

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)[Options](#)

# Organizer's Edge ►

E-NEWS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZERS

June 2013

## Where Have All the Unions Gone? Long Time Passing - Michael Jacoby Brown

Several years ago I was invited to California by the California Education Association (the state teachers union) to provide training to their community organizing department. There were 4 organizers trying to organize parents and others across the state of California. They were a dedicated and talented crew with a big job in a big state. The fact that there were so few of them spread so far was not the worst part of the story. [read more](#)



**Fred Azcarate**, was the leader of Jobs with Justice for 15 years, then on staff at the AFL-CIO leading the Voice@Work Campaign, and recently became the Executive Director of US Action.

### Labor Movement at the Edge

The Labor movement is at the edge of sustainability. Our power comes from our members, and yet we are doing less organizing. The challenge with community groups is always: how do we get to scale? The Labor movement

has some level of scale, and is now more open to ally with the community. But how do we do this so it is not just window dressing? This is hard. We don't have a long history of doing this well. [More from Fred Azcarate](#)



Cathy Howell, AFL-CIO

**Cathy Howell** retired in 2011 from the Field Department of the AFL-CIO where she coordinated a leadership education program for elected officers and staff from Labor Councils and State AFL-CIO organizations. Prior to joining the staff of the AFL-CIO in 1997, she worked as a community organizer and trainer for 20 years - primarily in the south and northwest of the United States. She currently lives in San Salvador, El Salvador and volunteers at the Centro Intercambio y Solidaridad. She is a board member of the Rural Organizing Project in Oregon and the National Organizers Alliance.

## **Cathy Howell responds to Fred Azcarate....**

I agree with Fred that existing unions - and possibly the labor movement as a whole - are on the edge of sustainability - and are getting weaker, not stronger. Unions now represent a tiny portion of private sector jobs and are increasingly under attack from the right and losing the ability to hold onto representation in the public sector. This means less power and less money - both of which impact the ability to organize in many ways. [Read On.](#)

Visit our website

[\*\*We want to hear from you, your reactions, ideas, YOUR edge of YOUR envelope. Just... Visit our website!\*\*](#)

## **Who else you will hear from.....**

We are just starting, but so far you can expect to hear what the following people are thinking:

[Heather Booth](#), founder of the Mid-West Academy,

[Roger Newell](#) with the Teamsters Union and Jobs with Justice in Washington, DC,,

[George Luse](#) of the Mass Teachers Assn,

[Scott Reed](#) with the PICO Network, ,

[Ceasar 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,

[Cherie Andes](#), of the Industrial Areas Foundation,

[Avi Green](#), with MassVote,

[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](#)

[Road Map Consulting, Inc.](#)

[Visions-Inc](#)

[ViHO Other Useading](#)

Michael Jacoby Brown Training and Coaching | | [mjbrown246@gmail.com](mailto:mjbrown246@gmail.com) | <http://www.michaeljacobybrown.com>  
10 Brattle Terrace  
Arlington, MA 02474

[Text](#) | [Link](#)

Copyright © 20XX. All Rights Reserved.