



Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

130 Prospect Street • Cambridge, MA 02139
www.uusc.org • 617-868-6600 • info@uusc.org

March 28, 2006

To whom it may concern,

The Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee formed the Gulf Coast Relief Fund to respond to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In November 2005, we participated in a meeting of several organizations doing community work in New Orleans. They all emphasized the difficulty of working in New Orleans, the complexities of working with evacuees and returnees, the losses that their own organizations had suffered, and the overall lack of funding for community organizing in the wake of the hurricanes.

The Gulf Coast Relief Fund supported a team to spend several weeks in New Orleans mapping the community organizations' work there. The team spoke with organizations on the ground about the work they were doing, the challenges they faced, and their needs for capacity building.

As we approach the seven-month mark after Hurricane Katrina, the situation in New Orleans continues to be dire. People, particularly those in low-income communities and communities of color, face huge obstacles both to returning physically and to having any voice in a more equitable reconstruction of New Orleans. Strengthening community, grassroots, and social organizations which represent or are led by low-income people and people of color is essential to building their participation into the return and reconstruction phase. However, for these groups to face the challenges, they need more resources, increased capacity, and support.

The organizational mapping work done by the team shows that there is little funding going into these organizations. They have lost personnel, offices, equipment, and records. Few organizations have the resources to replace much of what they have lost. We found the team's work very useful for our own programmatic framework for funding in New Orleans.

In the interest of supporting the community organizations in New Orleans, we would like to share with you their findings in the attached report. This is the first of three reports that the team will work on between now and May 21. Please let us know if you would like to receive additional reports.

Sincerely,

Martha Thompson
Program Manager for Rights in Humanitarian Crises

*New Orleans' Post-Katrina Community Organizing
Landscape:*
Current Efforts, Unmet Needs

*Prepared for the UUA-UUSC
and the larger Funding Community*

by Jainey Bavishi and Rachel Wilch

March, 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to acknowledge the support and trust from the Unitarian Universalist Association-Unitarian Universalist Service Committee that made this community organizing mapping project possible. We also want to acknowledge Leigh Graham and Susana Williams for their contributions to the first phases of this project. We would like to recognize our local partner and primary community liaison, Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans, Inc. (NHS), who helped us to establish and build relationships, through an overview of the community organizing landscape, an extensive geographic tour of the destruction, and numerous introductions to community organizers. Lastly, we would like to thank all the community organizers and groups that took time out of their extremely busy schedules to share their stories, explain their work and allow us into their communities.

CONTACT INFORMATION

You may contact the authors of this report by email or telephone:

Jainey Bavishi
jainey@mit.edu
704-293-3320

Rachel Wilch
rwilch@mit.edu
206-714-2318

INTRODUCTION

In January, 2006, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) sponsored a team of graduate students from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to survey post-Katrina community organizing efforts in New Orleans. The team set out to meet and begin conversations with grassroots organizers in order to collect information about the nature of their efforts, the scope of their visions, and their areas of need. The results of this analysis have helped to inform the UUA-UUSC's decisions about funding allocations in the complex post-Katrina organizing landscape, in which information flow is often constrained and areas of need are constantly changing. The UUA-UUSC is continuing to support this surveying work until the middle of May and wishes to share the information collected from this project with the larger funding community, with the hope that it will help to draw additional resources to organizing efforts in New Orleans. The following is the first of a series of monthly reports that will emerge from this project. This report provides an update on organizing efforts in New Orleans and identifies areas for resource allocation within specific organizations.

The surveying work that informed this report was conducted between January and the beginning of March, 2006. When we started this project, we were in touch with a few community organizations working on the ground in under-resourced minority communities. These community organizations helped to put us in touch with other organizers working in the similar communities. Using this "snowball method," we have generated a continually evolving list of contacts. Because organizations often serve many different needs of communities, it is difficult to place the organizations we have interviewed into a single category. However as a rule we have focused on organizations working on mobilization and community building, avoiding agencies involved in social services and case management. Initially, we talked to organizations that served constituents across the city; whereas recently, in reaction to a changing policy landscape, we have focused on specific neighborhood groups mobilizing to respond to the city's pending neighborhood planning process. The terrain and players involved in rebuilding are constantly evolving; the people and programs represented in this report should not be read as a comprehensive list of community organizations working in marginalized communities in New Orleans, but rather as a work in progress.

At the time of this writing, more than six months after the storm, the recovery process in New Orleans still seems long and slow. Even in the most operative neighborhoods that did not endure flooding, stop signs replacing dysfunctional traffic lights cause congestion on major city corridors, piles of sheet rock and other trash sit on the sidewalks waiting to be picked up, and fallen limbs litter street medians. In the most devastated neighborhoods, bulldozing has begun, bringing new energy to the clean up process, but also grim reminders as the bodies of hurricane victims are uncovered in the rubble. The celebration of Mardi Gras brought life back to the city for a short time, attracting tourists and residents, alike. Neighborhoods, even in some of the flooded areas of the city, felt lively as neighbors reconnected and people watched the festivities from their front stoops. But with the end of the celebrations, the emptiness returned and the devastation reappeared. As the election approaches, there is a great deal of concern about who will be able to exercise their right to vote; those who will possibly be excluded are also the ones most affected by the storm. The race and class dimensions that overlay these groups bring up major questions about who this city is being rebuilt for and who will be able to come home.

The remainder of this report will classify and describe the organizations working to rebuild this city, outlining the needs identified in our interviews with them.

ORGANIZING LANDSCAPE

The possibility of shrinking the city's footprint has been a predominant issue in the redevelopment of New Orleans. If the most devastated neighborhoods do not redevelop adequately to justify the services needed to support them, they are in danger of being reduced or eliminated. In January, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission recommended that the City Council implement a neighborhood planning process through which residents would participate in the creation of plans for the future of neighborhoods. That process has not yet been formally initiated and is already a month and a half behind the proposed schedule. With or without residents' input, it is certain that some neighborhoods' viability is in question, and eventually a judgment will be made about whether or not those neighborhoods will survive.

There are also neighborhoods, located on higher ground, that suffered little or no damage from the hurricane and subsequent flooding, yet the communities occupying these neighborhoods face the danger of being forced out. It is important to note that Hurricane Katrina destroyed some

wealthy, predominantly white neighborhoods and did not destroy all working class, predominantly black neighborhoods. Therefore, in a city without rent control, poorer neighborhoods, largely unaffected by the storm, are at great risk of being completely changed by gentrification as developers look for areas to relocate the affluent displaced populations.

Many communities are mobilizing to reclaim their neighborhoods. In affected communities, individuals and neighborhood associations are striving to prove the viability of their neighborhoods. This involves rallying displaced residents and creating conditions for them to return, finding spaces for residents to meet and organize, reopening neighborhood institutions, organizing support networks for the debris removal and the rebuilding process, and working with planners and architects to produce neighborhood plans. In unflooded areas, communities are working to defend their neighborhoods from gentrification. Some communities are focusing on creating a public presence on the street to present themselves as a formidable obstacle to big developers. In other neighborhoods, groups are helping community residents stay in their neighborhoods by working to help them fix their homes from storm damage and providing first-time home buyer counseling.

Providing support for these initiatives may require a paradigm shift on the part of funders, as many of these neighborhood anchors do not fit the description of traditional grantees. Historically, community organizing in New Orleans' poor or otherwise marginalized communities has taken place on non-institutional grassroots levels. Community groups are often lacking 501c3 status and a formalized process for development, grant writing, and funds management. However, local organizations as well as nonprofits in other parts of the country have demonstrated a willingness to serve as financial intermediaries in order to make the provision of funding to these groups possible. Supporting neighborhood based efforts not only helps to directly respond to the effects of Hurricane Katrina, but is also an investment in deciding who is a part of the city's long-term future.

Larger organizations or coalitions of organizations that function on the city scale, serving many neighborhoods rather than a single area, are also responding to support neighborhoods. Some of these groups act as clearinghouses for a wide range of services and information needed by residents, serving as a one-stop shop for post-Katrina concerns. Their work may include gutting

houses for residents as the first step to coming home, communicating with community networks to disperse information about pending city plans, or addressing other emerging community needs. The Common Ground Collective, for example sponsors a pro-bono house gutting program, a free health clinic, a legal aid center with regular drop in hours, an emergency housing and eviction telephone hotline, and a public computer lab with internet access. Similarly, the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Committee functions as a coalition operating through 14 working groups ranging in focus from workers' rights to arts and culture. Other city-wide organizations work in a more focused but no less important arena, whether it is supporting homeownership in neighborhoods with high percentages of renters, building community centers as meeting and organizing spaces for residents, or advocating for public housing tenants.

There is also a group of organizations that are striving to reconnect residents, both displaced and at home, to the unique culture and heritage of New Orleans. A Studio in the Woods, the Neighborhood Story Project, and the Finding our Folk Tour are just a few of the organizations working to reclaim the city's rich artistic traditions, to give New Orleanians a chance to tell their stories in their own voices, and to bring New Orleans music and culture to people who've returned and ho those still evacuated. These organizations occupy a special niche in the organizing landscape, helping to remind communities of the unique creativity of New Orleans and the inspiration and empowerment it fosters These groups also play an important role in the healing process occurring after Katrina by creating different outlets of expression to address what happened and by providing a sense of what things were like before the storm.

A list of the organizations that were interviewed for this report and brief descriptions of their activities can be found in the appendix that follows. The next section discusses the overarching needs of the organizing community and the specific needs of individual organizations.

UNMET NEEDS

After talking with nearly two dozen organizations working on a variety of areas, we identified three central areas of unmet need. They are as follows: staffing, space and programming and outreach. A brief description of each general type of need, followed by a list of specific organizations' needs are included below.

Staffing

As a result of city funding cuts and displacement of workers following the storm, many organizations are operating with severely limited capacity at a time when community needs are the greatest. At a recent meeting, Steve Bradbury, head organizer for ACORN's New Orleans office, pointed to staffing as his organization's most urgent need. Prior to Katrina, ACORN employed nine organizers, one each to mobilize the city's nine membership chapters. After the storm, as ACORN struggles locate evacuated staff and reconfigure operations to meet its members' enormous communication, housing, construction, labor, voting rights and legal advocacy needs, only three organizers are working to cover the same area. ACORN's situation is not unique. Across the board, there is an immediate and enormous need for organizational capacity building in the form of funded positions for professional and administrative staff, programming staff, organizers and consultants with expertise in strategic planning, information technology, accounting and legal support.

The UUA-UUSC is taking steps towards meeting these needs by funding two full-time positions each for Neighborhood Housing Services, PICO, New Orleans Network and The Advancement Project. An additional four positions are in the proposal phase. Even with these resources, organizations need additional support. Generally, organizations describe needing from one to five staff positions each. Given an increased post-Katrina cost of living and the challenges associated with recruiting and retaining quality staff members, proposed salaries ranged from \$28,000-\$35,000 plus benefits for an entry level organizer or administrative staff position, to \$45,000-\$55,000 plus benefits for more experienced professional staff or executive director positions. Consultants bringing legal, technical, accounting or other types of expertise are typically paid hourly or per contract; the costs of these services vary.

Organizations' stated staffing needs are as follows:

Organization	One or Two Full Time Organizers, Entry Level Staff Members	Three to Six Full Time Organizers, Entry Level Staff Members	Legal, Accounting, or Technical Support	Full Time Specialist, Experienced Organizer, and/ or Program Director
ACORN		X		
A Studio in the Woods	X			X
Common Ground			X	
Douglass Community	X		X	

Coalition			
Gert Town Revival Initiative, Inc.	X		
Finding Our Folk Tour	X		X
IAF-Jeremiah Group My House	X		
Community Learning Center	X	X	X
Neighborhood Housing Services		X	
Neighborhood Story Project			X
New Orleans Housing Emergency Action Team (NOHEAT)	X	X	
New Orleans Network		X	X
People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Committee	X		
Vietnamese Initiative for Economic Training (VIET)	X	X	

Space

There is a profound need for space on the part of organizations seeking to resume their pre-storm operations and for those working to meet the new and emerging needs of their communities. In the near term, organizations need resources to rent office and programming space in dry neighborhoods; in the long-run, organizations need support to construct new or renovated spaces in neighborhoods where constituents are.

Rebuilding spaces—just like rebuilding organizational operations—offers an opportunity to re-envision the scope and mission of an organization. Doug Anderson is the executive director of My House Community Learning Center, an after school and literacy program which operated out of a 22,000 square foot building (which the organization owned) in the Mid City neighborhood prior to Katrina. During the storm, the neighborhood was flooded by four feet of water, inundating the first floor of My House, but leaving the second floor untouched and the building structurally sound. Following the storm, Anderson recognized that his constituents (children from the neighborhood) were absent, his pre-storm programming was obsolete, and that My House's biggest remaining resource was its building. Since October, Anderson has been working to shape a dynamic non-profit incubator and community center to be located in the building. The incubator portion of the complex will house from five to ten small non-profit organizations and

will be structured as a collective with shared conference rooms, meeting spaces and support staff such as grant writers, accountants, attorneys and information technology specialists. The community center will house public spaces for meetings and programming, a daycare center, and other community resources. Through a practical analysis of its post-Katrina resources, My House has decided on an organizational restructuring that will best meet the changed needs of the neighborhood and of the city's struggling non-profit organizations. At present, My House continues to refine the redevelopment plan for its Mid City location, and is looking for an interim office to rent during the construction process.

Since Katrina, the price for office space has risen sharply while its availability has plummeted. Rents vary by neighborhood, but most organizers describe prices that fall between \$1 and \$2.50 per square foot. Programming spaces are in similarly short supply; prices depend on the owner, and on the size and nature of the space. However, some organizations have expressed a newfound interest in sharing both office and programming spaces with other groups; exploring this possibility could cut down on total rental costs. The costs of renovation and new construction are attached to the needs of the builder and the current condition of the location. Individual organizations' construction budgets should be consulted when making funding decisions.

Organizations' stated needs for space are as follows:

Organization	Interim or Permanent Office Space	Community Space for Meetings, Information Center, and Activities	Funding for Renovations or Construction
Concerned Citizens of Agriculture Street Landfill	X		
Douglass Community Coalition		X	
My House Community Learning Center	X		X
New Orleans Network	X		
New Orleans Housing Emergency Action Team (NOHEAT)	X	X	
People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Committee		X	
Porch Community Center			X
Vietnamese Initiative for Economic Training	X		

Programming and Outreach

Organizations need support to resume, and in some cases redevelop programming, and to conduct outreach activities to get in touch with constituents. Resuming pre-storm programming and tailoring new programming to the changing needs of residents helps make New Orleans a more realistic option for return. Support for outreach activities addresses the challenges associated with organizing and serving the still scattered population of New Orleans.

The Porch Community Center is in the planning phase at present, but already, artist in residence, Willy Birch is organizing programming for the future space. Well aware of the forthcoming city mandate for neighborhoods to prove their viability through a variety of means including a *visible* presence on the street, Birch and his neighbors are planning a community center with a large, open air 'porch'. This sheltered space will be clearly visible from the street, housing a tool library and an active woodworking gallery. Birch is also working to create a calendar of arts happenings in the neighborhood ranging from visual arts workshops to participatory performance arts events where residents reclaim their neighborhood; their first action—a community tree planting—took place a few weeks ago.

Programming and outreach are obviously highly unique to a given organization, and as such are hard to typify. Organizations' stated needs have ranged from funding to make photocopies of a monthly newsletter to support for gutting a thousand flood-damaged homes. Currently, the UUA-UUSC is funding NOHEAT (the New Orleans Housing Emergency Action Team) to create outreach materials that will help residents of public housing stay informed about lobbying activities and demonstrations. Many other areas of need exist, and new programming and outreach needs are emerging constantly.

Organizations' stated programming and outreach needs include:

Organization	Outreach/ Resource Materials	Youth Programming/ Curriculum Development	Equipment & Materials for House Gutting	Artistic/ Cultural Programming
ACORN			X	
A Studio in the Woods				X
Common Ground			X	
Finding Our Folk Tour		X		
House of Dance and Feathers				X
New Orleans Housing Emergency Action Team (NOHEAT)	X			

People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition (PHRF)	X		X
Porch Community Center			
Students at the Center		X	
Youth Inspirational Connection, Inc.			X
Vietnamese Initiative for Economic Training (VIET)		X	

CONCLUSION

This report provides a snapshot of the current activities and needs of the organizations we have interviewed thus far. It is an incomplete picture of the organizing landscape, but does paint in broad strokes some of the responsibilities and constraints facing organizations in New Orleans. For a more nuanced impression of the status of the rebuilding effort, and for more up to date information about the operations and needs of given organizations, we recommend foremost a firsthand visit to the city, and second, direct contact with head organizers and executive directors who can provide the most current information in this ever-shifting landscape. Most organizations' contact information is available online; for further questions about how to reach organizations or for help planning a trip to the Gulf Coast, please feel free to contact the authors of this report.

APPENDIX

I. DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATIONS' ACTIVITIES

Neighborhood Anchors:

Concerned Citizens of Agricultural Street is a community advocacy group representing residents living above the former Agricultural Street Landfill. Prior to Katrina the group was engaged in a legal battle with the city over issues of environmental health and justice. The storm inundated the neighborhood with five to six feet of flood water, causing even more toxin from the landfill below to seep into the homes and yards of residents. Now the group is pressing environmental officials to declare the site uninhabitable and to support residents to relocate elsewhere.

The **Douglass Community Coalition** came out of pre-Katrina efforts to improve Frederick Douglass High School in the Upper 9th Ward. After the storm the coalition broadened its focus, working to bring a farmers market, health clinic, teen recreation center, community center, housing, and improved educational facilities to the community. The coalition includes dozens of partner organizations.

The **Gert Town Revival Initiative** emerged as a response to the health and environmental hazards posed by a now closed pesticide manufacturer in the Gert Town neighborhood of New Orleans. Although the factory is gone, the health risks remain and have been exacerbated by Katrina-related flooding. Now, GRI is lobbying for resources to clean the land and houses before residents return, and for additional services to support the return of senior citizens and other vulnerable populations who make up a high percentage of those living in Gert Town.

The **House of Dance and Feathers** is a New Orleans Cultural museum located in the Lower 9th Ward. Run out of an addition to the curator's home, the House of Dance and Feathers had a singular schedule of cultural programming and a preeminent collection of local artifacts and memorabilia including Mardi Gras Indian feather and bead work. Although much of the collection was spared from the flood, the building was heavily damaged. The House of Dance and Feathers is now working to expand its collection and to rebuild and reopen its doors on the same location in the Lower 9th Ward.

My House Community Learning Center in the Mid City neighborhood ran after school and literacy programming prior to Katrina. During the storm, the center's 22,000 sq. ft. building was flooded along with the neighborhood around it. As a result, the center has shifted its focus from programming to redevelopment of the space into a non-profit incubator and a full service community center with a daycare and community meeting and programming spaces.

The **Porch Community Center** is a collaborative project between Seventh Ward residents, Tulane University and NHS. The proposed center will be a part of NHS's emerging network of community centers, consisting of a carpentry workshop and tool library to help residents learn the skills to work on their homes, housing and homeownership counseling from NHS, and regular visual and performing arts programming as a means of creatively reclaiming the neighborhood.

The **Vietnamese Initiative for Economic Training (VIET)** is based out of the larger Vietnamese community concentrated in New Orleans East. Prior to the storm, VIET was

involved in a variety of advocacy and job training programs as well as offering an annual summer day camp for kids. IN the wake of Katrina, VIET has broadened its focus to include advocacy and support in navigating the bureaucracies of insurance, taxes, FEMA aid packages and absentee voting. VIET has been extremely successful at mobilizing residents in this hard hit neighborhood; now the organization is trying to expand its tax and legal support programs, reopen its summer day camp and establish a recreation center for neighborhood youth.

City-wide Organizations and Coalitions:

ACORN is a grassroots membership-organization working for social justice and equality. Since Katrina, ACORN's semi-autonomous New Orleans chapter has been involved in lobbying Washington for federal funding for rebuilding, anti-bulldozing class action lawsuits on behalf of residents in the Lower 9th Ward, organizing residents to prepare for the neighborhood planning process, and wide scale pro-bono gutting of flooded houses belonging to ACORN members from across the city.

Common Ground Collective emerged in the weeks following Katrina and now consists of more than forty full-time volunteer organizers working on a range of rebuilding issues. Common Ground has been particularly effective at pro-bono gutting of flooded homes in the Upper and Lower 9th Ward and at legal defense of tenants' rights.

IAF-Jeremiah Group is a consortium of local churches organized before the storm. Post-Katrina the Jeremiah Group has worked to help pastors locate evacuated parishioners and identify and meet their needs. The Jeremiah Group is currently exploring homebuilding and homeownership programs for its members.

Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) was founded to help move low and moderate income residents from rentals to homeownership. Post-Katrina NHS's focus has expanded to include development of a network of interconnected community centers offering a variety of social services including housing and homeownership counseling.

New Orleans Network emerged post-Katrina as an information sharing tool for organizers and community members. Housed on the internet, the New Orleans Network's function is to provide a community calendar and database with information on organizations, services, events and fundraising.

New Orleans Housing Emergency Action Team (NOHEAT) is a public housing and tenant advocacy coalition that brings together public housing and rental tenants, activists and attorneys. Since Katrina, NOHEAT has been fighting for the reopening of New Orleans' public housing projects, for eviction protection for renters and FEMA hotel voucher recipients.

People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Committee (PHRF) is a broad-based coalition whose activities are spread across fourteen working groups and whose stated focus is on the needs and perspectives of marginalized, poor, African-American survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Currently PHRF is engaged in developing affordable housing, opening a center for reconstruction workers, and developing a 'Peoples' Plan' as a response to the city's official neighborhood planning process.

Organizations Promoting Artistic Expression:

A Studio in the Woods, located in Lower Coast Algiers on the fringe of Orleans Parish, is a non-profit dedicated to preserving bottomland hardwood forest and providing within it a peaceful retreat where visual, literary and performing artists can work uninterrupted. Post-Katrina the Studio has expanded its pre-existing artists' residency program to help New Orleans artists return to the city, healing themselves and their communities through artistic expression. The Studio is also working with an environmental educator and a botanist to develop a youth curriculum on the ecological effects of the storm.

The **Finding Our Folk Tour** is traveling between evacuee hubs across the nation to bring artists, musicians and activists to young New Orleanians in exile. The tour functions as an opportunity for New Orleans youth to tell their stories, reconnect with friends, and enjoy the artwork and music unique to their city. It offers youth the chance to stay connected to New Orleans, its people and its singular culture, while still waiting for the chance to return.

Neighborhood Story Project (NSP) is a community documentary program. Before the storm, NSP worked with public high school students to author their own stories, publishing the finished products as bound books. Despite funding shortages and upheaval in the public school system, NSP is back working on writing with local middle and high school students and other community members to make their stories heard.

Students at the Center (SAC) worked before the storm with public high school students to produce original writing and film. A focus on helping young people tell their own stories has expanded post-Katrina to processing and creating narratives of the storm and evacuation. SAC is back working with students in New Orleans, and is also traveling to evacuee hubs to hold periodic conferences of youth in exile.

Youth Inspirational Connection, Inc. was founded in 1975 to support youth organizing and involvement in the arts. Since the storm, YIC has been working to revive its annual youth-organized, youth-run music festival which was held every October for the last 16 years until Katrina. The festival, which typically employed an event planning staff of 30 high school students, and brought together over 4000 musicians, brought musical traditions from around the world to the people of New Orleans.

II. AUTHORS' BIOS

Jainey Bavishi is a first year Master's candidate at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT from Charlotte, NC, focusing on international development and regional planning. After graduating from Duke University in 2003 with an AB in Public Policy Studies and Cultural Anthropology, Jainey spent a year in the town of Cuttack in Orissa, India, an area still recovering from a deadly super cyclone in 1999 that killed more than 10,000 people and left over 1.5 million homeless. Her work focused on creating advocacy materials for a movement to start daycare centers in communities below the poverty line through documenting the voices and visions of poor working mothers. Jainey spent the last year working as a research assistant at the Fannie Mae Foundation. She researched lessons and best practices from domestic community revitalization work.

Rachel Wilch was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. She received a BA from Reed College in Portland, OR where she studied labor movement narratives through the lens of

cultural anthropology. Her interests focus on economic justice and alternative approaches to affordable housing. She grew up in, and later worked on establishing low-income mutual housing cooperatives. She is currently pursuing her MCP (Masters of City Planning) in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT. She is excited for the adventures and opportunities she is finding across the country, though she is eager to eventually set up shop back in the great Northwest.