

# **“Building Grassroots Democracy in Minority Communities”**

## **Winter 2014 U.S. Mentors Delegation in Europe**

### **February 6 - 28, 2014**

*Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of the Educational and Cultural Affairs,  
Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Fellows Division*

*December 2013*

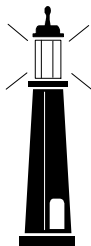


**PROFESSIONAL  
FELLOWS**

**GREAT LAKES CONSORTIUM  
for International Training and  
Development (GLC)** — GLC is a  
collaborative effort of the Bowling  
Green State University, Lourdes  
University, The University of  
Toledo, and WSOS Community Ac-  
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*The Great Lakes Consortium – through WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc. – as Contract Agent and Manager – received a grant for a two-way exchange between September 2012 and August 2014 from the U.S. Department of State for the “Building Grassroots Democracy in Minority Communities”.*

*The overall goal of this exchange is to provide a professional development opportunity for up-and-coming and mid-level professionals to gain knowledge of the U.S. practices in citizen participation and advocacy, engaging minorities, and marginalized populations in civil society and politics, collaborating with community leaders to inform changes in legislation that make a difference in minority communities (incl. Roma, disabled, homeless) and building grassroots democracy.*

*European participants were exposed to diverse community organizing methods for citizens in solving problems in their own communities and gain hands-on experience at both public and civil society institutions in the U.S. and a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture and people. They had opportunities to examine the relationship between civil society and government and learn U.S. practices on transparency and accountability. Through internship placements at national, state or local organizations across the U.S. they gained knowledge and experience as well as adaptable approaches that they could implement after their return.*

*The first delegation with a total of 19 fellows from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia visited the U.S. from April 1 – May 11, 2013. In the second delegation from September 29-November 9, 2013 included 18 European fellows. They participated in group seminars, round-table discussions, site visits, and had interactions with United States leaders. A tailored 3-week internship with mentoring, multicultural events, and participation in volunteer activities as well as in the Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, D.C. were also included in the 6-*

*week professional fellows program. Participants prepared 6-9 month individual and group Action Plans for follow on activities. They had various opportunities to experience the American family life and the diversity in the U.S. through staying with American host families during their internship.*

*As part of the exchange U.S. mentors have opportunities for a reciprocal travel to Europe to share professional expertise and gain a deeper understanding of the societies, cultures and people of other countries. This citizen civic exchange promotes mutual understanding, create long-term professional ties, enhance the collaboration between GLC and its partners.*

*The first Out-Bound delegation with 8 U.S. mentors visited Europe between June 19-July 17, 2013, the second group included two U.S. mentors trip between August 29-September 21, 2013). Members of the U.S. delegation previously hosted, trained, worked with the European fellows while they were in the U.S. The next delegation of 9 U.S. mentors will travel to Europe between February 7-28, 2014.*

*During the 3-week program Americans will work with the European alumni in providing workshops, assist with consulting and mentoring. They will be involved in field experience and learn about minority issues and gain cultural experience in Europe. Home hospitality will be also included for the Americans so they can gain a better understanding on living conditions, family life, traditions etc. in Europe.*

*This program is a collaboration between GLC and its overseas partners: CECA in Bulgaria, Civil College Foundation in Hungary, CeRe in Romania and Center for Community Organizing in Slovakia as well as the European Community Organizing Network (ECON) and many U.S. partner organizations from 16 states involved in joint programs, the tailored internships, and follow up mentoring activities. THANK YOU TO ALL!*

## Justin Terrell

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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Justin Terrell is a Program Manager for the Justice 4 All within TakeAction Minnesota nonprofit organization. He is a native to South Minneapolis with a strong commitment to justice. For over 10 years, Mr. Terrell has sought to serve his community by working or volunteering at a variety of non-profits and community organizations. As a Board Member for Minnesota Neighborhoods Organizing for Change and for Urban Homeworks, he works on issues related to housing, education and environmental justice.

Mr. Terrell is a Mentor to a 16 year old young man at Minneapolis North Community High School, and is involved as a congregant at Sanctuary Covenant Church. Currently, as the Justice 4 All Program Manager, he is organizing to close Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation racial jobs gap by reducing barriers to employment for people with criminal records. Recently, the Justice 4 All program helped pass statewide legislation that removed questions from employment applica-



tions that inquire about criminal records. This is the first step in installing statewide fair hiring practices that will help close Minnesota's racial jobs gap.

Mr. Terrell has a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from the Bethel University (2002) and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Advocacy

and Political Leadership (2015).

Mr. Terrell will be a speaker in celebrating the Black History Month in Bulgaria and Slovakia that is in plan to organize with the U.S. Embassies in these countries.

While in Europe, Mr. Terrell will do training in following topics:

- (1) The New Jim Crow: a discussion on racism in America and how it has changed through our history;
- (2) Building Power: How TakeAction Minnesota is organizing for racial, economic and social justice, and
- (3) Black History: An overview of heroes in the Black Community

TakeAction Minnesota hosted Hristo Angelichin, Fall 2013 Professional fellow from Bulgaria.

*Kevin Farmer (J4A) and Hristo Angelichin from Bulgaria participated in "Target the Racial Jobs Gap" movement lead by TakeAction MN in Minneapolis*



[www.takeactionminnesota.org](http://www.takeactionminnesota.org)

**TakeAction Minnesota (TAM)** is a statewide network of people working to realize racial and economic equity across Minnesota. TAM do this by connecting people and organizations to each other, turning someone's individual desire for change – to pass a more progressive policy or law, to improve an institution, to change a harmful idea or perception – into the broad public action that makes change happen

where it wasn't possible going it alone.

TAM members want to make a difference on the issues that affect their own lives: to have access to health care when you need it; to earn enough to support your family with dignity; being given a second chance to build your future. But to be effective, TAM needs to connect with other people, and other organizations, who have the same vision. At TakeAction Minnesota, people come together to change Minnesota. They work together to win the changes

that help shape their lives for the better, beating the odds again and again. TAM does it with great people, and organizations, from communities across our state: "With people, by people, and for people just like you".

**Justice 4 All (J4A) campaign** is working to close Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation racial jobs gap. J4A educates policymakers and corporate employers, and creates real second chances for those who are caught up in the criminal justice system.



## Quanisha Smith

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Quanisha M. Smith is Co-Executive Director of the ACTION United, Pennsylvania's largest community organization of low to moderate income families. She is locally recognized for her educational and community development work. Ms. Smith grew up in a public housing project in the South Bronx (New York City), and was it not for scholarships and educational opportunities in her community, she does not know where she would be today. Fueled by a passion to pave the way for children with similar backgrounds and for social change, Quani-sha worked in youth development before she chose a career in community organizing around social & economic justice campaigns for ACORN.

Ms. Smith is a University of Pennsylvania Alumni and holds a Bachelor's Degree in the Science of Human Services from Springfield College where she learned to combine social change theory with practice. Currently, she is a candidate for a Master's Degree in Social Services with a concentration in Community Practice, Policy & Advocacy from the Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. Ms. Smith has been a vital part of ACTION United's

organizational management. As a senior staff member, she translates her holistic view and experience with community organizing into easily understandable lessons for their staff and

members. She can articulate and teach this model of community organizing to others for effective implementation.

Ms Smith will be a speaker in celebrating the Black History Month in Hungary and Romania that is in plan to organize with the U.S. Embassies in these countries. While in Europe she will do training in following topics:

- (1) Coalition Development,
- (2) Membership Recruitment & Leadership Development,
- (3) Organizational Capacity Building

ACTION United hosted two Spring 2013 Professional fellows: Laszlo Jakab from Hungary and Ioana Petrache from Romania



[www.actionunited.org](http://www.actionunited.org)

**ACTION United (AU)** is a state-wide organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. AU was formed in January, 2010 by former members of PA ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) and other concerned people in the state to advance the interests of low and moderate income families around Pennsylvania on the issues that are of critical importance: economic justice for low income and working families, fair lending practices and a real solution to the foreclosure crisis, good schools, clean air and a safe envi-

ronment, and quality affordable health care. Education is a major focus as part of a larger agenda of advocacy and organizing to build the power of low- and moderate-income citizens. Jobs, health care, social security, housing, and the environment are other issue areas.

Action United is a membership organization of low and moderate income Pennsylvanians. 57,000 members are organized into 17 neighborhood chapters throughout the state currently concentrated in North, West, and Southwest Philadelphia, Germantown, and Delaware County. Chapters develop neighborhood action agendas

and participating in broader campaigns. One of the focal points for the chapters is organizing parents around improving neighborhood schools, including eleven Empowerment Schools, the designation for chronically low-achieving schools that are receiving additional support and scrutiny from the School District.

Political action and lobbying are another big part of ACTION United's work promoting a more collaborative, community-based vision of school transformation. AU is working to build power through organizing communities to win changes on the issues that are important to them.

## Leah Torrey

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Leah Torrey first began organizing in Wayland, Massachusetts with the Wayland Interfaith Clergy Association as an intern while studying at Harvard Divinity School. She received the Hopkins Shareholder award for her work with the Wayland Interfaith Clergy Association. Ms Torrey has a Master's Degree in Divinity from the Harvard Divinity School where she studied modern American religious movements. Ms. Torrey has a second Degree in Religion from the Oberlin College.

After graduation from Divinity school, Ms. Torrey became Lead Organizer in Kern County, California with "Faith In Action", an organizing project within the PICO network. There she worked to organize Mexican

migrant workers, and developed campaigns ranging from local parks and code compliance to healthcare and education.

Ms. Torrey joined United Valley Interfaith Project (UVIP) in 2011 where has helped organize campaigns to fight predatory car-title lending, win fair working conditions and benefits for JC Penney workers, and defeat legislation harmful to New Hampshire families and working people. In addition to organizing full-time, she is a

part-time Assistant Chaplain at the Dartmouth College where she works with students to explore issues of identity, service and faith. On Spring 2013 Ms. Torrey led a group of ten students on an alternative spring break to Washington, D.C. to work with service organizations on anti-poverty initiatives and explore faith-based service.

In her spare time, Ms. Torrey has started an organic farm with her husband, Honey Locust Farm in Bradford, Vermont.

Ms. Torrey has experience traveling in England, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, Spain and France, as well as to Peru. While in Europe she will do training in the following topics:

- (1) The Organizing Cycle,
- (2) Problem to Issue,
- (3) Research Actions

United Valley Interfaith Project UVIP hosted Fall 2013 Professional fellow Andrea Tajti from Hungary.

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[www.unitedvalleyinterfaith.org](http://www.unitedvalleyinterfaith.org)

**The United Valley Interfaith Project (UVIP)** is a federation of congregations, supporting faith organizations and community organizations that have come together to work for the common good of the central Connecticut River Valley region of New Hampshire and Vermont. Also UVIP is a community organizing group based on a systematic approach to addressing the root causes of social problems and improving the lives of all in their com-

munities. UVIP aims to build a stronger region by deepening ties between their communities, developing the leadership skills of their members and tackling systemic issues which impede justice and a good quality of life for all residents.

UVIP emerged from several congregations seeking to understand the extent of poverty and injustice in the region, and their frustration in tackling poverty and justice issues by themselves. From a loosely-knit group of congregations in 2003 to a formal or-

ganization in 2008, UVIP has become a powerful force for collective action to enhance social justice in the region. UVIP is currently focusing on two issues: Tropical Storm Irene Relief, and New Hampshire Legislative Action.

As UVIP grows, the issues will change. Over time, new issues will arise from the process of building relationships and listening to one another's hopes and dreams for all in the region.

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[www.seniorcaucus.org](http://www.seniorcaucus.org)

**Jane Addams Senior Caucus (JASC)** is a multiracial, grassroots organization led by concerned seniors in the Chicago metropolitan area. They cross neighborhood, racial, religious and socio-economic lines to find common ground upon which to act on. Through leadership development, organizing and popular education, JASC seniors use the power of their collective voice to work for economic, social

and racial justice for all seniors and all communities.

JASC has about 500 members from diverse background fighting for social justice. JASC knows that seniors are valuable to the community and those seniors coming together can improve their lives and be active in civic life. The issues JASC is working on come from the concerns of the members. Presently JASC issues include the preservation and creation of affordable housing, improving in-home health

care and ensuring on-site social workers in senior buildings.

JASC is currently working on local organizing efforts in neighborhoods throughout Chicago to preserve and create affordable housing. JASC continues to organize seniors, families and others to win improvements in the Community Care Program. JASC is focusing on organizing to strengthen and protect social safety net programs, such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and HUD programs.



## Saskia Harak

Chicago, Illinois

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Saskia Harak is a Health Care Organizer in Jane Addams Senior Caucus (JASC) a multiracial, grassroots organization led by concerned seniors in Chicago metropolitan area. Ms. Harak currently organizes seniors around issues of retirement security. Her organizing experience includes organizing students on college campuses, registering people to vote, and organizing low-income renters to help better their living conditions. In college she received a Grassroots Organizer of the Year award from a statewide organization.

Ms. Harak has experience working with low-income populations and with people of color. She has developed training skills by putting together effective and creative trainings as well as leadership trainings. Ms. Harak has

organizing experience on health care and retirement security issues, housing, and voter registration. She also worked in an environment that connects legal work to organizing. She has worked with people of all ages – from college students to the elderly. Ms. Harak also has rich experience with leadership development and planning strategic campaigns.

Ms. Harak attended classes at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, where she received a Bachelor's De-

gree of Arts in Political Science, with an emphasis in Legal Studies. Then she attended law school at the William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota. While there Ms. Harak interned at the American Civil Liberties Union, the Office of the Stillwater Public Defender, and the Multicultural Affairs Department of her law school.

Ms. Harak has travelled in Europe to the Czech Republic, Austria, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Ireland, and England, and also to Mexico and Canada. While in Europe Ms. Harak will do training in the following topics:

- (1) Turnout for Events & Rallies,
- (2) Relational/One-on-one meetings,
- (3) Planning & Facilitating Meetings, Popular Education.

Jane Addams Senior Caucus hosted 4 of the Fall 2013 fellows: Gabriela Mezeiova from Slovakia, Annamaria Kovacs from Hungary, Laura Stefanut from Romania and Shaban Darakchi from Bulgaria.

## Kara Bender

Chicago, Illinois

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Kara Bender is the Lead Trainer and Racial Justice Organizer at the Jane Addams Senior Caucus (JASC), a multiracial, grassroots organization led by concerned seniors in Chicago metropolitan area. She currently co-directs the Aging Justice Program, a 9 months intensive legislative advocacy training program for women in Illinois and directs the racial justice work at JASC. Previously Ms. Bender worked as the Affordable Housing Organizer for five years on a variety of campaigns at the city, state, and federal levels. Additionally she has led multiple trainings and leadership development efforts.

Ms. Bender graduated from the Eastern Mennonite University with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Social Work. Ms. Bender has had extensive organizer, supervisor, popular education, and facilitation training experience from the Midwest Academy,

Industrial Areas Foundation, and Highlander Education Center to name a few. She has also received a variety of anti-racism trainings from the Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training, a national training and consulting organization. Because of her vast amount of training Ms. Bender has developed and lead many trainings of her own including, but not limited to: Organizing 101, Popular Education Methodology, Turn Out - getting others to attend events and rallies, Relational Meetings - how to build and develop relationships with potential lead-

ers, Meeting Facilitation - how to lead a meeting well, including understanding group dynamics, the roll of the facilitator, and making sure everyone is heard, Legislative Meetings - how to interact with elected officials, Building Allies & Coalitions, Messaging & Factsheets - Creating talking points and fact sheets for different audiences. She is also an active volunteer leader with her church congregation, where for the last three years she has co-led a Racial Justice Small Group.

Ms. Bender has travelled to Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, and Canada. While in Europe she will do training in the following topics:

- (1) Relational Meetings,
- (2) Popular Education Organizing Methodology
- (3) Meeting Facilitation.

Jane Addams Senior Caucus organization hosted 4 of the Fall 2013 fellows: Gabriela Mezeiova from Slovakia, Annamaria Kovacs from Hungary, Laura Stefanut from Romania and Shaban Darakchi from Bulgaria.

## Jim Picchetti

Chicago, Illinois

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Jim Picchetti is a Statewide Organizer at Chicago Coalition for The Homeless (CCH) and a key staff member in CCH's downstate campaign. Mr. Picchetti joined the CCH staff in 2009, after interning a year on the Sweet Home Chicago housing campaign while completing his Master's Degree in Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. Mr. Picchetti started working with people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland, OH as a Jesuit Volunteer after graduating with his Bachelor's Degree from the Marquette University in 2006.

As a community organizer with CCH, Mr. Picchetti has worked with and trained homeless leaders and service providers to pass a statewide subsidized jobs program called Put Illinois



to Work that created more than 26,000 full-time jobs for low-income and homeless employees. Also he has

worked with leaders around Illinois to form a statewide network. Over the past two years, CCH and the state network has restored \$18 million to homeless shelters and safety net programs in the state budget.

While in Europe, Mr. Picchetti will do training in following topics:

- (1) One-on-one's,
- (2) Effective Meetings,
- (3) Power & Power Analysis.

Chicago Coalition for The Homeless hosted 2 Fall 2013 Professional fellows: Boba Baluchova from Slovakia and Lia Gaudi from Romania

*Leaders of the CCH with Fall 2013 Professional Fellows during their 3-week internship time:*

*(L-R) Jim Picchetti, Lia Gaudi, Boba Baluchova, Rachel Leonor Ramirez and Jim Field*



[www.chicagohomelwss.org](http://www.chicagohomelwss.org)

**Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH)** is a non-profit organization that works with people hurt by homelessness in metropolitan Chicago, Illinois. Founded in 1980, CCH organizes and advocates work to prevent and to end homelessness, based on the belief that housing is a human right in a just society.

CCH has outreach to family and adult shelters, street programs, and single-room occupancy (SRO) facilities. Each month, three field organizers visit 28 facilities across Chicago. Commu-

nity organizers, policy specialists and legal aid attorneys staff CCH. They work for and with those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including mothers with children, unaccompanied youth, single adults, and ex-offenders.

A youth attorney also runs a mobile legal aid clinic that makes three weekly stops at neighborhood programs that serve unaccompanied youth. During these visits, CCH offers practical information. This includes telling parents about a homeless child's right to free transportation to school, or informing low-income adults of their eligibility to apply for charity care

from non-profit hospitals.

Through outreach, CCH involves homeless youth, parents and single adults in developing advocacy campaigns that work to create more access and economic opportunities for people living in extreme poverty. Together, they advocate to curb, and one day, end homelessness, pushing for access to a shelter safety net, affordable housing, living wage jobs, and quality public schools.

CCH is committed to fighting until every person has a place to call home.



## Neil Sealy

Little Rock, Arkansas

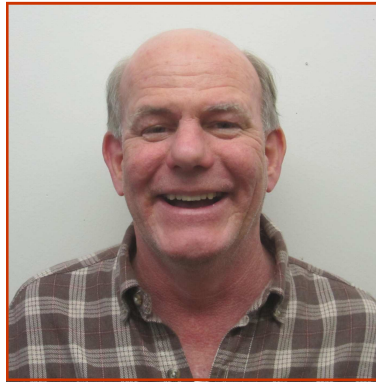
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Neil Sealy is a Community Organizer in low-income, mostly African-American neighborhoods in central and southeast Arkansas. He has been active in social justice organizing since the 1970s and began working in Arkansas in 1984. Mr. Sealy helped low-income Arkansans organize and carry out several issue campaigns that resulted in real wins for low wage workers such as community reinvestment agreements with local banks, expanded access to health coverage, laws that protect consumers from predatory lending and improved government services.

Mr. Sealy has also organized and been active in several electoral campaigns including ballot initiatives that won reforms to Arkansas's campaign finance laws and a living wage for Pine Bluff city workers. He helped leaders in predominantly African-American neighborhoods develop ways to increase civic participation and representation in elections.

In 2010 Mr. Sealy has worked with community members to form Arkansas Community Organizations, to focus on developing innovative ways to build strong organizations of working families. Since the 1980s he has organized successful leadership training programs for low-income citizens that helped to create a solid core of leaders



active in their community some of whom later successfully ran for local offices.

Mr. Sealy has a Bachelor's Degree of Arts in French Literature from the Duke University and a Master's De-

gree in Education from the Indiana University. Mr. Sealy has studied in France and Brazil. In 2006 he helped to lead week long training in civic engagement and organizing in Moscow, Russia. He has traveled to Italy, Belgium and Canada.

While in Europe, Mr. Sealy will do training in the following topics:

- (1) Leadership training
- (2) Organizing an issue campaign
- (3) Getting people to become involved in civic engagement activities

Arkansas Community Organization hosted two Fall 2013 fellows: Oana Botezan from Romania and Kalina Hristova Valova from Bulgaria.



*Healthcare event at Moody Chapel AME Church with Neil Sealy, Kalina Hristova and Oana Botezan, and other leaders and members of ACO and "Local 100", partner of ACO*

[www.arkansascomm.org](http://www.arkansascomm.org)

**Arkansas Community Organization (ACO)** is Arkansas' largest grassroots organization. ACO aims to organize low-income and working families across the state to enable them to fight for social and economic justice. ACO is working to stop cuts to Social Security Benefits.

ACO was officially incorporated on December 2009. In the past many ACO members were involved in suc-

cessful campaigns to increase the minimum wage and win living wage policies. ACO works with Health Care for America Now (HCAN), Community Catalyst and other networks to build support for health care reform in Arkansas. ACO also will make sure that non-profit hospitals carry out the new regulations on charity care in the Affordable Care Act.

ACO has also collaborated with Arkansas Community Housing to enable low-income people in Pulaski and

Jefferson counties to receive affordable home mortgages and to improve their access to all types of credit. Community leaders in Little Rock and Pine Bluff wanted to make sure that an organization was in place to ensure that strong, grassroots organizing work continued in Arkansas. With few resources, ACO has already made a difference for low-income and working families in Arkansas: "Don't wait for change to happen. Make the changes you want."

## Emira Palacios

Wichita, Kansas

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Emira Palacios has been involved with Sunflower Community Action (Sunflower), a Kansas-wide nonprofit organization that focuses on grassroots leadership development and empowerment of underrepresented communities in Kansas for 12 years (8 of them as a volunteer). She worked as the Immigrant Rights coordinator from 2007 to 2012. Ms. Palacios is the current Vice-President of the National People's Action Board of Directors, a national organization which goal is to empower low-income people to take action and find solution to their issues. Also she is an active member of Cristo Vive Assemblies of God Church in Wichita.

Ms. Palacios' newest adventure has been to work as a co-founder of an up and coming community organization, the Seed House ~ CASA de La Semilla, based in Wichita, Kansas, with the focus to create an arena for grassroots leaders to grow and develop in their capacity to bring justice, equality and sustainability through collective action. Ms. Palacios was a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteer for two years, for Roots and Wings Organization that focuses on



helping children that are in the state custody. She is currently volunteering for Harbor House, a shelter for victims of Domestic violence. Each organization that Ms. Palacios has been involved with requires intensive training

in order to be able to volunteer. In addition to all those trainings, Ms. Palacios has a certificate of completion on the Layman's Education and took two years of Christian Counseling at Word of Life Institute.

While in Europe Ms. Palacios will do training in the following topics:

- (1) From the Trail of Tears to the Trail of Restoration
- (2) Equalizing Power through Popular Education
- (3) Sharing your Empowerment story

Seed House ~ CASA hosted 2 of the Fall 2013 Professional fellows: Robert Bekefi from Hungary and Elena Carbutaru from Romania.



[www.sunfloweract.org](http://www.sunfloweract.org)

**Sunflower Community Action (Sunflower)** is a Kansas-wide, non-profit, grassroots organization, whose mission is to unite and empower people to achieve justice and equality for all, changing lives by developing grassroots leaders who identify problems and seek lasting solutions.

Sunflower members build power by taking action and holding decision-makers accountable. Sunflower members are brown and black and white, young and old, and have low to moderate incomes. They are recent immigrants and families who have lived in Kansas for generations. Sunflower brings a variety of issues that concern them. Together they take action for racial and economic

equity, fair lending, and justice for immigrants, civic engagement, worker justice, better public education, and more livable neighborhoods. Sunflower guiding principles based on every person counts. Together ordinary people can overcome financial oppression and racial discrimination if our action is strategic and persistent.

Sunflower believes that everyone should have human rights, including food, shelter, medical care, education, and a job; families should be respected and supported; power should serve the people it affects; all people are entitled to participate fully in civic life; the common good is more important than privilege for a few; the earth should be kept livable for future generations.

**The Seed House - La CASA de La Semilla (Seed House)** corporation created in 2011 is classified as an educational organization. Seed House holds residential workshops and educational training sessions in both field settings and in its location based in Wichita, Kansas. By facilitating workshops, Seed House brings people from local communities facing specific struggles together. Through the arts, education circles and learning to live sustainably, people will figure out how best to move forward in solving their problems.

The mission of Seed House is to create an arena for established and emerging community leaders to grow and develop in their capacity to bring justice, equality and sustainability through collective action.



## Zachary Chasnoff

Saint Louis, Missouri

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Zachary (Zach) Chasnoff is a Community Organizer at Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment (MORE) a powerful organization of low- and moderate-income people in St. Louis. As a professional organizer Mr. Chasnoff is interested in housing and fighting corporate power. He put together the first ever defense of a home facing foreclosure eviction in St. Louis. He were successful in preventing the eviction for over a month. He helped pass legislation that required mediation between banks and homeowners facing foreclosure.

Mr. Chasnoff has led a campaign to implement participatory budgeting in St. Louis. He has won implementation on this campaign in the city's 6th Ward; city wide implementation is expected to pass for next year's budget.

As a volunteer Mr. Chasnoff has organized several local endeavors. He has used his connections as a musician to organize a variety of benefit concerts, including those for the West Memphis Three's legal defense fund and the organization "Food Not Bombs". Most recently, Mr. Chasnoff put together "Beats For Eats", a concert to benefit Operation Food Search. Beats For Eats' inaugural show took place October 1st, 2010, the second concert took place in the Fall 2012. Concerts are planned to continue annually. During Spring 2012 Mr. Chasnoff helped organize "Occupy the Midwest", the first regional gathering of Occupiers from different cities all around the Midwest.



Over 500 people took part in Occupy The Midwest.

Mr. Chasnoff works incredibly hard and demonstrates the rigor necessary for true base building, knocking doors every night when necessary. He also has intrinsic tendencies of leading from behind, and letting others determine the path forward for the group, important skills to illustrate for younger organizers.

Additionally, Mr. Chasnoff does thoughtful and effective leadership development, taking volunteers through the leadership ladder of engagement. His approach to leadership development is to challenge volunteers and to debrief thoroughly after different tasks to create teaching moments.

While in Europe Mr. Chasnoff will do training in the following topics:

- (1) Direct Action: Planning and execution from banner drops to locking down
- (2) Home Defense: standing up to big banks/ housing as a human right
- (3) Participatory Budgeting: democratizing money

Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment (MORE) hosted two Spring 2013 Professional Fellows: Monika Vaskovicova from Slovakia and Delyana Mihneva from Bulgaria.



[www.organizemo.org](http://www.organizemo.org)

### **Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment (MORE)**

seeks to be a powerful organization of low- and moderate-income people building power in our communities. MORE is part of several national and local networks, including Leadership

Center for the Common Good, Rising Tide North America, Right to the City, Missouri Jobs with Justice and Missouri Organizing Collaborative. MORE leaders and activists believe that Missouri is positioned at a unique intersection of social, economic, climate, and environmental injustice. They believe that as corporate power continues its

unabated expansion and the gap between the rich and the poor widens, there has never been a better time for our low-income communities to come together and fight back. MORE strives to transcend divisions of class, age and race as they envision and build the more just, sustainable world in which people would like to live.