

## **Learning at WISR:**

### **A Tradition of Innovation, Community Improvement, and Social Change**

by John Bilorusky, WISR President, 2011, Open Exchange

The Western Institute for Social Research (WISR) was founded in 1975. It offers adults the opportunity to individually design BA, MA and PhD programs, all of which are California State approved. WISR is a dynamic, multicultural learning community that nurtures the distinctive, creative efforts of its community involved students.

**Shyaam Shabaka** is nearing the completion of his PhD at WISR. Like all WISR students, he has designed his learning projects and dissertation to support his problem-solving inquiries and tireless efforts to effect needed changes in low-income communities of the East Bay. He is the founder and Executive Director of Eco Village Farm in Richmond ( [www.ecovillagefarm.org](http://www.ecovillagefarm.org) ), and was recently **named this year's "Community Champion" for the State of California by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy.**

**David Yamada**, the first tenured person of color in the 100+ year history of Suffolk University Law School in Boston, is **one of the foremost experts in the country on the problem of workplace bullying** ( [www.newworkplaceinstitute.org](http://www.newworkplaceinstitute.org) ). For the past five or six years, he has used his PhD studies at WISR to intellectually support and advance his efforts in this area. David just completed his PhD at WISR, and even more recently, during this May, **the New York State Senate has passed the anti-bullying workplace legislation that he wrote.** This progressive, but bipartisan and still very controversial, law is headed toward the New York Assembly for consideration.

WISR's newest PhD student is **Che Kum Clement, Chair of the Department of Vocational Education, at the Islamic University of Technology in Bangladesh.** Mr. Clement is from Cameroon, and his WISR PhD studies are focused on his efforts to evaluate and further improve IUT's vocational education offerings.

**Jane Johansen** just completed her MA in Psychology toward the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) license. Jane has been working in the field of remedial education and educational support for the past nine years. **Presently, she works at a private school as Learning Support Director and oversees the program of academic remediation and educational therapies at the school.** Jane's thesis studied a program of group sessions that taught social skills through interactive games that was part of a counseling program at a high school. Recently, the medical director of a holistic medical clinic in Hyderabad, India invited her to do some consulting with them over the winter break. He heard about her work with teens and wants her to teach some of the techniques to the counselor in their clinic who is working with teens.