

## **The Rural Organizing Project (ROP) Records**

Name and location of repository: Rural Organizing Project, Cottage Grove, Oregon, USA

Date range: 1981-2018, bulk 1992-2012

Extent: approximately 68 cubic feet of materials, housed in 67 containers

Processed by: Ava Coleman (archives volunteer), Miranda La Fond (archives volunteer), Kate Orazem (archivist), and Elizabeth Peterson (archives volunteer)

System of arrangement: Intellectual arrangement will not be finalized until inventory work is complete. Nonetheless, we have identified five major groups of records that will most likely constitute the series of the processed collection: county files, subject and program files, administrative records, ROP audiovisual materials, and a videocassette library.

Scope & content: The ROP collection comprises the organizational records of the Rural Organizing Project, which operated in Oregon from 1992 until the present as a network of autonomous, volunteer-run groups working to advance human dignity and democracy across rural Oregon. The materials document the work done by ROP and its staff, member groups, allied organizations, and individuals who were a part of the organizing network ROP developed, and also reflect areas of interest to those creators in the form of collected topical materials (such as sets of clippings or conference packets). Several issue areas and political campaigns are particularly well-represented in this collection. These include: the campaign against Measure 9, a homophobic ballot measure backed by the Oregon Citizen's Alliance in 1992, which led to ROP's founding, as well as subsequent "Son of 9" campaigns for similar measures at the city and county level; rural resistance to militia movements and white supremacist organizations; support for LGBTQ+ people, particularly students and young people; support for the civil rights of immigrants and resistance to deportation and detention of people without citizenship; opposition to the Iraq War; and economic justice and tax fairness.

At the folder level, the collection, while well-labeled by location or subject, is fairly miscellaneous in terms of record type. The records consist primarily of the following types: subject files containing various media organized by topic or location, such as newspaper clippings, magazines, books, and brochures, primarily documenting various political campaigns pursued or supported by ROP over the course of its history; event documentation such as invitations, flyers and posters, sign-in sheets and contact lists, press releases, programs, and maps; planning records such as notes, correspondence, and meeting agenda and minutes; other work products of organizing such as memoranda, strategy documents, group profiles, training and workshop materials, form letters and call scripts, fact sheets, petitions, surveys, and volunteer and donor forms; and financial and administrative documents, such as budgets, bank records, grant applications, policies, personnel records, incorporation documents, and by-laws.

The county files consist of records of ROP and human dignity group activities and interests

grouped by county. The program and subject files consist primarily of materials collected from across Oregon, organized by a specific topic of interest to ROP and its constituent groups, such as immigration enforcement, or a specific program, such as organizer trainings or the annual ROP caucus. Most of the materials in the program and subject files derive from Oregon organizations, although some were produced by organizations outside the state or reflect the activities of national or multi-state coalitions and campaigns. The administrative records contain records related to ROP's financial and personnel operations, including several floppy disks containing backup copies of fiscal records, as well as sets of ROP's published materials, such as newsletters and annual reports. The administrative records also encompass some materials that constitute the personal papers of ROP staff, particularly Marcy Westerling.

The ROP audiovisual materials consist primarily of cassette tapes, CDs and DVDs containing primarily video files, and digital and paper-based photographs produced by ROP and human dignity groups. The videocassette library primarily consists of VHS copies of professionally produced educational or political films; the collection contains correspondence indicating that these VHS tapes were loaned to other organizations and individuals in a loose circulation arrangement.

Historical note: The Rural Organizing Project (ROP) was born out of the 1992 campaign to oppose Measure 9, a statewide ballot measure sponsored by the Oregon Citizen's Alliance (OCA) that would have prohibited public schools, service providers, and other agencies from "promoting the homosexual agenda." The campaign exposed tensions that had emerged amid the decline of Oregon's timber industry, which wreaked economic havoc in many rural communities, and the political resurgence of the religious right. In August 1991, ROP's founder, Marcy Westerling, and other community members began organizing against Measure 9, and against what they diagnosed as a broader trend of social conservatism and erosion of civil rights, as Columbia County Citizens for Human Dignity.

After the defeat of Measure 9, the OCA continued to pursue its homophobic agenda at the local level as social conservatives joined with anti-tax advocates to target moderate Republicans in the state legislature for primary challenges from the right. Understanding that grassroots groups need support to sustain their organizing when progressive momentum ebbs, Westerling, assisted by Susanne Pharr, developed a model for the ROP that combined the consciousness-raising of the 1970s women's movement with the multi-issue, anti-racist approach of Pharr's Arkansas-based Women's Project. In 1993, at the first annual Rural Caucus and Strategy Session, more than 40 grassroots organizations decided to join together as the ROP, a permanent, statewide network of groups working on a diverse set of issues but linked by a commitment to human dignity and inclusion for all within the framework of a robust democracy.

In the mid-to-late 1990s, ROP and its members worked to combat right-wing hate-mongering by promulgating resources for LGBTQ+ students and by organizing a traveling exhibit on Anne Frank's life. The network stood with Pinos y Campesinos Unidos del Noreste (PCUN), a farm workers' union which had opposed Measure 9, in support of labor actions for better wages and conditions. In this period, ROP also collaborated with PCUN and Causa, an immigrants' rights

organization, to fight back against deportation enforcement, to advocate for fair housing for farm workers, and to oppose guest worker laws that would weaken already scanty workplace protections.

After 9/11, ROP's network became heavily involved in opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and in agitation against the Patriot Act's undermining of civil liberties, as well as in get-out-the-vote campaign and other forms of support for local groups' electoral organizing. In 2005, ROP participated in the Walk for Truth, Justice, and Community, an action which sought to link, and jointly oppose, the brutality of the United States' wars abroad with its dehumanizing treatment of immigrants at home. ROP continued to pursue this strategy into the years of the Great Recession, organizing a 2007 series of town halls across rural Oregon on the theme of "the cost of war," in which elected officials were pressed to explain military spending in the context of perennially underfunded social services. ROP also supported groups in pushing back against such service cuts, as exemplified by a 2011-2012 effort to create organizing toolkits to help rural communities advocate against post office closures. In 2013, ROP once again partnered with PCUN and CAUSA to organize the March for ONE Oregon, which featured fifty riders advocating for both local and national immigration reforms at events across Eastern Oregon, Idaho, and Washington.

In 2014, ROP staff's work to support the Lane County community during one of its most severe winter storms on record laid the groundwork for an increased focus on mutual aid in response to the escalating climate crisis. With the donation of a new building in Cottage Grove (after operating out of a residential home in Scappoose since the 1990s), ROP's headquarters became a hub for resource distribution and community gathering in the rural Willamette region. In this period, ROP also continued its work in opposition to right-wing violence by partnering with Political Research Associates to develop *Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon's Patriot Movement*, a groundbreaking report on the history and current status of militia movements in Oregon combined with an organizing toolkit to help people fight back against those movements within their own communities. ROP also organized a hotline and a program of radio ads to combat election interference and the spread of misinformation around the 2020 presidential election. ROP's network has also continued its longstanding immigration advocacy; from 2017-2020, several member groups worked to support hunger strikes organized by those in detention, pressure elected officials, and hold protest marches against the inhumane treatment of those incarcerated, actions which culminated with two Oregon prisons ending their contracts with ICE.

Note: [For a more detailed history of the Rural Organizing Project from 1992-2004, please see this piece written by our founder, Marcy Westerling.](#) An updated version of this organizational history is forthcoming.

Access note: The collection is open to research while processing continues. Until processing is completed, and for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will make records accessible only via appointment. The archivist will work with researchers to identify records of interest, review them for confidential material, and provide research access at the Community Building Center in Cottage Grove. Personnel files and materials containing personal identifying

information, such as sign-in sheets, are closed to research at this time. Photographs and other audiovisual materials may be restricted from access until processing is completed due to preservation concerns.

### Container listing

Note: the box titles listed below are original labels created by ROP staff at the time that records were retired. Archivist's notes appear in square brackets and series titles, devised by the archivist, appear in italics. These legacy labels have been confirmed to be accurate, but, as processing is ongoing, further description of box contents is not yet available. This list is provided to help potential users understand the contents of the collection, but it should not be considered an exhaustive or definitive statement of those contents.

#### *County Files*

Baker/Benton/Clackamas/Clatsop  
Columbia and Coos  
Crook/Curry/Douglas/Grant/Gilliam/Harney  
Deschutes  
Jefferson and Jackson  
Josephine and Klamath  
Lane and Lake / Multnomah and Outside Oregon  
Lincoln / Linn / Malheur / Marion / Morrow / Multnomah  
Polk, Sherman, Tillamook, Umatilla, Union  
Wallowa, Wasco, Washington, Wheeler, Yamhill

#### *Program & Subject Files*

Immigrant Rights Program Files  
Fight the Right and Hate Crimes  
Issue Materials / Farm Workers / Economy / No Soy El Army / Peace, Bill of Rights  
Defense  
Rural Development Initiative, Voter Ed Project, Voz Hispana, WAIRJ, Study Circles,  
Bigot Busting, Schools [also labeled Peace, Strategic Issues]  
Civic Engagement  
Rural Caucus and Strategy Session  
Caucus 2009 on  
Resist Newsletters 2003-2007 / Ecumenical Ministries 2001-2006 / Immigration  
Experiencia 2006 / Immigrant Rights 2002 / 9-11-01 Materials / Democratic  
Reform 2007 / OR Historical / We the People 2009 / Militias 1995 / Power,  
Participation 2009  
Democracy and Election / ROP Voter's Guide 2009, Elections 2006, 2004 Election  
Closure, 2002 Elections, [Western States Center] Vote Project, Legislature 2003,  
Bus Project, ROP 2000 Election, Labor/Neighbor, Enough is Enough, Election  
Materials, Ruckus 2003  
Organizing Skills and Resources

Tax Policy Oregon, Tax Handouts, Hunger, Living Wage, Welfare, Social Security, Jobs with Justice

ROP Immigration and Anti-Racism Rally 1990s and early 2000s

Fight the Right Booklets / White Supremacist Books

Fight the Right / Fight the Right 1990s

“Racial Justice” and Anti Hate, [Beyond Know Your Rights]/Safe Communities, Latino Organizing H[istory], [March for 1 Oregon], Immigration Info and Education, E-Verify Scare Marion and Polk 2010, Reform Immigration State and Federal 2010/2011, Rural Media Center, Immigration Rights 2005, Freedom Ride, Guest Worker

Organizing Skills

Historical ROP Video Library Files / Queer Rights Files / Race File Reports / Choice Files: 2002 Columbia Co. Ballot Measure, Economic Justice Info – Devolution, Money in Politics

Early ODP/ROP Files

Welfare Info 1997-2000 / Newsletters, Various Orgs. 2004 / [Oregon Center for Public Policy] Reports 1998-2003 / Economics / Pop[ular] Ed[ucation] 1996

Economic Justice and Elections 2008 / Hometown Strategies, Completed Take Your Top 5 Temperature Cards, Civic Engagement 2008, 2008 Voter Engagement, Radical Right

Youth Organizing and Hate Crimes / Fight the Right

Democracy and Election / Election Tools, Democracy Grid, Lakoff, Legislative, Bill of Rights, Civil Liberties, Election 2004, Walk for Truth, Justice, and Community 2005

Gender Justice Program

Organizing Skills and Tools

Program Binders

ROP History / Media Files

ROP History and Program Binders / Group Dues

Binders of [Kitchen Table Activism]’s Scrapbooks

Causa and Wage Theft and Other Files

Unsorted Program

Unsorted Program Files

Unlabeled box containing correspondence, memos, training and workshop files, publications, grant records, press clippings, annual reports, and other material primarily related to Measure 9 and Columbia County Citizens for Human Dignity

Unlabeled container of Walk for Truth, Justice, and Community materials

Oversize discussion notes

### *Administrative Records*

#1 Upper Cabinet / 2005-2012 / ROP Newsletters and Voter Guides

ROP Grassroots Fundraising Files 1994-2001

ROP Old Fiscal/Admin Binders

Misc. Old Program from Marcy [Westerling]  
ROP HDG Monthly Packets 1990s  
Archive Grants, Testimonials M-Z / Boxed 04/2012  
Stand Guides / Annual Reports / Direct Mail Letters  
ROP Newsletters and Voter Guides (Archive) / Lower Cabinet #2  
Archive Grants and DM / Action Ed Project – List Foundation  
Marcy and Amy Old – Mostly Fiscal  
Jess [Campbell]'s Journals  
Planners  
Misc. Files (to be sorted) / Amy [Dudley]'s Files  
Misc. Files...some CCCHD [Columbia County Citizens for Human Dignity]  
Misc. Files...a bit CCCHD [Columbia County Citizens for Human Dignity]  
Misc. Files / Anti-Oppression Resources / Old Tech/ Database  
Misc. Files / Leadership for a Changing World / Marcy [Westerling] Working Files

*Audiovisual Materials*

[1 box of photographs, approximately 0.5 cubic feet]  
[28 cassette tapes]  
[33 CDs and DVDs]

*Video Library*

[74 VHS tapes]

*Artifacts*

[Banners]  
[Pins and buttons]