



WEST WAYS

Where There's a Will:

Western States Center Helps Idaho Activists Find a Way

"Some days I wonder how I can go back there," says Jen Ray after another ugly day at Idaho's statehouse. "But I'm stubborn. Idaho is my home. And of all places, this is where we need to be doing social justice work."

Ray, executive director of the Idaho Women's Network (IWN), and Roger Sherman, program director of United Vision for Idaho (UVI), are just two of the hundreds of progressive Idahoans who work the phone lines, the fields, the meeting halls and the halls of power, day after day, to fight for justice.

In an increasingly conservative climate, Idaho activists have been holding the line, winning incremental gains, and building for the day when power will fundamentally shift. Idaho's roller coaster ride of exhilarating wins and stomach turning set-backs is a case study of politics in the West. With the help of Ray and Sherman, both Western States Board members, *West Ways* traces the role the Center has played in building a progressive movement in Idaho.

"When we get worn down, Western States Center reinvigorates us by connecting us to the other folks in the region and reinforcing what we know – that we're all in this for the long haul," Ray says.

Idaho activists have participated in – and helped to shape – the multi-issue, integrated strategies that are the hallmark of Western States Center's field programs. "The staff comes out and rolls up their sleeves to work alongside us. We can trust them not to steer us wrong because the work's been developed with grassroots people informing it," says Sherman.

Getting Perspective

Twice a year, thirty or forty Idaho activists travel to the Community Strategic Training Initiative and the Western Progressive Leadership Network conferences, and several more enroll in the Western Institute for Organizing and Leadership Development (formerly ALMP). Ray, whose staff will soon be comprised completely of Institute



One thousand mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day by demanding farmworker justice at Idaho's state capitol.

graduates, says "Getting together with activists from other states gives us a broader sense of the work we do."

Western States initiatives like dismantling racism and campaign finance reform have emerged from this big picture focus and are now influencing the work of dozens of Idaho organizations. Organizers are raring to go to be the second state in the region to bring public financing of campaigns to the voters.

In what some would like to claim as the white Aryan homeland, Idaho progressives have taken on organizational anti-racism work with greater depth and breadth than most of their sister states in the region.

The results are particularly noticeable in IWN, which is entering its fifth year of intensive anti-racism work. The Board composition has shifted to include one-third women of color, along with young women, old women,

by Holly Pruett



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The People & Programs of Western States Center



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WEST WAYS

is a new, semi-annual look at the latest ways Western States Center is working to build progressive movement in the west.

Spring 2000 • Vol. 1, No. 1

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THE WESTERN STATES CENTER's mission is to build a progressive movement for social, economic, racial and environmental justice in the eight Western states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and Alaska. Our vision is of a just and equitable society governed by a strong, grassroots democracy. We work on three levels: strengthening grassroots organizing and community-based leadership; building broad-based statewide progressive coalitions; and encouraging a new generation of citizen leaders to run for public office and engage in the public policy process. ***Here's how we do it:***

- The COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM expands the capacity and impact of grassroots and statewide organizations and their leaders by convening both emerging and established leaders for leadership development, training, and strategic organizational assistance. This program includes targeted technical assistance to organizations across the region; the **Community Strategic Training Initiative**, an annual four-day training for over 400 community leaders; and the **Western Institute for Organizing and Leadership Development** (formerly ALMP), an intensive year-long organizing and leadership development training program.
- The WESTERN PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP NETWORK helps build relationships and develop common strategies among community, environmental, labor, social justice and other public interest organizations to address vital public policy issues. The program supports the development of permanent, multi-issue statewide coalitions, and provides training and strategic support to build the capacity of informed communities to participate in the public policy process and in elections.
- The Center's RESEARCH AND ACTION FOR CHANGE AND EQUITY (RACE) PROGRAM supports research, education and action on race-related issues at the community level. It includes a dismantling racism training program; a partnership project that combines issue education and strategic convening of allied organizations working towards racial justice; and focused organizational development within communities of color.
- The Center's ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM facilitates collaboration among diverse constituencies and public officials in pursuit of socially responsible, environmentally sound and economically sustainable solutions to the region's environmental problems. The program provides research and analysis of emerging regional issues and engages communities — including those often excluded from policy debates — in developing solutions. Especially where such issues can become divisive, the Center convenes and supports groups working to bridge the divisions.
- The MONEY IN WESTERN POLITICS PROJECT works to analyze the flow of campaign contributions and political funds from wealthy private and corporate interests into politics in the West; expose the influence of these funds in our states; and mobilize public support for fundamental campaign finance reform.
- The HUB OF THE WHEEL is the development and administrative team which creates internal strategies that support external organizing, including leveraging national resources and expanding the regional progressive donor base; opening doors and providing fiscal sponsorship for new groups; and maintaining an active communications network linking 2,000 progressive organizations and almost 5,000 individuals.

Celebrate International Workers Day Register for CSTI by May 1st



Calling all activists! CSTI 2000 is coming five weeks early this year: June 22-25th at Reed College in Portland. If you want to build international (and regional) solidarity, hone your skills, and take on the bosses, sign up by International Workers Day, May 1st. Guaranteed to be the most fun since the WTO protests, CSTI is the place to pick up cutting edge analysis and strategies and hang out with hundreds of committed activists.

The Western States Center's Community Strategic Training Initiative is an intensive training institute that brings together nationally and regionally renowned trainers with a diverse cross-section of organizers and activists for four days of renewal, skill building, and fun. Once again, the Center has consulted with dozens of groups from around our region so that we can meet the needs of today's activists. Highlights of the 10th anniversary CSTI will include:

- Building on the momentum of the WTO protest in Seattle, workshops on the global economy, genetic engineering of foods, and sweatshop labor;
- New youth training presented by Sisters in Action for Power, using more youth trainers and methodologies more appropriate to young people;
- Strategies for countering racism in public schools, transportation projects, neighborhood "revitalization," and progressive organizations;
- How grassroots groups can develop electoral clout and build their base by organizing around election cycles.

If the line up of programs isn't enough to get you whipping out your calendar, check out the bottom line: CSTI offers one of the best bargains around. To keep CSTI accessible to all, Western States Center uses a combination of strategies:

- Almost half of the funds needed to produce CSTI come from the Center's general operating funds, substantially reducing the cost to participants.

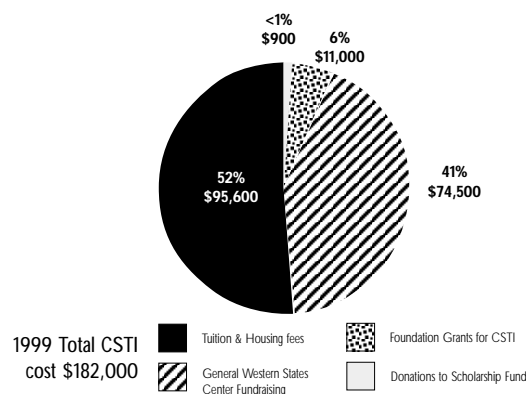
- Thanks to CSTI's national reputation and long-term relationships with some of the country's most talented trainers, many trainers participate for a fraction of their usual market rate.
- Finally, the Center offers substantial scholarship support to those who cannot afford the conference fees. In 1999, the Center provided over \$28,000 in scholarships and discounted fees. This spring, we are asking our friends and supporters to help meet this need by making a special contribution specifically for scholarships.

For more information, contact Taneisha White or Alanna Aiko Moore at 503-228-8866.



Keeping Costs Low

Fundraising underwrites almost half the cost of CSTI



In 1999, the Center provided over \$28,000 in scholarships and discounted fees.

"Some of the greatest people in the world hang out at CSTI. I left feeling ready to take on the world."

Linda Youmans
Fair Budget,
Washington



Remember, CSTI is taking place 5 weeks early this year. Mark your calendars now for June 22nd – 25th, and remember to register by May 1st.



The Way We Were: 1999 a

1999 was a watershed year for the Center, one in which years of work came to fruition in important ways. At the same time, we began several new areas of work, and maintained the quality and level of training and other programs which organizers and leaders across the region have come to expect of us.

STATEWIDE COALITIONS

United Vision for Idaho

•

Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN)

•

Equality State Policy Center, Wyoming

•

Utah Progressive Network (UPNet)

Planting Seeds

After a year of intensive planning, our RACE program – **Research and Action for Change and Equity** – is now ready to begin full implementation. This new program will initiate work and create synergy with our other core programs to build power among constituencies of color in our region, while broadening and shifting the constituencies for our environmental, coalition, and campaign finance reform work.

Our dismantling racism program, begun in 1998, was initially focused on developing a series of trainings to assist organizations in overcoming institutional barriers to effective multi-racial and anti-racist organizing. We've now created a regional network of dismantling racism trainers through a training for trainers program, and continue to initiate training with key institutional partners.

This work will now form one key component in a comprehensive racial justice program, whose goals are to support research, education and action on race-related issues at the community level. Building on our previous work, the program's objectives are to sharpen research and analysis of regional issues; support the capacity of community organizations, especially within communities of color, to advance racial justice efforts; develop experience with and models for collaboration among organizations of color on education and action campaigns; and develop models for white ally organizations to engage in racial justice campaigns.

At the same time, the redefinition of our **Environment Program** is opening up new possibilities to address pressing organizing and public policy opportunities such as growth management and sprawl, which have moved to the top of our states' agendas.



Mimi Ho, Californians for Justice, conducts electoral training.

Growing Roots

As we've planted seeds for new movement-building initiatives, we've also worked to strengthen the roots of existing progressive organizations.

The multi-issue, **statewide coalitions** that the Center has built in Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada and Utah are thriving. Their memberships are expanding; they are staffing up; and they are moving very significant program work in their states.

Gay rights in Nevada? The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada helped an Employment Non-Discrimination Act become law. And in Wyoming, where the Equality

State Policy Center hired its first full-time staff late in 1998, the coalition is giving the resource extraction industry a run for its money – literally. ESPC won remarkable media coverage exposing the relationship between an enormous state budget shortfall and tax breaks the state legislature has awarded to the resource extraction industries over the last decade in return for campaign contributions.

In 1999, Western States Center continued to provide the coalitions with a depth of support in both issue development and organizational development. The Center has also continued working with allies across the country to leverage additional financial support to sustain the coalitions. The Fund for the State Coalitions completed its second funding cycle, and a



by Dan Petegorsky

number of the coalitions have now secured significant levels of funding from major national foundations.

Our **Western Institute for Organizing and Leadership Development** (formerly the Advanced Leadership/Mentorship Program) graduated its fifth and largest class last Fall. Participants included immigrant rights organizers from Oregon and Washington; staff and leaders from statewide progressive coalitions in Idaho, Utah and Nevada; welfare and human rights activists from Montana; an environmental organizer from Nevada; and youth organizers from Oregon.

Our 9th annual **Community Strategic Training Initiative** was more strategically targeted than past years, to better meet the needs of our allied organizations. We doubled the percentage of participants from groups with whom we have ongoing, strategic relationships; those groups sent multiple staff and leaders to the event. Even more noteworthy, while most people attending came from such groups, more than half were also attending CSTI for the first time.

Established groups are cycling new people through the program, using it as a primary training ground for their leaders.

In addition to our core training programs, we have continued to offer **special trainings** to a variety of organizations and networks, especially as interest in citizen participation strategies heightens with the approach of the 2000 elections.

The Center also continues to provide hands-on **technical assistance**, fiscal sponsorship and consultation to key organizations across the region.

Bearing Fruit

Finally, we are particularly pleased to see many years of work culminate in the successful spin-off of our Helena office into the **National Institute on Money in State Politics**. Three years ago we began a collaborative effort to expand the scope of our ground-breaking research project to cover the entire country.

The Institute's growth will dramatically enhance the ability of local, statewide and regional organizers to "follow the money," not just within a single state, but across state lines and across the country. By compiling data on the flow of money into political campaigns in a single, searchable national database (www.followthemoney.org), we now have the capacity to do a much more comprehensive examination of the ways in which monied interests are seeking to influence elections and legislatures.

On the flip side of our move to promote this work at the national level, we have significantly deepened our campaign finance reform work at the local level. After nearly three years of diligent work with the Oregon Working Group on Campaign Finance Reform, we are on the verge of placing a landmark measure on the Oregon ballot. The **Oregon Political Accountability Act** has been filed for the 2000 ballot, and if it passes it will provide public financing to candidates who agree to accept no private campaign contributions.

Undermining Democracy, Oregon Action's exhaustive study produced with strong support from our staff in Helena, helped make the case for the measure, which is drawing broad support.

This measure will be the first "clean money" initiative on the ballot in our region, with organizers in Idaho looking ahead to a similar measure for their 2002 ballot.

Lastly, not content to rest after all of this field action, we also applied our planning and analytic skills to ourselves. The Center's board and staff devoted much time and energy over the past year to an intensive evaluation of our programs and strategies as part of a long-range planning process. We have set ourselves ambitious goals for the coming years. We look forward to working with activists and donors across the region to meet the challenges facing the progressive movement.



FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

Sisters in Action for Power



Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters



Western Prison Project



National Institute on Money in State Politics



Hollis Pfitsch and other classmates at the Center's leadership training program.

I D A H O C Y C L E S

“Working over a ten year period, you can see the cycles. When we’re able to think beyond today, we know we can win.”

Roger Sherman
United Vision
for Idaho

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|---|---|
| <p>1986 Right to Work law crushes labor movement in Idaho.</p> <p>1988 Idaho Women’s Network formed.</p> <p>1989 First ever gay and lesbian rights march in Idaho.</p> <p>1990 Legislature passes most restrictive anti-abortion bill in country, galvanizes pro-choice movement; law is vetoed by Governor.</p> <p>Disability rights movement and Idaho Citizens Network win landmark changes in Medicaid.</p> <p>Democrats match Republicans in the Senate and double their numbers in the House. Corporations begin to commit big money to reverse the trend.</p> <p>1992 Brutal reapportionment wipes out progressive electoral gains.</p> <p>1994 First time in 24 years: Republican party consolidates political control by taking both the governor’s mansion and the statehouse.</p> <p>Unprecedented gay and straight alliance defeats discriminatory ballot initiative.</p> | <p>1995 Responding to conservative onslaught fed by “white flight” influx to state, United Vision for Idaho forms.</p> <p>1996 Stop the Shipments anti-nuke initiative is defeated by pro-industry “Get the Waste Out.”</p> <p>Workers compensation coverage is extended to farmworkers; the Republican governor gets on board.</p> <p>1997 Welfare reform forces all but 1,100 Idaho families off public assistance.</p> <p>1998 November elections send only 4 Democrats to the 35 member state Senate, 12 Democrats to the 70 member House, and a Republican back to the governor’s mansion.</p> <p>2000 Legislature mandates parental consent restrictions on abortion after pro-choice forces held the line for a decade.</p> <p>1,000 activists turn out to the Capitol steps on MLK Jr. Day to demand minimum wage for farmworkers; a Republican sponsors the bill.</p> |
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Where There’s a Will: Western States

and former welfare recipients. Little things like meeting formats and places, and big things like organizational priorities and the framing of issues have all changed. “It’s about transformation,” says Ray. “When you’re looking at complex organizational change, you need outside support. We couldn’t be doing this without the guidance and support of Western States Center.”

Getting Organized

After a statewide progressive coalition had crashed and burned in the mid-1980s, many were wary of trying again. The redrawing of legislative districts in 1992 and the brutal electoral defeats that followed in 1994 signaled activists that they needed to get together.

The progressive community’s slender but stunning defeat of anti-gay Initiative 1 in 1994 laid the groundwork for – and reinforced the necessity of – effective coalition work.

UVI was founded the next year, ahead of many other states in the region. UVI boasts twenty-one member organizations encompassing labor, environmental, women’s, citizen action and human rights groups. To extend their base even further, together they built the Interfaith Alliance, the Progressive Student Alliance, and, as part of the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative, the Idaho Center on Budget and Tax Policy.

“In a small state like Idaho,” Ray says, “we form alliances that wouldn’t be possible many other places. We can’t afford not to.” UVI, IWN and the Idaho Community Action Network recently took this collaboration one step further into the tricky territory of joint fundraising, winning Ford Foundation funding for their common work to counter the effects of federal devolution.

Leveraging increased resources is just one sign of the

The Western Institute for Organizing and Leadership Development

The Western Institute for Organizing and Leadership Development is Western States Center's intensive, year-long organizing and leadership development training program. Since its birth in 1993 as the Advanced Leadership/Mentorship Program, the program has graduated sixty-five emerging staff and leaders. Through intensive training sessions and field work, participants improve their skills, have fun together, and form lifelong relationships.

A Wild Ride

Mary Tran-Thien and Hollis Pfitsch took the curriculum out of the classroom and onto the open road. Participants in the 1998-99 class, Tran-Thien and Pfitsch were organizers who wanted to include members and leaders in their Institute experience. They pooled their cross-training stipend from the Center, pitched in more from their own pockets, piled into a minivan and headed out of Seattle.


First stop: Central Washington, where they collected three women, one man, and two children connected with Pfitsch's organization, the Washington Alliance for Immigrant and Refugee Justice. Next stop, San Francisco, where

they worked with leading immigrant rights groups. One week later, they headed home — minus one person, plus two parakeets, with stories enough to fill a book (or make a movie).

For Tran-Thien — Community Outreach Organizer for Seattle Union Now, AFL-CIO — the trip was a time of intimate connection, of learning about organizing strategies for rural areas, and of immersion into the experience of being dependent on others for translation.

She returned with renewed commitment to her work. Tran-Thien is still buoyed by conversations with one of her fellow travelers. "I'll always remember Antonio saying that, no matter how many obstacles they face in organizing the apple packing plant, he still believes in the need for a union. It makes me see my work with the AFL-CIO as very necessary."

Get On Board

Recruitment for the 2000-2001 Institute has begun. The first of three four-day training sessions will take place next September in Portland, with sessions continuing into 2001. For more information or to request an application, contact Amalia Guerra-Lerma at 503-228-8866. 



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NANCY
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YVONNE
PAUL

AMARA
PEREZ

&

RENÉE
SÁNCHEZ

Center helps Activists Find a Way


growing capacity of Idaho progressives. Sherman reports growth in the infrastructure of many organizations, along with expansion in the number of progressive organizations. The training, technical assistance, networking and moral support — and sometimes hard cash — offered by the Center have been closely tied to all three developments. Several generations of leadership from some of Idaho's strongest organizations — and two state legislators, including former Center Board Chair Betsy Dunklin — have either come through the Western Institute for Organizing and Leadership Development or served on the Center's Board of Directors.

Getting Connected

With Idaho and other states of the western interior bearing the brunt of "white flight," progressives here

face one of the most difficult climates in the country. And yet for folks like Ray and Sherman, holding the line — tough as that is — is not enough. "We're doing good organizing, getting people out there, fighting in all the right arenas — but to change the politics of the state, we need to win bigger," says Sherman. "We need to find the pivot point to shift the balance of power."

Idaho activists know that they can't do that alone. Shifting power requires a movement. For Sherman, "Western States Center defines progressive movement. Without it, we'd be more isolated, disconnected, fragmented. The Center gives us a sense that we're part of something bigger. When we see each other working side by side, it helps makes things happen."

"It's possible to turn things around," says Ray. "And that's what we plan to do." 

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New Staff and Board Members Lead the Way

Western States Center welcomes:

RuthAlice Anderson, Bookkeeper – A Board member of Oregon Action and former financial manager with Oregon Fair Share and Basic Rights Oregon, Ruth also manages the Center's web site.

Amalia Guerra-Lerma, Director of Training Programs – A leader in a South Texas affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation, Amalia also worked with the Campaign for Human Development and World Hunger Year's Reinvesting in America program.

Selena Mason, Administrative Director – With over twenty years' experience in social service agencies in Portland, Selena recently earned her M.B.A., specializing in organizational development.

Julie Quiroz-Martínez, Board of Directors – The new associate director of the Center for Third World Organizing in Oakland, Julie has worked for the Urban Habitat Program, Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights, National Immigration Forum, National Council of La Raza, and OMB Watch.

Brigette Sarabi, Development Director – Brigette served as development director for River Network, lead national fundraising trainer for The Grantsmanship Center, and co-director of the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation.

Leah Slaney, Board of Directors – A member of the Nez Perce tribe from Idaho, Leah now lives in Bremerton, Washington and serves as board president of the Kitsap County Indian Center and on the board of the Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity.

Taneisha White, Office Manager – Taneisha gained her customer service and office management skills as an office specialist for the State of Oregon.



**YOUR
ONLINE
RESOURCE:**

www.westernstatescenter.org

Our redesigned web site will feature online registration for Western States Center events, a regional activist resource directory, training materials, and news and analysis from Center staff and our allies.

Seeking Talented Staff

Western States Center will be recruiting a new **Development Director** this summer when Brigette Sarabi departs to devote her full-time attention to directing the Western Prison Project, currently a sponsored project of Western States Center.



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