**Eric K. Ward**

**Biography**

Eric K. Ward a long time civil rights strategist and newly appointed Executive Director of Western States Center (WSC). The organization works with leaders in the West to reduce inequality and advance opportunity. From 2014 – 2017, Eric worked as a Ford Foundation Program Officer.  His grant making supported efforts to combat inequality. Before joining the Ford Foundation in 2014, Eric was the Program Executive for The Atlantic Philanthropies, U.S. Reconciliation and Human Rights Programme, United States and led the foundation’s grantmaking efforts in immigration and national security and rights.  Eric has a long and distinguished career as a philanthropist, working over the past 20 years with local, state, and national philanthropic institutions.  Eric began his service in philanthropy as the co-chair of the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation’s grant making committee, served on the Board of Directors of the Social Justice Fund Northwest, consulted extensively with the Open Society Foundation, co-founded Funders For Justice (a project of the Neighborhood Funders Group) and consulted extensively with philanthropic institutions across the country.

Originally from Los Angeles, CA, Eric began his civil rights career at a time when the white nationalist movement was engaged in violent paramilitary activity that sought to undermine democratic governance in the Pacific Northwest. A former staff member with Community Alliance of Lane County (CALC) from 1990 – 1994, Eric founded and directed a community project designed to expose and counter hate groups and respond to bigoted violence. In 1994, Eric joined the staff of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment and worked with government leaders, civil rights campaigners, businesses leaders and law enforcement officials in establishing over 120 task forces focused on human rights and anti-violence in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. During this period, he was one of a handful of prominent leaders of color working to counter this new manifestation of organized hate and, through his work, successfully encouraged some violent neo-Nazi leaders to renounce racism and violence. From 2003 until 2011, Eric served as the National Field Director for the Center for New Community and assisted immigrant rights advocates in addressing the growing xenophobic influence on public policy.

Eric is considered a national expert on the relationship between hate violence and preserving democratic institutions, governance and inclusive societies. Eric has been quoted and cited extensively by national media and is the editor of three published works*: Conspiracies: Real Grievances, Paranoia and Mass Movements*; *Second Civil War: States’ Rights, Sovereignty and the Power of the County* and *American Armageddon: Religion, Revolution and the Right*. From 2008 until 2014, Eric was a contributor to the Progressive Media Project where his opinions have been published in newspapers nationwide. Eric currently serves on the Board of Directors of Revolutions Per Minute (RPM), a nonprofit agency that provides artists with strategy and support for their activism and philanthropy. RPM was founded in 2005 by musicians, managers, and advisors from bands including Pearl Jam, The Beastie Boys, and R.E.M. in order to share best practices and lessons learned from their own experiences. Over the past decade, RPM’s network has grown to include more than a thousand musicians, comedians, and other allies.