are financially self-sufficient with their primary source of income being their dues-paying member institutions. Grants or gifts from foundations or individuals finance special projects, rather than supplement the organizations' operating budgets. The IAF accepts no funds from the federal, state or local governments.

For more detailed discussion of these IAF Fundamentals, please see Commonwealth, A Return to Citizen Politics, by Harry C. Boyte, The Free Press, 1989.



The IAF Organizer

The IAF organizer is mentor, advisor, agitator, trainer and coach to the people of the organization that employs him or her.

Organizers are recruited from the ranks of people who have experienced some kind of success, but are intrigued with the potential for change that organizing can offer, or who have become disappointed with the limitations of their current jobs.

Many organizers come from the inner-city neighborhoods where the IAF has organizations. They do not see themselves as victims. Organizing offers them the opportunity to use their talents to improve their communities, and to connect the values they believe in to the work they do.

Organizers do not come into an area to change or fix things for the

people who live there. They act more as catalysts. Ernesto Cortes is an organizer on the national staff of IAF and was the first organizer of COPS in San Antonio:

"No organizer comes in from the outside and organizes," Cortes says. "All you can do in any situation is to identify those leaders who want to organize. I didn't organize COPS. The leadership did. Organizers taught them, trained them, identified them, challenged them, and we worked with them on a one-to-one basis. But leaders did the actual organizing."

The organizer's mission is two-fold: to train and develop leaders and to assure the organization's victory on the issues it has chosen to address.

It is the organizer's responsibility to help the leadership to act upon their values, and it is also his or her responsibility to make sure that the organization tackles issues that are not only important but winnable. Leaders and organizers spend a great deal of time helping the membership decide which issues will be on their agenda.

The Individual Meeting

Many of the tools that the IAF organizer uses in this work have been developed over the past fifty years. They began with the tactics used by founder Saul Alinsky, and are continually refined and revised by the current IAF staff and leaders.

The technique the IAF calls "the individual relational meeting" is basic

National organizers meeting, December 1989, Memphis, Tennessee.



to everything an organizer does. These meetings are disciplined, personalized, face-to-face conversations lasting approximately thirty minutes with people in local congregations, priests, rabbis, political and corporate leaders, neighborhood leaders and residents—anyone who has a stake in the community and might be interested in new possibilities.

The Art of Listening

During these on-going meetings, the organizer probes and questions, attempting to determine what is important to the person, what he or she wants changed, the person's network and connections within the community, his or her values, and whether he or she is willing to act on those values to bring about change.

These exchanges are the beginning of hundreds of public relationships—connections that eventually

will be used to rebuild the community. The IAF has found that without individual meetings, a group cannot forge relationships or build organizations. It is this "art of listening" that sets the IAF organizing techniques apart. There are no preconceived notions about what the community needs; instead, IAF organizers and leaders take the time to find out about the core convictions of the people who live there.

The organizer trains leaders in the art of the individual meeting so that the skill will be duplicated and the long process of connecting people together to form a sense of community will continue.

This method of organizing breaks with the traditional bureaucratic thinking that one first sets goals, then develops a strategy, and finally amasses the resources necessary to carry out the strategy.

WHY I'M AN ORGANIZER

GERALD TAYLOR

Supervisor, Tennessee

Harlem to Memphis

I have been an IAF organizer for ten years. Currently, I'm working to build a new organization in Memphis, Tenn. I was born in 1948 and raised in Harlem. I remember when Harlem had a sense of community—a sense of vitality—and I feel angry when I see how it has deteriorated.

My parents, who were poor, couldn't give me many material things, but they did give me the love of learning. I was nicknamed "The Professor" by the other kids because I loved to read and did well in school. I worked hard and was accepted into a gifted and talented program in a school outside my neighborhood. When I saw what the rest of the world was like, I began to realize the potential for my own community.

By the time I entered college, I was spending almost all of my time organizing in black communities and becoming deeply involved as a leader and organizer in the civil rights movement. I believed that through the movement my people could build power and gain control over their own lives. After the death of Martin Luther King Jr. and the subsequent disintegration of the civil rights movement, I began searching for a more effective way to empower poor and minority people.

Organizing with the IAF developed my talents and gave me the skills to do that. I hope my work will inspire my two children to dream of the day when the Harlems of this country will be rebuilt and reclaimed.



"To See Real Change"

Most people have little choice about what they do for a living. They work because they have to. So, it comes as no surprise when the *Wall Street Journal* reports a survey in which 85 percent of the respondents, from a variety of jobs, declared that they do not like doing what they do.

At the same time, many others are on a fast track—political or corporate advancement, long hours, uncontrollable schedule, and truncated or nonexistent personal life.

Many in the helping professions—social workers, teachers, professors, government workers and clergy—experience immense satisfaction through their direct involvement with their students, clients, congregants, but increasingly realize they have no power, declining prestige or recognition and little effect on the larger world.

I refuse to work just for money, with no intrinsic value in what I do day-to-day. I refuse to hop on the political or financial fast track while someone else rears my kids. I refuse to spend my evenings at cocktail parties with people raising money for me or another political candidate. I can't stand dead-end "helping" that renders people perpetually helpless.

I want to see substantive change from my efforts, change that makes the United States more democratic, decent and humane. I want to be part of a corporate culture which encourages risk, imagination and basic human values. I want to work with people who practice high professional standards. I want to be paid a professional salary for my work. I want a work schedule that is interesting day in and day out. I want to be able to fight for what I believe in. I want a private life.

I have worked 18 years with IAF because it allows me to put these things together.

I hate to lose. I hate seeing the psychological damage done to people who lose every day—workers with no future, kids in schools that don't work, business people on the treadmill, ministers swamped with cries for help, food, housing and money.

I organize to see real change. Organizing either produces real, demonstrable change, or it's just an activity. Organizers who don't care about winning, and who confront for the sake of confrontation or who organize to feel good, don't work for IAF. Real organizing produces organizations that produce results.



The IAF organizers start at the other end. They use these individual meetings—hundreds and thousands of them—to connect one person with another and create a community of people willing to act. During that process they begin to discuss goals and strategy.

Career Opportunity

The IAF regards organizing as a profession, and treats its organizers accordingly. The Foundation believes

that investment in organizers is the linchpin of the Network's success, and has formalized systematic training, development and career advancement.

Organizers are offered a two-month sabbatical every three years so they can increase their knowledge or reflect on the direction their work is taking. They are encouraged to continue their education at IAF expense. A senior organizer acts as a mentor to them on an ongoing and regular basis throughout their career.



The IAF Leadership

Unlike organizations or movements formed around a single cause or issue, the IAF does not narrowly define a leader as a charismatic, outgoing, outspoken person, but instead as a person who can motivate and mobilize into action a following, no matter how small, and one who can build networks of relationships.

Margarita Vargas is one example of the kind of leader that characterizes the IAF organizations. She is one of thousands of IAF leaders who did not think they had leadership qualities.

Most IAF leaders experience great personal growth during the years they volunteer their time to the organizations. Many return to school, change jobs or careers, or in some other way experience their potential. Many say their involvement in the organization gave them the opportunity for positive personal change that they had not thought possible.

10-Day National Training

Leaders are given years of training both in workshops and in the course of developing projects that address issues of community concern. All IAF leaders attend a ten-day IAF National Training Conference at least once. This intensive training, held three times a year at locations throughout the country, provides the tools people need to become effective leaders.

IAF leaders are drilled in the skill of "constructive curiosity." Whenever they are confronted with new informa-

tion, they are taught to ask different questions: Why are things the way they are? Why did this happen now? Who is behind the news and what has motivated them? How could things be different? How could I make a difference if I combined my efforts with like-minded people?

Learn About Power

Leaders are taught about the nature of public relationships, the use and abuse of power, how to negotiate and compromise, how to conduct meetings large and small, how to speak effectively, how to research an issue and assess what should be done, and how to find, develop, motivate and train other leaders.

IAF leaders are trained to build organizations and to keep them healthy and active. They are trained to build coalitions with other institutions, other denominations, as well as business, government, and ethnic and economic groups. IAF leaders learn how to look at broad problems and break them down into winnable issues. They learn how to gain access to academic research on those issues and apply this knowledge to the practical situations in urban areas. They learn about legislation and how the political system works.

IAF leaders learn political judgment and come to understand how the world works; for instance, how institutions work, how money works. Perhaps most important, they gain greater

understanding of themselves and experience personal empowerment.

The results of this training are people with a depth of sophistication in their understanding of leadership, politics and power, as well as a solid network of relationships.

Many leaders who joined the or-

ganization out of a desire to make improvements in their own neighborhoods—out of self-interest—come to recognize the larger purpose of the organization. They continue to stay involved in issues that don't necessarily affect them directly, but are for the good of the larger community.

PROFILE OF A LEADER

MARGARITA VARGAS

East Valleys Organization

An Ordinary Person With Power

Margarita Vargas stood on the stage, looked out onto the sea of 7,000 faces in the Shrine Auditorium, saw the lights from the TV cameras, and felt her knees buckle. As she stood ready to kick off a huge campaign to raise the minimum wage in California, Margarita realized that nothing in her background had prepared her for such a moment—nothing except the three years of training she had received as a leader in EVO.

Born in Mexico, Vargas had spent the last 20 years raising her eight children, just as her mother and her grandmother had done. Although she had moved to the United States with her husband before the first baby was born, she never found it necessary to learn English or to become a citizen. But when her last child was three and the family moved to Baldwin Park, Calif., she found herself wanting more.

At the urging of a friend, she went to a special meeting at her church. Sitting quietly in the back of the room, she looked around. There were people there she had never associated with before: blacks, whites, Protestants, Jews. She couldn't understand everything that was going on, but she did understand that this diverse group of people wanted to do something to make the community better.

Vargas had some ideas, but she was too shy and too unsure of her English to speak up. Still, she continued to come to the meetings, because she was thrilled to see ordinary people taking power—power that she had thought belonged only to those in authority: government officials, corporate leaders and the wealthy.

After a while, she began to attend leadership training sessions and to take on some responsibility in the organization. Then one day she phoned the police chief of Baldwin Park to discuss EVO's interest in eliminating gang crime in the community. She was astonished when he personally returned her call. Vargas realized that she was one of those ordinary people with power. She was a leader. She says now that it was at this time that she began to see herself as a person with a public life, that before her work with EVO, she was interested only in things that affected her personally.

In 1988, Vargas spearheaded EVO's eight-month voter turnout campaign that resulted in her organization delivering 11,764 occasional voters to the polls. She is now working on strategies to rebuild California schools and to clean up the severely polluted ground water in her neighborhood.

Vargas makes an important contribution to EVO and to her community. She is proud of that, but she says she is prouder that her work with EVO has made her look inside herself and find something she did not know she had. She is now fluent in English, she studied and passed the GED test and got her high school diploma, and in March 1989 Margarita Vargas was sworn in as a citizen of the United States.



Passing the Torch

Wind, rain, and fog—a leader's nightmare—confronted Carol Reckling when she left her office and dashed toward her car. It was a miserable midwinter dusk in downtown Baltimore. It was also the night that BUILD had chosen for an action, involving 1,000 leaders, with Maryland state legislators in Annapolis. And it was the night Carol Reckling, after a seven-year career as a BUILD leader in the public eye, would sit back and watch a new set of BUILD leaders take center stage.

All over Baltimore, she hoped, BUILD leaders like herself were heading for the many gathering points where buses were supposed to be waiting. All across the city, leaders were bolting early dinners or packing sandwiches, waiting for spouses or fretting about late baby sitters, changing from their work clothes or quickly freshening up for the long evening ahead. When Reckling arrived at her church, there was one other leader, no bus, and a few minutes to think . . .

It had rained on that night seven years before when she began her work with BUILD. Although she had been aware of BUILD since its inception, she had shied away from participating until she learned of a BUILD meeting that would focus on a matter near to her heart: schools.

The meeting was a caucus of the just-forming BUILD education committee. The subject was not curriculum or funding or the condition of buildings, but something more basic—the lack of supplies. No paper. No pencils. No books. She remembered her feelings—shock, then anger—at hearing that litany.

Reckling had a good education—in Baltimore elementary and high schools, at Howard University, and in the master's program of Washington University Business School. She had found teachers who worked hard and who worked her hard. And she had lived, firsthand, what her parents and their peers had always said, "Education is the key." Reckling knew this formula: No paper and pencils and books equaled no future, no career, no hope . . .



Seven years later, in worse rain and wind and fog, she boarded a bus with forty other BUILD leaders and rode through the night to Annapolis. In the intervening years, she had worked hard and well; had become a driving force in education strategy; had negotiated with three mayors and many corporate leaders; had been one of the founders of the BUILD Commonwealth Strategy; had served as BUILD's president; and was now one of the BUILD representatives to the IAF National Leadership Group. She did all this while advancing in her professional career and becoming a mother for the first time.

One of IAF's interests is the development of local indigenous leaders in America's poorest and most devastated urban centers. In these areas, where much hope is gone and the cities' leaders have given up trying to restore vitality, the IAF can have the greatest impact in bringing empowerment to the people who still live there. Much of the leadership in these communities is isolated or defined by elected office holders, or spokespeople for advocacy or social service groups.

The IAF restores leadership by identifying people with potential and giving them the opportunity to lead.

The IAF leadership training enables community members to design and initiate strategies to address issues in these communities, create public debate and get some resolution, while connecting their actions to their values of justice, concern for the poor, the dignity of the person, participation, and respect for diversity.



Industrial Areas Foundation Network

ALLIANCE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

1124 N. Broadway
Knoxville, Tennessee 37917
(615) 525-2018

Founded 1988
26 churches, 6,000 families

Organizer: **Jonathan Lange**

Key leaders: Claire Lovelace, Rev. Vincent Jones, Julia Cox

- ABT is made up of unions, black churches, white churches and neighborhood associations that have joined to bring about justice and fundamental institutional change in Knoxville and Knox County.
- In the last year, ABT has campaigned to preserve industrial zoning in west Knox County, and to clean up lots and sidewalks in East Knoxville.

ALLIED COMMUNITIES OF TARRANT

P.O. Box 3565
Fort Worth, Texas 76113
(817) 332-1830

Founded 1986
22 congregations, 14,000 families

Organizers: **Perry C. Perkins Jr.**, Mattie Crompton

Key leaders: Rev. Nehemiah Davis, Rev. Terry Boggs, Dr. Claudia Camp

- Its broad ecumenical base, black, Anglo and Hispanic leadership, and multi-issue approach has made ACT a unique political reality in Fort Worth.
- In 1985, ACT was instrumental in passing a city bond issue that committed \$57 million of capital improvement funds to the largely minority and inner city communities.
- In 1987, ACT began a parental empowerment program in a Fort Worth middle school which, in three years, resulted in a dramatic rise in student test scores from 20th out of 20 middle schools to 3rd place.

AUSTIN INTERFAITH

1106 Clayton Lane, Suite 120 West
Austin, Texas 78723
(512) 459-6551

Founded 1985
30 congregations, 25,000 families

Organizers: **Gary McNeil**, Dana Loy

Key leaders: Fr. John Korcsmar, Rev. Marvin Griffin, Rev. Brendlonly Douglas

- Austin Interfaith is a tri-ethnic, multi-issue organization. Originally based in East and Southeast Austin, an area with a population of 200,000 people

Bishop Francis Mugavero gives a hug at the podium during an August 1985 action. He received the IAF 50th Anniversary Award, May 1990.



including 45,000 Hispanics and 43,000 blacks, Interfaith has expanded into South Central and North Austin.

- In 1989, Austin Interfaith leaders achieved a police neighborhood center and a \$3.5 million public housing renovation.
- In spring 1990, Austin voters passed an \$80 million school bond package, authored by Austin Interfaith, aimed at improving inner city schools and crowded suburban schools. Because of the organization's Get-Out-the-Vote campaign, turnout in Interfaith precincts was higher than citywide.

BALTIMOREANS UNITED IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

4502 Park Heights Avenue
St. Ambrose Parish
Baltimore, Maryland 21215
(301) 542-8822

Founded 1977
51 units, 40,000 families

Organizers: **Gary Rodwell**, Kathy O'Toole, Elijah Etheridge
Key leaders: Rev. Vernon Dobson, Marian Dixon, Carol Reckling

- BUILD is a metropolitan, broad-based, multi-denominational, nonpartisan, non-governmentally funded organization that represents the strength and concerns of Baltimore's families through its churches.
- In 1980, BUILD began a successful campaign against bank red-lining that led to negotiated agreements with Baltimore banks and savings and loans, resulting in over 500 low-income families acquiring home mortgages.
- BUILD has been successful in forging the Commonwealth agreements. This is an agreement among BUILD, the mayor of the city, the corporate community, the school system and 16 area colleges and universities. Commonwealth guarantees financial aid or a job to any student who graduates from high school with a Maryland diploma and good attendance. In 1989, 1,407 students were placed in a job, went to college or joined the military.

THE BORDER ORGANIZATION

P.O. Box 806
Eagle Pass, Texas 78853
(512) 773-2451

Founded 1987
10 congregations, 10,000 families

Organizer: **Rosemary Agneessens**

Key leaders: Rosario Ramirez, Maria del Rosario Garzo, Gloria Heredia

- The Border Organization brings together urban and rural churches from five of the poorest counties of Texas.
- The Border Organization, together with Valley Interfaith and EPISO, led the fight to win a \$100 million, statewide bond issue to finance water and sewer development in poor border communities.
- The Border Organization has won numerous neighborhood improvements, including street resurfacing and water and sewer projects.

WHY I'M AN ORGANIZER

MICHAEL GECAN
Supervisor, Northeast Region

"People Pray in Different Ways"

There's no one answer to the question, Why do I organize? The composite answer includes scores of memories and incidents, actions and inactions, desires and fears, hostilities and hopes that more or less make up the "me" of 1990.

I do know that it was easier to answer this question in 1975, when I began with IAF, than it is today. Easier, because there were fewer memories. Easier, because the drive to organize was rooted geographically in Chicago and rooted relationally in my parents and the people of a single neighborhood and a single city. Easier, because organizing was fresh and new and spinning off the excitement of the civil rights and peace movements and because racial tensions were high but so were the hopes for racial relations of dignity and depth.

All of this has changed. Metaphorically, I've moved from the Plains, where the views are long and there is less for the eye to absorb, to the more crowded, more cluttered, more complicated place where it is harder to see and where there are more distractions. It's the nature of the middle—of a career, a project, an effort, a life—to be less clear, more muddled, more demanding; there's more opportunity and more risk; more tension and more meaning.

I organize more for my children and myself now, and less for my parents and for people in general. I organize more for the love of the daily activity of organizing—the individual meetings, the relationship with people like Johnny Ray Youngblood and Pat Oettinger and Tom Sinnott and Stephen Roberson, the thinking and rethinking and re-rethinking, the imagining and positing and implementing, than for some single identifiable victory or goal. (In the same way, I run for the love of running more than for the need to win a race.) I organize more out of a usually controlled fury (more controlled than at the start, much more) than out of disappointment about the betrayal of a single person or a single place. I organize because I've learned that people pray in different ways, and organizing, I believe, is the best way some of us know how—however crudely—to pray.



COMMUNITIES ORGANIZED FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

P.O. Box 830355
San Antonio, Texas 78283
(512) 222-2367

Founded 1974
26 congregations, 50,000 families

Organizer: **Tom Holler**

Key leaders: Rev. Rosendo Urrabazo, Patricia Ozuna, Andres Sarabia

- This organization of 26 parishes in predominantly Hispanic and low-income neighborhoods is the major non-business political force in San Antonio.
- Over the last 16 years, COPS has completely changed the political culture in San Antonio. It won over \$750 million in new streets, drainage, parks, libraries and other services, reversing the city's policy of disinvestment in poor neighborhoods. San Antonio's Community Development Block Grant program is now the best in the nation.
- Since 1974, COPS has completely rebuilt seven targeted neighborhoods, including over 400 new homes. In 1989, COPS spearheaded an effort to develop a 10-year master plan for affordable housing in San Antonio. Its centerpiece is a \$10 million Housing Trust Fund, which will leverage millions of dollars annually for new housing.

EAST BROOKLYN CONGREGATIONS

287 Lott Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11212
(718) 498-4095

Founded 1978
56 units, 55,000 families

Organizers: **David Nelson**, Elda Peralta

Key leaders: Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood, Fr. Leo Penta, Alberta Williams

- Comprised of churches, two homeowners' associations and a synagogue, in six communities, EBC seeks to address basic and fundamental elements of civilization, including street signs, stop lights, passable streets and decent food stores. Its focus is one primary issue: the ongoing recruitment, training and development of talented black, Hispanic and white leaders.
- In 1982, EBC began the research and analysis that led to launching the Nehemiah Housing Plan, which by 1990 completed its 2,000th home.
- In 1986, EBC launched Nehemiah II, to improve public high schools.

EAST VALLEYS ORGANIZATION

4428 Stewart Street
Baldwin Park, California 91706
(818) 338-9965

Founded 1986
18 units, 45,000 families

Organizers: **Michael Clements**, Ken Fujimoto

Key leaders: Vera Valdiviez, Margarita Vargas, Rev. Joseph Greeley

- With the formation of EVO, the San Gabriel and Pomona valleys, which lacked identity and had a relatively low level of visibility, were brought together to form a broad base of power to act primarily on crime, toxic waste.
- The Safe Harbors program is reclaiming the places where children play and learn by making them gang- and drug-free.
- EVO is insisting on the cleanup of ground water pollution, a serious problem in these valleys where leaking solvents have caused 40% of the wells to close.

EL PASO INTERRELIGIOUS SPONSORING ORGANIZATION

4317 Montana Avenue
El Paso, Texas 79903
(915) 564-5757

Founded 1981
22 congregations, 80,000 families

Organizer: **Maribeth Larkin, SSS**

Key leaders: Fr. Edward Roden, Margaret Martinez, Rebecca Rojo

- The specific goal of EPISO is to empower the diverse elements of the community of El Paso to participate in the political, social and economic decisions that impact their lives.
- In 1989, EPISO formed an Education Alliance with the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, the city of El Paso and local institutions of higher education to offer jobs, scholarships to seniors graduating with good grades, attendance.
- In 1988, EPISO and the El Paso Community College initiated 83 English and citizenship classes, enrolling 2,000 participants at 27 sites throughout El Paso.

WHY I'M AN ORGANIZER

MARIBETH LARKIN

Organizer, EPISO

"We Must Take Action to Achieve Justice"

For twenty years I have been a member of the Sisters of Social Service, a Roman Catholic religious order. Although interested in the religious life, I did not want to teach or work in a hospital. I thought I wanted to do social work, but my seven-year experience with providing crisis intervention and direct service for the poor was so frustrating that I nearly left the community. I knew how to help people work the system, but what about getting the system to work for people?

I found a way to do this. While working in an East Los Angeles parish, I became involved in the United Neighborhoods Organization in Los Angeles. I was deeply impressed with the power and effectiveness of the organization in getting real changes for people living in poor neighborhoods.

One of my first actions involved getting up on a stage before the City Council and translating a speech for a Spanish-speaking leader. I was so nervous I was literally sick. I thought about calling in and saying I just couldn't make it. But then, when we called the meeting to order and the council members ignored us, I suddenly got very angry. I got angry for myself and for all those people who deserved better treatment than that. Once I got angry, I was fine. I realized that there is a public person in me that I never knew was there. It was a liberating experience.

I wanted to organize people and work with them so they could get what they wanted. I knew that this was where I belonged, but no one in my order had ever been involved in anything like IAF organizing before, and there was some resistance from within the order that this kind of work might not be appropriate for a sister. Eventually, I was permitted to take a position as a full-time organizer. I went on to organize in Queens, San Antonio and other parts of Texas. As the senior organizer at EPISO in El Paso, I am unable to live with my community of sisters in California. I realize this is one of the sacrifices I must make to do the work that allows my religious beliefs to have meaning.

It is my work as an organizer that allows me to remain a sister. Religious life is public life. Religious life is about making a difference and doing the difficult work in a society. It is in the Gospel: "We must take action to achieve justice."



IAF Training — Survival Skills

Andres Sarabia is one of the most experienced leaders in the IAF Network. He has been with San Antonio's COPS organization for 16 years, serving as its first president from 1974 to 1976.

He recalls the early days when hundreds of members of the new organization gathered in a local school auditorium to confront local officials, and force them to solve the severe flooding problems that resulted from the lack of proper drainage and sewers in poor neighborhoods.

As film of the submerged cars, houses and entire streets were shown to the audience, people became more and more angry. Emotions were running so high that there was potential for trouble.

But Sarabia and the other leaders of COPS had been well-trained. They had been briefed on every potential problem and they had determined in advance what response they would have.

"Much to the surprise of the city officials, we had total control of the assembly, and we were able to direct the anger of the people into a positive and productive meeting," says Sarabia.

Sarabia says this kind of training and discipline is what has positioned COPS among the most powerful community organizations in the country, and what has given him the confidence and ability to handle difficult situations in all areas of his life.

Sarabia says his years as a leader in COPS have taught him how to channel and focus his own anger at injustice, so that instead of useless or even dangerous action, he could actually alter the way the system works in San Antonio, and effect changes in the way people are treated.

He says he also uses his leadership skills at work, where he is a computer specialist in the Civil Service. He has used what he has learned about reflection and planning, confrontation and negotiation, and has effected an increase in the number of Hispanics who are promoted in his section. He has found the training to have an impact in his personal life.

He recently wrote to his son, who is in the Marines and was preparing to be shipped overseas for combat. Sarabia told him about the difference between channeled anger and uncontrolled anger . . . about reflection before confrontation and action. And about making sure that he had his fellow soldiers with him before he made any moves.

Survival skills, Sarabia calls them.



FORT BEND INTERFAITH COUNCIL

P. O. Box 1015
Rosenberg, Texas 77471
(713) 341-9246

Founded 1988
15 congregations, 10,000 families

Organizer: **Mignonne Konecny, OP**

Key leaders: Kathy Franklin, Dora Olivo, Rev. Steve Quill

- The Fort Bend Interfaith Council was formed to address the issues facing a rapidly growing area near Houston, including poor education, low voter registration and lack of infrastructure.
- Fort Bend Interfaith initiated an Education Partnership with local school districts and Chambers of Commerce to improve neighborhood schools.
- Fort Bend Interfaith won major improvements to an unincorporated area of Fort Bend County, including nearly \$2 million of paved roads, water supply improvements and sewer system engineering.

GULF COAST ORGANIZING EFFORT

2601 Azalea Street, Suite 19
Victoria, Texas 77901
(512) 572-4709

Founded 1988
10 congregations, 5,000 families

Organizer: **Stephanie Marie Martinez, IWBS**

Key leaders: Fr. David Collela, Alonzo Clazada, Linda White

- The Gulf Coast Organizing Effort is a broad-based coalition of churches bringing together a mix of people around family and community issues.
- The goals of the Gulf Coast Organizing Effort are to confront the issues of drugs, teen pregnancies, unemployment and under-employment, lack of quality education, inadequate housing, inaccessible health care and unsafe neighborhoods facing the families in the community.

INTERFAITH ACTION COMMUNITIES

600 Bright Seat Road
Landover, Maryland 20785
(301) 499-8774

Founded 1987
36 congregations, 14,500 families

Organizer: **Gregory Groz**

Key leaders: Rev. Laura Griffin, Sandy Mattingly, Rev. Roy Minnix

- IAC's vision is to create a racially and economically integrated county by forging a broad-based citizen organization that would empower low-, moderate- and middle-income people to become part of Prince Georges County's decision-making process.
- There is now a newly formed partnership between IAC and the county executive to produce 2,500 units for home ownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income people, and 730 units for low-income people for rental units over a five-year period.
- In addition to reaching a major agreement with the county's police chief that will result in specially trained police officers functioning as community problem-solvers, IAC has been able to demonstrate that a multiracial, interfaith organization can be successful in a county that long has been noted for its poor race relations.



Key leaders Rosalinda Lugo, Grace Trejo, Carol Reckling and Andres Sarabia meet to plan strategy.

Southwest supervising organizer Ernesto Cortes holds strategy session with leaders of Valley Interfaith of Texas.



INTERFAITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

83 Wayne Street
Jersey City, New Jersey 07302
(201) 333-2338

Founded 1987
35 congregations, 28,000 families

Organizers: **Stephen Roberson**, Patrick Bower
Key leaders: Rev. Willard Ashley, Rev. James Pagnotta, Myrtle Smith

- ICO has member congregations from eight denominations and a racial and cultural makeup that includes Filipinos, Hispanics, blacks, Asians, whites.
- ICO has won victories on several local issues, including cleaning up and developing city and county parks, curtailing sale of illegal drugs in specific locations and cleaning up hexavalent chromium contaminations.
- In spring 1989, ICO began a campaign to expose the presence of more than 100 toxic chromium sites in Jersey City alone and drew media attention to the issue, exposing the lack of state and federal response; they negotiated an agreement with the state of New Jersey to begin immediate cleanup of the worst chromium sites.

THE METRO ALLIANCE

230 Vargas Street
San Antonio, Texas 78203
(512) 534-5266

Founded 1989
18 congregations, 20,000 families

Organizer: **Pearl Caesar, CDP**
Key leaders: Marcia Welch, Genevieve Flores, Rev. Bill Eason

- The Metro Alliance, formed by the merger of the East Side Alliance and the Metropolitan Congregational Alliance, reaches outside the traditional inner-city areas to empower black, Hispanic and Anglo low- and moderate-income families throughout the San Antonio area.
- In 1990, the Metro Alliance turned around an effort to place extensive oil and gas storage facilities next to families and schools in a poor and minority area of San Antonio.
- Over the years, the Metro Alliance has won significant victories improving the infrastructure, drainage, police protection, housing, economic developments, voter participation and water supplies in San Antonio.

THE METROPOLITAN ORGANIZATION

202 North Loop West, Suite 221
Houston, Texas 77018
(713) 868-1429

Founded 1979
57 units, 60,000 families

Organizers: **Robert Rivera**, Elizabeth Valdez, Joe Higgs

Key leaders: Jan Wilbur, Juanita Mitchell, Ana Guerrero Cummings

- TMO organized to enable Houston-area residents to have a real voice in determining policies and making decisions that affect their lives; they believed

WHY I'M AN ORGANIZER

ROBERT RIVERA

TMO

"I Help People Build Power for Themselves"

I love politics. It is one of the reasons I became an organizer. But I'm not interested in becoming a politician or holding public office.

Although to do this work you have to understand power and to be empowered yourself, I don't do this work to get power for myself. I do this work because it gives me a chance to help people build power for themselves: power to change their neighborhoods, schools, communities.

The bottom line for me is that I enjoy my work and passionately believe that people, in particular poor people and people of color, should have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

When I was first starting out, I knew I wanted to do something to help people. I worked for VISTA and I even considered becoming a social worker, but I found that kind of work frustrating. I was disappointed at how little difference I was really making by providing social services. Although I could help people get food or shelter or a job interview, I was not giving people the power to make real changes in their own lives or in the system that was leaving so many people out.

In El Paso, Texas, I started the EPISO organization. The early days of EPISO were tumultuous. "Right-wing kooks," buoyed by the power brokers in the city, attacked everything we did to encourage the Mexican-American majority to participate in El Paso's political decisions.

At times, when they were calling us every insult in the book, when our efforts were blocked at every turn, and we all were getting discouraged, I felt that maybe organizing wasn't worth it. But what kept me focused in teaching people to build power was their spirit. They said, "This is my town; teach me how to have a say." If I can do that, I know that I have been successful.

Over the last several years, I have had to re-examine and rethink my reasons for doing this work. At first, I enjoyed the victories. I liked the fight and I liked winning. But now, my motivation comes from watching people develop and begin to gain some sense of power about their lives.

Recently, my father died of cancer. I sat many hours with him, talking to him about his own life. My father never completed the eighth grade and was bitterly frustrated at his own lack of accomplishment. He worked hard all his life, and I know he did the best he could, but his hopes and dreams were never realized because he did not have the opportunities to fulfill his potential.

My father's feelings at the end of his life ignited a realization in me. My romanticism about my work gave way to an increasingly rooted sense that organizing is about more than winning on issues—it is about developing people's potential to be more of what they think they can be.



that in a complex urban area such as Houston, the most viable strategy for justice was the development of a federation of groups representing all economic levels and all ethnic groups.

- TMO rehabilitated and constructed 23 residential units in Fifth Ward Houston for home ownership, the first successful effort of this kind in Houston.
- Leaders successfully forced the electric company to reduce its rates by \$40,000 by securing over 27,000 signatures in just 10 days.

PIMA COUNTY INTERFAITH COUNCIL

101 West 31st Street
Tucson, Arizona 85713
(602) 791-7774

Founded 1990
20 congregations, 6,000 families

Key leaders: Rev. Msgr. Arsenio Carrillo, Rev. Paul Buckwalter, Rev. Daniel McLaughlin

- Pima County Interfaith is working to develop an empowerment project to confront the issues of unemployment, education, housing, drug and substance abuse, and contaminated water in Tucson and Pima County.

QUEENS CITIZENS ORGANIZATION

87-04 88th Avenue
Woodhaven, New York 11421
(718) 849-0796

Founded 1976
33 units, 90,000 families

Organizers: Wade Goodwyn, Alberta Williams, Patricia Oettinger

Key leaders: Fr. John Amann, Nola Southerland, Rev. Edward Davis

- QCO, an interdenominational and multiracial organization, represents the working families of Queens.
- QCO leaders designed strategies that led to the passage of sweeping anti-arson legislation in Albany during a period when many New York City neigh-

Texas IAF leaders with Gov. Mark White in 1985 as he signs the indigent health care legislation they had worked for.



Memphis Blacks and Whites Together

On Feb. 12, 1989, 1,000 black and white Memphians spilled out of the Golden Leaf Baptist Church in North Memphis to kick off the SCISC organizing drive in Memphis and Shelby County. Representatives of 35 congregations, along with the bishops of the Episcopal and Roman Catholic dioceses and the national president of the Progressive Baptist Convention came to commit themselves to the most important organizing effort in Memphis since the civil rights movement.

Most significant for this racially polarized Southern city, half the congregations were white and half black. They represented nearly every neighborhood of Memphis, the wealthy, the middle class, the working class and the poor. Those who attended called the meeting the most significant black and white effort in the city's history.

The central message of the worship services was given by Dr. Alan V. Ragland of the New Fellowship Baptist Church, who asked the crowd, "Are you ready to work together?"

He challenged the congregation with the question, "Are you white members here tonight ready to hold black hands, even when they want to pull away?" The people responded, "Yes!" with resounding applause. "Then, are you black members here tonight ready to hold white hands, even when they want to pull away?" Again, the answer was a powerful "Yes!" with applause from the entire congregation.

When the worship ended, black and white Memphians went out to begin a new experiment in democracy in the heart of the Old South.

borhoods were being deliberately burned to the ground; they forced the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to create a \$2 million impact fund for communities surrounding the two Queens airports.

- QCO leaders are currently engaged in a battle to build 3,200 affordable Nehemiah Homes in Queens, and continuing their ongoing struggle against drugs and crack locations throughout Queens.

SHELBY COUNTY INTERFAITH

491 E. McLemore
Memphis, Tennessee 38106
(901) 946-3786

Founded 1989
50 congregations in 2 dioceses
37,000 families

Organizers: **Gerald Taylor**, Rev. Val Handwerken

Key leaders: Rev. Alan Ragland, Rev. Roy Stauffer, Fr. Tom Kirk

- Shelby County Interfaith is a broad-based, multiracial and locally self-determining interfaith organization that is dedicated to empowering poor working-class and middle-class families and communities in the greater Memphis area.
- With 1,000 black and white Memphians gathered at Golden Leaf Baptist Church on February 11, 1989, Shelby County Interfaith initiated its organizing drive in Memphis.
- Shelby County Interfaith conducted 435 house meetings over an eight-week period, involving nearly 5,000 people in developing its organizing agenda in Memphis-Shelby County.

SOUTH BRONX CHURCHES

230 Alexander Avenue
Bronx, New York 10454
(212) 402-3676

Founded 1987
43 congregations, 19,500 families and
6 public housing projects

Organizers: **James Drake**, Tony C. Aguilar, Maria Varona
Key leaders: Rev. John Heinemeier, Fr. Bert Bennett, Rev. John Collins

- SBC was organized to revitalize one of the most devastated and abandoned inner city communities in America.
- The Sign Up and Take Charge campaign took SBC into an encounter with more than half the adults in the South Bronx, collecting 103,000 signatures in 100 days.
- SBC focused on needed reform for Lincoln Hospital, resulting in an investigation by the state of New York that led to the enforcement of guidelines to correct abuses.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Los Angeles Office
P.O. Box 2197
General Mail Facility
Los Angeles, California 90052
(213) 731-8464

Founded 1978
35 units, 83,000 families

Organizers: George Givens, Anthony Massengale
Key leaders: Frances James, Rev. William Johnson, Grace Trejo

- SCOC was formed to address the problems in the largely black South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles. It now also has members in the Compton and Wilmington areas.
- SCOC helped develop an anti-crime legislative package and won passage of 12 out of 16 tough drug, gang and organized crime laws.
- In 1989, 4,000 SCOC leaders held a major assembly to launch a new initiative, Nehemiah West, an SCOC/UNO plan to build 500 homes to be owned by low-income families in South Central Los Angeles.



IAF rally to ban assault weapons in California. The four children at left lost their mother to a sniper's bullet.

IAF leader Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood of New York City.



UNITED NEIGHBORHOODS ORGANIZATION

3763 East 4th Street
Los Angeles, California 90063
(213) 266-0577

Founded 1976
16 units, 58,000 families

Organizer: **Larry Fondation**

Key leaders: Dr. Louis Negrete, Rosalinda Lugo, Leila Campos

- Although UNO's roots and base came out of predominantly Latino parishes and congregations in East Los Angeles, they have expanded into the communities of Whittier, Pico Rivera, Norwalk, Huntington Park and other southeast Los Angeles communities. It is now the largest, most powerful Latino organization in California.
- Within two years of its formation, UNO earned widespread recognition for reducing auto insurance rates by as much as 30% in East L.A. neighborhoods.
- UNO is working with the Los Angeles City Council and the county Board of Supervisors to develop and fund Community Youth Gang Services to address the serious problem of gang violence in Los Angeles.

VALLEY INTERFAITH

P.O. Box 1616
Weslaco, Texas 78596
(512) 565-6316

Founded 1983
39 congregations, 75,000 families

Organizers: **Christine Stephens CDP**; Timothy J. McCluskey; Consuelo Tovar DC; Joel Barrera

Key leaders: Javier Parra, Noeli Espinoza, Elvira Aguayo

- Valley Interfaith is a multi-religious organization founded to address the issues of concern to the residents of the poverty-stricken Lower Rio Grande Valley.
- In the 1989 legislative session, Valley Interfaith took the lead in conceiving, writing and passing state legislation that authorized the issuance of \$100 million to build water and sewer services for the *colonias* in the Valley, where thousands of families go without these basic services.
- Valley Interfaith was instrumental in passing 1984 legislation that resulted in \$127 million additional annual funding for the Valley for teachers' salaries, merit pay for teachers, classroom materials and resources.



Christine Stephens,
IAF national field
supervisor and Valley
Interfaith organizer.

Performer Without a Stage

A piece of advice:

When you are around Maria Varona, don't say things like "I've never tried that before," or "That won't work here," or "We're too old, so why should we even try."

Maria Varona is too busy for such talk. She is raising four teen-age sons. She is active in her local parish. She is studying for the GED, taking a writing course, and preparing to get her first driver's license. She is also settling into a quieter and more secure apartment. And she is a full-time organizer on the staff of South Bronx Churches.

In the past, as a tenant on public assistance, she fought for the most basic kind of security for her and other families in the building: a door that closed and locked. Then she struggled to get the local public school to provide kindergarten and special education programs for the niece she was also raising at the time and for other powerless children of their South Bronx neighborhood.

On Feb. 15, 1987, she attended the first public action of South Bronx Churches in St. Jerome's Church on Alexander Avenue. On a bitter cold afternoon, in a poorly heated building, Varona found herself among more than 2,000 other South Bronx residents.

They were people like her. Black and Hispanic mostly. Poor and near-poor. Their faces bore the lines and scars of struggle—the struggle to survive, the struggle to raise children in a hostile place, the struggle to keep their churches afloat, the struggle to begin to rebuild their community.

Varona heard SBC leader Marion Woods say, "When the Bronx was the Bronx, we could raise our families in dignity . . ." Varona never knew that Bronx. But she began to think that she might be part of another Bronx, a new Bronx, a Bronx of power and change and hope. Not long afterward, Varona decided to try to become a leader in SBC.

Three years later, she has become an organizer, whose main job it is to find, recruit and train other leaders like herself—performers without a stage, players without a field, creative writers without the tools of their trade, leaders looking for a place and a way to display their many talents.



VALLEY INTERFAITH PROJECT

P.O. Box 21024
Phoenix, Arizona 85036
(602) 254-9611

Founded 1990
38 units, 57,000 families

Organizer: **Peter Fears**

Key leaders: Rabbi Maynard Bell, Susan Ringler, Msgr. Edward Ryle

- Valley Interfaith Project is an organizing effort of concerned residents determined to build a broad-based organization to address the social and economic issues confronting Phoenix.
- Issues the fledgling organization faces are zoning and land use, utilities policy, attacks on family and community integrity, housing, health care, education and affordable insurance.

VALLEY ORGANIZED IN COMMUNITY EFFORTS

1525 Glenoaks Boulevard
San Fernando, California 91340
(818) 365-1980

Founded 1988
18 congregations, 33,000 families

Organizers: **Carmel Somers, RSC**, Rev. Curtis Page

Key leaders: Flo Weber, Marsha Novak, Fr. David Ulrich

- VOICE was formed to organize the broadly diverse residents of the San Fernando Valley. Catholic, Protestant and Jewish congregations have come together to work on issues facing this sprawling area.
- VOICE leaders determined that a major problem in the Valley was police response time, and they successfully led the fight to force the City Council to increase the police force by 514 officers.



Young Nehemiah resident sits on the front steps of her new home.



INDUSTRIAL AREAS FOUNDATION

www.industrialareasfoundation.org