DataCenter is committed to reflecting our values in organizational practices. We’ve been engaged in defining, implementing and sustaining concrete practices to dismantle systems of oppression and increase our accountability to communities. In order to tackle challenges and dysfunction endemic to social justice-minded non-profits, we’ve been developing long-term sustainable leadership—in particular by people of color and working class people—by sharing it across the organization. Building on transformative work in the Movement, knowledge from people of color communities, and organizational history of participatory decisionmaking, organizational culture work and anti-oppression work, we’ve piloted and are implementing a Shared Leadership organizational structure.

**FAQs**

**What is the “Shared Leadership structure”?**

We define Shared Leadership (SL) as a multiracial structure of sustainable non-profit leadership and governance grounded in Movement-building, our beliefs & values, historical experiences and self-empowerment. Like our “decolonizing research” methodology empowering communities to lead research (see Spring/Summer 2005 newsletter), SL proactively bridges disparities and power dynamics nascent in the 501c3 institution to carve space for healthy leadership practices. It germinates a mutual opportunity to empower a new generation of leaders while enabling co-founder Fred Goff to continue contributing to our longevity and sustainability.

Our approach is grounded in three key concepts: integrating program and support services, leadership development and leadership rotation.

Integrating program and support functions connects the work of all staff directly to our mission and holds us accountable to the communities with whom we work.

To support leadership development and organizational continuity, a team of coaches—former Interim Executive Director Patricia St. Onge, former Co-Director Carol Cantwell, Lorrie Johnson, and Belma Gonzalez—are respectively providing organizational, financial, development, and founder transition coaching. Coaches mentor committees, working groups and individual staff and conduct skills-building trainings for staff and board.

Leadership rotation enables all staff to assume responsibility and develop skills in operating and representing the organization. This builds a power-sharing culture, organizational continuity and stability, while minimizing isolation and negative impacts of power concentration accruing to individuals over time.

**How does SL work?**

Our structure consists of the Coordinating Council, three committees, working groups and the board. The Coordinating Council holds responsibility for keeping the organization on track with our mission, vision and strategy, and organizational, legal, financial and community accountabilities. The Council is comprised of three staff members representing key areas of the organization’s work—Research, Capacity-Building, and Support Services Committees. These committees coordinate organizational work and ensure staff are supported and are fulfilling responsibilities. Working groups handle day-to-day program and support services tasks and projects of the organization.

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**Shared Leadership**

being the change we want to see in the world (abridged)

By DataCenter with contribution from Patricia St. Onge
**Meet Our Board**

DataCenter extends our appreciation to our former board members who supported the organization through our transitional phase and conscientious growth. In our next phase of implementation and becoming more accountable to community groups, we welcome aboard our new constituent-based board of directors:

**Yvonne Cooks**, California Coalition for Women Prisoners Director and a former prisoner, has two-plus decades of experience working on issues facing women in prison. She values the work DC provides to organizers and hopes to bring to the board a spirit demanding social and racial justice to expand our mission and goals as we grow the shared leadership model. Yvonne holds a B.A. in Independent Studies from Columbia College and has published essays on women, Islam and prisons.

**Paulina Hernández** is a cha-cha girl, artist, community organizer and activist from Veracrúz, Mexico. She lives in Atlanta, GA and is the Co-Director of Southerners on New Ground (SONG). She previously coordinated the Southern regional youth activism program at the Highlander Research & Education Center for over 4 years. Paulina has a background in farm worker and immigrant rights organizing, anti-violence work, and cultural work.

**Andrea Cristina Mercado**, Lead Organizer and Political Education Coordinator at Mujeres Unidas y Activas, is coordinating the Workers Rights campaign and leadership course. She came to know DC through a California domestic worker project that led to the development of Household Worker Bill (AB2536). She has also worked with IPETER-RAS, a Brazilian sustainable agriculture project and as global justice organizer for the Miami Workers Center.

**Celina Ramirez**, originally from Tucson, AZ, was most recently the Policy Director for the Books Not Bars Project where she collaborated with DC investigating incarceration alternatives for Bay Area youth. She is inspired by DC’s commitment to provide access to knowledge that strengthens social justice movements. She has a B.A. and a J.D. from Stanford University and also serves on the Board of the San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association.

**Jessica Tovar** is a Chicana with roots in Guadalajara Jalisco México and East Los Angeles. She is an Organizer for Communities for a Better Environment. Her multigenerational, environmental justice work is grounded in Southwest communities and the global impact of Climate Change on poor people of color. She is drawn to DC’s work of benefiting and empowering communities to make institutional change. She is currently working on creative projects, danza azteca, and a zine called *Tontantzine*.

**Welcome New Staff**

**Chanda Jones** is our Finance Coordinator/Administrator. She is experienced in advocacy for women prisoners & adults with developmental disabilities, and in development/event planning in the nonprofit sector. Her vision is to maximize financial resources reflecting and the movement and DC’s commitment to community change in order to create sustainable fiscal health for the organization and the movement. Chanda is also a Personal Finance Coach for women.

**Jessica Nowlan** is our Development Coordinator. A Bay Area native, Jessica has been immersed in the movement since she was a teen outreach worker with the Center for Young Women’s Development. Jessica is a popular educator and community worker who helped start and run the first ever girls-led empowerment groups within San Francisco’s Juvenile Hall. Jessica is a mother to four, a writer, and is planning on getting a degree in Creative Writing.
What role does the board of directors play in SL?

SL impacts the board as well as staff. Board members are helping to envision and implement a role for the board that reflects shared leadership principles and balances legal & fiduciary responsibility. To ground our work and hold us accountable, board members are organizers and leaders from our constituent community groups.

Who makes decisions?

Those who are most impacted make the decision. This means that everyone participates in major organizational decisions, while committees, working groups and individuals have the autonomy to make decisions that fall within their scope of responsibility. We practice participation and transparency, and work to balance those principles with effective decision-making.

Why Shared Leadership?

Without attentiveness to and intentionality about power, we delude ourselves into re-creating the very systems of oppression we seek to dismantle. Our SL is but one endeavor among others in the Movement to be real about power and how it plays out, to empower staff and board, to integrate and value the well-being of staff and organization, and create healthy ways to practice power resonant with our politics.

While no structure is without challenges, we value the peer support, commitment and stability that shared leadership provides. Growing from our experience and needs, SL structure informs our work to dismantle inequities in research and strengthen the Movement for social justice and liberation.

We are indebted to former staff, directors and board who have been teachers along the way. Financial security and support from key funders, donors, our endowment enabled us to build and implement this structure. We are especially grateful to Patricia St. Onge who has nurtured the shared leadership structure from seedling.

We’re in progress, documenting successes & challenges, and would love to hear from folks their experiences or ways that they would like to support…

Read the full version on our website. www.datacenter.org

Recently Released!

Home Is Where the Work Is: Inside New York’s Domestic Work Industry

Domestic Workers United and DC released a report on the first ever industry-wide analysis conducted by & for domestic workers.

Executive Summary: www.datacenter.org/reports/homeexecsum.pdf


SouthAsianForum.org

DC supported National South Asian Task Force in launching a groundbreaking website of organizing resources & storytelling.

http://www.southasianforum.org

Victories!

Community prevents Candymakers from lead poisoning children

With DC’s corporate research, the San Diego community and Environmental Health Coalition won a landmark agreement from major candymakers adopting strict standards for protecting children from lead exposures in Mexican candies.

http://www.environmentalhealth.org/jul06Update.htm

Former Prisoners change discriminatory hiring policy

Using DC research to challenge policymakers’ assumptions and to provide policy alternatives, All Of Us Or None won a unanimous vote from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to “ban the box” that unfairly required full criminal record disclosure on preliminary public employment applications.

http://www.allofusornone.org/

Indigenous Nation wins UN sovereignty decision

With the help of our print media monitoring, Western Shosone Defense Project won a U.N. decision upholding their sovereignty.

http://www.wsdp.org

Upcoming Events!

Shared Leadership Summit

November. DC hosts a conversation with allies on social change models in non-profits. Location & time TBA.

DC turns 30!!! DataCenter celebrates our 30th anniversary next year! Look for our yearlong event series.
In our last newsletter, we brought to you our commitment to ‘Decolonizing Research,’ a process that changes our values around research. We recognize that different sources of information are valued differently as a result of the inequity of knowledge that renders certain voices ‘legitimate’ over others.

DataCenter builds community capacity to do research as a way to level the playing field. Through our Capacity Building program, we offer community organizing groups research workshops that make “expert” research, such as public records, census data, corporate filings, journalism and academic studies, accessible and relevant to social justice struggles. We transfer social science research skills, like how to conduct and analyse surveys or interviews, to communities so they can lead and own their own research projects.

In addition, the Capacity Building program facilitates strategy sessions for community groups to engage in research planning, assessing their resources and identifying research methods best suited to achieve their organizing goals.

DataCenter’s capacity building work advances the practice of valuing community knowledge by helping draw it out for the purpose of building community power. We also produce and distribute handouts and toolkits that guide community and family history, and community-driven research – is as valuable as what is often considered ‘legitimate’ knowledge in resolving social justice issues. Research for social justice and self determination must advance, not hinder or contradict, the idea of information and knowledge equity between the elites and grassroots community members. As we engage in various forms of capacity building support, we witness the dynamic and authentic practice of what we envision:

OUR knowledge is OUR power! And we see it happen every day.

miho kim and Saba Waheed lead DataCenter’s Capacity Building Program.

Capacity Building Projects

- Citizens Against the Dump Expansion used tools from a DataCenter training to conduct corporate research that enabled the group to successfully block the doubling of a toxic garbage dump in rural Solano County, California.
- Providence Youth & Student Movement is conducting a participatory research project of Southeast Asian youth in Providence, RI to inform effective and culturally appropriate local and state policy and service deployment; DataCenter trained youth members on how to survey their community.
- DataCenter presents Decolonize This!, a hands-on workshop on how to choose research methods that help achieve organizing goals, at national and regional gatherings including California Wellness Conference on Work and Health, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, Border Social Forum.
As of May 1, 2006, DataCenter has a staff member living and working in the Southeast. After three years in the Oakland office, Kim Rodgers relocated to Knoxville, Tennessee along with her girlfriend, two dogs and all their houseplants, where she will focus on building community and strategic research capacity in the South. Her work there lends an on-the-ground physical presence to our long-time commitment to underserved communities.

With its rich history of civil rights activism confronting among the most conservative political and cultural forces in the country, the South emerged as a focal point for our work some years ago. As a national organization based in Oakland, however, the DataCenter must consistently address the question, how do we build effective relationships with communities outside the Bay Area? When the opportunity arose to pilot a staff person working on the ground in the Southeast, we decided the time was right to try it out. Along the way we’ll be documenting best practices should we consider other similar arrangements.

We will be building on existing relationships with organizations like the Highlander Center for Research and Education. Together we are exploring ways to better understand the needs of community researchers in the South.

We kicked off our increased commitment in the South at the Southeast Social Forum, the first of the regional forums leading up the US Social Forum that will take place in Atlanta next June. Susan Williams of Highlander, Roger White and I co-facilitated a workshop on “Pupils, Prisons and Priorities.” Participants shared stories, analysis and strategies.

Here in Knoxville, I’m working with United Mountain Defense to help stem the destruction of Appalachian communities devastated by coal mining. One of the cruel ironies of modern strip mining is its ability to destroy entire mountains with very few workers, deploying massive machinery and explosives, and leading to skyrocketing unemployment in already impoverished communities. Next month we’ll be co-organizing a community forum to develop ideas for creative economic alternatives that sustainably use mountain resources, from ginseng harvesting to eco-tourism.

There was a clear sense of urgency circulating throughout the Southeast Social Forum, reflected as a sense of responsibility in the frequently repeated saying “as the South goes, so goes the country.” The DataCenter looks forward to working with low-income communities of color dedicated to making that path one of social justice.

Kim Rodgers leads DataCenter South.

Contact DataCenter South:
kim@datacenter.org
865.573.8804
¡Rini, Presente!

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the death of artist-activist Rini Templeton. Rini worked out of the DataCenter in the late 70s and early 80s, making art to visualize and advance struggles for social justice. Using the concept of a wall-newspaper, Rini created “The Right to Know,” an exhibit that presented DataCenter’s research and analysis on censorship in a visual form. Her invaluable legacy of copyright-free bold black-and-white images drawn from everyday life appears throughout the world on banners, leaflets, picket signs, websites and newsletters.

This fall the Rini Templeton Memorial Fund, Tumis, Design Action, Inkworks and the DataCenter will co-sponsor an exhibit of how her art has been used and how it has inspired a new generation of artists. The exhibit will open for three weeks on Saturday, October 28 at Studio 24 (Galeria de la Raza) in San Francisco. For further information about the exhibit see www.riniart.org. Please join us in this celebration.

–Fred Goff, President and Co-founder of the DataCenter