

Organizer's Edge ▶

RACE, TALENT & MONEY

I worked this week with several twenty-something Black men and women who are part of a community organizing fellowship for people of African descent. I had these reflections: (see [Union of Minority Neighborhoods](#), Howard Rye Institute)



- As I listened to these young people it was clear they are smart, innovative and dedicated to making the world a better place. One is trying to develop a theater – multi-media project to help others understand their own lives, environment, community and politics. Another young man is volunteering to lead a book group for teenage boys and is thinking about having them read *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. They all spoke eloquently about growing up with racism and their current every day collisions with racism. These are the more resilient ones: although they all have experienced trauma that often interferes with their capacity to reach their goals.
- Money: I reflected on how relatively easy it was for me, years ago, to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in the Jewish community, to develop a fellowship project for young Jewish (almost entirely white) organizers and how it has been going now for 20 years. For example, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, a large family foundation, had a special fund for Jewish work and gave us eventually \$50,000 per year. Nothing like that exists for Black folks. Working with some Black organizers, we tried and found it impossible to raise money for a similar fellowship for young Black leaders. This lack of money and funding for a fellowship has meant that so much talent is not developed.
- I was reminded that person to person, small group learning and listening, face to face is needed for real connection and community.. You can't hurry trust and community building or do it over the Internet.
- How building powerful organizations takes time to build trust and develop

many complex skills: group facilitation, fund raising, strategic planning, listening skills, understanding racism and culture, leadership development, recruiting, group dynamics, organizational boundaries and structure, public speaking, writing, media savvy, political understanding, building data bases, electoral campaigns and so much more. These skills **can** be taught. It just takes time, money and talented trainers to do this.

- How the “avoidance of contact” of modern racism -- (see VISIONS-INC.ORG) does not allow white people to meet these young people face to face and to see their potential.
- There is hope. It will take concerted effort to create on-going and repeated opportunities for white people with money to meet these young Black leaders for these dynamics to change. And it takes longer if we don't get started.

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

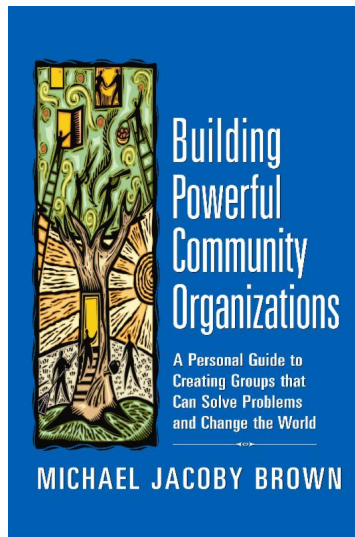
Other Useful Links

<http://michaeljacobybrown.com/>

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