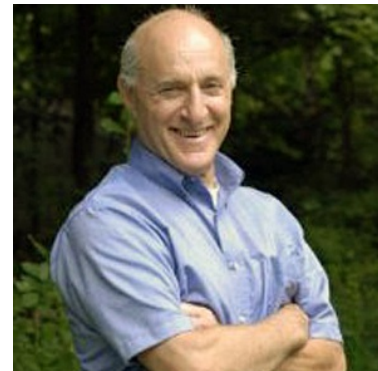


**Michael Jacoby Brown**  
training & coaching

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

# Organizer's Edge ▶

## **Self Care. Self Esteem and Being Busy -- Michael Jacoby Brown**



In an effort to video tape elder social justice leaders, we interviewed an 85 year old Black community leader. He told us that after he left his position as the Executive Director of a community agency he was “depressed.” His phone was not ringing. No one was asking him to do anything. “So I ran for Congress,” he said. I was struck by his honesty about his motivation for running for Congress. He lost the election. And although he said he learned a lot in the process, he wished someone had talked him out of it.

His reflection about his “depression,” reminded me how my own self -esteem is often related to how often my phone rings with people asking for my help. It reminds me that too often my worth, in my own eyes is based on what I do, not who I am. I wonder how much my own worth -- in the eyes of others – is also based on what I do.

When we interviewed this elder, he said when he mentors others, he often asks them, “What are you doing for self-care?” He said that his wife had to remind him to take time “off,” and to make that time sacrosanct – not to be interrupted. He reminded me of the importance of self-care and how often this is not on the agenda of our social justice organizations.

We are greatly influenced by the culture around us. Those of us who work in social justice organizations can ask ourselves, how much do our organizations value self-care? Is it part of the culture? Is there an expectation and accountability that each person will take the time for self-care? Is there a culture that values who you **are**, as well as what you **do**?

Videotaping elders who have worked for justice is part of our effort in developing new learning opportunities for working class people. There is a lot we can learn from these elders. The history they remember is important for us to understand and build on and how they have stayed in the work for the long haul.

Yet too many elders, including elected officials, stay on too long and don't develop younger leaders. Could this be because they know they won't be

valued once they are no longer in that position? That their value derives from their position and what they do? That they too will be “depressed” if they leave their positions? How can we change this dynamic so we can more effectively develop younger leaders and put to use the experience and knowledge of the elders?

Your thoughts and feedback are most welcome!

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## Feedback Welcome

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

[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:

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

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Other Useful Links

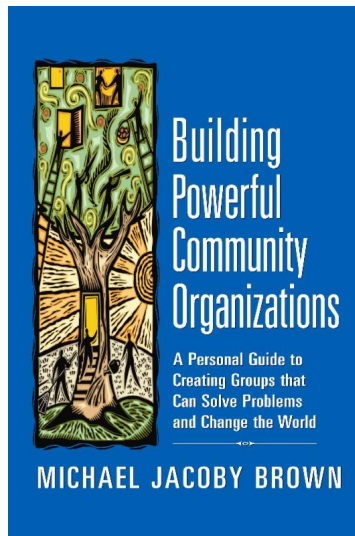
<http://michaeljacobybrown.com/>

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