

*Christians
supporting
community
organizing*

A new voice for change among

EVANGELICAL,
HOLINESS *and*
PENTECOSTAL
CHRISTIANS

Center for Religion and Civic Culture
University of Southern California

"The individual must be made intensely aware of the importance to his self-interests of his citizenship rights and responsibilities so that he will be moved to action." — Saul D. Alinsky

At their best, community organizations—"people's organizations" in Alinsky's terms—are the highest expressions of democratic principles and are vehicles for profound social change. They involve a broad base of people representing many ethnic groups, religions, ages, careers, and income levels while they energize citizens and reconnect them with the political process.

Community organizations contribute to civic life by fostering relationships between people from diverse backgrounds, enabling them to work together to address a myriad of issues that affect their neighborhoods and their cities, including education, affordable housing, fair banking practices, crime prevention, and more.

Community organizing is a method to inspire citizens to act. It is a form of action that addresses many negative cultural, social, political, and economic trends in the United States, including widespread despair about the democratic process, rampant "me first" individualism, and a culture of consumerism.

Community organizations evolve differently as local people make decisions about the direction and goals of their cities.

Fundamentally, community organizing addresses the issue of power. "Power," says Mike Miller, the executive director of the ORGANIZE Training Center, "is the ability to act effectively in the world." Many individuals and congregations feel impotent

in addressing problems of crime, affordable housing, lack of health care, unemployment and under-employment, poor schools, and related concerns. They may also feel inadequately represented in the political system and increasingly alienated from our major institutions. Community organizing enables them to develop powerful broad-based groups that act to hold government and corporate structures accountable. Once these organizations are established, the collective action of empowered citizens is a force to be recognized.

Modern community organizing originated in the late 1930s in Chicago. Saul Alinsky, founder of the Industrial Areas Foundation, worked to organize the poor and the workers in the Back of the Yards, an area made famous by Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Alinsky succeeded in coalescing the ethnic parishes of the Catholic church community, organized labor, voluntary associations, and neighborhood residents into a single organization called the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. The process of organizing these disparate groups into a unified force became the basis for modern community organizing and, over time, churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions became focal points for community organizers and their national and regional networks. As the labor movement's interest in a broad social and economic justice agenda waned, Alinsky's focus shifted to the religious community.

For decades, segments of the Catholic Church and mainline Protestant churches have been involved in community organizing

and in fact, many churches with these faith perspectives have helped to develop and disseminate the ideas of community organizing. Some denominations, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, have highly developed curricula on social justice that include strategies for organizing communities. In addition, independent publications such as the *National Catholic Reporter*, *The Other Side*, and *Sojourners* highlight the role of churches in community organizations across the country.

In the past sixty years, theologically "conservative" Christians have not participated in community organizing to a significant degree, with the exception of some African American churches. The Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Holiness traditions represent the fastest growing churches in American Christendom, but they are conspicuously absent from this social movement. One of the primary reasons is that the theologically conservative elements of the church have focused their attention on individual salvation and personal faith, and have not emphasized the need for social action of this kind.

Another factor has been the view that political involvement and the use of power are worldly concerns and are therefore inevitably corrupting influences with no redeeming virtues.

Christians Supporting Community Organizing

Christians Supporting Community Organizing (CSCO) is a bold national attempt to change the relationship between the theologically conservative elements of the Protestant church and community organizing. In the past, major community organizing networks have not been successful in recruiting and engaging these Christians and little has been done to alter this fact. CSCO represents a historically unique attempt to challenge decades of thought, theology, and action that have predisposed Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Holiness, and other theologically conservative Christians to avoid political engagement, except on a narrow range of issues related to personal behavior (e.g. abortion, promiscuous sex, divorce, etc.). Success for CSCO would entail a dramatic shift in the opinions, perceptions, and actions of their target group.

Unlike many community organizers, CSCO members understand the language, traditions, and viewpoints of the theologically conservative parts of the church because they are from these faith perspectives. CSCO's purpose is to get these churches to become part of the community organizing movement. CSCO seeks to accomplish its purpose through local members who are

organized in branches that encompass metropolitan areas. Branch members conduct individual meetings, workshops, and other educational activities aimed at pastors and lay leaders of their faith perspectives. Rather than creating its own network of community organizations, CSCO works to establish a base of relationships through which it promotes the ideas of congregation-based community organizing and encourages its churches to join existing congregation-based community organizations that are already in place in their communities. This is a unique effort because the individuals who participate in CSCO become the "evangelists" to their churches, denominations, ministerial alliances, and peers.

"Congregation-based community organizing," according to CSCO's proclamation, "is a process that enlists churches in faith and value-based action to address the economic, political, social, and cultural conditions which individuals and families alone lack the power to change." According to Marilyn Stranske, national organizer and one of CSCO's founders, "organizing is not getting people into partisan politics." Instead, organizing is a process that helps Christians reflect and act on issues of public life, such as justice in politics and economics, in light of their faith. CSCO's task is to convince Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Holiness churches that congregation-based community organizing has a biblical basis, that it is within their historical traditions, and finally, that it is a valuable use of limited time and resources.

According to CSCO, many of the theo-

logically conservative churches have not participated in, or taken stands on, issues of social concern during most of the twentieth century. During the 1920s, many of these churches assumed a posture of withdrawal from justice issues. They increasingly adopted cultural norms of consumerism and individualism. One of the primary reasons for the lack of involvement in social justice in the twentieth century, according to CSCO's principal theologian Robert Linthicum, is "a belief that the job of the church is to save souls and to save individuals, and little else." Some Evangelicals compare social action to "rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic when it is going down," Linthicum adds. Others perform acts of social service and have become engaged in church-based community development, but works of justice that involve challenging existing economic and political structures have fallen into disrepute or are ignored.

The end result has been a dichotomy between providing relief services and addressing the underlying systemic causes of social problems. Social service ministries—soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and the like—are common to these elements of the church. Such services are consistent with the church's call to minister to individuals, especially those with unmet basic needs. Challenging the systemic evil that causes social ills, however, is not viewed as within the mission to "make disciples of all nations."

Despite present trends, social reform and collective action are not new concepts within the history of these traditions. One

of CSCO's goals is to reconnect the churches with their histories of civic participation and social reform. In the nineteenth century, there are many examples of the extraordinary role played by Evangelicals in social movements. Charles G. Finney, the renowned evangelist who sparked the Second Great Awakening in the eastern and midwestern United States, was also an outspoken proponent of the abolitionist movement. In fact, he was one of the central leaders at Oberlin College when it became one of the northern stops for the Underground Railroad. Evangelicals and other Christians were also widely active in the women's suffrage movement, the creation of orphanages, labor rights for children and adults, and other important efforts to transform society.

Pentecostals also have a history of what Mike Miller, head of CSCO's California Project for Evangelicals and Pentecostals, calls "counter-cultural" activities. In 1906, the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles sparked a worldwide Pentecostal movement that changed the course of Christian history and is still burgeoning in the United States, Latin America, and other parts of the world. The multiethnic congregation on Azusa Street was under the leadership of the Rev. William Seymour, an African American pastor. At a recent CSCO workshop, Murray Dempster, dean of "conservative" Vanguard University, an Assemblies of God institution, summed up this history by saying, "revivalism is at the heart of social transformation."

History of CSCO

CSCO is built and organized around the development of relationships. In fact, CSCO's originators developed their strategy for influencing these elements of the church as they developed relationships among themselves and worked on common interests. In 1990, Marilyn Stranske attended a workshop on community organizing led by Mike Miller and co-sponsored by World Vision International's Office of Urban Advance—then co-directed by Dr. Robert Linthicum—and the Bresee Institute. There, Stranske had what she calls another "conversion experience." She realized that her theology and worldview had lacked an adequate understanding of institutions and the use and abuse of power. She began to consider how congregation-based community organizing might address these lacks, not only within herself, but also within the parts of the church in which she had spent her life. Stranske had a long history of inner city church and parachurch work; several experiences in this work created confusion and pain. She doubted whether the work that she was doing was actually empowering the poor. After the workshop, she began a period of directed study with Miller, pursued an internship in congregation-based organizing in Denver, and traveled to Asia with

Linthicum as part of a delegation examining World Vision-supported congregation-based community organizing. Through this process Ms. Stranske discerned that she had a "call" to connect Evangelical, Holiness, and Pentecostal churches to community organizing.

A respected leader in the Evangelical church, Stranske recruited several people to become the initiators of a feasibility study to determine if leaders within her tradition might become interested in congregation-based community organizing as a faithful form of ministry. The initiating group gave her the entrée to many other denominational leaders. The group included Dr. Vernon Grounds, chancellor and president emeritus of Denver Theological Seminary; Dr. Robert Linthicum, then co-director of World Vision International's Office of Urban Advance, and now the director of Partners in Urban Transformation; Rev. Kenneth Luscombe, then co-director of the Office of Urban Advance for World Vision International; and Dr. Alice Mathews, the producer of the Radio Bible Class and then dean of the Seminary of the East, Philadelphia Campus. Soon this study phase became known as "The No Name Project." When sufficient interest and commitment had been determined, The No Name Project dissolved into a new individual membership organization called Christians Supporting Community Organizing.

Stranske developed relationships across the country with denominational executives, pastors, and other church leaders through

individual meetings. At these meetings, she explained the reasons that compelled her to engage in the feasibility study and explored their level of knowledge and interest in community organizing. She also spent a large portion of the meeting listening to their perspectives, concerns, and yearnings for their churches and denominations. Many leaders were concerned about the growing privatization of faith. They expressed ambivalence about the rise of economic prosperity in their congregations and the resulting growth in consumerism and “watch out for number one” individualism. Others were worried about a theology that spiritualized some aspects of life and ignored social evils, both individual and corporate. They lamented the loss of community and the growing divisiveness among different groups in American society. These individual meetings allowed Stranske to identify interest in congregation-based community organizing and served as a feasibility study leading to the creation of CSCO. To date, Ms. Stranske has conducted over 400 of these individual meetings.

As a result of the interest in community organizing, The No Name Project held its first four-day workshop in July 1994 in Colorado. An initial group of committed leaders developed from the workshop. There, Mike Miller conducted sessions on congregation-based community organizing principles, strategies, and techniques and Linthicum presented the biblical theology component. In 1995, the second and third workshops took place in New Jersey and California. At each of these, an additional

number of leaders decided to commit themselves to the effort. A four-day workshop was held in Atlanta in 1996. In 1997, Christians Supporting Community Organizing was officially founded. Since the founding, the organization has held ten half-day to four-day workshops.

Current Status

CSCO's structure is based on principles from community organizing and is unlike many traditional nonprofits. It has a national leadership team, a small staff, consultants, and a national membership. The organization seeks to develop and empower local leaders rather than centralizing power in staff or in a national board of directors. Therefore, its strategy is to develop highly committed local bodies called branches. Members are committed to a high level of participation and sign a covenant to engage in relational one-to-one visits with pastors and other leaders, deepen their knowledge of organizing and its biblical roots, make a financial contribution to CSCO equal to one percent of their annual income, participate in branch meetings, and otherwise build the work of CSCO.

The national CSCO effort has progressed, but more slowly than anticipated; so far CSCO is active in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Rochester, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Spokane, and San Diego. In all, there are thirty-six members and ten endorsers across the country, ranging from lay persons to bishops. The ten endorsers pay yearly dues and also lend their names in support of the project, but do not make the full membership commitment. Though the membership and endorsers are small in

number, the commitment level is high and each person is a leader in a church or denomination.

In keeping with the notion of a member driven organization, CSCO has a small number of staff. Marilyn Stranske is the national organizer; Mike Miller is the long-term consultant. Stranske is based in Denver and conducts individual meetings with denominational executives, pastors, and lay leaders, and has one part-time administrative staff person in her office. Miller is the expert on philosophy, strategy and methods of organizing and has almost 40 years of experience in the field. He is the executive director of ORGANIZE Training Center in San Francisco and directs the CSCO-related California Project for Evangelicals and Pentecostals. The rationale behind this structure is to encourage local ownership by branch members and to minimize reliance on staff direction. A reality of the CSCO effort is that one full-time organizer with part-time support staff based in Colorado and one consultant on organizing, however experienced, cannot undertake the massive task of spreading the CSCO message alone. Therefore, the practical implementation of a national program must inherently rely on local participation and ownership.

The goal is to create local metropolitan area branches of between seven and fifteen people. The branches are responsible for recruiting and eventually providing some of the training. Regular branch meetings are held to discuss organizing projects, to receive theological training, and to keep the network

active. The objective of the recruiting done by branch members is to lead churches to join existing congregation-based community organizations.

In California, CSCO's work is done under the auspices of the California Project with Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Currently, the Los Angeles branch is the most developed in CSCO. It has sixteen members and is moving ahead as envisioned in the original plan. Members are meeting with pastors and other leaders and spreading their excitement about congregation-based community organizing. In June 1999, the Los Angeles branch sponsored a one-day workshop that had forty attendees representing several denominations and ethnic components of the church. Already, pastors from Los Angeles and Orange counties have attended meetings with organizing networks in their respective areas.

Theology

One of the major contributions that CSCO brings to the Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Holiness churches is its theological engagement. Though the established community organizing networks have done some theological work, it has not been comprehensive or systematic in its design and has not been built on a firm biblical foundation. Without a solid biblical basis for organizing, the task of integrating the CSCO-targeted churches would be impossible. Dr. Robert Linthicum is CSCO's primary teacher on the biblical basis for community organizing. He has impressive credentials and has practical experience in urban areas as a pastor, organizer, and as the co-director of the Office of Urban Advance, World Vision International. He is currently executive director of Partners in Urban Transformation. He holds a doctorate from San Francisco Theological Seminary and masters degrees from McCormick Theological Seminary and Wheaton Graduate School of Theology.

Linthicum's theology has the unmistakable imprint of his many years of urban experience in the United States and abroad. In his workshop presentations, Linthicum tells the story of his own transformation regarding community organizing and his extremely painful introduction to the realities of sys-

temic evil. During the late 1950s, he was a college student engaged in ministry in a government housing project in Chicago, where the "vertical slums" were terrifying places for children and adults alike. Linthicum was interacting with the African American teenagers who lived in the housing projects when he met a fourteen year old girl whom he calls Eva. Eva came to him one day, distraught. She said that a large gang was pressuring her to become a prostitute for men from the suburbs and she asked him for help. His response was consistent with his experience and theology at the time. He encouraged her to resist temptation and that if she did, that evil would flee from her.

When he returned from summer vacation, Linthicum found that Eva had become a prostitute. She said that the gang threatened to harm her father and brother if Eva did not succumb. First, her father was badly beaten. Next her brother was beaten and was hospitalized. Finally, the gang threatened to rape her mother and she knew that they were serious so she succumbed. Linthicum was deeply outraged and asked why she had not gone to the police for help. Moments later, his view of the world was forever altered when Eva revealed that the local police were the "gang members" threatening her and forcing her to become a prostitute. Stunned, Linthicum had discovered that his theology had not prepared him for the possibility of such deeply rooted systemic evil in an institution established to uphold justice. Individual faith was not enough to address rampant police corruption. This experience

and others launched him on the path of discovery that eventually led him to community organizing.

One of the foundations of Linthicum's theology is the "shalom community." He states that every human society is built upon three basic systems: a foundation of generally accepted values (what Linthicum calls the "religious system"), a political system ordering that society, and an economic system that generates and distributes goods and services. Each of the systems is intertwined with the other. In the ideal society intended by God, Linthicum teaches, the shalom community is built upon a religious system committed "to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands." Thus, in a shalom community the primary task of people would be building a community (that is, loving and being committed to God and to each other). Such a relational culture, Linthicum adds, will build a politics of justice and an economic system which would be equitable in the distribution of wealth so that there were "no poor among them." There would be no great disparity of wealth or income. In a fallen society, on the other hand, an economics of greed influences and corrupts the political system so that it acts oppressively and, finally, coopts the religious system to help the oppressors maintain their power by rationalizing the oppression as if it were God's, or that society's, highest intent.

Linthicum believes that God's people are called to change society if the systems are not functioning as God intended them. He

stresses that the Bible provides communal direction for churches and nations, not merely for individuals, and he argues that discipleship includes seeking economic justice, confronting oppression, and restoring communities to health. This biblical theology, presented at the workshops, is clearly revelatory for the participants and is an important factor in their decisions to join CSCO.

Workshops

For I'm building a people of power

For I'm building a people of power

And I'm making a people of praise

That will move through this land by my Spirit

And will glorify my precious Name.

Build your church, Lord.

Make us strong, Lord.

Join our hearts, Lord, through your Son.

Make us one, Lord, in your body,

In the kingdom of your Son.

—Workshop "theme song" introduced by Robert Linthicum as taught to him by a community organization with which he worked in India.

In addition to meetings with individuals, workshops are the primary places where the CSCO effort presents its challenging material and encourages involvement. At the October 1998 workshop, Marilyn Stranske introduced the four-day meeting by inviting each participant to "interact, think, argue, pray," and "if you feel so led, join us." Workshops are typically four-day sessions that provide an introduction to principles of community organizing and offer the theological rationale for churches to participate. As in other community organizing settings, personal histories play an important role. Miller, Linthicum, Stranske, and other CSCO members speak passionately about how community organizing has radically changed their lives and how

it has altered the very futures of churches and neighborhoods. Stories are important for organizers because they connect people to each other and break down walls of alienation that exist between people because of individualism, consumerism, and the privatization of faith.

In many ways, the workshops represent a marriage between the cultures of community organizing and churches. There are prayers, Bible studies, hymns, daily sermons, and worship services. References to Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit are prevalent. At the same time, the men and women at the workshops are there to ask tough questions about, to learn about, and to make decisions about congregation-based community organizing and how it might fit into their ministries.

Throughout the workshops, listening is one of the key concepts. Linthicum often cites Exodus 2:23-25, a passage that describes God hearing the "groaning" of the Hebrew people who are slaves in Egypt at the time. The point is that God heard and responded to the people even though the text gives no indication that their groans were directed to God. This theme of listening for the groans is restated in numerous ways throughout the workshops with the goal of helping pastors and other Christian leaders to identify the needs of their congregations, neighborhoods, and peer groups.

Mike Miller, a community organizer with almost 40 years of community organizing and civil rights work, provides most of the theoretical and practical experiences with community organizing. In one role-playing

exercise, Miller takes on the persona of "Mr. Obstruction," a manager of a housing project. The participants plan a meeting with Mr. Obstruction to negotiate with him about a series of problems they are having in their buildings. They plan the meeting, but Miller plays a shrewd man who usurps the meeting, stalls the process, and frustrates the community representatives. After the exercise, he leads the debriefing and employs the Socratic method to help people understand the strategies employed by Mr. Obstruction. Later, he leads a session on more effective ways to conduct meetings with decision-makers. Miller also trains the participants in community organizing tools, such as individual meetings.

The workshops employ many types of exercises to engage the participants. One of the most effective exercises is the use of family groups. During the first evening session, the participants choose to join a fictional family group living in the typical American urban/suburban population center, Laodicea. The Washington, Brown, Chan, Diaz, and Strickland families are residents of the metropolitan area and each family has a set of issues that concern them. The family groups are an effective way to apply what has been learned from the theoretical sessions. For example, after a discussion about the "groans" of the people, the family groups discuss the issues of their families and the metropolitan area of Laodicea. All of the other small group activities during the workshop take place in these family groups, so that by the end of the workshop there is a strong bond

between the members and they have learned to work well as a unit. Four-day workshops conclude with organizational meetings to which participants are invited if they wish to explore membership in CSCO.

In interviews with participants from the October 1998 workshop, there were many positive responses to the CSCO presentation. Steve Smith, an Assemblies of God pastor and professor at Vanguard University, said that in order to be effective, urban ministry “is going to take more than spiritual ministry or preaching.” Before the workshop he knew about community development, but the workshop helped to clarify community organizing. Smith added that he would seek to explore the local organizing efforts with his congregation in Inglewood and also include concepts from the workshop in his university teaching.

Other participants stated that the theological presentations gave them new insights into the role of Christians and their responsibility to work for change, especially when unjust systems are in operation. Andrew Kwong, a pharmacist and chair of the Social Concern committee of the First Evangelical Church Association, was impressed by the systematic analysis of the biblical teaching related to justice issues. Kwong said that at the workshop, Linthicum “adjusted our eye-glasses [so] now I see with more clarity” regarding God’s perspective on urban issues. Several participants discussed profound changes and new insights resulting from the teaching on theology.

Conclusion

Christians Supporting Community Organizing has undertaken a monumental task. The organization has the complex mission of explaining community organizing and establishing a new relational network in the theologically conservative parts of the Protestant church. Moreover, it must articulate a theology that convinces pastors, denominational executives, and lay leaders that this particular way to engage society has a biblical basis. Finally, it must shepherd pastors and their churches to engage in serious exploration of membership in local congregation-based community organizations in their areas.

One of the most promising developments for the movement is the relationship between CSCO, the Assemblies of God, and the Church of God in Christ. Two key leaders from these denominations have joined CSCO’s work. Bishop George McKinney is an active board member of the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO), an organizing network that is active in many cities in California. He is a strong advocate for community organizing and has brought his congregation into the PICO fold. McKinney administers the Second Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ, one of the largest areas of the COGIC

denomination, and is thus a very influential CSCO member. Another key leader is David Gable, the assistant superintendent of the Assemblies of God’s Southern California District, and a leading proponent of Christians becoming involved in the organizing process. He actively encourages his pastors, especially urban pastors, to participate in community organizing.

During March of 2000, the two denominations are hosting a joint workshop on congregation-based community organizing. The workshop will gather respected pastors and leaders from the denominations and CSCO will organize and present the workshop. This is obviously a major opportunity to influence the denominations. It is also a tangible step toward racial reconciliation, linking pastors and lay leaders from the predominantly white assemblies of God with their counterparts of the predominantly African American Church of God in Christ.

Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Holiness churches have demonstrated their ability to organize around private issues of faith. CSCO inspires them to consider a broader vision of the Christian life. Christians have a call to confront evil in its structural forms and to address issues that are beyond the scope of individual behavior and personal change. CSCO reminds Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and Holiness tradition denominations of their Old Testament heritage of justice, the New Testament’s vision of the kingdom of God, and of their nineteenth century predecessors whose work to transform their society was based in their faith. The Center for Religion

and Civic Culture considers CSCO’s work to be an important contribution to a faithful rendering of the gospel message.

APPENDIX

Community, congregation, and broad-based organizing networks in California

The **Gamaliel Foundation** grew out of an effort to support an African American organization on Chicago's West Side. In 1986, the foundation was reorganized to focus on congregation-based community organizing. Today, its network consists of staff and over 600 clergy across the country. In Oakland, Gamaliel is active through the Oakland Coalition of Congregations. For additional information, call the Gamaliel Foundation national office in Chicago at (312) 357-2639.

The **Industrial Areas Foundation** (IAF) is the largest organizing network engaged with congregation-based community organizing in metropolitan areas across the country. IAF, founded by Saul Alinsky in 1940, is also the largest and oldest of the community organizing networks. In California, IAF is active in the following areas:

- ▶ *Los Angeles Metropolitan area:* Southern California Organizing Committee, East Valleys Organization, Valley Organized in Community Efforts and United Neighborhoods Organization.
- ▶ *San Francisco and San Mateo Counties:* Bay Area Organizing Committee,
- ▶ *Sonoma and Napa Counties:* Sonoma-Napa Action Project
- ▶ *Sacramento and Solano Counties:* Sacramento Valley Organizing Community/Solano County Organizing Community
- ▶ *Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties:* Monterey Bay Organizing Project

For additional information call the Industrial Areas Foundation-West Coast Vision office in San Francisco at (415) 447-0774.

The **Pacific Institute for Community Organization** (PICO) was founded by two Jesuit priests in 1972. Today PICO has affiliate community organizations in over 70 cities around the United States. PICO is active through local organizations in the following areas:

- ▶ *Sacramento:* Sacramento Area Churches Together
- ▶ *Stockton:* People and Congregations Together
- ▶ *Oakland:* Oakland Community Organizations
- ▶ *Hayward:* South Alameda County Interfaith Sponsoring Committee
- ▶ *San Francisco:* San Francisco Organizing Project
- ▶ *San Carlos:* Peninsula Interfaith Action
- ▶ *San Jose:* People Acting in Community Together
- ▶ *Anaheim:* Orange County Congregation-Community Organization
- ▶ *San Bernardino and Riverside Counties:* Inland Congregations United for Change
- ▶ *San Diego:* San Diego Organizing Project
- ▶ *Contra Costa County:* Contra Costa County Interfaith Sponsoring Committee
- ▶ *Fresno:* Fresno Area Congregations Together
- ▶ *Long Beach:* Greater Long Beach Interfaith Sponsoring Committee

For additional information call (510) 655-2801.

The **Regional Council of Neighborhood Organizations** (RCNO) is a national network with organizations in 16 cities. During the past eight years, several thousand clergy, lay and community leaders have participated in RCNO workshops or training sessions. In Los Angeles, RCNO works with small and medium size African American churches through the Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM). For additional information call (323) 846-2513.

Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC)

During the period March 1997 to July 1999, the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California researched and documented the activities of the California Project for Evangelicals and Pentecostals, in cooperation with the ORGANIZE Training Center. The Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) is an organized research unit of the University of Southern California. Its mission is to research the civic role of religion and to interpret faith-based activities to an audience that includes scholars, religious institutions, funders, public officials, and the media. Research was funded by a subgrant from ORGANIZE Training Center through funding from The James Irvine Foundation. This report is a summary of our findings during the approximately two years of research.

CRCC conducted its research by observing and documenting workshops, interviewing participants formally and informally, and conversing with California Project leaders. Professor Donald Miller, CRCC's executive director, and Orlando Love, research assistant, attended a four-day workshop held in Santa Cruz in September 1997. Miller, Love, and Timothy Sato attended a workshop in Los Angeles in October 1998. At each event, researchers took detailed field notes of the content and activities they observed.

CRCC interviewed 27 participants in the California Project. These included members, non-members, denominational execu-

tives, workshop participants, and those in the process of determining their relationship with the effort. CRCC also interviewed individuals who participated in the workshops and decided not to join as members.

The ethnic and gender composition of the interviewees is summarized in the following table:

<i>African Am.</i>		<i>Asian</i>		<i>Anglo</i>		<i>Latino</i>		<i>Other</i>		<i>Total</i>	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
4	1	4	0	13	0	3	2	0	0	22	5
18.5%	15%	48%	18.5%	0%	100%						

This ethnic and gender balance in the interview pool is very similar to the California Project's statistics based on its California contact list from November 1998.

CRCC also conducted interviews with the three central figures in the CSCO/ ORGANIZE Training Center effort, Marilyn Stranske, Mike Miller, and Bob Linthicum. Ms. Stranske is the lead organizer of the effort and is the Denver-based CSCO's only full-time staff person. Mr. Miller provides training in community organizing and is a highly experienced community organizer. He serves as a consultant to CSCO and is the executive director of ORGANIZE Training Center. Dr. Linthicum provides the majority of the theological training for CSCO and is the executive director of Partners in Urban Transformation and the author of many books on urban issues.

For additional information on Christians Supporting Community Organizing and the California Project with Evangelicals and Pentecostals, please contact:

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*In partnership with
The James Irvine Foundation*