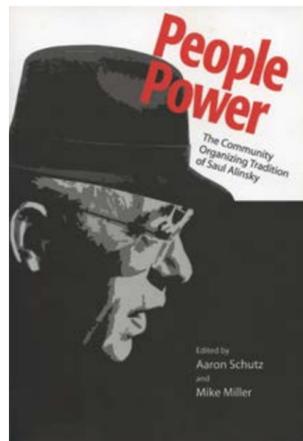


Roots of the neighborhood revolution

Remembering when the people had the power in S.F.



Saul Alinsky's portrait dominates the cover of the new book of interviews and essays about his tactics and principles, which fueled San Francisco's heyday of community organizing.

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"proudest of." In it, he brought together established Catholic and Protestant parish councils, small-business owners and civic, social and recreational groups with newly formed interest groups, youth clubs, and tenant and block groups. Their actions included rent strikes, boycotts, pickets, ridicule, letter-writing, canvassing, leafletting.

"You have to start small and grow," Miller told his audience, describing the Alinsky process. "It takes time to build your army." House parties help small groups get going. Then large and small groups combine to form an organization based on tight discipline and governance committees that work on issues and make recommendations. At a convention of delegates from all organizations, major issues are chosen to work on and standing committees formed. Monthly delegate councils work on interim and hot issues.

Mission Coalition Organization followed this path and eventually racked up victories including stopping pawnshops and porn shops from relocating to the Mission, controlling rising rents with rent strikes, helping end redlining and finding

jobs for ethnic minorities.

Miller lamented that MCO's "greatest victory brought about its tragic end." In 1971, he says, a majority of delegates to MCO's annual convention decided to pursue "a community control strategy rather than a strategy of institutional change. Instead of MCO remaining outside the administration of programs and holding administrators accountable, they became absorbed into the programs, and ended up working for them."

When community leaders join boards of directors, organizers become executive directors, members become clients and the people's independent voice is lost, he says.

MCO reversed the threat to the Mission for a few years, but its long life as a working-class neighborhood has ended, Miller says.

"Its days of having that character are largely done. The city's demography is so very different now. If you were going to start a similar people power movement, it would likely be elsewhere now."

The Mission Coalition was instrumental in sparking the neighborhood move-

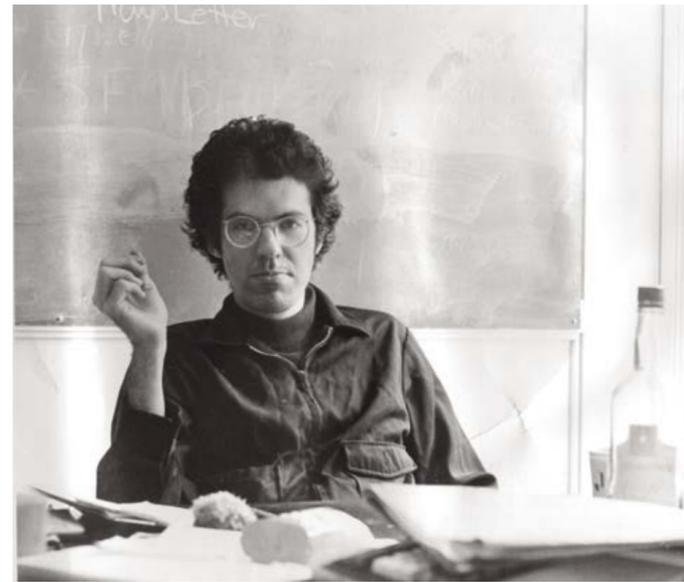
ment in San Francisco, the circa-1970 transition from merchants associations at every commercial corridor to grassroots efforts of residents organizing for the benefit of their traditionally designed neighborhood boundaries.

San Francisco Study Center was a part of this grassroots explosion, founded to help the rapidly forming neighborhood groups navigate City Hall and tap into the annual budgeting process.

Community organizing in San Francisco in the '70s involved scores of activists who worked over the decades on a multitude of issues, including housing. 409 House commanded a major role in that effort, with Calvin Welch, Bob Covington, Rene Cazenave and Sue Hestor dominating housing reform.

Miller's book event, while it didn't bring together all the players of the era, convened enough of the early stalwarts to occasion reminiscences about the days when community organizers here had a compelling common cause: neighborhood power. ■

Marjorie Beggs contributed to this story.



COURTESY RICHARD HAYES

RICHARD HAYES

Richard Hayes, who with Tony Fazio and Marie Jobling organized Miller's book party event, thinks there's a big story out there about San Francisco's neighborhood movement. "Mike's earlier book, 'An Organizer's Tale — People and Power in San Francisco,' was a start," Hayes says, "but there were several waves of community organizing. The [full] story really hasn't been told." In the early 1970s, Hayes co-founded the San Francisco Study Center. In the 1972 photo, above, he's at his desk at the Study Center office in the Grant Building, where the technical assistance organization operated until it was displaced by the new landlord in January 2012. Hayes' work with the nonprofit startup helped to demystify City Hall for the fledgling neighborhood groups and showed how they could tap into the city budget, then a mere \$556 million. (Today, it's \$8.96 billion).

Hayes later became a volunteer staff organizer with Mike Miller's All People's Coalition, then got a job challenging PG&E's utility rates with Electricity and Gas for People, which morphed into the statewide Citizens Action League that demonstrated for lower utility rates, special senior rates and other issues. At Catholic Charities, he worked on rent control and tenants' rights, and in later community organizing work tackled property tax reform, antinuclear weapon efforts and other progressive political issues. Hayes retired three years ago, but still works on issues that interest him, he says.

The profiles on these pages are of a few of Alinsky-disciple Mike Miller's colleagues from 40 years ago. They reflect on their work as community organizers at the dawn of San Francisco's powerful neighborhood movement.



COURTESY RICHARD HAYES

KATHLEEN CONNOLLY

Kathleen Connolly, above in the 1970s, had a major impact on community services in San Francisco for decades. She trained at the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) center for organizers in 1971, where Saul Alinsky taught that timing is critical. She says, "If you are going to found an organization, timing has to be on your side." The '70s was women's time — many were capable and experienced, she says, having honed their organizing skills in the '60s civil rights and antiwar movements. (Hillary Rodham was tapped for IAF training the same year as Connolly, but opted for law school.)

Connolly worked at the fledgling San Francisco Study Center in 1972, joined NOW and, in 1974, founded Women Organized for Employment (WOE). Its small staff published a four-page monthly newsletter that activists distributed to women on Financial District street corners as they rushed to work. "Saul was emphatic that you want to build not a movement but an organization with sticking power to continue."

On staff at Catholic Charities in the late 1970s, she helped the organizers who, she says, were instrumental in launching the city's rent control movement and getting legislation passed. She met Rich Hayes during those years, became his partner and remains so today. Connolly continued to work in management positions for nonprofit human services organizations, including those promoting affordable housing for seniors, until her retirement in the mid-2000s.

CHARLIE BOLTON

Charlie Bolton — Mike Miller called him his "mad scientist in the basement" — literally began his work as a community organizer with Mission Coalition Organization in his basement. "An Alinsky organization is tight and concerned about discipline," he says. "A lot of young radicals like to go their own way, so they kept me isolated because they didn't know if I was going to be a problem." His job was poking into public records and often dealing with uncooperative information gatekeepers he'd put on the spot. "I'd say, 'Show me the regulation that says I can't have it,'" he recalls. Once he'd proved himself, Bolton moved on to actions, sometimes involving dramatic stakeouts of a home or business and always targeting the highest decision-maker possible — in one case the Pac Bell board chairman.

Bolton went on to co-found the Study Center in part, he says, to help people "effectively intervene in decision-making processes from which they are largely excluded." In his subsequent work with Mission Planning Council, he worked on tenants' rights, low-income housing development and zoning issues. Today, he's a filmmaker, preparing to document microfinancing projects in impoverished communities overseas.

TONY FAZIO

Tony Fazio was at S.F. State in a work-study program in the early 1970s when he met Mike Miller, then organizing the All People's Coalition. Fazio and Miller worked together, organizing first in the city and later statewide with the Citizens Action League, which tackled issues like high property taxes and high utility rates. Fazio recalls one action that he and his roommate Rich Hayes worked on: All People's Coalition's successful effort to build a tenants' union at Geneva Towers, a notoriously dilapidated, 15-story, low-income apartment complex in Visitation Valley. (It was razed in 1998.) When Hayes went on in 1972 to co-found the San Francisco Study Center with Charlie Bolton and Stas Margaronis, Fazio became an organizer for SEIU Local 1021.

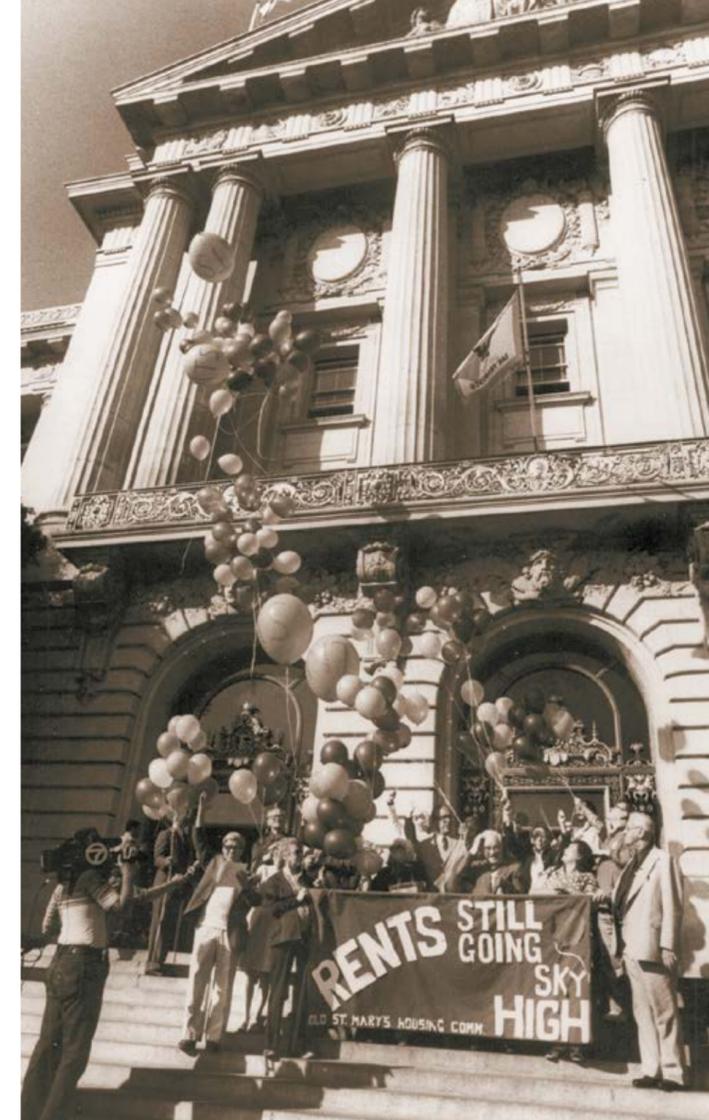
While working as an organizer for Catholic Charities, he met his wife, Marie Jobling. In 1989, Fazio founded Winning Directions, a political consulting firm that works on campaigns for issues and candidates nationally. He's now working on a project with Dignity Fund, seeking city funding for programs that serve disabled seniors and veterans. "Veterans haven't been organized in a long time," he says, "but the timing and demography is right to do it now." He plans to use Alinsky-type tactics, including grassroots organizing and house parties, to work the campaign.



COURTESY MIKE MILLER



LISE STAMPELL



COURTESY MARIE JOBLING

MARIE JOBLING

Marie Jobling is executive director of the 35-year-old Community Living Campaign, a progressive organization that supports seniors' and disabled adults' right to decide where and how they'll live as they age, and also works to integrate residential institutions into their community. Her role as a community organizer began in 1979 at Catholic Charities helping seniors at Old St. Mary's Church and renters groups protest the high rents and condo conversions that were displacing the elderly. In the photo above, the St. Mary's Housing Committee gathered on the City Hall steps. (That committee eventually became the S.F. Housing Rights Committee, now a fiscally sponsored project of S.F. Study Center.)

Jobling in 1991 helped form Planning for Elders in the Central City, a nonprofit whose Tenderloin and South of Market needs assessments laid the groundwork for organizing on key issues, such as the need for a better-funded, supportive home care program. A Planning for Elders task force, still meeting today, established the IHSS (In-Home Supportive Services) Public Authority. "It's a quasi-governmental body and, with this, IHSS workers have an employer of record and can join a union," she explains. "The program has grown from a few thousand workers earning \$4.25 to more than 20,000 workers at \$12.25." A downside: Seniors not eligible for IHSS services have to pay out of pocket and are finding it hard to keep pace, she says, so organizing is starting up to change that. Taking the lead is Senior and Disability Action, one of many groups for which Jobling has served as community organizer.

Left: Richard Hayes, Mike Miller, Charlie Bolton and Stas Margaronis at Miller's book event. All played key roles in important organizations and remain part of San Francisco's progressive continuum. Margaronis and Bolton signed on as founding officers in the 1972 incorporation of the Study Center. A climate warrior for a green planet, Margaronis is still an active member of the Study Center Board of Directors. Hayes and Bolton also were early board members.



ILLUSTRATION LISE STAMPELL

Nonprofit Open Hand joins trend to unionize

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Right 360," Hunter said, referring to the growing, nonunionized organization that now includes the former Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinic, Walden House, Lyon Martin Health Clinic, Glide Health Center and Asian American Recovery Services, "making \$14 per hour" at Baker Places, he said, the position would pay \$20 and for city employees doing similar work the rate was \$25-\$30.

The initial contact between Project Open Hand staff and the SEIU came in July, Carvallo said. "The workers themselves reached out to us and perhaps another local."

Since November's ratification vote, Carvallo said, the SEIU and Open Hand staff have elected their negotiating team and been busy training them and developing their initial proposal to management. As of late March, there had been just one negotiating session with man-

agement. Carvallo told The Extra that the process likely will take up to six months to arrive at a contract.

Ramsey Teon-Nichols, SEIU vice president of organizing, estimated the local represents "about 2,000" SEIU-represented nonprofit workers in San Francisco.

"We do have our hurdles in front of us," Carvallo said, speaking broadly of the labor movement. But "what's happening is a shift in thinking in terms of the American public that's evolving into being

more of a social justice movement." She cited political activism such as the "Fight for \$15" minimum wage battle that has found its way into the platforms of politicians from Jane Kim to Bernie Sanders, and in March the state agreed to the numbers — in a slogging six-year process.

"Will a 5%, \$1,000 annual raise make a difference, be enough to enable a \$20,000-a-year worker to remain in San Francisco? Just asking. ■