

## Chapter 5: CCC and Public Policy

The Center and its partner the Center for Community Action were classified as tax-exempt under Sections 501©(3) and ©(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. Both therefore were limited in the extent of their legislative work as well as barred from engaging in any political activities.

Nevertheless, **there were many points of contact between the Center's staff and projects and the world of public policy. It is worthwhile highlighting some of these points of intersection as they greatly expanded the Center's short- and long-term impact.**

Created shortly after Robert Kennedy's assassination, CCC was the first major project of the Robert F. Memorial. Its predecessor organization was the Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty (CCAP), , which had been created by in 1966 by colleagues of Senator Kennedy and leaders of the "war on poverty", or OEO (the Office of Economic Opportunity which was the heart of the "war on poverty"). They saw the need for an organization through which they could push that extraordinary set of programs to stay committed to maximum feasible participation of the poor and to organizing and social change. CCAP quickly captured attention in the national press and on Capitol Hill when it brought more than 1500 poor people to Washington for a major demonstration jamming OEO Director Sargent Shriver on the issue of maximizing community control and avoiding control by local politicians, especially Southern whites and big city politicians like Chicago's Mayor Daley.

Five of the Center's initial seven Board members had been associated with Kennedy including former Deputy Attorney-General Burke Marshall who served as the founding Chair.

Marshall succeeded United Auto Workers' President Walter Reuther who had chaired the CCAP Board, and subsequently became Dean of Yale Law School.

Dick Boone, CCAP's Executive Director and then Vice President of CCC had come to CCAP from having studied criminology at the University of Chicago and worked on juvenile justice issues with the Cook County Sheriff's Department, Boone worked for Bobby Kennedy at the President's Commission on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime. That Commission stressed community control and empowerment and was a major source of leadership and ideas for OEO. Boone had a particularly deep commitment to developing youth leaders and youth-led organizations, and was brilliant in spotting and guiding talented young people into careers in social change.

Jack Conway, who took over from Boone when CCC replaced CCAP in 1968, had been Walter Reuther's right-hand man at the UAW. President Kennedy appointed Jack Deputy Director of HUD's forerunner – the Housing and Home Finance Agency -- and then moved him to become Sargent Shriver's Deputy Director at OEO. Conway was highly political as was Reuther's whole team. One key ally was UAW Region 6 Director Paul Schrade who was deeply involved with CCC in the creation of "community unions", including the Farmworkers and the labor/community organizations in Watts and East LA. Schrade was shot in the brain by Kennedy's assassin but recovered and is still alive in 2021.

Rev. David Ramage was Conway's successor in 1971. He had served as Director of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church USA. Ramage was a long-time Board member of the Industrial Areas Foundation, and personally close to Alinsky. He also was a major leader in organizing church support for the civil rights movement, the Chicano movements, the Raza Unida Party, Tijerina's land reform efforts in northern New Mexico, the American Indian Movement (AIM) and other social change efforts. Ramage's skills in collaborative leadership brought greater unity to the Center, and he greatly strengthened the organizing side of CCC, drawing deeply from his relationships with Alinsky, Fred Ross and the social gospel movement. Dave brought Raul Yzaguirre and Rev. Arthur

Brazier to the Center as Vice Presidents. Yzaguirre came from the Texas Chicano movement and went on to become President of the National Council of LaRaza, now UnidosUS. A former postman, Brazier started a storefront church which rapidly grew to become a major institution within the Church of God in Christ, as Bishop Brazier also led the remarkable organizing efforts of The Woodlawn Organization and served as its President.

A major CCAP goal was the development of prototypes of strong independent community organizations for OEO and others to emulate. Worried that OEO's local programs would lose their independence, vigor, and commitment, they created CCAP to help build local organizations to organize strong grassroots constituencies which could influence politicians and major institutions and policies, develop alternative institutions controlled by POC/LMI, and also build power through voter registration, education and the development of community leaders who could win political office. Over the first 30 years, the Center's quasi-political work included the following. –

- Detailed two full-time CCC staff-members to help the Farmworkers for over a decade, one of whom was in charge of raising outside money to support the movement, the union and the National Farmworkers' Service Center, a ©(3) organization;
- Created The East Los Angeles Community Union with two long-range goals with strong policy implications –
  - Providing leadership opportunities for Esteban Torres, who was recruited from the UAW to launch and direct TELACU, and who was subsequently elected to Congress, where he served for eight terms, including two years as Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus; and
  - Preparing support and plans for incorporating the heavily Chicano unincorporated part of LA County to become a Chicano-controlled city of LA with a population of over 100,000 people. They developed the economic analyses and plans for the government

structure which were required to launch a referendum on the issue, but it was defeated by Anglo, corporate and political opponents falsely arguing that it would increase taxes) (good book on the incorporation struggle – John R. Chavez

- Created the Watts Labor Community Action Committee which too quickly became dominated by a single powerful figure, Ted Watkins, a former shop steward who had been recruited from the UAW to direct WLCAC. The organization never was involved in classic organizing or electoral politics, but it did have a series of huge victories –
  - Tackling the crisis in the lack of any hospitals or other medical institutions in South Central Los Angeles, by convincing the County and institutions to develop the Martin Luther King Hospital and Charles Drew Medical School in Watts;
  - Organizing occupation of Fort Saugus, a deserted army base on the edge of LA, by hundreds of young Blacks involved in WLCAC youth employment programs, eventually forcing LA Mayor Sam Yorty to redevelop it as a Job Corps camp under community control;
  - Through demonstrations against the building of a Freeway through South Central, they won enormous concessions, especially the moving of all houses in the freeway's path onto vacant lots in South Central, where WLCAC rehabbed them to code, providing hundreds of families with affordable housing;
  - Created dozens of youth jobs in farming as the organization seized control of land under the powerlines crossing Watts, and trained people in market gardening, farming, and small business.
- Hired Ed Brown and Charles Bannerman and helped them create MACE, Mississippi Action for Community Action, and the Delta Foundation. Eddie was Rap Brown's older brother, a deeply committed and charismatic SNCC leader. In its early years, MACE's main priority was building on

the success of the civil rights movement to give emerging grassroots leaders intensive year-long training in organizing, leadership, electoral work and issues affecting the Delta. Those leaders in turn built chapters in a dozen counties in the Mississippi Delta with plans to enable African-Americans to win office throughout the Delta. In addition to voter and electoral strategies, they concentrated on the need to develop jobs in the Delta so Blacks could stay in the region and maintain a voting majority. Charles was the equally talented #2 person in MACE and eventually ED of the Foundation, which was a CDC/job creator. Delta developed several industries – blue jeans, railroad spike manufacturing, etc. This tough, complex work preoccupied Charles who had been a union organizer in Ohio but who gradually turned away from organizing.

When Rap Brown was arrested, Ed felt he had no choice but to leave MACE and lead the defense for his younger brother. That weakened the organizing efforts and the organizations gradually lost strength and momentum, no longer having the remarkable leadership of Ed and Charles who had made an extraordinary team, balancing organizing and development with a long-range vision for transforming the Delta economically and politically.

- Created *Friends of the Children*, a national coalition which fought against Southern politicians' efforts to close off OEO support for the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), which had angered the white establishment by becoming the third largest employer in Mississippi as it provided child care, early childhood education, and employment to African American families throughout the Delta;
- CCC launched a special project and created a coalition which blocked efforts to cut off all funding for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, a critical vehicle for Black economic empowerment and political freedom in the South.
- CCC served as a major source of fundraising help, advice

on strategy, and skill development for MAYO (the Mexican American Youth Organization) as well as leaders of the third party La Raza Unida in Texas. The Center was major source of help for Jose Angel Gutierrez who became the first Chicano elected mayor in Valley history when he won office in Crystal City, and other young political leaders of the growing Chicano movement.

- The Center was a major source of support for Willie Velasquez, initially as part of CCC's TA to the Mexican American Unity Council in San Antonio for which he was the first ED, and then assisting him as he created *Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project*. Willie was a longtime CCC Board member. (Su Vota Es Su Vox is the title of both Willie's biography and an excellent PBS documentary on Willie.)
- Provided substantial TA to the Guadalupe Organization in Arizona, which was founded by Lauro Garcia who had been trained by Fred Ross when Fred ran an intensive three-month organizing training program in Phoenix for 12 new organizers from that region. GO's deputy director was Ed Pastore who subsequently was elected to Congress for several terms. Another staffer was Santo Bernosconi, who became the founding director of the Hispanic TV station in Phoenix. GO itself became a highly successful organizing group in that town of 5500 Chicano and Yaqui Indian farmworkers on the edge of the Phoenix SMSA. Among GO's victories were: the paving of all streets, street lights, access to running water and the town's first garbage pick-up; creation of job training and housing development projects and a credit union;
- This work with GO culminated in the incorporation of Guadalupe as a town with its own self-government; incorporation enabled the residents to defeat developers' plans for bulldozing the town and replacing it with gated communities (during one Tempe city hearing I attended, Guadalupe was depicted as a "dagger at the heart of Tempe" despite the fact that the Yaquis and Chicanos

settled the town six decades earlier in 1911 as they fled persecution during the Mexican Revolution, Tempe was then a crossroads in the desert),

- TA to the Harlem Neighborhood Boards which were democratically elected vehicles for exerting community control, and were closely linked to Rep Adam Clayton Powell, Chairman, of House Education and Labor Committee.
- Extensive TA to The Woodlawn Organization, Alinsky's first Black organization, especially the organizing and reform side of TWO when the organization was fighting for community control of schools, return by the University of Chicago of the land it had purchased in Woodlawn, displacing Black families, and gutsy efforts to guide the Blackstone Rangers gang toward constructive roles in the community. (See Black Power, White Control by John Fish)
- Hired Jim Hightower who created CCC's *Agribusiness Accountability Project* blasting corporate abuses and their devastating effect on small farmers,
- CCC's Youth Project funded and helped young people organize on a wide range of issues, including union reform (the YP funded *Miners for Democracy* and *Teamsters for a Democratic Union*) as well as local organizing efforts and the development of many long-lasting organizations;
- CCC unsuccessfully led the charge to block the Green Amendment which gave Mayors control over OEO spending in their jurisdictions, thus blunting their efforts to influence politics and force reforms at the local and higher levels
- CCC formed *Friends of VISTA*, a long-lasting staffed coalition which saved the VISTA program from being eliminated by Nixon who particularly hated the tough organizing and advocacy work which was being done by VISTA Minority Mobilization in Texas; the Appalachian Volunteers who were fighting strip-mining, black lung,

union corruption, etc.; and California Rural Legal Assistance which was attacked by Reagan who opposed the farmworkers fight against the growers for reforms, bargaining rights, the end of voter suppression, etc.

- John Kramer of CCC created the *Citizens' Board of Inquiry on Hunger and Malnutrition*, which involved a cross-section of national civic, union, civil right, and faith leaders in holding a highly publicized public hearings in several key states, publishing Hunger USA, creating an ongoing national coalition on hunger issues which was the moving force behind creation of the food stamp program and the forerunner of FRAC, the *Food Research and Action Center*. John had been Legislative Assistant to Adam Clayton Powell, and years later he became Dean of Tulane's Law School;
- Raul Yzaguirre served for several years as a CCC VP and the Center subsequently helped him build up the *National Council of La Raza*, which grew to be a major force nationally and a close partner for CCC for decades
- Comedian/Black activist Dick Gregory housed his organizing project with CCC as he led hunger strikes and marched across the US for expanding food programs;
- Paul Wellstone used CCC as his base during a sabbatical from Carleton College, before he was elected to the Senate; during that time he wrote his book on Power Lines
- CCC Vice President Phil Mason created a national coalition of Community Development Coalitions, which was the predecessor of *National Coalition for Community Economic Development*;
- **CCC incubated many powerful organizations and coalitions over the years, finding that one of the most effective ways of building “soft power” and trust with other national organizations and greatly leveraging its impact**; in addition to the groups already mentioned this included –
  - Andy Mott's role as founding Chair of the *Coalition on*



*Human Needs, the Working Group for Community Development Reform, and the National Low-Income Housing Coalition;*

- Pablo as founding Chair of the *National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy* and the *National General Revenue Sharing Coalition*
- The *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities* started as a CCC Special Project
- Another CCC special project became *Community Catalyst*, a major source of support, advocacy, organizing and research on community-based and creative solutions to the nation's health care crises;
- Barbara Williams (Skinner) prepared to be first staff Director of the *Congressional Black Caucus* through her directorship of CCC's *Coalition on Budget and Policy Priorities* during the Nixon Administration
- CCC's housed and staffed the *Funders Committee on Voter Participation* for many years, providing millions of dollars to support voter registration efforts in low-income communities of color; CCC also housed Project Vote.
- CCC's launch and staffing of several additional coalitions opposing the move to Block Grants, fighting to save and improve public housing, to save and expand the Public Service Employment Program, to crack down on predatory mortgage bankers, to defend the Community Anticrime Program at the Department of Justice, to argue for greater power and resources for neighborhood organizations and other vehicles for neighborhood control, to support expansion of CRA and other controls on private lending.
- CCC incubated several "Citizen Monitoring" efforts, applying Paulo Freire's population education strategies and helping community groups use participatory action research (PAR) to develop a thorough understanding of how local governments were using and misusing federal funds which

were intended to benefit poor people of color. The largest of these included providing funding to 80 local coalitions and organizing groups so they each hire half-time researchers to help them conduct interviews, file searches, legal reviews, etc. of the Community Development Block Grant program, issue local and national reports, organize and advocate on issues based on their research findings and local priorities. The results included: a San Francisco ordinance which permanently shifted the city to Precinct Elections in order to increase the power of communities of color; election of Tom Andrews as a Congressman from Maine; a new federal requirement that 51% of that \$4 billion program benefit low- and moderate-income people, with 25% benefitting those with very low incomes.

A noteworthy part of early CCC history is that Jack Conway brought several absolutely top-level lobbyists and policy experts when he moved to the Center. That policy team included –

- Leonard Lesser, longtime General Counsel of CCC, and one of the nation's top experts on Welfare and Health Care issues;
- Woody Ginsburg, CCC's Research Director, an economist and top expert on federal budget issues whom many organizations relied on for information and guidance before Bob Greenstein established his Center on Budget as a CCC Special Project. Woody also specialized on issues of employment, training, unemployment compensation, and started CCC's project on *Public Service Employment* which Othello Poulard directed with a field staff of five;
- David Cohen, subsequently the founding Executive Director of Common Cause and one of the top public interest lobbyists in DC;
- Jane O'Grady, who became the top lobbyist for the AFLCIO Industrial Union Department

CCC's Edgar Cahn and his wife Jean Camper Cahn founded Antioch School of Law and served as Co-Deans. It is now the UDC School of Law;

Edgar's deputy Steve Rosenfeld went on to become Chief of

Staff for Governor Dukakis, and Dean of the Law School at Tulane University.

Later John Carr directed CCC's policy efforts and particularly its fight against federal budget cuts and block granting. He also served as ED of the *Full Employment Action Coalition*, leading efforts which led to passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Deepak Bhargava became CCC's Policy Director after leaving ACORN. He developed a strong Public Policy Unit within the Center, leading our work on welfare reform and many other issues while also collaborating with issue specialists who were also on CCC's staff and leading policy efforts on issues on which they were expert. CCC administered a *Welfare Reform Grants Pool* on behalf of several national organizations. It provided funding for a broad program of advocacy during debate on welfare reform.