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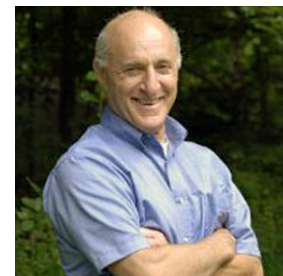
Michael Jacoby Brown
training & coaching

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

Organizer's Edge

MOVEMENT ELDERS?

I attended a recent meeting organized by Larry Kleinman of the [Capaces Leadership Institute](#) in Woodburn, Oregon. He is meeting with social justice organizers who are now "elders" to test interest in a national organization of "Movement Elders." (Having turned 70 I guess I qualify) Larry Kleinman posed the assembled elders in three cities some questions. (Brooklyn, Oakland, and DC) Below are selected comments from those 3 meetings
I welcome your reactions.



On this political moment

- As elders, we have the flexibility to take more risks and responsibilities

On what we imagine or believe that younger leaders need from us (or not)

- Sharing our experience, rather than providing "answers"
- "Support" rather than advice or "wisdom"
- How to understand/imagine a career path
- Our efforts (in the work) are sometimes frustrating, but relationships endure and matter
- To understand that Elders constitute an immense pool of talent, knowledge, will, commitment, and hunger to be of use
- That "disagreement among us does (should) not make us 'enemies'"
- One-on-one coaching

- Reflection on how we sustain ourselves
- The long view of history
- Safe, nonjudgmental space, especially for private reflections
- The distinctions between "organizing" and "mobilizing" and the many forms organization takes
- Ideas about what do strong, long-lasting organizations look like now?
- The experience of dealing with infiltration and how it could happen again

Possible activities

- Summing up experiences and takeaways of our work, writing, video/oral history)
- Transmitting experience and our "lessons" without "taking up too much space"
- Elders' self-awareness about what space we occupy (as contrasted with a possible assumption that there is no space for us to constructively occupy)

On the qualities of "elder-hood"

- Dominant culture in America tends to isolate us as elders
- We do well to "offer" our experience, rather than "instructing"

In transition

- Stepping away from paid work opened space to contribute in new ways
- Stepping away from our organizational roles can free us up to speak more freely, with less fear of burdening such organizations with the consequences
- Stepping away may also free us to "cross lines" and overcome barriers that previously impeded our building alliances; we can employ the perspective we've gained

In our "long view" reflections

- Thinking about how to move beyond the "professionalization" of movement work and the nonprofit structure, a reality that our generation has expanded and deepened
- Do we need a sort of "university" dedicated to summing up our history and the "how to" we accumulated?

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 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

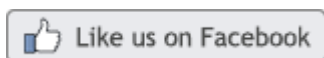
Other Useful Links

<http://michaeljacobybrown.com/>

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[Visions-Inc](#)

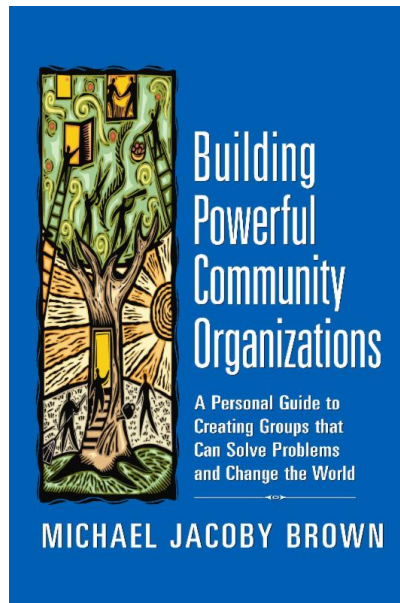
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