

NetworkNews

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NNG's 2003 Conference • Tucson, Arizona

BUILDING POWER for SOCIAL JUSTICE

THIS PAST OCTOBER, NNG held our 21st conference *Building Power for Social Justice* in Tucson, AZ – bringing together 300 grantmakers and practitioners to “get real” about what it is going to take to build power for social justice in this political and economic climate. NNGers took time to connect with new and old colleagues and to share programs, analysis and strategies. And importantly, both longtime NNG members and new attendees were reinvigorated and energized. The conference atmosphere shouted “COMMUNITY!” and reminded all of us that we are not struggling alone. The conference spanned four days, including a pre-conference day by NNG’s working group, Grantmakers without Borders.

The conference theme and program were designed by NNG members and built upon a series of conversations NNG has been engaged in with our members throughout 2003 in regional meetings, one-on-one interviews and surveys. The NNG board and conference committee planned this conference not as a conclusion to these discussions, but as one inflection point in a series of ongoing conversations that will continue and deepen well into 2004.

Deeply frustrated with the economic and political context, NNGers demanded that as grantmakers we need to “get real” about what it will take to build power for social justice. We have to answer the hard questions about how our grantmaking helps build larger movements. And, we must critically examine our role as grantmakers – what role do we play beyond “moving money?” Are we ready to exercise the power and influence we have beyond our checkbooks?



Photo: Harvey Finkle

Our members asked NNG to center the Tucson conference on strategizing about building power.

Planning *Building Power for Social Justice* was not easy, but it was essential that NNG start shifting the content and process of our work as a community of funders. In response to members’ feedback, NNG’s 10-person conference planning committee designed the conference programming around strategizing on building political and economic power. And, within this larger theme, the committee worked to narrow the focus to engage participants in their own roles as funders – both within and beyond grantmaking.

The Tucson conference took a significant departure from recent NNG conferences – instead of issue-based learning workshops, the core of conference programming was centered on member-designed “strategy sessions” – intending to create space for deeper conversation, analysis and strategy on economic and political power. “Strategy ses-

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Deepest thanks to NNG's very hardworking and good humored 2003 Planning Committee

Conference Chairs:

John Vaughn, then with the Peace Development Fund
Shannon Cain, Sonora Fund
Jennifer Allen, Border Action Network/FEX Saguaro Board
Bookda Gheisar, A Territory Resource Foundation
Christine Lipat, Astraea Lesbian Action Foundation
Christine Sartor, Winds of Peace Foundation
Chris Peters, Seventh Generation Fund
Danielle Wells Schreck, Abeland-West Foundation
Michael Warsh, CS Fund
Kolu Zigbi, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation

And a special thanks to

Kavita Rajanna, NNG's 2003 Conference Coordinator

Tracy Gary & Shannon Cain



sions" are difficult to plan and to operationalize; this active engagement of our members was a bit of a culture shift for both NNG and the philanthropic community. While this conference was a giant step toward real strategizing, we also learned many lessons of how to push it even further.

Coming out of this conference one thing is extremely clear from the NNG membership: strategy sessions are crucial to dictating the future of our work as funders. As we start thinking of the next

conference in Miami, we will engage NNG members in discussions regarding what it will really take to delve more deeply into strategy—what needs to happen so that one day we can have an Agenda for Progressive Philanthropy.

In addition to the thematic workshops and plenaries, NNG drew on years of conference feedback requesting more time for networking and created ample opportunities of "Open Space" for members to share their own programming, to host recep-

Focus: On the Border

At the suggestion of our members, we took the conference to the US/Mexico border in a deliberate attempt to deepen our conversations with a cross-border perspective.

The border is a place where local activists struggle to build the progressive movement, working across vast cultural differences, in a largely conservative state. Arizona is a state distinguished by the largest indigenous population in the country, and not far from an intensely and increasingly militarized border, where the human, environmental and economic costs of war are very real. This provided an important reality check for our deliberations.

NNG's planning committee worked with a local "host committee" of funders and activists who planned a "border" experience of local culture and food, as well as four trips to or across the border.

The first of these trips was a group of 25 NNGers participating in the October 12th Border Mobilization in which hundreds of people marched from both sides of the border to convene in

Nogales, Sonora, Mexico for a march and rally in honor of International Indigenous People's Day (a counter celebration to Columbus Day). In addition, NNG continued our tradition of site visits into the community. This year, the planning committee moved these events into the body of the conference and designed them as "Workshops on the

Road," engaging participants in the same strategy-focused questions as other workshops.

One of the workshops on the road took over 30 NNGers across the US-Mexico border to talk about the complexities of cross-border organizing. The other two trips brought NNGers to the border to discuss environmental justice issues and indigenous people's rights. For the first time, NNG's conference was able to bring close to 90 conference participants out into the community – four times as many as in recent conferences. This change was in direct response to our members' requests for more opportunities to be out in conversation with local communities.

One exciting by-product of the NNG conference was the participation of *Democracy Now!* in many southern Arizona activities. The *Democracy Now!* team followed the October 12th Border Mobilization, broadcasting the faces and voices of border activists throughout the following week on *Democracy Now!* They also ran a special segment on *Democracy Now!* focusing on the southern Arizona border (featuring local activists) and a segment on progressive philanthropy, interviewing NNGers at the Access Tucson studios. We are excited that NNG's ability to bring *Democracy Now!* to the border catalyzed the broadcasting of the voices from border communities throughout the US and internationally on radio, tv and online! In addition to the coverage by *Democracy Now!*, the *New York Times* interviewed NNGers and local funder and conference co-chair, Shannon Cain about the state of community-based philanthropy and the creation of the Sonora Fund (the piece ran in their Giving section, November 17, 2003).

tions and to connect up with one another. These sessions are becoming a critical part of NNG's conferences as members seek more and more "un-programmed time" to begin talking more deeply with other grantmakers. NNGers also continued to meet in caucuses and working groups. Our People of Color Caucus was particularly active with nearly 50 participants in attendance.

NNG's 21st conference, *Building Power for Social Justice* has come to a close, but the feeling of possibility is still in the air. We are extremely excited to start meeting with our membership and prepare for the next conference in Miami. And so the conversation about funders' roles in strategy and movement building continues...



Focus: Political Power

One exploration of Building Power focused explicitly on political power. The conference included two plenaries and several workshops on electoral strategies and voter mobilization.

Highlights from the "Strategizing for the 2004 Elections" session included Mike Lux from Progressive Strategies who gave an overview of what he sees as a very polarized electorate which has resulted in new types of organizing among progressives, including long-time national issue groups delving into grassroots organizing to mobilize voters and new strategies of communications and messaging.

The session also featured Eliseo Medina of SEIU who warned that one of the dangers facing us is that we have a very unrepresentative electorate that is not representing the face of America in diversity. California as a prime example is the first majority minority state, but where the majority of voters are white. He commented that we need to change the way the public perceives voting; instead of a "Secret Ballot," we need to see elections as a means to discuss and debate the issues we care about, not simply about candidates and parties.

Medina also insisted that we need to find a way for more inclusive participation so that even non-citizens can have a role, as well as to be strategic and target infrequent voters who are ignored by

the candidates. And, of course, we need to do it to scale and fund campaigns that win; this includes reaching target communities with paid TV, radio, phone banks and field operations.

Other key conversations in the conference explored the potential of clean elections to minimize special interest influence, as well as the critical links between electoral work and community organizing (including breaking down some of our fear and anxiety in funding c4 work – exploring the roles of public foundations, individual donors or foundations supporting 501 c3's with both c3 and c4 components).

Check out the Voter Engagement Donor Network – a loose network of funders who hold monthly calls (on the first Monday) for those in the philanthropic community planning to support nonpartisan voter engagement work over the coming election cycle. The calls have provided space for sharing information on various projects and strategies — recent resources have included developing lists of c3 organizations involved in voter mobilization in the next year, as well as sample funder questions for evaluating voter participation proposals. The next call will be held on January 5, 2004 – please email Mike Smith (msmith@proteusfund.org) to join this call OR to join the email list and receive the amazing resources this group is sharing.

Host Committee

Shannon Cain, Chair
Working Group on Arts & Culture:
Michelle Crow, office of
Congressmember Raul Grijalva
Gonzalo Espinosa, artist
Lorraine Hernandez, Tucson/Pima
Arts Council
Raquel Mogollon, Las Sinfonteras
Fred Rodriguez, Community
Foundation of Southern Arizona
Albert Soto, Tucson/Pima Arts
Council

Working Group on Site Visits:

Carolyn Campbell, Coalition for
Sonoran Desert Protection
Miriam Davidson, AFSC Maquila
Organizing Project
Isabel Garcia, Alianza Indigena Sin
Fronteras/Derechos Humanos
Caroline Hotaling, Ms. Foundation
for Women
Teresa Leal, Southwest Network for
Environmental & Economic Justice
Enrique Pérez-Gómez, Activist
José Matus, Alianza Indigena Sin
Fronteras/Derechos Humanos
Ann Murray-Wolf, Sonora
Environmental Research Institute
Elizabeth Saenz-Ackerman,
Grantmakers without Borders

NNG Members Speak Out on Getting Real about Power

THROUGHOUT 2003 and at the Tucson conference several themes emerged from our conversations with members — below is a working summary of those themes. They are the thinking and discussion of over 350 philanthropists. Above all else, members told us that we, progressive grantmakers, have to get serious about power -- what it means to have it and what it means to build it. We need to stop fearing anything big enough to be powerful. We also need to get real about our own role as funders and the influence we have beyond our check books.



Pam Pompey, Yeshica Weerasekera & Ericka Taylor

1. We need a movement building perspective

- **Go global:** Our collective strategies for systemic change must include funding internationally. Including funding local organizations that regrant.
- **Embrace multiple strategies:** We need to fund organizing, policy and electoral work.
- **Focus on communities of color:** It will not happen without their leadership.
- **Grants that sustain the movement:** fund technical assistance, infrastructure development, capacity building through multi-year, larger general operating grants that sustain organizations for the long haul.
- **Make time:** We need to find the time for ourselves and the communities we fund to build real alliances, deepen our political analysis and share real strategies.

2. We need to organize more money for justice and build a funding base that sustains social and economic justice work

- **Donor organizing:** We need to bring more donors into social justice work. Specific attention needs to be spent on family foundations — one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in philanthropy.
 - **Partner with larger foundations:** We need to leverage more resources through NNG partnering with larger founda-

tions re-granting and through grantmaking collaboratives.

- **Go where the money is:** As the progressive funding community, we need to stop self-marginalization and go to the places where the money is — including the Council on Foundations and other venues.
- **Social change 101:** We need to train new people entering the field — providing educational opportunities and sharing collective resources, networks and strategies.
- **Payout more:** Push the level of ours and other foundations' giving to get more money out into the community where it is critically needed. Stop saving for a rainy day, because it's raining now.
- **Develop philanthropy outside of the foundation community:** We need to foster philanthropies in underrepresented communities, such as communities of color and support alternative workplace giving strategies.

3. We need to revolutionize our philanthropy & our foundations

- **Democratize our grantmaking:** Organizers and community members need to be involved in decision-making as board members and as donors.
- **Make it easier:** We need to simplify grant application and reporting processes to save time and money that could mean more grants and more work on the ground.
- **Move our assets:** We need to put more of our endowments into socially responsible funds and

Denise Chavez, Luis Urrea & Ofelia Zepeda



use the power of our endowments to engage in share holder activism to help move progressive policy agenda.

- **Diversity & Anti-racism Training:** We need to find real ways to address issues of diversity and racism in our institutions.

4. We need deeper collaborations

- **More meaningful collaborations:** We need to find the time to build on and develop collaborations that are real and meaningful.
- **Joint vision creation:** We need to create visions in partnership with grassroots, policy, media and other partners.
- **More seats at the table:** Getting real about power means we need to be open to building alliances with partners outside the usuals.

5. We need to get our act together

- **Listen & learn:** Internally, as the progressive funding community, we need to deepen our community understanding of each other's work
- **Centralize needs:** Develop an internal database of grantees that all NNG members share in to increased joint efforts.
- **Strength in numbers:** Build deeper connections between strategic affinity groups to address key issues in philanthropy.

- **Map the field:** Create a landscape analysis of who the movers and shakers are in philanthropy.
- **Real strategy, real impact:** Have joint sessions where members get together, roll up sleeves and design a strategy to build greater power for social justice.



Kolu Zigbi & Alvin Starks

6. We need to get real about power

- **Get political:** We need to stop being afraid of funding political work and get real about what we really can do around c4 funding – including our work as individual donors.
- **Support alternative & independent media:** We need to foster independent and diverse media that bring more stories and voices to the table.
- **Stop equating grassroots with small:** Discuss and support large scale grassroots efforts that work to make significant changes in service, policy, organizing and legal fields.

Focus: Media Strategies

Undoubtedly the highlight of the conference was the opening plenary keynote address by *Democracy Now!*'s Amy Goodman. Using the documentary "Independent Media in a Time of War" Goodman deeply critiqued the mainstream media's failure and refusal to represent the "true faces of war." She commented "Independent media has a crucial responsibility to go to where the silence is to represent the diverse voices of people engaged in dissent." Her energy, analysis and demand for justice resonated deeply with NNGers who gave her and the *Democracy Now!* crew rounds of applause (check out *Democracy Now!* and the video at www.democracynow.org).

Conference participants were energized about media issues and ready to respond – anxious to start moving some real money to make an impact. Overall, there was a general recognition that media is central to how organizing happens now; if we are going to get real about power and getting to scale, we need to really focus on media. Conversations centered on a few key areas: changing media policy; funding and creating alternative media; and access to and reform of the media field itself, including the involvement of more people of color and efforts to help grassroots groups use the media.

The conversation did not start in Tucson, but was the result of a series of conversations and deep planning by NNG's Working Group on Funding Media and the Media Works Initiative which came out of NNG's last conference in Oakland. The NNG members at the core of these initiatives designed a track of "strategy sessions." The first of these sessions reflected on the media strategies of the anti-war movement — what worked, what didn't — and how to learn from these experiences to more strategically allocate funds in the 2004 election cycle. The other session focused more specifically on the road to building a sustainable independent media through regulatory reform and social investment in public, independent and ethnic media enterprises.

Interested in talking with other funders about Media? For the Working Group on Funding Media - which is open to all NNG members, people should contact Kathy Patridge at kathy@globalresponse.org. For the MediaWorks Initiative, contact

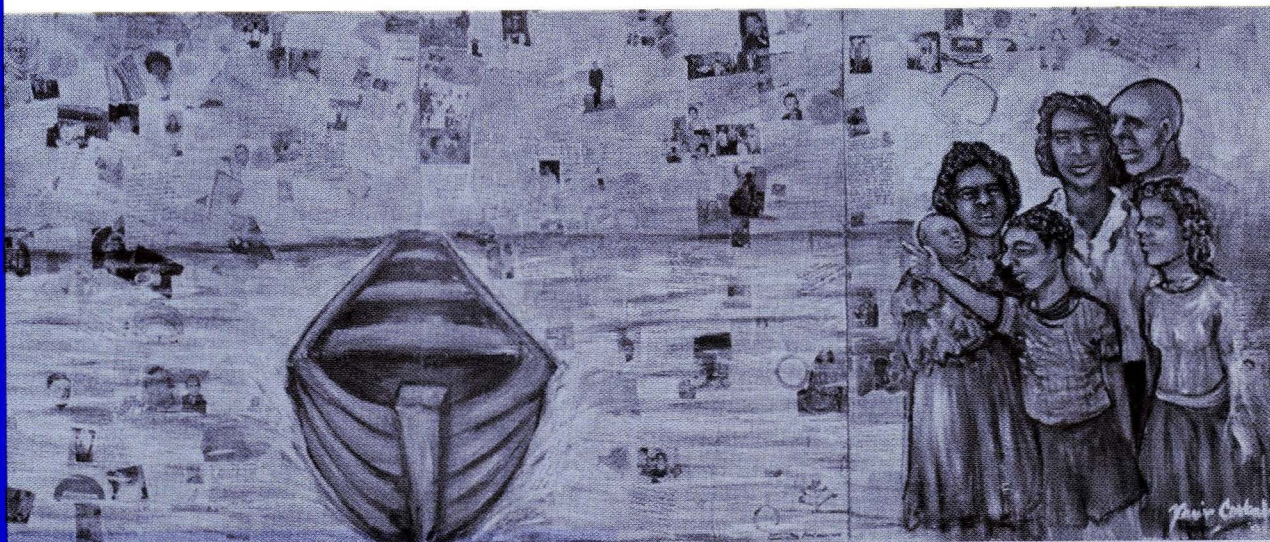
MediaWorks_Initiative@msn.com

Save the Date!

Miami 2004

October 16-19

NNG's 22nd Conference



Xavier Cortada, "We're in the same boat", 60" x 192", mixed media on canvas, 2001
www.cortada.com

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 How does your contribution
 sustain NNG's work?

- general operations • yearly conference planning and implementation
- regional gatherings and meetings for members and other grantmakers
- publications and newsletters • issue-based forums • working groups
- caucuses • galvanizing philanthropy on key issues • grantee involvement

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Membership benefits include:

- Reduced conference fees
- Free access to NNG's gatherings and meetings
- Complimentary publications and e-updates
- A Network of grantmakers with similar concerns
- Sharing information about projects and funding strategies

Change is Possible

Cynthia Renfro, Marguerite Casey Foundation **Joe Wilson**, Public Welfare Foundation
NNG Board Co-Chairs

CHANGE WAS POSSIBLE IN 2003: As the year comes to a close and the new one is upon us, we realize what an amazing year 2003 has been. NNG began the year executive director-less and damn near broke, teetering a bit in terms of energy and vision. But with the help of two of the most fabulous, caring, intelligent and driven individuals on the planet, Nicole Trombley and Júlio Dantas, the NNG board dug in and got to work putting this train back on it's rails. We have, in 2003, met most of our budget goals, put on an incredible conference in October, added some new faces to the NNG board, and just a few weeks ago hired a new executive director. But the most exciting part about this year, besides all the damn hard work paying off, was being in an ongoing dialogue with the membership who told us loudly and emphatically that you need NNG to be present and accounted for, powerful, now more than ever.

Phew!

Change is possible in 2004: We are very excited about Ron McKinley, our new executive director. His seasoned nonprofit experience and vision for NNG's leadership in progressive grantmaking, and philanthropy as a whole, sets up some thrilling challenges and solid direction for us organizationally. We are excited about rebuilding our organizational capacity to bring better services to our membership as well as to continue to engage and mine the wealth of ideas, passion and experience represented there.

Change is possible: As we continue to battle the powers-that-be, the domestic war on poverty, the scandal posing as our government bombing innocents overseas, and social and economic injustice in a myriad of ways, we obsessively read and re-read Arundhati Roy:

We can hone our memory, we can learn from our history. We can continue to build public opinion until it becomes a deafening roar. We can turn the war on Iraq into a fishbowl of the U.S. government's excesses. We can expose George Bush and Tony Blair — and their allies — for the cowardly baby killers, water poisoners, and pusillanimous long-distance bombers that they are. We can re-invent civil disobedience in a million dif-

ferent ways. In other words, we can come up with a million ways of becoming a collective pain in the ass. When George Bush says "you're either with us, or you are with the terrorists" we can say "No thank you." We can let him know that the people of the world do not need to choose between a Malevolent Mickey Mouse and the Mad Mullahs. Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness — and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling — their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability. Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them. Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.

—from Arundhati Roy's speech "Confronting Empire" at the World Social Forum, January 2003

Change is possible. We look forward to continuing the struggle.



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We welcome feedback and story ideas. Contact nicole@nng.org
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Welcome! Ron McKinley, NNG's New Executive Director

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS of the National Network of Grantmakers is pleased to announce Ron McKinley as NNG's new Executive Director, effective January 5, 2004. NNG spent much of 2003 engaging in deeper conversations with the membership on the future direction of NNG and reorganizing internally. This hard work was critical to clarify NNG's more immediate plans and to identify the ideal fit for the network at this time.

For those of you who do not yet know Ron, he has been a leader in the philanthropic community for over 25 years. Currently, he is the Director of the Wilder Center for Communities at the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation in St. Paul, MN, and serves on the boards of the Funding Exchange and the Headwaters Foundation for Justice. He also currently serves on the board of the Council on Foundations, chairing the Inclusive Practices Committee. Prior to this, Ron was manager of charitable contributions at St. Paul Companies, the founding director of The Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, a senior program officer for the Minneapolis Foundation and Coordinator of American Indian Programs for Macalester College. He also served extensively on the board of the Minnesota Council on Foundations, including chairing the Race & Diversity Task Force.

Ron has spent the past 30 years dedicated to the simple premise that our communities are strongest when all those who live, work and play in them are intimately involved in the decisions of the community. Equity and access are the motivators for all Ron's work, whether it is professional or volunteer in nature. Ron imagines the future to be a better place, and says "but it will only become that if advocates for justice commit themselves to very personal, individual action grounded in the values of equity." His work in philanthropy has been fueled by his belief that "a just society is dependent on the ability

and willingness of justice advocates to assume positions of influence at every opportunity, and then to use these positions to promote social change."

On taking on the role of NNG's Executive Director, Ron commented, "Today is a volatile time in philanthropy. Thousands of new foundations are being created every year, portfolios are on a roller coaster ride, control of trillions of philanthropic dollars will change hands in the next two decades, motivations in the field are changing from content to finance, technology and global economies have changed international boundaries from geographic to economic...there has never been a time when a powerful progressive voice was more needed in the field.

NNG's members are doing great work on many fronts. I am excited about the opportunity to join them and their leadership in building a powerful organization that will engage others in achieving justice."

After participating in NNG's December board of directors planning meeting, Ron will join NNG staff in January. He will immediately begin the planning for NNG's 22nd annual conference next October in Miami, as well as regional meetings throughout the U.S. in 2004, in addition to re-locating NNG's headquarters to Minneapolis. Look for details in the coming months!

We are confident that Ron's experience and commitment will be a tremendous asset to NNG's efforts to increase financial and other resources to movements for social and economic justice. Please join us in welcoming him.



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