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**Michael Jacoby Brown**  
training & coaching*Helping organizations achieve their goals  
through recruiting and motivating others*

## Organizer's Edge ►

### Organizing, Elections and Us

Since the 2016 election, many community organizers are focusing on the national electoral map, as well as local elections. The vitriol of the national campaign, rather than turning people off from politics, has energized people -- inspiring people who have not been much involved in civic life. Greg Knox, veteran organizer, describes what can lie ahead. I also have a few books reviews to enlighten your life. Happy reading.



### **Greg Knox, organizer, San Diego, California**   **Organizing for the Future**

The energy demonstrated in the Women's March, Occupy J20 and the counter-Inauguration, and the airport protests throughout the country has been impressive. I'm hoping this energy will extend to the Congressional and gubernatorial elections in 22 months. A major backlash against the GOP has already begun, with a corresponding opportunity to occupy Congressional and Senate seats and state posts. All members of Congress and one third of the Senate (33 Senators), along with 36 Governors, are up for reelection next year. It's time now to register the unregistered, support good incumbents or run in vulnerable districts, and get out the vote.



*"People really want to know how they can directly affect their communities," Daneya Esgar, a Colorado state representative who will also be participating in the [VoteRunLead online] seminar, told NBC News. "I want to encourage any woman who is thinking about it to jump in. Everyone deserves a chance to run for office."*

(2/11/17)

Community organizers have a special role in these campaigns. Because of our experience with diverse neighborhoods and our familiarity with fellow citizens, and, above all, our ability to listen with a practiced ear and implement what we hear, we have power to lend a progressive hand. We know that when people come together, great things can be achieved. The first task is identifying and targeting promising states with open gubernatorial and senate posts and congressional districts. Recruiting effective candidates follows, so there might be time for longer, less expensive campaigns in 2018. We have no chance of changing the White House or Supreme Court in the next two years, and the legislative branch offers a prime target now. [The Indivisible Guide](#) and organizations\* like [www.justicedemocrats.com](http://www.justicedemocrats.com) may be helpful, along with the mass of internet research-and-action sites. As usual, ultimate guidance and inspiration - not to mention energy - comes from people, whose needs and interests always prevail when fairly tested against the puppet candidates of the donor class. I'm optimistic that the next year will see both continued demonstrations of protest and resistance, and positive activist attention to elections enabling change.

\*TARGET/18 Tool Kit: Our Revolution ,  
Brand New Congress ,  
Working Families Party ,  
Progressive Democrats of America ,  
Democracy for America ,  
Green Party  
350.org ,  
Center for Popular Democracy ,  
Courage Campaign ,  
Iraq Veterans Against the War ,  
Friends of the Earth ,  
CODEPINK ,  
Public Citizen

## **Reading for Organizers: Some Good Books**

***Dark Money, The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right***, by Jane Mayer. This meticulously researched book chronicles the work of the Koch brothers and other billionaires to steer American politics in a direction that rewards themselves and other wealthy people. By strategically spending millions on elections, think tanks, colleges, law schools, media outlets and "grass roots" efforts (like the "Tea Party" and other seemingly "grass roots" organizations), these billionaires have changed the political landscape. This book is important if unnerving reading for anyone who cares about our country, the planet and democracy. For those begging "liberal" foundations to fund progressive grass roots organizing, it provides some perspective on how the right-wing funds its agenda: massively, strategically and for the long term.

***White Backlash***, by Marisa Abrajano and Zoltan L. Hajnal. Written in 2015, the authors foretell the election of T---p as President. Using national data sets, they show how white voters will vote on a basis of anti-immigrant fervor. They show how the increased presence of Latina/os has the potential to change the face of politics. Using hard numbers they show how white voters now and in the future control elections and how increased immigration was likely to create a white voter backlash. Written before the 2016 election, they tell an important and - now with hindsight -- accurate story.

***The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality***, by Thomas M. Shapiro. This book, with hundreds of interviews with Black and white families, as well as a broad range of data, shows how the increase of white wealth since World War II has allowed existing racial inequalities to widen. With numerous stories, as well as statistics, Shapiro shows how inter-generational wealth, sometimes in relatively small amounts, has allowed white families to buy homes in neighborhoods where home prices increase, graduate college with little debt, and move to school districts where their children receive a better education than their Black counterparts who lack the family assets to make such moves.

## 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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**Michael Jacoby Brown Story**

### **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,

**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

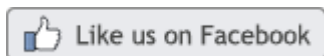
### **Other Useful Links**

<http://michaeljacobybrown.com/>

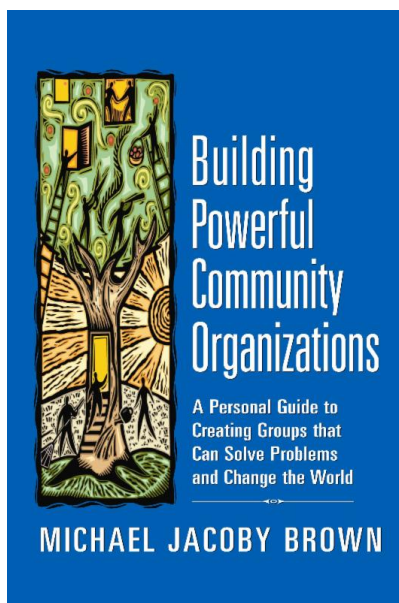
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