

Grassroots Leadership deserves the support of all of us. It is showing thousands of people, in the north as well as the south, how they can organize to make their voices heard in the seats of power.

Pete Seeger



Grassroots LEADERSHIP

NEWSLETTER

2010

Empowering Communities, Standing for Justice

Help us continue to fight for justice

Grassroots Leadership's 30-year history of standing for justice was made possible by hundreds of individual and foundation supporters. We've launched some great organizations and won significant victories.

Our work isn't done. People of color, immigrants, the poor and the voiceless suffer at the hands of multinational corporations ready to profit from their pain. The private prison industry is growing at an alarming rate. Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the GEO Group spend millions lobbying for laws that expand their profit center – people in prison.

Grassroots Leadership's success in the next 30 years depends on your continued support. Please use the enclosed envelope to make a donation today. If you prefer, you may donate on-line at our website, www.GrassrootsLeadership.org.

www.GrassrootsLeadership.org

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INSIDE:

The latest book and CD from Si Kahn! See Page 5.



Staff members: back row, from left, Les Schmidt, Jay Ferguson, LaWana Mayfield, Luissana Santibañez; front row, Bob Libal and Tarsha Jackson



Since 1980, Grassroots Leadership has helped build the infrastructure for a progressive Southern movement. We've trained and supported the leaders, organizers, organizations, networks and coalitions that will make long-term positive change inevitable.

Grassroots Leadership is a multi-racial team of organizers who help Southern community, labor, faith, and campus organizations think critically, work strategically and take direct action to end social and economic oppression, gain power, and achieve justice and equity.

Grassroots Leadership's goal is to put an end to abuses of justice and the public trust by working to abolish for-profit private prisons, jails and detention centers and to help establish a prison and criminal justice system that is truly humane and just.

We have helped organizations become stronger so that they can meet their own goals. We have created

Celebrate, continued on Page 4

Executive Director Si Kahn retires after 30 years

*What will I leave, what will I leave
What will I leave behind
When I am gone, who'll carry on
What will I leave behind*

Dear Friends,
On May Day 2010, nine days after my 66th birthday, I will officially retire from Grassroots Leadership, where I have worked for over 30 years.

As I go, I want to leave behind some thoughts about what, for me and hopefully for the rest of you, makes Grassroots Leadership such a special organization, the lessons I have learned over these years.

Keep it real: Grassroots Leadership organizes hard-hitting direct action campaigns that make a difference in the lives of everyday people they can touch and feel.

Stay small: Our small size has allows us to move quickly, to take on fights when they need to be taken on, to make decisions when they need to be made.

Stay on the edge: Whenever another organization is willing and able to take over a project that Grassroots Leadership has started, or can do one of the things we do comparably well, we should let them do it, and use our resources to take on the issues and campaigns no one else wants to touch.

Share credit: As a small organization, we can only accomplish our mission if we leverage other resources. That's why we're such good partners and coalition builders. Because we always share the credit, we win more often and more fully.

Change power and hearts: Grassroots Leadership organizes in ways that help people become better than they were: more humane, understanding, cooperative, empathetic, open, democratic.

All traffic bear left: As Jim Hightower once said, "There's nothing in the middle of the road but a yellow stripe and dead armadillos." If we moved towards the center, we could probably become a larger, better-funded organization. We shouldn't give up who we are to try to become what we're not.

Honor identity: We believe that race, gender, sexual orientation and class are all central to the struggle for justice, and we fight to keep them that way.

Be willing to fail: If you take on the really important fights, you're going to lose at least as often you win. We're open and honest about what goes wrong in our work (including that sometimes the other side is just too powerful), we learn from our mistakes and failures, and we move on.



Photo/Nancy Pierce

Whoever pays the piper, calls the tune: We don't accept money from sources that would compromise our principles or our ability to do what we think is right. We maintain enough financial independence that we can call our own tune.

Celebrate, celebrate, celebrate: We have a culture of celebration, and we celebrate culture. We lift up and honor each other and the work we do together.

Thank you for all everything done with and for me over these thirty years, and for your own work to help make this word a more just and joyous place for everyone.

In solidarity and friendship,

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Introducing Donna Red Wing, Grassroots Leadership's Executive Director

Social justice has been a defining thread throughout Donna Red Wing's work. Whether working with abused children or working towards equity for LGBT persons or defending religious liberty, Donna is at her core, an activist and an organizer. Before joining Grassroots Leadership, she was Chief of Staff of the Interfaith Alliance where she designed the First Freedom First campaign, and created the Green Paper Project on LGBT equality and religious freedom.



Grassroots Leadership continues to show America the impact and the joy of organizing. I am extraordinarily proud to be the next Executive Director of this amazing organization. I look forward to working with the staff and the Board of Directors as together we take Grassroots Leadership into a new decade of learning and teaching, and understanding the astonishing power of people who care and who organize.

– Donna Red Wing

Donna was the Policy Director at the Gill Foundation until April 2003, where she managed several initiatives including the National Faith Leadership Project, which brought together national mainline faith leaders around the intersections of faith, politics and sexual orientation, and the National Research Project which gauged public attitudes towards gay and lesbian Americans.

Donna served as the National Field Director for the Human Rights Campaign from 1996 to 1999, where she managed an advocacy network of tens of thousands of members. Her staff of field representatives worked in all fifty states. She served as a Board member of the Millennium March on Washington. Donna was the National Field Director for the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation from 1993 to 1996, assisting GLAAD as it moved from a loose federation of local media watch groups to a national organization with media advocacy networks across the country. She was Executive Director of the Lesbian Community Project, in Portland, Oregon, from 1989 until 1993 and worked against Ballot Measure 9, earning both the "Woman of the Year" award from the Advocate Magazine and the moniker, "the most dangerous woman in Oregon," from the radical right. In 2004 Des Moines Register columnist Rob Borsellino wrote that she had been called the "Most Dangerous Woman in America" by the Christian Coalition.

Donna brings extensive knowledge of Grassroots Leadership's history and vision. She served on the Grassroots Leadership Board of Directors from 2006 to 2009, led the Board's Development Committee, and served as Board Co-Chair.

At almost 9000 feet, my home in the mountains of Colorado is also the home of mountain lions, bears and elk. While I cherish the time I spend traveling and meeting with people: organizers, activists, advocates and donors, it is in Evergreen that I do my best thinking and my best living. My partner, Sumitra, and I love to kayak, albeit "old lady lake" kayaking. We walk our dogs, Doc Watson and Cinnamon, through the meadows and hiking paths. And we enjoy the sensibilities of this small western mountain town.

I bake bread, make yogurt, create killer scones and never buy a food item that has more than five ingredients or that has even one ingredient I cannot pronounce. It is almost impossible to grow vegetables on our hard-scrabble sloping side of the mountain so, we buy local produce when we can.

I suppose that we try to live a life that is the antithesis of violence; a quiet life of joy and appreciation, of inclusion and wonder, rich morning coffee, great dogs and fabulous friends. It is a good life.

Celebrating Grassroots Leadership past and future



North Carolina Fair Share is one of the many organizations birthed by Grassroots Leadership

Celebrate, continued from Page 1

and supported new organizations to address community needs. We have also provided strategic space for Southern activists to work together on common issues and campaigns.

Grassroots Leadership is an invaluable leader in social justice work. Staff generously share their expertise and support leadership development within the community. They are leaders in helping the movement grow stronger.

— Andrea Black, Network Coordinator
Detention Watch Network

Grassroots Leadership's most valuable resource is its staff. Most of the staff members are "minority." They know from the experience of their own lives what life is really like for working people, for women, for lesbians and gay men, for African-Americans, for other people of color, for immigrants, for combinations of all these.

Grassroots Leadership's unwavering commitment to amplifying the voices of those who are frequently unheard has been an important contribution to democracy in North Carolina and throughout the South. Your commitment to equity and social justice across lines of race, gender and ethnicity has been an inspiration. Your contribution of music, fellowship and laughter has been a gift.

Thank you.

— Leslie J. Winner, Executive Director
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Grassroots Leadership's staff brings the strength and power of their diverse communities, experiences and beliefs to the organization. We don't just talk the talk, we've walked the walk. When we join a community, we have firsthand knowledge of people's challenges, hopes and fears. This understanding helps us create a feeling of collaboration and trust as we developing strategies for change.

We're proud of our 30 years of standing for justice and look forward to fighting the good fight for the next 30 years.

Special thanks

Grassroots Leadership would like to give special thanks to CrossCurrents, a new foundation that works at the intersection of art and social justice, for helping support the Standing for Justice 1980-2040 national tour. CrossCurrents instigates collaborations with other funders and artists who are organizing to strengthen our democracy.



We recognize the power of the arts in transforming society.

Thank you!

Thank you to the following people who have supported Grassroots Leadership with donations over the last 30 years. We hope you will find your name among our supporters and we invite you to become a supporter for Grassroots Leadership's next 30 years.

This list was compiled as of December 1, 2009.

If you are a new donor, we look forward to including your name on future lists of supporters. Apologies in advance if you have been a Grassroots Leadership donor and your name is missing or misspelled. Please email csawyer@grassrootsleadership.org with corrections.

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Building Bridges, Building Coalitions

Grassroots Leadership's staff are community organizers. Whether they're in Texas, North Carolina, West Virginia, or New Mexico, they work with those most directly affected by the privatized prison industry, oppressive immigration policies, and the barriers of race, gender, sexual orientation, and class.

Grassroots Leadership seeks to build alliances, open communications, and increase mutual understanding among African American and immigrant communities.

Mass incarceration devastates both the African American and immigrant communities. Strengthening alliances between Black and Brown communities will create a united voice to address shared problems. Joining together, the Black and Brown communities can

address the legacy of discrimination and the impact of over incarceration on all people of color as well as all poor and working people.

Kudos to Grassroots Leadership for thirty plus years of brilliant, sustained, and strategic organizing for social and economic justice. And many thanks for all that you have taught me about political education: speaking truth to power, staying the course, and the incendiary joy of solidarity!

— Chandra Talpade Mohanty
Professor and Chair, Department of Women's and Gender Studies,
Syracuse University

Ending Injustices in Immigration

Fueled by private prison industry profits, the immigrant detention system in the U.S. has grown dramatically. Immigrant families are ripped apart when a long-time resident parent is detained for long periods of time. Immigrants and asylum seekers can spend months or years in detention waiting for their cases to be resolved.

For a U.S. Citizen, a simple traffic stop usually means a ticket or trip to the local jail. For an immigrant, it can mean deportation. We are organizing in Texas, North Carolina and nationally to end ICE-local law enforcement collaborations like the notorious 287(g) program and new "Secure Communities" programs.



Immigration laws like 287(g) rip families apart.

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Celebrating unsung heroes

Courage, Si Kahn's latest CD, celebrates the struggles of unsung heroes, immigrants, workers, and people seeking justice. Grammy Award winner Kathy Mattea adds her voice in harmony with Si's in *Courage*.

Si Kahn is an organizer, and an activist. He's also a poet, a songwriter, a preservationist, a historian, a documentarian in song. He's a stark realist, and simultaneously an unflinching optimist. The tender reverence he holds for the people whose struggles he has facilitated spills over into his songwriting, keeping their stories alive, connecting us to them—and ultimately, ourselves.

This record is like a great meal, or an epic movie. It satisfies on so many levels. There are moments of light and gentle humor, wry wit, soul-searching and questioning, deep longing and poetic lyricism. Musically, the performances sparkle, the acoustic instruments are hooky and add interest, but never overpower the lyric and spirit of the songs.

Si has done a difficult thing here: with ease and grace, he's told a heroic story by looking through small windows into the lives of everyday people. People like you and me, or maybe our family members, our ancestors or our children.

This is a record about what sustains the human heart—the big and small moments that keep us going when things get hard, that keep us connected to the bigger story, and our own history, and each other.

— Kathy Mattea, *Courage* liner notes

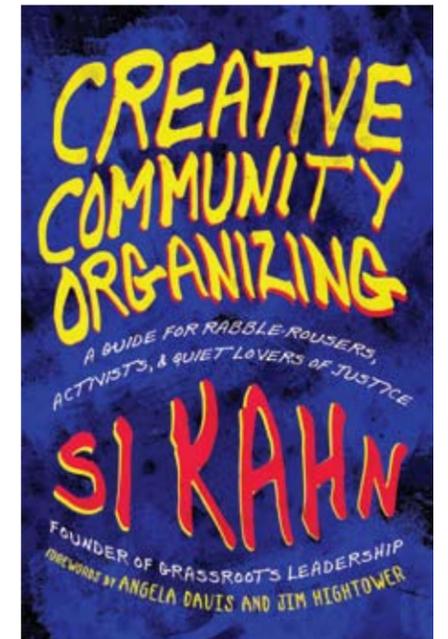
Guide to creative community organizing

Si Kahn's *Creative Community Organizing: A Guide for Rabble-Rousers, Activists, and Quiet Lovers of Justice* is a different kind of community organizing book. It describes many of the practical tactics organizers use, as do other books on the topic, including several by Si himself. But it's also about community organizing as a way of thinking, and a way of life.

The stories Si tells are entertaining, funny, sad, and inspiring. But they're more than that—they're examples of creative community organizing in action. Like the secular rabbi he calls himself, he lays out the specific lessons each tale is meant to teach—not only strategies and tactics, but advice on how to deal on a personal level with the demands of a difficult but vitally important job.

Creative Community Organizing will not only help veteran organizers become more creative and innovative, it will encourage them to question established principles, and decide whether or not they still make sense.

Those new to the field will discover new and different ways of looking at the world. They'll gain a sense of empowerment, a deep belief that things don't have to be the way they are, that the world can be more fair and humane—and that they themselves can work and live in ways that help make all that happen.



A signed book and CD are yours with a \$100 donation (feel free to send more) to Grassroots Leadership.

Be sure to include a note requesting a book and CD with your donation. If you donate online, click on the email us link at the bottom of the donation page to request your signed book and CD.

www.GrassrootsLeadership.org

Victories

Stopping, Shrinking, Shutting For-Profit Prisons

In Mecklenburg County, North Carolina (Charlotte), our campaign coalition blocked construction of a proposed 1,500-bed immigrant detention center. When ICE attempted to build it in adjacent Gaston County, we stopped that effort as well.

The activists at Grassroots Leadership are going to do whatever it takes to stop the construction of the detention center. It is good to know that we are not alone.

— Rafael Prieto Zartha,
Publisher & Editor, Mi Gente, Charlotte

In Shelby County, Tennessee (Memphis), we organized community pressure that persuaded the County Council to reject proposals by CCA and the GEO Group, the country's two largest for-profit private prison corporations to build what would have been a 5,500 bed private for-profit jail.

Grassroots Leadership has made an incredible difference for the people of Memphis. Without their self-less dedication to justice we would be home to the largest private prison in the United States. I can speak for hundreds in our community when I say thank you for your commitment to justice, and personally, thanks to Si for his consistent and effective leadership on so many issues.

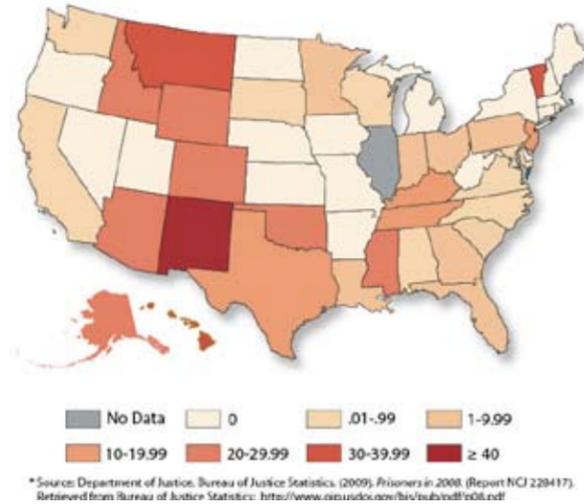
In Peace,

— Jacob Flowers, Director
Mid-South Peace and Justice Center

♦ In Laredo, the U.S. Marshals Service was forced to cut in half the size of what would have otherwise been the country's largest immigrant detention center.

♦ In response to our campaign, Mississippi Governor Ronnie Musgrove closed CCA's Delta Correctional Facility, one of the first instances of a for-profit private prison actually being shut down because of organized community pressure. It remained closed for two years until Haley Barbour, former head of the Republican National Committee, was elected Governor and re-opened it.

Percentage of state and federal prisoners in private facilities, by jurisdiction, December 31, 2008



A Decade of Victories

Ten years ago, Grassroots Leadership convened a meeting in North Carolina to launch a national campaign to abolish all for-profit private prisons, jails and detention centers. Thirty-two people representing community, faith, philanthropic, labor, student, prison activist, research and policy organizations came together to plan.

For those of us who are prison and criminal justice activists, the problems we face can sometimes seem overwhelming. It's worth pausing at relevant moments – such as the 10th anniversary of that meeting – to celebrate, not just our victories, but the people and organizations who help make the work worthwhile and rewarding.

For an organization with a very small paid staff, Grassroots Leadership has chalked up an impressive list of victories. We share credit with our many partners and allies. Grassroots Leadership never does anything alone; we're effective and often successful precisely because we're coalition builders.

Divesting in Prisons

♦ With pressure from students supported by Grassroots Leadership, the French multi-national food service corporation Sodexo Alliance (used by many colleges and universities) divested its approximately eight percent share in CCA and withdrew its representative from the CCA board of directors.

♦ In a campaign initiated by Yale graduate students, which was then at their request taken national by Grassroots Leadership, Farallon Capital Management, LLC, a hedge fund that manages many college and university endowment investments, divested from CCA.

No More Babies Behind Bars

In August 2009, the Obama administration announced the end of family detention at Hutto. The past three years have seen thousands of people participate in dozens of Hutto vigils, two great documentary films on family detention, major media scrutiny, a landmark lawsuit settlement, over 74,000 petition-signers, and the organizing of students, immigrant rights advocates, faith activists, and everyday people around the country to end family detention.

Grassroots Leadership is a powerful catalyst for change in Texas. They led the TUFF Coalition, coordinating the activism targeting the T. Don Hutto Family Detention Facility. As a result of this activism and the litigation that grew out of it, the Hutto facility was closed by the Obama Administration in September 2009.

Their leadership has played an indispensable role in pushing back against the expansion of the prison and jail infrastructure in Texas. In late 2007 we received a call about a proposed private, faith-based contract prison facility in East Texas. Grassroots Leadership helped coach a local activist



Grassroots Leadership helped close Hutto.

how to cultivate local opposition to the project, which was proposing institutionalizing the role of one local church as the sole theological service provider in the private prison facility. With the advice of Grassroots Leadership, the local activist successfully organized hundreds of local residents to oppose the facility as a poor choice for the small city.

It has been a joy to work in coalition with Grassroots Leadership and we hope to continue to have the pleasure for years to come.

— Rebecca Bernhardt, Policy Director,
ACLU of Texas

Despite the stunning Hutto victory, immigrant family detention itself has not yet been abolished. Some families will still be detained at the public facility in Berks County, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. It's possible that other similar contract sites, both public and private, will be established.

We remain vigilant.



Grassroots Leadership Board, staff, and friends protest outside of the T. Don Hutto family detention facility.

Manual for Stopping Private Prisons

Considering a Private Jail, Prison or Detention Center? A Resource Packet for Community Members and Public Officials

For profit private prison corporations entice economically struggling communities into contracts for prisons, jails, and detention centers with false promises of jobs and economic growth. Companies like Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the GEO Group make money from every prison bed. From their perspective, recidivism is just good business.

Grassroots Leadership's updated *Resource Packet* analyzes the economic impact of private prisons on Texas communities, offers alternatives to prison expansion, and compares the safety and conditions at private and government run prisons. This report and other publications are available for download on our website, www.GrassrootsLeadership.org.

Grassroots Leadership not only pioneered a unique style of effective community activism against private prisons in the USA, it remains the only organization in the world offering such resistance on an ongoing basis.

— Stephen Nathan, Editor, Prison
Privatisation Report International, London