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Michael Jacoby Brown
training & coaching

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

Organizer's Edge ►

Voting and More

This month veteran organizer and community leader, Ron Bell, describes some of his organizer's edge, including plans to help run local candidates for office, as well as helping low-income people register, vote AND be more involved in civic life.



The Invisible Voters Speak Through the Ballot by Ron Bell

As someone who grew up in and has worked in Boston, I have lived through many of the headlines that have shaped this city over the past few decades. Oftentimes, the real stories are not the ones in the headlines or seen on the evening news. Some of these iconic moments have been etched in national public memory -- the Big Dig, the Blizzard of 1978, the Boston busing crisis, the Marathon Bombing, Boston 2024, the Stuart Case -- because they received wide

media coverage. But many other, more local or isolated events, have been overlooked. What is often omitted from these images is the cumulative experience of living through crises when they become a part of daily life, and the observer -- or this case, the voter -- becomes just a part of the landscape. This is the situation we face in this city.

John Edwards, a presidential candidate in the election of 2008, often used the expression "the two Americas." We are now experiencing this phenomenon in the City of Boston. There are two cities: one is filled with luxury housing, international students and tourists and lucrative real estate deals. The other city, where most of us live, consists of people who are barely getting by on weekly or monthly paychecks. These, the have-nots, are often the invisible voters, usually not seen by the media or recognized by the power brokers of local politics.

Local leadership on this crisis has been severely lacking. For example, a recent bill before the Boston City Council called for the complimentary bags to be replaced by purchased bags. Some city councilors remarked that "five or ten cents" was not much to pay for a bag. Perhaps not, if you're collecting the salary of a City Councilor, although if every business had done it, we would have experienced a significant increase in the local cost of living.

Therefore, we must act on this situation, because when we pull together and mobilize, we can win and affect the outcome, as we did with the proposed plastic bag bill.

We are planning to identify and run candidates for twelve seats of the Boston City Council. Many of the current City Council members have been shown to be out of touch and ineffective. Some of them have been running for office unopposed, and this is not healthy for the democratic process. They must be challenged, if they want to remain in office, and they must work harder for the invisible voter in Boston.

Reverend Ron Bell *has been a voting rights advocate and community organizer for over 20 years. His long history of building community has made him a well-respected community leader and much-sought-after public speaker. He is a former Senior Advisor for Community Affairs for the Governor's Office, Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Ron is best known as founder of Dunk the Vote, which registered over 50,000 new voters in Massachusetts over the past 25 years. Currently, Ron spends most of his time as a consultant, specializing in community organizing, training and leadership development, and communications. Ron is a radio and TV broadcaster for Boston Praise Radio & TV and Milton Access TV and a clergy member and Political Director of Massachusetts 1st Jurisdiction for Church of God In Christ (C OGIC.)*

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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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,

Attica Scott, State Rep Louisville, Kentucky

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

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

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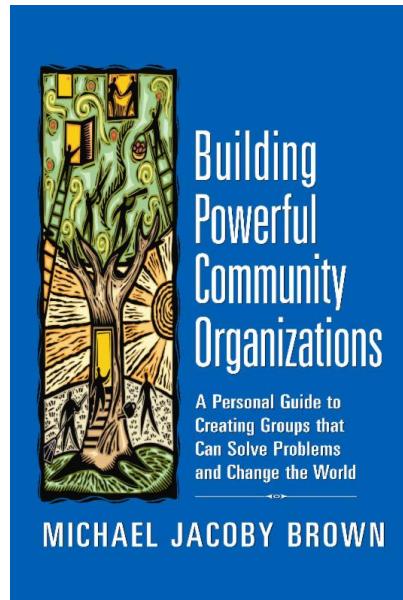
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