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More Information on Alinskyian Organizing

By now, most everyone knows that President Barack Obama's primary work experience, before the election, was as an Alinskyian organizer...but what are the ramifications of this for a US citizen?

Locally, a professor has left his position at the University of New Mexico to take on the task of full-time Alinskyian organizing with Albuquerque Interfaith, intending to expand the organization's membership among Catholic parishes and other religious bodies. What does that mean for Catholics?

Jesus Christ Was NOT a Community Organizer!

By Ariel

Recently the Obama campaign and its surrogates have been putting forth the preposterous proposition that Jesus Christ was a “community organizer”, and that Pontius Pilate was a “governor.” The obvious connection they want us to make is that Barack Obama is like Jesus Christ, and Sarah Palin is like Pontius Pilate. I guess one could possibly draw those conclusions if they knew nothing about Jesus Christ or community organizing. However, when one examines the facts, one could very well come up with the exact opposite conclusion. First, let us begin with a working definition of “community organizer” and see if Jesus Christ actually was one. Since Obama is the “community organizer” that is being compared to Jesus, perhaps it is best to use his own words in defining the occupation:

In theory, community organizing provides a way to merge various strategies for neighborhood empowerment. Organizing begins with the premise that (1) the problems facing inner-city communities do not result from a lack of effective solutions, but from a lack of power to implement these solutions; (2) that the only way for communities to build long-term power is by organizing people and money around a common vision; and (3) that a viable organization can only be achieved if a broadly based indigenous leadership — and **not one or two charismatic leaders** — can knit together the diverse interests of their local institutions.

This means bringing together churches, block clubs, parent groups and any other institutions in a given community to pay dues, hire organizers, conduct research, develop leadership, hold rallies and education campaigns, and begin drawing up plans on a whole range of issues — jobs, education, crime, etc. Once such a vehicle is formed, it holds the power to make politicians, agencies and corporations more responsive to community needs. Equally important, it enables people to break their crippling isolation from each other, to reshape their mutual values and expectations and rediscover the possibilities of acting collaboratively — the prerequisites of any successful self-help initiative. [Barack Obama, **After Alinsky: Community Organizing in Illinois** (c) 1990 Illinois Issues, University of Illinois at Springfield]

Now, the first thing that comes to mind is that Obama specifically states that community organizing cannot be based upon “one or two charismatic leaders.” Ironically Jesus’ entire ministry was based on His uniqueness as a charismatic leader. In fact His ministry was predicated upon His claim to be the “*only begotten Son of God*” (see John 3: 18), that He was literally God in the flesh, and that He was the “way, the truth, and the life” (see John 14:6). Hence, the primary focus of Jesus’ ministry was upon Jesus Himself. He did not “bring together churches, block clubs, parent groups, and any other institutions...to pay dues, hire organizers, conduct research, develop leadership, hold rallies and education campaigns, and begin drawing up plans on a whole range of issues - jobs, education, crime, etc .”

Indeed, Jesus focused His message on the Kingdom of Heaven, not on worldly gains, which appears to be the primary role of a “community organizer,” i.e., to determine specific physical needs of a community, and then to organize the community to address those needs. Rather, Jesus stated plainly: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” [Mat. 6: 33]

Hence Jesus addressed not the physical deficiencies of the community, but rather the spiritual deficiencies of the individual. He correctly surmised that once a person was brought into a right relationship with God, then God would provide the rest. How completely opposite from the Obama’s model of community agitating for redress of grievances. In Obama’s Marxist world view based upon Saul Alinsky, the original Chicago “community organ-

izer,” God provides nothing, it is up to the community to provide for itself.

Ironically, the profile of “community organizer” more closely fits that of Barabbas, the insurrectionist that the Jews demanded to be released instead of Jesus. Barabbas had led the insurrection against the Roman “oppressors” and had committed murder during the revolt. In short, Barabbas had identified the needs of the community, i.e. that they were oppressed, and had organized an effective response, an insurrection, which certainly rediscovered “the possibilities of acting collectively”. That would make him the ideal community organizer. Saul Alinsky and Barack Obama would have been proud. No wonder the Jews demanded that he be released instead of Jesus Christ, for Jesus spoke of a heavenly kingdom, not a worldly one.

The first century Jews were looking for a worldly leader who would save them from Roman oppression. They could not comprehend that they needed a spiritual leader to save them from their sins. Hence they wanted Barabbas, not Jesus to lead them. Obama is very much like Barabbas, he is worldly, and he is a leader. But he is no Jesus. I know Jesus, and Jesus is a friend of mine. Jesus Christ was no “community organizer”; and you, Obama, are no Jesus Christ! ☹

“Ariel” is a pseudonym for a blogger at www.floppingaces.net. This article was posted 9-12-08.

Among the “actions” of local Alinskyian organizations are the infamous “accountability sessions” with area politicians. The description below of one such “action” in Austin, Texas — described by one organizer as a “ritual” — could be Anywhere, USA.

No Faith in *Austin Interfaith*

By Patrick McGuinness, PhD

I attended the *Austin Interfaith* forum tonight. As a St Thomas More parishioner, I got the notice, and originally confused this with a parish event. I found out later this was an event that included other churches (St Albert), a synagogue (Kol Halev), and members of other groups (teachers unions). The ‘forum’ was not really a forum, but rather was an endorsement rally put on by the *Austin Interfaith* ‘faithful’ for their issues. (This was said directly by one of the leaders: “Our Issues are our candidate” and they endorse an agenda.) This was a highly scripted event, where almost all the talking was done by the *Austin Interfaith* leaders and questioners, and only a little time for candidates to answer, and no free-range audience participation.

The most objectionable part of the forum was how it was set up. Before the candidates came in, the ‘pre-session’ leaders instructed the audience directly that when a candidate answered “YES” to a question, they were to answer with loud applause and when a candidate answered “NO”, they were to sit on their hands. They even rehearsed this activity, just to make sure the audience was ‘trained’ right! So even audience participation was scripted and controlled!

It’s very creepy to have the audience trained like seals to applaud when directed rather than simply being permitted to express their opinions openly. Why the mind control? There is a reason: the ‘accountability session’ clearly has a very heavy hand of intimidation on the candidates themselves, to make them feel accepted if they go along with the *Austin Interfaith* questions, and very isolated should they be brave enough to have a different opinion than the *Interfaith* group. This was not about information, but about intimidating candidates and exercising power. By being so scripted and non-open, this ‘forum’ had the worst aspects of mass-movement power-intimidation.

Furthermore, the handouts had a scorecard on the back, where the audience members would ‘score’ the candidates on whether they were answering well or not.

Father Elmer Holtman set the focus with a general speech (“justice for all”) that in a few areas got into specifics - such as “We want to make sure immigrant families do not live in fear. ... we support rule of law, but not local officials doing the work of immigration agencies.” (But the real issue seems to be they don’t want the law enforced by anyone.) While I appreciated that they desired to speak about living our moral values through active participation in the public sphere, the elephant in the room, at least for me, was the complete and utter failure to mention, while lamenting the litany of items affecting us, the moral issues around the unborn, right to life, end-of-life, or the family itself. The agenda was centered around four themes: jobs-“living wage,” education, affordable healthcare, immigration. The set of issues has a common theme of: “spend more government money and relax standards and relax the rule of law.” While they claim to be non-partisan, the group and its agenda is quite liberal.

In summary, the ‘accountability session’ was an overly scripted session and exercise in mass-movement intimidation tactics that was disturbing and troubling on several levels:

1. The forum was a hostile environment for free thinking and free exercise of one’s conscience. It was an endorsement rally for the specific agenda of *Austin Interfaith*. There were mind-control and thought-control methods used that were frankly creepy, akin to what you see in cults, not a free and open forum.
2. Held in a Catholic church venue, it violated the guidelines put out by Texas bishops (Texas Catholic Conference) on how Catholic churches should behave. The Guidelines state: Item IV. “Evaluations of candidates or political parties should be avoided” - when this session did just that - rating candidates ‘good’ or ‘bad’ on the *Austin Interfaith* agenda. This was an endorsement/evaluation rally/exercise, that graded not merely an issue forum.
3. For a Catholic church to host an event - the elephant in the room question - why wasn’t the life issue on the agenda? Surely, it’s unfortunate that Rebecca McIlwain’s daughter didn’t get into accelerated English in 10th grade (the ‘story’ on the education), but I’ve been there, too, with my daughter in the past week (disappointments happen), but does it rise to the level of the right to life for the unborn? The agenda was a narrow agenda and missed “Faithful Citizenship” agenda items such as the issues of life, family, etc.

We know why life issues are off the agenda - because the other partners in this coalition force it to be so. After the session, I had a discussion with a woman from the synagogue. She mentioned how there were other ‘pro-choice’ groups and so that item was ‘divisive’. So too was school choice. Why? Oh, because the teachers unions are against it. Yet she warmly related how the lessons learned from Catholic colleagues were used by other groups to push for gay marriage (oh joy!) This begs the question of why the Catholic Church, which goes out of its way to limit political participation in other ways, would lend credence to a coalition comprised of other groups who are on the other side of the Catholic Church on fundamental issues.

4. I do not believe that the *Austin Interfaith* agenda was a genuine ground-up agenda coming from our parish. Rather, it was a pre-defined agenda that the backing organization, *Industrial Areas Foundation*, has been pushing, and the ‘house meeting’ and other meetings are less to discover the agenda of the parish, than to find those members receptive to push the IAF agenda.

In short, *Austin Interfaith* is pushing a narrow liberal agenda (including agenda items of teachers unions) into the Church, rather than taking the Church members’ agenda into the community. The Catholic Church should not be taken advantage of in this way. To put it bluntly: Why is the moral capital of the Catholic Church squandered on pet issues of the teachers unions and other external groups, when those groups themselves have enough power to push their own agenda? 🙄

Reprinted with permission from the author. Patrick McGuinness lives and works in Austin, Texas, where he is a member and lector at St Thomas More Catholic Church. He writes for the Travis Monitor blog (travismonitor.blogspot.com).

The Other Side of Change: Obama and Saul Alinsky

By Mary Jo Anderson

Change and unity -- the two words surely epitomize Barack Obama's campaign for the presidency. Last week's Democratic Convention extolled change hourly, in a relentless drumbeat. The only relief came when unity was emphasized. What nags at the back of the mind is that the call for "change" and "unity" is not so much an invitation but a command.

I'm a skeptic.

I've learned from covering the United Nations that when radicals cannot get delegates to agree to their terms, they change the meaning of those terms. Hence, "health and reproductive rights," though it sounds like innocent pre-natal care, is in reality the UN's goal to press for abortion on demand -- all in the name of doing something noble for the poor and oppressed.

Obama's understanding of "unity" has never been spelled out, but his past mentors -- and even some of his own comments -- paint a worrisome picture.

Obama said last year, "We're building a grassroots movement . . . [to] *unite the country around our shared values*" (emphasis added).

And then at a rally in February: "It is a choice not between black and white, not between genders and regions or religions, but a choice between the past and the future." In the context of the genderless world espoused by the gay lobby that Obama supports, or the Marxist vision of a religion-less world, those remarks about our future take on a different hue. In fact, there's a strong indication that for Obama, "unity" is part of a broader agenda -- a kissing cousin to the Marxist ideal of the undifferentiated collective.

Much has been written about Obama's career as a "community organizer," a benign term that was actually the brainchild of Marxist agitator Saul Alinsky, whose writings Obama studied and who founded an organization in Chicago for which Obama worked. Alinsky earned his doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1930 and went to work in the state penitentiary. He came to believe that the "social milieu," not personal behavior, was responsible for the plight of the inmates -- and therefore, a changed society would eliminate aberrant behavior. In 1939, Alinsky created his *Industrial Areas Foundation*, a grassroots agitation organization that found its power in collectivizing working-class poor and idealistic radicals.

Alinsky is well-known for his second book, *Rules for Radicals*, which begins with praise for Lucifer, a rebel who achieved his own kingdom. The book stressed that activists must be "people committed to change." (Sound familiar?) He taught his agitators to avoid the "useless self-indulgence" of despising their own middle-class roots, instead exploiting the contempt they feel: "If we are to build power for change, the power and the people are in the big middle class majority."

He also encouraged radicals to seek "bridges of communication and unity . . . [V]iew with strategic sensitivity the nature of middle-class hang-ups over rudeness or aggressive insulting profane actions. All this and more must be grasped and used to radicalize parts of the middle-class." In the name of "the poor and the oppressed," radicals catapult themselves into power, exploiting the goodwill of the desperate.

Alinsky further instructed: "Moral rationalization is indispensable at all times of action whether to justify the selection or the use of ends or means." Organizers are to drop the appearance of radical agitators and to don middle-class manners and behaviors so as to blend in while espousing their radical visions of the future -- a description that would suit Obama, according to Joseph Biden's own description of the senator as "mainstream... bright and clean."

The similarities continue in Alinsky's view of the middle classes as "fearful people threatened on all sides" who "cling to illusory fixed points" and who are characterized by "bitterness." Again, this is all familiar: It neatly summarizes the contempt Obama exhibited for the middle class when he derided their values at a swank San Francisco fundraiser by saying, "They get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them..."

Despite this, Alinsky coached his devotees to work with the lower-middle class to obtain...

...a series of partial agreements and a willingness to abstain from hard opposition as changes take place. They have their role to play in the essential prelude of reformation. . . . This is the job of today's radical -- to fan the embers of hopelessness into a flame to fight. To say, "together we can change it for what we want."

As Obama would do 50 years later, Alinsky used churches and people of faith to acquire a legitimate image (and financial assistance). Alinsky tapped Msgr. Jack Eagan for entrée into Catholic Chicago; for Obama, his mentor and pastor was Jeremiah Wright, whose message was never human unity but racial division. Wright is a proponent of liberation theology, a belief that man will save himself through unified political action. Is it reasonable to assume that the young Obama was formed by his 20 years of friendship with Wright? Can the "change" Obama imagines be the same "change" most Americans want?

Obama's devotion to Wright and radicals like Alinsky is well-known; anyone can pick up *Rules for Radicals* and read it as Obama's playbook. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger offered the ultimate warning against such ideology when he wrote in *Truth and Tolerance*,

[W]here the Marxist ideology of liberation had been consistently applied, a total lack of freedom had developed, whose horrors were now laid bare before the eyes of the entire world. Wherever politics tries to be redemptive, it is promising too much. Where it wishes to do the work of God, it becomes not divine, but demonic. ☹

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Alinskyian Organizing

Ecumenical opportunity or interfaith hazard?

By Stephanie Block

The dream of organizing religious institutions into an ecumenical political power-base is nothing new. What's new is the widespread acceptance such organizing has gained.

As of late 1995, *Albuquerque Interfaith* – an Alinskyian organization in the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico – had 28 institutional members, all of them religious congregations. Eleven were Catholic, four Presbyterian, five Lutheran, and the rest from an assortment of "faith traditions."

Albuquerque Interfaith is only one of a *network* of local affiliates around the United States. Each of these local affiliates belongs to the national "parent" organization, *Industrial Areas Foundation*. The *Industrial Areas Foundation* [known simply as the IAF] sends its professional organizers to train and engage people in each of these locations. The organizer's job is to bring these denominations into a "relationship" which will enable them to act together on civic issues.

Saul Alinsky founded the IAF in 1940. Alinsky, who died in the 70s, wrote two books: *Reveille for Radicals*, and *Rules for Radicals*. In *Reveille for Radicals*, Alinsky writes about the effectiveness of what he called "popular participation," the civic actions of ordinary people through a "People's Organization," like *Albuquerque Interfaith*.

A critical study of the extent of popular participation in People's Organizations was made, and the findings differed so radically from the prevalent assumptions that the original study was repeatedly checked. Each checkup corroborated the original findings. Conclusions showed that in the most powerful and deeply rooted People's Organizations known in this country the degree of popular participation reached a point of between 5 and 7 per cent! This in spite of the fact that those making the study fully recognized that the organizations being evaluated were so much stronger and included so many more people who actually participate than all the other organizations proclaiming "100 per cent participation..." [p 181]
amount of good – or damage.

The assumption that Alinsky is debunking in this passage is that an effective organization requires most of its membership to participate. It doesn't. A small, well-organized core of people can accomplish a disproportionate amount. An Alinskyian-involved congregation requires only a small, committed core of active, involved people to transform it. Similarly, a relatively small number of strategically situated, networked IAF locals across the country can have a strong influence on federal policy.

Multiply that by several Alinskyian networks, each with dozens of local affiliates, in the US – and add an Alinskyian-trained president in the White House – and one can see something powerful is at play.

How do Alinskyian locals function? How do they operate and organize?

At Ascension parish in Albuquerque, the Alinskyian-trained priest wanted his Catholic parish to become an *Albuquerque Interfaith* member. He began “one-on-ones:” private meetings between him and various high-profile people in the congregation. His goal was to identify those who could become an IAF “leadership team” for the congregation. These handpicked “leaders” were chosen for their influence in the community and for their personal openness to social activism.

Albuquerque Interfaith then trained the “parish leadership team”, personally chosen by the IAF priest, to run organizational “house-meetings” in the parish. House-meetings are designed to expand awareness about the local IAF and to establish the Alinskyian organization’s credibility among parishioners. They encourage parishioners to be active and supportive of the IAF organization and stimulate a controlled set of concerns, predetermined by the organization, around social and economic needs of the community. These concerns are quite limited – for example, Alinskyian organizations won’t address the issue of abortion.

As support in the congregation grows, participants engage in tightly orchestrated public actions. Public actions around Albuquerque have included ritualized meetings with government officials and school administrators, demonstrating apparent public support for the Alinskyian organization’s public policies.

Each member congregation in the local Alinskyian organization pays dues. In Albuquerque, member congregations pay 1.5% of their income to the *Albuquerque Interfaith*. This helps to pay the professional organizer a middle-class salary, benefits, office and travel expenses. *Albuquerque Interfaith*, in turn, pays the national IAF \$30,000 yearly. This money helps to pay the corporate-level salaries of the eight regional IAF directors who travel extensively.

What do Alinskyian organizations do? What are the changes they mobilize member congregations around the country to initiate?

The goals of the Alinskyian networks exist on two levels. The first is to seek the self-interest of their membership, that is, to identify some issues of concern to them. If a street corner needs a traffic light, Catholics, Muslims, Jews, and Protestants ought to be able to work together to get one in place.

To achieve this requires research: what does it take to have a traffic light installed? What are the costs involved? Is the money there? Is the need urgent? Who does one approach about it? How do we pressure them if they don’t agree with us? How do we involve the media, if necessary? How do we build public support for our issue? These are the questions that form part of the citizen education in which the Alinskyian organization trains the participating individuals from its member congregations.

The goals of the Alinskyian organization exist on another level, though. It not only has local goals, tailored to the self-interest of local people, but its own goals. Ernesto Cortes, the southwestern regional IAF director writes: “[The organizer’s] issue gets dealt with last. If you want your issue to be dealt with first, you’ll never build anything. So you lead with other people’s issues, and you teach them how to act on their issues. Then you model what is to be reciprocal, you model what it is to have a long-term vision.” [Ernesto Cortes, “Organizing the Community: The *Industrial Areas Foundation* organizer speaks to farmers and farm activists,” *The Texas Observer - A Journal of Free Voice*, July 11, 1986.]

To obtain a power-base that will support the *organizer’s* issues, the Alinskyian organization must build a constituency that trusts it. Working through the churches, using sympathetic clergy, an Alinskyian organization develops those relationships of trust within member congregations and dioceses. The hands-on, citizen education that teaches people how to get a traffic light installed has the additional advantage of identifying and developing a small but committed and active group of people who will support the Alinskyian organization’s “long-term vision”.

What is that “vision”? In general terms, Alinskyian organizations embrace a practical philosophy of governance called variously “third way,” “participatory democracy,” or “democratic socialism.” All these terms, and others, are

an attempt to describe a brand of socialism that aims to be a middle ground between laissez-faire capitalism and right wing, totalitarian socialism (like communism). Proponents of this “middle ground” believe that their system of government can use democratic mechanisms to administer the state’s benefits. The *mechanisms* of administration for those benefits are the “*mediating institutions*”— such as churches – which they believe will render government control more benevolent and “just.”

The “mediating institutions” are schools, churches, unions, community centers and the like, held together by the relationships they have forged within their community organization – like *Albuquerque Interfaith*.

To achieve this utopian “vision,” the Alinskyian networks are engaged in “restructuring” activities of all kinds. On the **political level**, these networks do a lot of voter registration. In the late 90s, for instance, the IAF made national headlines for a massive naturalization drive that it included hundreds of *invalid* naturalizations. New citizens – validly so or not – were driven straight from receiving their citizenship papers to the polling booths. The situation was not rectified until after the 1996 California elections, which unseated pro-life Congressman Robert Dornan to the IAF-backed, pro-abortion candidate.

The Alinskyian networks operate in the **economic arena**, also, pushing the comprehensive Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community packages in dozens of areas around the country.

The Alinskyian networks supported Hillary Clinton’s universal **health care** plan and have experimented with their member churches in “community-based” health-care clinics.

The Alinskyian networks have pushed **welfare reform**...of a sort. In Arizona, this “reform” was fought by a coalition of over 30 community-based human services organizations, including food banks and health care facilities (hardly “radical right” types), who argued it was an attempt to overrun “existing organizations with demonstrated track records and accountability for working with the poor...” to control public money for its own organizational purposes. The human services coalition warned that, “Any diversion of funds to create another layer of providers would detract from the present effort and be disastrous.”

Alinskyian networks are deeply involved in **education reform**. On January 24, 1996, the *Albuquerque Interfaith* began the first in a series of Professional Development Seminars funded by a \$450,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Involving about 60 teachers, administrators, community center directors, high school students, and parents from the city’s public school system, these all-day seminars at the Albuquerque Hilton were, according to one local school board member, designed as the educational establishment’s response to the radical right. Unlike other states, however, there was no organized opposition to systemic school reform in New Mexico, so there was no need for a program to counter it.

What was its real purpose, then? What did the IAF hope to accomplish among area educators? Dr. Benjamin Barber, a political scientist out of Rutgers University, during a radio interview, gave the answer. The Alinskyian networks, he explained, are conducting “practical experiments to empower people in their own lives.” These groups “don’t simply talk about citizenship and democracy, but are engaged in working for it.” Barber identified, specifically, the *Industrial Areas Foundation*. The IAF-lead Albuquerque “Professional Development Seminar” for public schools graphically connects the IAF’s **public education** goals to its **civic education** goals.

This is occurring all over the United States. The scope of IAF involvement in the recent federal movement toward systemic education “reform” is vast. And it is *necessary* for the IAF to maintain its involvement in the movement toward systemic education reform, because this reform is extremely unpopular.

Marc Tucker’s *National Center for Education and the Economy* [the NCEE] is the think-tank that produced the rough draft of what became the *Work Force Development Act* of 1995. The NCEE was well aware that public support for its plans was weak. It sought no less than “transformation in virtually every important aspect of the American system of education.”

A NCEE proposal for the legislation stated: “It will require thoughtful and sustained communication with the citizens of these states to build the public consensus needed to support these revolutionary changes.”

Weeks-long media campaigns and town meetings were suggested to “increase public discussion” and “focus daily news coverage” on education. Parents would have to see themselves as “collaborators” in their children’s education. The proposal said: “The *Industrial Areas Foundation*, perhaps the most experienced agency in the United States in the arena of community organizing, will help us think through the parent engagement and organizing issues.”

An example of the IAF’s work to generate parent involvement in OBE restructuring is documented in a vision paper called “Community of Learners,” ostensibly written by a network of Texas IAF locals in 1990. However, it was “facilitated” into being by an educational consultant from the NCEE board of trustees who was, in the early 1980s, the president of the IAF San Antonio local, *Communities Organized for Public Service*. The vision paper was then used by other locals around the country as the basis for their “own” educational policy.

Why did the Texas IAF locals need an education consultant from the NCEE to “help” them write their vision paper? The answer, we are told, is that she provided “...a larger framework for people to think about their own schools and the troubling questions about whether their children were being prepared for the work of the future. Schools are about political power, Hernandez explained.” [William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, 1992, p 231.]

No wonder children are graduating from the public school system unable to read! Recall Barber’s radio interview where he describes the IAF’s “civic education” activity in the public schools. Place that next to the NCEE consultant’s idea that “Schools are about political power.” What sort of educational system are the Alinskyian networks putting together?

The even more disturbing question is: how did the churches come to be involved in such schemes?

Using Religious Institutions

It’s a chicken and egg debate over which came first: do **liberal religious communities embrace Alinskyian faith-based organizing** or does participation in such organizing tend to liberalize the community? Perhaps both assertions are correct.

The IAF has, for example, conducted a national project called “IAF Reflects.” IAF Reflects is a series of “intense, 2-week seminars for veteran organizers.” These retreats for congregational leaders are, in the words of one enthusiastic observer, designed to put those “leaders in touch with the biblical tradition that might give deeper insight into their work together, bind them more closely, and empower them to go forward to build God’s reign. The IAF has come to realize that it is about holy work...”

Faith communities, writes the Catholic Villanova religion professor, Susan Toton, “must be conversant in two languages -the language of the faith and the language of public discourse,” which Toton equates to IAF-style activism. “Both are essential for communities committed to furthering God’s reign.”

Ed Chambers, national IAF executive director, has a similar idea. He says: “I’d had a little training in philosophy. And I started forcing myself to look at what our kind of organizing meant to people. We worked with people in the churches, and their language was the language of the gospel. Their language was nothing like Alinsky’s language. His language was power talk. Tough, abrasive, confrontational, full of ridicule. And those are really all non-Christian concepts. So I started looking at it. Here are the non-Christian concepts...here are the Christian concepts. Are there any similarities? Is this just a different language for the same thing?”

What is this language of Alinsky’s? Alinsky explains it. According to him, in his *Rules for Radicals*, this “power talk” is Machiavellian. “What follows [Alinsky writes in the opening paragraph of the *Rules*] is for those who want to change the world from what it is to what they believe it should be. *The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power. *Rules for Radicals* is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away.”

Machiavelli’s *The Prince* used to be on the Catholic Index, when the Church had an Index, as forbidden reading. This was **not** because the object of Machiavelli’s discussion was to protect the rich. It was because the principles Machiavelli gave the rich for holding on to power were unethical.

The “power talk” of Alinsky is also unethical. He teaches, at great length, (for instance) that the “ends justify the means.” (In fact, Alinsky devotes an entire chapter in the *Rules* to rationalizing why the ends justify the means.) Romans 3:8, however, says “it is not licit to do evil that good may come of it,” and Pope John Paul II, in *Veritatis Splendor*, insists that the Christian must accede to the truth of this moral teaching.

These two positions are not reconcilable. It is not moral to speak the language of pious ethics at worship, and then go out into the world and speak the language of opportunism and might-is-right and whatever else “ends justifies the means” ethics produces. They are not simply two different languages saying the same thing.

What, then, are the Alinskyian networks doing when they apply the biblical language to their “power” talk, or use scriptural references to support their reform “vision”? They are making religious people comfortable with socialist goals, confusing them into thinking socialist “change” and religious “conversion” are the same thing.

Expansion

Collectively, there are over 200 local affiliates of an Alinsky-style organizations in the United States and several of the networks are expanding into Latin America, Europe, and Africa.

Therefore, it is extremely important that people of strong religious convictions understand the funding mechanisms that support these organizations. In addition to the dues paid by member congregations, expansion efforts require “seed money.” The *Catholic Campaign for Human Development* annually channels millions of dollars into Alinsky-style, faith-based organizing. The *Jewish Fund for Justice*, the *Lutheran Fund for Justice*, grants disbursed through the *United Methodist Global Ministries*, and the *Presbyterian World Services* are similar sources of funding.

The dream of organizing religious institutions into an ecumenical political power-base is nothing new – but we’d better be very watchful of what we organize. ☹

"These methods are very cruel, and enemies to all government not merely Christian but human, and any man ought to avoid them and prefer to live a private life rather than to be a king who brings such ruin on men. Notwithstanding, a ruler who does not wish to take that first good way of lawful government, if he wishes to maintain himself, must enter upon this evil one. But men take certain middle ways that are very injurious; indeed, they are unable to be altogether good or altogether bad."

- *Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince*

In the Left Corner...Is Abortion Rights

Several years ago, the *Albuquerque Journal* carried an article titled “Left Flexes Its Muscles.” An accompanying photo showed Rev. Trey Hammond of La Mesa Presbyterian, co-chairman of *Albuquerque Interfaith*, and said “he believes the 2004 presidential election was a catalyst for religious liberals to be more vocal about their own religious and political views.” [Debra Dominguez-Lund, “Left Flexes Its Muscles,” *Albuquerque Journal*, July 9, 2006]

A companion piece by the same author added: “In the world of religion, the left corner includes *Albuquerque Interfaith*, the *Network of Spiritual Progressives*, *Faith in Public Life*, the *Catholic Alliance for the Common Good*, *FaithfulAmerica.org*, and the long-standing *National Council of Churches*.”

The “left corner” is the corner pushing for same-sex marriage and abortion rights. The Catholic Church has no business in a progressive political alliance. ☹

It’s Not Charitable...

Besides placing the Church into a political network with abortion and homosexual “rights” advocates, Alinskyian organizing looks at the world very differently than the Church does. Father Mitch Pacwa fielding questions on a recent *Catholic Answers* radio program, took a call from someone who was “concerned about a group in our city that calls themselves an interfaith community organization.” She had discovered that it was “linked to a foundation that [is] connected to Saul Alinsky and that style of community organizing.” She could have been speaking about *Albuquerque Interfaith* except that the call was from Wisconsin.

Father Pacwa, who was involved in Alinskyian organizing himself in 1969-1970, said:

The difficulty with Alinsky and his style of organizing is thatyou have to organize people around the issue and the only way to get them motivated is to identify who the enemies are. So, you say, “this guy is our enemy” and then you take some action. Now, what do you find problematic with that as a Christian? It is *uncharitable*. Change has to go on in the social situations to be sure. There needs to be improvements but establishing that from enmity is wrong. ☹

**For more information,
visit**

www.lospequenos.org/community

Pertinent articles include:

- “Parish Social Justice” - comparing Alinskyian organizing to authentic Catholic Action as typified by the pro-life movement.
- “Communitarian Riddle” - a look at the form of socialism Alinskyian organizing has adopted.
- “Alinskyian Organizing” - the fundamentals...and some objections.
- “Albuquerque Interfaith 2007” - a particularly interesting article in the light of where we are in 2009.
- List of Albuquerque Interfaith member institutions.
- Transcript of Father Mitch Pacwa’s radio comments about Alinskyian organizing.