

# Early History of the United States Green Party,

1984-2001

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May 15, 2017



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## Introduction

The Green Party of the United States exists today as a political party fielding candidates for office in most states and at the national level. It was formed when the state-level Green Parties came together in the mid-1990s. Thirty-three years ago, however, there were no state-level Green Parties, except one formed in Maine in January 1984, although various groups and organizations were discussing Green politics in other states. The effort to form a national Green Party began in the summer of 1984 and extended over several years of start-up work, including dialogue, debate, and outreach to spread the concept of a comprehensive Green politics. A tremendous variety of interests and approaches from many social movements flowed into the making of the Green Party of the United States.

The immediate inspiration for the U.S. Green Party was the creation of Green parties in Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as in Australia and New Zealand. But what would a Green political party look like in the United States? What could it look like in our particular circumstances and the immense spread of different populations and regions of a huge country? What were its chances of getting a foothold amid the myriad electoral rules and patterns and given the monopolization of politics by two dominant parties?

These and many related questions were discussed and debated as the Green movement grew and the fledgling Green Party took shape.

## First Stirrings of a Green Political Party in the United States



The first stirrings of a Green Party in the United States dedicated to running candidates took place when seventeen people met in Augusta, Maine, on January 8, 1984, to form a Maine Green Party – the first Green state-level political party in the United States. The impetus for the founding meeting came from Alan Philbrook and John Rensenbrink, who had previously worked together on three campaigns to shut down Maine’s only nuclear plant -- and had come close to doing so. It is important and ironic to note that this formation of a new state-level Green Party, the only one in the country, went unnoticed at the time.

Philbrook had recently attended the November 6, 1983, founding meeting of the Green Party of Canada, while in the summer of 1983 Rensenbrink had visited West Germany, where the Green Party *Die Grünen* had recently won 5.5% of the national vote, qualifying it for 27 seats in the Bundestag, West Germany’s parliament. They were the second European Green Party, after the Greens in Belgium, to win multiple federal parliamentary seats. In achieving such success, the West German Greens drew support from the popular domestic movement opposing the deployment of Pershing II cruise missiles on West German soil by NATO and the United States – and from various other social movements as well, including peace, environmental, feminist, civil rights, and Third World solidarity. *Could those same movements unite around forming a Green Party in the United States?*

## ***Green Politics: The Global Promise***



To address this historic question, Californians Charlene Spretnak and Fritjof Capra researched and wrote a definitive, early study of the West German Green Party — *Green Politics: The Global Promise* (New York: E. P. Dutton). Published in March 1984, the book provided deep insights into the challenges *Die Grünen* (the Greens) had faced as they brought together various social movements to create a new eco-social politics and to form a new kind of party that brings the values and analyses of the social movements into the bodies of government *and* brings information about the workings of government out to the movements. After winning seats in local and state governments – and after making an impressive showing in the West German election for the European Parliament in 1979 – the West German Greens won 27 seats in the German Parliament in 1983. The book *Green Politics*, which was based on 60 interviews with German Greens conducted by Spretnak plus six by Capra, was translated into German, Italian, and Japanese. It conveyed to an American audience the Four Pillars of the West German Green Party: ecology, social justice, grassroots democracy, and non-violence. In addition, the Green parties in Canada, Britain, elsewhere in Europe, and New Zealand and Australia were discussed.

The book bore an endorsement from **Petra Kelly** (a co-founder of *Die Grünen* and then-Co-Speaker of the West German Green Party): “to American readers who want to know what is at the heart of alternative Green Party politics.” *Green Politics* received several positive reviews in American newspapers and became a primer for those seeking to start a Green Party in the United States. The final chapter, “The Green Alternative – It Can Happen Here” inspired many to believe that this was possible,

even during the depths of the Reagan years. Indeed, only six months after *Green Politics* was published and became a catalyst, the Founding Conference of the Green Politics movement in the United States was held.

## Early Outreach to the Bioregional Movement

In May 1984, David Haenke and other leading bioregionalists convened the first North American Bioregional Congress, held in southern Missouri in the Ozark foothills. Haenke invited Charlene Spretnak to give a guest plenary talk explaining Green politics and the ways in which it supports the aims of the Bioregional Movement. Right before Spretnak spoke, a Bioregional leader, Peter Berg, passionately urged the plenary audience to view the Greens unfavorably as a parasitic, competitive threat to the Bioregional movement. He was well-known to them, was largely convincing, and got roaring applause. Spretnak's talk, however, was sufficiently successful that a small Green Politics committee was subsequently allowed to form among the working groups. The few Greens and Green Bioregionalists in that group worked for two days to compose a statement suggesting how the Bioregionalists and the Greens might move forward in a cooperative manner. In the closing session, the members of the Green Politics working group collectively held their breath as Spretnak read their proposed statement to the previously hostile Bioregional Congress. The bioregionalists approved it with enthusiastic applause! It was thus established that most bioregionalists would join, support, or peacefully coexist with the Green Politics movement in the United States as it continued to develop for the mutual benefit of both.



# Green Movement Committee

## Statement

(concerning the formation of a Green political organization in the USA)

Recognizing the urgency of our planetary situation and the opportunities for choosing new directions, Green political movements are arising around the world. None of the traditional political forces, whether from left, right or center, is responding adequately to the destruction of eco-systems and the web of crises related to that destruction.

Currently there is great interest in many quarters of the United States in forming a Green political organization. It seems certain that such an organization will emerge in the near future. It is essential that this organization have a biocentric vision - one which puts the needs of all life forms at the center of decision-making.

Furthermore, as individual bioregionalists, we recognize the need for bioregional principles and practices to be secured and protected, cooperatively and in a decentralized manner, through a Green political organization. Such an organization should focus on open, democratic planning and political action supportive of local and regional autonomy and interdependence as reflected in the bioregional model.

We believe that to be effective a Green political organization must originate from a broad base of support, from natural allies concerned with ecological politics and social justice, peace and non-violence, local and regional self-management and grassroots democracy. If the emerging Green political organization does indeed reflect these basic bioregional concerns, we urge support from

bioregional groups and individuals from around the continent.

We urge a Green political organization to include in its principles the following points: (this list is in process and does not address the areas of strategies, organization and actions)

- \* Human consciousness, society and governance must be rooted in, observant of and in balance with ecological imperatives;
- \* Appropriate governance should be largely decentralized to local and regional levels with mindful awareness of the regional environment, culture, spiritual values, history and community aspirations;
- \* A sustainable economy must be based on non-violent ecodevelopment that acknowledges finite resources, decentralization and diversity;
- \* Just as the war against nature must be stopped so must the exploitation of our sisters and brothers, here and abroad;
- \* The concept of national security must be redefined to include all measures that would insure the health of the biosphere and a regionalized global community.

We hope interested persons will help in the development of these ideas.

Green Committee  
or regional contact  
P.O. Box 658  
Mountain Home, AR 72653

## **The Founding Conference of a National Green Politics Organization in the United States – August 10–12, 1984, Macalester College, St. Paul, MN**

During the summer Charlene Spretnak, Harry Boyte (author of *The Backyard Revolution* and long-time member of Democratic Socialists of America), and David Haenke jointly decided to form a planning committee for the Founding Conference. They invited Catherine Burton (founder of Earth Bank in Seattle) and Gloria Goldberg (office manager of the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont) to join them. All five met once in New York City and several times by phone.

The planning committee sent a letter of invitation to 200 activist organizations working for peace, ecology, social justice, civil rights, feminism, veterans' rights, and other issues. Each organization was invited to send either one or two representatives to the founding meeting of the Green Party in the United States. Most recipients of the letter did not reply, and only a few dozen organizations sent anyone to attend the Founding Conference. It is possible that, like many attendees at the First North American Bioregional Congress a few months earlier, the idea of an unknown political entity (one that might draw away financial donations) was not universally embraced. Understandably, most of the groups wanted to wait and see what this new Green Party would be like.

Sadly, the one state-level Green Party already in existence – the Maine Green Party – did not get invited because the one member of the planning committee who, being from New England, knew about the existence of the Maine Green Party did not tell the other members. Presumably she was siding with those bioregionalists in New England who opposed all national parties. Because of that exclusion by one person, the Maine Green Party found out about the Founding Conference only after the event.

During the three-day Founding Conference, attended by 62 activists, many sessions were held on ways to move forward, as well as one on brainstorming Green values. To the surprise of nearly everyone, a group of 11 people from the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont – who packed the Founding Conference by violating the limit of two representatives stated in the invitation, and who were ideologically opposed to the very existence of national parties – derailed the momentum for founding a party that weekend. As a compromise position, the plenary group agreed in the final session to *temporarily* delay the formation of a party while spending the first few years seeding Green ideas locally across the country since few people at that point understood what Green eco-social politics entails. Also in the closing session, the attendees approved the formation of a scribe committee (Charlene Spretnak and Eleanor LeCain in Berkeley, and Mark Satin in Washington, DC) to compose a draft of a values statement, which they subsequently titled the Ten Key Values. A national clearinghouse was established in Minneapolis, and regional representatives were selected to serve on a steering committee and to encourage the formation of local Green politics groups and multi-levelled outreach to other organizations and issue networks.

## ***What's in a Name?***

A further surprise at the Founding Conference was that some of the community organizers argued against using “Green” in the organization’s name on the grounds that people of color (then) associated ecology with a middle-class approach that ignores issues of social justice. Moreover, the group of attendees from the Institute for Social Ecology, who were against any national party or organization on anarchist grounds, blocked the word “national” from being in the organization’s name. They also insisted that the national steering committee be called the InterRegional Committee instead. Thus the surprisingly rocky weekend ended with a pre-party national Green Politics organization called the Committees of Correspondence, named for the grassroots groups during the Revolutionary War.

The Founding Conference went on to agree that the local Committees of Correspondence (CoCs) would have a good deal of autonomy and would be free to use “Green” in their names if they wished, which most of them did. In July 1989, the national Green Gathering changed the CoC name to the Green Committees of Correspondence (GCoC). That name remained until August 1991.

The InterRegional Committee met two to three times a year until 1991 at locations including these: Berkeley, CA (February 1985); Boston, MA (summer 1985); Kansas City, MO (December 1985); Seattle, WA (March 7–9, 1986); Kansas City, MO (August 1987); Austin, TX (January 1988); Los Angeles, CA (June 10–12, 1988); New Orleans, LA (February 17–19, 1989); Washington, DC (December 9–10, 1989); and San Diego, CA (February 1990).

## Creation of the Ten Key Values

During the weeks following the Founding Conference, a draft of the Ten Key Values statement was composed by the Scribe Committee (Spretnak, LeCain, Satin). They drew from the brainstorming session in St. Paul, from the values statements of other Green parties, and from their own Green ideas. This draft was submitted to the InterRegional Committee, who took it back to their respective regions for discussion and any suggested changes or additions. Following inclusion of the suggested revisions, the Ten Key Values, which were accompanied by open-ended questions under each value to stimulate discussion, were approved and adopted unanimously by the InterRegional Committee. The Ten Key Values were distributed as a one-page document to all local Green groups. They reached many people by being published in the paperback edition of *Green Politics* (1986).

[The original Ten Key Values](#) were Ecological Wisdom, Personal and Social Responsibility, Grassroots Democracy, Nonviolence, Decentralization, Community-based Economics, Post-Patriarchal Values, Respect for Diversity, Global Responsibility, and Future Focus – and included the thoughtful questions under each value.

Local Green groups around the country eventually made slight changes or re-ordered the values or made additions to the exact wording of the Ten Key Values. The most common modifications were changing Post-Patriarchal Values to *Feminism and/or Gender Equity*; adding “Personal” to Social Responsibility (*Personal and Social Responsibility*); and adding Sustainability to Future Focus (*Future Focus and Sustainability*).

When the Ten Key Values were first presented to the future chair of the Green Party Platform Committee, Steve Schmidt, in 1987 in Santa Fe, he saw them as the basis for what became the initial platform of the New Mexico Green Party in 1993-94. This document was then redrafted in 1995-96 (with the questions under each value changed to affirmative sentences) as the foundation for the 1996 Green Platform document – and as the "official" 2000 national Green Party Platform. The Ten Key Values-based platform was adopted at the presidential nominating convention of the Associated State Green Parties in Denver in June 2000. It was subsequently included in the successful Federal Elections Commission filing for national Green Party legal status in 2001. In 2016 the statements under each value were further rephrased and amended by the Green Party’s National Committee.

The political philosophy expressed in the Ten Key Values became a focus on the national level at the 2000 ASGP presidential nomination convention. [The Ten Key Values document](#) was presented to the plenary by the Green Platform Committee, chaired by Schmidt from 1995 to 2001. He stated, “It remains for future Greens, whether formally affiliated with the Green Party in the US or greens who share core values of Green parties, to do their best in bringing the values and positions of Green thought into reality. The politics of the present era clearly demand the independent, future-oriented vision of Green, ecologically focused 'planet citizens.'”

The Ten Key Values turned out to be not only an organizing tool but a major factor in the sustained unity of the U.S. Greens. It has served as a philosophical framework and a broad umbrella through all the tumult and factional disagreements that a new party appealing to many different groups, concerns, and interests inevitably experiences. In 2001, when the Global Greens were founded in Canberra, Australia, and a Global Green Charter was approved by consensus from Green Parties in 72 countries, the U.S. Green Ten Key Values document was cited as one of the inspirational source documents behind the creation of the Charter.

## National Clearinghouse

Trying to put the Ten Key Values into practice became the task of the first Committees of Correspondence clearinghouse, established in late 1984 in St. Paul with Harry Boyte as Clearinghouse Coordinator.

At the December 1985 Inter-Regional Committee (IC) meeting in Kansas City, the decision was made that both the IC and the Clearinghouse should actively support organizing efforts through a number of services. The Clearinghouse was moved to Kansas City because the required tasks and responsibilities were rapidly becoming too great for only one person to handle. In Kansas City there was a local group (the Prairie Greens) to actively support it. Dee Berry, a leading member of the Prairie Greens, volunteered to be the Clearinghouse Coordinator, with support from fellow Green Ben Kjelshus. She served in that key role until fall 1989, when she was succeeded by Jim Richmond. Through her organizing skills, steady leadership and vision, and charismatic verve -- and with Kjelshus's enthusiastic help and equally compelling vision, Berry assisted in the birth and intergroup coordination of over 350 local Green groups throughout the country. This provided the "that-without-which" foundation of much subsequent development of Green politics movement and the Green Party. It was a vital step in the direction of both.

One of the primary services provided by Dee Berry's Clearinghouse was publication of *The IC Bulletin*. This periodical became a primary source of commentaries and newspaper reprints of Green success stories around the country. It was sent to all dues-paying Green locals within the CoC. This was before the era of widespread e-mails.

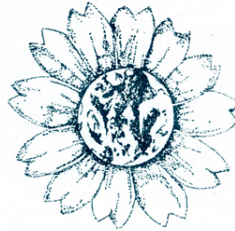
## Early Debates About Green Issues

Like Green Parties in other countries, the early years in the evolution of the U.S. Green Politics movement involved many discussions and debates about policy positions, strategies, types of activism, and the broad meaning of nonviolence in the practice of politics. Because people came into the Green Politics movement from a wide variety of single-issue movements and political orientations, there was an initial assumption by some that their own preference, or favorite issue, should be at the center of the new politics. The challenge was to meld all those preferences into an American version of the already-existing international Green vision of an eco-social politics, which included well-thought-out Green models for the economy, governance, education, healthcare, and more. The debates over various options took place not only in Green meetings and conferences but also in numerous grassroots publications that sprang up.

Among the questions considered were these: How can ecological/relational wisdom (originally the first of the Ten Key Values) inform not only environmental issues but also economics and all issue areas – that is, to reject the old compartmentalization of issues and bring to light the interconnections? What kind of activism can best be accomplished by electing Greens to political office and what kinds by working with grassroots movements? How might each type be supportive of and accountable to the other? Would it be possible for Greens to enter the electoral arena and various governing bodies without being distorted politically by the dominance of the two-party duopoly with its unGreen values? How can we avoid the corruption of money in politics (besides refusing any corporate donations for Green candidates' electoral campaigns) – and how might we participate in the system while seeking to transform it? What would it mean to bring Green values to bear on a rethinking of leadership, authority, and community in our movement and beyond?

## First National Green Gathering – Amherst, MA, 1987

### **BUILDING THE GREEN MOVEMENT**



### **A National Conference for a New Politics**

July 2-7, 1987

Hampshire College  
Amherst, Massachusetts

Sponsored by the  
Committees of Correspondence

The first national Green Politics gathering was held in July 1987 at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA, with the theme “Building the Green Movement—A National Conference for a New Politics.” The conference brochure stated, “We invite all Greens and activists in kindred social change movements to participate in this educational conference. We are not gathering to make decisions for the Green movement. Our purpose is education. It will be a chance for Greens and activists in kindred movements from across the land to meet, share perspectives, and learn from each other—and take what we learn back to our communities to put into practice.” Over 600 people attended most of the conference, but some estimates that included all short-time attendees put the total closer to 1500.

Featured speakers included Charlene Spretnak, Detroit-based social activist and feminist Grace Lee Boggs, Murray Bookchin of the Institute for Social Ecology, Wisconsin Green co-founder Walt Bresette, New Hampshire Green and Clamshell Alliance organizer Guy Chichester, California Green Danny Moses from Sierra Club Books, Maine Green Party co-founder John Rensenbrink, and eco-feminist Ynestra King. Workshops included a well-attended session on Independent Political Action. Other noted Greens in attendance included Dee Berry, Kathy Christensen, Greta Gaard, Gerald Goldfarb, Howie Hawkins, Phil Hill, Myra Levy, Roberto Mendoza, Lorna Salzman, Brian Tokar, and Nancy Vogl. Among the activists from other movements was the celebrated author Grace Paley.



## Strategy & Policy Approaches in Key Areas (SPAKA)

After the Amherst gathering, focus shifted to developing a set of policy approaches based upon the Ten Key Values, which might further define and unite U.S. Greens. At the Inter-Regional Committee (IC) meeting held in Kansas City in August 1987, John Rensenbrink (ME) and *Green Letter* newsletter editor Margo Adair (CA) were selected to be principal coordinators of what would come to be called the SPAKA process: Strategy and Policy Approaches in Key Areas. According to Adair and Rensenbrink, “SPAKA was to create a participatory process to formulate a Green Program for the U.S. — to create an identity.” Why a participatory process? “Democracy is not about deciding if you support this or that person to do politics for you. True democracy is creating policy collectively.” The first step was a call for topics, which went out to all the Green locals, as well as to many kindred organizations and individuals. Over the next two years, Green locals and others submitted 190 position papers — or SPAKAS — from the grassroots. The Merrymeeting Greens of Maine, a Green local acting on behalf of the working group, classified the submissions into 19 key issue areas: Energy, Forest and Forestry, Life Forms, Materials Use and Waste Management, Water, Air Quality, General Economic Analysis, Finance, Land Use, Politics, Social Justice, Eco-Philosophy, Spirituality, Education, Food and Agriculture, Health, Peace and Non-violence, Community Organizing, and Strategy. The category Strategy was deliberately added to pose the prospect that the desired aim of the project was an actual Platform for a political party — beyond a mere Program.

These issue discussions helped Greens think in terms of an electorally active Green political party. Although the Greens would have to struggle for many years against efforts by some members who opposed any Green electoral political party, with each step of the way toward the goal of "becoming and being" a political party the process became clearer. The 1980s Green Politics activism continued to push forward toward what would become, in the mid- to late 1990s, a robust political party. Obstacles were overcome, and this progress was assisted by the SPAKA envisioning of what could be and should be. The SPAKA process and organizing work gave impetus to local Green groups throughout the country and, although it did not ultimately arrive at a national platform — which occurred in a separate process from 1995 through 2000 — it illuminated future possibilities that a national party could compete with the two-party duopoly in the United States.

## Greening the West – 1988, near San Francisco



Green Politics groups had been forming in California since December 1984, when Charlene Spretnak organized the first meeting, in San Francisco. On September 30–October 2, 1988, a western regional Green gathering entitled **Greening the West** was held in a redwood park one hour south of San Francisco. It was hosted by the Northern California Greens, a regional affiliate of the Green Committees of Correspondence. The planning group was composed of Bay Area Greens Danny Moses, Greg Jan, Richard Gustafson, and Jess Shoup. More than 1,000 people attended. Speakers included Margot Adair; *Planet Drum* editor Peter Berg; Sierra Club Books founder David Brower; *Ecotopia* author Ernest Callenbach; pioneering bioregional philosopher Ray Dasmann; Fritjof Capra (who co-authored *Green Politics* with Charlene Spretnak); *Deep Ecology* author Bill Devall; eco-philosopher Joanna Macy; Jerry Mander (author of *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*); Los Angeles Eco-Home founder Julia Russell; Charlene Spretnak; and ecofeminist Starhawk.

The conference featured a workshop entitled “Towards a Green Party of the West: Local and Regional Electoral Strategies,” Along with the formation of the Maine Green Party in 1984, this was an early stepping-stone in the development of U.S. Green electoral politics. Facilitated by Moses (who would be the California Green Party’s candidate for Lt. Governor in 1994), some 150 people attended the workshop and moved ahead with forming a Green Party of the West, “a network to facilitate campaigns for initiatives, referendums, and local independent Green candidates.” That network would grow and help form the nucleus for the founding of the Green Party of California 15 months later.

## Second National Green Gathering – Eugene, OR, 1989



The second time the Greens met nationally was for the **Green Program Gathering**, which was held on June 21–25, 1989, in Eugene. The purpose was to develop a Green political platform through the SPAKA process. Organizers of the Eugene Gathering included Jeff Land and Irene Diamond. The Gathering was attended by reporters and received unprecedented coverage from the *LA Weekly*, *Mother Jones*, *New Age Journal*, *New Options*, *Pacific News Service*, *Pacifica Radio*, *Utne Reader*, and *Z Magazine*, as well as a substantial write-up in *New Options*.

Working groups were formed to focus on and synthesize input in each of 19 issue areas that had been identified by the Merrymeeting Greens of Maine. Concurrently, the Green CoC local in Eugene produced a daily newspaper entitled *Green Tidings*, which reported on the Gathering and contained a daily report on all changes in the issue areas so that delegates could follow the process. After three days input and revision within the working groups, the plenary session on Saturday was devoted to reports from each, with decision-making reserved for Sunday. This provided the working groups with one more chance to receive input and revise their documents, which many did. On Sunday, policy approaches in all policy areas either received consensus or at least the approval of 80 percent of the delegates. Those SPAKA approaches were then published in *Green Letter* and sent back to the locals for an additional year of review and more input. Final final approval set for Green Gathering 1990 in Estes Park, CO. After Eugene, Christa Slaton of Alabama became the SPAKA coordinator and began preparations for the Estes Park conference.

## **The Other Major Focus of the Eugene Gathering: Electoral Strategy**

Well-attended daytime workshops on Thursday and Friday focused on electoral strategy and were followed by very lively discussions and debates at night. The daytime strategy sessions were oriented towards building state political parties, while the nightly Left Green-sponsored marathon sessions were oriented towards building a non-party, politically organized movement. The strategy sessions went so far as discussion running a Green presidential candidate, while for the Left Green members the goal of building an electorally engaged party was left open, which reflected the divergent views of many in the group. After Eugene, the Politics Working Group of the Green Committees of Correspondence issued a statement encouraging Green electoral activity. It recommended that “Greens begin running candidates at the local level and only proceed to the state and then to the national level when there were a substantial number of Green officeholders at the level immediately below.”

This directive was followed by a successful proposal at the Inter-Regional Committee (IC) meeting in Washington, DC, in October 1989, to form a Working Group on Electoral Action. Authored by Merrymeeting Greens (ME) John Rensenbrink and Matt Tilly, the proposal needed a two-thirds vote. After heated discussion and with the outcome possibly in doubt, the proposal was brought to a tense vote and received over 90% approval. Then, even more boldly and controversially, the Working Group proceeded at the IC meeting in San Diego in March 1990 to form a national Green Party Organizing Committee. There the 15 co-signers stated: “The relationship of this new group to the IC and the GCOC was carefully discussed. The following point was agreed upon, ‘that we consider ourselves a cooperating organization but autonomous from the IC and GCOC.’”

## Early State Party Ballot Qualification Efforts and Candidacies

At the same time that this discussion was taking place, individual state-by-state ballot qualification efforts were underway nationally.

On February 4, 1990, the Green Party of California (GPCA) was founded at a meeting at California State University, Sacramento. In order to qualify with the California Secretary of State for the statewide ballot, the new party would have to convince at least 78,992 Californians to change their voter register to Green Party. At the meeting 27 Green locals voted in favor of forming a state party, and three stood aside. Other Greens stayed home in protest, arguing that party formation was premature and could co-opt Green values, ultimately undermining the long-term viability of the Green movement.

This conflict came to a head at the GPCA's second statewide meeting, which was held at Los Angeles Community College on March 25-26, 1990, where anti-party "movement" Greens came out in force. While many "movement" Greens wanted the party to be "accountable" to the movement, the reality was that functionally and legally, the new Green Party of California would be made up and structurally accountable only to its registered members; it would have no structural connection to the Green Committees of Correspondence (GCoC).

The strong debates over party formation pushed back much of the weekend's written agenda. Ultimately delegates continued the meeting nearby at Julia Russell's Eco-Home on Sunday evening to conclude the weekend's business. The debates at this gathering presaged the upcoming national debate and a split within the Greens nationally between the majority favoring a party structure and a minority, led by the Left-Green Network, favoring a "movement" structure with rules/processes/mandates that would be set up to oversee any and all electoral activity. The latter would prove to be unpopular and unworkable. The idea of "accountability" to the Ten Key Values again served as a consensus commitment, but over time it was demonstrated that the structure of member-oversight set above Green campaigns and candidates and state parties was not a structure that worked. Grievances grew, and many Greens dropped out. The Greens in California went through these debates and provided models of what to do and not do to be successful.

Over the next two years, the heated debate over electoral activism became self-selecting, with those interested in party building becoming involved in the statewide voter registration drive. Mindy Lorenz provided especially effective leadership in that effort. Ultimately the ballot qualification effort succeeded, with over 103,000 Californians marking Green Party as their party affiliation on their voter registration card by the deadline of December 31, 1991.

In Alaska, Green Jim Sykes received 3.4 percent of the vote for Governor in November 1990, qualifying the Green Party there for ongoing ballot status as well, while California's Mindy Lorenz received an impressive 1% as a write-in candidate for U.S. Congress in Ventura/Santa Barbara counties. Also in Alaska, Kelly Weaverling, running as a Green, was elected Mayor of Cordova in

1991.

Between 1985 and 1989 a total of 25 U.S. Greens ran for local office, mostly in rural Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Maine, and New Haven, CT, with seven elected. In 1990-1991, 37 Greens ran for office nationwide, with 17 elected, including six in California.

## Third National Green Gathering – Estes Park, CO, 1990



Christa Slaton, Margo Adair, and John Rensenbrink prepared intensively for the annual Green gathering in Estes Park, Colorado, in October 1990. At stake was whether the SPAKA program, which had been under development for two full years, would now be approved.

During the year, there had been strong negative criticisms of the SPAKA program, coming mainly from members of the Left Green Network (LGN). They asserted that not enough time had been allocated for a thorough review, that the economics plank was too weak, and that a sharper rejection of capitalism was needed, along with an articulation of socialist principles. Other Greens called for diverse economic program, including the Green model of developing community-based and regionally based economics, that would be relevant to a Green party that has a broad base support.

Many Greens felt that the LGN operated with a "vanguard mentality," one example being their attempt to bring certain Green electoral work under their LGN "mandates" (which had roots in the anarchist writings of Murray Bookchin and other "movement" thought). LGN had formed in 1987-88, led by Howie Hawkins of the Institute for Social Ecology, and exerted steady and increasing pressure to impose their sense of anarchist/left-centered politics onto the efforts to form a Green political organization.

As the Estes Park convention got underway, the many workshops, proceeded surprisingly smoothly. Each issue area was given its own final breakout session. The workshop dealing with the economy had

been expected to produce explosions, but differences were ironed out.

In the general assembly, however, voices critical of the leadership of SPAKA, some of it expressed in a pointedly aggressive manner, tore at the otherwise temperate demeanor of Christa Slaton. With considerable justification, she perceived *ad hominem* attacks on her and her leadership as a woman. Speaking to the Assembly, she named these prejudicial attacks, declared her resignation, and left the room and the Green party. This shocked everyone deeply. It was a clear demonstration of what was becoming a persistent problem within the Greens: the strong attacks, usually by the LGN faction, against Green leadership and the harsh criticisms (more often against women than men) had become repeated, tactical behavior. Not only were Greens leaving the party, but many new Greens came in, found themselves displeased with the aggressive behavior, and left.

Slaton's hard and dedicated work as the SPAKA Program Chair during the previous year succeeded in producing a SPAKA document was approved resoundingly. It would not go on to become a national platform, but again it succeeded in moving the idea of a national party forward.

The next day Danny Moses delivered a moving speech urging Greens to shape up and grow up. He was graceful and wise in his manner and mode of speech. This helped settle the spirits among the participants to some degree and shifted the group energy in constructive directions. Following his speech, a very large number of Greens responded to a call by John Rensenbrink for an impromptu discussion on Green Party building and running candidates. The mountain air discussion on the big lawn was animated. Though no decisions could be taken, it was unmistakably evident that there were now great expectations for action to move forward to establishing strong state parties and the resolute running of Green Party candidates at all levels. A minority group, however, stuck to their belief that electoral politics was corrupt and that a "movement" cadre would need to be set up to oversee electoral candidates.

To follow up, the Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC) that day made plans for a conference to take place in Boston in February 1991. Also, in the closing hours of the three-day conference, Dee Berry led a planning session for a meeting to take place shortly after the Estes Park gathering. The meeting that ensued was held in a conference center near **Kansas City**. It was composed of both "party first" and "movement first" leaders. Spirits were high. They came up with a bicameral structure for the new national Green Party, one branch composed of state-based political party representatives, the other branch composed of representatives of movement groups. The two branches would have equal power. Provision was made for leaders of both branches to meet in conferences to work out differences between the two branches. The meeting adjourned with the participants in full expectation that this plan would be adopted. It seemed to them a self-evident solution to a vexing issue. The plan was sent to the locals. Though a clear majority favored the plan, it needed a two-thirds vote to pass, and that did not happen. Members of the Left Green group led by Howie Hawkins lobbied against the plan – and it did not help that the existing state Green parties had no vote. It became clear in April 1991 that the plan had failed.



These events spurred a momentum toward party building. It appeared that a huge step toward electoral politics and state party building had been taken. But big hurdles remained – or now became more visible. Discussions turned to what kind of national Green Party the Greens would create and what its structure would be like? In the following years, four issues in particular threatened to capsize the project in midstream. These four issues overlapped with one another.

One issue was whether the national party would be based primarily on local Green groups or primarily on state parties. Embedded in this issue was another: whether the voting for national offices would be controlled by dues-paying activists based in local groups or by Greens in local and state Green parties, voting in their capacity as citizens and not as dues-paying activists. A third issue was the relation of movement entities and party entities, especially the now rapidly forming state Green Parties. A fourth issue was the treatment by some in the party towards others: bullying, insulting language, brow beating, head-tripping, innuendos and vituperative speech, constantly demanding the last word, and a non-listening, and a vanguard attitude and behavior. Women in particular were the targets of this strategic deployment of words and body language – and were fighting back.

## Green Party Organizing Committee – Boston, February 8-9,1991

The Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC) met in Boston in February 1991. Convinced that the growing fervor for a Green political party necessitated organizational structures that embraced it, they sought a new national structure balancing electoral and non-electoral movement work and strategies. This meant altering the power structure of the Green Committees of Correspondence, by providing direct representation for the new and growing number of state Green Parties.

During 1990, over 100 Greens around the country affiliated as individuals with the GPOC. Ken Gjemere of Dallas took on the task of Recording Secretary. Sadly, he suffered a stroke in August 1990. Phil Rose of Long Island, New York, took up the position and shouldered its tasks, including the publication of a newsletter for GPOC. The first issue of *Green Paper* was published in January 1991.

Earlier, on November 7, 1990, Phil Rose had sent a letter of invitation to all the individual Greens who had affiliated with the GPOC. The letter asked them to confer with other affiliated members of GPOC in their region to choose a person to go to the Boston meeting in February. The aim was to have a small group of about 15 to 20 people meet for two days to set up the bare bones of a national electorally active national Green Party and to propose a direction for the future. A limit was put of two attendees per state, though California, being the largest state and more electorally active than other states, except Maine, was granted four. The attendees included Mindy Lorenz, Debra Magnuson, Ross Mirkarimi, and Martha Fellows (CA); Barbara Rodgers-Hendricks (FL); Betty Zisk (MA); Dee Berry and Ben Kjelshus (MO); Sulaiman Mahdi, (Atlanta); Native Americans Medicine Story and Quiet Spirit; John Goeke, (PA); Phil Rose, (NY); Greg Gerritt and John Rensenbrink (ME); Blair Bobier (OR); Tony Affigne, (RI); Janette Taylor (Colorado); Charles Betz (MN) and Ron Natoli (NH).

The two-day meeting began with a brainstorming session on GPOC needs and possibilities. The group formed an Organizing Committee with a mandate to contact all the local and state Green groups and all local GPOCs, develop an inventory, and begin the circulation of mutual-aid ideas and materials. The group also formed a Steering Committee composed of Barbara Ann Rodgers-Hendricks (FL), Sulaiman Mahdi (GA), Phil Rose (NY), John Rensenbrink (ME), Ben Kjelshus (MO), Mindy Lorenz (CA), and Blair Bobier (OR). On Saturday, representatives from states and locals reported on their experience of Green candidates and party organizing. Later in the afternoon, the group created a Liaison Committee to make contact with Ron Daniels, an African American who would be running for President of the United States in 1992 as an Independent, backed by several state Green Parties. At the final session, the group set up a Committee on Program and Publicity, coordinated by Janette Taylor (CO) and Tony Affigne (RI).

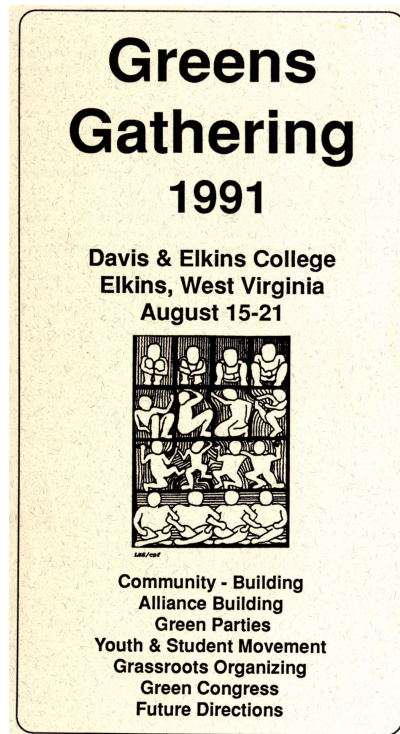
The GPOC meeting did not include Howie Hawkins (NY) or Boston Green Mitch Channelis, though they pushed to attend in the days just before the meeting. Hawkins, together with Guy Chichester (NH), presented themselves at the doorway, demanding to be seated. They were turned back. They were not affiliated with the GPOC and in that sense were not eligible to attend: the rules of invitation had been set in November 1990, limiting participants to those who were affiliated with GPOC. In fact, 11 Greens

who were affiliated had not been able to attend because of limits of space and accommodations. Further to the organizers' point was that Hawkins had often publicly stated his criticism of and rejection of the work and actions of the GPOC. The organizers assumed, with good reason, that Hawkins would immerse the meeting in the already painfully divisive "party versus movement" debate – and that Channelis would insist on including life-style and New Age issues of people who had only a marginal interest, or no interest at all, in Green electoral politics. These exclusions predictably produced swift opposition from the Left Green Network, as well as from others who were more interested in movement building than with electoral politics -- an opposition which reverberated six months later as blowback at Greens Gathering '91.

Yet the Green Party Organizing Committee achieved its primary aim: to continue to build momentum for an electorally engaged new national Green Party composed of state Green Parties. Toward this end, the GPOC produced a newsletter highlighting Greens running for office and Green state ballot-access drives. They were beginning to feel as if they had reached a new level, a clear grounding for a new and bona fide political party, a Green one.

## Fourth National Green Gathering – Elkins, WV, 1991

### The Creation of Greens/Green Party USA (G/GPUSA)



The “Party versus Movement” debate was out in full force again at the fourth Greens national gathering, held in August 1991 in Elkins, West Virginia. Members of the Left Green Network and other Greens who were agitated about the momentum of the state party-based electoral direction of the GPOC organized and attended in large numbers. They crashed the pre-gathering meetings of the GPOC and stymied its state and local party discussions, plans, and organizing efforts.

Also heated was the session at Elkins in which many Green women charged the Left Green Network men with having harassed and driven out of the Greens a list of women leaders they named.

The four-day conference produced a restructuring of the Green Committees of Correspondence. In the restructured body the Green movement and Green Party would operate as part of a single organization. The Green Party Organizing Committee was dissolved and its tasks were transferred to a less prominent and less important “Working Group.” **The Greens/Green Party of the United States (Greens/GPUSA)** was chosen as the name of the new organization. A Greens press conference broadcast on C-SPAN was held soon after in Washington, DC to announce the new organization,

featuring Charles Betz (Greens/GPUSA Coordinating Committee member), New York Left Green Howie Hawkins, and Joni Whitmore (Chair, Green Party of Alaska), as well as Hilda Mason of the DC Statehood Party.

In the aftermath of the Elkins gathering, the news spread among grassroots Greens that the Left Green Network faction (Hawkins, Betts, et al.) had finally gained control of the governing committee (now called the Green Council) of the national Green organization. At the same time, news traveled that there was some structural latitude for the formation of state-level Green parties to go forward, even though the major instrument for accomplishing this had been reduced to subordinate status as a working group in the new G/GPUSA structure. (A few months later even that pro-party working group would be abolished by the Green Council.) The combination of these two developments at Elkins led to a highly energized eruption of Green state party building across the country, as well as a general turning away from G/GPUSA among large numbers of Greens.

## Green Politics Network – 1992

As the party-building momentum continued to grow after Elkins, many of those Greens felt the need to create a structural home for this effort. Feeling their passion for a state-based Green Party stymied and deflected, their organ Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC) summarily dissolved, and smarting from verbal assaults from Left Green partisans, many former GPOC members and others gathered in March 1992 to found the Green Politics Network (GPN).

Meeting over six days at the Hartland Center in Kansas City, GPN founders included Mindy Lorenz (CA), John Rensenbrink (ME) Barbara Rodgers Hendricks (FL), Suleiman Mahdi, (Georgia), Betty Zisk (MA), Dee Berry and Ben Kjelshus (MO), Tony Affigne and Greg Gerritt (RI), Blair Bobier (OR), Annie Goeke and Tom Linzey (PA), and Sue Conti (VA).

The founders identified four major themes for action: (1) to facilitate as rapidly as possible the creation of a citizen/voter-based Green Party of autonomous state Green Parties (calling it the Confederation of Independent State Green Parties); (2) to pioneer a Third Party Coalition Project (or “Third Force”), a goal that stemmed from the presence during the last two days of the conference of many kindred groups and organizations who had been invited to attend; (3) to create a protection zone against abusive behavior based on the principle and conviction that “how we treat each other is as important as achieving our goals”; and (4) to “create space for people to connect with the spiritual universe.”

Between 1994 and 1996 GPN members organized a series of conferences designed to lead to a 1996 presidential candidacy: Third Parties '94 (Oakland, June 1994); Third Parties '96 (Washington, DC, June 1995); Third Parties '96 (Boulder, October 1995); and Third Parties '96 (Washington, DC, January 1996). GPN members would play key organizing roles in establishing the Draft Nader Clearinghouse in 1996 under the leadership of Linda Martin.

## **Fifth National Green Gathering – Minneapolis, 1992**

At the Greens Gathering at Augsburg College in Minneapolis in July 1992, tensions surfaced over whether the new Greens/GPUSA structure fairly represented state Green Parties in states where one registers to vote by political party. For example, someone could be a Green Party member and have representation in a state party simply by registering to vote and checking Green Party as his or her party affiliation in that state – but within the Greens/GPUSA, that same Green Party member would not have representation unless they also paid annual dues to the G/GPUSA, even if their state party was affiliated with the G/GPUSA. A clear example of this situation was the Green Party of California, which by that time had over 35,000 registered members but only a few dozen G/GPUSA dues-paying members.

This was not a new issue. The 1991 Greens Gathering in Elkins had established a Structural Working Group tasked with examining what an eventual Green Party might look like. They were to present their report to Greens Gathering '92 in Minnesota. The Working Group Secretary was Greg Gerritt (ME), the first Green to run for a State Legislature, in 1986. Gerritt sought a foundation for the Green Party in state political parties, open to all party members under state law. The Gerritt committee's report, with contributions from six authors, was not received favorably within the Greens/GPUSA, whose idea of a structure for the national Greens was based upon dues-paying membership in Green locals. Eventually the G/GPUSA Green Council abolished the Working Group.

The rift over this – along with the fact that more Greens were starting state parties and thus saw less value in a national organization in which they had no representation – meant that attendance at the next two G/GPUSA Green Gatherings dropped radically. Those meetings were held in Syracuse, NY (August 1993) and Boise, ID (July 1994).

## **Electoral Success in 1992 and Post-Election Conferences – in Santa Monica and at Bowdoin College, February 1993**

1992 was the first year Greens ran in large numbers across the United States, fielding 93 candidates in 13 states, including 44 in California. Twenty Greens won their races, including 11 in California. Prior to 1992, the most Green candidates running in a single year had been 21 in 1990, with nine victories.

The highest office won in 1992 was by Keiko Bonk of Hawai'i, who also became the first U.S. Green elected to a partisan office, when she was elected to the nine-member County Council on the Big Island of Hawai'i. Also in Hawai'i, Linda Martin received 49,921 votes (13.7% of the vote) for U.S. Senator, still an all-time high for a U.S. Green running for the U.S. Senate.

Also in November 1992 Dona Spring was elected to the Berkeley, California City Council. Spring would be re-elected repeatedly, serving almost 16 years on the City Council – the fourth-longest-serving Green office holder ever.

During 1992 four state Green Parties achieved ballot status: in Arizona, California, Hawai'i, and New Mexico. They joined the Green Party of Alaska, which had become the first in 1990.

### **Green Parties of the West Conference – Santa Monica**

In mid-February 1993, 100 Green Party candidates and other party activists gathered in Santa Monica for the [Green Parties of the West conference](#). They came primarily from states where the Greens had already attained statewide ballot status: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, and New Mexico. A major emphasis was on being a credible political party and winning races. The meeting had none of the seemingly endless remonstrances or resistance of people who wanted to question the validity of whether Greens should be in electoral politics at all. The meeting was described by its chief organizer Mike Feinstein as an incredible breath of fresh air for those who want to seriously pursue Green electoral strategies.

Conference presenters featured candidates in local races: Keiko Bonk-Abrahamson (HI), Steve Saint (CA), Kelly Weaverling (AK), and Jack Strasbourg (AR); in state races: Carolyn Campbell (AZ) and Kent Smith (CA); and in Congressional races: Blasé Bonpane (CA), Mindy Lorenz (CA), and Linda Martin (HI). Two speakers talked about Alliance Building: David Allberg (CA) and Lisa Duran (CA). Three speakers focused on Strategy: Ira Rohter (HI), Cris Moore (NM), and Ross Mirkarimi (CA).



## **Bowdoin College Conference**

The second conference, **Doing It the Grassroots Way**, took place at Bowdoin College in Maine, later in February 1993. It was convened by John Rensenbrink of the Maine Green Party. As a Bowdoin professor, he and several student leaders organized a coalition of Bowdoin student groups to formally sponsor and financially support the conference. Even the President of the College chipped in.

The conference featured several speeches, including a rousing talk by Tony Affigne of Rhode Island on grassroots, citizen-centered, political organizing. There were illustrative workshops on how to do effective election campaigns and on what mistakes to avoid, as well as ideas and plans for “getting the word out” throughout the country about Green electoral challenges and prospects, putting the emphasis on a steady grassroots politics. In addition, participants celebrated the campaigns in the 1992 elections run by three prominent participants at the conference: the elected Green Party Mayor of Cordova, Alaska, Kelly Weaverling; Jonathan Carter of Maine, whose strong showing of 11% in the second Congressional District in 1992 put Maine’s nascent Green Party on the map; and Linda Martin, whose startling 13.7% of the vote in Hawaii’s U.S. Senate race helped to spur Green electoral activity throughout the country.

Of further note, the conference was joined by Sam Smith of the *Progressive Review* in Washington, DC; by Mike Feinstein of the California Green Party, who had just helped organize a very successful “Green Parties of the West” conference; by representatives of the Reform Party; by Rob Daniels’ “Campaign for a New Tomorrow”; and by the Center for Voting and Democracy, a national organization headed by Rob Richie dedicated to promoting Instant Run-off Voting, Ranked Choice Voting, proportional representation, and electoral reforms supported by many Greens through the Center’s FairVote organizing work.

The leaders of the Bowdoin conference reflected that for the first time they could start with the assumption that Greens must be engaged in politics and no longer embroil themselves in what seemed endless rhetoric about its precise relationship to the rest of the Green movement. For them it was also an intimation of a growing consciousness that far more than “winning office” was at stake: in addition to learning the ropes of campaigning, they needed to examine and question the quality of politics itself. Overall, it became increasingly evident that Greens in many states were acting on their own in pursuit of a Green politics bent on competing electorally with the two major parties for public office.

## 1995 – A Watershed Year for Green Party Development: The Third Parties '96 Conference, and the Nader Factor

Why a watershed year? Two streams of Green organizing joined together to form a new, powerful organizing tide, which was quickly joined by many state Green parties. The Maine Greens and New Mexico Greens were prime movers, as were California Greens, joined by Greens in Rhode Island, Connecticut, DC, and many other states who envisioned a different type of national Green organization and a new direction for the formation of a national Green Party.

The Green Politics Network team of Tony Affigne, Hank Chapot, Linda Martin, John Rensenbrink, and Sam Smith began organizing national third-party get-togethers in Washington, DC (June 1995) and Boulder (November 1995).

The Green Politics Network (GPN) convened a **Third Parties '96** conference in June 1995 at George Washington University, Washington, DC. It was carried by CNN. For a four-day weekend, they brought together 27 parties and kindred organizations. Participants included representatives of the Libertarian Party, Reform Party, New Party, Natural Law Party, Labor Party, Socialist Party, and Green Party. The 100-plus participants were tasked with looking for things they had in common rather than dwelling on things that would keep them apart.

The conference produced a document, *The Common Ground Declaration*. Seventeen of the items in this declaration were agreed upon unanimously; over a dozen others that received more than 60% approval. Here are 10 of the 17 unanimously approved statements:

*We support proportional representation.*

*We support campaign finance reform to provide a level playing field in elections.*

*We believe that all economic activities should improve and protect the health of the earth, while promoting the happiness and prosperity of its inhabitants.*

*We must end corporate welfare.*

*We would encourage, through economic measures and education, the practices of source reduction, reuse, and recycling, and we advocate the elimination of toxic, nuclear, and other environmentally harmful substances.*

*We oppose race and class distinctions in exposure to environmental hazards in communities and*

*workplaces, including opposition to the siting of toxic waste facilities, employment in hazardous industries, and in the location of energy and mining facilities.*

*We support people's right to control their own sexual and reproductive lives.*

*We would cut military expenditures dramatically AND provide for displaced workers.*

*We believe that economic decisions should be made democratically, with participation by all affected workers, communities, and consumers.*

*We support the maximum empowerment of people in their communities, consistent with fairness, social responsibility and human rights, to meet local needs, and to defend those communities*

The success at finding this level and range of agreement among a broad range of alternative parties intensified the search for a third party presidential candidate for 1996. Ralph Nader was being looked to more and more as a likely choice as the summer and fall of 1995 came on apace.

## National Green Gathering '95 – Albuquerque

The Green Party in New Mexico in 1993 and 1994 achieved remarkable growth. In 1994, Greens in New Mexico experienced electoral success -- electing Cris Moore to the Santa Fe City Council and advancing many progressive proposals in northern New Mexico.

New Mexico Green Abraham Guttman, a founder of the state party, approached Steve Schmidt from Santa Fe, who had been a senior adviser to Jerry Brown's presidential campaign and had worked on the campaign's platform, which included many Green-aligned policies and "Rainbow Coalition" positions. Guttman wanted Schmidt and Roberto Mondragon, a well-regarded NM political and cultural figure, to join the Green Party and run for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor offices. Abraham also sought to join local organizing with state and national organizing. The resulting campaign and strategy was successful: the combination of Roberto Mondragon and Steven Schmidt received over 10% of the vote for their Governor/Lt. Governor ticket in 1994 and were in most of the televised debates. A slate of Green candidates received statewide media coverage, among them Lorenzo Garcia, the Green candidate for State Treasurer, who received 32% of the vote. The first New Mexico Green Party platform, whose drafting process was led by Schmidt, was highlighted in local and statewide press and in debates. The campaign election results turned the party, under the state's election law, into the first independent party to become a "major party." The media called the campaign one of the most successful state campaigns in the United States by an independent party in decades.

Buoyed by their success providing an example to Greens across the country, New Mexico Greens used their political capital to propose and then organize the **National Green Gathering of 1995**, held on July 27-30th. A follow-on strategy based on the NM model was written by Steve Schmidt, endorsed by the NMGP, and carried to California Greens for support. The aim was a national, multi-state organizing campaign that would build on local state-party success in New Mexico, using the model of a "serious, credible, national platform-based" campaign to build an effective Green Party and political voice.

After two years of greatly reduced attendance at Green Gatherings '93 and '94 -- owing to divisions and factional fights involving the Left-Green leadership of G/GPUSA -- the New Mexico Greens brought Greens together from all factions to the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque in 1995. A sign of the times was that G/GPUSA was invited as one of many groups invited to the Gathering, a significant change from their assumption that they were the national umbrella organization. Mike Feinstein followed this same independent arrangement the following year when he convened the Green Gathering in Los Angeles, the Green presidential nominating convention that nominated Nader. These two precedents paved the way for the creation of the Association of State Green Parties in mid-November 1996, independently of G/GPUSA.

At the Albuquerque gathering, Steven Schmidt emerged as a major mover and shaker. He urged the Greens -- in their expectations for themselves and for their party -- to create a "serious, credible, platform-based" party. Schmidt, with a background in environmental policymaking going back to the 1960s, focused on the Ten Key Values as the basis from which a Green platform could and should be

created. The platform of the NMGP turned out to be particularly significant because it was the foundation for what grew into the first platform of the national Green Party. This was accomplished through ongoing work by Schmidt, Holle Brian, and others after Schmidt registered gp.org and began a national forum for "3Ds" -- discussion, debate, and decision-making, with wide-reaching circles of support.

Prior to the Green Gathering '95 in Albuquerque, Schmidt wrote a "40-State Green Organizing Plan." The aim was to build upon and export the "serious, credible, and platform-based approach" of the New Mexico Greens in 1994. He and Mike Feinstein and Greg Jan of the California Greens hoped to attract a national Green presidential candidate in 1996 and to work toward an electorally based national Green Party. According to their proposal, reasons to take this step were many, including a recent *Times Mirror* poll showing that 57 percent of respondents supported the idea of a third party. Other possible contenders for that role (the New Party, the Labor Party Advocates) had not tried to organize nationally and, organizationally speaking, were relatively recent efforts. In contrast, the Greens had a ten-year history of activism and had already gained experience running candidates at the local, county, and state levels. If any progressive alternative political party was going to step into the vacuum created by the neoliberal shift of the Democrats, especially after the passage of both GATT and NAFTA under the Clinton administration, the Greens were the most prepared.

The plan presented in Albuquerque was supported by the Greens. It was decided that the Green Gathering '96 would be held in Los Angeles at UCLA, with preparations to be undertaken by the NM and California Greens initially. A few months after the Albuquerque gathering, the Green Party of California (GPCA) adopted a "receptive" process to place a candidate on its March 1996 presidential primary ballot, should a suitable candidate appear. In summary, many groups, organizations, and programmatic initiatives soon were moving towards exciting possibilities for a serious, credible, and platform-based progressive political alternative. It was also becoming clearer by the day that it would be a Green political alternative—indeed, a full-fledged Green Political Party. It should be noted that both the 40-State Organizing Effort and the Third Parties organizing effort were separate and distinct from GPUSA's organization, program, rules, and mandates.

Complementing the efforts of Greens at the national gathering in Albuquerque, Rob Hager, another NM Green and an investigative lawyer and friend of Ralph Nader, contacted Linda Martin as a result of the Third Parties '96 conference in June and its Common Ground Declaration. He had begun to think that Ralph Nader might be persuaded to run for President. During that summer and fall he bent his efforts in that direction. He conferred with Mike Feinstein and other California Green Party leaders in September.

All these efforts converged in stimulating Ralph Nader to agree in late November 1995 to run for president in California's Green Party primary in June 1996. He would make the same commitment in Maine in January 1996 to the Maine Green Party – and in other states on a state-by-state basis during the ensuing year. At the culminating Third Parties '96 conference in Washington, DC in January 1996, and in spite of an immense blizzard that blanketed the city, the Green Politics Network team and others (working the phones from Sam and Cathy Smith's house in Georgetown) laid the groundwork for a national Nader for President Clearinghouse to be located in Washington, DC. Linda Martin would take the lead. She and her volunteers would soon be in communication with the 40 State Parties' project of

Feinstein, Schmidt, and Jan.

## **First Green Presidential Nominating Convention – UCLA, 1996; Nader’s 1996 Campaign for President as the Green Party Candidate**

In mid-October 1995, Ralph Nader told the *Chicago Tribune* he was considering being on the California ballot. He would run, he said, because of President Clinton’s vacillation on deregulatory measures covering securities fraud, telecommunications, legal services, and welfare. Seizing the moment, Feinstein, Greg Jan (CA), and Nader aide Rob Hager began negotiating to make it happen in California. Nader did not want to self-declare and, since the Green Party of California only had a receptive process, Feinstein and Jan drafted a letter of invitation to Nader that would be signed by 47 progressive leaders from across the state, demonstrating a breadth of support to which Nader could then respond – which he did, freeing the GPCA to place him on its presidential primary ballot.

A similar process was unfolding in Maine. In January 1996, the Green Politics Network (GPN) set in motion a national campaign to elect Ralph Nader for president of the United States, called the Draft Nader Campaign. Linda Martin, formerly of the Hawaiian Green Party, now living in Virginia, became the de facto campaign manager for the Draft Nader effort.

Nader ultimately appeared on the general election ballot in 22 states and received 685,297 votes, or 0.7 percent of all votes cast. He ran a limited campaign with a self-imposed campaign-spending limit of \$5,000 (which allowed him to avoid being subject to the obligation to file campaign finance statements with the Federal Election Commission). He chose **Winona LaDuke** as his vice-presidential candidate.

Nader and La Duke were nominated at **the first ever Green presidential nominating convention**, held in Los Angeles at UCLA on August 20, 1996. There each state party who placed Nader on the ballot told their story, followed by a two-hour and twenty-minute acceptance speech by Nader. The speech was broadcast on C-SPAN and Pacifica Radio — the first time U.S. Greens had gained that kind of national exposure. During the campaign Linda Martin coordinated the Green Nader efforts among the Green state parties and groups, where Greens worked assiduously for Nader.

## Association of State Green Parties (ASGP) – 1996



The Nader '96 campaign clearly accelerated the development of Green state parties, with many new ballot lines as a result. A record 24 Greens won elections in 1996, out of Green 82 candidates nationwide, and the world's first Green City Council majority was elected in Arcata, CA.

During the Nader campaign, Linda Martin had developed nationwide contacts in the many state Green parties. In collaboration with leading members of the Green Politics Network, Martin invited her Green Party contacts to come to Middleburg, VA, ten days after the 2000 presidential election. The invitation stated that the explicit purpose of the meeting was not to discuss whether or not to form a national Green party by unifying the state Green Parties but to actually do it. (See *Driving Mr. Nader* by Linda Martin, Leopold Press, 1999.) Bert Garskoff (CT), John Rensenbrink (ME), Steven Schmidt (NM), Tony Affigne (RI), and Greg Gerritt (RI) each affirmed that their respective state Green Parties were supporting this call. They were acting as leaders in their respective state parties and as colleagues of Linda Martin in the Green Politics Network.

The turn-out was impressive. Sixty-two Greens from 30 states gathered in Middleburg, VA, over the weekend of November 16–17, 1996, to found the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP). The meeting was held at the historic Glen-Ora Farm where John Kennedy had had his weekend retreats during the early days of his administration (rented to the president by the mother of the host of the Green Party meeting and Nader '96 supporter, Elaine Broadhead). Green Party representatives from 13 states were the ASGP founding members. They approved an initial set of bylaws that set out the organization's purpose: to assist in the development of State Green Parties and create a legally structured national Green Party. Indeed, the Association of State Green Parties subsequently (in 2001) became the Green Party of the United States.



At the founding meeting of ASGP, Mike Feinstein proposed establishing a national newsletter, *Green Pages*. It was approved and remains to this day the newspaper of the Green Party of the United States.



Subsequent ASGP meetings took place in Portland, OR (April 5–6, 1997); Topsham, ME (October 3–5, 1997); Santa Fe, NM (April 24–26, 1998); Moodus, CT (June 5–6, 1999); and Hiawassee, GA (December 8–10, 2000). Ralph Nader appeared at the Moodus meeting in 1999 to talk about running for president in 2000.

From 1997 to 1999, as new state Green Parties continued to form, a highly competitive environment developed between the newly created but much larger ASGP and the Greens/GPUSA. However, it quickly became apparent that most state parties were opting to affiliate with the ASGP, as the number of “pro-party” Greens across the country was growing in voice and influence. By summer 1999 ASGP membership had grown to 32 states. At the same time multiple efforts within the Greens/GPUSA to reform its structure to be more “state-party-friendly” failed. Heading into the 2000 presidential election, the situation was far from resolved. Not only were their divisions into two camps between states but also within them.

Mike Feinstein felt that the competition between the two national Green Party organizations was holding back energy and focus, so he traveled east to meet with Howie Hawkins during a meeting of the Green Party of New York State in New Paltz, NY, in December 1999. There they crafted a Plan for a Single National Green Party, which became more generally known as the Feinstein/Hawkins Proposal. The plan sought to take advantage of the timing of the 2000 presidential campaign to create a single national Green Party from among the ASGP and G/GPUSA by Earth Day in April 2000. This plan was supported by most Greens in the ASGP, although many Greens opposed bringing in the

G/GPUSA group because their antagonistic anti-party efforts had seriously hindered Green Party growth for years. Within the Greens/GPUSA, the proposal received little support.

For a large portion of Greens, any attempt to work in cooperation with G/GPUSA came to an end when G/GPUSA “secretly” filed an application with the Federal Election Commission in 1996 claiming to be the “official” national Green Party and falsely listing many Green candidacies across the country that were actually the electoral work of ASGP state parties. Hank Chapot, of the California Green Party and a member of the Green Politics Network, alerted people in both camps to this action. G/GPUSA’s application was rejected by the FEC. The small number of G/GPUSA members who continue on today have an organization and program that is separate from the Green Party of the United States, and they have no legal status as a party or as a committee within GPUS.

## 2000 Presidential Candidate Outreach

In September 1998, the New Mexico Green Party proposed that an ASGP Presidential Exploratory Committee be established for the 2000 elections. The ASGP Coordinating Committee passed the proposal on October 30, 1998, and on December 20, 1998, the ASGP Steering Committee appointed a seven-person committee, chaired by David Cobb (TX). On February 22, 1999, the Committee sent a letter and a questionnaire to the following prospective presidential and vice presidential candidates, asking if they were interested in running on the Green Party ticket in 2000 and, if so, how they would envision conducting the campaign: Wendell Berry, Jerry Brown, Lester Brown, Noam Chomsky, Ron Daniels, Ron Dellums, Lani Guinier, Dan Hamburg, Woody Harrelson, Paul Hawken, Jim Hightower, Molly Ivins, Winona LaDuke, Bill McKibben, Cynthia McKinney, Carol Miller, Toni Morrison, Ralph Nader, Ron Ouellette (requested the questionnaire), John Robbins, and Jan Schlichtmann. On May 10 the committee also sent the letter and questionnaire to Harry Belafonte, Julian Bond, Joceyln Elders, Kurt Schmoke, Studs Terkel, Myrlie Evers-Williams, and General Lee Butler.

Brown, McKibben, Chomsky, Guinier, Hawken, Miller wrote back declining, but they each graciously thanked the ASGP for its outreach and offered sympathetic statements of support for the Green Party project. Nader replied:

If I seek the nomination – a decision that will not be made until next year – and receive that designation, I will pursue a dedicated and thorough campaign that meets the Federal Election Commission requirements. Such an active campaign will have the objective of strengthening our nation's democracy by strengthening the Green Party movement at the local, state and national levels; by emphasizing the problems of, and remedies for, the excessive concentration of corporate power and wealth in our country, by highlighting the important tools of democracy needed for the American people as voters/citizens, workers, consumers, taxpayers, and small savers/investors. If there are Greens who support my seeking the nomination, I encourage them to expand the number of volunteers and increase the time spent working to build the Green Party this year in order to advance the Party's "Key Values" and to increase the likelihood of ballot access in all fifty states.

## Green Party Presidential Nominating Convention 2000 and Nader 2000



The Association of State Green Parties nominated Ralph Nader and Winona LaDuke for president/vice-president at its June 23-25, 2000, presidential nominating convention in Denver. The convention was attended by over 300 voting delegates from 39 states. Nader and LaDuke were nominated with 92% of the vote, with the remainder being split evenly between Jello Biafra and Stephen Gaskin. Convention delegates also approved [the first national Green Party platform](#).

This document (which subsequently served as [the founding platform of the Green Party of the United States](#), in 2001) was based on the Ten Key Values and was the result of the platform process designed and led by Platform Committee Chair Steven Schmidt (NM). (The Left Green Network had composed their own version of a values statement, but Schmidt et al. did not draw from that document in writing the founding Green Party platform.) The first national Green Party platform was the result of the 1995 strategic plan presented at the Green National Gathering and intended to provide the basis of a national campaign. It did: Nader was one of the first to read the platform and declared in his first acceptance speech that the Green Platform he had in his hand was the reason he was running.

At a press conference on July 20, 2000, Nader stated, “The Green Party platform hands-down is the most thorough, justice-saturated platform of any political party platform of the day. Reminds me of some of the great platforms of many decades ago when parties – at least one – stood tall for the working people of this country.”

Jim Hightower was the keynote speaker at the Green Party presidential nominating convention. Other speakers included Manning Marable, Helen Caldicott, John Anderson, Ann Northrop, and Medea Benjamin, as well as representatives from Green Parties in other countries. Over 1200 people attended

the final nominating session, including representatives from Green Parties in 15 countries as well as from Green Party Federations of the Americas, Europe, and Africa.

The convention was a big success in bringing the Green Party message to millions of Americans who had never heard of it and demonstrated that the Green Party could be a viable alternative to the two-party duopoly.



The momentum of the Nader/LaDuke candidacy built on the protests in Seattle against the WTO in December 1999 – and from the streets of Philadelphia and Los Angeles during the R2K and D2K protests against Republican and Democratic Party conventions in the summer of 2000. Nader/LaDuke appeared on 44 state ballots in November 2000 and received 2,883,105 votes, 2.7 percent of all votes cast. This strong showing further accelerated the development of more state Green Parties and solidified the electoral orientation of the Green Party movement overall.

A record 286 Greens ran for public office in November 2000. Forty-six were elected, including a second Green City Council majority, this time in Sebastopol, CA.

## **The Boston Proposal – October 2000**

As for Green unity, the Feinstein/Hawkins plan was revisited and revised in October 2000, and ultimately renamed the Boston Agreement because it had been negotiated in Boston in the days before the first 2000 presidential debate. The negotiators for the Association of State Green Parties were Tony Affigne, David Cobb, Robert Franklin, Greg Gerritt, Annie Goeke, Stephen Herrick and Tom Sevigny. Those for the Greens/Green Party USA were Starlene Rankin, John Stith, Jeff Sutter, Steve Welzer, Rich Whitney, and Julia Willebrand. A critically important addition was made in the negotiations to make provision for accredited identity caucuses to receive national committee voting rights in the new national Green Party alongside state Green parties.

The Boston Proposal was approved by the ASGP at its December 2000 meeting in Hiawasee, Georgia. However, it was voted down at the 2001 Greens/Green Party USA Congress in Carbondale, Illinois, in July. There, after an intense credentials fight over the California and New Jersey delegations, the proposal to support the Agreement, from the Syracuse Greens local, received 99 votes in favor and 81 against; this fell short of the 2/3 vote needed to pass. This decision caused a profound schism within Greens/GPUSA membership from which it never recovered. Many Greens/GPUSA organizers and adherents, including their most influential leader, Howie Hawkins, eventually became involved through their state parties in the soon-to-be-formed entity they called the Green Party of the United States (GPUSA).

## Founding of the Green Party of the United States – July 2001

At the meeting of the Associated State Green Parties in Santa Barbara in July 28-29, 2001, the organization voted to change its name to the **Green Party of the United States (GPUS)** and to apply for recognition from the Federal Election Commission as having National Committee status.

### Press Conference at the Founding of the Green Party – July 2001



The Santa Barbara meeting was followed by a press conference in Santa Monica. It was attended by more than a dozen news organizations, including the Associated Press, NBC, CNN, and Fox News, as well as reporters from Los Angeles-area radio stations and newspapers. A portion of the press conference was broadcast nationally by C-SPAN.

The C-SPAN portion featured Santa Monica's Green Mayor Mike Feinstein; Green congressional candidate Donna Warren, from South Central Los Angeles; Jo Chamberlain (CA), newly-elected member of the party's national Steering Committee; and Tom Adkins, director of the Campus Greens.



Other speakers included Kevin McKeown, a second Green Party member of the Santa Monica City Council, who announced the Council's passage of the nation's first-ever private-sector living wage law, more than doubling minimum wage for the city's thousands of tourism and hospitality workers; Nancy Pearlman, recently elected to the Los Angeles Community College board; California U.S. Senate candidate Medea Benjamin; Anita Rios (OH), another newly-elected member of the party's national Steering Committee; John Strawn (CA), California delegate to the new GPUS national committee; Jacqueline Argüelles, of the Partido Verde Ecologista de Mexico, elected in 2000 to the federal Chamber of Deputies; and Tamara Muruetagoiena, cultural affairs adviser to Greens in the European Parliament.



## National Committee Status Granted to the Green Party of the United States by the Federal Election Commission – 2001



[On November 08, 2001, the Federal Election Commission \(FEC\) issued a unanimous opinion recognizing the Green Party of the United States as the National Committee of the Green Party.](#) This legal status was granted later that year, and the Green Party of the United States has retained it ever since.

[The Green Party's extensive filing with the FEC](#) was prepared by a number of core Green Party organizers. The filing included an Introduction of the Green National Committee, prepared by Green legal counsel Thomas Linzey (PA) and legal advisor David Cobb (TX); an Advisory Opinion Request and Candidate Affidavit List prepared by Dean Myerson; and the national Green Party Platform.

Excerpt from the FEC Opinion:

*.... The Party has already undertaken significant party building activity of a national scope. The various party registration and get-out-the vote-activities, the holding of a national convention in 2000, as well as efforts to publicize the Party's positions, indicate that the Green Party of the United States is engaging in activity comparable to other national party committees.... These results compare favorably with other recent national committee situations. Considering these factors together, the Commission concludes that through the functions of its coordinating*

*committee, the Green Party of the United States has manifested sufficient activity to qualify as the national committee of a political party for purposes of the Act and Commission regulations.*

The Green Party has taken its place in the political life of the United States, bringing an eco-social vision and analysis to issues of public policy and to fielding Green candidates for public office – locally, statewide, nationally, regionally, and globally.