

RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

FOSTERING STRONG AND HEALTHY GROUPS, BUILDING RURAL LEADERSHIP,
DEFENDING HUMAN DIGNITY AND ADVANCING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL



ORGANIZING *for* SAFE & WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

Many new groups formed and launched campaigns to make local change out of the mobilizations for racial justice in 2020. Vernonia Equality & Racial Justice (VERJ) in Columbia County formed during roadside Black Lives Matter demonstrations to advance campaigns for racial justice. VERJ's successes

include **working with the City of Vernonia to draft and adopt a resolution denouncing racism, discrimination, and police brutality against Black people, establishing a plan to educate city leadership on implicit bias and racial equity, and committing the city to collaborating on a bias incident reporting system.**

BIG STATEWIDE VICTORIES MADE POSSIBLE *by* RURAL OREGON

Human dignity groups across 16 counties uncovered major legal loopholes that Immigration and Customs Enforcement exploited to use local law enforcement resources to detain and deport rural Oregonians despite Oregon's Sanctuary Law. Together with a coalition of allied organizations, we **helped draft the Sanctuary Promise Act** that closes those loopholes to ensure that the federal government can no longer use local public resources to tear families apart. In July, the Sanctuary Promise Act was signed into law and went into effect.

In addition to the Sanctuary Promise Act, six key policies the ROP network prioritized because they will help rural communities move from barely surviving to thriving were successfully signed into law. After **human dignity groups drafted policy, wrote letters, and met with elected officials**, together we passed the Childcare for Oregon Act, the Oregon Energy Affordability Act, the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act, and funding to expand broadband internet access.

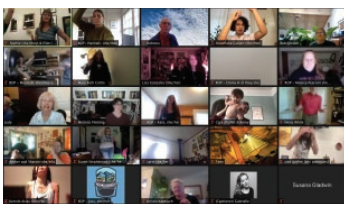
In 2020, every county in Oregon mobilized to protest the murders of Black and brown people killed by police. In 2021, **rural Oregon mobilized to respond to the murders of Black people by white vigilantes.** After Aidan Ellison was killed in Ashland, the **Truth to Power Club at Ashland High School hosted virtual anti-racism workshops and painted a mural at the school** celebrating Aidan's life alongside other prominent Black, Indigenous, and people of color who have graduated from Ashland High School.



After Barry Washington, Jr. was murdered in downtown Bend, his white killer was immediately released by police with a minor charge of manslaughter. **Central Oregon Peacekeepers and other groups organized vigils, rallies, and a successful campaign to push the district attorney to change the charge to second degree murder.** When

a local TV station put a video of the attack on their website against Barry's family's wishes, the Peacekeepers coordinated a successful campaign that asked advertisers to end their contracts until the video was removed.

BREAKING RURAL ISOLATION



ROP **virtually convened hundreds of rural organizers** and small-town community leaders for strategy sessions, the annual Rural Caucus, and living room conversations to develop local and statewide plans for the year.

When Creswell's annual 4th of July parade was cancelled due to COVID-19, Proud Boys and so-called patriot groups announced they would hold their own parade and statewide gathering. Community leaders who spoke out received threats of violence and the mayor resigned after out-of-towners mobbed her home. A week later, the community of Cottage

Grove learned the same Proud Boys were eager to march in their town's annual festival's parade. **More than 100 business owners, service agencies, faith leaders, and concerned neighbors succeeded in convincing the festival's board to exclude the Proud Boys** with a heartfelt letter campaign declaring hate has no presence in their community.

NEIGHBORS SHOWING UP *for* NEIGHBORS

Central Oregon Peacekeepers, Redmond Collective Action, The Helpers, and Central Oregon Democratic Socialists of America teamed up across three counties and the Warm Springs community to distribute necessities where unhoused communities were camping and mobile distributions for people that were living more remotely. They expanded to provide showers, trash pick-up, and vaccination clinics and used

their success stories to **pressure elected officials towards ending the practice of clearing out camps** and instead ensuring the health and safety of unhoused community members, from trash service to managed camping.

Led by multiple community partners and volunteers, the food pantry at our Community Building Center in Cottage Grove **shared food and supplies with**

more than 1,200 people every month, many of whom are refugee and migrant farm-working families systematically excluded from other services because of documentation requirements, language accessibility, and cultural competency. This program has successfully raised awareness of these barriers and several local agencies have changed their practices, hired interpreters, and adapted to better serve the entire community.



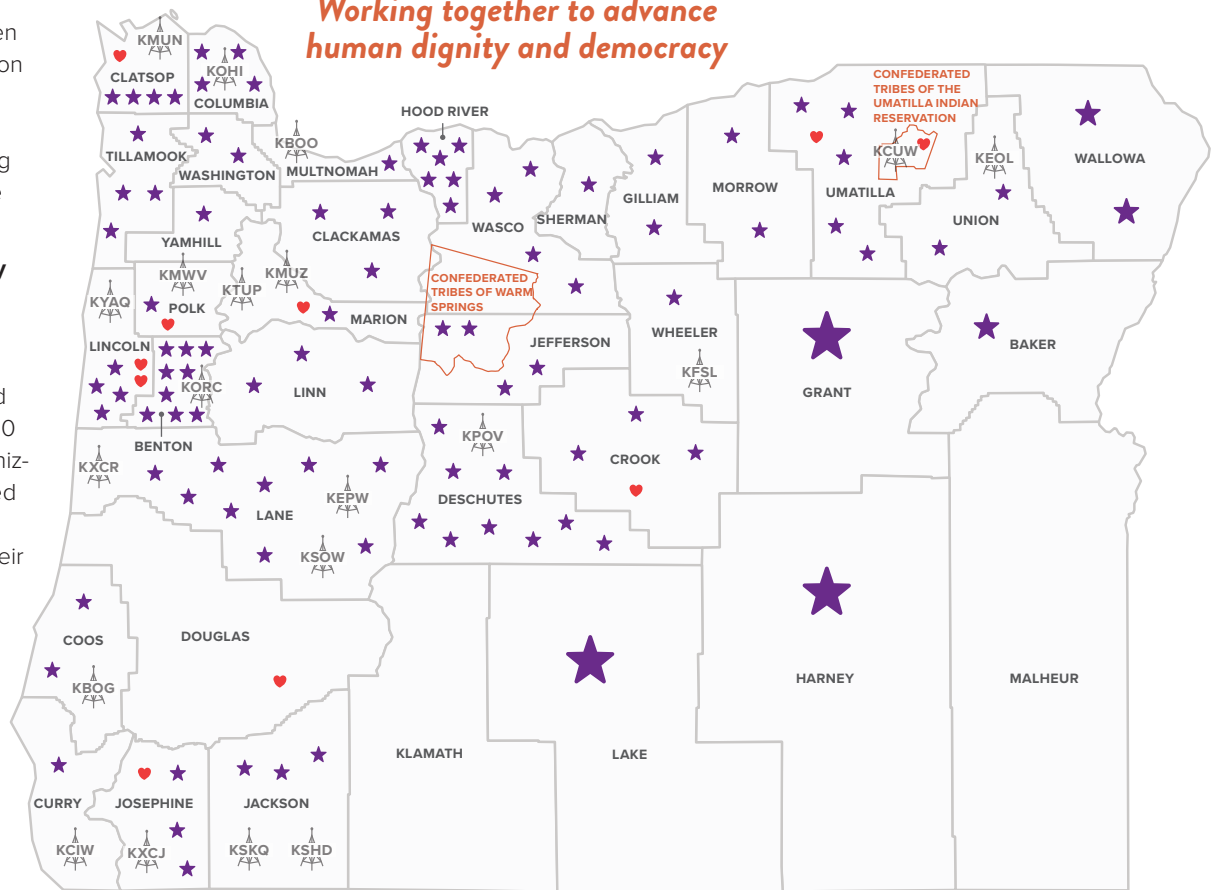
What is the RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT?

Working together to advance human dignity and democracy

ROP's mission is to strengthen the skills, resources, and vision of primary leadership in local autonomous human dignity groups with a goal of keeping such groups a vibrant source for a just democracy.

More than **80 human dignity groups and thousands of community leaders** worked together to advance democracy in small-town and rural Oregon. From April 2020 to April 2021, ten Rural Organizing Fellows virtually convened to share skills, organizing strategies, and to build up their organizing toolboxes.

-  **Human Dignity Group**
-  **Rural Organizing Fellow**
-  **Radio Station Playing Rural Roots Rising**



- BAKER**
Baker Community Justice Project
- BENTON**
Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism
Disability Equity Center
Linn-Benton Greens
Linn Benton Rapid Response Team
Mid-Valley Health Care Advocates
Mid-Valley Solidarity Coalition
Race Matters, First Congregational UCC
Street Outreach Response Team
Veterans For Peace, Linus Pauling Chapter 132
- CLACKAMAS**
Bridging Cultures
Clackamas DSA
Indivisible Clackamas
- CLATSOP**
Columbia Pacific Alliance for Social Justice
Consejo Hispano
Indivisible North Coast Oregon
North Coast Progressive Action
- COLUMBIA**
Columbia County Coalition for Human Dignity
Consejo Hispano
Moving Forward Columbia County
Vernonia Equality & Racial Justice
- CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF WARM SPRINGS**
The Helpers
Unite Warm Springs
- COOS**
Human Rights Advocates of Coos County
Oregon Remembrance Project

- CROOK**
Central Oregon Peacekeepers
PFLAG Central Oregon
The Helpers
- CURRY**
Indivisible North Curry County
- DESCHUTES**
Central Oregon Peacekeepers
Deschutes DSA
Embrace Bend
Indivisible Bend
KPOV 88.9 FM High Desert
Community Radio
Peace and Social Justice Team of First Presbyterian Church
PFLAG Central Oregon
Redmond Collective Action
Sisters Indivisible
The Helpers
- GILLIAM**
NORCOR Community Resource Coalition
Rural Voices
- GRANT**
Grant County Positive Action
- HARNEY**
Rural Alliance for Diversity
- HOOD RIVER**
Columbia Gorge Women's Action Network
Gorge Ecumenical Ministries / Somos Uno
Gorge ICE Resistance
Hood River County Rapid Response Team
Hood River Latino Network
NORCOR Community Resource Coalition
- JACKSON**
Beyond Toxics
Truth to Power
Veterans for Peace, Rogue Valley Chapter 156

- JEFFERSON**
Madras Key Club
The Helpers
- JOSEPHINE**
Beyond Boom and Bust
Josephine Social Justice Alliance
Oregon Remembrance Project
- LAKE**
Indivisible Lake County
- LANE**
Beyond Toxics
Blackberry Pie Society
Church Women United
Community Alliance of Lane County
Community Rights Lane County
Deadwood Resists
Florence Indivisible
KSOW 106.7 FM Real Rural Radio
Soup's On
Springfield-Eugene Showing Up for Racial Justice
- LINCOLN**
Acompañar
Coastal Network
Coast Range Association
Lincoln County Progressive Project
- LINN**
Albany Peace Seekers
Linn Benton Rapid Response Team
Linn-Benton Greens
- MARION**
Silverton Progressives
- MORROW**
Oregon Rural Action
Rural Voices
- MULTNOMAH**
Oregon Remembrance Project

- POLK**
Polk Communities for Human Equality
- SHERMAN**
Rural Voices
- TILLAMOOK**
Consejo Hispano
Racial & Social Equity Tillamook
Sammy's Place / Oregon COAST Network
Tillamook Democracy Project
- UMATILLA**
Economic Community for Healthy Opportunities
Oregon Rural Action
Pendleton Community Action Coalition
PFLAG of Pendleton
Raíces
- UNION**
Oregon Rural Action
Racial Justice Eastern Oregon
- WALLOWA**
Postcardia
Safe Harbors
- WASCO**
Gorge ICE Resistance
NORCOR Community Resource Coalition
Protect Oregon's Progress / The Dalles
Indivisible
Wasco County Rapid Response Team
- WASHINGTON**
Adelante Mujeres
Forest Grove Showing Up For Racial Justice
- WHEELER**
Rural Voices
- YAMHILL**
Unidos Bridging Community

PRESERVING & SHARING RURAL ORGANIZING HISTORY

ROP is transforming our records of powerful community organizing into an archival collection! These unique materials will be featured in a traveling exhibit celebrating ROP's 30th anniversary next year, giving us all a chance to learn from 30 years of the ROP network's victories while strategizing what



we can accomplish together over the next 30. Reach out if you'd like to see this exhibit in your town!

ADVANCING DEMOCRACY over the AIRWAVES

In 2021, we completed the second season of **Rural Roots Rising**, our monthly podcast and radio show that broadcasts on 20 community radio stations across the state. Rural Roots Rising featured rural



organizers and media-makers who are organizing to respond to white supremacist violence, climate disasters, language accessibility, and housing crises. Listen to Rural Roots Rising wherever you get your podcasts or at RuralRootsRising.org.






RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT

Let's connect!

Give us a call, check out our website and follow us on social media!

www.rop.org
503-543-8417
PO Box 664
Cottage Grove, OR 97424

 @ruralorganize
 @Rural Organizing Project
 @ruralorganizingproject