ACORN "Informants" and Whistleblowers

Recently, various individuals and groups have sounded the alarm of wrongdoing and corruption at the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). Most are advocates, some are activists and others are self-promoters; all have spoken truth to power. However, there have been so many so-called ACORN "whistleblowers" that it is hard to tell the differences between real whistleblowers and mere tattle-tells. Here is how to keep score.

Washington, DC (PRWEB) November 2, 2009 — The International Association of Whistleblowers (IAW) supports the Whistleblower Film Series a part of the 9th annual DC Labor FilmFest. The series presented by the DC Labor FilmFest and supporters of whistleblower protection legislation; at the Capitol Visitor's Center and the Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2247 from October 1, 2009 through October 29, 2009. This first-ever series is part of a landmark, nine-year legislative effort to restore credible whistleblower rights for government employees and contractors -- and showcases dramatic films that explore this vital issue. Important films like “The Pentagon Wars,” “The Whistleblower,” “Silkwood,” “The Insider,” and “The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers.”

Unfortunately, a new film "The Informant" recently opened to less than rave reviews. The movie is loosely based on the true-life story of one individual who helped break the largest corporate corruption case (at that time) and involved the world wide price fixing of food. The movie is based on the story of ADM scientist Mark Whittacre and is an often amusing satire about a deluded thief who stole from his crooked company; and then cooperated with the authorities.

Recently, various individuals and groups have sounded the alarm of wrongdoing and alleged corruption at the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). Most are advocates, some are activists and others are self-promoters; all have spoken truth to power. However, there have been so many so-called ACORN “whistleblowers” that it is hard to tell the differences between real whistleblowers and mere tattle-tells.

Michael McCray, Co-chair International Association of Whistleblowers and National Spokesman for the ACORN 8 states “True whistleblowers pay a tremendous price for their courage, integrity and fortitude.” The financial losses are often considerable but there are many personal losses as well, including loss of one’s professional identity, loss of the respect of one’s colleagues, loss of one’s position in society, loss of personal friends and family, and a sense of self worth or value, to name just a few. The retaliation that targets whistleblowers is so clearly unfair. And often the corruption extends higher and further than the whistleblower ever initially imagined.

ACORN 8, led by Marcel Reid and Karen Inman, is a group of ACORN members, leaders and national board members who were expelled for demanding a forensic examination and independent audit of ACORN and its related entities. The ACORN 8 is now a membership organization with representatives in 15 states and the District of Columbia which engages in legislative advocacy, including federal and corporate whistleblower rights and judicial reform; participates in grassroots coalitions and continues to advocate on behalf of low and moderate income families and communities.

The ACORN 8 are members and neighborhood leaders. The ACORN 8 were the first to identify the nebulous Citizen’s Consulting Inc. (CCI) and attempted to “follow the money” at ACORN; the first to seek a forensic
examination and independent audit of ACORN and its related organizations; the first to seek injunctions against ACORN, the Rathkes and CCI; the first to call for a national boycott of all charitable donations, federal funding and member dues; and the first to file civil rights and criminal RICO complaints against ACORN.

Truth To Power, led by Greg Hall, is a group of former ACORN workers and staff. Hall contends, “low level ACORN workers often become the scapegoats for ACORN senior management.” Greg Hall a former ACORN organizer supports the low income workers who get “thrown under the bus” whenever ACORN wrongdoing is exposed. Truth To Power seeks to unify and organize both current and former ACORN workers into a national service workers union.

Anita MonCrief is a former employee of Project Vote an ACORN affiliate who alleged illegal coordination between the Obama Presidential Campaign and Project Vote. However, in a lawsuit filed against MonCrief, Case No. 09-cv-01109 (RWR) in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia; Project Vote states that “MonCrief was fired for cause after fraudulently applying for an ACORN credit card in her name, and then charging $1,500 worth of personal expenses on the company credit card.” These allegations are not unlike Dale Rathke who embezzled nearly $1 Million on an ACORN credit card in 1999-2000, according to a New York Times article “Funds Misappropriated at 2 Nonprofit Groups” by Stephanie Strom on July 9, 2008. The only difference is ACORN actually fired MonCrief when she got caught but covered up the Rathke embezzlement.

Michael McCray, National Spokesman for the ACORN 8 states “Anita MonCrief is darling of the far right, due to her highly critical and provocative statements; including unsupported accusations and fabricated evidence.” McCray continues “MonCrief’s allegations --if true– provide the strongest connection between ACORN and the Obama Presidential campaign; however, these allegations have never been publicly substantiated with any proof or actual evidence.” Finally, MonCrief disparages both ACORN and real ACORN whistleblowers with equal passion and vigor.

Hannah Giles and James O’Keefe are conservative activists who exposed the lack of coverage on alleged ACORN corruption by the traditional media dressed as “pimp and prostitute”. The comical nature of the undercover video prompted the US House of Representatives and Senate to withhold funding, and for the IRS and Census to cut their ties to ACORN. McCray opines “Ironically, the most effective blows were delivered, not by ACORN workers, members or staff; but instead by a pair of are aspiring journalists and filmmakers.”

However, to really understand the truth about ACORN, you must first understand the difference between ACORN’s membership and staff states Michael McCray, National Spokesman for the ACORN 8. “ACORN staffers are low wage workers who are often depicted as incompetent or worse in the media. ACORN workers registered Mickey Mouse and Tony Romo to vote. ACORN workers offered to provide tax advice and assist a ‘pimp and prostitute’ in establishing an underage brothel; Anita MonCrief was an ACORN staffer” continues McCray. “In contrast, there are over 400,000 low and moderate income families who pay regular dues and volunteer their time and service to improve their local neighborhoods and communities.”

In an insightful article by K. R. Sawyer "The Test Called Whistleblowing” the author writes, the true value of a whistleblower is their long-term value to society not their short term value as individuals. Just as those who have shaped history have often not been revered and rewarded in their own lifetime so it is for the whistleblower. The contributions of whistleblowers occur in many dimensions and surely they are contributors to the evolution of our society. Think of Lincoln, Mozart, Martin Luther King, Ghandi, Jesus, Mother Theresa and many others. The value to history is not measured in the balance sheet today but with benefit of hindsight. The true value of persons with integrity is inestimable.
McCray continues “a whistleblower is a person of conscience who challenges wrongdoing, often at great risk to one’s career, reputation and family. Successful whistleblowers eventually become advocates and activists. The ACORN 8 has survived all these tests” concludes McCray. “Anita MonCrief is more like the troubled Whittacre in the ‘Informant’, rather than a true whistleblower. In the end, the ‘Informant’ is about a wacky, dishonest witness to his own crimes and those of others – it is not about a real whistleblower.”

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