1989 ACORN 1989

ACORN is the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, a grassroots membership organization of low and moderate income people. Founded in Arkansas in 1970, we have grown to a membership of over 60,000 families in some 400 local neighborhood groups.

ACORN is now firmly rooted in 26 states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and the District of Columbia.

For 18 years, ACORN members have organized to improve their communities and to win a fairer share and a greater voice for all low and moderate income Americans. The fundamental issue for ACORN members is who has the power to control what happens in our neighborhoods, cities, states and the nation.

The election kept ACORN members busy in '88. Members boarded buses for the ACORN Caravan for Justice, rolling through seven southern states in nine days, focusing national attention on issues affecting low and moderate income Americans. Justice Riders and local host groups along the way participated in get-out-the-vote work, ensuring that people who share their interests and concerns would be out voting on Super Tuesday.

The 1988 ACORN National Convention in Atlanta brought over 1000 members together from all over the country for 3 days of speeches, actions and workshops. The convention ended with members marching through the streets of Atlanta, with stops at Rev. Jackson's headquarters and at the Federal Reserve Bank, where ACORN demanded better treatment by the banks of low and moderate income people. The march also served as a send-off for 25 ACORN members elected as Delegates to the Democratic National Convention.

ACORN was at the forefront of a coalition pushing Congress to strengthen and expand the Community Reinvestment Act to make housing loans more available to low and moderate income people.

In Philadelphia, the ACORN Banking Committee organized the nation's first Bank Fair, bringing together officials from eight Philadelphia banks with low and moderate income customers in a day long series of workshops.

Brooklyn members worked to improve voting conditions and fought against unfair voter purges, while Boston, Little Rock, and Oakland members all worked for increased police protection in their neighborhoods. Dallas demanded better service from area grocery stores. In St. Paul, ACORN members got lower sewerage rates.

Chicago members rallied against industrial toxic contamination in their neighborhoods, while in New Orleans, neighborhood groups are still fighting to prevent the parking of toxic tank cars in their community overnight. Pine Bluff fought for cleanup of a PCB-contaminated lake. Albuquerque groups won their fight to reduce air and noise pollution by local factories.

Kansas City members won the fight to establish school speed zones. In Atlanta, members succeeded in their push to have a First Source ordinance passed, giving the city's long-term unemployed preference in job hunting. In Des Moines, members won the re-assessment of property taxes in ACORN neighborhoods. Memphis, Lake Charles, Detroit, Washington, D. C., and St. Louis all strived to clean up their neighborhoods and fight drugs, while Phoenix members dealt with community development issues.

The march forward will continue in 1989, as ACORN, nationally and locally, leads the fight for representation, involvement and empowerment of low and moderate income people.

The People's Platform Preamble

We stand for a People's Platform, as old as our country, and as young as our dreams. We come before our nation, not to petition with hat in hand, but to rise as one people and demand.

We have waited and watched. We have hoped and helped. We have sweated and suffered.

We have often believed. We have frequently followed.

But we have nothing to show for the work of our hands, the tax of our labor. Our patience has been abused; our experience misused. Our silence has been seen as support. Our struggle has been ignored.

Enough is enough. We will wait no longer for the crumbs at America's door. We will not starve on past promises, but feast on future dreams.

We are a nation of uncommon common people. We are the majority, forged from all minorities. We are the masses of many, not the forces of few. We will continue our fight until the American way is just one way, until we have shared the wealth, until we have won our freedom.

This is not a simple vision, but a detailed plan.

Our plan is to build an American reality from the American rhetoric, to deliver a piece of the present and the fruits of the future to every man, to every woman, to every family.

We demand our birthright: the chance to be rich, the right to be free.

Our riches shall be the blooming of our communities, the bounty of a sure livelihood, the beauty of our homes for our families with sickness driven from the door, the benefit of our taxes, not their burden; and the best of our energy, land and natural resources for all people.

Our freedom shall be based on the equality of many, not the income of few. Our freedom is the force of democracy, not the farce of our federal fat and personal profit. In our freedom, only the people shall rule.

Corporations shall have their role: producing jobs, providing products, paying taxes. No more. No less. They shall obey our wishes, respond to our needs, serve our communities. Our country shall be the citizens' wealth and our wealth shall be our country.

Government shall have its role: public servant to our good, fast follower to our sure steps. No more. No less. Our government shall shout with a public voice, and no longer jump to a private whisper. In our government, the common concerns shall be the collective cause.

We represent a people's platform, not a politician's promise.

We demand the changes outlined in our platform and plan. We will work to win. We will have our birthright. We will live in richness and freedom. We will live in one country as one people.

We will dream of more, but we will not settle for less.