



## 2016 Final Report to LBHEA

Corvallis SURJ: Showing Up for Racial Justice extends its gratitude to Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance for the funds that permitted us to have an active, wide-ranging second year of organizing. In 2016 we accomplished 4 main types of work: direct actions, direct support of organizations led by people of color, education about race and racism, and advocacy and lobbying. We believe that all 4 emphases are important in fulfilling the new role that SURJ has set out for its chapters: to act as part of a multiracial movement “to undermine white support for white supremacy and to help build a racially just society.”

### Direct Actions

***Silent Protest of Anti-Immigrant Ballot Initiatives.*** Last spring, the League of Women Voters invited State Rep. Mike Nearman (R-Independence) to speak at the Corvallis Library. At the behest of Oregonians for Immigration Reform, which is funded by white nationalists, Nearman was a sponsor of all 3 anti-immigrant ballot initiatives proposed for the November 2016 general election. Earlier in the year, SURJ had joined One Oregon, a statewide coalition headed by Causa that was opposing those initiatives.



On April 28, SURJ partnered with MEChA de OSU (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) to educate the League’s audience about the initiatives and conduct a silent protest of them. While MEChA stood silently on the street, SURJ handed out leaflets and obtained signatures on a “Decline to Sign” petition, which we circulated in English and Spanish. The students taped their mouths, as a symbol of how the ballot initiatives would silence and oppress them and their people, and led us into the meeting room.

At the protest and, later, at Corvallis’s Solidarity Fair, SURJ enrolled more than 60 people and groups in One Oregon. On May 23 we hosted a training by Yanelly Rivas, field organizer for One Oregon, to train some of our members, plus some members of CARE and the NAACP, about how to deliver a slide presentation about the anti-immigrant initiatives. The presentation ultimately proved to be unnecessary, because One Oregon kept the initiatives off the ballot. However, similar initiatives have already been filed for 2018.

**Protest of Police Violence.** In July, SURJ partnered with the NAACP at the Benton County Courthouse to protest the unprovoked police killings of 2 black men, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. The protest drew approximately 225 people. The following Saturday, SURJ held a community meeting to discuss who benefits from police violence, how it affects people of color, and how it affects white people. Between the protest and follow-up meeting, our base increased by dozens of people, including 3 who joined our leadership team.



### **Direct Support for Organizations**

In line with a policy of national SURJ, each year our Corvallis chapter intends to donate the same amount of money to a group led by people of color as we pay in SURJ dues. This year we gave our \$100 donation to Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County.

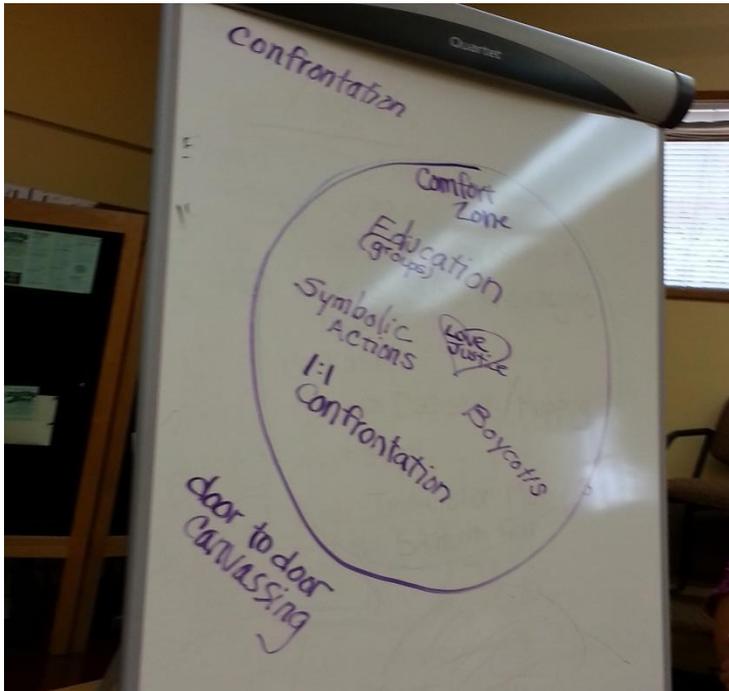
We also provided money and volunteer hours to the local NAACP's Juneteenth celebration, Freedom Fund Banquet, and "Living the Black Experience" series. In November, we provided volunteer hours to the OSU Native American Longhouse's "No DAPL" rally and march.

### **Education About Race and Racism**

Educational programs geared toward white people continue to be among our best-attended meetings. Generously funded by LBHEA, on February 7 we hosted an Oregon Humanities Conversation Project with Dr. Emily Drew, a white sociology professor at Willamette University. The conversation, entitled "White Out? The Future of Racial Diversity in Oregon," drew 93 people to the Corvallis library. LBHEA awarded SURJ \$405 in support of this event and paid for the English-Spanish interpreter.

On April 16, Ken Runningcrane, a Benton County resident who is a Lakota Sioux, spoke at our community meeting on the topic "Red Road, White World." Runningcrane, an advisor to the OSU Native American Longhouse, later spoke at the protest of police violence and helped us partner with the Longhouse as described elsewhere in this report.

In May several SURJ members, including 2 OSU students, attended the Rural Organizing Project's annual caucus, a 2-day event in Bend. We benefited greatly from learning more about Oregonians for Immigration Reform, the "patriot"/white nationalist movement in Oregon, and security measures to take when arranging meetings and events on volatile topics. The weekend also gave us a chance to talk with Carla Wallace, one of the national leaders of SURJ, and attend her workshop on facilitating conversations about race and racism. In June, we hosted a roundtable, "Strategies for Activists," to debrief the caucus with SURJ and CARE members who attended it, plus interested community members who could not attend.



Later in May, white anti-racism educator Robin DiAngelo spoke at Linn-Benton Community College on "White Fragility and the Patterns of Engagement." SURJ helped LBCC publicize this event. Afterward, a SURJ member led a meeting to discuss DiAngelo's ideas and how we can expand our individual and organizational comfort zones about taking action for racial justice.

Over the summer, we partnered with the City of Corvallis's King Legacy Advisory Board to offer a community-wide study group on mass incarceration. This 4-part series began on June 9 with a catered dinner and a TED video entitled "Considering Alternatives to Incarceration," which was attended

by 45 people. In July and August, 2 young adults of color, Chris Lenn and Amber Moody of OSU, led 3 classes on Michelle Alexander's mega-bestseller, *The New Jim Crow*, with attention to the local and state criminal justice systems and the role of white allies in working for racial justice. LBHEA awarded SURJ \$2000 to pay Lenn and Moody for their time.



In November following the election, a SURJ member led a workshop called “Responding to Racist Remarks and Actions,” addressing microaggressions and how white people can respond to them. We scheduled this at the south co-op and had to start turning people away when the crowd reached 60 people.

SURJ is increasingly often asked to lead discussions in the community. In 2016 we presented at an ethnic studies seminar at OSU, 2 sections of “Introduction to Human Services” at OSU, the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Corvallis Pride festival, and Women of Power, a new group of women organizing to support each other and marginalized people following the election. In addition, a SURJ member led a 7-week study of the book *Waking Up White* for First United Methodist Church, and 2 SURJ members facilitated a discussion about race and racism at Live Well Studio as part of a series called “Talking About What Matters.”

### **Advocacy and Lobbying**

At the beginning of the year, it seemed clear that the City of Corvallis planned to give only token mention to equity and inclusion in its Imagine 2040 Vision & Action Plan. Eight SURJ members attended an Imagine 2040 Task Force meeting to urge outreach to people of color and attention to their concerns. Thanks to that and pressure from the NAACP, the city made equity one of 6 focus areas in the plan. About half a dozen SURJ members followed up by participating in all 3 Imagine Corvallis 2040 Saturday workshops. In April, we led our own Imagine 2040 workshop and reported the comments to the Task Force.

Our September community meeting was devoted to “Standing with Standing Rock.” We educated each other about what was happening at the camp, took up a collection for its legal fund, and wrote letters and made calls to the Obama administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, and oil company executives. Subsequently, we partnered with the OSU Native American Longhouse, 350.org, and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on a City Council resolution that opposes the Dakota Access Pipeline and expresses support for the Standing Rock Water Protectors. City Council adopted the resolution.

In late October, several SURJ members went door-to-door to talk with voters about Measure 97 and distribute voters guides we purchased from Oregon’s Rural Organizing Project, of which SURJ is a member group. We made Spanish-language copies of the guide available at the Corvallis Library, Corvallis Multicultural Literacy Center, and Lincoln Elementary School.



Our final work of the year, in November and December, was to partner with the City of Corvallis King Legacy Advisory Board on a resolution to make Corvallis a sanctuary city and Benton County a sanctuary county. SURJ was responsible for 5 groups and more than 90 individuals becoming signatories to the resolution, and SURJ members testified to both the city and county. At this writing, the city has passed a satisfactory resolution, but the county gutted the King Board’s recommendations and adopted a fairly meaningless document. In early 2017 we will lean on the county commissioners and sheriff to strengthen that resolution.

# SURJ SHARED VALUES

- Calling people in, not calling out
- Take risks, learn and keep going
- Tap into mutual interest
- Accountability through collective action
- Enough for everyone
- Growing is good

## How We Used Our Grant Funds

Dues to national SURJ	\$100.00
Dues to Rural Organizing Project (ROP)	50.00
Registration for 5 adults for ROP caucus	105.00
Student accommodations for ROP caucus	598.00
Donation to Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County	100.00
Donation to NAACP Juneteenth celebration	100.00
Table at NAACP banquet	520.00
PO box rental	60.00
Printing, sign-making, and office supplies	111.21
Website hosting fees	55.79
5% fee to fiscal agent	100.00
5% fee to fiscal agent for second \$2000 grant	100.00
Total	\$2000.00