

“Sustaining Civic Participation in Minority Communities”

PROFESSIONAL
FELLOWS

Testimony from the Summer 2015 U.S. Mentors Delegation
visiting Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia
June 24 — July 12, 2015



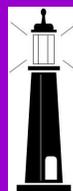
July 11, 2015, Budapest, Hungary: Last night of U.S. Mentors visit in Budapest and farewell program with Hungarian alumni (L-R) row 1: Bence Pal, Sondra Youdelman, Tara Parrish, Kelly Viselman, Johanna Laszlo and Hannah Willage; row 2: Nik Belanger, Sarah Jane Knoy, Dr. Reka Szilardi, Szilvi Suri, and Ellen Glover.

THANK YOU TO ALL PARTNERS IN EUROPE FOR THEIR HELP TO OUR DELEGATION AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ACTIVITIES:

Bence Pal, Claudia Popa, Cristinela Ionescu, Dilyana Gyurova, Dr. Reka Szilardi, Emil Metodiev, Eva Rieceanska, Florea Mihnea, Ionela Ciolan, Ivana Raposova, Johanna Laszlo, Kirilka Angelova, Lenka Machlicova, Magda Ilie, Veronika Strelcova, Maros Chmelik, Monika Jurikova, Nevena Pashova, Oana Bacil, Peter Petak, Raluca Negulescu, Slavomir Gal, Sona Korenova, Szilvia Nagy, Szilvia Suri, Vlad Catuna, Lavinia Chiburte, Iustina Neagu, Zsanett Fugg, Mate Varga, Marton Gosztonyi, and many others!



*Sponsored by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs,
Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Fellows Division.
Locally organized by WSOS / Great Lakes Consortium for International Training and
Development with its collaborating partners in the USA and Europe: CEGA in Bulgaria,
CeRe in Romania, CKO in Slovakia, CCF in Hungary, and alumni friends in these countries.*





Tara Parrish, Springfield, Massachusetts Pioneer Valley Project



“It was an honor to participate in the WSOS/Great Lakes Consortium exchange. It was a wonderful professional challenge to design and deliver relevant, appropriate and useful trainings in new cultural contexts and to learn more about great complexity of doing community organizing in emerging civil society sectors in Bulgaria and Slovakia.

I especially appreciated the opportunities to meet with Roma community leaders to learn about their important organizing work in the face of racial, social and economic discrimination. I hope that this program continues its important focus on organizing in minority communities and supports the identification of Roma organizers and their professional development. Social change happens when ordinary people shed light on the wounds of injustice and build power focused on a shared vision for justice and transformation. There are many reasons to be hopeful about the continued growth of the community organizing field in Central and Eastern Europe. I feel fortunate to have had this incredible opportunity to learn from and support and train organizers and leaders who are committed to justice and equality in this part of the world.”



Ellen Glover, Chicago, Illinois One Northside



“The GLC Fellowship was such a great experience for me professionally, personally and culturally. It was an amazing opportunity to get to meet the communities that my fellows' organize and to see how their work is both similar and different to our organizing work in the USA.

I look forward to continuing the friendships that I built through this experience as well as the professional contacts. It was transformational to get to connect with the international organizing community.”



*June 28, 2015,
Sofia, Bulgaria:
Tara Parrish and Ellen
Glover (in the middle)
with Bulgarian Alumni
after a training in
Community Organizing.*





**Sondra Youdelman, New York City, New York
Community Voices Heard**



“What an incredible experience! As we continue in the day-to-day race of our critical social justice work, it's rare that we take the time or get the opportunity to share what we're learning with others, and to step outside our own preconceived notions and embedded thoughts and see things differently. The professional fellows program offered that type of learning and rejuvenating experience for both sides. I am energized by my new perceptions and excited about the path forward.”



**Sarah Jane Knoy, Manchester, New Hampshire
Granite State Organizing Project**



“I am very pleased to have been a part of the summer 2015 delegation. Returning as a mentor for the second time has helped me understand the context the fellows work in more deeply and allows me to assist them more effectively. It has been wonderful to see the progress made by my 2013 fellow over the past two years. Thank you for allowing me and GSOP to participate in this exchange!”



**Hannah Willage, Chicago Illinois
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless**



“The GLC legislative fellowship has provided an amazing professional experience. I look forward to ongoing partnership with my fellows and seeing their successful work.”



**Elizabeth Balint, Toledo, Ohio
WSOS/ Great Lakes Consortium for International Training and
Development**



“It was a great opportunity to be with this U.S. mentor delegation in Romania and Hungary to learn from them and also see our alumni in doing joint activities with their mentors. The Spring 2015 Professional Fellows group was very active in every country in preparing the program for their mentors and spending time with them and the American delegation. As a result we could learn more about the participants of this program and their culture and traditions. Special thanks for the fellows who provided home stays and/or home hospitality for some of the U.S. mentors. It was a unique experience. We hope that the relationships that we built between our U.S. mentors and our European alumni will continue as the alumni are implementing follow on activities where further mentoring and consultations will be very helpful. Thank You for this great experience to everyone involved!”



*Thank You to Ellen Glover, Sondra Youdelman, Tara Parrish, Elizabeth Balint
and others for the photos used in this publication!*



**Nik Belanger, Charlottesville, Virginia
Virginia Organizing**



“As a member of the U.S. delegation to Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary, I saw firsthand the power of community organizing to build stronger, more democratic communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Through the time I spent in Romania working one-on-one with our Fellow to develop an action plan to win a Roma artisan center in Petrosani, I learned more about Roma culture and how her community is fighting to preserve it. In Slovakia, I met with several NGOs, led trainings for immigrant organizations, and talked about Virginia Organizing’s Dismantling Racism work with community leaders.

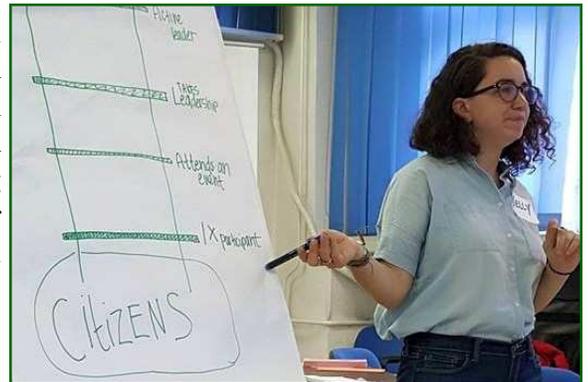
My time in Hungary allowed me to meet with my fellow to discuss his supervision and training of several new community organizers in a newly-formed national network of organizations. In only a couple short weeks, I met people who are just starting to think about community organizing and others who have already committed their lives to it. In all of this, I am grateful for the opportunity to meet so many amazing people and excited to see what happens next!”



**Kelly Viselman, Chicago, Illinois
Jane Addams Senior Caucus**



“The GLC fellowship program was an excellent experience professionally and personally. Collaborating and training with other organizers from the United States and Eastern Europe helped me refine my training and facilitation skills. The fellowship also provided time for valuable reflection on my work in Chicago and helped me feel more connection to a global struggle for justice”.



July 10, 2015, Budapest, Hungary: (L-R) row 1: Ellen Glover, Tara Parrish, Sondra Youdelman, Hannah Willage and Kelly Viselman; row 2: Sarah Jane Knoy and Nik Belanger.

