

Social Action Committee Report, 2009

Members:

Stacy L. Burns, Airin D. Martínez, Stephen J. Morewitz, Christine Oh, Kimberly Richman, Cynthia Siemsen, Wendy Simonds (Chair-Elect and Chair) Kristin J. Wilson

All members participated via email in two rounds of discussion and voting, first on all of the nominated organizations and then on narrowing from a short list of three to the final choice. We discussed whether or not to split the award, and a majority voted to give it to a single organization.

Nominations:

We received 14 nominations from the larger Bay area. They represent a wide range of organizations addressing a variety of important social needs; all would have been worthy of support. However, a clear winner did emerge, Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana, or WAMM.

2009 Award Winner: WAMM is the subject of Wendy Chapkis's and Richard J Webb's book *Dying to Get High: Marijuana as Medicine*, and was nominated by Chapkis herself. As she summarized, "Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana, or WAMM, founded in Santa Cruz, California in the mid-1990s -- is one of the most respected medical marijuana organizations in the country. WAMM has been called the "gold standard" for medical marijuana provision by members of the California state legislature. This San Francisco Bay Area organization is composed largely of individuals living with life threatening illnesses who collectively cultivate cannabis which is then provided free of charge to the approximately 200 current members. The organization operates legally with full support and cooperation of local and state law enforcement and elected officials" (Chapkis nomination). WAMM's history shows the ways in which the federal government has allied with BigPharma to thwart efforts to make medical marijuana accessible, even as it is legal within the state of California. WAMM's political stance exemplifies anti-medicalization, anti-commercialization, and community-based nurturance for those who need it most (poor, uninsured, sick and dying people). It is a truly unique social change organization.

Simonds notified Chapkis by email; drafted letters for the winning organization and the nominees of the non-winning organizations.

The winner will present at a (new) special session at this year's conference.

Other Nominated Organizations:

Women's Economic Agenda Project
World Institute on Disability
Oakland Food Connection
Transgender Law Center
Insight Center for Community Economic Development
ColorOfChange.org
Critical Resistance
St. Peter's Housing Committee
Asociacion Mayab
Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth
Mujeres Unidas y Activas
East Bay Community Law Center
Women of Color Resource Center

