

May 20, 2014



Organizer's Edge ►

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Stay Connected!

Recently I was feeling down. I often shuttle between two different worlds -- although they are less than 20 miles apart. One is suburban Boston, where the houses are big with large lots and places to play nearby, the faces white, (except for the landscapers) the streets safe, the schools large and well-kept, the people well-educated (although very "busy" and "stressed" by all their busy-ness), the air quiet, clean and the food good and easy to find.

And then there is Dorchester, ("inner city" of Boston), where the houses are not so spacious, not so nice, on smaller lots, often with asphalt and cars and garbage cans, the faces darker, the streets noisy and often unsafe (children have been shot just walking outside), the schools over-crowded with little or no place to play, many people often without much formal education (also busy and stressed, often working two jobs and traveling to work on over-crowded buses and trains for long periods of time), and good food hard to find.

It makes me sad and sometimes a little crazy. How can we, in this wealthy beautiful country allow this to go on...and on? For so many years?

My usual answer is these two "worlds" rarely meet. This history of structural racism in Federal housing law, mortgage lending, and other institutions are part of the reason. (See the PBS documentary [Race: The Power of an Illusion, Part 3](#) for some of this history) The people in these not so distant worlds travel in their own circles so they don't see or listen to each other. And out of sight is out of mind. It has been this way for a long time.

How to combat the sadness? Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, of the [Institute for Jewish Spirituality](#) said, stay connected. She is right. This past Sunday, I spent the morning of Mother Day on the Mother's Day Walk for Peace, organized by the [Louis D. Brown Peace Institute](#). And there were some colleagues from [Visions-Inc.](#) and others I knew. I made connection. And

felt better. The world had not changed so much, not immediately anyway, but we were on our way. Connected.

PS. I hope you will read **all** of Walter Davis' contribution about his organizing in Tennessee. He has some important lessons here about the power of local volunteer organizers.



Walter Davis

has been Executive Director of the [Tennessee Health Care Campaign](#) since May 2013. He is well known in east Tennessee for an extensive range of advocacy for justice. For twenty years, he worked at the Southern Empowerment Project (SEP) in Maryville, Tennessee training community organizers and leaders throughout the Southeast. In 2007, he served as Executive Director of the [National Organizers Alliance](#) in

Washington, DC.

He provides this view of his "organizer's edge."

Walter:

I am working in one of the states where the governor did not support enrollment in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). In my presentations on the health reforms, I have urged people not to use the term "Obamacare." The Act loses about significant support when that term is used. While the President invested energy to its passage, it is not his personal act and there is no law by that name. It took thousands of people for many years to bring us this far. And let's not lose that first part of the name because it captures the emphasis preventive care and has the second part is about the ability to create premiums and benefits for people they can afford where they live. Frankly, the administration has been unwise in giving ground to opponents to call it "Obamacare" and to even use it themselves.

In this state, the Federal government put about \$5 per eligible person into programs to enroll people. So it had to be volunteers who filled the gaps. At first the State wanted to fingerprint everyone who wanted to enroll people. [Read on...](#)

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

<http://michaeljacobybrown.com/contact/>

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,

[Linda Honold](#), of Wisconsin Voices

[Attica Scott](#), now an elected official in Louisville, KY, formerly with Jobs with Justice,

[Quinn Rallings](#) in Alabama with the PICO Network,

[Bob Van Meter](#) with the Local Initiative Support Corporation in Boston,

[Walter Davis](#), in Tennessee, of the National Organizers Alliance,

[Deb 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,

[Claudia Horwitz](#), of Stone Circles in North Carolina,

[Mary Ochs](#), long time organizer in Los Angeles

and others, hopefully, including YOU

Other Useful Links

<http://michaeljacobybrown.com/>

[National Organizers Alliance](#)

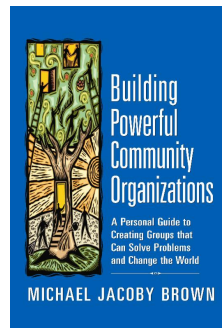
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