

Organizer's Edge ▶

Greetings!

Canvassing Lessons

Door-knocking for a local candidate with my daughter in a Black part of Boston reminded me: “All politics is local” (Tip O’Neil) and “Organizing is 1% inspiration and 99% follow up.” (I heard [Anthony Thigpenn](#) say that)

Door knocking reminded me that face-to-face encounters are the best way to listen to people and to get out the vote. (It also helps if you can bring back their escaped cat: see photo!)



The face-to-face encounter is even more effective when the person at the door is known and trusted -- or at least a neighbor. They then have the added credibility of being someone who lives near them and is likely to see them again. My daughter and I were not neighbors. We were also white in a Black neighborhood. Even so, we made some decent connections.

Migrant Campaign Workers

We first met two young campaign managers who had just moved here from other states. These impressive people in their twenties make a living going from campaign to campaign. The lack of a local connection made me a little sad while recognizing the skill and dedication they bring to the local campaign. Sad, because it made the campaign focus more on the MiniVan App, we were using to go door to door --as if the work was a universal technique without a strong commitment to continuing the grass work canvassing after the election. If a candidate wins, the candidate often says: “Thanks, I’ll take it from here.” At least until the next election. There is no organization built with all the people encountered.

I have done thousands of hours of canvassing, and generally find about one person an hour who seems interested in doing more than just voting. This was the case the other day. These folks are a great potential resource of power.

And Now for Something Different: Dunk the Vote

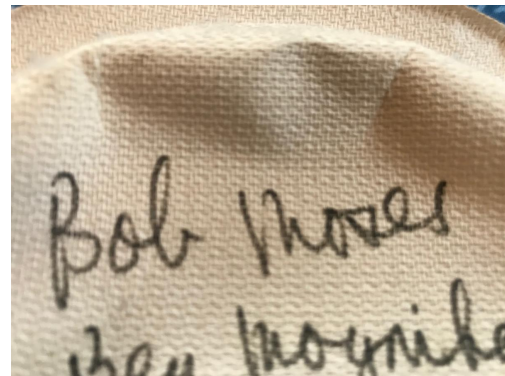
Luckily, I work with [Dunk the Vote](#) and its leader, Ron Bell, who is trying to create an organization that will bring together those people (the one an hour folks) who want to do more than take my flyer and say goodbye. DTV invites such people into “Civic Engagement Learning Labs.” These conversations and training sessions listen to what they care about, the questions they have about the city, their neighborhood and their future and also educate them about how public life and government works (or does not work for them!)

What DTV treats the people we meet as more than a number (Are they, from 1 to 5, with our candidate, neutral, or against?). DTV listens to them and weaves them into a community of others like them, and builds a network and organization with the power to move those who are elected (and others with power over their lives) in the directions they choose. It is a tall order. It recognizes that “all politics is local,” And “organizing is 1% inspiration and 99% follow-up.”

And if not us, then who? And if not now, when?

Bob Moses: May His Memory Be a Blessing

Bob Moses was my hero. So when he was sitting in the kitchen at a friend's wedding reception, I was in awe. "What should I do?" I asked my friend. "Go say hello." So I did, and Bob Moses wrote down his contact information on a small paper dinner plate that I have kept on my wall.



He was my inspiration. I thought of his organizing advice (quoted in [I've Got the Light of Freedom](#), by Charles M. Payne) yesterday when I was door knocking in Dorchester. "How do you organize?" he said, "You throw a ball, and follow the ball til some kid picks it up and you talk to the family on their porch,"... And yesterday, there was a 3 year old boy and his mom kicking a rainbow colored ball in their yard and we talked over the fence while her son ran around with the ball. Bob Moses' spirit was in that place.

Feedback Welcome

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

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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 MIT,

Diana Bell of Community and Labor United,

David Hernandez of the California Education Assn,

Attica Scott, State Rep Louisville, Kentucky

Walter Davis, of the Tennessee, Health Care Coalition.

Debra 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,

Mary Ochs, long time organizer in Los Angeles
and others, hopefully, including YOU

Other Useful Links

[http://michaeljacobybrown.com/
Visions-Inc](http://michaeljacobybrown.com/Visions-Inc)



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Building Powerful Community Organizations

A Personal Guide to
Creating Groups that
Can Solve Problems
and Change the World

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