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April 21, 2015

Michael Jacoby Brown
training & coaching

*Helping organizations achieve their goals
through recruiting and motivating others*

Organizer's Edge ►

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From Michael Jacoby Brown

Challenges to the Field of Community Organizing:

Our focus for this month and next is Challenges to the Field, with comments by veteran organizer **Mary Ochs**. We often say that the organizer's job is to: develop leaders and build organizations.

Here we focus on building organizations. All powerful organizations need people and money. This month we focus on one challenge regarding people, specifically executive directors. Next month we will "follow the money." We hope to get some dialogue going on these issues, so let us hear from you.



Some of the big challenges in the field, by Mary Ochs

The Executive Director's job:

I am struck by the number of younger people coming up in this work who never want to be an Executive Director. They feel that the ED job looks very lonely and overwhelming. In particular, I am hearing that from younger women and women of color.

The ED job can be unsustainable without strong support (mentors, a coach) and strong secondary leadership. We should also think in terms of



co-directors and building strong leadership teams. The TN Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition has a successful co-director model. I know we often think that co-directors equals no one is in charge, but that is too simplistic. Whatever the structure, most of the fundraising and heavy lifting cannot fall on one leader---the ED. There is so much more to say on this topic. I have seen too many cases where a long-time ED leaves and feels that the organization should now have an ED of color and a younger person of color is hired. They inherit a lot of problems and are not adequately prepared or supported for success. We need to be much smarter about these jobs. We are setting up, burning out and scaring off good people.

Mary Ochs has worked as a community organizer and founder/executive director of numerous grass roots, social justice organizations. She worked in the field for over 35 years. She first became involved with community organizing when she volunteered on a campaign to organize welfare recipients. In the recent past, Mary worked as a Field Organizer and as Organizing Director for the Center for Community Change (CCC), a national technical assistance organization to grassroots social justice organizations.

We want to hear from you, your reactions, ideas, what is at the edge YOUR "envelope." Just go to...

MichaelJacobyBrown.com/Contact

Who else you will hear from.....

We are just starting, but so far you can expect to hear what the following people are thinking:

Jessica Tang: Boston Teachers Union, AFT

George Luse of the Mass Teachers Assn,

Scott Reed with the PICO Network, ,

Cathy Howell, in Oregon and El Salvador, formerly with the AFL-CIO,

Caesar McDowell of the Interaction Institute for Social Justice,

Diana Bell of Community and Labor United,

David Hernandez of the California Education Assn,

Linda Honold, of Wisconsin Voices

Attica Scott, now an elected official in Louisville, KY,formerly with Jobs with Justice,

Quinn Rallings in Alabama with the PICO Network,

Bob Van Meter with the Local Initiative Support Corporation in Boston,

Walter Davis, in Tennessee, of the National Organizers Alliance,

Deb Askenase, of Community Organizing 2.0,

Deb Fastino, of the Coalition for Social Justice in New Bedford, MA,

Rebecca Gutman, with SEIU-1199,

Tim Dean, of SEIU-1199,

Claudia Horwitz, of Stone Circles in North Carolina,

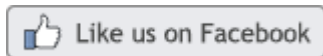
Mary Ochs, long time organizer in Los Angeles

and others, hopefully, including YOU

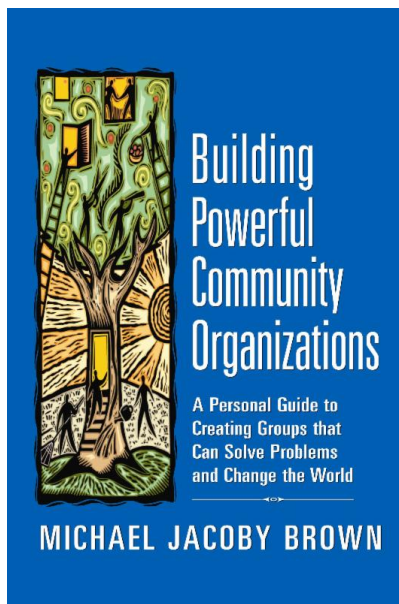
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