

Sharon Streater Bio

Sharon grew up in Texas, Florida and California, the sixth of seven children. Her parents were missionaries in China before she was born so international visitors were always in their home. After earning a zoology degree at Humboldt State University, she attended the American Baptist Seminary of the West, part of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and interned at Allen Temple Baptist Church in East Oakland.

Sharon was curious to see Christianity outside western culture so she transferred to a seminary in South India for two years. During her studies, she traveled in India every holiday and spent several days at Mother Teresa's Home for the Destitute and Dying. Years later she also visited Zimbabwe, Namibia and Mozambique. Several times in these travels she was told to go home and work on the poverty and racism in the US.

After graduation from seminary Sharon spent seven years with the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM), including one year working and walking with Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers. She learned that servanthood theology could mean poverty wages and long hours, but she also learned organizing can create positive, long-term changes in thousands of peoples' lives.

Sharon's longest NFWM position was with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, working in Oakland, Chicago, Toledo and the tomato fields in NW Ohio. FLOC asked Jesse Jackson to mention their Campbell Soup boycott in his 1984 Democratic Convention speech. When he mentioned the struggles of the farm workers in NW Ohio, FLOC supporters held up boycott signs while Sharon danced in front of the convention in a tomato soup "can" made from hula hoops and a sheet. The soup label was "Cream of Exploitation" with low wages, child labor and pesticides as ingredients. The consumer boycott took seven years, but in 1986 Campbell signed an historic contract with the growers and the field workers represented by FLOC.

Sharon moved back to Florida in 1990 to be near her parents and to work as the lead organizer for the newly created HOPE, the Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality. For 34 years until her retirement last November, Sharon was teaching, training, coaching and organizing as HOPE grew to 26 member congregations. Sharon is married to Joseph Buczek and they enjoy biking, hiking and visiting their two sons and five grandchildren in upstate New York.

The Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality, HOPE, a direct action community organization, unites diverse congregations to improve the quality of life in Hillsborough County. Based on shared values of justice, fairness, love of neighbor and the dignity of all people, HOPE trains members to identify common community problems, research long-term systemic solutions, create issue campaigns, and build the collective power needed to hold systems accountable to implement those solutions.

Once an identified community problem was approved for action by membership, Sharon organized a committee to research solutions and strategize a campaign. She coordinated the committee with leaders and helped prepare for research meetings with institutional leaders and elected officials. She trained members to respond to deflections, denial, and division, to evaluate the meeting, and to plan future steps.

Every spring HOPE organizes a large public action, the Nehemiah Action, with over 1000 community members and the officials who can implement solutions. HOPE leaders will have

met or tried to meet with all relevant officials, discussed the community problem and possible solutions, and invited them to the action months in advance.

The power of over 1000 community members united in one place is the cumulative and essential step in HOPE's process to achieve justice. Sharon created action program booklets with issue reports and proposals, a roster of member congregations, and an agenda facilitated by leaders. This booklet reminds members and teaches visitors what "people power" looks like and what it has accomplished.

HOPE's major community accomplishments since 1990:

Education: School district's alternative to out-of-school suspension program, so students stay on track for graduation.

Employment: Revised City of Tampa job applications to give people with arrest records a chance for employment.

Health: Increased dental services for low income residents and increased county funding for needed senior homecare services.

Homeless: County program to help people get birth certificates, official identifications, and access to services including housing and jobs. Expedited rental assistance checks to landlords.

Housing: County Ordinance to put \$10 million annually in county budget to develop affordable housing for residents with low and very low incomes.

Mental Health: Establishment of ACTS Clubhouse for people with mental illness to gain job training, employment, peer support and community. Crisis Intervention Training for Tampa police officers.

Neighborhoods: Improved East Tampa with sidewalks, demolition of dangerous buildings, and improved drainage. Change in zoning in West Tampa Dobyville to preserve housing.

Transportation: HART extended hours on late-night and weekends on eight major bus routes. HART established 30 more bus shelters.

Youth: Civil citations for children committing misdemeanor offenses to prevent lifelong arrest records, increase public safety, and save taxpayer money.

Find more on HOPE at <https://hopehillsborough.squarespace.com/>

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