

**The Power of the People:  
Faith-Based Community Coalitions and IAF Organizing  
for Living Wages in Spokane and Washington, DC**

**by**

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## I. Introduction

*“Right here we have a circle representing the world as it is - and over here we have a circle where we can try to picture the world as it should be. What do we envision as part of the world as it should be?”*

This question asked by Lottie Sneed, an organizer for the Washington Interfaith Network at a leadership training workshop in 2002, provides a glimpse of the Industrial Areas Foundation model of community organizing. How do you, as an individual and member of the community, envision the world as it *should* be? Better schools, safer neighborhoods, and higher paying jobs are common answers to this question. Then comes the question with a catch – what are *you* going to do about it? Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) community organizations work to organize and empower community members through preexisting, primarily faith-based, institutions to achieve their self-determined goals in their cities and neighborhoods. The IAF groups encourage members to be politically active, participate in rallies and large actions, and constantly identify new leaders and partnerships within their communities to shift power relations within the city. Membership in faith-based community organizing groups is growing, with many achieving substantial success in cleaning up public schools, establishing affordable housing, and to an increasing degree, addressing the need for living wage jobs.

Faith-based community organizations may seem an unlikely force behind campaigns for living wages. What can a group of churches do to change things? The founder of the Industrial Areas foundation, Saul Alinsky, saw the resource potential of an institution with preestablished membership, networks of communication, and financial assets. In the Civil Rights Movement, churches in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference served as a powerful organizing force for social change. While organizing the United Farm Workers, organizer Cesar Chavez heavily

utilized religious imagery to both invigorate union membership as well as gain support from churches around the country. A unique component of faith-based organizing groups can be a deep moral, spiritual, and ethical impetus for social justice grounded in their religious traditions and community consciousness. It was not until the 1970s when IAF would seek to fully engage this component and seek long-term relationships with churches and other religious institutions.

Faith-based community organizing holds specific organizational strengths and tools to foster sustainable citizen political action by focusing on campaigns for a living wage. A crucial partner in community living wage campaigns are labor unions, who at this historical moment are in need of seeking out innovative, inclusive, and outreaching methods of organizing. The modern labor movement faces significant barriers for organizing the working class in the United States. Labor's decline as a force in US society is widely recognized, made more visible by the dramatic flight of industry to capitalize on lower wages in underdeveloped nations over the past two decades. This "industrial restructuring and the growth of subcontracting to small businesses that have never been organized by industrial unions" has resulted in the rapid expansion in the number of low-wage jobs and decline in union membership (Ness 14).

US union membership has moved in a downward spiral from its height of 35% of the labor force in the 1950s to an all-time low of around 13% in the 1990s (Ness17). With only 13.5% of the labor force unionized in 2001, the low-wage labor economy is a pressing concern in the labor movement as well as in many local communities (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Traditional union models of workplace organizing utilizing established "institutional arrangements covering large segments of industry" are less likely to succeed in organizing the workers in these new low-wage sectors. In his study of the growing role of central labor

councils in reviving American unionism, Immanuel Ness comments on the irony that “the growth in the global economy and capital mobility increases the relevance of metropolitan and community-organizing strategies” (14). As the flight of American industry overseas continues, leaving displaced workers feeling powerless, more local communities recognize the need to address power relationships in their own cities. Local living wage campaigns initiated by coalitions of faith-based community organizations and unions offer a unique opportunity to mobilize working class communities, potentially contributing to a revival of union membership as well as a diversification of faith-based community organization members.

Though there is not wide consensus regarding the definition of a true “living wage”, working models of city living wage ordinances have passed in over 50 cities. The living wage ordinances generally require all city employees to receive a wage that would bring a worker with a family of four up to the federal poverty line. The federal poverty line, set by poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines that are updated annually for price changes using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, is markedly higher than the federal minimum wage. City ordinances range from setting specific hourly wages to more progressive measures, requiring wages that meet 130% of the poverty line and specific benefits. Living wage ordinances exist in a diverse set of cities, from wealthier Madison, Wisconsin, to poorer Detroit, Michigan, and have even passed in seven counties and at Harvard University (Ness 141). The first living wage ordinance in the country was passed in Baltimore in 1994, resulting from the combined efforts of an IAF coalition and the American Federation of State and Municipal Employees union.

IAF organizing aims to be broad-based and multi-issue in a specific effort to make their organizations powerful, sustainable community networks mobilized for social change. The theoretical framework of resource mobilization is well suited for an analysis of the IAF model of organizing. Resource mobilization theory, developed by Mayer Zald and John McCarthy, possesses roots in social movement theory and agrees that social movements arise as “deliberate conscious efforts to bring about change that are rooted in a dissatisfaction in the status quo” (Rupp and Taylor 193). Social movements have been analyzed throughout history as having distinct stages, parallel to life history, including formation, growth, success or failure, and continuance or decline. Resource mobilization theory advances traditional social movement theory in its understanding that discontent with the status quo is not the sole or even central factor in movement organization, but it is the “amount of social resources available to them that makes it possible to launch an organized demand for change” (Rupp and Taylor 194). Resource mobilization theory also takes into account political and social environment, which can serve to inhibit or promote collective behavior, and suggests that there are particular periods during which a group’s actions will be more or less likely to be supported or resisted, and therefore, meet with success or failure.

This theoretical framework is particularly suited to the study of the organizing model of IAF, which builds from preexisting organizations and capitalizes on prior group resources and solidarity for the basis of its mobilizing power. Aldon Morris, in his study of black church communities in the Civil Rights Movement, calls attention to the limitations of resource mobilization theory in capturing the “cultural factors such as religious beliefs, music, and sermons” that were also crucial to the development of the movement (282). Women’s

Movement scholar, Barbara Ryan, emphasizes the lack of resource mobilization's perspective of the "incorporation of ideology and symbolism in the mobilization and commitment process" (Ryan 4). The Women's Movement and Civil Rights Movement provide important illustration of culture and identity as components in issue and movement framing that is also present in the faith-based nature of IAF coalitions. While religious identity and symbolism are elements of the IAF faith-based model of organizing, this study will particularly explore the manner in which they contribute to the resource development and sustainability of a community organization.

To address the resource potential of IAF faith-based community coalitions to execute living wage campaigns, I explore the development, identity, and resources of the Spokane Alliance, based in Spokane, Washington, and the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) in the District of Columbia. I conducted ten personal interviews between the two organizations, and regularly attended WIN organizational events, including monthly meetings, a leadership training, and an accountability action. The personal interviews and participant observation, explained in greater detail in Appendix I, greatly directed further research for this thesis, informed the organizational histories, and provided invaluable perspectives on barriers and benefits of union participation in faith-based community organizing.

To understand the state of modern community organizing in America, it is necessary to understand its history and the philosophies and influences of its founders. Therefore, in this thesis I will look at the history of American community organizing in chapter one, focusing on the tactics and strategies of Saul Alinsky in the late 1930s and 1940s in his efforts to assist a Congress of Industrial Organizations union organizing effort in the Chicago packinghouses. From this first example of the community organizing style, coordinating efforts between

community members and unions, we possess a model from which to build. This specific effort with the CIO resulted in Alinsky's formation of the Industrial Areas Foundation community organizing style.

In chapter two, I explore the developments in the Industrial Areas Foundation style that reoriented its method to faith-based organizing, with which it has enjoyed considerable success. Ernesto Cortez and the Texas IAF organization, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), will be the primary example of the appeal and success of the faith-based model. The second half of this chapter will deal with the specific social movement resource advantages that are possible with IAF's model of faith-based organizing. Particularly, I will examine how faith-based organizing employed in the Civil Rights Movement and United Farm Workers campaign can be effective for economic justice campaigns. These examples provide important models from which IAF can further engage the living wage movement.

Chapter three examines two modern IAF organizations in Spokane, Washington, and Washington, DC, and details their development, membership, and organizational style. These case studies illustrate the evolution of the IAF model and to what degree it has remained broad-based, multi-issued, sustainable, and effective in two different contexts. The role of religion and labor union involvement differs greatly between these organizations, and I will explore how true these organizations stay to the faith-based model of the modern IAF.

Chapter four addresses the main argument of the thesis: how the engagement of unions and faith-based community organizing groups can be a symbiotic relationship, particularly beneficial for living wage campaigns. By reaching out to unions, faith-based community organizations diversify their membership and receive members who are mobilized and able to

articulate their economic self-interest. By integrating experienced union members and organizers into community efforts for higher wages, campaigns will have greater impact and potential success. However, significant barriers exist in this religion-labor IAF community organizing ideal. Unions may not see benefits from or feel comfortable working in a faith-based environment, and non-union community members might be hesitant of unions bringing their own agenda to the organization and not contributing to the faith-based atmosphere. By studying the successful model of BUILD achieving living wages in Baltimore through a faith-based and labor community affiliation, I will suggest the potentially productive relationship between religious institutions and labor unions. Finally, I will look to my case studies in Washington, DC, and Spokane, WA, and propose strategies and methods for executing living wage campaigns in each city.

This paper cannot hope to properly address the multi-dimensions of the labor movement, faith-based organizations, and the complicated interaction between religion and labor as well as among religions institutions. Exploring the history and development of the Industrial Areas Foundation style of community organizing provides a glimpse of the evolution of social movements in the United States and the creation of new models of social action that appeal to Americans at this time. The IAF model has proven its sustainability since the 1940s, adapting to address the needs of a changing America. For the IAF model to successfully address economic justice issues such as living wages, further evolution may prove to be beneficial and even necessary. Working for living wages from the diverse resources offered by faith-based organizations and labor unions may be a resourceful model for both organizations to consider and engage.

## **II. Chapter One**

### **Community Based Organizing: Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation**

#### American Organizing for Social Change: The Women's Movement and the ERA

Social Movement history in the United States provides rich models for organizing for social change. To situate this study of IAF faith-based community organizing coalitions, I will turn first to the Women's Movement, and in subsequent chapters, the Civil Rights Movement and Labor Movement for examples of issue organizing, broad based community organizing, resource mobilization, organizing around identity, and faith-based elements in organizing. By issue-based organizing, I refer to organizations that exist to campaign for a single issue, such as the National Women's Party's advocacy for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). In such campaigns, leaders organize around one particular issue, and success revolves around the winning or losing of that campaign. Community organizing distinguishes itself from this model, as the focus of community leaders is to organize people into an intentionally broad-based, multi-issue coalition. This reorients organizational support and sustainability to be supreme goals for community organizations, equal to, if not exceeding, the value of single-issue campaign success.

American social movements have traditionally campaigned on specific issues that individuals and groups can support and promote through organizational affiliations, financial support, direct action, and other resources. The Women's Movement provides clear examples of the issue-based organizing model. The Women's suffrage struggle in the United States, with roots well before the 1848 Seneca Falls women's convention, utilized all organizational resources on the single-issue campaign for woman's right to vote. Women leaders such as

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association in the 1860s, which in 1890 became the National American's Woman's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) that incorporated radical and traditional efforts to change the country's voting rights (Ryan 22). Through this organizational structure, women leaders were united on the issue of suffrage and this campaign maintained strength through the turn of the century, with minor victories and gains along the way. Success came through the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote on August 26, 1920.

Immediately after this success of the suffrage campaign, NAWSA ceased to exist. Select members redirected their efforts to maintaining the core group of the League of Women Voters, but the powerful combined efforts of women's organizing were largely dissipated. What does this dissolving indicate? Social movement organizations form and fall away throughout history, either after winning or losing a campaign. Since women won the right to vote, victoriously completing a campaign, many women no longer saw the need for a women's organization. Perhaps they were correct, and NAWSA had served its purpose, but this falling away and absence of an organized community of women led to great difficulties in re-energizing the women's movement even three years later.

In 1923, the National Woman's Party first proposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The purpose of the ERA was to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender, proceeding beyond the gains achieved by the suffrage movement. The single-issue campaign for the ERA encountered many difficulties, many brought upon the organizers by themselves. The ERA effort was led by upper class women in a single-minded fashion, seeking out token black and working-class women merely for the sake of claiming their support (Rupp and Taylor 159).

Appeals for support were largely only addressed to the upper classes and political and institutional leaders. Rather than building sustainable working coalitions, the single issue of the ERA was all that mattered; members of the National Women's Party would appeal for support using tactics of McCarthyism for unions and Catholics, but would turn the other cheek and accept communist endorsement when offered. Such contradictory efforts in service of "the Cause" sacrificed "all other issues to the cause of women" and the Women's Party would suffer from this disregard of "means for ends" (Rupp and Taylor 143).

Through obtaining support by any means necessary, the national efforts for the ERA failed to convey the specific need for the amendment to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender, and these women's rights activists could not make this specific issue urgent and meaningful to most of the population. In fact, social movement efforts of other women and labor organizations directly conflicted with the goals of the ERA. Working class women had no reason to be supportive of what they saw as upper class women's efforts to minimize their workday and total wages. What Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor refer to as the "elite-sustained" time of the Women's Movement, possessed formative powers on the later women's movement in the 1960s, increasing the difficulty in reaching out to minority and working class women (144). Efforts for the ERA were spotty throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a mobilization of women as successful as the suffragists was largely lost until the second stage of the women's movement in the early 1960s.

The ERA effort before the 1960s illustrates a particularly problematic single-issue campaign that neglected any efforts of grassroots organizing. Even if the ERA would have passed during this time period, the effect of such legislation that did not hold the support of a

substantial amount of American women is questionable. While this Women's Movement model promotes legislative changes to facilitate a trickle down effect of social change, the IAF community organizing model proposes the most effective method of social transformation to be grassroots efforts that address the personal values of individuals in their own communities. The Civil Rights Movement, what Rupp and Taylor describe as an "indigenous movement" will serve as an example of such a successful grassroots effort. Chicago organizer Saul Alinsky was an early observer of the challenges of organizing and sustaining single-issue campaigns in the 1930s. To address these obstacles, he sought to develop a theory and practice of sustainable organizing that could empower communities to improve their situations through their own organizing efforts.

#### Roots of Community Organizing in Social Work and Settlement Houses

Preceding community organizing efforts of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, community activists such as Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr addressed community needs through the establishment of settlement houses. In 1890, they founded Hull House as a settlement house project in Chicago's 19th Ward that recognized and responded to the medical care, childcare, and legal needs of the community. Within one year, there were more than a hundred settlement houses throughout the United States, largely operated by women who dramatically advanced the social work profession ("Jane Addams"). These efforts in social work provided a new model for engaging the community that would contribute to early community organizing models after the First World War.

Community organizing campaigns of the 1920s, initiated by charitable and community welfare groups, existed largely to address the problems of poverty in communities. Both

religious groups and secular community groups were leaders in these programs. In the early 1920s, members and participants in social agencies had begun to compose community organizing manuals (Betten 21). These manuals addressed a variety of ideas and methods to protect small, local communities from urbanization and promoted democratic participation. At this time, the social worker developed the social survey and began to canvas community areas to involve individual community members and focus on a participatory social change process.

During the 1920s and 30s, the focus of community organizing was social welfare planning. Community groups that formed to organize the populace were often subsumed into social service agencies, such as what is now the United Way (Betten 84). These groups that advocated for social services often took on essential roles as service providers, and social action would diminish as their focus. Social workers would often become advocates within the system of government rather than agitators on the outside. This tendency of community organizations to become service providers can be expressed “in terms of existing authorities’ desires to transform actual or potential organized groups into more compliant and complacent agencies engaged in the routinized delivery of service” (Milofsky 261). This perspective of the cooptation of groups that would otherwise engage in political advocacy is evident in Marxist thought, which would recognize service providers as a form of social control to inhibit social change; “groups that ‘sell out’ by disengaging from political action may be considered to ‘buy in’ to the more legitimate system of existing programs with their routine activities” (Milofsky 261). The organizing philosophy of Saul Alinsky sought to address both the need to maintain a politically orientated approach to community organizing as well as avoid the dangers of social movement organization’s decline at the end of a single-issue campaign.

### Saul Alinsky: Father of American Community Organizing

By specifically addressing multiple issues community members identify as crucial and organizing these people through a participatory process, Saul Alinsky introduced a new model of community social action. Alinsky's style of organizing became known as the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) community organizing model. The structure of an Alinsky IAF organization utilized preexisting organizations, such as local church groups, unions, businesses, and parent-teacher associations. This "organization of organizations" was called a congress that elected officials, passed resolutions, and decided the future campaigns of the organization with the input of delegates from member organizations (Betten 158). Once the congress and the structure of the community organization worked efficiently, Alinsky's organizers would move away and allow the community to choose their own leaders from among themselves. Alinsky's organizing style originated in his involvement with the working class neighborhoods of Chicago in the 1930s. Through his innovative participatory style, distinctively aggressive tactics, and organizing successes of low-income and ethnically diverse communities, Saul Alinsky became considered the father of American community organizing. While Alinsky's organizing had substantial successes, many of his organization-building efforts were unsustainable. The following subsections explore the historical context of Alinsky's aggressive tactics and innovative organizing model, his community power structure analysis, and his strategic use of preexisting organizations in building movement sustainability.

#### Alinsky and the CIO

Alinsky greatly admired the strategies and militant tactics of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) prominent labor leader, John Lewis, and began his organizing career

supporting a union recognition drive of packinghouse workers in Chicago in the late 1930s. The Industrial Areas Foundation name comes from Alinsky's central efforts to organize the neighborhoods with industrial workers in coalition with CIO efforts. Using many strategies that labor organizers used in the workplace, Alinsky went out into the community and formed his first neighborhood community organization, the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC). The innovative aspect of Alinsky's style was that he organized the workers not at the workplace, but in their local neighborhoods. This is an important shift, as labor organizing traditionally took place on the job, separate from family, community, and neighborhood networks. This workplace model of labor organizing, which includes activities such as voting for union presence, striking for higher wages, and most importantly, securing contracts, is known as business unionism. Labor history scholar, Kim Moody, criticizes this model as conservative and isolating, asserting that it neglects any movement for shifting power relations between social classes, "leaves unquestioned capital's dominance, both on the job and in society as a whole," and does this through "a businesslike negotiation of a contractual relationship with a limited sector of capital and for a limited proportion of the working class" (15).

CIO-initiated efforts of the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee particularly sought to go beyond the business unionism model. Alinsky's efforts with the BYNC took workplace justice concerns directly into the community. Given the familiarity of the workers with labor organizing tactics and strategies, Alinsky's first community organizing campaigns, using boycotts and strikes, translated well for the BYNC. These tactics illustrated Alinsky's forceful approach to power politics and his willingness to push the boundaries of expected behavior. Other elements of CIO strategy influenced the Alinsky organizing model. CIO

organizers in the Chicago packinghouses were forced to address a history of racial violence and unrest. Their union organizing strategy was to “meet workers on their ethnic, or racial, ground and pull them into a self-consciously common culture that transcended those distinctions” (Cohen 339). In his community outreach, Alinsky also addressed shared values and desires of diverse ethnic and racial groups. The Industrial Areas Foundation did seek to break down racial prejudice, but through a more pragmatic than progressive approach. Rather than making blanket statements like “racists are banned from this organization,” Alinsky wanted everyone at the table to recognize and organize around common needs, and racial understanding would be built from the less-than-ideal base of “car[ing] about the other guy when you need him” (Sanders 72).

While Alinsky’s community organizing style and the CIO labor organizing style employed similar militant tactics and commitment to organizing in diverse communities, important distinctions exist between the labor and community organizing models. Labor organizing deals with the power relationship between workers and management, rallying on specific material gains for the participant, such as higher wages, better working conditions, and control over hours. Community organizing confronts power relations as well, but deals with a more complicated relationship, as the opposition is a “loosely integrated power elite” (Betten 153). Community organizing targets vary on the structure of the city and state governments as well as dominating forces in the local labor economy. A crucial point of understanding power dynamics in a city involves looking at the concrete structures of wealth and power and analyzing the distribution of goods and resources. Money and politics certainly are hand in hand when it comes to issues such as influential corporate developers and permits for city land, tax breaks on

new development, and no demand for higher wages for city residents in response to corporate welfare.

### Power, not Politics

Alinsky's confrontational style grows from his perception of the power holdings in the city: those who have power have the ability to control the community. Alinsky subscribed to the words of Frederick Douglas, "power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and never will." During his work with the segregated communities in Rochester, NY, the importance of always challenging power structures crystallized in his mind; "the most important lesson is that people don't get opportunity or freedom or equality or dignity as a gift or an act of charity. They only get these things in the act of taking them through their own efforts." (Sanders 44). This sentiment translated into the IAF's Iron Rule: "Never do for others what they can do for themselves." Ernesto Cortes, an exceptional IAF organizer, attributes organizations' victories to teaching "ordinary people ... how to speak, to act, and to engage in politics for themselves" (Cortes).

Large, mobilized groups are crucial for the success of Alinsky's aggressive approach to community organizing. Whether organizing for civil rights or mobilizing around living wage issues, power lies in organizing itself: "You'll only get power through organization. Because power just goes to two poles – to those who have got money, and those who have got people. You haven't got the money, so your own fellowmen are your only source of strength." (Sanders 33). Forming networks of people within the community is the first step in taking action, and mobilizing those people into a powerful threat is the essential part of achieving gains. This focus

on community power building would be present throughout Alinsky's career and is captured in his books, Rules for Radicals and Reveille for Radicals.

Alinsky actively encouraged identifying the opposition as the enemy. With a classic, "if you are not with us, you are against us" mentality, Alinsky would rally leaders within the organization to break down any feelings of needing to give leeway to the opposition. In fact, Alinsky strongly believed that actions needed to make the "status quo" be all they can be. This "status quo", exhibited through police or state involvement actively against the resistance of an oppressed community, can further outrage and strengthen the force of the organization. Alinsky asserts "Bull Connor with his police dogs and fire hoses down in Birmingham did more to advance civil rights than the civil-rights fighters themselves" (Sanders 42). Cooperation from the powers that be is not always the best situation for an organizer, because it invites compromise among the resisters, and can weaken the movement for resistance. Action can, and often must be rude, messy, and even uncomfortable. Keeping everyone happy will not change the status quo. Effective actions of Alinsky's The Woodland Organization (TWO) included threatening to tie up all the restrooms in O'Hare airport and dumping garbage on a alderman's lawn – both of these efforts resulted in better garbage pickups in the lower class neighborhoods (Sanders 75).

#### Resources and Sustainability in the Alinsky Model

To form the type of organization that could combat dominating power structures, Alinsky focused on establishing sustainable groups that addressed multiple issues of concern in the community. Alinsky cautioned against single-issue organizations for the fear that these groups would dissolve after the identified problem was addressed. The greater purpose of the

community organizations is to build a sustainable community power structure that could be used in future coalition building and community campaign successes: “when there are many different objectives there is constant daily activity and a sense of purpose and action and victory. People begin trading for each other’s support and alliances are formed between groups” (Sanders 49). Alinsky was a dynamic and charismatic speaker, able to rouse community support and ingratiate himself into communities, a crucial point in understanding community culture. Utilizing these community connections is central to Alinsky’s organizing model, which insists on members of the community identifying the issues that most need to be addressed. Through greater understanding of the community networks and operating style, the organizer can make the correct contacts and further strengthen and expand community coalitions. Specifically, Alinsky organizers effectively reached out to local congregations and churches, providing the community organization with space and meeting resources as well as a larger member base.

Alinsky utilized church groups primarily as pre-established networks that enhanced the numbers and resources of the community organization. Resource mobilization theory articulates the mobilization of a movement as distinctly affected by the degree of preexisting organization among dominated groups:

If the social base of a movement is already linked together in some sort of primary network so that people have common values and moral commitments, interpersonal ties, and communication on a regular basis, than this prior group solidarity can serve as a basis for mobilization. (Rupp and Taylor 200)

Church members of faith-based organizing coalitions bring well-established moral commitments, but “faith-based organizing also continually struggles with faith institutions to make their theological commitments real” (Warren, “Building Democracy”). In the founding stages of the IAF, faith-based community connections were developed through Alinsky’s work with Catholic

Bishop Bernard J. Sheil. “Labor Bishop” Sheil also assisted in the creation of a council that encouraged local pastors to support the majority Catholic union workers in Chicago’s Back of the Yards community.

Alinsky’s understanding of CIO organizing strategies may have influenced his inclination to turn to the churches for support. The CIO made great efforts to reach out to local church communities in their organizing drives both to engage the active churches of the immigrant communities as well as have the Catholic Church’s support in denying Communist control of the CIO (Betten 157). Alinsky’s model of organizing did not fully engage the faith commitments of these church communities. In conversation with a Catholic priest supportive of the IAF, Reverend John Egan, Alinsky said, “You take care of the religion, Jack, we’ll do the organizing.” This conception of religious involvement in the organizing style was to dramatically change under Chamber’s leadership in the IAF after 1972. Church involvement with labor and community organizing would serve as the crucial element in the development of the post-Alinsky, Modern IAF style.

Alinsky’s groups achieved short-term success, but the organizations in poor communities could not be sustained after initial gains. After the organizer would leave a community coalition, these organizations would give into the tendency to relax on political activism and focus on providing social services. Alinsky’s The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) “became more involved with administering services to the community than in continuing to organize broad participation” (Warren 46). Community groups would have difficulty organizing for a number of reasons, such as lack of dedicated leadership after the IAF broke ties, community conflict, or a change of focus of the organizing groups.

One problem with the IAF style of organizing around community-identified issues and problems is that it can fail to address the existing prejudices that cause the community to choose an issue that disempowers other oppressed communities. How does an organizer respond to a community who sees the major issue in their community as the influx of minorities? Does the IAF organizer advocate a campaign to keep the neighborhood white? As a non-partisan organization that finds grounding in the motivations of the neighborhood community, this is a difficult dilemma. Alinsky's own group, the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, was gradually taken over by a small group of leaders who effectively changed the group into a conservative organization, rallying behind Chicago's Mayor Daley and eventually supporting George Wallace for President in 1968 (Warren 46).

Community organizations are not perfect, progressive institutions: individuals and groups carry their own prejudices, fears, and varying politics into organizations. The role of an organizer can be to infuse or negotiate a sense of justice through shared values in a manner that does not restrict the community's self-control. In communities with race tensions, Alinsky would try to "avoid the race issue" and establish common ground among diverse groups through common organizational goals (Sanders 71). While Alinsky did have certain successes with this style in Chicago, it presents severe limitations in acknowledging the needs of oppressed groups. Dealing directly with community conflict, whether it be over race, religion, economics, or a host of other potentially divisive issues, may be the most appropriate way to grant the issue the importance it deserves and assuage community discord. A commitment to social justice is a basic ingredient in community organizing, but how this commitment is articulated within a

diverse community coalition to properly address the various needs of coalition members must be carefully negotiated in each individual coalition's setting.

### Where's the Faith? Developments in the IAF Style

Some solutions would come to Alinsky's problems of coalition sustainability through the work of Ed Chambers and other IAF leaders after Alinsky's death in 1972. Alinsky's organizing tools are still the backbone of the organizing style of the IAF, but many changes enhanced the sustainability and strength of the IAF style in the coming years, namely the focus on faith-based coalitions. Developing what sociologist Mark Warren refers to as a "theology of organizing", I will explore how working with faith communities enhances community organization campaigns. In the following chapters, I will discuss the evolution of faith-based organizing in the IAF after Alinsky and specifically focus on two IAF affiliate groups: the Washington Interfaith Network and the Spokane Alliance.

### **III. Chapter Two**

## **Power Politics from the Pulpit: The IAF's New Theology of Organizing**

### **A. Developments in Faith-Based Community Organizing in the IAF: Ed Chambers and the Texas Organizing of Ernesto Cortes**

#### IAF After Saul Alinsky

Dramatic changes occurred in the IAF after Ed Chambers assumed Saul Alinsky's role as leader in 1968. Chambers encountered some difficulty filling in the rowdy and enigmatic shoes of Alinsky, which had raised both organizational income and infamy. Replicating Alinsky's style was not an objective of Chambers, however, who had deep roots in the organization and widespread organizing experience. The IAF was now his to mold.

Ed Chambers was a former seminarian, though always an activist at heart, as he was asked to leave the seminary for his critique of the practices of the Catholic Church. His subsequent path was to be social activism with religious grounding in a Catholic Worker community, but he instead encountered a different Catholic interracial organization called Friendship House that focused on interracial justice issues. Chamber did not understand where the "justice" was in handing out sandwiches, and he started organizing black tenants (Rooney 70). Saul Alinsky heard about his work and Chambers got hired on as an IAF organizer in 1957. Chambers organized communities around the country and had the opportunity to see the IAF organizations in all stages of development and demise. What most concerned him was how the sustainability they expected from the local IAF upstart organizations was not becoming a reality. The Alinsky tactic of sending in an organizer to a city for three years and then moving on was important because it showed that a group had achieved self-sufficiency, but very often, groups lost their focus without proper guidance.

### Chambers' New Vision: The IAF Institute

Ed Chambers respected Alinsky, but he was not afraid to voice what he saw the flaws were in the IAF organizing model. Saul Alinsky died in 1972, after Chambers had been calling the shots for a few years. The turning of the 1970s saw the change of what Chambers refers to as the Modern IAF. Elements of the new approach to organizing were to heavily focus on training organizers in a central location. A greater number of trained organizers would relieve the need for organizers in the field to move to different locations so frequently, and addressed organizers' feelings of burnout of resulting from having to do too much in a short period of time. Chicago was the headquarters at this time, and Chambers made the IAF Organizing Institute happen. The first year of the Institute was 1968, and Alinsky was the major source of funding. An enigmatic speaker and self-declared "radical", Alinsky was often a featured speaker on campuses and had local legend status. After Alinsky's death in 1972, Chambers had a difficult time scraping up money, but the IAF Institute continued.

The IAF Organizing Institute embodied three main components of the Modern IAF: professional organizers, relational organizing, and independent community power. Professional organizers trained at the Institute entered the community to recruit and train new leaders, not to run issue campaigns or administer programs (Warren "Building"). The role of organizer is to capture community energy and channel it through "innovative fundraising and imaginative coalition building," (Rogers 94). This energy arises through foundational individual meetings with community members. Relational organizing, embodied in "one-on-one" meetings, places the value of individual relationships above specific issues and serves as the basis for public action on behalf of the community. Organizers encourage emerging community leaders to

develop campaigns out of issues that arise in conversations about shared values and immediate concerns. Through developing local leadership and broad-based support networks, IAF organizations explicitly seek to build power on behalf of their communities (Warren “Building”). Alinsky’s organizing style supplies the roots for analysis and confrontation of power differentials in the community. The IAF Institute trains organizers to challenge power through combative and abrasive tactics, but focuses on honing a community’s power base through extensive “quiet time,” building alliances that support their efforts.

### Integrating Faith in Organizing

Along with the Organizing Institute, a central development in the Modern IAF was engaging faith traditions of religious community coalition members in a new manner. While Chambers was a religious individual, he was wary of the role of religion in organizing. Under Alinsky, he came to view organizing as a serious and often ugly business of power plays, and Chambers feared “mixing religious teachings with organizing because they have a tendency to deteriorate into sentimentality.” (Rogers 94). This concern about religion making organizations weaker or less active adds to other concerns about the mixed messages that religious groups can send. Organizations such as the Christian Coalition are viewed by many as opposing social justice efforts through conservative campaigns, and in fact, working to the opposite effect. Chambers’ skepticism about religion in organizing was not absolute, but he needed to witness the advantages of working through faith groups. This model was provided by the talented organizer from San Antonio, Ernesto Cortes, who joined the IAF training Institute under Ed Chambers in 1971 with a firm commitment to work from his faith perspective.

The organizing work of Ernesto Cortes was fully grounded in mobilizing faith communities in Texas. He saw the great potential of connecting with people on a spiritual level about their basic rights as citizens. Chambers constantly challenged Cortes about how he could effectively utilize religion in his organizing, forcing him to fully evaluate his strategy. At the IAF Institute, Cortes did find grounding for his beliefs in exactly what Chambers taught him, “organizing was not just action and issues, but value and vision” (Rogers 95). Values can be deep seeded in people’s religious and moral beliefs, and visions can incorporate working towards the reign of God.

To really connect with the religious people of San Antonio, Cortes was energized by forming deep spiritual ties. Chambers and Cortes both felt that appealing to what people valued would be the only way for a sustained organization. People needed to feel like they were essential members within an organization that cares for them and operates with them on a deep level of fundamental concern (Rogers 96). Focusing on people’s values and what directly matters to them is a way to not exclude people from issues that may seem too aligned with political parties or ideology. The purpose of an IAF community organization is not to throw people into a complex political arena, but to realize their power to change the things that most matter to them. For example, family is of huge importance to the Hispanic community, and Cortes wanted to appeal to people through this value by having them envision what a safer and healthier community would be for their children.

### Cortes and COPS in San Antonio

What Ernesto Cortes was able to accomplish in San Antonio characterized the future of IAF organizing. In 1973 Cortes returned to San Antonio to engage his Hispanic community. The

Hispanic community resided almost entirely on the West Side of San Antonio, an area that had received little to no public money and was riddled with dangerous trenches where children could drown during floods. A great deal needed to be done in this neighborhood, and Cortes immediately sought out allies in the religious community. Many Church communities wanted very much to improve the situation of the Mexicans on the West Side, but feared investing in another organization that would rise and fall as so many did in the 1960s. What made Cortes different was how he planned to appeal “to the strong family values of West Side Hispanics” and to draw on the “religious language and stories of a people whose emotional roots were entwined with the Catholic Church” (Warren 106). Cortes saw the Hispanic community in Texas as a “sleeping giant”, with the potential of so much power, but without the current power and agency to realize this. From groups who were familiar with Saul Alinsky, to old and new friends of Cortes, he mobilized forces to fundraise money to start off a citizen campaign. There would be no public money or seeking of private grants, instead, the organization would be directly accountable to an ecumenical sponsoring committee, which would closely monitor the project and hold the organizers accountable.

Enough money was finally raised and Cortes started slowly, with the directive of simply listening to the needs of the members of the church communities. Cortes did not want activists or cause chasers; he wanted people with roots, ties, and obligations. These people are invested in their community and are both most familiar with the problems, and can be the strong movers for change. Sometimes this would be the parish priests, sometimes members of the community who first expressed interest, and often these leaders would be lay women. What Cortes found

out was that these Church members and leaders were not primarily concerned with typical issues that the hard-line Chicano rights groups espoused, but with the basic issues of family life.

The communities called for simple, direct changes. They wanted their children to have a healthy environment in school, without trash barrels to catch rain from the leaky roof and they worried about electricity costs with skyrocketing utilities, and they wanted parks and community areas in the neighborhoods (Warren 109). This was the way the community could be mobilized. They gathered to discuss the necessary issues and began to see who made the decisions in the city. These were the first ways of gaining empowerment, and when they realized the city had been categorically neglecting the West Side for years, they began to become angry. Community leaders decided that they needed a plan and they needed an organization, so they formed Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS).

#### The New IAF Identity

The new IAF identity fused Cortes's engagement of religious groups with Alinsky's political strategy, forming the "foundation for a distinctive faith-based organizing model that is particularly suited to democracy building" (Warren "Building"). In addition to the elements of professional organizers, relational organizing, and independent community power developed in the IAF Organizing Institute, a values orientation became a central component of the IAF identity. Alinsky's method of mobilizing community power through pre-existing organizations has remained central to the IAF model. A values orientation to community coalition building seeks to address and incorporate the core values and beliefs of "institutions that already structure the lives of families in their communities" (Warren "Building"). The IAF organizer's role is to highlight the shared values community organization members hold and articulate methods in

which these local institutions working in coalition can create change. Implementing realistic campaigns that lead to victories and visible results are very important in developing and securing membership commitments from local community organizations to an IAF coalition. The process of translating values into concrete community initiatives for change can dramatically appeal to faith-based institutions though actualizing theological commitments that too often remain merely abstract ideals.

In COPS, Cortes developed what he called a “theology of organizing” where close interpersonal relationships are the roots of all action. In this one-on-one relationship building, he claims the “spiritual action” takes place. This crucial action establishes the initial personal drive and connects you to your work. Understanding your specific role as a leader or an informed citizen is what makes organizing and participating in organizations not merely a job, but a deep personal conviction. While COPS tactics and strategies were classic in the IAF tradition, Cortes was not afraid to apply his Catholic identity to the issues as well. Certainly some members of the community wondered if they had walked into the wrong room when Cortes started a story about how Moses was one of the world’s best organizers. But Cortes carefully prepared this message for his community and through a familiar story told in a different way, people did understand the power of coalition building and delegating responsibility. Most of all, Cortes accentuated that this is a way to get at “real politics”. This type of politics appeals to the human person. “Real politics offers an opportunity to engage people at the core of their values, their vision, their imagination.” (Rogers 16).

Once more referring to the spiritual connections of one-on-one talks, these are where you get to know the human person as an individual, and for believers, see an individual as a person of

God. This interpersonal contact prevents displacement from the work you do and the people you see, as politics and closed-door governments often serve to alienate rather than empower. Close personal contact is particular to IAF style because in community organizing, it is people you are organizing, not issues or campaigns. In this case, “organizing is a fancy word for relationship building” (Rogers 17). Through these individual relationships that form the core of institutional relationships, a community can be mobilized.

## **B. Ministry for Social Justice: Movement Sustainability Found Through Church Networks and Moral and Ethical Connections in Faith-based Community Organizing for Economic Justice**

### The “More” of Faith-Based Organizing

Religious belief and the church networks both offer useful resources such as ideology, networks of people and communication, financial assets, meeting spaces, as well as moral and cultural resources. Faith can function as a valuable resource, an organizing tool, and even something deeper - a more “whole” commitment - a life commitment to social change rather than isolated issue campaigning. An active participant in COPS, Mrs. Ozuna reports on the two things that keep her going in organizing, “anger at injustice and that I’m doing the Lord’s work. It’s my ministry for social justice” (Warren 71). Connecting with people through their faith convictions is a very personal way to solidify a commitment to organizing for social change.

The IAF model of faith-based organizing actualizes differently according to the diverse needs and circumstances of each coalition’s institutional members. Mark Warren defines faith-based organizing as engaging religious institutions’ faith traditions by appealing to individual members’ cultures and belief systems (“Building”). “Faith-based” almost exclusively translates to a Christian-based organizing, with “non-Christian congregations other than Jewish and Unitarian-Universalists constituting less than 1% of the congregations in the [community organizing] field” (Warren “Faith-based” 6). Social movement efforts outside of the community organizing arena, such as civil rights and labor struggles, have utilized faith-based elements in various manners. The mobilization of faith-based groups through the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the Civil Rights Movement and the use of religious symbolism in the United Farm Workers (UFW) labor organizing campaign provide two case

studies examining the role of faith in organizing. These organizing efforts also present historical models of religious institutions partnering with labor union campaigns for economic justice.

### Faith in Action in the Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement is an excellent example of religious and moral motivation providing impetus for social change. Martin Luther King extensively used biblical, religious, moral, and ethical convictions to achieve gains in the civil rights movement. One of the greatest examples of church networks working for social justice is the organization of Black Southern Churches in the South. The formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957 grew out of a number of elements in the growing consciousness of black southerners after World War II. Organizations such as the NAACP had recently won the crucial case of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which also served as impetus to the growth of black opposition to segregation and the subsequent need to address it in a substantial manner (Palacios). The NAACP, however, was ill-suited to the task of mobilizing large numbers of blacks for action. The choice of ministers taking the lead on forming the SCLC is partially economic. Most black professionals were economically dependent on whites, and had good reason to refrain from rocking the boat. Black ministers, whose salaries were dependent on their black congregation, had a greater ability to make strong statements at less risk to their well-being (Fairclough 16). The culture of the black church, with the black minister playing an integral role as leader also wielded a substantial amount of power with the black community.

Ministers did not necessarily come to the forefront on their own, but were called to by the community and in response to the difficulties secular organizations encountered in efforts to resist segregation. Church organizations had greater influence within the community and were

the oldest and most respected black institutions in the South. These church communities fostered a sense of solidarity, self-identity, and self-respect (Fairclough 18). The black church communities had plenty of resources to offer in terms of emotional and spiritual strength. SCLC meetings were emotional and theatrical presentations patterned after Sunday services. Mass-meetings were morale boosters, filled with hymns and sermons extending late into the night that were “captured by the spirit”. This provided entertainment and a sense of involvement and deep spiritual commitment for all attendees and was extremely effective in mobilizing church communities.

The actual organization of the SCLC was loose, as it served as an umbrella group and relied heavily on the charismatic presence of Martin Luther King and dispersed influence of local ministers. Martin Luther King came to be a leader at a young age with his efforts in the Montgomery bus boycott. After that event and through his exceptional oratory and personable skills, he became the star of the SCLC, often overshadowing other leaders and the structure of the organization itself was characterized as the arm of Martin Luther King. Fairclough rejects that interpretation, as the SCLC received political support from the North as well as multiple Southern black ministers serving as essential leaders. Even though Baptist Churches are staunchly independent, through the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Council as an umbrella group, the organizational strength vastly multiplied and necessarily relied on the role of ministers and Churches to organize themselves. The SCLC asserted a non-political identity in order to appeal to all black southerners as well as not to appear as a tool or co-opted by the Democratic Party. By asserting Christian principles and non-violence it “projected a non-controversial image of peace and non-violence” (41).

The SCLC was most effective in mobilizing the Southern Black communities in their outreach through the black church, capturing the moral and religious convictions of the community. Working through the church communities captured the spirit of the people involved and social actions became an outreach of their faith and deep connection to community. Through the bus boycott, voter registration campaigns, and later protests and marches regarding issues of voting rights and desegregation, the SCLC was largely responsible for the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act. While the SCLC's disorganized structure possessed its difficulties, benefits of loose coalitions proved effective in quickly mobilizing people for action and alerting the community of new strategies and tactics at the last minute was possible through the mass meeting organizing structure.

The SCLC and Martin Luther King used these religious and moral principles in organizing efforts for economic justice as well, through the Poor People's Campaign and in the 1968 Memphis Sanitation worker's strike. The Poor People's Campaign was a major effort for the SCLC as King recognized the need to address the "de facto segregation" that remained from the limited economic opportunities available to black Americans (Beifuss 14). To organize resistance to these conditions, King lead the SCLC into a Poor People's Campaign that would bring together "across racial lines a coalition of the unemployed, and the working poor, exemplified by domestics, garbagemen, [and] migrant farm workers" who would establish a goal and method to address economic injustice (15). This resulting formula was a twelve billion dollar economic bill that King would travel the country organizing for throughout 1967 and 1968. The events in Memphis at this time coordinated perfectly with the demands of the Poor

People's Campaign, and King was asked to address the workers and black community in the spring of 1968.

Detailed in Joan Beifuss' At the River I Stand, the strike of black sanitation workers in Memphis was articulated clearly in the context of civil rights and carefully constructed with the union efforts for these workers to be treated with dignity. Wearing placards and holding signs declaring "I am a Man," striking sanitation workers demanded that the city of Memphis formally recognize their union and thus grant them a voice in determining their wages, hours, and working conditions. King recognized the "economic issues facing public employees in Memphis and their attempt to organize to deal with their own problems was an example that could be understood by poor people in other places" (Beifuss 191). A SCLC staff meeting was moved to occur in Memphis to facilitate King's presence at a rally on March 18. At this rally, King felt the same fervor of emotion and energy that had characterized the civil rights movement and he agreed to march with the people of Memphis in a few days, thereby committing himself and the SCLC to their struggle.

The 1,300 strikers, along with the rest of the country, were devastated by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s April 4 assassination in Memphis. The energy and excitement that he had brought the strikers carried over to a imminent victory, as the strikers soon got almost everything they had fought for during their 65-day walkout. The city of Memphis recognized the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, Local 1733 and specific worker's rights to determine wages, hours, and conditions of employment. This amazing and powerful victory was certainly shadowed by the overwhelming grief of the loss of Martin Luther King, Jr., but also carried his vision and strength. The efforts of King and the SCLC for

economic justice efforts were not always met with pleasure, as many perceived this as a transfer of the Civil Rights focus from race issues to class issues. The sanitation workers struggle illustrated the effectiveness of combining efforts for economic justice and civil rights within King and the SCLC's ethical, Christian non-violent framework.

### God is on the Side of the Oppressed: Liberation Theology in the United Farm Workers Campaign

The labor movement and religious convictions intersected again through the work of Cesar Chavez and the organizing of farmworkers in California. Chavez was a profoundly religious individual, and his abilities to connect with the values of fellow Mexican farmworkers and integrate spiritual symbols into his movement were exceptional organizing tools. Born in Arizona in 1927, Chavez experienced a difficult depression-era migrant childhood. Discrimination was a vivid part of his youth, as well as part of the lives of his fellow Chicanos. Chavez's talent for organizing was bolstered by Catholic ministers to the Mexican community. Fr. Donald McDonnell, A Roman Catholic priest commissioned to do outreach to the farm laboring community, taught him Catholic Social Justice Teaching, including the right to organize and have a living wage and encouraged Chavez to read about the life of St. Francis of Assisi and Gandhi (Griswold del Castillo 23).

As his talent in organizing became more apparent, Chavez attended an IAF organizing training. He was instrumental in forming the Community Service Organization (CSO) in San Jose, which was affiliated with Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation. The IAF organizer in the area, Fred Ross, won over an initially suspicious Chavez with his honest interest in and dedication to local farm worker issues in June of 1952 (Griswold del Castillo 27). Chavez built the CSO in the traditional IAF style, with many one-on-one relational meetings with

migrant workers. He got to know people working on migrant ministry and looked to Protestant church leaders who were already going out and serving the migrant population. There were groups of Filipinos, Mexicans, and Chinese, and Chavez knew he would have to reach out to everyone to have the strength to organize. The tactics of the CSO was first a voter-registration drive to get Mexican migrants politically active, and Chavez would later use this political consciousness to organize workers in the fields.

In 1962 Chavez broke away from the CSO to focus all his time on the National Farm Workers Federation that he formed with Delores Suarta and they began using the famous flag with the black eagle. Chavez witnessed the non-violent actions of the Civil Rights Movement and wanted to utilize those strategies for the NFWF. In 1965 the first grape boycott began and there was a dramatic march from Delano to Sacramento. This was a month-long march, explicitly non-violent and well disciplined. Participants carried the banner of the union as well as a banner of our lady of Guadeloupe, which was both theatrical and reflected the deeper values present in the movement, a merging of the civil and religious (Griswold del Castillo 43). Chavez constantly received advice from the Catholic Bishops and Monsignor Higgins at the Catholic University of America (Higgins 93). The National Grape Boycotts became a central campaign for church networks around the country. At St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Spokane, WA, the campaign was publicized through literature and grape boycott stickers from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops available in the rear of the church.

Other Judeo-Christian elements were incorporated into labor struggles, such as Chavez's fasting during a 1968 strike. This dramatic fast integrated traditional Christian sacrificial offerings to the labor struggle (Ferriss 144). The religious focus was not always appreciated by

all members of the Farm Workers Movement, some of whom found the “Catholic character of the fast ... offensive” (Ferriss 143). But for the most part, this move turned to be a revival of spirit for the movement, with “thousands of farm workers streaming to the Forty Acres to show their support.” This spiritual revival also served as an effective organizing tool, resulting in extensive outreach and a resurgence of excitement. In 1970 Chavez went to jail for a boycott, where he fasted and prayed, summoning images of St. Paul as well as the religious intensity of Martin Luther King. Religious imagery and the support of religious communities were effective tools in sustaining worker moral, positive public image, and winning campaigns for fair contracts and wages for the farmworkers.

#### Contradicting Religious Views: Grassroots Organizing and the Christian Right

Using religion as a point of mobilization encounters challenges that stem from the dramatic differences in interpretation of religious doctrine. For example, in El Paso, Texas, a conservative Catholic coalition greatly opposed the formation of an IAF group in El Paso in the early 1980s and was almost able to dissolve a great deal of Catholic support by labeling the IAF organizers outside agitators and communists. The American commitment to separation of Church and State adds to plentiful examples available to illustrate the tensions between politics and religion. One way of dealing with this is through the IAF’s non-partisan stances, as taking sides on party lines would certainly cause greater obvious dissent within religious groups. While the IAF claims to be non-partisan, the issues they organize around predominantly fall under a liberal framework. This is in stark contrast to the faith-based organizing of many conservative-minded Christian Churches whose efforts strongly support Republican Party candidates.

In a much brighter spotlight than the faith-based organizing efforts of IAF coalitions, organizations such as the now disbanded Moral Majority and the active Christian Coalition have taken major steps in the political arena in the past three decades. The organizing styles of the IAF and the Christian Right can have a great deal in common, as they both utilize preexisting church networks, what resource mobilization theory would describe as “cooptable networks”, to obtain financial and human resources. Both organizations approach church groups through contacting ministers and establishing ties to interested members of the congregation. The Christian Right organizations usually fall under a more centralized national coalition and during campaigns receive greater financial resources and mass-produced materials such as flyers for mailings (Wilcox 9). The Christian Right participates to a great deal in “candidate centered” politics, which means recruitment of and targeting support for specific candidates that represent their interests (11). The Pat Robertson 1988 presidential campaign was very influential in mobilizing the evangelical Christian community for political action and utilizing the unique resources of the Christian Broadcasting Network. While the Christian Right occasionally asserts their bipartisan nature, the coalition’s party activities are “for all practical purposes confined to the Republican Party,” illustrated by one case of a lone Democratic attendee “met by booing from the audience” during the 1992 senate campaign events (Oldfield 190). The bipartisan claim is much less legitimate than that claim of the IAF, as the National Republican Senatorial Committee has even funded these Christian Right campaign efforts, providing a \$64,000 grant in 1992 (191).

A religious group with a political agenda carries an ugly taste to many liberal minded people, religious or not. Organizations such as the Christian Coalition and similar local affiliates

and their association of a Christian ideology that restricts the rights of women, homosexuals, and often other minority groups, can dissuade individuals from seeking involvement in faith-based groups or delegitimize faith-based groups in the eyes of outsiders. IAF coalitions and the Christian Right articulate the Christian message of justice in two dramatically different ways; people who are not believers in any faith tradition would be justifiably wary of an institution sending such contradictory messages. IAF coalitions will best address concerns about religion and politics by appealing to local communities through sustained efforts at building broad-based, multi-issue constituencies.

Expanding beyond the ... core of traditional organizing, faith-based community organizing culture brings wider credibility, new ethical insight, new constituencies, and great diversity into the organizing world, but it must be undertaken in ways that sustain the flow of commitment and motivation within organizing. If faith-based organizing accomplishes this, it will have a great deal to teach the wider political culture about appropriately combining faith and politics across the religious spectrum of contemporary American society. (Warren "Faith-Based" 16)

#### **IV. Chapter Three**

### **Washington Interfaith Network and the Spokane Alliance: The IAF at Work to Shift Power Relations through Community Organizing in Spokane and the District of Columbia**

#### Staying True to the Vision?: The IAF in Washington, DC and Spokane

Cortes effectively employed and developed the IAF model in San Antonio, creating a faith-based community organization that was able to place sustained pressure on the Texas local government. In different settings, how do organizers continue to “kindle the imagination, stir the possibilities, and then propose some kind ways in which you can act on those dreams and visions” (Rogers 17)? Visions have been activated in diverse communities around the country, necessitating a variation of strategies for community mobilization. The geographical and historical context of each organizing site warrants differences in community development and engagement styles. This chapter studies the formation, development, and organizing approach of two IAF affiliate groups in Spokane, WA, and Washington, DC. These two cities provide a good contrast: Spokane is a predominately white, industrial, moderate sized working class city that has never been effectively organized. Washington, DC is a racially and economically diverse metropolitan area alienated from the political process. While this capital city is rich in issue-based organizations, few community organizing efforts have proven effective. I examine the formation, successes, and struggles of each city’s organizing and investigate the power relations both within the city communities and within the faith-based community organizations.

#### The Spokane Alliance: Organizing in the Inland Northwest

Community members in Spokane, Washington, began preorganizing for an IAF coalition in 1995. Some of the initial people raising money and seeking support were individuals with significant organizing training and backgrounds in social justice issue campaigns, while others

were community members simply wanting to see ways that Spokane churches and the local community could come together to better support the citizens (Chrastil). Mobilization efforts garnered support from religious institutions, labor unions, and community groups, and enough money was raised to hire the first IAF organizer in 1998. The Spokane Alliance works in conjunction with two other IAF groups in Eastern Washington, constituting the Eastern Washington Action and Justice Alliance. The other two sites are in Yakima and Toppenish, and all three sites have at least one lead organizer and one part-time organizer and/or administrator.

The “Heart of the Inland Northwest,” Spokane rests next to the Idaho border, a long, four-hour drive from Seattle. Although Spokane is the second largest city in the state of Washington, with a population including the immediate surrounding areas exceeding 350,000, citizens possess a small town mentality. A comic article in *The Spokesman Review*, Spokane’s daily newspaper, attempted to describe Spokane for high school students working on their college admissions essays. Two options were: "If you stick to a narrow line of east-west travel, Spokane is the biggest city between Minneapolis and Seattle, which is to say that there are no large cities between Minneapolis and Seattle." Or, "If your campus tour guide makes some lame joke about rainy Washington, I swear I'm going to bust him right in the mouth" (Turner, Paul). These observations hit right on the well developed inferiority complex of Spokaneites who live on the dry side of the Cascade Mountains in the shadow of Seattle. Western Washington carries almost absolute weight over any state initiatives, which drives a “why bother” feeling into the political psyche of Eastern Washingtonians.

Specific barriers to organizing in Spokane have to do with the lack of any

previous substantial community organizing efforts. The city has experienced significant labor organizing efforts, but these have focused on organizing the workplace rather than the larger community. Most recently, an extremely visible lockout of union workers from Kaiser Aluminum, one of the city's top ten major employers, resulted in a bitter two-year struggle with a disappointing resolution in 2000. Spokane has a large low-income population, with the lowest average annual wage of the five most populated counties in Washington. Almost one in eight people, 13.7%, lived at or below the poverty line in 2000 ("Dynamics of Poverty"). The city is over ninety percent white, and whites make up the largest population of low-income people. Minority groups, however, represent a disproportionate amount of the people living below the poverty line ("Dynamics of Poverty").

Spokane's lack of organizing experience can be a strength, as the Alliance does not need to compete with other community organizing groups for membership or deal with bad impressions of organizations that had been ineffective in the past. The Alliance, however, does have to prove that their organizing can be effective and a worthwhile experience with which to participate. Lead organizer of the Spokane Alliance, Joe Chrastil, suggests the "difficulty lies in getting people to picture what could be possible, to offer a new vision for the city." The minority community is also extremely difficult to organize, as all minority groups are small in number. African Americans have been tokenized on city committees and in other organizations, so they bring justified suspicion to any new association. The Native American community's poor internal organization and poverty makes institutional membership difficult (Dellwo). Recent immigrant groups, such as the Hmong and Russian communities, are not yet members of institutions, so difficult for the Alliance to engage.

Joe Chrastil, the first organizer for the Spokane Alliance, has been in Spokane since 1998. Ever since then, the Alliance has sponsored leadership institutes to start training new community leaders. Since these sessions are largely for working adults, they are offered one night a week for a six-week period. Renee Carmen, St. Aloysius' parish liaison to the Spokane Alliance, first became involved through hearing church announcements and "just talking with other parishioners over coffee and donuts after mass." While she originally did not want to get "too involved," Renee attended a leadership institute and now assists with parts of the training sessions. Once members of the Alliance have attended leadership institute and multiple action sessions, organizers assist them in taking over the role of small group facilitation as well as other components of the training institute. Kathy Dellwo, a long-time Spokane resident, felt inspired by the leadership training, which allowed her to "refocus on what could be built rather than what was wrong" in her community. Echoing Kathy's excitement, Scott Cooper, the Parish Social Ministry Coordinator at Catholic Charities, felt the Alliance could help Catholic Parishes "put faith into action."

The first county-wide assembly of all member institutions took place in May of 2000, under the name of the Spokane Interfaith Alliance. A crowd of 340 people was present and seven member institutions pledged their support. At this point, the Alliance adopted a dues structure, set goals for the coming year, and each member institution made a commitment to reach out to other churches, unions, or other community organizations in their section of the city. Outreach to local labor unions had been crucial from the beginning of the Alliance's organizing process, and non-religious institutions raised concerns about the exclusivity of "interfaith" as part of the organizational name. Organizers and new community leaders negotiated a new name,

dropping “interfaith” from the official title, and incorporating it in the organizational tagline:

*“The Spokane Alliance: Interfaith, Education, Labor & Civic Institutions Organizing for the*

*Common Good.”* At the May 2001 assembly, with 540 people and 21 member institutions

pledging their support, the first item on the agenda regarded maintaining institutional identity in

a diverse coalition. Representatives from member institutions presented the distinct perspectives

of the civic/education, union, and religious traditions, while also focusing on the shared values of

these rich traditions. The musical contribution of the Praise Team Choir from Covenant United

Methodist Church reflected the focus on diversity by kicking off the assembly with *We Shall*

*Rise*, later bring new life to the traditional union song, *Bread and Roses*, and finishing with

*Strong, Gentile Children*.

As of December 2001, the Spokane Alliance had 31 member institutions. The goal for

May of 2002 is to have 40 member institutions, and at this point the organization will “go

public” or publicly launch their community agenda. Strategy teams will present their research

and articulate campaigns developed from four community-identified issues: youth and

education, sustainable jobs, health care, and racism/intolerance. Of the 31 current member

institutions, eleven are unions, four are non-church civic organizations, one is a low-income

advocacy group, one parent-teacher organization, one is a children’s education advocacy group,

four are Catholic parishes, six are Methodist parishes, two are Lutheran parishes, and one is

United Church of Christ. The ratio of church to non-church groups is unusually low for an IAF

group, which speaks the Alliance’s ability to provide a space for non-religious institutions while

maintaining an interfaith component. Focusing on members’ shared values while discussing and

negotiating the inclusiveness of the Spokane Alliance, as displayed during the renaming process, keeps this diversity from being divisive.

The role of unions in the Spokane Alliance makes this Industrial Areas Foundation group profoundly different from older, more church-based IAF groups. The Spokane Alliance's initial coalition-building efforts captured the attention of unions after the devastating Kaiser strike. As unions in Spokane seek new methods to build organizational power in the community, they also bring organizational resources and strength to community coalitions through their knowledge of the values of unionism, which include the importance of community and solidarity. Union membership, however, has not made Scott Cooper's social ministry outreach efforts to Catholic Churches easier, as he found older, more conservative congregations "wary to join a group that seemed to push a liberal agenda." On the other hand, community members that previously held anti-union sentiments have grown to greater understanding of union organizing efforts and the working class sector as a whole through these interactions. The initial successes of the Spokane Alliance's outreach efforts at first surprised Renee Carmen, but as she began to build relationships and gain a greater understanding of the Spokane community, the appeal of the Alliance made increasing sense:

People are looking for community. They crave it. And the Spokane Alliance offers something that I think people feel is genuine, and also exciting – a chance to make changes that people never thought would be possible.

#### The Washington Interfaith Network: Organizing in our Nation's Capital

The Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) has a longer history than the Spokane Alliance, with pastors from the District of Columbia gathering in the early nineties to plan meetings and raise money to bring Industrial Areas Foundation organizers to form a community

organization. Over one thousand individual meetings took place, and four or five issues emerged to be formed into a political platform. At a Saturday morning leadership training in January 2002, Rev. Lionel Edmonds of Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, one of the founders and current co-chair of WIN, articulated the development of WIN, a history he has honed over the past decade. He started with his story, explaining his desire for ministry in the church to take place “outside of the sacred walls of the church on Sunday.” While “one church and one pastor” could not accomplish what needed to be done in Washington, DC, when congregations unite and organize through coalitions such as WIN, people hold new power to be agents for change.

Washington, DC, a federal city, is a fascinating place to discuss power relationships and barriers to organizing. A city of over 570,000 people, DC is usually referenced as a small state, an afterthought in the “all fifty states – and the District of Columbia” heading. A major matter of power distribution in Washington, DC, is that citizens cannot vote for members of the House of Representatives or Senate, and these very powers are the overseers of the District’s budget and city government. Any law that the mayor and city council makes, Congress has the power to overturn. A particularly egregious control abuse is that the federal government prohibits Washington officials from taxing people who live in the suburbs but who work in downtown D.C. (Rom 7). The lack of new taxes from government workers that live outside D.C. has deprived the city of money and contributed to their financial crises. Estimates conclude that over 400 million dollars is lost from these tax breaks that would compensate the citizens of DC for the depletion of their city resources (Rom 7).

Statehood bills have been introduced into both houses of Congress, but were defeated for a number of political reasons. Any hope of DC achieving statehood is slight, since Republicans

would never want to introduce two democratic senators and a representative in Congress. From Congress also emanates a distrust of the District's ability to self-rule. Due to Mayor Marion Barry's divisive terms that lasted from 1978 to 1997, DC has experienced discordant leadership, which served to exacerbate splits in the city along racial lines. During this period, the gradual move toward granting more self-governance to the District was reversed and for a time Congress had control over all aspects of government save Parks and Recreation through a Congressional Control Board. Overwhelmingly, the white population viewed Barry as an embarrassment and the African American population viewed him as an activist leader that could bring good to the city.

Since Barry's replacement, Mayor Anthony Williams, these extreme racial tensions have receded, but the many barriers to organizing in DC remain. The lack of federal representation is enormously frustrating for citizens of DC, which creates a knee-jerk response to blame the federal government for DC's problems, many for which DC itself is responsible. Congressional power over the District is harmful to the political psyche of District residents, reinforcing feelings of powerlessness to change the system, and allowing Congress see DC as theirs to manage how they desire. Further barriers to organizing include the apparent racial and income disparities that exist within the District, with the people who have the most economic influence having the least need for a local government to function well. Under Barry's leadership, what Rom labels a "patronage machine," DC local government was very much focused on providing government employment and providing benefits, for the sake of political support rather than government efficiency and effectiveness (10). These initiatives served to direct political change

energies at working through the complicated and unsound governmental system, rather than organizing outside of it.

Despite these barriers, a group of pastors recognized a great need for organizing in the run-down city in the early 1990s. Notably, three of the pastors involved in the early process were students at the Howard University School of Divinity, where the dean was a huge supporter of infusing the civil rights era activism into a new generation of urban pastors (Montgomery 25). These pastors asked the Industrial Areas Foundation to take a look at the District and propose organizing plans. This was during the 1990-94 period when Barry was not in office, and the city was extremely racially polarized. The IAF asserted their policy of not working in a city unless clergy and lay people from at least two races and four denominations were committed to the effort, and the experienced organizer, Arnie Graf, observed carefully. First, Graf met with white and black congregations separately, dealing with white clergy's fears that "their congregations would be scapegoated for the inequalities in the city. Some black clergy were dubious that white congregations would put themselves on the line for priorities in black neighborhoods." These priorities could possibly result in a loss for white neighborhoods or at least not be in the wealthier communities' best interests.

The fears of white church leaders were somewhat alleviated by support from higher positioned clergy such as Catholic cardinals and Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist bishops who had witnessed the success of IAF organizations involving their faith groups. Traditionally independent black churches were reached by bringing down two black pastors from Baltimore and Brooklyn who were successful leaders in their local IAF organizations. They assured black pastors that this could be a process that did not compromise black people. Individual meetings

throughout the city were held, with group listening sessions purposefully held in varying areas of the city, from Georgetown to Anacostia, equally bringing individuals out of their comfort zones. From these initial meetings, “they began to weave the strands of relationship that provide the strength of WIN’s fabric to this day” (Montgomery 26). WIN’s “coming out party took place in June of 1995, with more than 1,400 people filling Israel Baptist Church. At this time, Barry was again the Mayor and spoke to the diversity of the crowd present, but also quietly remarked to Rev. Daniels, a founding black pastor of WIN, why the black pastors were working for a white man [Graf]. Daniel’s responded to this comment by asserting, “Mr. Mayor, we don’t work for him, he works for us” (26).

After this initial coming out, WIN placed its efforts back on building the organization to be strong enough to support a political agenda. WIN faced great difficulties during this period of political unrest in the District, when Congress took away home rule from the city. This removed a political target around which to mobilize, and WIN leaders and organizers wondered if this was even the best time to go forward with any organizing efforts. Rather than giving up, however, WIN hastened its efforts and planned a rally spectacle in May of 1996, turning out more than 2,000 people, including Hilary Clinton and Henry Cisneros. At this time, WIN announced the five-point agenda cultivated from thousands of individual meetings: Nehemiah housing, community policing, after-school programs, a living wage, and restoration of home rule. First Lady Hillary Clinton praised WIN for their organizing efforts and focused her speech on WIN’s commitment to family and children. She declared her commitment for keeping the doors to schools open from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. After-school programs were one of the first organizing successes for WIN, and have only recently come to be entirely financially independent of WIN.

Ms. Clinton's specific commitment to these after-school programs, even listing the times of operation, shows the intensive background work WIN completed before her speech. WIN never simply wants a famous speaker to come and give vague lip-service to the ideals of the organization. The focus is entirely on the power the organization has to exact commitments from authorities for WIN's specific plan. From this style, WIN has more power to keep these leaders accountable.

By 1999, WIN consisted of three full-time organizers: Arnie Graf, Martin Trimble, and Lottie Sneed. In this time, WIN was able to secure commitments for the low income housing facilities, alert the community to the inconsistent police patrolling, start a community policing initiative, initiate after-school daycare programs, and start organizing union members around living wages. At their 1999 rally, Mayor Williams spoke to a WIN crowd. Remaining vague, he was prompted to address WIN's issues, to which he subsequently referred, though in a passing manner. After the speech, 40 WIN members evaluated the effectiveness of the rally, asking if they should have pushed more and what they could improve. Through their assessment, the members felt that it was acceptable to grant more time for the Mayor to follow through on his promises, but that it was always time to organize membership and "build the base" of pressure (Montgomery 30). Not every campaign is a success, and sometimes concessions have to be made for candidates or officials who do not entirely fulfill their commitments, but no political officials are to be let off easily.

WIN's total membership as of December 2001 is 51 organizations, all religious institutions except for two unions, one tenant organization, and one education association. A central campaign for WIN regarding living wages and employment in DC was a recent effort to

call into question the hiring practices of a construction company receiving federal money. The company, Miller and Long, is non-union and refuses to comply with the DC Apprenticeship Law that requires any contractor that receives more than \$500,000 in city financing to recruit, train, and hire DC residents for career jobs in the construction industry (Wilgoren). The Department of Employment Services has authorized the Laborers' Joint Training Fund as a DC apprenticeship program, but Miller and Long does not want to use this training program because it is operated by unions and workers certified under that program start at \$9 an hour plus benefits, while nonunion laborers are generally paid \$7 an hour. Four of the eleven City Council members committed to writing letters to Mayor Williams, and Williams has asserted that "the law should be applied" but has yet to force Miller and Long to comply. This effort, while it remains unresolved, has been a force of unity between the Laborers union and WIN, introducing a greater consciousness of the limited job opportunities and low wages in the District throughout WIN's membership.

## **V. Chapter Four**

### **Barriers and Benefits to Labor Union Involvement in Community Organizing Efforts for Living Wages: Campaigns in Spokane and Washington, DC**

Community campaigns for living wages in Spokane, WA and Washington, DC will be executed very differently. In this chapter, I explore the organizational benefits and barriers to labor union and faith-based community organization collaboration, specifically how this partnership may influence living wage and economic justice campaigns. Unions and community organizations both possess incentives and concerns about combining efforts that can play out differently depending on the setting, current needs, and personalities involved. Exploring these concerns and the valid or erroneous reasoning behind them will lay a groundwork for discussing methods of overcoming these barriers to enjoy the benefits. The living wage success story of Baltimore's IAF organization illustrates union and faith-based community collaboration leading to positive effect. The interaction of unions and community organizations is the focus as I address the differences created by the union presence in the Spokane Alliance and the predominately church-based support in the Washington Interfaith Network for the strategies and methods taken for living wage campaigns. Points of attention will be the race, gender, and social status of the community members that take leadership roles in each circumstance and how the campaigns are framed and executed. Finally, I will suggest future strategies and tactics that would be location specific as well as broadly applicable.

#### Barriers to Faith-Based Community Organization and Union Collaboration

Multiple barriers exist that prevent easy collaboration between faith-based community organizations and labor unions. Churches and unions are both established institutions, meeting the qualification for IAF members, but these organizations operate, organize, and run campaigns

in completely different ways. The “business unionism” model of organizing has traditionally been focused on achieving specific gains in the workplace, addressing wages, benefits, and hour disputes. These campaigns are designed to mobilize large groups of people quickly and end once explicit objectives are achieved. IAF organizations are considerably slower moving in their campaign style and focus to a much greater extent on relational organizing. Along with the difference in organizing style between unions and faith-based community organizations, barriers such as political orientation or agenda, issues of class and race, unfavorable conceptions of working with religious groups or unions, and simply recognizing the potential benefits of collaboration, all contribute to the difficulties for forming effective, lasting, and established relationships.

A specific organizational barrier for union participation in faith-based community coalitions is that often these community organizers do not want to become involved with union politics. IAF groups maintain that they are non-partisan, and unions have been married to the Democratic Party since the 1920s. Labor unions may unabashedly promote voting by the party-line on the ballot, which could create an image of community organizations as simply tools of the union or the Democratic Party. On the other hand, unions could easily become frustrated with an IAF community coalition dragging its feet on supporting a candidate that obviously responds to the needs of working people. To deal with the issue of political agendas within organizations, both groups will need to be sensitive to the background of the other. Union members will need to recognize the appropriate times to not push a union political agenda at the strategy table, and faith-based members of the community coalition will have to accept the political culture of union members as based in their material self-interest.

Further, faith-based community organizations are made up a variety of class backgrounds, and members of a church organization may be on the “losing” end of union efforts for higher wages or benefits. An example of intra-church conflict that could arise from such a situation is the discontent of Spokane’s aluminum plant managers who attend a church that aligns itself with striking steelworkers through The Alliance. Non-working class perceptions of unions can often be negative; images of unions as greedy and self-serving may pervade the community consciousness, influencing parishioner resistance of church and labor collaboration. Racial tensions can also exist between faith-based community organizations and unions. In one situation in Baltimore, some members the predominantly African American IAF organization, BUILD, held concerns about the historically racist operation of unions. Faith-based community organizations as well as unions are filled with people who are racist and hold prejudices just like any other group in society. The issue of race, important in so many aspects – from organizational factors to who is doing campaign groundwork to who is benefiting from campaigns’ successes – must remain central for each group separately as well as when they work together.

Specific to faith-based community organizations, the additional membership of secular organizations can dilute the religious qualities of meetings and events. IAF coalition members involved through religious institutions may participate from a faith perspective and expect religious or spiritual qualities to be central components of the IAF coalition. The greater the secular institutions’ involvement, the more a reduction in prominence of a religious orientation of the organization is likely. Union members are often religious people, but unions are not religious organizations, and by no means fit comfortably in a faith-based setting. In most cases,

unions would be the definite minority in IAF coalitions, further setting union members apart from members involved through their churches, who may have a more immediate connection. IAF style is slow, painstakingly slow at times, and organizational support may not transfer quickly enough to respond to immediate workplace needs of union members in an unexpected labor dispute. In areas that historically lack religious support for unions, labor unions may have no reason to believe they have anything to gain from a new membership with a “churchy group” that is not going to serve their needs.

Catholic labor activist Msgr. George Higgins reflects on further barriers between Church based organizations and the labor movement working together in his Organized Labor and the Church. These observations ring true for union involvement in IAF coalitions. First of all, he suggests that unions and churches need to understand each other’s structures and not have false expectations of the other. Unions often seek out statements of support for labor causes from clergy and religious groups, but may “go to the top” for a Cardinal’s statement rather than seek the support of religious people in their own neighborhood. While this higher figure may be more impressive on paper, it leads to a “superficial kind of support” and reinforces the belief of Churches that, as WIN’s lead organizer Martin Trimble describes, they are only being used in a “rent-a-clergy” capacity (74).

Out front it also needs to be recognized that labor and church groups come to the table with different agendas. This ideological split may be one of the greatest divides for church and labor groups, and one that should be carefully negotiated. Divisive issues such as abortion on the Democratic ticket must not be given precedence over the areas of mutual interest in the economic justice field. Efforts to “convert” people on issues or otherwise persuade groups to

adopt the others' viewpoint are volatile and potentially destructive. Instead, efforts need to be made to educate labor on the social and economic justice tenets of religions, which are often not well known, and labor must educate churches on its own rich history. The focus of any church and labor collaboration must be approached openly and honestly, addressing the similarities of each group and recognizing the strengths both institutions bring to the table. Benefits from this collaboration can be shared on both sides, with unions raising awareness by outreaching into the community, and faith-based community coalitions gathering strength in numbers and a group who understands the benefits of organizing.

One final barrier for collaboration is the specific hesitancy of unions to mobilize for living wage ordinance campaigns. These reservations primarily emerge from concern about the use of union resources to assist a campaign that will “not directly benefit existing members, on the small chance that some new workers will organize” (Ness 153). Living wage campaigns may require years of commitment, and the difference in labor and community organizing styles is at the heart of the tension, as “community organizers tend to think in terms of years; union organizers tend to think in terms of weeks” (155). For a union to use substantial resources for a long-term campaign for non-union workers reflects “a dramatic change in the labor movement” (155). Progressive union leaders recognize engaging in these campaigns can “break down stereotypes of the labor movement as monolithic” and foster greater working class solidarity (143). In 1997, the national AFL-CIO passed a resolution declaring itself committed to getting local governments to pass living wage ordinances. With this endorsement, the role of labor unions and central labor councils in living wage campaigns is likely to increase, especially as momentum for the living wage movement grows.

### Living Wage Campaign Success in Baltimore

The first city living wage ordinance in the United States was achieved in 1994 by an IAF group, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD), working in collaboration with the American Federation of State and Municipal Employees union (AFSME) in Baltimore, Maryland. BUILD membership is Ninety-five percent African American and consists almost exclusively of Christian churches. This campaign serves as a successful model to analyze faith-based community organization and labor union combined efforts for living wages. This labor and church effort was effective in reaching out to low-income citizens and allowing them to take leadership roles in the campaign. Church and union leaders both contributed specific resources that allowed this campaign to proceed and succeed.

BUILD membership at the time of the living wage campaign consisted of 50 churches and the AFSME union. BUILD membership is ninety-five percent African American. In executing the living wage campaign, the churches and AFSME union needed to find a constructive method of collaboration that could break down fears and apprehension about each party working with the other. In Baltimore as well as many other cities, there had been collaboration with unions and IAF member organizations before, but often unions would only call the churches at the last minute for presence at a rally or for a quote from a priest. This creates feelings of being tokenized among the clergy and makes churches hesitant to try to create longer lasting relationships with unions. Unions often do not feel that they “need” the IAF groups and desire to use their resources on more immediate, tangible goals for their membership.

This living wage campaign was a major step for both BUILD and AFSME in reaching out to the other for resources and organizational strength. The environment of BUILD was

entirely church-dominated and AFSME, though a member, would not regularly attend meetings. During the living wage campaign, however, AFSME was at the table from the beginning, able to offer expertise in organizing for higher wages as well as monetary resources necessary for the campaign to proceed. Once groundwork had been laid for the campaign, BUILD organizers as well as AFSME organizers did outreach to non-union city employees to involve them in the campaign. Although AFSME does represent city employees in Baltimore, the workers who would be most affected by a city living wage ordinance would be non-union employees.

This effort by a union to serve workers to whom they are not accountable greatly impressed BUILD members and enhanced AFSME's credibility as a member of BUILD as well as the image of unions in general. Baltimore has a history of unions not securing good contracts for their members, and a union reaching out to assist employees that could be viewed as actually competing with union workers was a strong statement. AFSME's rationale for organizing to assist these non-union workers does make sense for union employees as well; when all city employees are to receive a comparable wage, union or not, there will be less movement of city officials to continue the trend of outsourcing employment to expressly non-union, low-wage employment services. By all employees receiving better pay, the work environment become less hostile to unions and there is actually greater job security for union members

During the campaign, AFSME and BUILD co-formed an organization of low-wage city workers who wanted to be involved in the living wage campaign. The organization was named the Solidarity Sponsoring Committee (SSC) and functioned as an active member within BUILD, while also receiving organizing assistance and other resources from AFSME. Female janitors took leadership roles in organizing their coworkers and speaking at rallies. Church leaders added

prestige and the ability to argue on the moral high ground in executive meetings, and support for this groundbreaking campaign existed throughout BUILD's membership. Within the SSC, about ninety percent of the active members are women, the vast majority of these, women of color (Glassman). The final stages of the living wage campaign actually took place during the 1994 mayoral election, when the mayor-elect, Mayor Kurt Schmoke, was pressured into committing to a living wage after his opponent had committed during a 1,000 person rally. Utilizing election campaigns to exert pressure on candidates and garner commitments for their issues is a central strategy of IAF groups. Both church members and union members were present for the rally, showing widespread support that pressured both candidates into living wage commitments.

After BUILD and AFSME's victory, AFSME remains the only union in the organization, but the Solidarity Sponsoring Committee also remains an active member even though the campaign for which they were formed was completed. The primarily female leadership of this group was very impressed with the outreach of churches to aid in the campaign to raise their wages, and hold a great commitment to the community organization (Glassman). During the campaign, they felt protected and supported by having so many churches behind their efforts and appreciated the one-on-one attention that the BUILD organizers provided. The gains that BUILD and AFSME achieved for the city workers of Baltimore could not have happened without their joint effort. Even though the membership of BUILD has not changed to include more unions, there is an acute awareness of the power they hold when partnering with labor. Voices of workers are more present in the organization through the SSC, and economic justice campaigns more readily able to be organized.

Finally, addressing the needs of non-union janitors achieves something crucial within an IAF organization—it reaches out to groups without a place at the IAF table. Often low-income people most in need of organization are not involved in preexisting institutions. This group of people can often be immigrants or other minority groups not involved in traditional religious institutions such as churches or temples and face barriers for union organization. Reaching out to these community members in a different way, such as through this living wage campaign, brings in new voices, ideas, and further commits an IAF coalition to address the needs of the entire community. This can also complicate matters, as a diversity of perspectives can lead to conflict. Paul Loeb, scholar of social involvement and author of Soul of a Citizen, borrows the words of civil rights activist Bernice Reagon: “If you’re in a coalition and you’re comfortable, you know it’s not broad enough” (232). This discomfort is necessary “both to achieve success and to renew our vision” (232).

### Living wages in Spokane

In its early stages of growth, Spokane has effectively communicated with and engaged the labor community. Uncharacteristic of IAF groups, one-third of the members of Spokane’s 31-member Alliance are labor unions. As I detailed in chapter three, careful negotiation of a “faith-based” or “values-based” identity has been crucial in addressing labor’s concerns of not belonging in a church organization. Spokane’s strategic decision to reach out to labor unions certainly grows from the large concern about depressed wages in the community. In past years, labor struggles have been particularly unsuccessful in addressing central issues of wages and benefits. Church efforts in the Kaiser Aluminum labor struggles were minimal, but awareness of the need to address these central issues of wages and benefits throughout the Spokane area was

heightened. This context perhaps provided more incentive for church and labor groups to sit down at the table with less difficulty in the Alliance's building stages.

From this building relationship, I believe the Alliance will address economic justice issues with greater frequency and with enhanced ability than either church or labor groups could do individually. The first major action of the Spokane Alliance reflects this focus, with the Sustainable Jobs Team calling on the federal Bonneville Power Authority (BPA) "to commit to job quality and increase from two-thirds the percentage of business the BPA does with Northwest Suppliers" ("BPA Commits"). This commitment to bring living wage employment into the Eastern Washington region was the first success of the Spokane Alliance, and will be a cause of concern throughout their growth in the next few years. Due to Spokane's small size, union members and church members encounter each other in the community much more often than unions and church members would in the DC community. Spokane Alliance member's children are more likely to be in the same schools and members are more likely to use the same health care facilities, which introduces greater common ground from which to work on many issues.

Union involvement with the Spokane Alliance brings a strong working class voice into the organization, but the presence of low-income members remains small. One low-income advocacy group, VOICES, plays a central role in presenting the needs of low-income Spokane residents. The Alliance has worked successfully with VOICES to gain a commitment from the mayor and City Council to increase the percent of the city budget allocated for human services from half of a percent to one percent. The Racism/Intolerance Team has initiated efforts to engage diverse faith and ethnic groups, hosting a dinner with the Spokane Islamic Center after

the September 11, 2001 terrorist events, drawing 250 Muslims and members of the Spokane Alliance (“BPA Commits”). Further outreach to minority and the low-income community is crucial in organizing for living wages, and a campaign itself, such as in the BUILD circumstance, could lead to further low-income participation.

### Living wages in DC

The Washington Interfaith Network faces many barriers in achieving living wages in the District of Columbia for multiple reasons. WIN is an established organization that has enjoyed considerable success in improving schools, raising voter awareness, and addressing the issue of affordable housing. The composition of WIN during these victories has been almost exclusively church groups, and the religious character of WIN is central to its identity in DC. For the Washington Interfaith network to succeed in a living wage campaign, they desperately need further involvement with unions in the large city of DC. This interaction will require compromise on both sides, with unions fully participating within the organization as well as WIN accommodating union members’ different needs and backgrounds from many church members.

These difficulties are much different from the Spokane Alliance, where backgrounds do not differ to the same degree as race, class, and ethnicity do in Washington, DC. Union members in DC would largely represent the service sector rather than the industrial sector, and to a much greater degree, represent low-income immigrants. WIN has recently made great strides in addressing the needs of immigrants in the DC area, with one full-time organizer’s focus on largely immigrant populations. Her experiences reveal that immigrant groups may be hesitant at first to join an organization such as IAF because of the diverse membership. Effective methods

of reaching out to this population occurs in areas where they do feel comfortable, such as through tenant organizations, soccer leagues, or other group settings that may not appear as institutionalized as a church or union, but nonetheless function as a mobilizing community network.

WIN faces serious barriers to church-union collaboration in DC. In prior experiences, WIN has felt used by unions merely wanting a priest to speak at a rally, and not engaging in long-term relationships. Since WIN is established as an interfaith group and so distinctly church-based, unions would certainly feel out of place. Religious groups within WIN would be displeased with changes in the religious frame of the organization, making it very difficult to modify the religious focus to accommodate non-religious groups such as unions. The religious atmosphere of WIN has not precluded union membership, however, with two local unions as official members, the Laborers International Union and Local #25 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union. The unions themselves may be the best members to reach out to other unions, illustrating the benefits of engagement with WIN in their campaigns.

The unique political landscape of the District of Columbia makes it a difficult place to apply other campaigns. The power structures and dynamics of representation in the District of Columbia make the city exceptionally difficult to organize. The heavy majority of the population of DC is Democratic, which has varying implications on organizing during non-competitive mayoral or city council races. WIN organizers are in tune with city dynamics and organizing potential and, aided by contact with union leaders, can stay up to date on the needs of the mobilizing potential of the DC workforce for living wages. Looming in the background,

however, is the daunting issue of whether Congress would simply veto a living wage bill passed by the DC City Council.

A few factors are working in favor of a living wage campaign in DC of which WIN can choose to be a part. Jobs with Justice, a national non-profit that serves to create a network of local coalitions that connect labor, faith-based, community, and student organizations to work together on workplace and community social justice campaigns, is forming a local DC Jobs with Justice coalition. These coalitions operate on more of a labor organizing style, focusing on big actions for quick results, and occasionally providing short notice before the mobilization of large rallies. However, Jobs with Justice understands the distinctiveness between organizing with religious groups and labor unions and may be able to facilitate some space to address community and religious collaboration with unions. The DC Metro Labor Council would be a part of this Jobs with Justice coalition, and already members of the council are aware of the benefits of community collaboration and have done extensive community outreach through the AFL-CIO initiated DC Streetheat program. This program works both to alert community members of area strikes and labor grievances as well as to collaborate with other non-profit organizations during larger global justice mobilizations in the nation's capital. WIN's work with the Laborer's union, advocating "DC Jobs for DC Residents" through the union's apprenticeship program, is a crucial first step in building lasting relationships with DC unions and illustrating their commitment to labor rights and economic justice issues. Through engagement ranging from union membership within WIN to sustained coalition support, union and faith-based community groups form an essential partnership for a living wages campaign.

## **VI. Conclusion**

By combining resources and organizational styles, BUILD and AFSME were able to achieve amazing success, securing living wages for all city employees in Baltimore. The organizational model they employed does not need to be an aberration in organizing style, but a model of interrelationship that can evolve and shape to fit different labor struggles and community circumstances. Organizing interaction between labor and religion is not new, but few and far between are active and institutionalized community relationships. From a resource mobilization perspective, the joint mobilization of unions and faith-based organizations can serve to strengthen campaigns by dramatically increasing numbers of members and resources to be mobilized. This model of success assumes that unifying common values and goals can be agreed upon by the diverse groups. A sustainable coalition requires constant emphasis of these shared values as well as affirming the distinct identities of member institutions.

Living wage campaigns are a distinct way faith-based community organizations and labor unions can reach out to previously unorganized members of the community. These members in many cases may be minority groups that IAF coalitions and labor unions have had difficulty engaging in the past. Alinksy's organizing roots were in the CIO's progressive union model that targeted diverse populations and embraced community engagement. At this historical moment, the labor movement is declining in America as the current global economy complicates workplace organizing. Integrating IAF organizing style with labor organizing skills in a living wage campaign offers setting to reach out and form a different model, breaking free from the traditional and currently struggling workplace focus. In a similar manner, labor organizing skills can be beneficial to faith-based community organizing, especially in articulating goals, standards

of success, and appealing to working class constituencies to execute economic justice campaigns.

Alinsky's model of community organizing—mobilizing preexisting institutions in a broad-based, multi-issue effort to shift power relations through direct action—remains a powerful organizing prototype sixty years later. Candid discussions of power relations and principles like the Iron Rule continue to roll off the tongues of IAF organizers, carrying on the Alinsky spirit. If this spirit did not have the backing of great organizers like Ernesto Cortes and Ed Chambers, however, its current status would be questionable. The faith-based vision of Cortes and the crucial organizational investments of Chambers provide the basis for the IAF's current strength and sustainability. Their efforts have sparked the dramatic growth of the field of faith-based community organizing over the past three decades, through the expansion of the IAF as well as the development of other faith-based community organizing groups. Three other faith-based community organizations built on the IAF model are the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO), the Gamaliel Foundation, and the Direct Action and Research Training Network (DART).

Faith-based community organizations hold an important role in mobilizing forgotten constituencies for the development of stronger, more active and cohesive communities. Cortes asserts that issues such as poverty can only be dealt with through “the re-creation of cultural and civic institutions that identify and mentor people” to be leaders in social action. A community-building approach recognizes that “the problem of poverty is more than the lack of sufficient income. It is a crushing burden on the soul” (Cortes “Reweaving”). Renee Carmen of St. Aloysius Parish captured part of what Cortes is addressing when she articulated Spokane

residents' deep "craving for community." IAF organizations build and activate community first through fostering new relationships. These relationships provide the basis for the crucial stage in revitalizing the community—mobilizing power to actualize your vision of "the world as it should be."

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## **VIII. Appendix I: Methodology**

To address the questions of IAF's evolution as a faith-based community organizing coalition and their growing commitment to living wage campaigns, I conducted interviews in Spokane, Washington, and Washington, DC, to gain perspective on this movement in diverse locales. In Washington, DC, I was able to attend a leadership training, monthly meetings, and an accountability action for the Washington Interfaith Network. I served as a participant observer of these events and was also able to briefly connect with different coalition members during these meetings. During my research work for this thesis, I have also been meeting with Martin Trimble, WIN's lead organizer, about a corporate accountability campaign for IAF East as TANF reauthorization approaches. From the perspective of WIN, I was viewed primarily as a research assistant, and secondarily as an observer of WIN events.

St. Aloysius, my parish in Spokane, Washington, is the largest religious institution in the Spokane Alliance, and I was able to interview parishioners as well as use church contacts to set up interviews with the organizer of VOICES, a low-income advocacy group, as well as the coordinator of Parish Social Ministry at the Spokane Diocese Catholic Charities office. Due to this connection to St. Aloysius, the people I interviewed from the Spokane Alliance were disproportionately Catholic. Each interview took between 45 minutes to an hour and a half, and I asked questions about personal motivations for being involved in the IAF coalition, its intra-organizational dynamics, and their visions of change in the community. Due to the limited time I had to do interviews over my Christmas break in Spokane, I was only able to have short conversations with two union members who were more difficult to reach over the holiday.

The following members of WIN and the Spokane Alliance were all influential in my

paper construction process:

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Chrastil, Joe. Personal Interview. 21 December 2001.

Cooper, Scott. Personal Interview. 20 December 2001.

Dellwo, Kathy. Personal Interview. 2 January 2002.

DePaulo, Austin. Personal Interview. 21 December 2001.

Glassman, Alisa. Personal Interview. 11 March 2002.

Nelson, Kjersten. Personal Interview. 21 January 2002.

Tighlman, Tim. Personal Interview. 6 October 2002.

Trimble, Martin. Personal Interview. 12 February 2002.

Waldref, Rita. Personal Interview. 27 December 2001.