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Industrial Areas Foundation

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INDUSTRIAL AREAS FOUNDATION

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In his classic book, *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair described life for the workers in the Chicago stockyards:

All day long the gates of the packing-houses were besieged by starving and penniless men; they came, literally by the thousands, every single morning, fighting with each other in mad frenzy for a chance for life. Blizzards and frightful cold made no difference to them, they were always on hand; they were on hand two hours before the sun rose, an hour before the work began. Sometimes their faces froze, sometimes their feet and their hands; sometimes they froze all together – but still they came, for they had no other place to go.¹

It was this world that Saul Alinsky observed in 1938 when, with a graduate degree in criminology, he went to work for sociologist Clifford Shaw at the Institute for Juvenile Research.² Based on his observations, Alinsky concluded that the only remedy for poverty in America was “active, widespread participation in the political process.”³ After consulting with church leaders and leaders of various ethnic groups, Alinsky and local organizer Joe Meegan convened the first “Back-of-the-Yards”⁴ Council meeting in 1939.⁵ “Alinsky envisioned an ‘organization of organizations,’ comprised of all sectors of the community — youth committees, small businesses, labor unions, and, most influential of all, the Catholic Church.”⁶

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1. UPTON SINCLAIR, *THE JUNGLE* 70 (See Sharp Press 2003) (1906).

2. See Independent Television Service (ITVS), *The Democratic Process: Saul Alinsky and his Legacy*, <http://www.itvs.org/democraticpromise/alinsky.html> (last visited Mar. 14, 2006).

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.* The Back-of-the-Yards was the area behind the stockyard where workers lived in poverty. *Id.*

5. See *id.*

6. *Id.*

Through the activities of the Back-of-the-Yards Council, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) was born.⁷

As the IAF developed, Alinsky established what are known as the “Alinsky concepts of mass organization for power.”⁸ He thought that the most essential element of organizing was communication, and that communication must not be one-way.⁹ Alinsky believed in “multistranded” relationships — relationships that build on each other, using information developed in one strand to facilitate another. In an effort to make IAF organizations more cohesive and assertive, especially when dealing with municipal government, Alinsky encouraged multistranded relationships and face-to-face meetings.¹⁰

Alinsky also believed in establishing local power through individual local leaders who organized and mobilized the poor.¹¹ “[This] fusion of the new civil rights sensibility with the rich tradition of community organizing generated a unique brand of community-based advocacy that promoted cross-racial alliances for economic justice.”¹²

The IAF has expanded since its modest beginnings. It once consisted of only three organizations: Citizens Organized for Public Service (COPS), in Texas; Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD), in Maryland; and the Queens Citizens Organization (QCO), in New York.¹³ Today, the IAF consists of over fifty church-based, interfaith and interracial organizations nationwide, all of which are fulfilling Alinsky’s vision of a network of organizations of ordinary working people coming together to participate in affecting decisions that impact their lives and communities.¹⁴ Cur-

7. *See id.*

8. *See* Jessica A. Rose, Comment, *Rebellious or Regnant: Police Brutality Lawyering in New York City*, 28 FORDHAM URB. L.J. 619, 632 (2000).

9. *See id.* at 632-33.

10. *See* William H. Simon, *The Community Economic Development Movement*, 2002 WIS. L. REV. 377, 427 (2002).

11. *See* Scott L. Cummings, *Community Economic Development as Progressive politics: Toward a Grassroots Movement for Economic Justice*, 54 STAN. L. REV. 399, 417 (2001).

12. *Id.* at 417-18.

13. *See* Industrial Areas Foundation, About Industrial Areas Foundation: Where do we do it?, <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/iafabout/aboutwhere.htm> (last visited Oct. 22, 2005).

14. *See id.*

rently, the IAF is led by Edward T. Chambers, who succeeded Saul Alinsky as the executive director.¹⁵

The structure and the working methods of IAF organizations continue in the tradition begun by the Back-of-the-Yards Council — community organizations providing a connection between the individual and the larger society.¹⁶ The IAF believes that all individuals have the potential to develop into leaders, to participate fully in the political process, and “to speak and act with others on their own behalf.”¹⁷ IAF leaders are motivated by democratic traditions, labor organizing, workers’ rights, and religious freedom.¹⁸ Leaders have also been motivated by anger at the obstacles that stand in the way of realizing “life, liberty, and happiness’s pursuit” — obstacles such as inadequate schools, poorly maintained public housing, low wages, and crime.¹⁹

Alinsky had a vision of professional organizers who could select those individuals devoted to the IAF’s cause, organize them, and train them to effectively improve their communities.²⁰ This process allows IAF members to move from community to community, educating individuals, who, in turn, develop and improve their own communities.²¹ Father Leo Penta, an IAF leader in the East Brooklyn organization, explains the tool for IAF organizing — the “relational meeting.”²² According to Penta, IAF organizers “begin[] by establishing relations with the enduring community institutions that people rely on — churches and synagogues and civic associations”²³ Individual and community development are seen by

15. *Id.*

16. *See* Industrial Areas Foundation, About Industrial Areas Foundation: Who are we?, <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/iafabout/about.htm> (last visited Oct. 22, 2005).

17. *Id.*

18. *See* Industrial Areas Foundation, About Industrial Areas Foundation: Why do we do it?, <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/iafabout/aboutwhy.htm> (last visited Oct. 22, 2005).

19. *Id.*

20. William Julius Wilson, *Rising Inequality and the Case for Coalition Politics*, 568 ANNALS. AM. ACAD. POL. & SOC. SCI. 78, 95 (2000).

21. *Id.*

22. Anthony D. Taibi, *Radical Justice in the Age of the Global Economy: Community Empowerment and Global Strategy*, 44 DUKE L.J. 928, 971 (1995).

23. *Id.*

IAF leaders as mutually reinforcing.²⁴ Each IAF organization focuses on the needs of its community, and their agendas are developed by individual leaders, not the IAF.²⁵

The principle of personal responsibility is firmly rooted in the organizational model developed by Alinsky.²⁶ The IAF, however, emphasizes individual development that is grounded in community development. The IAF iron rule is: "Never do anything for someone that they can do for themselves. Never."²⁷ This self-reliance, however, takes place in the context of relationships: "The IAF theology of politics asks people to think of relationships in a context larger than themselves."²⁸ According to Ernesto Cortes, founder of the San Antonio-based Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), "we're trying to . . . draw people out of their private pain, out of their cynicism and passivity, and get them connected with other people in collective action."²⁹ The IAF helps people discover their "political-ness," to find within themselves capacities for active participation in their communities and self-empowerment in the service of justice.³⁰

While IAF leaders are not interested in political office themselves, the IAF seeks to make changes through the political process.³¹ In California, for example, three organizations lobbied Sacramento successfully to increase the state minimum wage.³² In Texas, ten organizations worked together to win state legislation for indigent health care and \$100 million in financing for sewer and water systems in the Rio Grande migrant-worker communities. In Baltimore, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) developed its own agenda for the city, based on canvassing efforts about community political affairs, and collected endorse-

24. See Industrial Areas Foundation, About Industrial Areas Foundation: Who are we?, *supra* note 16.

25. See Wilson, *supra* note 20, at 95-96.

26. See WILLIAM GREIDER, WHO WILL TELL THE PEOPLE: THE BETRAYAL OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY 225 (1992).

27. *Id.*

28. *Id.* at 226.

29. *Id.*

30. See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Will the Real Civil Society Advocates Please Stand Up?*, 75 CHI-KENT. L. REV. 583, 598 (2000).

31. See GREIDER, *supra* note 26, at 222.

32. *Id.* at 223.

ments from seventy thousand citizens.³³ In fact, Kurt Lidell Schmoke adopted BUILD's agenda during his campaign to become Baltimore's first African American mayor.³⁴

The IAF has affected electoral politics on a state-wide level as well. In May 1997 at a church meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, Governor Parris N. Glendening announced that he would issue an executive order barring employers from hiring taxpayer-subsidized welfare recipients to replace workers already on the job, making Maryland the first state to take such action on the controversial "worker displacement" issue. As Sanford Horwitt reported:

Glendening, facing a tough re-election challenge, made his announcement at a church filled with 300 black, white and Latino representatives of the I.A.F.'s three, large Maryland-based community organizations. "It doesn't do any of us any good to talk about declining welfare rolls if we are forcing other people into unemployment," the governor said. "Our intention is to state very clearly: It's illegal, . . . and it's immoral." The fact that a politician can discern morality a lot faster in a roomful of registered voters has little to do with cynicism but says much about how the democratic process works — and has always worked — in our country.³⁵

In our modern democracy, where far less than the majority of eligible citizens vote and many have no meaningful participation in the political process,³⁶ IAF provides opportunities for citizenship through collective action and direct participation.³⁷ The focus of IAF organizational efforts, however, is not on electoral politics, but on the "reconstruction of democratic values in [peoples'] lives."³⁸ Alinsky's original vision, Daniel Bell wrote in 1945 in his review of Alinsky's book, *Reveille for Radicals*, "attempts to give people a sense

33. *Id.*

34. *See id.* *See also* Oracle Thinkquest, Timeline of the Twentieth Century, <http://library.thinkquest.org/3337/time19.html> (last visited Mar. 14, 2006) (noting that Kurt Lidell Schmoke was Baltimore's first African-American mayor).

35. Sanford D. Horwitt, *Citizenship Through Acting Collectively: A measure to ban worker displacement, shows that Alinsky's legacy lives*, L.A. TIMES, July 20, 1997, at 5.

36. *See id.*

37. *See id.*

38. GREIDER, *supra* note 26, at 223.

of participation and belonging [and] becomes important as a weapon against cynicism and despair”³⁹

Today, as a result of the IAF’s work, there is a nationwide living wage movement.⁴⁰ The living wage movement lobbies for higher than minimum wages for the whole of the workforce.⁴¹ Through living wage initiatives, workers who would otherwise land in low-paying service jobs receive training as skilled workers.⁴² The powerlessness of the workers in the Chicago stockyards has not been completely eradicated — a living wage is still not a reality — but the term “living wage” has become part of the national vocabulary.⁴³

IAF East affiliates designed and lobbied for the nation’s first living wage bills in Baltimore in 1994 and in New York in 1996.⁴⁴ The living wage work of the IAF East has sparked a national movement — IAF affiliates in Texas, Arizona, and other regions have successfully pushed for living wage legislation.⁴⁵ Community, labor, and religious coalitions have fought for and won similar ordinances in cities nationwide.⁴⁶ Since the living wage movement began, 130 ordinances have been passed.⁴⁷ “Today, more than seventy-five living wage campaigns are underway . . . across the country.”⁴⁸

Consistent with the IAF’s organizational philosophy, a living wage campaign usually consists of a multiracial coalition of local labor leaders, community organizations, religious organizations,

39. Horwitt, *supra* note 35 (quoting David Bell’s 1945 book review of Alinsky’s *Reveille for Radicals*).

40. See Mike Gecan, *A Living Wage for All American Workers – Nonprofit Workers Too?*, 1 *NFC REPORTS* 7 (2000), available at <http://www.nfg.org/reports/71wage.htm> (last visited Nov. 20, 2005); see also Living Wage Resource Center, *The National Movement*, <http://www.livingwagecampaign.org/index.php?id=2071> (last visited Nov. 20, 2005).

41. See Living Wage Resource Center, *supra* note 40.

42. See *id.*

43. Gecan, *supra* note 40.

44. Industrial Areas Foundation, *About Industrial Areas Foundation: What do we do?*, <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/iafabout/aboutwhat.htm> (last visited Nov. 20, 2005).

45. See *id.*

46. Living Wage Resource Center, *supra* note 40.

47. For a list of Living Wage Ordinances currently in place, see *id.*

48. *Id.*

and in some areas, student groups.⁴⁹ Participants lobby for municipal ordinances that require contractors doing business with the city to pay their workers a minimum hourly wage that exceeds the state or national minimum wage.⁵⁰ These ordinances sometimes specify that the contractors provide employment benefits to their workers, such as health insurance, pensions, and vacation days.⁵¹ The campaign places indirect pressure on other local employers to raise wages and provide benefits in order to compete.⁵²

Living wage ordinances typically cover employers who hold large city or county service contracts or receive grants, loans, bond financing, tax abatements, or other economic development subsidies from cities.⁵³ IAF organizations usually work with coalitions of local community, union, and religious leaders who come together to develop living wage principles, organize endorsements, draft ordinance language, and plan campaign strategy.⁵⁴ Such campaigns also typically include lobbying and negotiations with local elected officials.⁵⁵

In addition to lobbying municipal governments for living wage ordinances, many living wage campaigns include education as part of their strategy.⁵⁶ In Philadelphia, for example, the IAF-East organization, Philadelphia Interfaith Action, has worked with Philadelphia Area Accelerated Manufacturing Education (PhAME), a Philadelphia job training program, to raise public funds to provide stipends for qualified students while they undergo training for jobs as machinists.⁵⁷ As a result of this program, machinist jobs in the

49. See Marion Crain, *Colorblind Unionism*, 49 UCLA L. REV. 1313, n.128 (2002) (citing William Julius Wilson, *THE BRIDGE OVER THE RACIAL DIVIDE: RISING INEQUALITY AND COALITION POLITICS* (1999)). See also Janice Fine, *Community Unionism in Baltimore and Stamford: Beyond the Politics of Particularism*, 4 WORKING USA 59, 61-62 (2000-2001) (describing partnerships between ACORN (Associated Communities Organized for Reform Now), the IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation), and unions that merge labor and community issues in campaigns).

50. Crain, *supra* note 49.

51. See *id.*

52. See *id.*

53. See Living Wage Resource Center, *supra* note 40.

54. *Id.*

55. *Id.*

56. See *id.*

57. BUILD Products Page, Who is the Industrial Areas Foundation?, <http://www.buildiaf.org/products.htm> (last visited Oct. 22, 2005).

Delaware Valley are now filled with PhAME graduates. Without PhAME these machinists would likely be working at low paying jobs in service industries.⁵⁸

In 1999, IAF began calling for a national living wage of at least \$25,000 per year.⁵⁹ IAF-East contends that any institution that benefits from a federal tax break, subsidy, or loan should be required to pay its employees and contract workers a minimum of \$25,000 in wages and benefits.⁶⁰ IAF's position is that the living wage requirement must apply to non-profit organizations as well, including citizen groups, social service providers, and religious groups.⁶¹ A national IAF organizer points out that although the term "living wage" has now entered the national vocabulary, it has not become a national reality.⁶²

The IAF still relies on the principles of communication, cooperation, participation, and self-reliance that sparked change in Chicago in the 1940s. The IAF is still growing and it provides ongoing training for those "with the patience and vision to create new political realities and the passion and discipline needed to generate sustained social change."⁶³ The methodology of the IAF has not changed since Saul Alinsky began his work in the Chicago's stockyards.⁶⁴ Yet relatively few people benefit from the living wage bills that have been passed and there are still millions of Americans who work for low wages and are without health care coverage.⁶⁵ Although the ends have not yet been realized through the IAF's methods and organization, Alinsky's vision lives on and the IAF strives to meet his vision.

58. *Id.*

59. Gecan, *supra* note 40.

60. *Id.*

61. *See id.*

62. *Id.*

63. Independent Television Service (ITVS), *supra* note 2.

64. *See id.*

65. *See* Gecan, *supra* note 40.