

# Silberman

School of Social Work

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## HUNTER

### The Education Center for Community Organizing (ECCO) Archive

July 2017

**The Education Center for Community Organizing (ECCO)** at Hunter College School of Social Work (now the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College) in New York City was founded in 1982 to strengthen the effectiveness of organizers in the neighborhoods and human service agencies. ECCO has assisted over 5,000 human service workers and community organizers through workshops, conferences, festivals, forums, consultations, written materials, training and skills development. The Silberman School of Social Work offers an MSW degree with a specialization in [Community Organizing, Planning & Development](#). Hunter College beginning in 2017 will offer a 15-credit undergraduate [Minor in Community Organizing](#). [Dr. Terry Mizrahi](#) served as its founder and [coordinator.t Mizrahi@nyc.rr.com](mailto:coordinator.t Mizrahi@nyc.rr.com)

ECCO is no longer active as a Center, but some its materials, documents, and resources are available in this document.

A separate Coalition Project and Manual are also available by [clicking here](#)

Other archived ECCO documents, audio and video tapes, etc. are available for listening and/or viewing through the Hunter College archive found in the [Hunter College library](#). These include:

- Audio and video tapes of its **Monthly Organizers' Coffee House Series** from the early 1980's until the early 2000's serve as a history of organizing topics in New York City
- Audio tapes and materials of **Computers for Social Change** conferences [from 1986-1996]. A historic collaboration that was a pioneer in bring computer information and technology to grassroots and social activist organizations using the computer (and later the internet) as “a tool of empowerment, not oppression.”
- **The Women Organizers' Project** –In addition to the documents found here, there are additional materials, and audio tapes of their conferences and meetings from 1984- the late 1990's.

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## Education Center for Community Organizing (ECCO)

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### What is ECCO?

a resource for organizers consultation and training an initiator of new projects to build organizers' skills and knowledge video, audio & print library & training materials

### What We Have Done:

- Monthly Organizers' Coffee House Series
- Basic Organizing Skills Series
- Conferences on Organizing in Diverse Society
- The Coalition Project (see below) Computers for Social Change Network
- A Celebration of Organizing in the Eighties: The Life of Saul Alinsky
- The Women Organizers' Project (see below) Resource Files and Library
- Film and Video Festivals
- Community Organizers' Exchange Days
- Child Welfare Organizing Project Organizers' Technology Exchange (OTEX)
- On-Line Reports and Papers (see below)

## Special ECCO Initiated Projects

### **On-Line Reports & Research**

[Community organizing strategies and case examples in addressing issues relating to asthma](#)

[Community and Labor Organizing: Trends and Techniques for the Classroom & Field, 1998-2000.](#)

[Integrating Distance Learning Technologies into Community Organizing-1999- 2000](#)

[Basic Principles for Organizing: Perspectives from Practice.](#)

[Community Organizing: For A Change \(a career guide\)](#)

[Educating for Social Change: The Impact of an Innovative Interdisciplinary Community Organizing Course on Hunter Students' Career and Civic Pursuits.](#) (with Andrea Case); Presented at ACOSA Symposium at Council on Social Work Education, 1999

[An Innovative Model for Teaching A Community Organizing Course at Hunter College](#) (with Christina Danguilan, MPH), 1998.

#### **The Coalition Project Coalitions: Enhancing Capacity and Effectiveness**

The research and training project which started in 1985 develops and refines techniques to help diverse organizations work together more effectively through its research, training, and publications (with Beth Rosenthal).

Publication:

*Strategic Partnerships: Building Effective Collaborations and Coalitions*

Content: Definitions; Advantages and disadvantages; Essential components of coalition development; Successful coalitions; Planning suggestions for structuring interagency collaborations; Managing dynamic tensions; Recommended readings; (250 pages)

Cost: \$35.00

#### **Computers for Social Change (CFSC) Network**

Since 1986 the CFSC Network has promoted the use and accessibility of information technology as a tool for community organizing, empowerment, and progressive social change. Directory and database available.

#### **The Women Organizers' Project**

Founded in 1987, the Women Organizers' Project serves as an information clearing house, conducts research on Feminist organizing, holds workshops and support groups, and produces written and video materials to strengthen women's roles as organizers and leaders.

Publications & Video:

*Women, Organizing, and Diversity: Struggling with the Issues*

(30 min. Video)

[Women, Organizing video script](#)

[Women, Organizing, and Diversity](#)

(Workbook and Guide to accompany video, 88 pages)

[Women Organizers: A Beginning Collection of References and Resources](#) (34 pages)

[Women on the Advance: Highlights of a Conference of Fifty Women](#)

[Organizers from Across the Country](#) (32 pages)

[Women Resources Books](#) \*PDF

[A Framework for Feminist Organizing](#) \*PDF

## **The Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP)**

Begun in 1995 by ECCO, the purpose of the Child Welfare Organizing Project is to organize and empower clients of the child welfare system to influence its policies and programs. CWOP is now an independent organization, giving voice to parents whose children are at risk for, or are in, foster placement.

80 E 110 ST #1E

New York, NY 10029

Phone: 212-348-3000 [www.cwop.org](http://www.cwop.org)

For Additional Networking Resources:

See The Association for Community Organization and Social Administration

ACOSA Website: [www.acosa.org](http://www.acosa.org)

## **Why Join ECCO?**

Support the work of ECCO!

Be the first to hear about ECCO events!

Receive discounts on ECCO events and publications! Get priority access to our files and written resources! **Join a vital network of organizers!**

**Individuals: \$15.00**

**Organizations: \$25.00**

(For more information on membership and resource materials, please, write/fax/email your questions to us!) Make checks payable to: ECCO/SSSW.

**For more information on the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College;**

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork>

## Computers for Social Change [CFSC Archive in Hunter College Library]

The **Computers for Social Change Network** originated in 1986 when a group of human service and computer professionals came together with community leaders and organizers from a variety of organizations in the New York Metropolitan area. The goal of CFSC is to connect organizing groups from "electronic information poor" communities to technology resources. Our collaboration wants to influence the direction and relevance of computer technologies as tools for empowerment and universal access to vital information in order to improve social and economic conditions in our communities. Our dual focus on technology AND social change is what makes our work important. We offer opportunities for diverse groups to exchange ideas, experiences, resources in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

### ORGANIZERS' TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE (OTEX)

Our main project in the Fall of 1997 was the **Organizers' Technology Exchange (OTEX)** Monday, December 8th, 1997.

- Who [Attended?](#) [Highlights](#) of the meeting
- **ORGANIZERS' TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE-PART 2**

Awarded computers to three community-based organizations: Community Voices Heard; Chinese Staff & Workers' Association; West Harlem Environmental Action Coalition

CFSC is also looking for additional technological resources, equipment, and expertise.

If you know of any, please call/fax/email us.

### CONTACT US

EDUCATION CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING (ECCO)  
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*Last revision: Friday, April 24, 1998*

**CFSC UPDATE CFSC UPDATE CFSC UPDATE CFSC UPDATE  
YOU ARE INVITED**

to the

**ORGANIZERS' TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE-PART 2 (OTEX2)**

by the **COMPUTERS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (CFSC) Network**

A Follow-up to the OTEX Project Launched in December, 1997

**On MONDAY, MAY 4th, 1998 from 6:30 to 9:00pm  
at Hunter College School of Social Work  
129 East 79th Street and Lexington Avenue.**

### **CROSS TALK**

with the Three Community Based Organizations that received the 3 MAC computers from CFSC:

- CHINESE STAFF & WORKERS' ASSOCIATION  
<http://www.cswa.org>
- COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD
- WEST HARLEM ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION, INC. <http://www.cucrej.rutgers.edu/html/weact.htm>

Hear about their organizing strategies & struggles. How can technology support their organizing issues?

### **RECONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY**

What are the burning issues for activists?  
Putting words into action

**RECOMMIT TO CFSC** What can CFSC do for you? What can you do for CFSC?

**For more information call Tekla  
Devai at 212-452-7132 or email  
Terry Mizrahi at  
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*Friday, April 24, 1998*

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*Friday, April 24, 1998*

# COMMUNITY ORGANIZING STRATEGIES AND CASE EXAMPLES IN ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATING TO ASTHMA

FROM

**SOCIAL WORKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

**BEST PRACTICES WITH CHILDREN WITH ASTHMA AND FAMILIES  
IN URBAN COMMUNITIES JUNE 2000**

A Collaboration of the

**New York City Chapter  
National Association of Social Workers and**

**New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Childhood Asthma  
Initiative**

**FOR ENTIRE DOCUMENT ONLINE—GO TO [WWW.NASWNYC.ORG](http://WWW.NASWNYC.ORG)**

**Community Organizing Strategies and Case Examples in Addressing  
Issues Relating to Asthma**

## **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING**

### **Workshop Overview**

The workshop presenters describe three projects illustrating large scale organizing initiatives designed to address systemic, institutional, and structural conditions that contribute to high prevalence rates of asthma in such City neighborhoods as Central and East Harlem.

#### **Building a Community Coalition: A Case Study:**

##### **Barbara Brenner-Director, Community Relations, Mt. Sinai Medical Center**

I have been active in the community for the past 15 years, representing Mt. Sinai in a variety of coalition activities. I am going to talk about the experiences of the East Harlem Health Committee, a highly successful organizing project in the East Harlem community where asthma prevalence rates had reached epidemic dimensions. For example, a prevalence study conducted by the New York Academy of Medicine of two East Harlem public schools showed that 22% of the student body had a diagnosis of asthma. If we had good prevalence studies, the numbers would probably be even higher. The Academy study provided the rationale for developing a strategy for addressing a health problem of enormous magnitude for the East Harlem community. Creating a coalition to address asthma involved bringing together many community stakeholders. Not only health professionals, social workers, social service providers and community-based organizations, but we knew it would be important to include consumers as well. It would be especially important to include parents because they live the experience of asthma day to day. Establishing the Committee was a long and sometimes difficult process.

**The East Harlem Working Group** was established in 1996 as an outgrowth of the East Harlem Community Health Committee. The Committee was formed in 1970 in response to the threat to close Metropolitan Hospital, which served as a catalyst for mobilizing people across many sectors to oppose the hospital closing. It was a very successful organizing effort, and prevented the closing of the hospital. A smaller group of people from this committee decided to stay together to confront institutional barriers that contributed to disparities in health outcomes for East Harlem residents. The group consisted primarily of representatives from community hospitals and community based organizations. All of us who worked in the community understood the reasons for the poor health status of the community, despite the presence of three

hospitals, two federally funded health centers and many other medical resources, and all kinds of social service provisions in the community. It was related in part to the failure of these groups to develop a means for working together across disciplines, organizational boundaries, and special interests.

Even with all those resources, we were not sufficiently organized to address the serious health problems in the community. The lesson to learn from this is that you may have all of the resources in world at your front door, and still unable to solve a major community problem if there is no well-defined coordinated strategy for making use of these resources.

The East Harlem Health Committee emerged as an initiative to correct this, moving from an issue oriented group that met episodically to become an organized stable group. Over time a stable leadership was formed, and we became a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a board of directors, a structure, and with a very clear philosophy and public health mission. Our goal was to rid ourselves of all of the competitive and burdensome attitudes and turfism and see if we could gain consensus as to how problems were to be defined, and then to work together to solve them.

### **The Asthma Working Group**

The East Harlem Health Committee took on a number of different health issues through a committee structure. The **Asthma Working Group** was established in 1996, and emerged from the **Pediatric Health Committee**. Mt. Sinai had consistently provided staff to support this effort since it was the major hospital and medical school involved with the Committee. This was both a benefit and a liability. The benefits were that we were able to draw upon the many resources of the hospital and medical school. The liability is that whenever you have a large institution, a university, a hospital, a medical school, or a large agency, there is the risk that the community agenda may be offset by competing priorities of the larger institution. I find that this is very typical for a medical school. However, although issues have come up from time to time, the Asthma Working Group has been able to work through these to form a strong asthma action agenda that has the support of the Hospital and other community institutions.

The Asthma Working Group is made up of a true cross-section of representatives of East Harlem. It has brought everyone to the table, which I think is a true test of a coalition. When I say “everybody to the table” I mean elected officials, hospital representatives, social service providers, community health centers, housing organizations, tenant leaders, and

representatives of government. Our coalition sought very clearly to bring people to the table from every sector of the community because asthma affects every sector of the community. For example, most East Harlem residents are not home owners. They either rent their apartments from the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA), or they live in buildings that are privately owned and the landlord is NYC Housing & Preservation Development (HPD). Therefore, representatives from housing organizations, NYC government and tenant leaders needed to be involved.

In the process of undertaking the following activities, the coalition identified a number of gaps in service delivery systems and other critical issues that influence access to health services. First, we did an inventory of how many programs and services have been created to address asthma in East Harlem. Our initial list totaled 107 separate projects. That number grew to 140 by the time of our final tally. These programs were engaged in a range of activities. Some provided services to prevent asthma, some health education, some case management, and some were involved in some sort of environmental project. We realized that a very clear function of the coalition was to find a way to conduct an analysis of these projects, and devise some sort of plan to evaluate their effectiveness, and integrate these programs to prevent duplication and improve patient utilization rates. The proliferation of agencies established to address asthma, illustrate that asthma was viewed as a health problem of some magnitude for the East Harlem community. However, we had not been able to devise a way to effectively attack the problem. Second, we endeavored to identify the issues that were most relevant in East Harlem. There was very poor continuity between emergency rooms, primary care providers, schools and parents. There were school rules and regulations that served as barriers to treatment to children experiencing asthma episodes while in school. There was a need for parent education and support. And there was little evidence that children were being taught how to manage their own asthma treatment plans. We also learned that many of the health providers in the community were not using culturally competent practices and there was a lack of culturally appropriate educational materials.

Third, we realized that although we could focus on treatment and prevention, if we did not take the indoor/outdoor environment into consideration we would get nowhere. We decided to start with the indoor environment of families because poor housing conditions in East Harlem exacerbate asthma triggers. We were able to obtain funding from the Federal Government and

the American Academy of Pediatrics to test a home environmental intervention developed as a pilot program. The pilot program was implemented by the Little Sisters of the Assumption. [See Workshop; Asthma in the Home]

The project was a culmination of coalition efforts that brought many community stake holders together to define a purpose and a problem and then get behind it to secure funding support for a program that addressed the problem. We have also made a submission to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that we hope will be approved for \$300,000/year for two years. The money will be used to support coalition activities and a number of discrete projects. Some examples of these are extending the home intervention that has shown to be extremely successful; placing case managers at all of the community health sites; and continuing to test and implement some of the 140 projects identified in the inventory that have proven to be the most effective.

An outstanding challenge that we face is to develop strategies for improving environmental conditions that effect air quality. This will require significant legislative changes in public policy regulating activities like waste disposal and transportation to reduce exhaust fumes from trucks and buses. Our next presenter will discuss these.

### **West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. (WE ACT):**

#### **Peggy Shepard- Executive Director and Co-Founder**

Over the past 14 years, I have worked to impact public policy through community organizing and community-based participatory research partnerships. My organization, West Harlem Environmental Action, or WE ACT, is an environmental justice organization. It was created in 1988 in West Harlem as a result of community organizing around the operations of the North River Sewage Treatment Plant, which is located in the Hudson River between 138th and 145th Streets. A state park had been constructed atop the sewage plant.

I was the Democratic district leader in 1986 when community residents initially asked me to help them organize the community and work to get the City to be accountable for this facility. One of the first things that we realized was that residents were having allergic and respiratory symptoms. The children, some of whom already had asthma, were having asthma attacks more often than usual. We began to make the connection between the facility, air pollution, and asthma. By 1988, we understood our need for data and reached out to Dr. Jean Ford, now chief

of pulmonary medicine, at Harlem Hospital.

### **Research for Organizing**

We asked Dr. Ford if he observed that more hospitalizations or emergency room visits were coming from specific zip codes near certain facilities like the North River plant. After two years of conducting research, he and his colleagues published a study that indicated that hospitalizations and mortality rates in Northern Manhattan, Harlem in particular, were three to five times those of other communities in New York City. Data from this study armed us with facts to begin more substantive organizing and education of residents around the environmental health linkages. We initiated a strong advocacy campaign targeted to city and state officials around ambient air pollution concerns in Northern Manhattan, pollutants emanating from the plant and the impact on the health of residents. We spent eight years organizing around the North River Plant.

### **Tactics**

Our long-term objective was to place the issue of environmental racism on the City's agenda and to get the plant fixed. Strategies included mobilization, litigation and strong advocacy. We mobilized residents. Between 100 to 200 people came out to meetings around this issue every month. We organized direct action and civil disobedience. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1988, 100 residents participated in civil disobedience demonstrations. Seven of us were arrested holding up traffic during rush hour on the West Side Highway. WE ACT also pursued a legal strategy and filed a lawsuit against the city. We won a 1.1 million-dollar settlement from the lawsuit against the City with the funds being used as an environmental benefits fund for projects in West Harlem. Our advocacy resulted in Mayor Dinkins' commitment of 55 million dollars to fix the North River plant in a five-year plan that ended in 1999. Now the plant is operating more efficiently with less pollution and odors emitted into the community, though children with asthma still may not be safe playing in the park due to the emissions from the plant's stacks that are present in the park.

### **Connecting Issues: "Environmental Racism"**

Community residents began to see that our community was being used as a dumping ground for a variety of polluting facilities and unwanted uses. We call the intentional targeting of communities of color and low-income communities for this kind of citing along with the lack of environmental enforcement, "environmental racism."

A prime symbol of environmental racism is the proliferation and expansion of diesel bus depots in Northern Manhattan neighborhoods. Out of the eight depots currently in Manhattan, six are located above 99th Street. There are two in East Harlem, one in Central Harlem, two in West Harlem and one in Washington Heights. These are neighborhoods totaling 7.4 square miles, home to 600,000 mostly African-Americans and Latinos, and home to one-third of New York City's 4,200 diesel buses. Due to ridership demand and the success of the MetroCard, many more buses are being purchased. The MTA is now purchasing or leasing parking lots all over Northern Manhattan to house these hundreds of additional buses. The buses are parked outdoors and not in a heated depot, so those parked buses have to idle all-night so the fuel does not coagulate. The outdoor parking lots have no environmental controls that will trap fine soot particles emitted by diesel buses. These fine particles exacerbate respiratory disease like asthma and lead to 20,000 premature deaths per year.

The New York State Legislature has focused on this issue and encouraged the MTA to commit to buying more alternative fuel buses and to commit to not building additional diesel bus depots. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has promulgated a new heavy-duty diesel rule and a new standard for fine particles. However, the same polluted communities will continue to bear this burden over the next ten years until cleaner fuel and vehicles are finally in use and the new regulations have been fully implemented. So, we will continue to have a problem that will affect new generations of children, some of whom, studies indicate, are being born sensitized in utero to certain allergens that are triggers for asthma. Housing is another critical environmental factor. We realized that the asthma belt is the lead belt. The same top ten neighborhoods for asthma are the same top ten neighborhoods for lead poisoning. Housing maintenance is a crucial and unique issue in New York City. This is because 60% to 80% of residents live in rental housing, which means they are not in control of certain aspects of their living situations. They can't control heating, which is often a key trigger for asthma in housing projects where certain lines of apartments are overheated. Tenants can't control moisture. If a toilet overflows upstairs and water seeps into the walls, mold can proliferate. Mold is a trigger for asthma and certain types of mold are highly toxic and can affect neurological function. Mold also results from moisture seeping between the bricks of building facades, which have not been pointed or well maintained. That often happens in NYC Housing Authority buildings as well as privately owned buildings. So, housing maintenance is a critical



issue, but it's been very difficult to form coalitions with tenant groups on these issues. However, the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning has been able to coalesce with the New York State Tenants Association. At the neighborhood level, it has been difficult to work with tenant groups because groups have a narrow agenda, few resources, small staff, if any; they feel overwhelmed to take on another issue, even an important one.

### **Organizing to raise awareness**

In 1996, WE ACT began raising awareness around asthma. We joined forces with the Harlem Health Promotion Center, which is a Center for Disease Control-funded facility that is a project of the Columbia School of Public Health. Ruth Messenger (then Manhattan Borough President) agreed to declare June 1996 as *Uptown Asthma Awareness Month*. We held the first community conference in New York City on that issue. We organized a youth event called "Hoops and Home Runs for Asthma" in a schoolyard where we had physicians like Dr. Jean Ford. We distributed and demonstrated the use of asthma pumps to parents and children and trained them about asthma management. We held a briefing for media and legislators with the Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to discuss some of the issues linking asthma and environmental exposures. That's when we really began organizing at a neighborhood level around asthma.

We have found our partnerships with the Columbia School of Public Health to be very effective and rewarding. We have become a partner in outreach and education; we are also an integral voice in study designs; we are a partner of the Children's Environmental Health Center at Columbia University.

At the Children's Environmental Health Center, we are investigating the impact of environmental pollutants and the resulting exposures on pregnant women and their newborn children. Findings indicate that children are being born sensitized in the uterus to certain triggers for asthma. We are following those children and administering developmental tests at six month intervals for a period of two years. One of the published findings is the high level of exposure to pesticides by pregnant women in the study. Many of us have been reading front-page news about the use of illegal pesticides. These are serious exposures taking place indoors as well as in schools. Until recently, parents and teachers were not notified when pesticides were sprayed in schools. You might have a child very sensitive, very vulnerable, yet the parent won't know what the child is exposed to at school. In the state legislature, we have been pushing for a number of

“healthy school” bills; a “neighborhood notification” bill on pesticides has recently been passed. Finally, we have a *Healthy Child, Healthy Home* campaign that WE ACT has organized as a part of our outreach and education response at the Columbia Children’s Environmental Health Center. We have mobilized other community-based groups in Central and West Harlem and in Washington Heights to participate as advisors, and we have developed training sessions on children’s environmental health issues for the health educators employed by these CBO s. We have distributed a tip sheet to parents listing seven key concerns for them to address in their homes regarding pesticides, pest control, children washing their hands, and eating fruits and vegetables. I should also say that organizing is simply a tool, and not an end in itself. WE ACT’s eye is on the prize of changing public policy that affects environmental health and community quality of life. To effect change in this arena, we must impact city, state and federal agency regulations, policies and guidelines. But ultimately, change starts with a mobilized, informed community participating in the decisions that affect their quality of life.

### **Northern Queens Health Coalition:**

#### **Mala Desai, Executive Director**

I will focus my talk on what it takes to do community organizing and bring people together to get the work done. My background is working as a volunteer with South Asian women. I started that in 1992 as a volunteer. Within six months, I realized that working as a volunteer with individuals was not going to get South Asian woman anywhere as a group. So, we decided to give ourselves a structure and form an organization. That organization still exists. It is in its sixth year, but still struggling. Hopefully, this year we will have a budget of around \$40,000- our previous budget was below \$20,000. We have survived on donations, relationships and work that we have done with communities across Queens and also at a citywide level.

#### **Building Coalitions**

I am a believer in forming partnerships and collaborations. That is reflected directly in the work I do in my community. Our organization survived because we have formed collaborations with Victim Services Agency and the YWCA in Flushing to start a job placement and training project for women. Of course, when you work with women, it’s never work with women alone; so now we are looking to officially revise our mission to include women and

families.

Before working with the Northern Queens Health Coalition as a consultant, I had served on the board as a volunteer for almost three years. When we started working with women and children, there were needs that woman brought to us that impacted their children, and we realized that we had to look at the bigger picture. So, we worked actively with the Northern Queens Health Coalition to form a partnership to begin enrolling children in the new Child Health Plus Program. Fortunately, with the help of the Northern Queens Health Coalition office, we obtained funding in northern Queens for nine separate organizations. These programs are now underway, and we have enrolled almost 100 children in one month among the nine organizations. Working collaboratively, we are ensuring that children receive the health care that they need through the *Child Health Plus Program*.

We put together a committee to seek financial support from the NYC Department of Health for the Northern Queens Region to bring resources for an Asthma Initiative. Immigrant communities have very few resources to provide educational and support services for asthmatic people. The community is also disenfranchised. For example, over 30% of Queens residents are new immigrants who are voiceless and have no political leverage. Unfortunately, our project was not funded. However, one of the funded agencies is a pilot program in Queens named the Center for Children and Families. The program has become a very strong partner in our coalition. In fact, that agency is also the lead agency for the CHIP initiative. So, even though we are competitors, we can also work together for the community that desperately needs service. From this experience, we began a dialogue at the Jewish Community Relations Council again to talk about how to bring partners together who may be competitors but who need to work together to resolve a larger issue in a community.

### **The New York City Asthma Partnership**

I am honored to serve on the Steering Committee of the New York City Asthma City Partnership, and would like to tell you about this initiative. This Partnership has provided me an opportunity to voice the concerns of a number of communities from Queens. It has also helped to create a structure that is needed citywide- one that will be inclusive, reflect diversity and that addresses different points of view. We are in the process of creating that structure with a list of priorities. To do this, we are working with a multitude of stakeholders including hospitals, community-based organizations, The Board of Education, and the Housing Department (HPD).

The NYC Asthma Partnership has captured almost every stakeholder in the city that needs to be working together to not only to resolve the asthma epidemic, but also to prevent future epidemics in the City.

When we organize, it is important to set ground rules and establish a common vision. The vision must reflect and be inclusive of all the resources. I really want to specify that when we developed a vision for the Asthma Partnership, we looked at the wealth of resources that exist within that partnership, including past structures that existed. We also looked at ideology and what it was we wanted the citywide partnership to reflect.

**American Lung Association:  
Mindy Lieberman, Program Associate**

I work at the American Lung Association in the Public Education and Outreach department. We coordinate asthma education programs on a national level. Our largest program is called **Open Airways for Schools**, which is a school-based asthma education program for third through fifth graders. We work closely with our environmental health department whose main program is called **Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools**. These are two programs that you can advocate be brought into your school or community. Our government relations department works on a national level to lobby government officials to pass bills that will impact the outdoor and indoor air quality. On a local level, each Lung Association works with geographic communities and local elected official to initiate change.

**Resources**

There are three different legal tools that an individual or an organization can use to advocate better services for clients.

First is the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. Although many people are not aware of it, asthma is covered under this Act. It is something that can be used to advocate for services if your clients aren't receiving the proper services either through their health care or through their school services. It's something that you can use with your organization to make sure those services exist for your clients.

Second, there are **two** New York State policies that are important to know about. In New York City, we are in a very unique position because asthma medication is allowed in schools. A law passed under Governor Pataki in 1998, states that a child can bring his asthma medication to

school with both physician and parental authorization. One is the standard MD/parent authorization form created by the Board of Education -- the **504 form**. If your clients who have asthma are unable to bring their asthma medication to school for whatever reason, I would recommend that you research the school's policy. Private schools are under different regulations and may have their own policies. If you are working with a child who has asthma who goes to a NYC public school, it is important for you to be aware of this policy. If you live in another state, you can contact your local Lung Association to find out the policy of taking asthma medications to school in that state. The second NYS policy is *Access to Healthcare*. It is a policy in New York State that provides medical services for the treatment of and rehabilitation with children with disabilities; that includes medical services. There is no reason for a child to go without services. There are free clinics that provide these services. Every child is eligible and should have access to medical services.

The American Lung Association created a resource publication called “**Action on Asthma Binder.**” It includes a list of the laws passed in each state pertaining to asthma as well as guidelines for model legislation. The Binder has language that organizations can use, in collaboration with the American Lung Association, to advocate for bills to be passed. It is very hard to make changes alone. Working in coalitions can make a difference in your community, especially when using policy as an advocacy tool. I think policy is our strongest ally and we need to really know about it in order to use it. One thing I would like to alert you to is the **resource guide** that was prepared for this conference. It is a resource guide that is comprehensive but by no means exhaustive. It includes health plans and asthma clinics; it has information on nation-wide programs; and pharmaceutical companies where you can obtain free asthma medication. This information can be used as a tool to help your clients get services. As a former direct practice social worker, I know that my resource guide was my “bible” at work. There are so many different programs and services being offered around the city and having a resource guide like this one makes searching for such services a lot easier!

### **Working with coalitions.**

As the newest organizer in this field, it seems like a daunting task to me to start a coalition. It is easy for people to suggest that you should start organizing a group of people to make change, especially when you are so passionate about a cause. But it can be a really huge task and it sometimes just doesn't seem feasible for a social worker sitting in an office who is

trying to help his or her clients day to day. But, what we have learned today is that there are so many resources that the city has to offer and there are so many organizations and coalitions that you can join with in a partnership rather than trying to start something on your own. I am not suggesting that coalitions can't be started, but if there is already a coalition that already exists that is addressing the same issues you are interested in—by all means join it. You cannot only benefit from others' expertise, but you can add your own expertise to that group. I recommend using this resource guide and using the information we learned in this session to help change policy and to change ideas and to change thoughts about asthma and access to care for asthma.

# **COMMUNITY AND LABOR ORGANIZING**

## ***TRENDS AND TECHNIQUES FOR CLASSROOM AND FIELD***

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF A CUNY/COMMUNITY SEMINAR SERIES *1998-2000***

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***SUPPORTED (IN PART) BY THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK***

**INTRODUCTION TO HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY AND LABOR  
ORGANIZING SEMINAR SERIES**

This series was to further develop our CUNY-wide community and labor organizing curriculum project (C.L.O.C.P.). It built upon a successful day-long colloquium held in May 1997 and a seminar in Fall 1998, both funded in part by the CUNY Faculty Development Program. Over 200 CUNY faculty, staff, and community leaders attended one or more of these events.

**The goals were:**

- as) to enrich the knowledge of classroom and field faculty about new models of community and labor organizing occurring in community and workplace settings in New York City and elsewhere;
- b) to increase the skill level of faculty teaching organizing in the classroom and field;
- c) to strengthen an interdisciplinary collaborative model of exchange between academics and practitioners on many CUNY campuses;
- d) to enrich the curricula of interested departments, schools and programs by providing materials for inclusion in existing relevant classroom and field-based courses;
- e) to stimulate faculty and administration interest in creating new or revised courses and other collaborative programs with organizations that are attempting to improve the social conditions of communities and workers; and ultimately,
- f) to enhance CUNY's role in improving the quality of life for New Yorkers by promoting faculty, staff and student leadership in community and labor organizing.

Until the C.L.O. Colloquium in 1997, there had not been a concerted effort to bring interested or involved faculty together across CUNY campuses for in-depth exploration of the opportunities as well as obstacles for improving the conditions of people where they live and work utilizing community and labor organizing strategies and structures. The field is ripe for a more comprehensive and coordinated effort under CUNY leadership of which the C.L.O.C.P. would be a part.

There is tremendous interest and growing support for community and labor organizing inside and outside academia today that was and will continue to be reflected in the continuing C.L.O.C.P. Union and other workplace organizing is burgeoning with a renewed sense of commitment: the AFL-CIO with their student- oriented "Union Summer," and their ongoing AFL-CIO Training Institute; UNITE (Union of Needle trades, Industrial & Textile Employees with their "Justice Centers" to work on issues related immigrants; other worker advocacy organizations such as the Chinese Workers and Staff Association and the Latino Workers Association; and other community organizations organizing women in the W.E.P. program such as ACORN and the Urban Justice Center, and Hunter's own Welfare Rights Initiative. NYPIRG and other community action programs are expanding on CUNY campuses, and students are being exposed to community and labor organizing in career and civic pursuits.

Perhaps most innovative is the renewed interest in electoral organizing to accompany community and labor organizing. New and revitalized third parties--Green, Unity, Working Families, Labor-



- and voter education and registration drives, are evidence mobilizations with direct affect on CUNY's future.

Organizing training institutes and programs inside and outside academia have developed in the last few years. Among them are: The Organizers' Support Center, TICO (Training Institute for Organizers), the AFL- CIO Organizers' Training Institute, and the Brecht Forum. Inside academia are: the Community Organizing and Development Program at Hunter College of CUNY, and the Neighborhood Organizers Concentration at LaGuardia Community College of CUNY. The Education Center for Community Organizing at Hunter College School of Social Work still has written resources and a library available to organizers.

Also available is a 2-hour video presented as part of this series: **Community Building: The Potential of a Capacity Enhancement Framework--An Interactive Telecommunications Dialogue using Distance Learning Technology with Melvin Delgado**, Professor, Boston University School of Social Work. Researcher, Community Builder, Author: *Community Social Work Practice in an Urban Context*, and Megan Nolan, Director, Community Programs, New Settlement Apartments (NSA), Bronx and NSA youth and parent organizers.

SEE WEB PAGE FOR Education Center for Community Organizing through [www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork)

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## **Community and Labor Organizing Seminar: Trends and Techniques in the Classroom and Field**

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**OCTOBER 22, 1998 - TRENDS AND ISSUE, IDENTITY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD  
ORGANIZING**

Bertha Lewis, Director of Organizing, ACORN

Jan Peterson, Founder, National Congress of Neighborhood Women and GROOTS International

The presentation and discussion that are summarized here were based on questions that the participants addressed to the speakers at the beginning of the seminar around the theme mentioned above. The majority of them related to the questions of gender, class and race in doing organizing; issues of outreach and relationship building; staff and students' involvement; relationship between labor and organizing.

### **National Congress of Neighborhood Women: Organizing with a gender issue lens**

Jan Peterson presented her organization through her own experience in training and teaching organizing. It all started in the 60's, when the Women Movement raised the question about how to link different movements throughout the United-States. A whole lot of reflection and collaboration developed among women from different organizing groups. As a result, the

National Congress of Neighborhood Women was established.

The work first started in Williamsburg's neighborhood, a culturally diverse area. There was a split between women who were involved in different neighborhood organizing groups. In order to create linkages between these different organizations, a group of women decided to meet together to create a methodology that would be especially sensitive to the cultural diversity of their group. At the beginning, they particularly struggled on the way to implement the different visions and ideologies of each individual within the group process. Throughout meeting and discussion, they finally succeeded in fostering a structure, which was focusing on analysis instead of fighting. Their methodology emphasizes on the creation of a safe space. They identified specific behaviors that the group members agreed on which enhanced their level of comfort in sharing personal experiences.

Through several meetings, the group of women reached a stage where they wanted to know how to move from a small group to a bigger place. They realized that community development, social services and advocacy were tools that they needed to use. They realized that they needed to organize. At that point, their major struggle was to create a real organizing model that would still keep the group organic, where everybody would be able to share what each other is doing.

In looking at political and social programs as well as at existing organizing models developed by Alinsky or the ones used in labor or in community development, they realized that gender issue was totally absent. On that matter, the United-States seemed to be worse than any other countries. The women started to analyze everything on a woman's point of view. They also started to link internationally. They studied and developed organizing models that were an alternative to the victim oriented -service approach that was prominent and it still is. They rejected the type of organizing that is issue or block based. They created a new paradigm with a gender issue lens, which was claiming for resources and was developing a better consciousness among the women

Jane Peterson concluded her presentation by summarizing the women organizing methodology developed by her organization by asking the following three questions:

1. How do you take an organization and turn it around from a casework to an organizational position?
2. How do you start from a single-issue model to a comprehensive, holistic model which includes gender and thus which really empowers the women?
3. How does the group get into politics and planning at a larger scale?

### **ACORN: Organizing basics**

Bertha Lewis started her presentation in answering the question about how to handle the diversity within a group. The answer comes from organizing basics. First, an organizer needs to identify an issue that transcends the borders of economic, race, class and gender differences. People come together around common issues that they can do something about. This is also true for the labor and organizing movements in order for them to be able to work together. Second,

the organizer needs to deal with the tensions within the group. His/her role is to anticipate where the conflicts come from and to organize against them. The democracy should always remain the organizer's guide. In order for these recommendations to work out, the organizer needs to work on his/her own perceptions about issues of identity, class and so on.

Following that, the presentation moved on defining who are the people who get in organizing. According to Bertha Lewis, people who get in organizing are hard worker, ambitious, driven. It is clear however that even if the goal of an organizer is to do social change, community organizations will never compete the corporate world in terms of money and prestige. Another characteristic of organizers is that they come and go. Once done with a project, an organizer will move on to something else. Being an organizer is a real career. "You want the revolution or you don't". A lot of education work needs to be done.

The work of an organizer starts in people's living room, finding about what is going on and what people want to change. In order not to get discouraged, it is important to remember that it is impossible to organize everybody. The role of the organizer is also to get the people to look at the bigger issue and to identify the real target for action. "It is the organizer who thinks globally and acts locally". The organizer works with the people in a proactive way. Together, the people research on a problem and make a plan in order to take action.

### **Tensions between Mutual-Aid and Social Action**

Terry Mizrahi spoke about the tensions between the mutual-aid movement and social action. The mutual-aid movement supports self-help autonomously within a community without seeking any concrete responses in terms of funding from the government. In the social action perspective, the government is seen as the targeted enemy, which should provide resources. The question then is how do we use the best of mutual-aid movement and have the resources and the institutions to support it.

Bertha Lewis presented ACORN organizing strategies, which combine neighborhood organizing which, is not self-sufficient with a membership organizing. People need community development, advocacy, social services, and social action all together. The government should at least provide the services. What is the fundamental goal is that people organize to change the role of the government that should be to give the resources needed to the people in order to be able to create and run their own institutions. But to be able to sustain the people's will to organize around big policy issues, they need to win little battles at a local level. Their short-term needs are to be with each other and to have fun. Neighborhood organizing is the beginning point. People need to be geographically organized.

Based on her own experiences in dealing with these tensions, Jan Paterson added on what Bertha Lewis presented by emphasizing on the fact that it is important to analyze the political environment and not to become totally dependent on the government funding. "It is really easy to lose what you have built". You need to find alternatives against the Government cuts. It is also important to know how to use the connection that an organizer or a community-based organization has with politicians. Basic grassroots organizing is essential.

### **Community Organizing and Labor movement**

The seminar continued with a discussion about globalization. A union organizer, explained that corporate America started to organize really well, at an international level. On the other hand, the American labor force did not organize enough during the last 30 years. In 1900, there were only 5% of the labor force that was organized. In 1950, it reached 38%. In 1960-1970, the Labor and Civil Rights Movements worked together. Today, less than 13% of the labor force is organized. This percentage is still going down. This led to an increase in the level of poverty and racism. The working class is totally disorganized. The labor movement needs to revive by finding new strategies to fight for power. It requires a combination of human contact, a vision of power that is just and a mastery of the technology. There is a need for a change in the relationship within the people in the labor movement. It already started three years ago with an election at the AFL-CIO. A Mexican woman was elected a Secretary Executive. Internal organizing needs to continue. Democratic vehicle has to be restored within the institutions that are existing. As mentioned previously by the two speakers, the key is to start small, by entering in direct contact with the workers. A strong membership needs to be built. In order to really increase the power of the workers and underserved people in community, one strategy is to bring the neighborhood and labor-organizing movements together, like it happened in the 60's with the Civil Rights Movement. One example of this collaboration is through the Working Family Party created by ACORN and small unions. According to Bertha Lewis, voting is the first step in creating social change. We are not used to democratic in all aspects of our life.

## **Conclusion**

All the participants demonstrated their satisfaction and the questions that this seminar raised about organizing. Following is a listing:

- Get background information as much as possible such as ethnicity, economic status, past conflicts, problems about a neighborhood and about the group of people that you are getting involved with.
- Identify the potential tensions between the members of a group.
- Scrutinize the organization you want to get involved with.
- Connect different groups of people with each other. For example, connect an environmental group with a church.
- Never be alone.
- Organize around existing issues.
- Go where people are.
- Education is part of organizing.
- Prevent burnt out by creating something bigger where organizers can come together.
- How do you prevent people to burn out after a victory or a failure? How do you make them willing to continue?
- How do you get homeless and SRO tenants involved in organizing since they may not belong to a specific neighborhood or have a home?

Jan Peterson and Bertha Lewis both mentioned that what keeps them going is that they have a vision. Principles and values are essential when doing organizing. Jan Peterson emphasized on the benefits of being part of a support group. "Organizers need to build network and start to get together. Organizers should trust their instinct, be persistent, do follow up. The tools of

organizing are needed in everyday life. How do you make things happen? Everybody should know how to do that. It is a political tool. An organizer can work use different angles by moving the same agenda through many entry points. You need to ask to you the question: What am I willing to do?"

Esperanza Martell, one of the moderators and long-time organizer, concluded by saying that a vision was key for her also. This vision is to change the fundamental underpinning of the society. "We have to take what is and transform it. We have to change globally, talk about having a critical mass, and transform the state... and then what?"

## **COMMUNITY AND LABOR ORGANIZING SEMINAR: TRENDS AND TECHNIQUES IN THE CLASSROOM AND FIELD**

NOVEMBER 19, 1999 - WORKER AND WORKPLACE ORGANIZING

Dominic Chan, Organizer, U.N.I.T.E.; formerly, Jobs with Justice  
Mili Silva, Organizer, WEP Workers' Organizing Committee, ACORN Susan Borenstein.  
National AFL-CIO for New York State

Due to a tape recording problem, initial presentations of Dominic Chan and Susan Borenstein are missing.

### **WEP Workers' Organizing Committee**

Mili Silva presented part of the mission and the work of the WEP Workers' Organizing Committee. One of their most successful events was that they organized a voting site for WEP workers in order for them to get unionized. Ninety eight percent of the 17,000 WEP workers, who voted, voted for the creation of a union of WEP workers. Even with such a result however, Mayor Guiliani has not recognized this union.

The WEP Workers' Organizing Committee also has been intensively working on childcare issue. Most women on WEP have seen their right to childcare violated. During a special event, 60 women on WEP decided to go outside of the building where they were working. They got coverage in the New York Times and Spanish TV. In that same afternoon, they all received their check so that they could pay for day care services on time and not be discriminated against. Mili Silva specifically explained that when doing a campaign, it is essential to get press coverage. It is the only way that the politicians cannot hide from the public.

Another WEP Workers' Organizing Committee issue is organizing CUNY students that are on welfare. The dilemma for these students is that either they decide to remain in school and not get food stamps and cash assistance or they decide to do their WEP assignments and stop being able to go to college. Fifty members of the organization organized two actions at Hostess Community College. Seventy students participated asking the City to work on an agreement on the procedures for students on welfare. The campaign is having some success. When organizing works with labor, when everybody is a worker.

In earlier discussion, Susan Borenstein noted the increase of efforts the AFL-CIO has placed on

organizing drives and organizer recruitment and training. She also explained that while the press has been excited by the recent successes of the AFL-CIO, the organization is not going well. Many more improvements need to happen. Dominic Chan explained that it has been a real struggle, especially in New York, to have people working together: He noted that there is no way that Al Davidoff (New York State Director of AFL-CIO) can force people in different cities to do what is decided by the AFL-CIO at the state or national level". More and more people have to work together. He explained that it is important to recruit as many people as possible to become unionized. His principle is that everybody is a worker. For instance, many students have one or two jobs and are considered cheap labor. As an illustration, students hold 75% of the jobs in stores that sell sporting goods. He also mentioned that it would be interesting to use the professors to help the AFL-CIO in organizing those students.

According to him, it is necessary for labor organizing to be involved in community organizing. If the labor movement wants to get involved with community organizations, it is important that it gives back some of its power and reaches out to the people on the ground. A major difficulty in building this collaboration is to develop a sustainable leadership to do this kind of outreach. For instance, Jobs with Justice has been supported by several unions that work on labor issues, but it is very small and has always had funding problems. Only a few progressive foundations contribute. The key is for both labor and community organizing to find a convergence of self-interest that would enhance their work together.

Terry Mizrahi mentioned the fact that organizing WEP workers was not an either/or situation. Work needs to be done so that good jobs are created with a living wage and benefits, and that ultimately the WEP program is eliminated. On the other hand, it is also really important that existing working conditions of the people who are actually doing WEP assignments be improved. There are many things that the WEP workers need that other workers need as well. For instance, childcare is an issue that concerns many working women. It is important to create ways of working together on common issues such as affordable day care, a "living" wage, etc. to lessen the divisiveness between the working and the welfare poor.

### **Political organizing and the Role of the labor unions.**

Many felt that it was important that the labor organizing movement be involved in electoral organizing. But it is important also that the effort made by different parties, who are the voices of low-income people, link together in one party if they want to have their voices heard. Because there are still too many people who are not registered, some unions have also been involved in registering and get out the vote campaigns.

Mili Silva talked about the Working Family Party, an effort of ACORN, other community organizations and the larger unions in the New York State. WFP, received more than 50,000 votes in the Nov. election so that it is now going to be on the ballot for the next four years. Its goal is to represent the issues of low-income people. The WEP Workers' Organizing Committee will assure that this new party collaborates with the WEP workers and reflects their issues.

### **Conclusion**

In speaking about organizing efforts, Esperanza Martell made the observations that privatization



is the big push. She concluded by reminding all of us that we are all part of a community and this is where the power is.

## **COMMUNITY AND LABOR ORGANIZING SEMINAR: TRENDS AND TECHNIQUES IN THE CLASSROOM AND FIELD**

DECEMBER 17, 1998 - ELECTORAL ORGANIZING

Sean Sweeney, Queens College Worker Education Program; Labor Party  
Charles Barron, Dynamics of Leadership; Chair, Unity Party  
Susan Metz, Green Party

Terry Mizrahi started the seminar by asking Charles Barron the question: "How important is it for community organizations to connect with politics?" She explained that one role for electoral organizing among progressive contingents has been to create new parties to pressure the Democrats to pay more attention to important legislation and policies. This has been done in recent times in conjunction with a strong effort toward voter participation and voter education.

The major issues that the participants articulated for this session included: procedures to get independent parties formed; the reasons for a community organizations to get involved in electoral organizing; the involvement of students in electoral politics; the role of coalition among independent parties, and the place of accountability and democracy for independent parties.

### **Labor Party**

Sean Sweeney started his presentation by looking at the last 20 years of the labor movement. He acknowledged the fact that the public is asking a lot of questions about the political activities of the movement. For 20 years the labor movement has been pressuring the Democrat party, but nothing worked. The Democrat party has been under the control of corporate agents for many years, which has affected its role in a severe way. Because of that, the labor movement had big losses. The living standards and political power of working people is really low right now, he believes. There is no enthusiasm for electoral politics and the Labor Party is a response to this situation.

In the 90s, the labor movement formed its own party. Twelve major unions supported the party. Its goal is to represent not only the 10%-12% unionized working people, but also all the people who are part of the working class.

This party believes in the role of electoral organizing. As a candidate-of the Labor Party, a person will need to be accountable to the internal program of the party. Unlike the major parties, the candidate will be pressured to comply to the program because of the strong and active membership that the party is trying to create. In fact, the party voted that their first objective is not to run a candidate for election, but to organize a strong base. The crucial point is to gain the trust of the people working in their community. Once the party achieves this membership base and accumulates enough resources, it will participate in primary elections. He concluded by saying that the most important resources for a party are its human resources. Many working people organized isolated efforts to improve their conditions. They need to have a place where



they can work on a common agenda for social change. Sean believes that the Labor Party represents an opportunity to do so.

### **Green Party**

Susan Metz explained that the reason why she turned to electoral organizing is because of the actual corrupt political system, which she considered fascist. She mentioned the increase in the number of jails and the destruction of the CUNY system as examples. It is out of desperation that the Green Party developed its ideology. It is present in 17 countries and 13 states. Having gained 53 000 votes during the last elections, the Green Party is going to be on the ballots in those states for the next four years.

According to her, the Green party is not a class-based party. It goes beyond focusing on the means of distribution and production. It has a broad and unifying vision based on diversity, community and ecology. Issues around environment such as energy policy or wasted disposal for instance seems to particularly fit this vision well. It also believes in political pluralism and in a mixed economy, with a strong public sector that is unionized and with support for the development of individual initiatives.

Susan explained that the Green Party has a decentralized way of organizing in order to keep its candidate in line with the party. She said that the membership comes from independent political initiatives and local groups. They can sign to become part of the Green Party, which gives them the opportunity to have a voice in choosing their candidate. It is a bottom up approach, different from what is done in the major parties right now. The candidates are active members who have a strong engagement in "Green" values.

### **Unity Party**

Charles Barron began his presentation by asking the question: "Is it a waste of time to get involved in electoral organizing? He said that Republican and Democrats know what their vision is. However, progressive parties which are growing right now do not know exactly what they want, but that these parties are asking a lot of difficult questions.

The Unity party however is really speaking about the real issues which are race, gender and class, even in the internal structure of parties. According to him, most parties are White dominated. He asked what diversity means exactly. He said that even progressive parties have a lack of diversity. They have diversity at the base but not at the top. Diversity needs to be present at the decision-making level. This is real democracy.

The Unity Party started only last May and got petition drive in July with 20,000 signatures. According to him, it is the first time in the history of that country there is a party lead by people of African ancestry.

### **Issues Related to Coalition-building, Cross-endorsement, and Diversity and Leadership Raised by Participants**

Sean Sweeney said that right now the labor movement needs to break with Democrats. The Labor Party does not want to be a pressure on the Democratic Party anymore. He raised the

debate among progressivists about coalition politics across these progressive parties. The Labor Party does not have time right now to do coalition work. It has to work on its own base which only represents 10,000 to 12,000 members. Later it will be possible for the party to be able to be in a coalition.

Susan Metz said that the constituencies and the internal structure of the Green party were a little different than other parties. It is a community-based party. In fact, the party is most criticized because of its lack of leadership. There is no one to tell any other what to do. She believes that it is both a fault and a strength. As for the issue of cross-endorsement, she said that only three states allow that, but she hopes to cross-endorse a candidate that will appeal to both Green and Working Family Party (discussed in the November Seminar), and that all progressive parties will provide staff to work with that person.

She described two types of constituents present in her party. Some are members who receive newsletters about the party on the WEB. Others are activists who participate in meetings. These are the ones who have the decision-making power. It goes against New York State law which prescribes that every registrant in a party has the right to vote for a candidate. She said that her party supports candidates to be "movement" people really involved in their community. But she admitted it is difficult to bring in people of color. However, the Green Party is working on anti-racist issues such as a prison moratorium, sweatshops and CUNY. She believes the Green Party would like to be affiliated and cross-endorse candidates with the Unity party, respecting the differences between the parties, while working on common issues.

Sean Sweeney recognized that his party was dominantly White. He explained that the reason for this is historical. The strategies and tactics used in the past were not inclusive of African Americans. This is why the Party is struggling right now to get a diverse membership. However, through the support of many unions which have a diverse membership, things may become better. The Party also is not young; most people are in their 40s. However, there is the beginning of a youth movement, but it is really early.

### **The Labor Party really is promoting a diverse membership that looks like the composition of American people in the US**

Charles Barron explained that the Unity Party has a platform similar to the other parties in terms of issues. However, it differs in how it diversifies its leadership. The party is now experimenting with a rotating leadership in order to have a real democracy. If they relied on numerical majorities then African Americans for example, (who are only 12% of the US population) would never be leaders.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Charles Barron said that he really believes that small groups can have major impact using inside and outside electoral organizing strategies. The candidates are there to help the constituency do their organizing.

Susan Metz said that the most important thing is to keep working on electoral organizing. There is a need to find candidates whom voters will believe in, and develop a system to register more

young people. It is possible to make changes in working on an issue with a candidate in coalition. We need to find common candidates in different districts and to cross-endorse candidates.

Sean Sweeney said that it is important to work on creating a real progressive party that will really come from the base. It is important to create a party that will be there over time because it is supported by its constituents. He said that it is a project in formation and that everything is possible. There is a need to discuss who should own the control of social policy and economics. There should be a debate on these various alternatives.

Terry Mizrahi concluded that the major issue that all the parties are facing is to have candidates who will be able to hold up to the values and principles of the parties and at the same time be effective. The key is to communicate with the constituencies and obtain their agreement or understanding when there is a need to compromise. Every party needs a strategic vision, a vision for the long haul, one that has flexible and interim short-term victories related to the political climate of the time. Esperanza Martell had everyone comment about what they had learned or were taking from the session. She urged everyone to stay active and informed.

### **Community and Labor Organizing Seminar Series**

October 17, 1999 - Neighborhood Organizing: Where it came from and where it is going?

Robert Fisher, Professor University of Houston; Visiting Moses Professor, Hunter College School of Social Work; author *Let the People Decide*; Mary Dailey, Executive Director of the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition

The presentations and discussion that are summarized here were based on brief presentations made by our guests and questions that the participants addressed to the speakers at the beginning of the seminar. Many questions related to issues of gender, race, and class in community organizing, issues of relationship building, increasing the use of social action, and building resident and student involvement. Esperanza Martell facilitated the discussion.

### **Robert Fisher: Some History of Neighborhood Organizing & Lessons from the Past**

Community organizing has a history, certainly as old as neighborhoods. It's not a product simply of the 1960s. Community-based resistances around geographic communities (neighborhoods), and communities of cultural identity (blacks, gays, women), have become the dominant form of social action in the United States since the 1960s, replacing more class and labor-based organizing. The ever-increasing significance helps explain the widespread contemporary interest in community-based organizing. I think "community" is absolutely hot! This presents a lot of opportunities for us. But the focus tends to obscure the rich and fundamental history that undergirds current neighborhood organizing and it narrows to debates to contemporary conservative limits. One of the problems of not knowing history in a conservative period is that you miss out on all these alternative models. To illustrate all of these points, I'm going to begin by talking about different models of organizing and then lead into the kinds of challenges that I think we face. Someone from the audience mentioned that there is this "conservatizing" influence that is affecting organizing at this point. This makes it a real challenge to do what people used to refer to as "community organizing", as opposed to community building or community development.

### **Three Models of Organizing**

Since the 1880s there have been three types of organizing. One of these types is a “social work model, which I have argued was dominant in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The best example of this is the social settlements and community-based services, like the Cincinnati Social Unit plan and community health services. A second model is a “community activist” approach, which isn’t limited to the 1960s but was certainly popular then. It was also very evident in the 1930s. I’ve talked about this model in terms of the Communist Party, Saul Alinsky, and the New Left in the 1960s. Certainly other groups have used this model like ACORN, NWBCCC, and IAF. The third type of organizing is a much more conservative type of organizing. It’s what I call the “neighborhood maintenance” approach, which is more characterized by people who wanted to maintain property values and engage in economic development and stabilize their communities- not engage in social action, and not engage in community building or social reform. Certainly, in the 1980s and 1990s there are lots of examples of this type of organizing approach in the contemporary community economic development efforts- CDCs, etc.

Let’s talk about some lessons from the past. Community organizing has a long history. Organizing is as American as apple pie. People turn to work in their communities to get a variety of things done. The critical issues around that are that despite the fact that organizing has long roots in the American past, it’s never been easy. Organizing is an audacious act. It’s basically designed to legitimize what the society doesn’t want to have legitimized- so it makes organizing that more difficult. The primary skill that organizers bring is to challenge the accepted vision of things- not alone, but with the community. The vision of the leader to help challenge the accepted vision of things and then to work in a democratic way to help people mobilize around these challenges.

The second point is the community organizing cuts around the political spectrum. Don’t enter it thinking that it is inherently progressive, or it’s inherently liberal, or it’s inherently a good thing. It gets used for a wide variety of purposes depending on who’s doing it, who’s funding it, what their politics are, what the radiology is, what their goals are, etc. So, on the one hand, pat yourself on the back for all the good progressive work that you do, but at the same time keep a skeptical eye out for what other people are doing. Just because it happens at the community or neighborhood level doesn’t necessarily mean that its ultimately progressive or social and economic justice oriented.

The third point is that the larger context in which organizing occurs has an incredibly dramatic effect on the kind of organizing that occurs in any given period. It has occurred whether it’s the progressive era, the 30s, the 50s, the 60s, the 1880s, or the 1890s. It doesn’t mean that what an organizer gets to do is completely pre-determined. But in more conservative context (like the one we’re in), what seems salient, what resonates, what gets funded, what is legitimate is much more about conservative kinds of organizing. For example, the conservative version, which states that organizing is all about relationships. Organizing is all about building consensus. Organizing is not about confrontation. It’s not about conflict. It’s not about social action. That’s 60s stuff. That’s dinosaur. So, the context in which we do our work, heavily shapes our organizing. It doesn’t mean that it’s pre-determined or that there isn’t a dialectical interaction. It doesn’t mean that we don’t get to shape that larger context as well. The kinds of work that we do in our

organizations, lays the seeds for change. It begins to challenge the limits. What do we do now to introduce more social action, as social action develops more (and it will). Then ultimately the conservative context in which people have to operate begins to change as well.

### **Another lesson from the past**

There are liberal eras (public-regarding) and conservative eras (private-regarding). We are currently living in a private-regarding era. In the more liberal eras, I think the historical lesson is push hard. Push as hard as you can. There's a whole revision now about the 60s that the "good 60s" were the early 60s, but the "bad 60s" were the mid- late 60s because people became militant. I'm not sure if the historical interpretation is accurate or inaccurate, but the point is that it seems as though these periods don't come around that often. When they do come around, then the opportunities are there. It's hard enough even in those periods to get stuff done. Push hard. It's probably no time for moderation. It doesn't mean you have to do this ultra-leftist craziness, but when the opportunity occurs (hopefully in our lifetime), push hard. In the kinds of periods that we're in right now, the role is to organize, educate, plant the seeds of resistance, and survive. The groups we have right now, includes those that have been in existence for 20 or 30 years have survived, and need to be given more credit. Those groups, which have survived, have lots of gifts and lots of skill and lots of experience. We, as an organizing community have to do a better job of recognizing that and supporting it.

We are in a new private world. Power is increasingly concentrating, as the tasks of that world are increasingly deconcentrating. This means that in some ways, "community" is hot! This provides openings for us who have been doing community work and who know about this kind of work to maybe get some money from foundations, to maybe get some sort of support, and to maybe have people come and talk to us about our work. At the same time, this economic globalization that we face really requires more than just working in our individual communities. We need to think not only about doing good work in our communities, but where we have the skills and abilities, to form coalitions, to form political parties, to form something larger, to ultimately challenge for power. Otherwise, I think we'll be stuck in our communities doing the good work that we do for a long, long time, which isn't bad, but really isn't where any of us wants to be in 20 or 30 years.

Organizing also means keeping in mind short-term goals and long-term goals. In order to continue the work on these goals it is essential to keep issues of the political economy in mind. Long-term goals are absolutely important in organizing, especially in a period, which are anti-the long-term goals of social and economic justice.

### **My last point is, I think we need more social action**

As mentioned earlier, (in my view) we have had a lot of conservative pressures that have occurred on organizing in the 90s. You know, organizing is about consensus. Organizing is about relationships. Organizing is NOT about relationships. Organizing is about power. Relationships are part of building power, but organizing is about power. So, what we need to think about in terms of our own work is where there's potential for doing more social action. I have this theory that the economic globalization can't stand challenges. The last thing they want is for the social costs to rise because they can't deal with the challenges. So, we have to think of how to bring back social action organizing, not as the sole way of doing community work, but into the mix of what is called community building and community development. [\[1\]](#)

### **Mary Dailey, Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition**

Mary Dailey presented a clip from the video, *Passin' it on: 25 Years Organizing the Northwest Bronx*. Mary explained that in the 1960s and early 1970s, insurance companies, banks, many landlords, and New York City drew a “red-line” around the Bronx and stopped investing in those neighborhoods. 12,000 fires burned each year, 300,000 people fled, and in the South Bronx 40% of the housing stock was destroyed. To put an end to this abandonment and burning in the Northwest Bronx, community people of every color and ethnic background, working people, poor people, college students, Catholic priests and their congregations formed a 10 neighborhood coalition. The Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition recently celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.)

### **Organizing in the Northwest Bronx, NY**

Since we are on the topic of social action, in 1988, the NWBCCC had a very successful social action, which you just saw on this videotape, *Passin' it On* [\[2\]](#). We moved a couple of hundred people up to HPD (Housing & Preservation Department) and we had some very specific demands coming off of a year and a half of organizing around a whole platform of affordable housing issues. Our northern neighborhoods were organizing around rent increases and co-op conversion and southern neighborhoods were organizing around reclaiming the vacant properties. People asked earlier about how to unite people across race and class. Well, at that point in time, in the NWBCCC's history, we used this housing campaign to do that. Our northern neighborhoods at that time were still predominantly white, working class neighborhoods. These folks could not afford the type of rent increases that were coming forward. A lot of these people came from union backgrounds, so they were exposed to organizing at the jobs. Our southern neighborhoods were just fighting to survive.

As we've moved in the past ten years, we've faced a lot of these hard organizational decisions that Bob Fisher's book talks about. He wrote about some organizations that did not survive. Hundreds of organizations were created at about the same time we were. It was also around the same time that the National Campaign for Human Development (of Catholic Charities) started funding community organizing. This is not a coincidence. A lot of those organizations moved in the direction of either doing community development or doing direct social services. That's what people wanted. We wanted more service developed for youth. We wanted more people to know about their rights as tenants. We wanted to see the houses taken back and the land developed. So, as we won things through our organizing victories, organizations had to make hard choices about whether or not they were going to do the direct service delivery themselves or do the development themselves. New York is not unlike many places around the country, in that many of these kinds of “people's organizations” grew up to be community development organizations.

Our organization was kind of smart about community development. The real issue that people always raise is accountability – are you going to be able to hold that community development corporation accountable afterwards or are they just going to go off and do what's going to make them money and what's attractive to them and not what's in the best interest of the people in the neighborhood? Accountability is a huge issue when you spin off a group and also whether or not they remember what the mission was and whether they continue to grow. We've lost a few of those groups. But the two that survived are doing well.



A lot of the organizations that came from that period in time, had done a lot of strong anti-redlining work in the late 1970s and the early 1980s around the creation of the community reinvestment act, forcing banks to begin to reinvest in neighborhoods around the country. In 1988 most groups had created community development corporations around that time and were able to work CRA under agreement and were able to not have to challenge a bank around CRA's but were able to negotiate with these new entities that Chase and Chemical and other banks New York had created. So, the question was: Were there still economic fights to be had? At that time, our organization took on a major campaign that took four years of targeting the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation.

At the moment, we are confronted with massive school overcrowding in our area. We met this problem of stabilizing the neighborhoods, but people are still moving in our area in droves, so we have massive school overcrowding. At that time, we were confronting our successes against the anti-redlining campaign in that the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation moved into our turf and decided to put mortgages on 700 apartment buildings. Unfortunately, they were doing that in a very speculative way, so they were competing with Wall Street. People all over the country thought we were insane. Our national network didn't give us support. They said, "What the hell are you talking about? We're still trying to get Freddie Mac to invest in other places. You've got 700 Freddie Mac mortgages and you're complaining about it?" And we said, "Yeah, because it's going to create building deterioration and increasing rents and making it less affordable for people to live here. If they're going to lend, they have to lend the way we tell them to."

For our NWBCCC, community organizing was all about having control over the decisions that were going to affect our day-to-day lives in the neighborhoods and building up enough power to do that. In terms of where we are now, we also often say that organizing is as American as apple pie. We did a "hit" this past April when we went to Senator Ross's home in Delaware. He's the Chair of the United States Finance Committee. He's a very wealthy individual and lives in a very exclusive area, outside of Wilmington, Delaware. When twenty people showed up at his door with an apple pie, they were all invited inside and had a chat with him.

In terms of where we're at right now, I think we're in a period of alliances. Some of the networks really need to realize that they have to work with one another. For example, yesterday our New York City Board chair and the NYC Board Chair of Acorn when together to meet with Chuck Shumer. Something like that would have never happened last year. This weekend in Chicago, ACORN and NTIC- affiliated organizations will do a joint action. That would not have happened three months ago. As far as the theme of the seminar being around CUNY and Labor organizing, Finally, I think that the Working Families party here in New York is probably one of the most exciting examples of where that could lead when you see ACORN doing a tremendous amount of work in terms of identifying unions that want to move some type of progressive agenda. Thank you.

## **Conclusion**

After some discussion, our facilitator Esperanza Martell reemphasized that we are living in a

privatization era, but all the stories shared by the audience members demonstrated that social action is alive and well in New York City.

December 17th 1999 - Workplace Organizing with Immigrants: Challenges in making Labor/Community Connections

Tarry Hum, Asst. Professor, Dept. Of Urban Studies at Queens College; Mike Donovan & Jerry Dominguez, Local 169, U.N.I.T.E.; Monica Santana, The Latino Workers Center; Margaret McHugh New York Immigrant Coalition; Carmella Chen Chinese Staff & Workers Association National Mobilization Against Sweatshops

The presentations and discussion that are summarized here were based on brief presentations made by our guests and questions that the participants addressed to the speakers at the beginning of the seminar around the theme mentioned above. Terry Mizrahi facilitated the discussion.

**Tarry Hum- Immigrant Economies and the New York City Garment Industry**

I'm going to talk about the different strategies of the government in terms of addressing the garment industry that comprises a combination of carrots & sticks. I think the immigrant community is going to feel more the sticks and maybe benefit very little from the carrots. My own involvement in the garment industry is both personal and professional (academic). I'm the first-generation woman in my family that does not work in the garment factory- both my maternal and paternal grandmothers and my mother worked as sewing- machine operators in the NY garment industry. As a community planner, I'm also interested in immigrant economies- in particular, the dual-nature of immigrant economic activity as both a revitalizing force in the sense that immigrants have been key to revitalizing urban neighborhoods and many industries- including the garment industry. Yet because immigrant economic activity is concentrated in marginal industries immigrant economies also reproduce a great deal of exploitation and inequality. So, my work centers on moving beyond conventional definitions of community development (beyond small business ownership). It's clear that for many immigrant groups, while small business ownership may be common, the goals of equity, workforce development, and community wealth are not.

I'd like to give you a status of where the garment industry is now. It remains a vital source of employment for Asian and Latino immigrants, despite that it has been declining for many years. Nation-wide employment in the garment industry peaked in 1973, with 1.4 million jobs. By 1997 (the latest figures we have), employment in the garment industry fell by 40%. By the year 2005, the Bureau of Labor Statistics expects that employment will continue to fall in the garment industry. While NYC remains a key production center in the U.S garment industry, its share of the national employment in power production has declined from 24% in the late 1950s to 8% in 1996. Over the past 4 decades the number of garment jobs in NYC has fallen as well. In addition to declining number of jobs, the real wages of garment workers (that is the wages after they have been adjusted for inflation) have also been declining in the past few decades, indicating greater working poverty.

A power production has always been a labor-intensive process because of the nature of fabrics, which makes it difficult to mechanize the assembly or the production of clothing. In the majority of jobs, (close to three-quarters) in the garment industry are labor intensity sewing machine



operators jobs. Most of these are held by immigrant Asian and Latino women. Since the capital requirements for setting up a garment shop is minimal, many immigrants seek self-employment as sub-contractors, with access to cheap labor as their key competitive advantage. There are approximately 45 hundred manufacturing firms located in NYC, of which 4 thousand are contractors and 500 are designers or manufactures. Immigrants own between 1,700 -2,000 of the contracting facilities in NYC. It is in these small shops that the majority of garment workers are employed. In addition to these firms, the New York State Department of Labor estimates that the number of sweatshops is between 1,500 to 2,500.

Finally, another trend, which has important implications in terms of the relationship between labor/workplace issues and community issues, is the formation of new sites of garment production, outside of Manhattan. Although Manhattan still accounts for 60% of garment employment, many garment contractors are moving to the surrounding boroughs in search of cheaper rents and a non-unionized work force. The garment industry is becoming a key part of the local economy of many immigrants' neighborhoods, including Sunset park and Williamsburg in Brooklyn. Some recent reports on NYC's garment industry include public testimony on sweatshops that was held 2 years ago in Sunset Park sponsored by Assemblyman Felix Ortiz. The testimonies emphasize the brutality if the work conditions in the garment industry and the subsequent costs in terms of worker's health and well-being. Another recent study is by Mark Levinton at the Community Service Society, who investigates whether the garment industry is a viable source of employment for welfare recipients. He finds a declining industry faced with high international competition.

I will now direct my comments towards local policy responses to improving the conditions of NYC's garment industry. Essentially, the government employs a two-prong strategy, which I stated earlier is a "carrots and sticks" approach. The "sticks" is the policing and regulation of garment shops that violate standard labor, health & safety laws. This includes an array of legislative tools, including the Unpaid Wages Legislation that was recently passed by the New York State Assembly. Part of the "sticks" approach is also to hold a greater number of players in the chain of liability, such as retailers and manufactures accountable for labor law violation. The "carrots" are incentives and substitutes for legitimate firms to upgrade their production and technology. These "carrots" represent economic development strategies or innovations that are being employed to sustain and improve the garment industry. The central premise is that NYC garment industry has a very important competitive advantage- its location. It's located in a global fashion center. That serves as a unique niche in NYC garment in serving the rapid changing women's fashion oriented apparel lines. Current economic development policies emphasize how to better develop and serve this niche through upgrading manufacturing technology, managerial and workforce skills, strengthening relationships between manufactures and retailers through a quick response system. It is also important to expand local and global export markets. While I think that the enforcement of labor standards and holding manufacturers and retailers accountable for their part in creating substandard work conditions are absolutely necessary strategies, my sense is that the immigrant sector of the garment industry will only receive the "stick" form of government intervention and not the "carrot". They will not get the resources that will be necessary to plan or develop economic strategies that address immigrant workers needs and issues in terms of skills development or the effects of working poverty in their communities.

The implications of this two-prong strategy may be a further segmentation of NYC's garment industry where immigrant workers employed primarily in immigrant-owned firms will be concentrated in the marginal sectors of the garment industry, pursuing a low road strategy of development. This observation is shaped by the experience of the development of a business incubator in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, which just had an opening in September 1999. This garment incubator space is part of the Borough President's larger vision of reestablishing a garment industrial center. These tenants will benefit from tax substitutes. They will also receive technical assistance. Community involvement was key in gaining designation of Sunset Park as the site to receive the garment incubator. This development is indicative of the kinds of policies that will be pursued to sustain the garment industry- to pursue this high road of development that is focused on the specialized niche in the industry.

**Mike Donovan, Local 169, U.N.I.T.E.**

U.N.I.T.E represents the workers in the needle trade and apparel industries, but the campaigns we have been running lately have been away from the garment industry and more towards the service sector where the jobs have been created in the United States. Since 1975, 90% of the work created in the U.S has been in the service sector. Obviously, there is some shrinkage going on here and as Terry mentioned its our industry that is getting nailed more than any (the textile industry). We have one major campaign against the Green Grocery Stores in the Lower east Side.

Local 169 is a union that is headed by a man named Ernesto Jofray, a Chilean refugee committed to immigrant rights. UNITE was founded by immigrants. Things that are required for our difficult campaigns are a commitment of resources- money, legal, and personnel. We're an independent local within UNITE, so we are able to carry this out. We have to have a contact between the immigrant groups. This contact has to someone who is dynamic and a leader. We've been able to target two. One is Jerry Dominguez. Jerry's been working with the Mexican groups. He came to us through an organization he founded called Mexican American Worker's Association. The other gentlemen is Mamadou Camaro who is an African from Mali, working with the delivery personnel in the supermarkets on the Upper east & West sides. We are trying to get a campaign up among the delivery personnel in the stores (about 600 in the NYC area). The final component is getting workers who are prepared and willing to fight. There's nothing more discouraging than when you find these pockets of exploitation and we can't find anybody to set up. There are reasons for that. Immigrant workers are not unlike American workers. They're afraid when the boss says something. They also have the additional problem of immigration. The workers that we are going after are almost 100% undocumented. We find them covered by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. They have rights in the workplace. They even have labor rights. They can belong to unions. The one right that we have that they don't have is the right to stay in this country.

**Jerry Dominguez, Local 169, U.N.I.T.E.**

Almost ten years ago I crossed the river. I was an illegal alien in this county. I worked as a farm worker in Florida and South Carolina, etc. We used to be exposed to pesticides very often. We worked from sunrise to sunset. No Holidays. Sometimes we used to make \$12 a day or \$20 a day in terrible conditions. When I arrived to NYC, I found the same conditions. Through the

Mexican American Workers Association, we decided to do something. We knocked on many doors. Most of them were shut in our faces stating that the Mexican community is not ready to fight. We are undocumented. We don't speak the language. We are afraid. So, forget about it! So, we said, "O.k. You don't want to help us, so we're going to do it by ourselves." We started boycotting 17 stores in Brighton Beach and luckily 169 came and said they could help. Even though we were boycotting all these stores, and just trying to get minimal wage to start with some basic things, we didn't have the legal knowledge, the economic power, or political connections, which is what Local 169 was providing. We had a very hard time. Our lives were threatened. Somehow these people were not expecting that the Mexican people could organize and join forces. For them it was as though nothing was going on. They used to come in our faces and tell us, "If you keep organizing, we're gonna kill you!" But we kept going. Fortunately, some of the workers began supporting us because they got increases in their salaries. From making \$200 a week, working 12 hours a day, six days a week. Making \$300 dollars from \$200 was a big change. So, of them thought, "We don't need the union. We have money." We went in to fight elections, because the National Labor Relations Board asked the workers if they wanted a union. They had to vote. So, we went in to fight an election; we lost for that reason. We won one single election, but the NLRB cannot force this employer to bargain with us- to have a contract.

Based on those experiences, we went into the Lower East Side, where many community groups are helping us. The workers in Manhattan are a little more militant. We have some workers that are on strike for more than three months. We have the Blake & Todd workers that are volunteering and helping us. So, we are showing that we are ready to fight! We really want a better life for ourselves, but we also don't want people to feel pity for us. Pity is the wrong attitude. If you want to help the workers, you have to go and empower them. Tell them, "You are very smart. You are very powerful. Just organize! We are here to support you." If you make them feel as though they are less than you, you won't connect with them. There are certain things that you need to know about these workers. For instance, there are certain cultural aspects- they like to go to parties. They like it. So, if you are an organizer who thinks you don't have time for parties, they will ignore you. There is another key element is this campaign- an I.D. card. An I.D. for them is better than gold. They need it for everything and they don't have it. When you give them an I.D. that means they are somebody. So, we give them I.D.'s to say that they are temporary members of Local 169. So far, the Attorney general has been involved, and the U.S. Labor department. This is very good for us. One year ago, we didn't have that support. We hope to further expand.

### **Camilla Chen, National Mobilization Against Sweatshops**

N-Mass started out a few years ago as part of the Chinese Staff & Workers Center. We then became our own organization because our mission became to fight sweatshops. We are trying to fight against this whole sweatshop system that says, "You are not a human being. You are just here to make money for us". We do campaigns that focus on grassroots worker's power. The focus of today's session is immigrant labor. We've found that it's hard to just talk about immigrants because even if you are documented, you spend so much time trying to get your papers. Once you got your papers, you still can't do anything. We doing a campaign right now called, "Ain't I a woman?" We're having a demonstration tomorrow. Some of the workers

involved in this are sewing clothes for DKNY in Mid-Town Manhattan. Some of them are documented but they still cannot use the bathroom. They cannot take phone calls. They still get money stolen from them. They are still treated like animals. You have to fight for more than just papers. One woman was telling me, “Now I have papers. I feel like a slave with papers.” You have to have a bigger vision.

You also have to think bigger in terms of immigrant or American-born. I was born here. I’m a paralegal and college-educated. I can’t leave at night to take care of what I need to take care of. Is that what we come here for? As immigrants, we come here so we can get papers and be a slave with papers. They actually want to fire me now because they say I’m not supposed to leave at 5:30 Pm. I have to leave when “they want me to leave”.

The “Ain’t I a woman” campaign started when some women came into our worker’s center. Donna Karen fired them for speaking out about long hours, unpaid overtime, padlocked bathrooms, and racist comments towards Asian & Latinas. The campaign was started so that the women can get reinstated as workers; get all their back wages they are owed, a public apology from Donna Karen and a promise to stop intimidating people and guarantee that her clothing is made in a law-abiding factory.

The reason we call the campaign “Ain’t I a woman?” is because the female workers were being treated like slaves. Donna Karen is someone who made her money by designing clothes for the working woman. What about the working women under your nose? It’s called “Ain’t I a woman?” because we want to liberate ourselves from the modern-day slavery. We talk in this campaign about all different kinds of women workers issues. One of the biggest issues is that a lot of women spend about 50 hours at home taking care of their kids, taking care of the house, etc and that’s considered their duty. No, that’s work. Women do two jobs. They work outside of the house and they work inside of the house. Why is that not considered work? Why is it when you don’t have a job outside of the house, you’re considered lazy?

A lot of times this country actually encourages illegal immigrants. They make-believe they don’t want people coming over the border, but they do. They want the cheap labor. That’s what this country was built on. It was built on free labor and now cheap labor and it continues. They want Asian and Latino people to come over undocumented. The more undocumented people that come here, the worse working conditions will become. I feel like the undocumented will always come here. They will always come to the U.S. they will always come to NYC. You can’t do anything to stop undocumented people. Everyone is looking for a better life. The only thing you can do is fight for a better life once you’re here.

### **Monica Santana-Latino Worker’s Center (speaking in Spanish with some translation)**

I work for a community organization called the Latino Worker’s center. This organization deals with labor and community issues. We’re a relatively young organization, approximately 5 years old. We are focused on labor and community campaigns, mobilizing workers. Our organizing methodology focuses on the leadership development of women and of the community in general. Our organization has developed various campaigns. In the development of those campaigns we have experimenting with different tactics depending on the changing needs of the community we

serve. Originally, our intentions were to organize around the issues of injustice that our people have encountered in garment work, home care, maintenance, restaurant/deli workers, supermarkets, service delivery, etc. An essential part of our campaign was to educate the public about labor issues and the need for the organization to help improve the work and life conditions of the community. In 1996, we started to see results of our efforts around certain restaurants that we targeted. As we continued to develop our campaign, we realized that in the community we worked, a lot of the workers were undocumented. In that process of organizing people, we realized that when we won a campaign victory around labor issues, the results were still not good because workers would be fired and dismissed. This made us integrate immigration issues along with labor issues in our organizing work. We then educated workers on the effects that changes in immigration policies had on their lives.

The last three years, we have been working and combining all of these factors- the promoting of labor rights, the demand of a law for international amnesty to give the possibility for undocumented workers to obtain documents that authorize them to work. 1997 and 1998 were very active years at the Latino Workers center because immigration was strict, and as a result many people were deported. With the changes in immigration law and in public assistance, there was a displacement of people. Many of these people began looking for work- the same work that had very bad working conditions. Now that people were more vulnerable and in more need, it leads them to accept even worse working conditions. If any worker spoke out about the abuse they were automatically fired. They caused people to accept all the horrid work conditions, for fear of being fired from a job they desperately needed. We've worked in alliances with the religious sector, with some unions, and with various community-based organizations.

In the beginning of this year, we began a national coalition with various organizations that all support the national campaign for general amnesty. This coalition recently did a demonstration in Washington in which we mobilized over 20,000 people. Within this coalition are various groups from a wide variety of religious sectors and different labor and union groups. We are now developing our plan for next year.

### **Margaret McHugh, New York Immigrant Coalition**

Our coalition has been around since the late 1980s. The main things that we focus on are immigration policy, as well as education policy, health care, housing and political empowerment. After the 1996 laws we have been involved in a lot of social services. I think that a lot of groups that have been involved in the immigrant rights field have been hit with a tidal wave with the 1996 law that passed regarding immigration & welfare. Social service has been a big focus also for us. In terms of the labor issues, we have a number of groups in our coalition that have been doing really wonderful work at the grassroots level on organizing issues. It's work that everyone is really proud of but there's always been a disconnect about having there be a policy agenda that all of the other groups that work on immigrant rights could really connect to and move forward. Part of that has to do with this country's climate right now.

I wanted to talk about how things have changed in the last ten years. First, there's a dramatic shift under way in terms of organized labor and its orientation towards immigrants. The labor union movement had its roots with immigrants. Immigrants started the labor union movement in this country but then over a few decades, we got away from those roots and suddenly labor groups were very anti-immigrant and tried to protect the jobs of native-born workers. The



perception was that native-born workers were against foreign-born workers and the idea that foreign-born workers were going to undercut their wages. Unfortunately, we have the labor movement to thank for most of the worst anti-immigrant laws of this country. A lot of the worst anti-immigration laws were very heavily supported by organized labor. That may not feel very relevant to us locally, but it is huge when you look at the national picture. How labor weighs in or doesn't weigh in has a really huge impact. In the last 10-15 years, the labor movement has been dying or feeling that they were losing their base. John Sweeney and other people came in with a real focus on organizing. As they tried to organize, all they found were immigrant workers. Unions like SEIU, who do service-sector organizing, are now ascendant within organized labor. They are where all of the new energy of the movement is coming from and it's all immigrants that they are working with. It's created some uncomfortable dynamics nationally within the AFL and a real power struggle over the immigrant issues. In fact, a special commission was appointed a few months ago to have the AFL to look at its position on immigrant issues. This is significant because, it's largely organized labor that supported employer sanctions, the law in 1986 that created the circumstances that everyone is talking about in work places. The fact that organized labor is revisiting its position on employer sanctions is really big news. The second thing is that AFL is also revisiting its position on amnesty. This could also change the political landscape. So, these are things that are happening that could really take us in a different direction.

Now, you have people like Allan Greenspan talking about "how good immigrants are". It's a scary thing that someone who is the ultimate, free-market economy conservative type of guy. It's an uncomfortable place to be. The country is turning more pro-immigrant right now. Part of this is because the economy is booming- and more immigrants are needed for a lot of the jobs that are being created. But, what kinds of jobs are we bringing people into? I think this is a hard moment for people who do immigrant rights work- to be saying on the one hand, enjoying that there are these new opportunities to try to get people legal status and move forward with all these immigrant policy questions because the economy is doing so well. But there are all the downsides of what kind of work situations are you bringing people into. These people are vulnerable and have a hard time with these jobs they are brought into. Secondly, what happens when we inevitably hit a recession? I don't think we are building infrastructure or public dialogue about the long-term commitment to immigration here in the U.S. and how it should not just be a function of the market dynamics. What we hear sounds pro-immigrant, but it's all employer driven. It's all about the needs of the employer.

I wonder a lot about what it means for labor to be more supportive on these issues. It's not going to be helpful if labor comes on more pro-immigrant and puts forward a lot of controversial proposals that even their membership, for the most part, is not going to agree with and then they stand back and watch the fight happen. If they come out pro-amnesty or anti-employer sanctions, and then back away and don't do the really deep work that needs to happen to pull their membership along with those issues, it could ultimately be more destructive than helpful. For those of those who have connections, it's important to make sure that there's more commitment on the issues. A hopeful side in the state level in New York is that the state AFL has made a commitment to making progress on a lot of farmworker issues. I think it's embarrassing for labor to see just how awful the conditions are for farmworkers. I think this is an example of a good way to direct this new energy- to have the traditional labor constituency speak up for immigrants. I

think the fundamental problem with immigrants in the workplace is the legal status issue. I think this is the issue that makes immigrant workers so much more vulnerable than other low-wage workers.

Lastly, I think that this could be a different year for worker rights. I think we've all evolved to the point where there are a real set of policies that people can join together and push forward on. On the city level, the taxi workers alliance has a whole set of proposals that really could move forward at the city council. At the state level, it really looks like there will be movement of the farm worker issues. If enough people get behind them, they could get a whole set of protections that had not previously existed. There's also a lot of unfinished business around the unpaid wages act. Local groups did a terrific job of organizing around passing this act a few years ago, but there hasn't been enough money put into enforcing it. That's a real agenda that could make a big difference. There are also various types of amnesty issues nationally. It's a campaign year and everyone is courting the Latino vote.

Part of the strategies here are to (1) get people legal status, (2) to try and change the fundamental legal structure that people are working with in the workplace, and (3) to raise the threshold about the conditions that people are coming into. All of these things have movement right now and we can work on them together. Immigrants have not mattered to anyone in elected office because they cannot vote. A huge number of immigrants have come through the citizenship process, and finally there are enough numbers in places like New York and California to make a difference in elections. I think that's the only thing that is going to make people pay attention. Although we may be ambivalent about the current electoral system, I really think that voting is a real path to making real change on the immigrant rights issue.

### **Community and Labor Organizing**

January 14th, 2000 - Three Visions of Organizing for the New Millennium

Richie Perez, National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights

#### **Richie Perez - The Socio-Economic Context in which we do our Organizing**

I'm a life-long NYC resident, a graduate of CUNY, Morris High School in the Bronx. I've lived in the Bronx for most of my life until I fell in love with a woman who lived in Brooklyn. So, then I had to make that move. I've been a community organizer, I was a public high school teacher for five years, I joined the Young Lords in the late 60s, and I taught Black & Puerto Rican Studies at the University level for 15 years. I was active in the movement to free the Puerto Rican Nationalists. I helped found a group called the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights and for the last 19 years I have been leading the organization's work in terms of police brutality and racially-motivated violence. Most recently in the last 5 years, we been doing a lot of work with youth organization, including gangs in the Latino community and were successful in negotiating a truce, which is still in effect between the Latin Kings and the Netas, two of the largest Latino street organizations and actually recruited a few dozen of those members to be active in the political movement, especially working on the issue of police brutality.

My area of discussion today is the socio-economic context, in which we do our organizing. I'm talking about globalization and changes in the U.S. economy that have links to the increased prison population and some other changes in social policy. A few years ago, the NY Times ran

an article called “The Downsizing of America.” The series told readers that in one-third of all households in the country, a family member had lost a job. The NY Times reported that workers with at least some college education made up the majority of people whose jobs were eliminated in the last five years.<sup>[3]</sup> In addition to downsizing here, American corporations have found a way to maximize profits by moving to low-wage nations abroad and closing factories here. This “global factory” is one cause of the deindustrialization of the U.S. Manufacturing jobs are disappearing, while most new jobs are in the lower-paying service sectors.

Globalization and deindustrialization don’t result in higher unemployment. They cause a ripple effect. Generally, for each manufacturing job that is lost, three-and-a-half additional jobs are affected—in support industries, service industries and in local small businesses. As jobs are lost, local governments face a drop in income from both corporate taxes and local taxes paid by employees. At the same time, the demand for social services goes up, as newly unemployed members of the community try to adjust and survive. One study estimated that every 1% increase in unemployment, lasting for 6 years, is associated with 37,000 deaths, 920 suicides, 650 homicides, 500 deaths from cirrhosis of the liver, 4,000 state mental health admissions, and 3,300 state prison admissions.<sup>[4]</sup>

Taken together, globalization, deindustrialization, and the restructuring of the economy have resulted in a decreased need for both unskilled labor AND educated workers. There has been a shift to a low-paying service and high-technology economy—the “Two Cities” theory manifests itself again. However, most people of color are kept out of the high tech and growth sector of the economy through constantly increasing educational requirements and outright discrimination. The American economy, as it is structured today, cannot absorb all those who want to work; and it cannot reward its members for hard work and education.

Corresponding to a decline in America’s need for our labor, today, we see public schools in inner city communities being allowed to deteriorate educationally and physically. We also see the doors to the universities being shut in our faces. Those of us who survive the public school system, and go on, face growing obstacles in the colleges too. Open Admissions are dead; and tuition rises every year. Cuts in financial aid coincide with the nationwide attack on special admissions programs, ethnic studies, and student support services. The economy does not need our young people; and it seems everything possible is being done to blunt our educational dreams.

### **How this Plays out on the Local Level**

The NY city economy is deeply divided. We live in a two-tier economy—in “Two Cities”. In three key measures of economic health, unemployment, job growth, and the local rate of inflation, New York is amongst the weakest urban economies. New York has an unemployment rate of almost 10%; it is about 50% for Black and Latino youth. The city ranks ninth in job creation among the ten largest cities. Approximately 90,000 elementary students don’t have classroom seats. These realities are the result of policy choices and spending decisions that have been made by the mayor and his municipal government. For example, in 1996, the budget of the Youth Services Department spent an estimated \$10 million on a new “Youth Strategy”, which consisted of approximately 150,000 “interventions” with youth, picking up school truants and filing two kinds of juvenile reports on youth perceived to be acting “improperly.”<sup>[5]</sup>



Deep cuts to youth programs and the increase in juvenile arrests go hand in hand. A 1997 report by the Citizen's Committee concluded that with declines in funding and roughly 1 in 14 youths arrested annually by the NYPD, youths age 13 to 20 have a greater chance of getting arrested than they do of getting a job after school or having a community youth program to go to after school (Citizen's Committee: Keeping Track of Children," 1997). Is it any wonder that increasing numbers of us believe that government has adopted a policy of replacing the coach with the cop. During Giuliani's first year in office, juvenile arrests jumped to 98,553, an increase of 22,229 over 1993. "Four out of five arrests in Giuliani's first year were for non-violent offenses such as disorderly conduct and drug possession, and half were for violations so minor that they did not require fingerprints, just a summons according to the Division of Criminal Justice." Arrests of youth for disorderly conduct, a charge that is used to cover everything from hanging out on a corner to playing a radio that a cop decides is "too loud", jumped from 4,516 in 1993 to 7,579 in 1994. The NYPD's "quality of life" sweeps are jailing an average of 280 young people a day for activities like playing loud music, not having "proper identification", loitering, and drinking beer in the streets.<sup>[6]</sup>

Hundreds of people are spending hours, even days in crowded holding cells, just waiting to be charged. Former police commissioner Bratton predicted that his "quality of life" street sweeps would "probably" result in some people's rights being violated; but that it was worth it. (NY Times, 6/20/96). These arrests are not making our communities safer! They are ADDING to the worries families now have about their loved one's safety. Communities of color, in particular, are being told that in order to fight certain forms of crime, we must accept widespread violations of civil and human rights and an increase of police abuse- a different kind of crime.

## Conclusions

Today, as globalization and deindustrialization bring profound changes to the U.S., we see an economy that cannot provide jobs for all who want them; and we watch as the youth of our communities are locked out of the U.S. economy. The only program America seems to be willing to invest in for our young people is expanded prison spending. We see our youth become the raw material that these prisons process- while whole upstate communities thrive from prison-related industries. Indeed, the prison industry is one of the fastest-growing and most profitable in the country. Today, families consider themselves lucky if their children grow up without being arrested or killed. May inner city youth consider it a rite of passage to go to jail; they EXPECT to be arrested and jailed. This is a crime that has been committed against; the lowering of our expectations, the taking away of hope from young people. police brutality and institutionalized cover-ups that invariably follow are part of this crime.

[Note: Unfortunately, the Visions of Ellen Gurzinsky from The Funding Exchange and Safiya Bandele, from Medgar Evers College were not recorded.]

[1] Also see Fisher, R (1994). *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America*.

[2] *Passin' it On: 25 Years Organizing the Northwest Bronx Mass Transit Street Theater & Video*. (718) 882-2454.

[3] *NY Times*, March. 3, 1996.

[4] Data from *The Deindustrialization of America*.

[5] 1996 City Project report: "Doing Less with Less, Doing Less with More."

[6] *Newsday*, November 27, 1995.



**Integrating Distance Learning Technologies into Community Organizing  
Education**

**Report on an HCSSW Distance Learning Program Grant  
Award**

**Prepared by Kallen Tsikalas, Educational Technology Consultant  
April 1, 2000**

**Distance Learning Project was sponsored by the Education Center for  
Community Organizing (ECCO) and the Community Organizing and  
Planning Sequence of the Hunter College School of Social Work**

**Terry Mizrahi, Ph.D. Professor and ECCO Director**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Integrating Distance Learning Technologies into Education in Community Organizing

The purpose of this pilot project was to explore and demonstrate how distance learning technologies, specifically two-way videoconferencing, might be employed to support and enhance higher education in community organizing and practice. Our *key challenges* in this endeavor were to find ways that videoconferencing could:

Support collaboration among students, between students and organizers in the field, and with expert or policy-level organizers; and

Enhance students' understandings of the nuances (social, political, attitudinal, etc.) of the communities in which they were working or could potentially be working.

During the period from 1998-1999, we implemented two pilot videoconferences in community organizing courses at Hunter College School of Social Work (HCSSW). These were: **An Organizers' Exchange between** HCSSW students and staff at LEAP, a Connecticut-based youth and community leadership organization; and a **Case Study Roundtable with** HCSSW students, organizers from New Settlement Apartments in the Bronx, and Professor Melvin Delgado from Boston University.

We learned that distance learning experiences can indeed enhance education in community organizing. They make possible conversations and sharing that might otherwise be difficult or impossible because of the distances between participants. They require faculty and student presenters to be more cognizant of and strategic in their use of time and media (camera angles as well as information displayed). They result in production of artifacts (videotapes) that are themselves valuable educational and archival resources that:

To increase the effectiveness of distance learning experiences for education in community organizing, we recommend

Videoconferencing events be structured in such a way as to alternate relatively long (15-25 minute) presentation periods with shorter (5-10 minute) comment/question periods. This chunking strategy allows time for technical glitches as well as unplanned (tangential) conversations which are often especially relevant to participants. Participants be prepared in advance for each other and the live video medium. Such preparation might include background readings, prior class discussions and e-mail exchanges. This enables "air-time" to be used more effectively--focused on the discussion of deeper issues (strategies, successes, challenges, and conflicts).

Additional technologies (most likely Internet technologies) be investigated and acquired to enable a more facile connection between low-tech and high-tech environments. This is particularly important if we want to involve authentic community sites that may not have access to high-end, two-way videoconferencing facilities. These groups *are* likely to have Internet access in the future.

Multiple media (photos, data graphs, notes taken on the whiteboard) be used in presentations. Video artifacts, recorded during these events, be made available in the library or on the web as resources for students enrolled in CO classes and as continuing education opportunities for alumni working in the field.

### Integrating Distance Learning Technologies into

# **Community Organizing Education**

## **(Report on an HCSSW Distance Learning Program Grant Award)**

**Prepared by Kalen Trikala's, Educational Technology Consultant  
April 1, 2000**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this pilot project was to explore and demonstrate how distance learning technologies, specifically two- way videoconferencing, might be employed to support and enhance undergraduate and graduate education in community organizing and practice.

Community organizing and practice education at Hunter College School of Social Work (HCSSW) differs from more traditional courses of academic study in some noteworthy ways. Most importantly, it privileges situated and social learning. Situated learning theory, pioneered by John Dewey in the early 1900s, maintains that “learning is a necessary incident of dealing with real situations.” (Dewey, 1915, p. 4) Social learning theory asserts that people learn by directly interacting with others (teachers, peers, mentors) in whom they observe certain skills and strategies being modeled and with whom they may practice these behaviors themselves (Bandura, 1977).

Graduate students are required to do a field practicum for 400 hours per year. Here, they are encouraged to critically examine and evaluate the theories of community and models of community organizing to which they have been introduced in class. They are also expected to learn from seasoned organizers in developing and refining their own skills and strategies, including: Identifying and assessing problems in the context of the political interests and commitments of community stakeholders; developing goals and objectives that are clear, appropriate, and actionable for a particular community; conceptualizing and implementing plans within the constraints of institutional policies and regulations; handling diverse viewpoints and conflict/confrontation; and establishing and working within group structures such as collaborations and coalitions.

Experiential (situated) and collaborative (social) learning are central to community organizing education. In such, our key challenge in trying to meaningfully integrate distance learning technologies was to find ways in which videoconferencing could:

Support collaboration among students, between students and organizers in the field, and with expert or policy- level organizers; and

Enhance students’ understandings of the nuances (social, political, attitudinal, etc.) of the communities in which they were working or could potentially be working.

Keeping this in mind, Professor Terry Mizrahi and I proposed to investigate three different models/scenarios of technology integration. These included:

1. Case Study Roundtables. This model was based upon the very established practice of Grand Rounds, in which medical doctors present patient cases (complete with evidence of the problem, diagnoses and treatment) to students. For our purposes, we envisioned that one CO student and his/her field supervisor would present a case at the Hunter facility. Advertised in advance and

open to interested community organizers in the area, this presentation would be broadcast to node sites. Participants at these sites would be able to raise questions and enter into dialogue with the presenters. Role of technology: In this model, we hypothesized that the videoconferencing technology would increase the number and diversity of organizers able to participate, and hence the richness of the discussion, by offering numerous locations (the node sites) from which they could join the conversation.

2. Distributed Panel Presentations - Debates. Somewhat similar to the Case Study Roundtable, this model involved discussions of contemporary topics in community organizing rather than case presentations. In the model, we envisioned that participants at both the hub and node sites (on the I-Net backbone) would make presentations, taking different positions on important and controversial issues in the field. Expert organizers would be placed at each site to moderate questions and facilitate local conversations off-line. Role of technology: We hypothesized that the primary role of videoconferencing technology in this model would be psychological. By creating an atmosphere similar to a televised political debate, we expected the forum to be more engaging (charged) and more accurate than otherwise. We also felt that the products of these distributive panels (videotapes of the debates) would be useful educational tools.

3. Organizers Exchanges. In this model, we envisioned that organizers on the ground level (at community-based organizations) would initiate and participate in exchanges. The occasion of such events would be gatherings of constituents, activist teach-ins, etc., and students at HCSSW would essentially be observers of these processes, able to pose questions indirectly of the events' leaders/facilitators. Technology in this model was to be decidedly low-end, as is typical of most organizing environments. At most, we expected the CBOs to have T1 Internet access and low-end videoconferencing software such as Sesame through which they would connect to the Hunter facility. Role of technology: In the Organizers Exchanges, we believed that video conferencing could help students better understand the authentic and varied contexts of organizing in which they might find themselves practicing. It would do this by making visible elements of these contexts (the physical environment, constituents, nature of conversations, etc.) that otherwise would not be seen.

### **Documentation of Activities**

While we planned to implement each of these models/scenarios at least once during a semester-long CO seminar, constraints imposed by scheduling, required preparatory work, and the technology itself prevented us from doing so. Instead, we conducted a total of two videoconferencing events in two separate community organizing courses. One occurred during the fall of 1998; the second during the fall of 1999. Neither of these events followed the model templates described above. Rather, they each combined elements of Models 1 and 3.

#### **Event #1: Organizers Exchange on Youth Development & Community Development**

Planning. Considerable effort went into planning this Organizers Exchange. Because a prior relationship had not existed between Professor Mizrahi and the staff at LEAP, some time was required to establish common goals and agree on what each group would be gaining from the interaction. In this regard, it was determined that the LEAP activists, most of whom were recent college graduates with little formal training in community organizing (CO) or social work, were

most interested in learning just what students in a formal CO course of study acquired from the experience. They were also interested in new developments related to welfare policy. Prof. Mizrahi indicated that she felt her CO students might be most interested in and best served by a joint problem-solving session in which very concrete strategies were discussed. She indicated that they wanted “desperately to talk about things that are happening in the field.”

In addition to “getting acquainted,” it was important to establish among participants why we were attempting the event: What would the videoconference enable that otherwise would not occur? Because LEAP is not locally based, it was easy to justify the videoconference on the grounds that a physical meeting between the CO students and LEAP staff would not be likely to occur.

Time was also required to discuss the videoconferencing medium itself and idiosyncrasies that it might introduce to forum. It was acknowledged, for instance, that the sequence of presenters was important and that we must alternate from site to site to keep audiences at both sites fully engaged. Similarly, speakers had to learn to look at the camera, rather than directing their eyes to the people they were addressing--a behavior which required practice and caused some to feel disingenuous.

Finally, a number of phone calls and contacts were required to secure logistics for the event. Most importantly, it was necessary to find a videoconferencing facility in Connecticut from which LEAP could participate.

**Implementation.** This event took place on December 8, 1998. It involved approximately 20 students in Professor Terry Mizrahi’s graduate course on Community Organizing and Planning and five staff/youth organizers from Leadership, Education, & Athletics in Partnership (LEAP). LEAP is a youth development and leadership initiative based in four cities in Connecticut. It has received national attention for its innovative residential and multi-tier mentoring program which trains college students to work as counselors and then places them in communities (mostly housing projects) to mentor high school students (junior counselors) and counsel inner city children and families. The program has been uniquely successful in providing opportunities for young people to serve as teachers and role models while themselves being mentored by college students. Many of LEAP’s junior counselors have become senior counselors and staff members, creating a positive community and continuity of commitment that is rare in such high-poverty, urban neighborhoods.

This event was structured to allow CO students who were working with youth to share experiences, successes, challenges and strategies with the youth organizers from LEAP. Following this exchange, the CO students and LEAP staff were to reflect upon and discuss the relationship between youth development and community development. The program plan for this event was as follows:

15 minutes Prof. Mizrahi introduces the event and outlines its format to CO students. Students view videotape of LEAP that was produced by Good Morning America and formulate their



questions for LEAP.  
(B4 LEAP is connected) •

05 minutes • AV connection established with LEAP.

25 minutes • Welcome and introductions.

Prof. Mizrahi leads and moderates. • Summary of CO questions. Prof. Mizrahi presents questions raised by CO students that are to be addressed by LEAP staff during their 30 minutes presentation.

• Mini-presentations: 2 presentations by CO students; 2 presentations by LEAP staff. Alternating in sequence. 10 minutes • Q&A about presentations. Facilitated by Prof. Mizrahi; questions may be asked by any student in class.

15 minutes • Discussion around focus question: How do we move from individual leadership development to community mobilization and activism? (How do we get people involved in something that not only help their own situation but also helps their community?)

05 minutes • Wrap-up and Good-byes.

Total Time: 1 hour, 45 minutes

**Program evaluation.** In reality, more time was required for technical aspects of the event (to connect LEAP and to establish sound contact) and much less time was available for discussion of the focal question.

Despite these issues, the event was deemed very successful by both the event's planners and participants. Both CO students and LEAP staff indicated that they enjoyed and learned from the presentations and discussion. Most interestingly, participants also felt they learned from (not about) the videoconferencing technology itself. For instance, one CO student indicated that her work involved organizing with people in different states, and she could see potent applications of videoconferencing for their meetings and campaigns. Another student commented that this experience had made her acutely aware of media's power in framing issues for the public. She explained that during the videoconference, she noticed that the camera seemed to manifest a particular point-of-view: It focused on certain people, lingered on certain faces, and zoomed in on certain occasions. All of these visual effects, she noted, conveyed meaning to her about what was important and legitimate. They also suggested that she would need to be cognizant of the role of the recorder (camera, videotape, audiotape) in her own political organizing work.

**Technology evaluation.** Some issues arose specifically in relation to the technology. For instance, when planning for the event with LEAP, we initially thought that this organization could connect through a CUSeeMe/Internet connection at one of their community computer facilities. However, as logistical negotiations progressed, it became evident that high technology and low technology were not so easily integrated. This seemed to be due to both technical and psychological factors.

In terms of transmission speed and audiovisual quality, the Hunter videoconferencing technology far exceeds simple CUSeeMe/Internet videoconferencing technologies. Consequently, any live video from the community-based, CUSeeMe site projected at the Hunter facility would appear sub-standard, with relatively poor resolution, broken-up sound and little editorial polish afforded by camera angles and effects. Similarly, in order for live video from the Hunter facility to be



transmitted to one of LEAP's community computer facilities, it would need to be digitized and then to travel through the Internet along with all the other Internet traffic. The Hunter videoconferencing facility was not set up to transmit live video via the Internet. Additionally, for this demonstration pilot project, the staff there did not feel that it was the best use of their technical capacity to scale down to meet the lowest common denominator of low tech community organizations.

Additionally, questions were raised about the accessibility of the videoconferencing facility. Specifically, participants inquired about the lack of subtitling features in the system. One student in the class was hearing impaired and expressed surprise that these features were not included. He indicated that voice-to-text translation options were widely available.

## **Event #2: Case Study Roundtable**

**Planning.** Planning for this Case Study Roundtable occurred primarily through telephone conversations. Professor Mizrahi spoke individually with the lead participants (Professor Delgado and Ms. Nolan), and she initiated a teleconference with both parties to agree upon a theme and structure for the event and to exchange resources and references. Additionally, background materials, including a bibliography for Delgado, were collected and shared with Hunter students prior to the event. Finally, the lead presenters were also asked to prepare a presentation that included visuals to be projected at the event.

**Implementation.** This event took place on November 19, 1999, and included: Professor Terry Mizrahi; approximately 10 students from Dr. Mizrahi's Seminar on Community and Labor Organizing; a professional community organizer (and alumnus of the HCSSW program) from New Settlement Apartments-- Megan Nolan; a parent activist from New Settlement Apartments (NSA)--Cynthia Cummer; five youth activists from NSA; and Professor Melvin Delgado from Boston University. Delgado is recognized as a leader in the field. His work involves identifying and building upon community assets and capacities, particularly those related to young people.

The topic for this event was community building. Its structure was as follows:

- ~10 minutes • Introductions by Professor Mizrahi and CO students. The students also indicated their questions and interests at this time.
- ~20 minutes • Presentation by Megan Nolan and Cynthia Cummer about the history and philosophy of the New Settlement Apartments and an overview of the community building efforts there.
- ~20 minutes • Presentation by youth organizers about their service and advocacy projects with the Bronx Helpers and Bronx Leaders.
- ~5 minutes • Commentary and questions from Melvin Delgado on these youth initiatives and the general work of the NSA community organizing win
- ~10 minutes Presentation by Cynthia Cummer about parent organizing at NSA.
- ~20 minutes Presentation by Professor Delgado about his own work in community capacity enhancement. Description of projects involving community murals, playgrounds, and sculptures.
- ~15 minutes •Q&A for both groups of presenters.
- ~5 minutes •Closing comments and Good-byes.

Total Time: ~1 hour, 45 minutes

Professor Delgado, appearing from Boston University, was conferenced in prior to the start of this roundtable event. Megan Nolan and other organizers from NSA were present at the HCSSW facility.

**Program Evaluation.** This videoconference proceeded smoothly and seemed extremely effective. Energy was high throughout the entire event, and participants asked a number of questions which indicated that they were building bridges from the information presented to their own placements and practices. One student, for instance, asked the presenters to talk about instances in the projects when collaborating agencies were not responsive and to discuss their strategies for dealing with these situations. Additionally, the presentations were substantive and quite relevant to the topic.

Factors contributing to the success of this case study roundtable included:

1. The event's structure of combining relatively long blocks of presentation time with shorter periods of commentary and questions enabled deep coverage of the topic. Planning for greater amounts of presentation time also reduced the chance that technical problems, if encountered, would significantly upset the flow of activities.
2. Enlisting Professor Delgado (an author and activist whose work the students had read) as an "expert" panelist from afar enhanced the conversation by placing the work of the NSA in the context of a much broader movement.
3. Both groups of presenters and Professor Mizrahi as facilitator used multiple media (photos and the whiteboard) in making their cases and identifying themes and issues. These additional visuals added meaning to the presentations.

Beyond these factors, it is also possible that having an alumnus of the CO program at HCSSW (Ms. Nolan), one who was familiar with the needs of the students as well as the structure of the program, as a key presenter and information funnel increased the event's relevance to students and it minimized the time required for getting acquainted.

#### General Observations and Reflections

From these two events, we learned a great deal about using distance education technologies to support and enhance education in community organizing. Our observations and reflections clustered around four general themes--technical issues; preparation and structural issues; mediation issues (including media issues); and surprises.

**Technical Issues.** We encountered three main technical issues during our pilot research. Initially, we had hoped to include Professor Delgado as an expert panelist for our first organizers exchange event in 1998. However, we quickly found that logistical difficulties of doing so, as well as the expense of involving more than one remote site, were prohibitive. In short, at the time we implemented this event, it was not feasible to conference in more than one external site. While the point may seem trivial, this technical bottleneck did prevent us from exploring other models of using videoconferences to support social and situated learning in community organizing.

. The lack of suitable interfaces to connect high-tech systems (like Hunter's) with low-tech systems (like the Sesame Internet options more readily available to community organizations) limited our capacity to involve these sites as partners. It also hindered our ability explore how videoconferencing might be used as an effective tool for showing students the authentic and varied contexts of organizing (the physical environment, constituents, nature of conversations, etc.) that otherwise they might not see.

. One of the CO students present at these events was hearing impaired. Because the videoconferencing technology did not have subtitling features, it was not inclusive for this student or others like him.

**Preparation and Structural Issues.** Much of the feedback we obtained from participants about these distance learning events related to time and its effective use. We classified these comments as issues of preparation, structure, and mediation, because ultimately time is managed through such processes.

Particularly during the first videoconference, we became aware that time was a costly and rationable commodity. Unlike traditional classes where students might linger to ask more questions or talk individually with presenters, in the videoconference, this was not possible. Here, the time was bounded: the videoconferencing facilities were scheduled for other events following ours, and every minute on the airwaves cost money. As a consequence, students indicated that they felt a certain "loss of intimacy." They commented that the event seemed "scripted" and did not allow for time to stray from the agenda or pursue tangential topics that might in fact greatly enhance the discussion. Additionally, individual interests and questions could not be addressed in this public medium.

The students also suggested that they felt the exchanges did not always go as deep as they would have liked. By the time certain basic situations were clarified, there was no time remaining to explore common issues, dilemmas, strategies, etc. One student volunteered: "It might have helped if we had talked more about this before-hand." Another student noted that she would have liked to have known more what the other sites hoped to gain from the event.

Finally, an issue did arise that seemed unrelated to time. Some participants questioned the value of such videoconferences. One student commented, "I'm confused about how this profession will be able to implement these kinds of things."

In conclusion, we needed to spend a greater amount of time acquainting participants with each other and orienting them to the live video medium itself--through readings, class discussions, and perhaps e-mail exchanges. These introductions done in advance might allow us to optimize time spent together in the more costly and time-constrained videoconferencing environment. We also determined such events needed to be structured so as to provide a little more "wiggle room" in the case that activities did not go quite as planned or that participants wished to pursue different lines of inquiry.

**Mediation Issues.** In this analysis, we have defined mediation liberally to include both media effects and human facilitation.

Regarding media effects, participants in the first event commented that they felt the camera itself did manifest a point of view, and that they were unprepared for the effect of having someone else determine what was to be seen. Given the political nature of much organizing work, it was not surprising that this issue emerged. We recommend that participants explicitly consider the role of the medium in shaping what is perceived. Media literacy materials are increasingly available on the web, but it might also be expedient to invite personnel from the distance education facility to make a short presentation about these issues.

We also observed that the use of many types of documents and visual aids during the presentations helped participants understand and stay engaged in the experience. Additionally, we found that human facilitation primarily involved insuring that all sites were active participants, for example alternating questions among sites.

**Products.** In the course of planning and implementing these events, we discovered that the videotapes, recorded during each of these sessions, were in themselves very valuable educational tools. We imagined that these tapes might be placed on reserve in the library as topical resources for community organizing courses in the future. Additionally, segments might be edited and placed on the Internet as continuing education resources for organizers (alumni) working in the field. And finally, because the videos arrest a moment in time in political and social culture of NYC and perhaps the country, we envisioned that at some point, they might be of some historical value in understanding the nature of community/civic change and growth.

### Conclusions

During the period from 1998-1999, we implemented two pilot videoconferences in community organizing courses at HCSSW.

These were:

An Organizers' Exchange between HCSSW students and staff at LEAP, a Connecticut-based youth and community leadership organization.

A Case Study Roundtable with organizers from New Settlement Apartments in the Bronx and Professor Melvin Delgado from Boston University.

Through these events, we investigated the merits of and issues related to using distance education technologies to support situated and social learning--particularly as they related to CO education.

We learned that distance learning events can indeed enhance CO education. They make possible conversations and sharing that might otherwise be difficult or impossible because of the distances between participants. They require faculty and student presenters to be more cognizant of and strategic in their use of time and media (camera angles as well as information displayed)—skills which will serve them well as they communicate publicly and in broader contexts. They result in production of artifacts (videotapes) that are themselves valuable educational and archival resources.

## **Recommendations**

To increase the effectiveness of distance learning technologies for community organizing education, we recommend that:

Videoconferencing events be structured in such a way as to alternate relatively long (15-25 minute) presentation periods with shorter (5-10 minute) comment/question periods. This chunking strategy allows time for technical glitches as well as unplanned (tangential) conversations which are often especially relevant to participants. Participants should be prepared in advance for each other and the live video medium. Such preparation might include background readings, prior class discussions and e-mail exchanges. It most likely would enable “air-time” to be used more effectively--focused on the discussion of deeper issues (strategies, successes, challenges, and conflicts).

Additional technologies (most likely Internet technologies) be investigated and acquired to enable a more facile connection between low-tech and high-tech environments. This is particularly important if we want to involve authentic community sites that may not have easy access to high-end, two-way videoconferencing facilities. These groups are likely to have Internet access in the future.

Multiple media (photos, data graphs, notes taken on the whiteboard) should be used in presentations.

Video artifacts, recorded during these events, be made available in the library or on the web as resources for students enrolled in CO classes and as continuing education opportunities for alumni working in the field.

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# Basic Principles for Organizing: Perspectives from Practice\*

Terry Mizrahi Ph.D.

## Introduction

This article is based primarily on practice wisdom from my own experiences over thirty years. It is also informed by the literature and by the cumulative field experiences of community organizing and planning students at the Hunter School of Social Work over the years, sometimes using their words. Social workers and others who assume organizing roles should know what to anticipate in order being proactive and successful. I will be addressing the reader as “you” and assume that you are reading this when you initiate or are being called upon to respond to an issue, or meet an agency or community need. “You” also includes the group or the other people with whom you are working. The references provided at the end include organizing texts and manuals that explicate many of these principles in more depth. These principles are not laid out in a linear order. Several of them need simultaneous consideration before taking action; others are interactive, so that following one may affect your response to another.

### 1. Plan ahead in order to attend to both process and product.

A key assumption is that there is never sufficient time, staff and other resources to pay enough attention to both involving people in making change (process) and accomplishing a specific goal (product). Both are important, so the question is how to operationalize and balance them. Process does not mean endless talking resulting in little or no action; and product does not mean that your sole focus is on the instrumental task. Process does not mean attaining unanimity of agreement; nor does it mean that everyone needs to participate directly. Nevertheless, there must be enough consensus to move ahead, and mechanisms to ascertain the intensity and well as breadth of disagreement. You need enough process to gauge people’s interest in and commitment to the task, and to take into account the needs of the affected group. Involvement of people creates a sense of investment, and can ultimately lead to a sense ownership of the product. You need time to build trust, but that is best done through working on the task.

The solutions to managing time so that you achieve the product without sacrificing the process is to a) calculate a more complete and realistic timetable; b) modify expectations; c) prioritize with the others involved; and d) ascertain who will assist with the project. Never lay back and think things are running smoothly. Plan for contingencies; allow more time than necessary, and pay attention to detail and follow through.

Understand that that the role of facilitator or enabler in making change is a dynamic and strategic one. While community organizers are often in the background promoting others to take a leadership role, this should not be confused with a laid back, passive stance. Even when the goal is to create leadership and group empowerment, the organizer structures the process and actively creates opportunities for members to play differential roles over time.

### 2. Planning is a complex socio-political as well as technical process.

Planning is not just about data collection, goals and timelines; it is not just about who can write a clear, internally consistent proposal. Rather, planning, as a part of organizing is a socio-political, as well as technical process. Values, power, and resources inform the way you and your constituency define the problem and select the solutions. A value base or ideology includes basic



assumptions about why a problem exists, why needs are not being met, why conditions are not optimal, i.e. who's to "blame" for the problems identified. Political means understanding that somebody (with a small or capital "B,") i.e. some individual or group has the power to make decisions about how resources are used to meet needs, whether to implement the program, or change a policy. Resources include creating or redistributing the assets and means to solve the problem. Hence, the strategies selected for influencing the decision-makers in order to achieve your goal are done within a social-political context.

As examples: substance abuse was identified as a national problem in the 1960s when it spread beyond the "ghetto" to middle class America; homelessness became a national crisis when the number of people living on the streets moved beyond "derelict row." While middle class parents had been organizing and planning services throughout the 1950s, mental retardation came out of the closet when President Kennedy disclosed that he had a mentally retarded sister. He used his office to create funding opportunities for facilities and programs.

## **2. Assume nobody knows anything, anytime.**

This principle assumes, for political/strategic purposes, that those in charge are ignorant of the problem or need. Your first step is to define and document the need in a way that gives the decision makers a chance to respond, even if you believe that those in control already have the information. Once you present the problem and possible solutions, the ball is now in their court. If indeed they really did not know the extent or seriousness of the problem, then this is a genuine opportunity to influence and negotiate change by presenting the necessary information and making a cogent argument.

If they did already know about the problem, but didn't act, they are now more apt to respond when directly presented with the need. You have given them a chance to save face. In the best scenario, they will do something about the issue (i.e. clean up the park, fund a program, pass a piece of legislation, allocate staff time for an activity, etc.). In the worst scenario, they delay or oppose the solution. If they don't respond then, your group has greater legitimacy for moving ahead--from presenting additional information to using more intense persuasive and pressure tactics. Document all the steps taken in this process, and keep the relevant people, constituencies and organizations informed.

The expose of the conditions at Willowbrook State Institution for the Mentally Retarded in New York City in the early 1970s was the result of several years of professional staff and families trying to convince those in charge to improve the horrendous conditions. When investigative reporter Geraldo Rivera turned his cameras on the site, the courts, legislators and regulators were forced to respond because their neglect of the presented facts was clearly obvious. There are also many cases however, where advocacy, social agency and client groups work behind the scenes to convince the decision-makers to improve conditions before the public becomes aware of the situation.

## **4. There is no such thing as "rational" and "irrational" from the perspective of how problems are defined or resources are allocated.**

In defining and documenting need, someone may say that a system or structure or policy doesn't make sense; "It's irrational." When someone makes such a statement, it should be reframed by

asking that person or group instead: “To whom does it make sense?” “For whom is it functional and working?” “Why hasn’t that policy been changed, if it isn’t working?” You will usually uncover reasons why conditions or attitudes have remained in place, why a need wasn’t met, why people have resisted change, or why a new program wasn’t implemented.

Consider the following: a new program may create more work without additional resources, or more competition; it may be detrimental to existing programs; it could disrupt existing informal relationships; it may mean that staff doesn’t know how to do the new tasks required; or that the community has not had experience with the new program. A new program can be an implied criticism of the existing system, or provide additional data that will then require additional changes. It may mean that a group perceives they will lose power if that program is created. In other words, it’s not irrational for all of those groups adversely affected from their perspective, to maintain the status quo. Understanding this allows you to identify the covert as well as overt reasons for resisting change and to develop strategies to decrease resistance.

Some professionals assert that planning is a rational process, and that the planner’s role is to be rational. Often, this assertion is contrasted to an ideological role, the latter presumed to be inappropriate and even biased. Someone who is said to be “ideological” is usually associated with a humanistic, progressive, or radical set of values, whereas someone who is “rational” is usually presumed to be objective and serves in a technical capacity. This is a false dichotomy.

First, it is important to understand that “rationality” when it means utilitarian, is itself an ideology, one that is usually associated with the ideology of capitalism and pragmatism. Therefore, you need to recognize when the term “rational” is being used to keep out of deliberations, such values as fairness, equality, and justice, or when it is being used to divert or discredit those who have a progressive value base. Second, it is important to assert that there is no such thing as value-free planning and organizing. Values and beliefs inform the problem definition and solving process; i.e. why, when and how a problem is defined and the proposed solutions that emanate from that definition, are guided by ideological perspectives.

To take the example of homelessness noted in Principle 2, the problem was ignored until a combination of deinstitutionalization of mental hospitals and gentrification of formerly abandoned and neglected neighborhoods resulted in hundreds of thousands or more people without a place to live across the country. The problem could no longer be ignored because they were now visible. However, the solutions were informed by values and ideology, not on the basis of need alone. Those who perceived it as a housing problem, advocated for the right to shelter and housing; those who perceived it as a mental health problem, advocated for services; those who perceived it as a civil liberties problem, advocated for personal choice and the right to be left alone; and those who perceived it as a criminal justice and morality problem, advocated for prisons, involuntary commitment, forced work and other social control measures. It is important to understand that planners and the institutions for whom they work cannot be “neutral.”

These political and ideological arguments about rationality should not however, obfuscate your need to be logical, systematic and problem-focused. It is necessary to anticipate the steps, people and resources needed to go from beginning to end of a plan, and to include contingencies for situations beyond your control. Those skills are a vital part of making systematic change.



## **5. Know and make your case.**

Needs assessments are a critical part of community organizing practice. It is essential to ask the question: “How do you know there is a problem?” How do you know there is a need for a particular intervention? Answering that question entails gathering empirical (objective) and perceptual (subjective) data. How serious is the problem/need? How pervasive is it? How many people does it affect? Who believes there is a problem/need? Who is defining the problem/need? And why at this time?

As noted in Principle 2 and above, defining the need has an ideological as well as factual component. For example, if it is reported that 30% of the students in a particular school or community did not complete high school, the questions posed might include: “Is that a problem? For whom is that a problem? Why should anyone care? Answers to those kinds of questions will depend on whether the norm is to complete high school; whether it is desirable to complete high school; whether that figure has gone up or down in the last several years; what is the comparable figure to other communities, what are the alternatives to and consequences of not completing high school? etc. Remember, how a problem is defined will determine the proposed solution(s). If you report that 30% of the students dropped out of school last year, there is already an implied causation built into that definition of the problem. “Drop out” implies a willful act on the part of the student or neglect on the part of parents or the community. Consider the difference when you say that 30% of the students were pushed out or turned out last year. The latter implies the problem lies with the school system. Hence, the solutions will vary depending on answers to those questions, and those responses are informed by ideological views about the role of the school system, students, teachers, family, government, corporations, etc. in educating students.

Once you define the problem, the next step is to document the problem. Be prepared to communicate in writing, verbally, and visually. In making your case, use numbers/statistics (quantitative data) and narration, i.e. interviews, case studies, anecdotes (qualitative data). The steps that follow include consideration of the ways to convey that information to the decision-makers. Will it be in the form of a letter or a report? Who writes and signs it? What does it say, and how does it say it? If it is to be a persuasive communication, should it be done verbally? Is there a forum where it should be presented? Should it be done in a private or public forum? Who should be there? Who else should be invited or know it? What materials should be presented, (e.g. fact sheets, photos, the voices of people directly affected, experts and influential people in the field, videotapes of the conditions)? Several years ago, a Director of a Public Health Clinic helped create additional funding for dentistry for low income adults, by mounting a public awareness campaign showing graphic photographs of the mouths of young adults from that community who had severe dental disease from years of neglect. No one could guess that they were New York City residents 20 to 40 years old.

As part of making the case, this is the time to consider whether the involvement of political leaders and the media would help or hinder the process of change. The answers to these questions also depend in part on the following additional principles.

## **6. Know decision-making structures: the formal (authority) and informal (influence) aspects of the system. Know who the critical and facilitating actors are.**

The task here is to understand the concept of power; who, i.e. which body (person) or Body (group, structure) can make the change you want? The “critical” actors are the actual legitimate decision-makers, those with the sanctioned authority to grant the request. The “facilitating” actors are those who can influence the critical actors because of their relationship or position to the decision-makers. Many times, people don’t know who has the formal power, because it is hidden, and the system is complicated.

The best approach is to do a power analysis beforehand, which includes exploration of the system and the community. Identify those people who control the various systems at the appropriate level—the economic, political, religious, social welfare, education, media, culture and the arts sectors. Determine which ones might be allies or adversaries to your cause.

It is important to understand the two faces of power-- authority and influence. The formal system of authority is usually found on an organizational or governmental chart. However, those diagrams are frequently hard to come by precisely because they show the chain of command, i.e. who reports to whom in the hierarchy. Knowing someone’s formal position helps in know whether they are being accurate or “buck passing” when they say they can’t make a certain decision. Then, it is essential to ascertain from them, “Who can make it happen?” At the very least, the person you first approach may become a facilitating actor in the process of making change, by revealing their formal (or informal) relationship to the critical actor(s).

There is also a need to know and utilize the informal structures of influence. Influence is that face of power acquired by people when they do not have the authority to make decisions. And that includes most social workers and the social agencies and community based organizations. Clearly people have power i.e. the ability to make change, by virtue of being able to influence the decision-making bodies. Organizing power by using strategies of influence is an essential skill set. Organizers utilize these strategies to bring pressure to bear on the structures of authority to convince them to make the needed changes, fund programs, reallocate resources, etc.

There are many ways groups can be powerful when they can’t command, “Just do it!” People have power through the positions they hold, their past history of action, their longevity in a system, their perceived effectiveness and expertise, their connections to the decision-makers, their ability to control a large constituency, their persistence and willingness to take risks.

**7. Do not assume that the system you want to influence is unified monolithic system. Look for internal strains, divisions, and vulnerability. Seek friends and allies from within.**

In analyzing the system that you are trying to influence, it is essential to ascertain who on the inside of that system feels similarly about the issue to the way your group/constituency does? It is those inside people at all levels of the structure who can provide critical pieces of information, including the identification of the critical and facilitating actors. They know about the organization’s or system’s processes, dynamics, culture, and timing. Conversely, those insiders may need your group for support, legitimacy, and resources to do their job more effectively. The principle of exchange is pivotal. You provide them with the capacity to be more influential on the inside, while they help your group on the outside. In the situation of Willowbrook noted in Principle 3, many courageous social workers, resident psychiatrists and other staff inside that institution clearly worked with advocacy and family groups on the outside by providing

necessary information to media and government sources; some were even whistle blowers; i.e. they went public with their criticism.

Here's the difficulty. For purposes of rallying your group or constituency (e.g. peers, clients, community residents, etc.) it is often necessary to simplify the system you need to influence. By personalizing the opposition, i.e. targeting a specific individual (e.g. the mayor, the landlord, the principal), or targeting a visible entity (e.g. a tobacco company, the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Education, the County Board of Supervisors, etc.), an adversarial process will likely intensify. While this approach may rally people initially, it may also create difficulty in negotiating later on in the process. It also may prevent those on the inside from cooperating for fear of antagonizing their leaders and bosses. The solution is to proceed cautiously and deliberately, allowing time for the people on the inside to persuade others of the need to grant the request or meet the demand as discussed in Principle 8.

### **8. Assume the principle of least contest.**

Escalate the process only as needed. Don't antagonize prematurely or unnecessarily. Intervene just high enough to get job done. Strategies of influence exist on a continuum of social change tactics from consensus to contest. These range from developing and presenting information in persuasive ways, to negotiation and exchange processes, to offering incentives and posing threats, to social action and conflict strategies using tactics of mobilization, protest, resistance and disruption.

In general, you should not to begin with adversarial and confrontational tactics as noted in Principle 3. On the other hand, you cannot assume that that information alone will be sufficient to produce major change. The strategic question to answer is: What will it take to have the issue seriously addressed? A well thought out response will determine the process and timing of moving from the least to the most conflictual strategies. The cogent questions are: How long have you been waiting? How long can you wait? What is your group prepared to do next? What is needed to move to the next step? What are the consequences of moving from one stage to next?

This means that in the organizing process, no matter what the issue or program being planned, you need to build support for your effort. You don't want to alienate potential allies who are either on inside or on the outside. You need to build credibility before your group goes above or around someone, exposes someone, etc. It is essential to have factual information and engage in a democratic decision-making process with your group or allies so that you cannot easily be isolated or proven wrong.

In intensifying and escalating the pressure on those who can make the change, you must pay attention to ethical considerations, such as whether your constituency being organized is informed about the tactics in which they are being asked to engage. If there is a chance of provocation or repercussions, participants need to have the ability to make an informed choice, to the extent risks can be anticipated. People need to know the consequences of moving from protest to civil disobedience, and how to handle threats from the opposition. This is especially important around tactics that require police notification or have legal ramifications, e.g. events that need police permits; trespassing laws; etc. The principle here is "No surprises!" Organizers

need to anticipate opposition, as discussed in Principle 10.

### **9. Assume good will and common cause on part of the workers and those who run the system.**

In analyzing the structure of the system, it is important to distinguish among and between levels of workers and management. While there are likely to be the divisions and possible defections among the ranks with respect to how good a job their institution/agency is doing as noted in Principle 7, in reality, staff, professionals included, are usually loyal to their places of employment. If you assume that most people want to do a good job most of the time (i.e. the “Y” theory of management), then it follows that most administrators, workers and even clients/constituencies who use that system identify with it. The reasons for this are many. It may be because of the pride they take in their own work, or their understanding of the obstacles it takes to make major changes. It could be their sense of vulnerability, their fears of being outspoken, or their uneasiness with proposed alternatives or no alternative. They may have been co-opted, or they may have made the system work for them.

While uncovering possible worker disillusionment, fears or inertia, caution must still be exercised in criticizing an agency or system. Even if the staff or clients understand and agree with the problems being raised, they do not automatically want those problems uncovered in public. Time and again, organizers have underestimated the sense of workers’ and clients’ feelings of hurt or anger at perceived attacks when problems are exposed or demands made. Even when a group attempts to separate or not blame all workers, supervisors, or client groups equally, there may be resistance to change from those groups.

Therefore, as noted in Principle 6, it is vital to gauge the tacit or active support of at least some people on the inside, and to identify the extent of loyalty. This will help you assess whether those in control of the institution/agency have the power to use a “we/they” division to create rifts between those on the outside and their agency/system and those on the inside, including themselves. As an example: when a local neighborhood health organization began criticizing a hospital for inadequate care, the organization’s leaders assumed the hospital workers, most of whom were the same background or came from the same neighborhood, would join in their public meetings or issue a statement of support. Private conversations revealed that many staff were angered that no one had asked them their opinions on issues or strategies. A “divide and conquer” strategy ensued, with the hospital director firing the few sympathetic workers who joined the health organization, and promoted a few others who were then co-opted. The rest of the staff remained silent.

Therefore, your group should attempt to carefully reframe the problem in consensus terms, at least initially, so it is not presented as a “win/lose” scenario (see Principle 3). It can be stated in ways that recognize that everyone wants to, for example, help the children, or provide quality health care, or have a clean environment, or professionalize its staff, etc. Alternatively, the problem could be reframed so that you convey your understanding of the difficulties that agency/system has in meeting the needs of its clients or constituency. Demonstrate to the staff, the public, the clients, how the agency/system is interfering with or defeating its own goals. Where possible, appeals should be made to self-interest as well as altruism. “It’s good for you and good for the community!”

## **10. There will always opposition to change at some level—be it active or passive resistance**

It is essential to assume that somebody/Body will be opposed to the change your group wants to make. You may hear such things, as “It can’t be done,” “We’ve tried it before and it can’t work,” “We can’t afford it,” etc. Always anticipate opposition and obstacles. Therefore, it is important to know the opposing side’s arguments by playing out alternative responses to the problem, and by testing the waters with facilitating actors (see Principles 6 & 7). Analyze who may be opposed to the suggested solutions being offered, and why are they opposed.

Then, good organizers will help develop strategies to counter or neutralize opposition where they can, as well as identify those elements in the change process that they or the group cannot control. They will also help identify all the allies and potential sources of support. In doing this it is essential not to write off your potential allies, even if they have been adversaries on other issues. Short of those intense ideological battles where there is little room for compromise (e.g. abortion rights; affirmative action, etc.), appeals for support can be made to most sectors of society. Arguments may need to be different for different groups. You may appeal to such factors as reputation, pride, and professional expertise.

Sometimes the opponents are not always apparent because the implications of the change may not be visible until the change process is underway. Don’t assume that all the opposition is external or being orchestrated from the target of change. Consider that communities are not monolithic. There may as much division and difference within a community, whether it is defined as a neighborhood or a geographical entity, or as a functional, interest or identity group. Sometimes the opposition may surface as inertia and inaction rather than visible and articulated differences.

To the extent possible, it is important to have a response to anticipated resistance. This is not to assert that groups engaged in social change are obligated to come up with solutions. One tactic of the opposition is often to ask “So how would you fix it?” or “What would you do if you were in charge?” In a democratic society, citizens have the right to raise questions and to hold those in charge responsible for outcomes, because the latter have the authority, resources, and presumed expertise. People have a right to organize and make their voices heard. Remember that DeTocqueville observed that the strength of American democracy was the prevalence of voluntary associations free from government restrictions. It was only when organized groups left out of the decision-making process began to challenge the authority of those in control, that those in charge questioned their credibility and representativeness.

Your group may simply be saying that: “Things aren’t working;” “There must be a better way.” Nevertheless, your group is more likely to be credible and effective if they have thought through the arguments for why the current situation has to change and how it can be changed. . For example, when the response to a request is “We don’t have the funds,” your group may be able to counter with “We know where you can get them.” or “We know from where they can be taken.” When the response is “We can’t do that,” your group has to ask “Who says?”

## **11. Minute taking, and record keeping in general, is a political, not a clerical function.**

If information is power, than obtaining and recording information is a political process. That process includes taking minutes, corresponding with people, documenting actions and inactions, keeping people on track and reminding people of past decisions through letters, memos, email, and written records. The person or group in charge of those processes may be the most powerful person in that organization. Taking minutes is a skill, a value and a process. It helps gauge and set the tone for the way a group makes decisions as well as what decisions were made. Documents are accountability tools, helping to keep people focused and honest.



Although what and how records are kept should be a group decision, experienced organizers always want to be involved in that process.

Indeed, you can assess the seriousness, effectiveness and cohesiveness of a group/organization by whether minutes are taken and reviewed, and how people are engaged in their production and review. Experience has demonstrated that if there are no minutes of a meeting or group process, the chances are nothing will happen, nothing will change. The people in charge will often resist formal records, while those wanting the change need to create a “paper trail” that includes agreements and timetables.

Alternatively, when organizations spend inordinate amount of time refuting minutes of previous minutes, you can infer an organization with a lot of distrust and an inability to move ahead. When minutes are pro-forma without much attention paid to them, you can infer an organization without much investment or involvement.

**12. In taking action, assess risks realistically. Identify and weigh costs against gains. Also identify the consequences to the group, constituency or target of change of non-action.**

For any major change, you have to anticipate actual or perceived repercussions. It is essential to play out with constituencies the generic question: “What’s the worst that can happen?” This accompanies Principle 10, anticipating opposition. There will be some risk to every action taken. You have to ascertain the support you have, so you won’t be left out a limb. There are times when hard choices have to be made as to how far to take a social change project. In order to determine the type and extent of action to be undertaken, you should consider pragmatic things such as: feasibility of success, and principles such as seriousness and pervasiveness of the situation.

Perhaps, most importantly, you should anticipate opposition from peers, supervisors, managers inside, and from the social change target on the outside. Therefore, it can’t be stressed enough is to keep your own house in order. Rarely, will you be actually be sanctioned for your organizing activities. More often, especially if it is an internal target of change, you may be called to task for not doing “your paid job.”

Pay attention and don’t get caught off guard. In assessing risks with others, it is essential neither to over promise protection nor to underestimate repercussions. Organizers can never assert that nothing untoward will happen to those participating in any change process. On the other hand, it is essential to uncover any perceived fears, even if not grounded in reality, so they can be addressed by your or the group. . Groups are often caught short when they haven’t thought through their compromise or bottom line response.

**Conclusion**

These principles are meant as guides to action, and will apply differentially, depending on the auspice of your agency, the goals identified, and the political and economic context of the community, issue and system driving the organizing. Organizers cannot control all the variables affecting a particular project or strategy undertaken. However, competencies as well as commitment and personal and professional characteristics can greatly increase the chances of success. Hopefully, the few principles laid out here, the results of cumulative practice

wisdom, will be useful as is or adapted to your situation as needed.

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\*A version of this paper appears in the *Social Workers' Desk Reference* – 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., published by Oxford University Press, 2015.

## Community Organizers: For a Change\*

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Community organizers are everywhere. Thousands—indeed millions—of people in this country are involved in community work. They are active in civic organizations, tenant and block associations, neighborhood improvement committees, parent associations, church outreach to the poor, citizen mobilization, school-based projects, and countless other local action groups. Indeed, active grassroots groups are a necessary and vital part of a democratic form of government.

Yet, organizing is not a well-known career choice for several reasons. First, the term community organizer is not listed as an occupation by the Department of Labor. As a result, many young people who may want to get involved in community life don't necessarily know that they can do this for a living. Additionally, some people don't pursue jobs as organizers because they assume that the skills involved are natural ones. The term organizer may be perceived as being synonymous with leader, and people may wrongly believe that they just don't have the knack. As a result, training in order to work in the field is not considered. Also, some people may not identify community organizing as a career because it is often invisible; that is, organizers are getting things done behind the scenes, while the president or leader of the organization gets the credit. Finally, since organizing has been identified with social change and social reform, these issues or causes taken up by organizers are controversial. There are often obstacles and opposition to change which may make some people feel uncomfortable.

Community organizing as a career is alive and well, comprising a variety of job titles, educational qualifications, and functions. There are knowledge and skills to acquire, and competent organizers with a social commitment to the common good are needed in many settings.

Community organizing is about working collectively with people to solve problems—joining or forming organizations to address issues that concern people in their neighborhood, workplace, or community of interest (e.g., senior citizens, health care, housing, environment, education, economic development). Community organizers work with others to: improve the social conditions of a community, enhance the quality of life of people, and bring people into the political process. Sometimes, they work directly with oppressed and disadvantaged groups in the society, e.g. the homeless, the poor, immigrants and refugees, and people of color.

Organizers' jobs have many facets to them. Depending upon the agency or organization for whom they work, they could be involved in: stopping a toxic waste incinerator from being placed in a community, planning an alternative school or health center, developing a housing plan for the neighborhood, getting the drug dealers off the block, bringing in funds to develop a senior citizen program, changing a law to prevent banks from discriminating against poor districts, organizing a campaign to clean up the environment, coordinating services for the mentally retarded, recruiting volunteers to work at a battered women's shelter, promoting

public awareness of benefits and entitlements, organizing stockholders to promote corporate responsibility, advocating human rights and social justice, or engaging in international solidarity work.

## **History of Organizing**

Organizing has a long, noble, and at times, controversial tradition. It has developed during the social reform movements of the various historical periods, especially the 1930s and 1960s. Organizing—taking collective action—is one of the reasons for the growth of the labor, civil rights, women, peace, consumer, environment, gay and lesbian, AIDS, and other movements throughout this century. Some of the most visible organizers— Ralph Nader, Saul Alinsky, Walter Reuther, Caesar Chavez, Jesse Jackson, Eleanor Smeal, Heather Booth, Faye Wattleton, Marion Wright Edelman, Ada Dear, Wilma Mankiller, Gary Delgado, Wade Rathke, George Wiley, Si Kahn—have all influenced our country's laws and systems. These well-known activists have been affiliated with causes for which there are countless other organizers also working at the local, state, and regional levels.

## **Values Are Essential to the Job**

While the knowledge and skills an organizer brings to the process can be used for any goals, it is the values of social work that helps shape what people do, where, with whom, and why. These humanistic values include: social and economic justice, equality, democracy, and peace. Community organizing within social work has contributed its knowledge, skills, and leaders to these causes, and also has its own tradition. The early social workers were leaders in the social reform struggles of their day and also helped build community institutions, such as settlement houses and social services to meet people's needs. While community organizers have always been a minority in number within the social work profession, their impact has been significantly felt. Beginning with Jane Addams who founded one of the first settlement houses in Chicago (Hull House), they have been among the leaders of the movements for social security, labor reform, and health care, as well as shapers of the social programs in the 1960s and 1970s through the Economic Opportunity Act, Model Cities, Community Block Grants, and a myriad of other social service initiatives. The 1990s under President Clinton seem to be ushering in a new commitment to community work and community service, as well as expanded opportunities to revitalize and develop communities—in urban and rural areas— across the country. The time is ripe for new jobs in this field.

## **Roles and Goals**

Organizers wear many hats and are called many things—enablers, advocates, brokers, facilitators, leaders, planners, resource and program developers, coordinators, reformers, and social change agents. The terms associated with the field of community organization include community development and social planning. Within social work and other human service disciplines, it is also called community work or community practice. Successful organizers work toward the goal of empowerment—helping people mobilize, obtain resources, and develop strategies that promote their interests or causes. While the knowledge and skills an organizer brings to the process can be used for any goals, it is the values of social work that helps shape what people do, where, with whom, and why. These humanistic values include: social and

economic justice, equality, democracy, and peace.

## Getting Started

Individuals usually get started in this field because of personal commitments, volunteer experiences, or beginning jobs. For example, they may have a passion for social cause, or they may feel deeply about local problems that have surfaced in their community, be it in their school, on their block, in their region, or a problem related to their racial, ethnic, or social group. "What are people doing about it?" is the question that gets young people and adults involved. This path is the *natural*, spontaneous way in.

There are also more structured ways of *testing the waters* through volunteer work. In the past, people have joined the federal government-supported VISTA or Peace Corps. Volunteer bureaus operated by local governments and private organizations such as United Way often offer a range of opportunities that go beyond traditional social services.

Additionally, entry-level jobs are offered by such groups as ACORN, Public Interest Research Group, Center for Third World Organizing, Grassroots Leadership, as well as with the thousands of membership organizations, social service agencies, and associations working on a particular issue. Every cause has its leadership organizations—sometimes more than one, and sometimes competing ones. Those interested in organizing can find their niche according to their political and social beliefs.

## Educational Opportunities

Many of the groups listed welcome committed people who may not have a college education, but who are willing to be trained on the job. More typically, most organizations seek persons who have college degrees, preferably in the social sciences or human services, where they have had an opportunity to do some field work or an internship. Sometimes they encourage and even support a staff person in returning to school on a part-time basis.

For those beginning at the college level, majoring in the social and human sciences is the usual area of concentration. However, it is important to note that some of the best organizers enter the career from other liberal arts and specialized backgrounds.

Selecting a social work major at the undergraduate level is a direct route into the field. All accredited social work degree programs require course instruction and field work in communities as a part of a general curriculum. Students who typically enter a BSW program in their junior year are required to do a part-time internship, which usually includes understanding community life and institutions, analyzing communities—their people, institutions, culture—and working on community projects. Depending upon the interest of the student, faculty, and agencies affiliated with a particular BSW program, community work can have different degrees of emphasis.

At the graduate level, there are several ways to enter professional organizing life. While it is not necessary to have a master's degree, many effective leaders of advocacy organizations and coalition and human service campaigns have one. Within MSW programs, some schools still

offer a concentration or major in community organizing or community development. Unfortunately, during the 1980s, some schools eliminated the major in community organizing or else incorporated it into what has become known as macro practice or policy, planning, and administration (PPA). Nevertheless, all accredited graduate schools of social work expose students to methods of working with people that includes working with communities, as they do in BSW programs. However, the ability to acquire a specialization in the area will vary from school to school.

Courses at the graduate level cover such topics as: knowledge of community and social systems, organization and groups, inter-organizational and political arenas, skills-building in program planning and evaluation, collaborations and coalition building, lobbying, community assessment, leadership development, grant writing and fundraising, public relations, service-coordination, and case and class advocacy.

During a typical two-year MSW program, students will have an internship for one or both years in which they have a supervised practicum to develop their competencies in community practice. If the program has a two-year major, the initial year might be spent in a grassroots setting with a neighborhood group or community center, while the second year might be served in a politician's office getting experience as a legislative aide.

Other graduate degree programs outside of social work offer some aspects of community organizing, each with their own perspective. Among them are: urban planning, community health education, human service and public administration, international studies, and labor studies. There are also a few independent, non-academic schools for organizers. These include the MidWest Academy and the Industrial Areas Foundation, both in Chicago.

## **Career Paths**

Career paths in community organizing are vast and varied. Experience has demonstrated that, regardless of the job title, the community organizing approach to problem-solving and the involvement of people always exists. Here are just a few of the job titles held by graduates of MSW programs: settlement house director, advocate for the homeless, commissioner of the Department of Youth and Juvenile Justice and other departments, youth program coordinator, health coalition director, family policy analyst, tenant organizer, housing specialist, drug prevention program director, AIDS program developer, legislative aide to elected public officials, and politician. The community organizing specialization in social work allows for a diversity of career opportunities.

## **Caveats and Challenges**

While the revitalization of community organizing within social work is occurring, it is not in the mainstream of the profession. Those interested in pursuing careers in organizing within social work will have to find or establish their own support group and seek comfort in the social missions grounding their work.

Organizers are few in number relative to the need and did not have a professional association

until recently. A National Organizers' Alliance, begun in 1993, is designed to help obtain job benefits, security, and advancement. The Association on Community Organization and Social Administration (ACOSA) has existed since 1988 to promote these areas in social work education and practice. There are also centers affiliated with schools of social work that support community organizing research, training, and program development the Education Center for Community Organizing (ECCO) at the Hunter College School of Social Work is an example.

## **Salaries**

Grassroots organizers and even leaders of advocacy and policy organizations are paid relatively low wages. To gain more pay, organizers usually have to move away from the front line. The hours can be long: there are often night meetings and weekend events, since those are the times when people come most conveniently together as citizens.

The process of change is sometimes a slow one and not without its frustrations. Organizers need tenacity and determination as well as good interpersonal and analytical skills. They must interact with and influence diverse groups of people, not all of whom share the same values, goals, and strategies. The payoffs and victories may be slow, so satisfaction must often be derived from the process of engaging and educating people. Ultimately, though, an organizer's investment of time, energy, and resources will have an impact on society and seem worth it —for a change.

\*Adapted from an article by the author published in *Mental Health and Social Work Career Directory*-1<sup>st</sup> edition, B.J. Morgan & J.M. Palmisano, Editors. Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1993.

# Educating for Social Change: The Impact of an Innovative Interdisciplinary Community Organizing Course on Hunter Students' Career and Civic Pursuits

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This paper presents an analysis of the impact of a course on students' career direction and community involvement. It was initiated as part of the planning and implementation of an interdisciplinary Community Organizing and Development (C.O.D.) Program at Hunter College at the undergraduate level. [\[ 1 \]](#) There are very few documented formal education programs aimed at developing community organizing as a professional career (O'Donnell, 1995; York & Havassy, 1997); the few articles that exist on community organizing training focus on programs outside academia (Robinson & Hanna, 1994; Hanna, 1998; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, forthcoming).

## BACKGROUND, METHODS AND SUMMARY

The paper focuses on the impact on Hunter students of two new interdisciplinary courses, concentrating on the innovative one semester, three credit course: *Introduction To Community Organizing* and an separate supervised 100 hour internship. The course provides the knowledge, skill and value base underpinning community organizing, planning, development and change. It emphasizes the myriad roles, goals, and strategies used by community organizers in effecting social change. A 20 hour volunteer field placement is required to expose students to an actual organizing setting. Innovative pedagogical methodologies modeling and utilizing community organizing skills and strategies were used by the faculty along with presentations and discussions with experienced organizers from the community (see attached syllabus). The same faculty member taught the course all four times.

An anonymous questionnaire was mailed to 90 "alumni" who took the C.O. Course in one of four semester between Fall 1995 and Spring 1997 (see attachment). Almost 60% of the alumni responded (N=53). There were open and closed-ended questions about the value of the course one to three years after it was taken. Eleven of the respondents had also completed an additional 3 credit, 100 hour supervised internship. A similar before and after course questionnaire was completed by an additional two cohorts of students who took the course in Fall 1997 and Spring 1998.

Analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data indicates extremely positive impacts of the course on their lives and on their avocational, vocational and advanced educational pursuits. These former students reported on the extensive knowledge and skills acquired and their increased interest in using community organizing in their personal and professional lives. Unquestionably, the course shaped the career direction for many students and for almost all of



them, the course had a broad influence on the students' civic lives and community activities. Given the schism that has existed traditionally between academia and the organizing world, this C.O.D. program is a model of effective collaboration that bridges traditionally disparate communities.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Background on the Course "Alumni"**

Forty-four percent of those who took the course had already graduated from Hunter College. Twelve percent had taken a leave of absence and about 50% were still enrolled at Hunter. Ten percent were in graduate school and 82% were currently working. Six percent were pursuing additional organizer training at this time.

Seventy-four percent of those responding were female. The cohort was mixed racially and ethnically with slightly more than 1/4 being Caucasian, another 1/4 being African American, 1/5 being Latino, and 1/10 being Asian). About 1/3 were in their early 20's, 2/3 in their late 20's and almost 1/3 were over 30 years. (Seven percent identified themselves as homosexual; however almost 50% left the optional "sexual identity" category blank.)

The breakdown of those responding is reflective of the total population of the 90 course participants with respect to age, gender and racial or ethnic identity.

Alumni's evaluation of the Introduction to Community Organizing course was overwhelmingly positive (see Table 1). Eighty-four percent stated that they learned a considerable or a great amount from the one semester course. This extremely affirmative response was surpassed by the number of alumni that felt that they learned more in this course than in other courses (94%). As Table I indicates, students not only valued the course, but would also recommend it highly to their peers. Perhaps even more importantly, for almost two-thirds of the alumni, the course substantially influenced their job and career direction, as well as their volunteer and community work.

With respect to what they remembered about the course content, more than three-quarters of alumni reported that they learned a great deal or a considerable amount from almost all of the course topics ranging from organizing roles, to understanding values, power and resources (see Table II). Likewise, these former students valued both the traditional and non-traditional methods used in teaching the content (see Table III). Two-thirds valued the experiential learning attached to volunteering at a community organization while almost all appreciated both the participatory and lecture formats.

### **Contributions of the Community Organizing Course to Learning: Theory, Community Awareness and Skills**

One quote summarizes the dominant theme of what alumni learned from the C.O.D. course: *"The concept of c. o. and the use of collective power for social change."* Alumni felt that they gained

an understanding of what c.o. is, how it is done, and its importance to society. Not only did they learn about c.o. models, but they also learned how to use various c.o. strategies and tactics:

*[The most important thing I learned from the course was] the different strategies for approaching social change - and how the models have been put into effect in the past (3)*

*[The most important things I learned from the course was the] History of social change movements; importance of assessing and understanding the community and/or constituents/members; importance of cultivating allies; making links. (22)*

*[The most important things I learned from the course was the] The role of the organizer vis a vis the group being organized. How to build a group and help keep it going. (9)*

Different skills, such as how to run meetings and how to develop leadership were mentioned as critical additions to their knowledge base:

*[The most important thing I learned from the course was] Leadership qualities, agenda planning, organizing groups, making changes, networking and problem solving. (21)*

*[The most important things I learned from the course was] Running meetings in an organized way, being able to stay on track when personality conflicts arise in meetings. (49)*

*[The most important things I learned from the course was] Community Organizing. Lobbying strategies. Learning the difference between issues and problems. Leadership development. (14)*

An awareness about how to create social change using community, and how to give voice to the voiceless were also mentioned. As one alumnus stated, one of the important things that he learned was, *"The significance of community as a unifying and powerful tool for waging social change movements."* (2) Another stated, *"I gained a more clear knowledge of power structures (city government, large institutions) and an understanding of strategies to use so the "less powerful" voice can be heard."*(36)

### **The Impact of the C.O.D. on Alumni's Lives: Changes in Consciousness, Personal Empowerment, Values, and Roles**

*Almost all of the alumni said that the course influenced their lives in some way. On the whole, it made them more conscious of c.o. as a discipline and as a career. For some, the class helped to solidify an already existing interest in the field. Another cohort were stimulated to consider c.o. as a career. Others found themselves becoming more involved in their communities or volunteering to support various causes. To them, the class highlighted the importance of civic involvement. Additionally, alumni involved in careers other than c.o. were able to make the link between their disciplines and community organizing. For example, one alumna stated "Community organizing influenced my career goal - I now see the role of journalism and c.o."*

Another stated,

*"I learned that community organizing is not something that I wanted to pursue professionally, but the course did have a drastic effect on how I feel about my impact on my community. The course made me realize that I did need to contribute to causes that I felt were worthy, - and that my input to these causes did matter." (13)*

It is clear that the course's effect on alumni were varied but nevertheless seemingly profound.

The course also raised consciousness and changed perceptions about the world and about themselves. The majority of alumni commented on c.o.'s power to change society. The idea that c.o. does make an impact on the world was a revelation to some, and a comfort to others. Note what these alumni had to say:

*This course made me realize this world functions because of what we all do. We all make a difference influencing change which can benefit everyone." (38)*

*Organizing is germane to any field because there will always exist issues of power and struggles. (30)*

*I realized that even in a city like New York where everyone seems highly selfcentered and driven to achieve individual success, people can and are pulling together through community work. Participating in the process was a truly uplifting experience. (36)*

The changes in perception range from the intellectual, *"There are a number of important issues in the world,"* to the personal, *"I can make a difference."* Changes in perception also led to increases in alumni's sense of personal power. As some alumni revealed:

*If I feel like an active participant now more than before. I know that one voice combined with other individual voices carry volume. (49)*

*I got involved instead of complaining. I think of myself as a leader.*

*The course made me realize that I can make a difference in someone's life. (16)*

The increase in alumni's personal power is most evident when examining the effects of the CO Course on alumni values. Several noted personal change:

*I feel less the victim, more of the agent of change. I'm more active. (10)*

*My values have been affected by what I learned in the course, by not waiting on people to make changes for me, but to make the first step toward making a change. (20)*

*Learning to listen is essential in organizing. Just listening to people it means more than what you could possibly say. "I've learned to value people's opinions (32)*

*I appreciate all things on this earth . I used to say I hate people. I don't hate people. I hate what they stand for." (29)*

Some alumni indicated that their values did not change, but for others, their values were strengthened. As one alumna stated *"My values are the same before as they are after taking this course, with the exception that they are a little more finely tuned. "* Several alumni noted that they were more appreciative of community efforts, community organizers, and uniting to struggle for causes.

When asked if they made any changes in the roles they played as citizens/residents, clients/consumers, parents, friends, neighbors or colleagues, many responded affirmatively:

*Yes, [I am] much more of a critical thinker as my role in my community and work and personal life. All of which are intimately linked, which is a perspective that this course fosters and nurtures through practical experience. (37)*

*Yes, I believe before all I looked for was to finish school and move out of my community, but now I have an interest to stay and make it better for those behind me. (32)*

*I have gained a better sense of myself and have increased confidence in my relations with others- particularly those in seats of power. (31)*

*I am less bitter towards people. (29)*

## **Volunteerism and Activism**

Over half of the respondents said that they did volunteer work prior to taking the C.O. course. Volunteer experiences ranged from serving on councils at schools to belonging to neighborhood tenants' associations, with the majority of alumni volunteering in religious settings, school organizations, and tenant associations. While the number of alumni that did volunteer work after taking the C.O. course slightly declined, many more were also now working full time. Most continued to volunteer at the same site with increased determination and skill.

As noted in Table IV, the alumni were much more active after having taken the C.O. Course. In almost all of the 11 community and political activities listed, the percentages of those indicating that they had taken part increased significantly. Notable among the large increases was participation in electoral and issue politics --ranging from financially contributing to a campaign to working on one. Also, there were substantial gains in areas ranging from lobbying a governmental body to organizing a community event.

## **Recommending the Course to Others: Alumni Speak**

Virtually all the alumni stated that they would recommend this class to other Hunter students. Responses such as "*with enthusiasm*" and "*absolutely*" were common. While some would recommend it only to those in certain disciplines such as social work, human service studies, political science, and women's studies, most would recommend it to everyone. A substantial majority felt the skills and knowledge they acquired would be helpful to everyone, regardless of one's major or career path:

*whether someone is interested in pursuing a career in organizing or not., many valuable skills were taught in this class which can be used in many other work situations and environments. (31)*

*I feel organizing skills can be applied in any area of work. I think it's an essential class that students should have the advantage to take. (32)*

*It is extremely valuable to learn methods and techniques of organizing, regardless of what you use your skills for. (8)*

One factor influencing their course recommendation was the unique nature and structure of this course. As alumni stated:

*It is a great experience to have hands on experience and share it with a class and instructor to help you grow. (17)*

*The courses were much more interesting and engaging than most of my classes. They moved beyond academics and theory to practice. There was interaction between students that rarely existed in other classes." (22)*

### **Impact of Course on C.O. Career Direction: Many Opportunities, Many Obstacles**

One-fifth of the respondents now have a job in the c.o. field. Respondents cited several opportunities in pursuing a career in c.o. The opportunities to learn about c.o. in this course, in addition to the opportunity to volunteer through school, were presented as having practical consequences. As one alumna states, "*...my volunteer activities have given me a lot of experience that I could apply to a job.*" (22)

However, many cited obstacles already known to promoters of social change. Obstacles to pursuing a c.o. career varied from lack of skills to lack of experience, in spite of having taken the course. The hours required in the c.o. field, as well as the perception that there are limited numbers of c.o. jobs out there, were also identified as barriers. However the biggest challenge alumni identified in pursuing a career in c.o. is salary! Time and time again, salary was listed as an impediment to entering and advancing in the field:

*There are not many jobs in organizing/activism!!! And the ones that exist often don't pay enough to survive on! (22)*

*There are many opportunities for me to pursue such a career, however, one major potential obstacle is that of compensation - wages are still quite low in the organizing field. (47)*

Nevertheless, those alumni who chose not to enter the c.o. field because of salary often incorporated c.o. into other aspects of their lives:

*For many years I considered pursuing a career in c.o. However, I realized that it is extremely difficult to support a family on such salaries. I feel I have struck a balance by choosing to do my organizing on a volunteer basis. (31)*

This alumnus' view represents the adjustments people were willing to make in order to include c.o. in their lives.

However it is clear that in order to attract new workers, salaries need to increase in order to attract these educated, committed and skilled individuals.

## **THE "BEFORE" AND "AFTER" COURSE ASSESSMENT**

The course was taught by two different faculty members in Fall 1997 and Spring 1998 from the one who taught it in all previous semesters. Analysis of the following data assures that the instructor was not the significant factor in the reported positive outcomes.

**Knowledge of C.O. Topics** (see Table V). The students demonstrated tremendous areas of growth in knowledge related to 12 community organizing topics. Before taking the course, fewer than a majority of students knew a great deal or a considerable amount about the knowledge and skill base of c.o. (ranging from 8% to 49%). Upon completion, small and large majorities knew a lot (ranging from 66% to 82%).

**Learning from Course Components** (see Table VI). The students were pretty accurate with respect to their predictions about the formats for acquiring the c.o. content. Most anticipated learning a great deal or considerable amount from all five identified components and indeed, they indicated that this had actually occurred.

**Community and Political Activism** (see Table VII). One goal of the C.O. Course and the eventual C.O.D. minor is to produce more informed and active residents regardless of their vocation. It is the C.O.D. Program's belief that a citizenry equipped with the knowledge, skill, and values to participate in civic life would contribute to a more empowered and dynamic community.

We examined whether this diverse group of students were already active and, by inference, whether as a result of taking the course, they would anticipate strengthening or expanding their areas of public participation. The results are stunning. In all 11 identified areas of community or political participation, there were significant increases in the percentage indicating they would become active. Especially noteworthy was the fact that at least 2/3 of the cohort anticipated

playing a leadership role in community affairs and working on electoral, political or issue campaigns. Also interesting is the fact that almost half would engage in more activist social protest activities including civil disobedience and joining a picket line. Clearly, the course had a critical impact on their expectations of activism, and will indeed come to fruition if they follow the outcomes the direction taken by those who took the course in earlier semesters.

**Interest in Community Organizing** (see Table VIII). One puzzling finding was the fact that the percentage of students interested in pursuing a career in c.o. dropped somewhat as did their apparent interest in taking an internship the following semester. Two factors may account for much of the difference between these and the alumni who indicated a greater c.o. career interest afterwards.

First, the time of the course shifted (by design) from evening to daytime. It attracted a somewhat younger cohort of day students, many more of whom indicated they were taking it for credit toward a major or minor. Polling them at the end of the course revealed that there was much more interest in both the minor and the internship, but they could not fit the 100 hour field internship in their next semester's schedule. Some were already seniors needing additional credits toward their declared major or minor. Others had paid job responsibilities in addition to family and school which did not leave them with enough hours in a week to fulfill all their obligations.

## CONCLUSION

*"The most important aspect of this course for me, was the ability to apply theory to practice, not only in work, but personal life and other activities in the community." (37)*

Without question the C.O. course significantly increased the students' knowledge and skill. However, perhaps more importantly, it also influenced their consciousness about the role of community in effecting change, and strengthened their roles in their own communities.

In essence, the respondents revealed that the true value of the C.O. course for them was the application of c.o. theory to their lives. As one can see, the course has influenced many aspects of their lives, from their values, to their roles as citizens and activists. The impact of the course was way beyond what its originators envisioned. The course increased students' interest and movement towards a in c.o. as a career. Most importantly, it has built their knowledge and skill base and changed their perspective on how to create change. This course is an invaluable step in creating a committed and competent core of citizen and paid change agents.

While the C.O. Course was modified somewhat in its format, content, and structure by virtue of different instructors, the basic syllabus and teaching methodology remained in tact over six semesters. The six cohorts who took the course were extremely positive about it, learned a lot, and identified anticipated and actual impacts on their personal, career and civic lives. This outcome is extremely rewarding to the interdisciplinary collaborative who designed and implemented components of the C.O.D. program which we anticipate will be institutionalized by the Hunter College administration.



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Civic pursuits  
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[1] This research was funded in 1997 by the President's Research and Teaching Initiative (Hunter College).

# An Innovative Model for Teaching a Community Organizing Course at Hunter College

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*June 1998*

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This paper presents an overview on the teaching methods used in a special course designed to introduce students to community organizing [\[ 1 \]](#) . Begun in 1995, Introduction to Community Organizing is an interdisciplinary undergraduate course offered in collaboration with the Anthropology, Community Health, Sociology, Political Science and Urban Planning Departments (see syllabus attached). It was initiated by a Hunter College faculty collaborative as part of a new 12 credit Community Organizing and Development minor. The course was taught by Terry Mizrahi, professor in the School of Social Work from 1995 to 1997, by Jan Poppendieck, Sociology Professor in Fall 1997, and in the Spring 1996 semester, by Professor Beth Richie of the Community Health Program in the School of Health Sciences. Chris Danguilan served as Dr. Richie's graduate teaching assistant. [\[ 2 \]](#)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the course is to provide an introduction to community organizing; specifically, the knowledge, skill and value base underpinning community organizing, planning, development and change. It emphasizes the myriad roles, goals, and strategies used by community organizers in effecting social change. It examines the history of organizing as a context of analyzing contemporary issues and organizations in the country and in New York City. Models of community organizing including mass mobilization, social action, grass roots empowerment, leadership development and advocacy, as well as newer community building approaches are assessed for effectiveness in the current conservative climate. Special attention is paid to issues of gender, class, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation in organizing. A field-related/ 20 hour volunteer experience is included to expose students to an actual organizing environment.

## COURSE FORMAT AND ASSIGNMENTS

Much of the content, structure and process for the course (and an accompanying separate 100 hour field internship) were suggested at a series of meetings with faculty and with two focus groups of community organizers from the area. It has been revised with input from students who took the course and the three faculty who have taught it. Guest lecturers have included members of the faculty and experienced organizers working in NYC. Many of their organizations also serve as sites for the volunteer field assignment.

The course was designed to be experiential and to provide opportunities for students to synthesize theory and practice through application of readings, lectures, media presentations,

and reflection on their field experience. Almost every session provided some structured opportunity for small group work and or simulation exercises. The field experience was made a required course component at the suggestion of students who opted to do some field work the first time the course was offered. [\[3\]](#)

### **Participation in a Volunteer Field Experience**

Students selected an organization, agency or group with which to volunteer during the semester for a **minimum of 20 hours**. A list of possible community organization sites has been developed by the collective faculty with the assistance of a graduate student assistant and updated each semester.

The purpose of this assignment is to provide a direct experience observing and participating in (to the extent possible) the organizing work of the group. Students are expected to negotiate their entry and assignment with the organization's leaders and/or staff. The organization is expected to permit students access to meetings, minutes and other materials of the organization, and to arrange for interviews with leaders and members. In exchange for access and experience, the students' responsibility was to contribute to the work of the organization. This could include furthering the group's agenda, assisting in carrying out a project or event, and providing feedback to staff or leaders on their observations.

As the semesters went on and class size increased, faculty had to rely on graduate student assistance to reach out to and orient potential field sites. Introductory material was prepared for the field and course syllabi were shared with field contacts. It was emphasized to both students and organizational staff, that the students would not be able to actually carry out an organizing project in 20 hours. Hopefully, their appetite would be whetted to do more, their or elsewhere in the future.

Additionally, because so many grassroots, community-based organizations wanted student volunteers for even the 20 hours, an innovation was implemented in Spring 1998 to facilitate the placement process. All potential field supervisors were invited to a class session to recruit students. Organizations prepared materials and made brief presentations. Students seemed to feel valued and needed by the organizing community. This session had the secondary benefit to students of exposing them to the wealth of organizing going on in New York City. They were able to reflect on the variety of models, issues, goals and strategies articulated by field people.

At the end of the semester, students presented their field experiences orally in class. Minimum written expectations included students keeping a log of their observations and submitting a brief paper at the end of the semester, answering the following questions: 1) What model or approach to organizing is being used by the organization?; 2) What are both the strengths and limitations of the group's effort?; 3) What opposition and allies does it have?; 4) What roles do the organizers and leaders play?; 5) What has been accomplished? Were there any disappointments, failures or defeats?; 6) What lessons did you learn? They were also asked to refer to relevant course readings and class discussion in their paper and

presentation.

To conclude the field assignment, at the end of the semester, field supervisors were asked to write a one page "letter of recommendation" for their student. These letters served several purposes: to document the completion of the assignment, identify any contribution the student made to the organization, and provide the student with a ready made reference letter for use by potential employers or graduate schools (see samples attached).

### **Class Session Recording**

Once during the semester, small groups of students are asked to take notes on a class session, compare them, and together, prepare in writing a single summary and synthesis of major themes. This exercise at "minute taking," provides an opportunity to improve observational, negotiation and analytical skills of the participants and to understand that record keeping is a political and professional (not a clerical) function. The composite document ("minutes") is duplicated and given to fellow students and faculty as a resource for their review and comment. Students are then also freed of having to take notes for all but one week.

Additionally, these minutes are briefly reviewed by the entire class to ascertain whether the highlights provided by the minute-takers were reflective of a previous class session. During these discussions, students have the opportunity to examine the interaction between what is heard, what is remembered, what is deemed important, etc., and to reflect on how the culture and purpose of the "organization" together with the skill and goals of the recorders, affect the prepared minutes. It also demonstrates how powerful the minute taker's role is.

### **Structured Small Group Facilitation**

For both philosophical and pragmatic reasons, in Spring 1998, all the class sessions were structured so that equal time was devoted to traditional lecture and small group discussion.

**Lecture/Presentation.** The lectures focus on the content of the syllabus and assigned readings. The syllabus is organized to examine contemporary community organizing campaigns. Lecture topics are arranged to mirror the progression of a campaign, where each week a new phase or issue of campaign building would be explored. Campaign building concepts include (but were not limited to) race, class, and gender issues, roles of the organizer, community diagnosis, organizational development, and coalition building. Guest lecturers, mainly organizers from the field, have been invited to complement course material.

Students evaluate the style as well as the content of the presentations, thereby, obtaining experience in analyzing the components of public speaking. The lectures provide the formal instructional element of the course. At times lectures are supplemented with videos that document both popular and grass roots organizing campaigns.

**Small Group Format.** After each lecture, students disseminate into small groups for the remainder of the class. The small group sessions serve several purposes. The first purpose is to allow students the opportunity to analyze and discuss, the community organizing concepts

presented in the lecture and readings. The discussion is initiated with an exercise or series of questions relative to the day's syllabus topic (see attached sample discussion sheet). Initially, it is the faculty and graduate assistant who develop the topical questions. Later on, students are given the opportunity of producing their own question based on assigned readings. (They also turn these in to the instructor along with an attendance list.)

The second purpose is to initiate students into actual community organizing experiences by assuming the roles of group facilitator and recorder at least once during the semester. The purpose of the group facilitator role is to give the students the opportunity to learn and exercise the skills of a community organizing group's leader. The responsibility of the facilitator is to bring his or her group members through the steps of the week's exercise and to analyze the process and their performance.

The purpose of the group recorder role is to encourage students to learn minute-taking skills, as well as to witness group process dynamics in action. The group recorder's responsibility is to submit a one page synopsis of his or her group's experience and success with the exercise the following week.

Some of the small group sessions discussed aspects of the students' volunteer work and other course assignments including their neighborhood assessment. Small group discussion gave students the opportunity to share their rich and diverse histories regarding their organizational and community experience with each other as part of the learning process. Engaging the students with one another afforded them with the opportunity to exchange community organizing strategies. In addition, an understanding of each other's community's conditions helped build a more cohesive Hunter student community.

The role playing aspects of group offers students the chance to build organizing skills in a supportive environment. The roles of facilitator and recorder require that each student become actively involved with the group's activity rather than wait for these roles to evolve out of group process. Often, initial experience with these roles is enough to bolster the confidence of some students who might otherwise not engage in discussion. Assignment of these roles in part ensures that every student's contribution is captured by the group, a fundamental of community organizing.

Another course goal was reinforced by this small group format: the chance to actively participate in their own learning and to value the contribution of peers as well as teachers. There was also a pragmatic reason for this division of class time. Unlike most undergraduate courses, this course met once a week for three hours. The class size has increased substantially for a number of reasons. In the spring 1998 semester, there were close to 50 students enrolled. Clearly, a continuous lecture or even lecture with large group discussion was not feasible.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS OF THE COURSE**

**Small Group Format.** The limitations of the participatory experiential model include the enormous amount of class preparation and logistics given the size of the class. The small group settings require much physical space (this class utilized three small classrooms with two groups in each). Splitting up the groups into different classrooms minimize supervision, often making

instructor observation and participation efforts hectic. Groups going too long without supervision had the potential of straying from the day's assignment into general conversation. Degeneration of a group's discussion could limit a student's capacity to fulfill the role of recorder or facilitator.

Another common experience with the groups was the absence of the day's assigned facilitator or recorder. Although groups were not responsible for the absent recorder, an absent facilitator required that the group "waste" time selecting a substitute facilitator. To minimize this occurrence, unless the facilitator's absence was arranged for within the group, or he/she had a legitimate excuse, the student would not receive credit for this course requirement. The positive learning of this "crisis" for the real world of organizing is to anticipate the absence of leaders and other key players when planning for meetings and events.

**The Volunteer Field Experience.** The 20 hour volunteer assignment although imperative to the course goals, bewildered some students. In spite of the structuring of the process over time, on occasion, a few students voiced that they either had trouble choosing an organization or felt uncommitted to the site they eventually chose. Some students felt their volunteer sites failed to appreciate the academic aspect of the commitment, neglecting to provide students with background materials relevant to their assignments (e.g. mission statements).

The most difficult aspect of implementing a successful experience however, continues to be the lack of flexibility in the students' schedules. Most students were working all or part time in addition to attending classes, and in many instances, caring for family members. Nevertheless, most students still highly valued the assignment, and many volunteered more than the required number of hours. Their written and oral work was a testimony to their progress and achievement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions were made by the graduate assistant to further improve the quality of the course: 1) Allow students to apply the volunteer hours toward their field internship; 2) limit course enrollment to 30 students (although 20 students is an ideal size); 3) Minimize the number of reserve readings or make them more accessible; 4) Incorporate a graduate teaching assistant as an ongoing practice.

## CONCLUSION

As can be seen in Table II attached, three quarters of the students learned a lot from all the various course formats. A majority of students also indicated that they had invested more in this course than others and learned a lot (see accompanying paper noted in footnote 2). The vast increase in knowledge and skill they felt they had acquired seemed to make the investment worth it. They were willing to do a lot of work and take responsibility, in exchange for being challenged and empowered. Many were interested in taking additional community organizing courses and the 100 hour internship (if their schedule permitted).

The course has been given overwhelmingly positive evaluations by students all six semesters,

eliminating the possibility of undue influence of a particular faculty's style. Nevertheless, faculty need to learn and be comfortable with a participatory format and many more, albeit shorter, papers to grade. From a faculty standpoint, the success of the course and accompanying internship are stepping stones toward the institutionalization of the community organizing and development program at Hunter College.

### **SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (3/10/98)**

As students, you are members of the Hunter College Community, however, there are many examples of the ways that your status does not afford you the power to determine responses to the problems that you face. Using your experience as Hunter College Students, consider a Direct Action Campaign following the strategy outlined on Bobo, Chapter 2.

1. What improvement would you identify as important? Why?
2. How would you help other students develop their sense of power?
3. How could the overall relation of power be altered?
4. What barriers to your campaign would you anticipate?
5. What moral/ethical grounds would you argue your point on?
6. What alliances or coalitions would you attempt to create ?
7. On what terms would you evaluate your success (remembering the three goals of organizing)?

### ***INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZING***

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to community organizing; specifically, the knowledge, skill and value base underpinning community organizing, planning, development and change. It will emphasize the myriad roles, goals, and strategies used by community organizers in effecting social change. It will examine the history of organizing as a context of analyzing contemporary issues and organizations in the country and in New York City. Models of community organizing including mass mobilization, social action, grass roots empowerment, leadership development and advocacy, as well as newer community building approaches will be assessed for effectiveness in the current conservative climate. Special attention will be paid to issues of gender, class, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation in organizing. Field-related experience is included to expose students to an actual organizing environment.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES KNOWLEDGE**

- to understand the various concepts of community and their application to community organizing;
- to understand the different types of organizing goals, roles and organizing strategies;
- to recognize the value, power and resource differences that impede community organizing and development.

#### **SKILLS**

- to begin to assess the assets (strengths) and deficits (problems) of geographic (neighborhood) and functional (interest) communities;
- to begin to apply models of organizing to specific social change endeavors;
- to acquire beginning skill in specific organizing tools and techniques such as running meetings and public speaking, and use of media.
- to acquire ability to critically analyze situations and problem-solve.

#### **VALUES**



- to appreciate the complexity of and competence needed for the organizer role.
- to value citizen, community and client/consumer participation and empowerment.
- to value to struggles and conflicts inherent in organizing for social and economic justice within an historical context and democratic framework.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **I. Log of Selected Readings**

Each week, select one article or chapter in a book to highlight from the readings. **In no more than one page include:** 1) brief summary; 2) your opinion about it; 3) the most interesting point; 4) a reason why you think it is an important article; 5) its relevance for community organizing. A total of 12 logs are required including two from outside or non-required readings. No more than 3 chapters from any one book or guide.

At the end of the semester, present in writing an outline or essay on the major themes and learning points from the readings you have done for the course. What do they have in common? Are there any differences in their perspective ? (2-3 pages).

### **II. Neighborhood Observation and Beginning Assessment**

Take a walk around a geographic area in which you live or work. As one of the tools for community assessment, you should use your five senses (and your sixth sense!) to begin to understand that neighborhood. (Guidelines for the observation will be given out in class). Come prepared to discuss your observations and preliminary analysis. In class, we will compare and contrast experiences. (It would be ideal if two or more students chose the same area to observe independently and then compare observations). Submit in writing a *three-four page paper*, answering the following questions: What does it look, feel, smell, sound and “taste” like? From your observations, what strengths does the area have? What problems are visible? Is this an area/neighborhood which is stable? in transition ? improving ? deteriorating? What additional questions are raised from your observations that need further fact-finding and assessment? *Most importantly, what are the potential organizing issues that emerge from your preliminary assessment (eg., need for programs, resources, campaigns to improve something, etc.)* You can supplement with photos, drawings, maps, etc.

### **III. Meeting Analysis**

Attend a meeting of a community organization or some local government meeting (eg. community planning board), civic body or neighborhood organization (eg. block association, tenant association, women’s group) concerned with a neighborhood or issue, preferably an organization which is working to improve conditions, policies or services. Describe the meeting in detail and then analyze it according to *written guidelines to be distributed in class*. Preferably, the meeting you attend should be connected to your volunteer field experience.

### **IV. Class Recording.**

Once during the semester, small groups of students will be asked to take notes on a class session, compare them and together prepare and distribute to the whole class, a summary and synthesis of major themes. This provides an opportunity to improve observational, negotiational and analytical skills and to understand how minute -taking is a political and professional (not a clerical) function. The composite document is duplicated and given to fellow students to serve as a resource for them. Selected sessions are reviewed by the class to ascertain

whether the highlights are reflective of previous week's session.

## V. Participation in a Community Organizing Project

Select an organization, agency or group with which to volunteer during the semester for a **Minimum of 20 hours**. A list of possible community organizations **will be provided by the** instructor. Alternatively, you can locate one on your own with permission of the instructor. The purpose of this assignment is to give you first hand experience observing and participating (to the extent possible) in the organizing work of the group. You will need to negotiate entry and assignment with the organization leaders and/or staff. At the very least, you should have access to meetings, minutes and other materials of the organization, and be able to interview leaders and members. In exchange, the group may ask you to participate in furthering the group's agenda, help them carry out a project or event, and/or provide feedback on your observations to them. This effort can be done individually or with other students.

Students will present their experiences orally in class at the end of the semester. Minimum written expectations are to keep a log of your observations and submit at the end of the semester a paper (4-5 pages), answering the following questions: 1) What model or approach to organizing is being used?; 2) What are both the strengths and limitations of the group's effort?; 3) What opposition and allies does it have?; 4) What roles do the organizers and leaders play?; 5) What has been accomplished? Were there any disappointments, failures or defeats?; 6) What lessons did you learn? Refer to relevant course readings and class discussion.

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[ 1 ] See paper on "Educating for Social Change: The Impact of a Community Organizing Course on Students' Career and Civic Pursuits," which presents an evaluation of the course by 6 student cohorts.

[ 2 ] A grant from the President's Research and Teaching Initiative funded a student assistant to help implement and evaluate the course and assist in course administration .

[ 3 ] This list of field sites was also used for the 100 hour Community Organizing Internship which the students could also enroll in for 3 credits concurrent with or in the semester following this course. Materials developed for the supervised internship are available.

# **Women, Organizing and Diversity**

## **A workbook and guide to the video (1994)**

**By Diana Agosta**

**With Barbara Joseph, Susan Lob, Terry Mizrahi, Beth Richie and Beth Rosenthal**

**Consulting Editor, Robin Ferguson**

**The Women Organizers' Video Project, Education Center for Community Organizing at the Hunter College School of Social Work**

**[Session one: Why diversity is important](#)**

**[Session Two: The politics of language](#)**

**[Multiculturalism and Diversity:  
Necessary But Insufficient Challenges to Racesexism](#)**

**[Session Three: Viewing and discussing the video](#)**

**[Session Four: Part one: Approaches to multicultural organizational  
development](#) [Part Two: From theory to practice](#)**

**[Session Five: Planning for change](#)**

**[Session Six: Celebrating ourselves and our work](#)**

## **How your organization could use this videotape and workbook**

You could use this video, *Women, Organizing and Diversity*, and this accompanying workbook with a group of women or a group of women and men:

to explore the implications of confronting economic, social, cultural and political bias, and to encourage the creation of diverse, multicultural organizations using feminist principles;

to explore connections between the organizing that women do and their work to overcome oppression, especially racism, sexism and other "isms";

to help you think critically about your organizing processes -- goals, strategies, principles, style, values, commitments -- and how these may relate to diversity;

to help your organization and your organizing strategies and processes more completely embody our diverse and multi-cultural world.

### **Who this workbook and video is for:**

This videotape and workbook was written primarily for women in grassroots, community service or activist organizations, but can also be used for classes addressing oppression and multiculturalism. The workbook and video can also be adapted for use by unions, neighborhood groups, social service agencies, non-profits and other organizations.

Such groups may be composed of staff, volunteers, clients, members, or students. While this videotape and workbook was developed by women organizers as a way of sharing strengths and struggles with women doing similar work, this process is not limited to women or feminists. The process of education, exploration, self-analysis and strategy is important for all of us.

### **Before you begin**

We have designed this workbook for women organizers. You may be an educator, staff member, trainer, leader, or simply an active member of your group. We assume that you, the facilitator will bring your own particular experience and style to this work, so we have designed this workbook to be useful in a variety of contexts. We urge you to view the video and read through this workbook before you begin working with your group, so you can use these materials more

effectively.

A note on our terminology: "we" indicates the writers of this workbook, a shorthand for the Women Organizers Video Project; "you" means the facilitator or group leader; and by "your group" or "the group" we mean the people viewing the video and doing these exercises.

As you know, you will not solve the problems of racism and sexism with one discussion, one video, one evening session. We have designed this workbook ideally to include a *six session* program, with each session lasting about one and one-half hours (which won't solve the problem either, but it's a start!). We strongly recommend that your group hold all these sessions which include discussions, exercises and video screening. However, there is a great deal of flexibility within each session. We suggest that you first assess your group's motivation and goals, their level of knowledge and awareness of diversity, anti-racist and feminist issues, and then choose appropriate sessions and exercises.

### **How to use these training materials**

We recommend that you don't show the video in the first session, but instead provide some preliminary information and help your group assess their current knowledge, motivations and goals. We have designed two sessions before showing the video:

***Session 1.*** Why diversity is important. Here we have included three options: a discussion about your organizations motivations and goals for building multi-racial organizations, and two exercises exploring personal identity issues. A review of the Fact Sheet might also be useful here. You might also discuss the idea of an Organizational Analysis outlined in Session Five.

***Session 2.*** The politics of language. This is an exercise that includes background information on basic concepts and definitions.

***Session 3.*** provides a process for viewing the video, including a list of questions for discussion. We suggest that your group first watches the 30 minute video first in its entirety, then view it in sections to discuss each set of topics. Several case studies are included after this chapter in which several women explain the examples they mentioned in the video. Each vignette is followed by questions you

can use to spark further discussion.

After showing the video, we have developed two sessions to help your group explore some options for how to build more a diverse organization, and some examples of planning processes you can begin with:

**Session 4.** Models for building anti-racist, anti-sexist organizations. Here we provide ways for your group to explore the model presented in the video as well as two other models, through a guided discussion. In addition, these models can be applied to the case studies introduced in the video.

**Session 5.** Planning for Action: applying the models to your organization. This is where your group can develop an action plan for your organization.

Ideas from **Session 6**, Celebrating our work, can be used in any of the preceding sessions as well as a wrap-up. This session describes some ways to acknowledge ourselves, our work, and our accomplishments, and explore the next steps in the process.

### **Materials you will need**

In addition to a (1/2" VHS) VCR and TV or video monitor for the videotape, you will need:

- è several large newsprint pads and colored markers
- è or a blackboard and chalk
- è photocopies of the several handouts

You may also want to assign some background readings found in the Resources section on pages.

### **Some suggestions for working with groups**

You may be skilled or a novice at leading group discussion. If you are inexperienced, the following hints may prove helpful.

The ideal size for a group doing this kind of intensive discussion is 10-15 people: large enough for lively discussion but small enough for everyone to participate. If

you are working in a larger group, you might try breaking it up into small discussion groups at various points during a session.

You may want to consider the feminist principle of shared leadership. (See page 16 of *Women on the Advance* for a discussion of women organizer's leadership styles.) For example, a different person or persons might lead each of the sessions.

## **Ground Rules**

Before beginning, take a few moments to think of the group atmosphere. The discussion generated from the sessions may make people feel personally challenged, vulnerable and threatened. So it is important to create an atmosphere of safety so that everyone in the group knows that their feelings and thoughts are respected, if not shared.

Some facilitators feel it is a good idea to work with homogeneous groups, so that people can explore their fears and questions more freely. Other facilitators believe that these issues are best confronted directly in mixed groups. If you are working with a mixed group, it is important to establish that people of color are not expected to represent their entire group, or to take the responsibility for teaching the rest of the group; and that white people are made to feel personally guilty or defensive. If you are working in a group that shares the same ethnic background or gender, it is also important not to assume that they're all alike in other ways.

Here are some suggestions to help especially for groups that include both men and women, and people of diverse identities.

- ⊃ Set clear expectations and limitation: for example, no sexual innuendo or "racial" slurs permitted.
- ⊃ The facilitator should remain non-judgmental, especially careful not to put people on the defensive.
- ⊃ When possible, use volunteers; don't force people to talk.
- ⊃ Arrange seats in a circle; this creates a sense of a group working together.



- ⌞ Use small groups (3-5 people) to discuss personal or controversial issues.
- ⌞ Put closure on discussions: sum up each topic before moving on to the next one.
- ⌞ Don't expect an individual to represent an entire group.
- ⌞ Don't assume one person's views represent the group's views.  
Ask who agrees, who disagrees?
- ⌞ Don't assume that silence means agreement.
- ⌞ If the discussion becomes too abstract, ask for concrete examples.
- ⌞ If the discussion becomes too personal, ask for related examples, or ask, what can we all learn from this?

**Here are some ground rules to post in front of the room or hand out:**

- ⌞ Treat your own and other people's ideas and emotions with respect.
- ⌞ Don't interrupt: listening is as important as speaking.
- ⌞ Be as honest as possible.
- ⌞ Don't question other people's experiences.
- ⌞ Don't make fun of each other, or make sarcastic or cutting comments.
- ⌞ Treat the discussions with confidentiality
- ⌞ Don't over-generalize about groups; these can lead to stereotyping

**Sources:** Tips for Generating Safety in Discussions of Races, Class, Gender and Sexual Orientation, Panel of Americans and Helpful Tips for Groups, Dan Willis and Josh Meyer.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the following funders for their support of the Women Organizers' Video Project:

*The Sister Fund (formerly the Hunt Alternatives Fund) The Women's Research and Development Fund of CUNY The Pluralism and Diversity Fund of Hunter College The Joyce Mertz -Gilmore Foundation*

Thanks to the Education Center for Community Organizing at the Hunter School of Social Work for its administrative support. We also would like to express our appreciation to Robin Sirota and Diane Williams for their invaluable assistance in coordinating this project, for everything from juggling our impossible schedules to find meeting times to their thoughtful contributions to the workbook itself.

### **Author's note**

I would like to thank all the members of the WOVP, including Consulting Editor Robin Ferguson, for giving me the opportunity to work with them. I have learned and grown from their knowledge, warmth and experience. I have appreciated their encouragement and support, especially when I felt overwhelmed by the scope of this project. I feel privileged to have worked for such a truly collaborative group of women, impressed by their lack of defensiveness, ability to be self-critical, eagerness to hear each other's views and willingness to go beyond disagreements to find consensus.

I would also like to thank Julia Andino, who was not able to join the project, but whose suggestions, criticisms and advice on early drafts were generous and perceptive. I would especially like to thank Terry Mizrahi for handling the flock of administrative "details," making sure we had everything from sufficient funding to office supplies, and also for her copious but always clarifying red pencil on each successive draft. I hope this workbook conveys the supportive and critical

intelligence of this impressive group of women.

***Women, Organizing and Diversity: Struggling with the Issues***

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## **Session one:                      Why diversity is important**

### **Goals:**

- ' to welcome and introduce the group
- ' to clarify the schedule and ground rules
- ' to help the group reflect on the challenges and advantages of their organization's commitment to change (Exercise 1, Advantages and Challenges) and/or
- ' to introduce the idea that everyone has ethnic or "racial" identities and that identity issues are complex (Exercise 2: Assessing Your Identity Profile) and/or
- ' to explore the ways women are different and what we have in common across ethnic, "racial" and class divisions (Exercise 3: Affirming Ourselves and Our Differences)

**Materials:**                      see individual exercises

**Time:**                              Introductions: 35 minutes

Each exercise: approximately 45 minutes

Wrap-up: 10 minutes (total: 90 minutes if you select only one exercise)

### **Introductions:**

#### **c Introduce the group to itself**

It's a good idea to begin with some sort of welcoming exercise, to help everyone feel part of the group, especially if it is new, and to help focus attention on the issues. You might begin by simply asking everyone to say their name and something about themselves, and, depending on the group, what kind of work they do, what they hope to learn about issues related to women, organizing and diversity, or the accomplishment they feel most proud of.

Another way to do a welcoming exercise is to split the group into pairs, and have each partner share information about themselves with each other. Then, bring the group together and have each member of the pair introduce the other to the full group. (See Session 6: Celebrating Ourselves and Our Work, for other ideas.)

**d Introduce the Women Organizers' Video Project (WOVP)** and how you have organized this series of discussions, exercises and screenings.

Briefly discuss why WOVP created this video and workshop project (highlighted below). You can also draw from the information about the Advance, the video, this workbook and the Women Organizer's Video Project in the Introduction to this workbook.

To emphasize the project's relevance to your group, you might choose a few facts from the Fact Sheet, pages , review changes in your organization or describe a relevant incident that happened in your group or community.

Outline your plan or schedule: how many sessions, what days and times, and any ground rules you have decided to use.

### **Summary of WOVP Assumptions:**

' No one is unaffected by oppression, though we are often affected differently; there is no position of safety.

' Our lives in the U.S. are increasingly inter-related with the peoples, economies, politics and cultures of the rest of the world.

' The persistence of racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, able-ism, ageism, and other "-isms" damage not only its victims but also its perpetrators.

' We all gain from embracing diversity and lose from racism, sexism and other oppressions.

### **Activities**

Choose one of the following three exercises. These activities can help your group gain more from the video by reflecting on their own situation first, organizationally and/or personally.

### **Activity 1: Advantages and challenges**

This exercise focuses on motivations: why is diversity important? What does diversity mean specifically to your organization?

#### **Goals:**

' to help your group clarify their motivations, needs and goals for multicultural organizational development

**Materials:** large newsprint pad and markers, or blackboard and chalk

**Time:** approximately 45 minutes

This exercise is based on the article, "Building Multi-Racial Organizations," by Stephanie Roth and Robin Ferguson, reprinted on pages 53-. Please the article before the session so you are familiar with its main points.

Follow their instructions for the brainstorming\* exercise. They ask you to help your group list challenges and advantages of multi-racial and anti-sexist organizational development. First ask your group to take a few minutes to write down some ideas. Then share these thoughts by writing their ideas on a newsprint pad or blackboard. (20 minutes)

Then write the "premises and precepts" (from page of the article) on the board or pad, and again open the discussion to your group. Spark the discussion by using relevant information Roth and Ferguson provide in their article. (25 minutes)

\* **Note:** "Brainstorming" means having the group list all possible answers to a question. The purpose of brainstorming is to quickly generate many ideas, without discussing, analyzing or rating them.

## **Activity 2: Assessing your personal identity profile**

### **Goals:**

- ' To expand our thinking about identity:
- ' we all have several kinds of identity;
- ' since identities often represent shared experiences, we each may have several different ways we can relate to each other;
- ' ethnic or "racial" identity is not a simple concept, and families are often "mixed" in one way or another.

**Materials:** A copy of the Identities handout (next page) for each person in the group

**Time:** Approximately 30 minutes

Hand out the Identities handout. First, ask each member of the group to, "circle all the words on the list that describes you." Reassure them that they only need to circle things they feel comfortable sharing with this group. Then ask them to check the words that are most relevant to them on this particular day, in this particular group.

### **The following questions may be useful in leading this discussion.**

- ' Identities often indicate areas of shared experience. What identities do we as a group have in common?

- ' How many categories of identity have each of you circled?
- ' How many people checked more than one word from each section? How many people have checked more than one ethnic, national or "racial" identity? Does anyone have more than one ethnic, national or "racial" identity in their family (parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, in-laws, spouses or partners)?
- ' Are there terms you find objectionable that are used in this identity list? Why? Do you prefer certain terms? (Note: if people from the same ethnic background prefer different terms, you might help the group discuss what each term means, and how these terms have political implications. Another approach is to discuss how identities and terms change, and that people may prefer different terms in different groups.)
- ' What is your earliest memory of an ethnic or "racial" identity?
- ' Did you feel like emphasizing or de-emphasizing any aspects of your identity here?

You might begin or end this exercise by reading selections from Barbara Joseph's thoughts on her own identity, on page \_\_ of the Appendix.

**Sources:** Inspired by Panel of Americans, and Equity Institute activities.

## **IDENTITIES**

gender female male

relationships single married separated or divorced in a relationship lover partnership mother, father wife, husband stepparent, godparent grandparent aunt, uncle niece, nephew cousin daughter, son, step-child, adopted child sister, brother, half or step- sister or brother

age child young adult adult elder/senior

religion Animist Atheist Agnostic Buddhist Yoruba Christian Hindu Jewish Muslim Pagan/Wicca

Ethnicity European American American Anglo-Saxon American White African American Black Negro Afro-American African Caribbean Latino/a Hispanic Chicana/o Puerto Rican Borinqueno/a CHK Asian American Asian Oriental Chinese American Native American American Indian Amerindian First Native (nation) Jewish Pacific Islander

Relation to U.S. citizen resident visitor immigrant refugee

Class poor working class middle class upper class

Sexual Orientation gay lesbian heterosexual bisexual



Political Affiliation radical liberal moderate conservative right-wing apolitical  
Republican Democrat Independent

Geographic urban suburban rural

Job/Career

## SESSION ONE: WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT

### **Activity 3: Affirming ourselves and our differences**

This exercise explores the different expectations and responsibilities that are placed on women and men. You may adapt the questions to reflect differences in color, class or nationality instead of gender.

#### **Goals:**

' to clarify that women of different backgrounds have both similar and different ways of coping with the pressures and joys of family, work and community;

' to affirm that our differences are valuable and make us all culturally, politically and personally richer;

' to clarify that our families and society have different expectations for women and for men

#### **Materials:**

For each person, a copy of "Expectations and Responsibilities" charts for BOYS and for GIRLS.

Newsprint pad and markers, or blackboard and chalk.

**Time:** Approximately 45 minutes.

Break into small groups and ask participants to fill out both sections of the handout. Explain to the groups that there are two versions, one for girls and one for boys. The first part lists expectations and responsibilities, and the second part asks about our feelings about these roles. Ask the groups to select a recorder and presenter. (This should take about 20 minutes.)

When the groups are finished, bring the whole group back together and ask the recorders from each group to present their findings.

Then present the following questions for discussion. You might give the group a few moments to write down their thoughts before you ask them to respond. Also, it may be helpful to summarize responses on a newsprint pad so the whole group can reflect on them.

--

' Are there similar expectations and responsibilities placed on women as compared to men regardless of "race" or ethnic group? What are some things that are similar? What are differences?

' What are some of the strengths of women and men in your particular ethnic group?

**Source:** Violence Against Women: A Curriculum for Empowerment. Sharon Szymanski, editor.

## **Affirming Ourselves and Our Differences**

### **Expectations and Responsibilities: For Girls/ For Boys**

As a girl/boy in your "racial" or ethnic group, what were the expectations and responsibilities placed on you?

c Towards children:

d Towards men (fathers, brothers, future partners) (if you are taking the female perspective)  
or Towards women (mothers, sisters, future partners)(if you are taking the male perspective):

e In paid work:

f At home:

g In school:

Source: Violence Against Women: A Curriculum for Empowerment. Sharon Szymanski, editor.

SESSION ONE: WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT
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## **Session two: The politics of language**

### **Goals:**

- ' to clarify the terms and concepts related to organizing and anti- oppression work that are used in this workbook.
- ' to understand and challenge these working definitions
- ' to raise consciousness about the complexity of concepts related to diversity
- ' to identify areas of consensus and disagreement about the terms that affect organizing against "isms"

### **Materials:**

WOVP Concepts handout (or write on pad or blackboard)

### **Time:**

approximately 1 hour

### **Some thoughts about concepts**

The pages labeled "WOVP Concepts" (pages 28-31) summarize our collective thinking about some concepts related to diversity and the "isms." We think of these ideas as evolving concepts, not rigid definitions. They can serve to ground discussion and to provide context for the sessions in this workbook. The Notes to Facilitator, pages 32-35, provide some additional background information for those words followed by asterisks.

### **Why discuss concepts?**

People often have strong feelings about the terms relating to ethnic and cultural groups in this society. In a group, the emotions that are brought up are sometimes expressed by silence or confusion, fear of saying the wrong thing, or sometimes by excited or angry disagreements. These emotions are themselves a sign that the issues are important. We believe it is imperative to confront this language to understand the implications of what we, and others, say. Discussing these definitions is an opportunity to clarify misunderstandings and to raise consciousness about the underlying issues, even if these discussions don't end in consensus and we still don't agree about the meanings of terms.

Many of these are not neutral words and phrases. These words have different histories and meanings depending on where and when and by whom they are used. They have been socially constructed, like swearing and name calling, to hurt and control people. Sometimes groups of people reclaim "hurting" words to take control of them and transform their meanings. Remember also that definitions change and often relate to what is happening in the world, in your life, or in your organization. (For example, see the reprinted excerpt by Barbara Joseph on page 5\_.) We need to be aware of these word-histories so that we know what we are saying and how other people may interpret its meaning. Using words that have with more than one implication or ambiguous meanings can cause unintended misunderstandings and divisions.

Thinking about these words and their implications is also a way to continue to raise our consciousnesses, by making the words we use more of a reflection of the humanity we would like to express to one another.

### **Suggested exercises**

Some members of WOVP believe that the main use of these concepts is to express our understanding of these terms to the users of this workbook. Other members believe that concepts could be explored in exercises to sensitize a group to the implications of the politics of language. You, the facilitator, will decide what approach is most relevant to your group. Here are some options:

A: Copy the pages labeled "WOVP Concepts" and ask the group to read them. (In the meanwhile, you might review the "Notes for Facilitators on Concepts" to bring up your own points.) Then read each term out loud, and discuss your group's questions, disagreements or comments.

B: Chose 5-10 words that are relevant to the issues or background of your group. Read the definitions to the group, and discuss any questions or disagreements they may have. Then break up into smaller groups, and ask each group to discuss:

Î In what ways are you affected by these terms?

Î How can you incorporate your new understanding into your work?

Î What are some examples of the use of these terms in your organization or community?

C: Ask the group to read through all the concepts. Then ask if they found any definitions difficult to understand or if there were any they disagreed with. List these contentious or confusing terms on the board or pad. Choose about 10 words, and break up into small groups to discuss these disagreements. Present some of the information from your own knowledge and the facilitator's notes as you listen to the groups' discussions.

D: Some words that are similar have different and sometimes hurtful implications. In large or small groups, discuss examples like the ones below, referring to the facilitator's notes to explore what are the differences between:

Î homophobia/heterosexism

Î disabled/differently abled/...

Î Black/Negro/African/African American...

Î woman/girl/...

It is a good idea to review the group's understanding of the concepts again at the end of the training. Question to ask include:

Î How have your ideas and understandings changed about these concepts?

Î How will you use them differently in the future?

Î How will or can you educate others about their usage and implications?

## WOVP concepts

*Because language changes and its use may vary depending on the cultural context, and can be controversial, we are providing a list of concepts that represent the thinking of the WOVP. Please note that these definitions are from the perspective of the United States. Definitions in other parts of the world may vary. (Astericks mean that more information can be found on the Notes for Facilitators.)*

**anti-racism work** goes beyond multiculturalism or diversity to confront issues of power and causes of inequality in society. "This is where a person or group actively participates in eliminating racism on an individual, organizational and societal level"<sup>1</sup>

**anti-Semitism\*** is the prejudice and discrimination which has often led to violence against people and property based on their Jewish heritage. In its extreme forms, it led to the forced ghettoization of Jews in Europe for many centuries and the holocaust in Nazi Germany.

**culture\*** has been defined in many ways. One definition is, a "way of viewing and practicing life" which is reflected in their common beliefs, values, interests, experiences, language or communication styles, dress, or other behavior."<sup>2</sup>

**differently abled/physically challenged/disabled/handicapped** are the terms used historically to describe people who have different physical or mental abilities. (Note: "handicapped" is not a preferred term among people with disabilities.)

**ethnicity** is the "distinction among people based on region or nation of origin, religion, and/or language." <sup>2</sup> What people find important about their ethnic heritage may change, as may its importance in relation to other aspects of their identity.

**ethno-violence\*** refers to violent acts against people based on assumed ethnicity and what people assume are related characteristics.

**feminism\*** is an analysis of sexism, and an anti-sexist perspective that addresses the imbalance of power between men and women.<sup>1</sup> Feminism doesn't assume that all women are the same, but acknowledges the diversity of women's lives and supports a woman's right to define her own life.

**feminist organizing** The feminist organizing model is based on women's contributions, functions, roles and experiences and is derived from their strengths. It also recognizes the limitations of their socially ascribed roles and the nature of their oppression. A feminist perspective means that women can and should share leadership and that the organizing process must empower women and build community. (See Women on the Advance about feminism and organizing.)

**gender** refers to whether or not someone is male or female. (The terms gender and sex are often used interchangeably but gender is more accurate.)

**heterosexism** is the system of oppression of lesbians and gay men based on homophobia. (Homophobia is the irrational fear of homosexuality and the hatred, disgust and prejudice that fear brings.) Heterosexism is the institutional response which assumes that all people are heterosexual and therefore excludes the needs, concerns and life experience of lesbians and gay men.<sup>3</sup>

**identity** means the ways one defines oneself "based on race, national origin, language, religion, sexual orientation, professional association or union, politics, or any other voluntary or involuntary marker [characteristic]."<sup>2</sup>

**identity politics\*** refers to the idea that a person's ethnic or other identities have political, social and economic implications. Organizing based on an identity may reflect pride in one's heritage or community, be a defense against oppression by institutions or other groups in society, and a way to gain control over one's own life. It can also be a way of emphasizing differences and divisions over shared conditions, concerns and characteristics.

**multiculturalism/diversity\*** recognizes the existence of a variety of cultures or ways of living and seeing the world, which may be based on ethnicity, color, sexual orientation and other differences in people's experiences. A multicultural approach emphasizes that we, as individuals, and our organizations and communities benefit from including people with a diversity of perspectives and experiences.

**oppression** occurs when a dominant group has the power to impose its way on a less powerful group in society, or has the power to define the world in terms of its own interests and ignore the perspectives of those with less power.

**people of color** is a commonly-used term to define people of African, Arab, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Latina/Latino and Native American descent. (Note that not everyone from these cultures use this term to define themselves.)<sup>1</sup>

**prejudice** is when an unfavorable opinion or feeling is formed about a group of people without adequate knowledge, or an irrational hostile attitude towards an individual or group because of assumed characteristics.<sup>4</sup> Anyone from any "racial" or ethnic group can be prejudiced.

**"race"** is most commonly used to identify a person's skin color or ethnicity. Because of its use historically, "race" is a contentious and complicated term. For example, many people believe that racism exists but "race" does not; it is a social construction. This is why we always use quote marks around the word "race" in this workbook.

**racesexism** refers to the reality that racism and sexism together have been institutionalized in the United States, though their effects are not necessarily additive. For example, the experiences of Black women are not the same as the experiences of



white women or Black men.

**racism\*** is the institutionalized and systemic oppression of people of color. Institutional racism is enforced by the system of power in which "racial" inequality is embedded in government, the economic system, the legal system, the educational system, organized religion, and the media. Racism negatively affects the life- chances of people of color in every area including access to jobs, housing, education and health care. Institutional racism can be reinforced by individual acts of bigotry, prejudice and discrimination, but has many more far reaching consequences than simply "how people treat each other". Racism is prejudice coupled with the power to enforce the prejudice.<sup>5</sup>

**sexism\*** refers to attitudes, action or institutional structure which makes a person or group subordinate because of their gender, and also occurs when people's social roles are defined by gender. It is also the exploitation of women, individually or as a group, by men.<sup>6</sup> Sexism has had different characteristics and meanings in different cultures and time periods. A **sexist** is someone who uses ideas about the limits and implications of female reproductive anatomy to determine women's capacities, proper roles, and relationships to other people. To a sexist, men's perspectives of the work are "normal", while women's perspectives are considered unimportant or abnormal.

**sexual orientation or identity\*** refers to whether a person is bisexual, gay, heterosexual, lesbian or transgender ( ?). Sexual orientation has also been referred to as sexual preference.

**stereotype** is a conventional and often oversimplified conception or belief about a person, group, event or issue which is considered conform to an unvarying pattern.<sup>7</sup> Prejudices are often based on stereotypes.

**white privilege\*** refers to the economic, political and societal benefits that white people [people of European descent] receive as a result of systemic oppression and discrimination of people of color, in housing, education, judicial system, in physical safety, and media images.<sup>1</sup>

**white supremacy\*** is the belief that "whites" are better than people of color.

**Sources:**

1. Ferguson, Roth and Walber, 1992.
2. Simons, 1989, in PCPS: 4
3. Homophobia and Heterosexism, M. Smith.
4. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981.
5. Adapted by Barbara Smith
6. Fact Sheet on Institutional Sexism, compiled by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, quoted in Rothnberg; 20-1).
7. American Heritage Dictionary 1979.

## Notes for the facilitator about concepts

*Following are some additional ideas and thoughts on the concepts introduced above that may be useful to bring up in your group's discussions. Words people use to describe themselves often have moral, social and political implications, and consequently are the focus of debate. We encourage you to refer to the Resources at the end of the workbook and the Women Organizers resource collection for further reading on these issues.*

**anti-Semitism** Not all anti-Semitism is as extreme or obvious as Nazism or neo-nazi vandalism that has increasingly occurred in Jewish synagogues and cemeteries in many parts of the United States. Stereotypes about Jews are part of anti-Semitism. Some people distinguish between anti-Semitism (discrimination against Jews), and opposition to Zionism (the idea and existence of Israel as a Jewish state), while other people do not accept this distinction.

**culture** refers to one or more of the following things: the ways people think, their beliefs and values, language or dialect; things people make or do, like food, dress, music, family relationships, or styles of problem-solving. Anthropologists consider the ways people organize their social lives (family, friend and work networks), economic survival, cultural expression and political involvement all part of culture. (see Session Six, Celebrating Ourselves and Our Work).

However, making the assumption that all members of a particular group like the same things, act the same way, etc. is stereotyping. People sharing the same culture can be as different from each other as people from different cultures. Also, people often share or participate in more than one culture at different times or in different contexts; for example with parents or relatives, at work, and with friends. Cultures change: we know that how we live in the United States today is different than even 20 years ago; the same is true for Nigerian, Japanese, and Native American cultures.

**ethno-violence** Nationalist violence is based on the belief in pure ethnic heritage that some ethnicities or nationalities are better than others, should be dominant, or must avenge recent or past wrongs by other ethnic or national groups. Recent examples of ethno-violence can be seen in attacks by German and French youth against North African and Turkish immigrant workers; by Serbs against Bosnians, in the former Yugoslavia; in several areas of the former Soviet Union and in Rwanda in Africa.

**feminism** has a long history, with many debates and changes in emphasis and understanding. The feminist women's movement since the 1960s (often referred to as "second wave feminism") has sought to obtain equal rights and treatment of women economically, politically, and socially: for example, the right to work in any job for which she is qualified, and receive equal pay for equal work, the right to choose whether or not to have children. Using the slogan "the personal is political" feminists

have raised issues such as child care, equitable divorce and child support payments, and spousal abuse. However, this primarily "white" feminism has been criticized for ignoring the experiences, knowledge, contributions and needs of women of color. In recent years white feminists have become more sensitive to their own racism and ethnocentrism.

**identity politics** There is a difference between being stereotyped by someone else, and self-identifying - labelling oneself with a group identity. What people choose to call themselves may differ at any one time, as well as historically. For example, today some people prefer to be called "African American" while others prefer to be called "Black." In the 1950s, "Negro" was considered by many to be more respectful than "Black" or "colored." The term one prefers may also depend on the particular context. For example, the same person may be alternatively identified as Latina, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, American Indian or Native American, or simply as a woman: one can't choose another person's identity for them.

**multi-culturalism and diversity** refer to the fact that there are a variety of cultures and ways of seeing the world, based on ethnicity, color, sexual orientation and other differences in people's experiences or backgrounds. A multi-cultural approach emphasizes that we as individuals, and our organizations, benefit from including people with this diversity of perspectives and experiences. Techniques using this perspective focus on prejudice reduction and ways of managing differences in organizational work and community life.

**"race"** has at least two different meanings today: it is used as a biological and genetic concept, and as a means to label and oppress people. As a biological concept, most anthropologists and biologists agree that "racial" categories are not clearly defined and that "race" as used in popular debate has little scientific basis, and little utility. In biology, the occurrence of traits that are said to distinguish "races" are less frequent than those that are shared. Also the word has had different meanings. Until the 1950s, "race" and "nation" were often used interchangeably (for example, people used to refer to the Irish "race.") In much of Latin America, a family might have children labelled with several "racial" classifications. So the word is neither scientifically or etymologically meaningful.

As a means of oppression, the concept of race has been used over several centuries to kill, enslave, shorten the life-spans, and limit the opportunities of people based on the color of their skin. There is no doubt that "race" is real in this sense.

At the same time, many people of African descent celebrate their heritage and shared culture, as African Americans, as Africans, and as members of an African diaspora. In this way, "race" is similar to ethnicity, with the crucial difference of the shared experience of racism.

**racism** is institutional while prejudice is individual. Institutions maintain racism by their everyday policies and practices which provide resources and services and enforce their rules in ways that are unfair. "Most of this country's institutions were set up by privileged white men determined from the very beginning to maintain their privileges

and benefits and profit from unpaid labor from and taking of land."  
1DiLapi, Gay and Mitchell provide a useful table showing the differences between individual and institutional racism:

<u>individual</u>	<u>institutional</u>
one on one	group on group
intentional	unintentional
overt	covert
observable	subtle
does harm or injury	"business as usual"
public condemnation	public sanction

**sexism** was institutionalized throughout much of the 19th century in laws and rulings that prevented women from owning property, serving on juries, holding office, or serves as legal guardians for own children.<sup>3</sup> Today's effects can be seen both in the differences in access to and control of decision making and resources between men and women, and in attitudes about women's and men's proper roles in society.

**stereotype** Stereotypes function like filters or frames that prevent you from seeing what you don't want to see, especially things that might cause you to change your mind or make the world seem less predictable. To avoid stereotypes, look for details, accept other people's individuality and be willing to be change your mind based on new information. <sup>4</sup>

**white supremacy** The roots of white supremacy are in the construction of the global division of power and resources that began with European exploration and conquest of the Americas as well India, Africa and East Asia in the 15th century. white supremacy was also part of the founding of the United States, a built-in contradiction to U.S. ideals of freedom, equality and self-representation. For example, it was institutionalized in the U.S. constitution with "three fifths compromise" that accepted slavery, and counted enslaved people as three fifths of free persons, for the purpose of allotting representatives and apportioning taxes. <sup>5</sup>

The ideas and effects of white supremacy survive today not only in extreme racist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan or Aryan Resistance, but also in the institutional structures that are still controlled by whites. It can also be seen in the continuity of unequal opportunities and facilities for education, health care, employment, housing, and other social needs. White supremacy also persists in cultural assumptions such as in ways of speaking or in art forms, in defining what valued, or what is normal, what is valued what is exceptional versus what is typical behavior.

Sources:

1. Council on Interracial Books for Children, Understanding Institutional Racism filmstrip script, produced with the assistance of the Division of Life and Mission of the American Lutheran Church and the Institution for Education in Peace and Justice, quoted in Willis, p )

2. from "Challenging Racism and Misogyny" Elena di Lapi, Gloria Gay and Joann Mitchell in Third Women's Policy Research Conference Proceedings, 1992.

3 (Rothenberg: 9)

4 (Andre in Rothenberg,: 257-262)

## **Multiculturalism and Diversity: Necessary But Insufficient Challenges to Racesexism**

*Excerpts from a talk by Barbara Joseph*

I come here not to praise multiculturalism (nor to bury it) but to talk about the dreaded "R" word -- racism -- (your garden variety racism) and the "S" word (sexism), combined as "racesexism," since for women of color, you can't have one without the other. I also come to talk about heterosexism and the "isms" in general, and our pressing need to undo these things directly and frontally. For until we do this, we may not know what true diversity is or how it enriches our lives, collectively and in a deeply personal way.

Talk about identity, I am a racism survivor: how else could I emerge from a process of naming designed to engender multipersonalities or schizophrenia. Today I say I'm an African, Native American woman; but once I was "Negro" -- never "African" (those folks who followed Tarzan with eyes popping fearful of a land and environment they have survived in for thousands of years) or "Black" (which was and is synonymous with "bad": black lies, black listed, black balled) but "Negro" was better than "Nigger" and "Nig row." Then I was "colored," as in (NAACP, National Association of Colored People) interesting; more universal than the assigned misnomer "Negro." Then also "Indian" (as in Columbus' mistake), then Afro-American, which was closer to basic origins, but still devoid of a geographic and ethnic sense of place and culture afforded most other groups. There are, after all, not Frencho-Americans, Italo-, Chino-, Japo-, etc., Americans. And where is "Afro"? Lately, I have been a woman or person of color, (dropping the "ed" of "colored"); and now, African American: a refinement and important step located in the reality of land, history and culture. I think, however, it isn't over yet -- the important thing may be the process of naming one's self and one's world, as part of a crucial act of empowerment. And I may be holding out for "person" or "human," able and determined to identify with all people in the richness of their differences and common needs.

Our challenge is to come to terms with cultural and class pain, inflicted by some groups upon others, in some cases intentionally, born of a consummate institutional ignorance of each other's reality, by learning to ask critical questions and putting them to people in power. What approach do we have for working through pain and injury, how do we help each other to assess their relationships with self and others in the context of exploitation and domination expressed through racism, sexism, all the "isms"? Do people ask, "what are you?" Do we, in split second timing perceive a person's color, gender, age, sexual preference and conjure up responses that are time-honored stereotypical judgements and expectations? Can we acknowledge and recognize emerging identities of different groups of people based on:

a: Current and transistional characteristics and principles -- understanding these as open-ended -- because much of it can only be understood or at least determined

in the very language and practice of oppression. If there are no "races" as the scientists, anthropologists and sociologists concluded nearly 50 years ago at a United National conference and reaffirmed subsequently over decades, why are we still taught this myth and code of difference?

b: Recognition that real identity is a process, one that has a universal core, grounded in human nature and human needs which are essentially positive and mutually reinforcing. Through problem-solving and mediated by experience, real identity changes as the reality and conditions offered afford more choices and opportunities to securely build upon that which creates community cooperation, intimacy and health-giving life chances; conditions which promote empowerment, self and group actualization.

## **Session Three: Viewing and discussing the video:**

### **Goals:**

- ' to explore and understand the perspectives, experiences and ideas presented in the videotape
- ' to relate experiences and information in the video to their own lives and work.

**Materials:** 1/2" VCR and monitor, "Women and Diversity" videotape

**Time:** approximately 2 hours

**Note:** See transcript for the names of people who speak in the video.

Before playing the video, review "About this workbook..." on page 7. Explain how and why the video was made and what the Advance conference was.

The following questions were written for you the facilitator to ask your group, so "you" in the questions refers to your group. In order to focus the discussion and have enough time to complete this session, we suggest that you select the questions you think are most relevant, interesting, or controversial. You may not want or need to go through the whole list.

1) We suggest that your group first view the video, which lasts about 30 minutes, in its entirety and then discuss the general questions below.

Î What did you like about the video?

Î Were there any particular statements that you remember?

Î Were there any ideas that seemed particularly relevant to our

organization?

Î Were there any statements that seemed confusing or wrong?

2) Then re-view the video in sequences, stopping the tape at the points marked in the video transcript. Briefly discuss the following questions for each sequence before going on to the next sequence. The questions are divided into themes, based on the sections and sequences of the videotape. (These sequences are indicated in the script.)

### **Main themes**

As the video begins, the first three statements express its main themes.

' What does it mean to have a sense of home, and to leave home? What might it mean in the context of helping your organization grow and change? Why does Beth say that she expects everybody to leave home, not just her?

' How does your organization balance self-examination and getting things done?

' What does Barbara mean, that there is no position of safety?

' Who are we, and what are our visions for organizing?

In the next sequence, a number of women from the Advance conference introduce themselves. If your group is new to organizing, it might be useful to expand this discussion with the vignette of Yolanda Sanchez on page \_\_\_\_.

' What are some of the different projects identified by the women from the Advance conference? What do these women, or their projects, have in common? What is "organizing"?

Here, you might bring out some of the differences in the issues and approaches of the women in the video. For example, the issues the women are working on include cultural, labor, sexual orientation, academic, and civil rights; some of them are paid staff members while others are volunteers.

' What are you currently working on and what are you most proud of in your work? (For this question, you might go around the circle, asking each person in your group to respond. You might also ask, what is most difficult in your work? What do you need to do your job better, or to be more effective?)

' Charlotte Dickson says she's proud of having good relationships with people and being able to organize across differences: what are some of the things that make good working or organizing relationships? Do you find this statement naive, inspiring, or offensive?

' Karen Artichoker talks about her vision for her work in Sioux country. What are your



visions for your work? (You might make a list of everyone's responses to this question, or do a group brainstorm posing this question.)

### **Confronting the "-isms": pros and cons, benefits and fears**

In the next part of the videotape, women talk about some issues that are important to consider in anti-racism work. Their main points are: the necessity of dealing with racism and sexism; the need to respect people's skills, gifts, and priorities; that we all gain from accepting diversity; that doing these things means changing how we work and how we think about our work; and that all of this is hard work.

' Why might an organization self-destruct or be unable to move forward

because of racism? Have you had this experience? How has this issue affected your group? (To pursue this topic further, discuss the vignette of Stephanie Roth on page .)

' How is embracing diversity in an organization different from charity? Charity is based on the idea that others "need" something, while the idea behind diversity is that we have shared needs and we all can make contributions.)

' Who gains from combatting racism and other "isms" in our organizations? How do we gain from diversity?

' What does Stephanie Roth mean by saying, "it's really important that you don't bring women in [to your organization] saying, 'work on our issue.'"

' If home is our organization and our way of doing things, how can we "leave home," or open our organization up to difference? (These ideas will be discussed in more detail by Beth Richie in the next section of the video.)

' Does recognizing diversity mean losing boundaries and distinctions, or respecting and even heightening differences, or some combination?

' Why is it important to "learn the things that pain us and to learn how to heal"? What are the dangers of expressing and not expressing anger or frustration? How can we grow from recognizing anger and frustration?

' Why is it important to work against the "isms," even if we are in a homogeneous organizations?

### **One model for multi-cultural organizations**

The next part of the videotape was based on a one-hour presentation by Beth Richie and Stephanie Roth. It is an introduction to a model for developing multi-cultural organizations, which was developed by Beth Richie. Session Four, explores this and other models further.

' What are the three kinds of organizational action that Beth Richie recommends in this model? (She recommends: doing outreach, establishing a multi-cultural atmosphere, and acting against oppression in the larger society.)

' What are some of the elements of outreach and why are they important? (acceptance -- changing the appearance of the organization to make it welcoming; real interest -- letting people know what the organization has to offer to them; curiosity -- getting the organization educated about the groups to whom you're reaching out.)

' What kinds of outreach has our organization done? What are some ways our organization could do outreach in the future?

' How can we create a multi-cultural atmosphere? (Possibilities range from changing the cultural environment, such as what the organization looks and sounds like; structural changes like affirmative action policies for hiring and promotion, and changes in decision making structures.)

' How can our organization act against oppression in our community and the larger society?

## **Problems and solutions**

The next part of the video presents excerpts of a discussion by Heather Booth and Charlotte Bunch, as they talk about the problem of conflicting goals: that of embodying a diverse, anti-racist society, and that of helping people with their immediate needs or the concrete tasks of an organization.

' Why are each of these goals important?

' How do they suggest balancing these goals? (Charlotte says to "constantly keep the vision and figure out what you can do to move toward it" and Heather says that even things that don't work might provide a base for future change.)

' What are the pros and cons of the solution in the example Stephanie Roth gives about the organization that decided that their annual conference should be for women of color only? (For more information about this example, see the case study, pages.)

' How did the carefully constructed diverse slate that Laura Unger's union ran help address some of the divisions she talks about in her union? (Some of the divisions to overcome that she mentions are wage disparities between men and women, divisions between clerical vs. plant workers, "racial" issues, union members having often stronger ties with their community organizations, such as churches, than with the union.) (For more about this example, see the case study, pages.)

## **Celebrating the work we do**

The last section of the focuses on appreciating and celebrating the work we do, our

long-term goals, and our perseverance.

' What are the main things that the women recognize and celebrate in this last section of the video? (They celebrate that they are organizers; that they do share bridges and connections; that it is possible to persevere)

' Why is it important to recognize our strengths and accomplishments?

' Barbara Joseph says that envisioning and theorizing can help us

Understand the conflicts we are facing, help us confront them more efficiently, and help us see the larger context of our particular struggles. How can our organization give us the opportunity to come together to develop our understandings and plans for our work?

The video ends with a closing ceremony. The role of this and other group activities and celebrations are explored in Session 6.

## **Organizers' Stories**

These vignettes expand on the issues and experiences that Yolanda Sanchez, Stephanie Roth and Laura Unger raised in the videotape. They are based on interviews conducted by Diane Williams. Questions for discussion follow each vignette.

### **What is organizing? How and why does someone become an organizer?**

**Yolanda Sanchez** (Current President, National Latinas Caucus; Executive Director Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs (PRACA))

In the 1950s, Yolanda Sanchez, a young Puerto Rican caseworker from East Harlem, first started organizing. There was never a day when a light bulb went off in her head, Yolanda explained. Instead becoming an organizer was a gradual process that started to make sense with time and through many experiences. Initially she was asked to join a group of fellow middle class, professional Puerto Ricans who had decided to work together on common issues and problems that affected them as a stateside community. Though unaware of it at the time, she was being drawn into a lifelong profession of organizing and advocacy. So while she had been doing organizing for years, it was not until the early 1960s that Yolanda began to get paid for doing organizing work. This was when her mentor, Dr. Antonia Bonita asked her to become the first social worker at ASPIRA ("aspire" in Spanish). Her first assignment was to organize leadership development programs for youth.

### ***Defining her identity***

For the first twenty years of her professional life, Yolanda identified herself as Puerto Rican. Out of this concern with nationalist issues, she helped create the Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs (PRACA) and the New York City Chapter of the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women. But in the 1970s Yolanda redefined her

sense of identity. "I've always operated as a Puerto Rican. I never applied race to myself, because I was a Puerto Rican and what I was up against was the general community versus Puerto Ricans. However, over the years, it became clear I was facing other things, too. With the consciousness of the Black movement also working on me, I began also to see race [as also affecting me]. I began to realize that another way I am defined is by my color. I am a Black woman within the community."

### ***Gender issues***

Yolanda was also involved in and greatly influenced by the women's movement of the 1970s. As her feminist consciousness was raised, her belief in the need to organize Puerto Rican and other Latina women grew stronger. When the National Puerto Rican Women's Caucus, which she helped to organize, didn't survive due to internal conflicts, Yolanda felt there was still a critical need for a viable feminist group of Latina.

In 1984, Yolanda decided to have a dinner party, but this was to be no ordinary dinner party. She sent out invitations to eleven women activists, not all of whom were Puerto Ricans. The invitation explicitly stated her intention to form a Latina women's caucus. Seven women showed up. The two question agenda began, "Do you think there is in existence a feminist, progressive women's organization for Latinas?" Most of the women answered no. The second question was, "Are you interested in helping me organize one?" Five of the seven women present decided to give it a try, and the organization they started became known as the National Latinas Caucus.

The group decided on a Latina as opposed to an exclusively Puerto Rican focus because it was clear to them that there was going to be increased immigration into the United States from other Latin American countries. They believed that strength comes with numbers. Their philosophy of inclusion meant that as long as someone believed in feminism and the need for economic and leadership development among Latina women, they could join. The National Latina Caucus has an activist agenda. It has been involved in issues such as housing development and youth empowerment that affect the Latino community. While it is a non-profit, the Caucus has created a Latinas Political Action Committee to fundraise and promote Latina political candidates.

Yolanda recently reflected that, "It was not the creation of the National Latinas Caucus which generated and sparked feminist ideology and thinking in me. It was years of being on the fringes of the women's political movement in Manhattan. I was living in East Harlem in those days and responding to women's organizations like NOW. You would be the only woman of color in the group -- or one of the few. But you're in the room and you're listening. You also begin to read and then you become much more knowledgeable on public issues. But being at those meetings, unless you just Black out completely, you do hear, you do absorb. Whether it has an impact on you at that moment or not, it's there somehow."

"I was working with other women, some that were real feminists, others that were not into the movement at all. All of that, the life experiences played a role in raising my

consciousness: trying to grasp a greater understanding of feminism, trying to redefine for myself, trying to understand what makes feminism in the Latina community slightly different from feminism in the general community"

### **Questions for discussion**

- ' What do you think it means to have your feminist consciousness raised? Through what life experiences has your consciousness been raised?
- ' Are there times when an exclusive or separatist group is necessary? What are some specific examples?
- ' What could make feminism in the Latino community (or African American, Asian, etc.) different from feminism in European American communities?
- ' How do you currently identify yourself? How have you identified yourself in the past? Has your identity been redefined in the past?

### **Why might organizations self-destruct because of racism?**

**Stephanie Roth** (Consultant and trainer with nonprofit development organization on fundraising, organizational development, and racism and multiculturalism. Activist in women's and lesbian organizations.)

In the late 70's at a Reproductive Rights National Network (R2N2) Conference, the Women of Color Caucus decided to leave R2N2 in mass because they felt that the organization was too racist. Shortly after this incident R2N2 folded. This was very upsetting to the remaining members of R2N2, including Stephanie Roth, then a paid staff member of the Committee for Abortion Rights and Sterilization Abuse (CARASA) one of the members of the Reproductive Rights National Network (R2N2). They wondered how this could happen in an organization that explicitly focused on a race and class analysis of these issues. For example, they fought against sterilization abuse and worked diligently to keep abortion legal and accessible to women who couldn't afford to pay for them.

Stephanie and other woman from R2N2 began to reflect on what went wrong. How did R2N2 fail? One explanation for the network's self-destruction lies in who started it and why. R2N2 was founded by white, progressive, politically left women who were interested in a class-based analysis of reproductive rights. The founding members, who set the organization's agenda, decided that in addition to working on abortion rights issues they would also concentrate on sterilization, child care and women's health issues.

R2N2 made sincere efforts to diversify their organization through outreach, such as trying to hook up with reproductive rights organizations that were made up of mainly women of color. These efforts worked on a small scale. The network grew from a

predominately white organization to one that included a few women of color. These women began to feel unified and strong enough to begin to challenge organizational issues, such as the lack of leadership of women of color within the organization and R2N2's resistance to exploring different perspectives of their issues. Issues came to a head at one of their conferences in which there was a session where women of color and white women met separately. The task for each group was to talk about "racial" issues within the organization. The two groups reported back very differently. The white women's report was vague. They were unsure about how to begin to address the issues and seemed resistant to taking responsibility for "racial" tensions within R2N2. In contrast, the women of color came back with a list, saying, "These are the problems that we've experienced with R2N2, and this is what we need to have happen."

Like many predominately white organizations the white women weren't prepared to deal with this kind of crisis. The majority of the women of color decided that it would be too time consuming and frustrating to continue to work to change the organization, so they decided to leave.

Stephanie says of the incident:

"I think this was a historical period in the women's movement where there was a lot more organizing going on separately among women of color, and a lot more challenging of white women. And white women clearly didn't have a sense of what to do. ... The women of color leaving was the first step in the demise of R2N2. Their leaving was not a vote to destroy the organization. I don't think they even had an idea one way or the other whether R2N2 would continue to survive or not. The white women felt so devastated and so clearly overwhelmed by what it would mean to have a network made up of all white women at that point that they just decided to close down."

### **What were the pros and cons of organizing an annual conference for women of color only?**

In 1983, Stephanie Roth joined New York Women Against Rape (NYWAR) as one of two paid staff. NYWAR was the only citywide Rape Crisis Center in New York. When she arrived it was a very white organization in terms of staff, board and volunteers. Being aware of racism and the problems of white dominated organizations from her past experiences, Stephanie felt concerned about NYWAR's commitment to anti-racism. She raised her concerns to the other members and they agreed that action must be taken on this issue.

The first thing they did was to make a commitment to hire a woman of color for a co-coordinator position. This meant that the two staff people would have equal power and responsibility in the organization. About six months after Stephanie arrived on staff, NYWAR hired a Latina woman who was committed to developing leadership of women of color within the organization. She and Stephanie served as co-coordinators and worked closely together.

Later, Stephanie and another Latina colleague worked together to organize the NYWAR's annual conference. The focus was on issues of race and class and how they were linked to violence against women. This conference turned out to be one of the most diverse conferences NYWAR ever had. Their organizing efforts were successful, Stephanie believes, because they did a great deal of outreach and tried to get women of color involved in every step of planning and implementing the conference. For example, a large number of women of color ran workshop sessions. As a result of the conference, a women of color caucus was formed. NYWAR seemed to be entering a new era regarding diversity within the organization.

But Stephanie and her colleague felt a stronger commitment needed to be made to women of color and proposed that the next conference be organized by and for women of color only. Their arguments were that NYWAR had a long history and reputation of being predominately white and that not enough resources in the organization had been devoted to issues of women of color.

The board approved the proposal, but the conference plan also caused some tension in the organization because the white women felt excluded. It became apparent that NYWAR had to grapple with helping the white women in the organization deal with this change. NYWAR began, during the period that the conference was being organized, with two day-long consciousness-raising discussions with the white women regarding racism. The purpose was to help them deal with any concerns they might have regarding the conference and to talk about responsibilities that white people have to address racism in an organization. There were a few disgruntled women who left the organization but the majority of the women stayed.

This conference was an important step for NYWAR in honoring its commitment to women of color and to anti-racism. It displayed the organization's serious commitment, and began a period of organizational growth concerning multi-cultural issues. Within a few years, NYWAR had a diverse board and staff. A critical mass of women of color started to form who no longer felt isolated and who continued to challenge what they perceived to be racism within the organization.

### **Questions for discussion:**

' Do you know of any organizations that folded because of racism? What do you think caused them to fold? Do you think R2N2's decision to fold after the women of color left was a good one?

' Members of R2N2 weren't prepared for racism's divisive effects. How can an organization prepare itself for "racial" conflicts?

' What are the pros and cons of having a women of color only conference?

' Why do you think that when the white women were challenged by the women of color on issues of racism, they felt hesitant to challenge these accusations?



## Healing Divisions and working together

**Laura Unger** (Current President, Communications Workers of America (CWA), Local 1150, in New York. Activist and speaker on women's leadership in trade unions, ... )

Laura Unger is not the type of person who believes in working only for herself. So when she decided to run for President of CWA Local 1150, it was only natural that she run as part of a slate. The slate [for the Board of Directors of the union] turned out to be a very diverse one that reflected the membership of the union. The slate included a white women President, a Black man as Vice President, a white man for Secretary/Treasurer, a Black woman as NY Area Director and a white man as NJ area director. This board formed as a natural outgrowth of whom the membership was and who had similar beliefs and principles.

Laura commented,

"I think by just going out and trying to find the best person it ended up being a diverse slate. I think had it not happened that way ...I would have noticed it. It wasn't like I said, 'Oh, I have to get a Black woman for a particular Local because that building is mostly Black.' What happened was that a Black woman ran (though she wound up getting laid off, so we replaced her with a Hispanic man). If people are allowed to use their skills and talents and there's a conscious effort to develop membership, then Black and Hispanic members will come forward. It's only in places where there's a conscious effort to keep them down, keep them out of the structure, that they're out of it. I think it's because we do things right, the natural things happened, that the board is going to be diverse."

One right thing that she did was to choose to run on the same slate as Ron, a former Chief Steward, who was running as the Vice Presidential candidate. Laura always admired Ron's perseverance and integrity. He quickly moved up the ranks while earning the respect of those who worked with him. He was known as the kind of Chief Steward who would find out every detail of a grievance so that he could

mediate in the best way possible. Laura knew that they would make a great team, pairing his attention to detail with her visionary approach to social change. She believes that within every individual there is the ability and strength to make change. Ron takes a more task-oriented approach, with the determination to see tasks through to completion and the ability to draw out people's strengths.

Laura, Ron, and Bob, the candidate for secretary/treasurer, all agreed that the best type of union membership is one that is educated, organized and empowered. They began to act on this belief even during the campaign; their first step as candidates was to educate union members on the history of the labor movement. This helped to raise consciousness about past struggles and victories and to motivate members to action.

Then, Laura, Ron and Bob wrote a militant program that encouraged people to stand up against their employer, AT&T. Solidarity and protection was emphasized. Their slate

promised to stand behind anyone that decided to back them. These strategies worked; Laura and her slate won impressive victories. Laura won as President in a five way race against four men, winning on the first ballot with over 50% of the vote. Ron was challenged by a white man who ran a nasty campaign that tried to insult Ron's intelligence. Many believed that this man counted on what he thought was the racism of some members of the union; he was proven wrong by Ron's landslide victory. As Chief Steward, Ron had helped a broad range of people and his hard work and loyalty to union members was repaid on election day.

### **Winning was only the beginning**

Winning the election was only the beginning. Maintaining a diverse slate takes a lot of hard work. One of the largest obstacles is dealing with a membership demoralized by huge lay-offs. Laura keeps people motivated by focusing on their strengths. Second, she knows that union members need to know what their elected officials are doing; they need to be kept up-to-date. Laura's board continues to stay in close contact with their membership by putting out a members newspaper, taping a bi-weekly news message on the Local's phone system; leafletting in front of the worksite; holding frequent meetings with shop stewards so stewards can report back to people they work with; organizing lunch-time information meetings, and making office visits. Though it is still difficult to get large numbers of people to membership meetings, the slate has been able "to get the committed to become more committed" for example by increasing the number of shop stewards.

Another way to keep morale up is to develop good relationships with other board members. While it is important to maintain professional boundaries, seeming aloof or unapproachable is not helpful. Going out to eat, inviting fellow organizers to your home, and just being a good friend all can be important to create harmony on the Board.

### **Don't avoid conflict!**

One mistake the slate made was trying so hard to avoid internal conflict that they ignored problems that should have been addressed immediately. For example, one of the Chief Stewards had a drug problem. Instead of confronting this problem head on, other members were asked to take over some of her grievances. The leadership was criticized with the insinuation that white liberalism was protecting the women, who was African American.

The diverse group of officers then began to address some of the divisions in the union between clerical and plant workers. Before Laura and her slate took office, the union had a plant Vice President who dealt exclusively with plant workers and an administrative Vice President who dealt only with clerical workers. This system allowed a disparity of conditions between plant and clerical workers because the two vice presidents didn't communicate with each other enough. Laura's slate broke down the walls between the clerical and plant members of the union by changing the bylaws to divide local areas geographically. In this way, both Vice Presidents would be in charge of clerical and plant workers in a building. Now the greater awareness of conditions, and exchange of ideas has resulted in more equitable conditions and much less sense of division between the two kinds of workers. This makes organizing together much

easier.

The union's officers continue to develop new leaders through giving constant support and encouragement to people who have decided to take on leadership responsibility. For example, a new shop steward is given training and backup: Ron has been known to go over to a building ten times in one day to help a shop steward who doesn't feel confident enough to talk to a boss on his or her own. Several once-hesitant shop stewards have begun thinking of running for office themselves.

### **Questions for discussion:**

' Think about who has influenced the development of your own leadership abilities. What did this person do to increase your leadership potential? (For example, did she or he offer encouragement, serve as a role model, etc.) How can you help to develop leadership in others?

' How does the structure of your organization increase or decrease divisions in your members, staff or constituency?

' How would you define white liberalism? What types of conflicts can it cause within an organization?

' What mechanisms does your group use to address problems before they become crises?

## **Session four: part one**

### **Approaches to multicultural organizational development**

#### **Goals:**

' to provide your group with some information about approaches to multicultural organizational development

' to see how different approaches to multicultural organizational development can be applied to your group

#### **Materials:**

copies of the pages describing the two approaches (pages )  
for each person

**Time:** 1 - 1/2 hours

This session is not a comprehensive guide to changing your organization. We present some of the different ways that organizations go about this process, so that your group can discuss which may be most relevant to your situation. We outline three different

conceptual frameworks for overcoming racism, sexism and other "isms" in your organization. The questions following each description are designed to help your group explore how you might use these approaches.

Divide your workshop into two work-groups. Give each group copies of the pages outlining one of the two approaches. Using the questions provided as a guide, ask each workgroup to see how they would apply the model to your organization (or if they come from several groups, they could pick one group as an example.) Remind them to designate a spokesperson to present their ideas to the whole group.

After about 1/2 hour, bring the groups together and ask them present their ideas. After these presentations, help the group discuss the differences and similarities in the approaches, and which might be best suited to your group's structure and present condition.

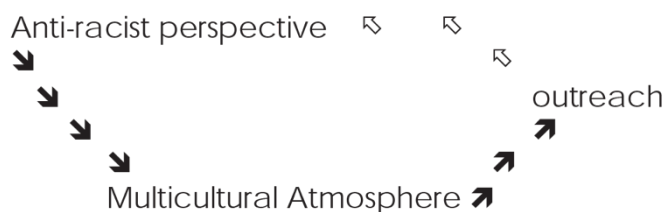
You might point out that each model seems to apply best to particular kinds of groups. Beth Richie's three part model could apply to a neighborhood group, a small human service agency or a not-for-profit organization; Jackson and Holvino's framework seems designed for larger organizations or agencies.

## **A model for multicultural organizational development**

*As developed and presented by Beth Richie in the video*

*"We need strategies and models. It's not enough for you to care about racism or care about [heterosexism] or for me to care about anti-Semitism. It is critical that we figure out what to do with the good intentions; what to do with the care." Beth Richie*

The following is an expanded description of the model developed and presented by Beth Richie on the videotape that accompanies this workbook. This illustration of the model, written by Robin Ferguson, is based on a presentation of anti-racism and organizing made by Beth Richie and Stephanie Roth at the "Women on the Advance" conference.



## **Multicultural Atmosphere**

This model outlines a set of organizational actions to begin or continue to address issues of diversity. It focuses on organizations that are predominantly white (European American). Although the presentation of this model highlights "racial" diversity, other issues of oppression such as sexism and heterosexism must also be addressed.

### **Outreach**

Many organizations begin with outreach as a way to bring women of color into the organization. There are a variety of methods of outreach that organizations use to generate interest. For example, a group may decide to send flyers to organizations and groups of women of color or advertise in publications that reach women of color to ensure that they receive information on the organization's programs, conferences and other activities.

Outreach is not a final step to achieve diversity. Effective outreach can change the appearance of the organization. However, increasing the number of women of color is not the only work that needs to be done. There are many organizations where women of color have joined and then leave because of an oppressive working environment. Action on outreach needs to be supported by a multicultural atmosphere.

### **Multicultural Atmosphere**

To maintain diversity, the atmosphere of the organization has to change. Your commitment to changing the organization must be upheld by concrete decisions to incorporate other cultures in the organizational structure. For example, some organizations adopt affirmative action policies, such as requiring that 50% of the board members are women of color.

In addition, the organizational environment has to include a variety of ethnic and "racial" cultures in the kind of events that are organized, the type of music played, poetry read, etc. All of these activities have much to do with whether or not people feel included and a part of organizational culture.

### **Anti-Racist Perspective**

Anti-racism work is more of an external process where the organization takes on racism in the larger community. Building a diverse organization does not happen overnight. As you do your internal organizational work, it is important to also beware of and take a stance against oppression perpetrated by the courts, law enforcement, schools and other institutions.

Creating a diverse organization is a long term process. You do not have to wait until women of color join your organization to take such actions. Women of color may not join your organization for a variety of reasons. "Even if it is not possible for your organization to reflect the "racial" diversity of your community, actively working on racism with the white people in the organization is an important step in overcoming it."\* (from "Building Multiracial Organizations" reprinted on page xx)

### **Conclusion**

There is no required order in which to apply this three-part model. Your organization will need to do an organizational assessment and decide which action is appropriate to work on. (See Session 5 on how to do an organizational assessment.) At some points you may need to concentrate on outreach; at other times, work in the larger community. In either case, you must be consistent and continue to find strategies that fight racism and build diversity in your organization.

### **Some questions to discuss:**

- What are some of the elements of outreach and why are they important?
- What kinds of outreach has your organization done?
- What are some ways your organization could do outreach in the future? You can use the following categories as a guide.
- acceptance: changing the appearance of the organization to make it welcoming;
- real interest: letting people know what the organization has to offer to them;
- curiosity: getting the organization educated about the groups to whom you're reaching out.
- In what ways does your organization have a multi-cultural atmosphere?
- Where could you make improvements? Two areas to start are:
- changing the cultural environment, what the organization looks and sounds like;
- structural changes like affirmative action hiring and promotion, or changes in decision making structures
- How can your organization act against oppression in our neighborhood, community, city, region, or nation?
- What groups in your community are already working against oppression?
- How can your organization present alternatives to oppression in the larger society?

# Multicultural Organization Development

*Based on Bailey W. Jackson and Evangelina Holvino's Working Paper #11, Program on Conflict Management Alternatives at the University of Michigan, 1991.*

Jackson and Holvino see the greater diversity in the U.S. population and the resurgence of racism as evidence of the need for more effective efforts towards social justice in our workplaces. They have found that individual consciousness-raising strategies have made only limited improvements in workplace environments. They conclude that organizational systems must be changed so that they "direct, manage, and provide support for efforts intended to enhance and capitalize on the social diversity in the workplace" (page 1). This is how they describe their vision of a multi-cultural organization:

## ***A multicultural organization:***

- ' reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service," and incorporates members of all groups throughout the organization, especially in decision-making;

- ' is sensitive to all forms of social oppression, even if targeted towards groups are not represented in the organization;

- ' acts to eliminate oppression within the organization, whether or not the particular oppressed group is represented in the organization.

## ***But how do we get there? What are the steps?***

Jackson and Holvino suggest that the first step is to understand the developmental stage your organization is at now. They describe a continuum of three levels and six stages from mono-cultural to multicultural development. These stages are:

### **Level One, Stage One - The Exclusionary Organization**

This kind of organization's mission is to maintain the one group's domination over other groups, based on race, gender, culture or other social identity characteristics. It could be as extreme as the KKK or as common as civic and social clubs that exclude women, African-Americans, Jewish people, or gays.

### **Level One, Stage Two - The Club**

This kind of organization holds on to traditional privileges. While not explicitly racist or sexist, it only accepts those women, people of color who accept and act according to accepted norms. Color and gender are seen as the primary divisions in society though members of other social groups such as seniors or Jews may also be targets of discrimination.



**Level Two, Stage One: Compliance Organizations**

The Compliance Organization recognizes discrimination but addresses it in limited ways: it may recruit and hire some women or people of color, but will not change the structure, mission, or culture of the organization. Previously excluded people often are hired at the bottom of the ladder or as "tokens" where they constantly have to prove themselves.

**Level Two, Stage Two: Affirmative Action Organizations**

At this stage, the organization actively supports the growth and development of employees of previously excluded groups with development programs, and racism and sexism are discouraged in the workplace. The definition of diversity may be more inclusive, but the organization itself still has not changed its ways of doing things or its mission.

**Level Three, Stage One: Redefining Organization**

This kind of organization questions how its cultural perspective is inherent in its mission, structure, management style, and relationships with customers or clients. It explores how the organization's policies and practices can be changed to take advantage of the benefits of a diverse, multicultural workforce.

**Level Three, Stage Two: Multicultural Organization**

In a multicultural organization, the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups are incorporated in its mission, practices, and relationships with customers or clients. Members of diverse groups are influential in decision making at all levels. In addition, the organization is committed to "the eradication of social oppression in all forms within the organization" whether or not particular groups are represented in the organization.

Finally, Jackson and Holvino suggest that organizations move stage by stage. After assessing what stage the organization is at, and deciding on what stage it would like to achieve, the organization must create a strategy. This strategy will take account of the organizational broader goals and resources. Part of this process includes analyzing the risks and benefits of achieving the desired stage of multicultural development, in the short term and in the long term.

Different kinds of strategies and actions are useful for each stage. Some strategies focus on individual understanding, action or opportunities, while others target organizational systems like hiring, training and career development, reward systems, and conflict management.

**Questions for Jackson-Holvino Model**

- ' Which stage is most similar to your organization? Why?
- ' Which stage could your organization achieve within the next year? within the next 5 years?

- ' What would the benefits of achieving this stage? What would be the drawbacks?
- ' What kinds of actions or strategies could help you achieve your first year goals? your five year goals?
- ' What are the barriers to change in your organization?
- ' What strengths and advantages does your organization have that can help move it to the next stage?

## **Session Four: Part Two**

### **From theory to practice**

Here are two sets of practical suggestions. Using the same technique as in Part 1 of this session, make copies of these ideas and divide into groups to discuss them.

#### **Bridging Differences: A practical model for grassroots community groups**

*Adapted from a manual for the Citizen's Committee for NYC by Susan Lob (1991)*

Many groups find that the more diverse their membership is, the stronger they are. They become more responsive to the entire neighborhood, in a better position to fight for their rights, and more respected or feared by the powers that be. However, building consensus among people with diverse interests, cultures or backgrounds is extremely difficult.

Most community groups experience tensions among differing member factions. Older and younger adults may have different values and approaches. Women may feel that their work is not respected or that they can't rise to leadership positions. African American members of a group may feel uncomfortable because white or Latino members blame the neighborhood's problems on African American residents. There may be language barriers as well. Overcoming these differences takes time, commitment, and skill.

#### ***Some suggestions for handling differences in community based groups:***

- ' Create an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and respected. Don't allow anyone to put down or blame another group.
- ' Make genuine efforts to reach out to all segments of the community. Don't settle for token representation.
- ' Make sure your leadership truly reflects your membership. Using co-

chairpersons makes this more attainable. Don't exclude older people, women or people of color from leadership positions.

- ' Make sure your meetings are accessible to everyone who wants to come. This means that meetings need to be held at a convenient time, in a safe location, accessible to the disabled, with childcare provided, etc.

- ' Allow opportunities for people to share aspects of their culture: pot luck dinners, singing, celebrating holidays, etc. This builds bridges between people and enriches the group and its members.

- ' Confront differences head on. Don't try to pretend tensions don't exist. They are real and members will not feel safe in the group, or trust it, until things are out in the open. At one tenants meeting in Brooklyn, an organizer said, "I notice that all the Black tenants sit of one side of the room and all the white tenants sit on the other." This was enough to get people talking about some of the tensions in the group. Once things are out in the open, members can decide if they can make the changes necessary or whether they need to call in outside consultants to help.

- ' Allow disagreements at meetings. Members can disagree on some issues and still work together on others. Only take action when there is consensus.

- ' Acknowledge how difficult and scary dealing with differences can be. Give yourselves credit for doing it. Enjoy the unity and diversity you have built so far. Publicize it, for example, announcing on a poster or at a meeting, "our group represents seven nationalities."

- ' Pick your issues carefully so that there is support for them from as many factions as possible of the community. Look at who the issue affects. If it benefits only one segment of the community, try to combine several, related issues into one campaign. This builds a coalition of different neighborhood factions.

- ' Try to use strategies that reflect the culture and values of your members.

### **Questions for applying these ideas:**

- ' How can your organization create a welcoming and respectful atmosphere?

- ' How can you reach out to your community? What are the different kinds of groups in your community?

- ' How can your leadership better reflect your membership or your constituencies?

- ' How can your meeting places and times be more accessible?

- ' What kinds of opportunities for culture-sharing can you create?

' Are there any differences or disagreements that need to be dealt with in your organization? What are some ways you could deal with them?

' What issues is your group actively working on? Which segments of your community do these issues affect?

' How could your group's strategies better reflect the cultures and values of your members or constituencies?

## **Lessons from the field: Some common mistakes**

*Stephanie Roth*

Saying, "Our issues are pertinent to women of color, they're probably the main target group. So why wouldn't they want to get involved in our organization?" Even though these issues might be relevant to women of color in general, it doesn't mean that these particular women, at this particular point in time will choose this to mobilize on issue. Sometimes the problem is not your specific issues but how you organize. Organizations need to think about how their work styles may need to change when new people, who bring with them their own experiences, workstyles and points of view, enter the organization.

Tokenism and not holding people of color up to the same standards that white people hold other white people to. For example, when an organization wants to diversify they will sometimes give hiring preference to a person of color even if that person doesn't have the right qualifications for the job. Tokenism often leads to setting people up to fail because they don't have the qualifications to succeed (or because they are not given the support or additional skills or training they need.)

The Managing Diversity Approach/Trap. This premise is that we are a multi-"racial" society and that there are people of all different ethnic groups in our society and we have to learn to work together [so we can continue to make more money, be productive and have fewer conflicts in the workplace]. This approach doesn't go far enough; it doesn't confront racism but instead looks at issues of sensitivity, i.e., that people come from different cultures and have different traditions and expectations of how they get work done or how they interact with each other. These are issues of style rather than power. The real key to achieving an anti-racist atmosphere is to look at who has the power within the organization (who is on the board, who is the executive director, who are in top-level supervisory positions, etc.) Only when a diverse mix of people hold powerful positions will the organization be truly anti-racist.

Commitment. White organizations need to be truly committed and ready for change, not just do a couple of things without any follow-through.

### **Questions for discussion:**

" Who has the power within your organization (who is on the board of directors, management positions, supervisors, etc.)? Is it a diverse mix of people? If not, how can you play a role in changing this?

" Who sets the agenda for your organization? How can you ensure that it will be a multi-cultural agenda?

" Have you been in an organization that gave hiring preference to persons of color? How did this affect the organization?

## **Session Five: Planning for change**

### **Goals:**

- ' to assess and address your organization's racism or other oppressive practices
- ' to develop a plan for strengthening your organization's multiculturalism

### **Materials:**

- ' problem assessment form
- ' strategy planning form
- ' action plan form
- ' action plan form reproduced on newsprint sheets

### **Time:**

- ' problem analysis and strategy plan: 1-3 hours
- ' action plan: 1-2 hours

In this session, we recommend that you take some time to do an organizational assessment -- to analyze your organization's practices, feelings about racism, strategic barriers and resources for addressing racism and building a strong multicultural foundation.

In order to make meaningful changes in your organization, members need to commit themselves to the planning process and agree to carry out the plans that are made. The first step, therefore, is to develop consensus about the need to begin a planning process.

After arriving at some common understanding of these underlying factors, you will be in a position to develop an Action Plan to address racism and other oppressions your group wishes to tackle.

Recognize that this is a difficult and sometimes painful process. It may be a good idea to review the working rules on, or to begin the session with some sort of cultural activity from Session 6.

**Problem Analysis:**

Using the Problem Analysis form, have people in small groups thoughtfully discuss what they consider to be the problems your organization faces, their characteristics, and how they are experienced.

**Strategy Plan:**

Bring the groups back together. Taking each problem or goal identified in the problem analysis, use the Strategy Plan form to discuss the forces operating for or against what your group wants to do. Use this Strategy Plan to refine your goals and point you towards some specific action that you can take.

**Action Plan:**

In the first step, the group clarifies "what" is to be done. In small groups or with the full group, take one of/each problem or goal identified in the problem analysis and developed in the Strategy plan. Have each person in the group identify at least one action step that they think would be needed to implement the goals you've chosen. You can either brainstorm, or have each person write down their own suggestions. Every person should have a chance to express their ideas.

It may be useful to have people write their ideas on large strips of paper, which can be pinned or taped up on a wall and moved around.

Have the group select and prioritize which action steps to follow, and the order in which they can be implemented. If there is disagreement on whether to include a particular step, ask the person proposing it and the person objecting to it to explain their views; then ask the group to decide whether to include the step. Number each one.

Determine "how" each step will be done -- what process will be used. Be as specific as possible, in order to determine whether the action step is really do-able.

Determine "who" will be responsible for doing it. Make sure that the people involved understand what is entailed and how their part affects the whole plan.

Finally, determine the time frame by which each task should be completed. Sometimes it helps to work backwards in time from your deadline or designated date of completion.

Make sure everyone gets a copy of the group's proposed action plan. Set a date to get together again and review your progress. If the whole group agrees on this plan, it will be easier to hold each person accountable for their part on fulfilling it.

### **Possible ideas\* to include in your action plan might be:**

- ' developing a process of collecting and using community feedback on your organization's cross-cultural effectiveness
- ' holding training in prejudice awareness and reduction
- ' holding training in cross-cultural problem-solving skills
- ' work with organizational development consultants to develop and implement plans for organizational change

\* some of these suggestions came from Facing Racial and Ethnic Conflict, pages 45-46 (see Resources)

### **Some themes for organizational assessment**

It is often a good idea to work with a consultant to develop an organizational analysis and action plan: sometimes an experienced outside person can provide a fresh, critical perspective. Also, these evaluations can be sensitive and raise fears of criticism. But the questions below can be helpful for an initial discussion outline. One way to point discussion in a positive direction is to ask the group to consider how the organization currently deals with each question, and how it can be improved. Or discuss each questions below to see if there is consensus about the workings of your group and where there are disagreements or areas of tension.

Collecting information is just a first step: there's also development of a plan, implementing the plan, and periodically evaluating the plan's effectiveness and making changes as needed. In other words, this is not a one-time activity. (See Session 5: Developing Strategies for Change for suggestions on these next steps.)

- ' Consider the diversity of the people involved in your group, organization, agency or class. What, for example, is the proportion of women, people of color, speakers of languages other than English in your staff, board of directors, membership, managers, public you interact with, clients, volunteers, faculty, students?



An additional exercise is to list the affiliations of your members, staff or especially board members (their jobs, other boards they sit on, organizations they are active in or belong to) and how these relate to the goals of your organization, the needs and interests of the community in which you work.

' How is power, decision making and agenda setting distributed in your group organization? You might start by drawing an organizational chart showing who reports to whom in your organization. Even if yours is a loose grassroots group, you probably have a sense of who handles decisions and information on a more frequent basis and how other people in the group find out about those decisions and information. Then consider, how involved are women/people of color in making policy and program decisions, and how are they affected by these decisions? Who prioritizes tasks, or sets the agenda of your group?

' Who has access to formal information, and informal information networks?

' How much do men and women, whites and people of color work together or collaborate? How often do women and people of color have mentors? Do women and people serve as mentors for others?

' What training and staff development methods does your organization have to develop consciousness about diversity within the organization, or to develop the skills and potential of women/people of color specifically? For example, does it support attendance at workshops and conferences, receive publications or organize internal programs?

' How well does your organization support diversity in outreach, hiring and promotion? (You might consider areas such as recruitment, job descriptions, promotion criteria, benefits such as flextime and childcare, salaries, selection and treatment of suppliers, sub-contractors, freelancers and consultants, and union representation)

' Does your organization support diversity in its cultural atmosphere through the feel and sound of workspace and meeting spaces, themes and languages of meetings, parties and outreach materials?

' Do women and men and diverse staff, group or board members socialize outside of work, for example, celebrating birthdays & other staff celebrations, participating on sports teams, corporate challenges (or charitable efforts like AIDS walks)?

' How well does the projection of your organization into the community of your organization reflect diversity? Think about press releases, advertising, printed/video/audio materials, statement of purpose or mission, feedback mechanisms from public/clients/volunteers/community, involvement in diverse coalitions. If there is a newsletter or other type of internal communications, how well does it reflect diversity or raise issues related to diversity and oppression?

' Does the work of your group or organization benefit women and people of color in your community directly, and how are these benefits identified?

## **Session Six: Celebrating ourselves and our work**

*"No matter what our attempts to inform, it is our ability to inspire that will turn the tide."*

Syracuse Cultural Workers

### **Goals:**

- ' To provide your group with information about the importance of people's cultures.
- ' To develop ways in which your group can discover and create ceremonies and rituals to celebrate themselves and their accomplishments
- ' To bring a sense of closure: that your group has experienced something important together, that they understand how critical and complex these issues are, and that they have begun to acknowledge and address them.

### **Materials:**

- ' member's hands, bodies, voices, feet
- ' music
- ' food
- ' symbols, objects (group to determine these)

**Time:** 1 to 1 1/2 hours

Culture is a critical dimension of organizing and activism, lending spirit to work which is often frustrating, crisis-laden, and brain-logged with strategies, tactics and little joy. In our efforts to build community, we find that cultural expression can help us experience the power of rich, redemptive, healing power, helping us to transcend the often tragic characteristics (racist, sexist, ageist, consumerist and heterosexist) of our contemporary

culture. To heal ourselves and our communities requires we recognize our inherent value. What we value, we nurture and preserve (Starhawk, 1987). An empowering process unfolds with the recognition that our sense of self-worth is dependent in many ways on our ability to sustain our lives, on our capacity to create a sustainable culture, and our capacity to create a society which meets our needs.

Fundamental to the success of the Women's Advance was the integrated role of cultural exchange within the structure of the gathering. The sharing of rituals brought people together to work. Integrated throughout the three days were cultural exercises, rituals and presentations for those who wished to participate. The following paragraphs elaborate on a model by Susan Perlstein, director of Elders Share the Arts, of the cultural work -- both invented and traditional -- practiced at the Advance.

### **Opening warm-ups**

The purpose of group warm-ups is to encourage trust, release tension, and establish supportive connections among participants. People arrive preoccupied, and these disparate energies need to be channeled in to a unifying direction. This process of centering -- of moving from the world of daily activities to creative exploration -- enables people to experience heightened states of receptivity, spontaneity and imagination. It awakens the senses and prepares the group for more involved forms of activity.

Warm-ups should be fun and playful and can bring people together on a physical and emotional level. Attention should be paid to the creation of a warm, open atmosphere in which people can learn from each other. We use non-verbal communication, including breathing exercises (yoga), songs, sound and motion, rhythm and gestures. For example, in the video we saw a clip of an activity called "movement pass around":

Rather than introducing yourselves with your work titles, each person contributes a movement (keeping it simple so others can follow) until everyone has taken a turn.

In the video, you see an energized group, affirming our collective presence, first clapping hands and then stomping feet. Joining together in these ways enhances our ability to work together on the Advance.

The ritual seen at the end of the video is actually an opening ceremony that was contributed by two Lakota Native American women from South Dakota, Madonna Beard and Karen Artichoker. It is a ceremony called "smudging" and its purpose is to help purify and cleanse participants so they can feel centered and open. In this ceremony, each woman in the circle stood and in turn had sage and cedar smoke waved over her with a feather. Eboni Adelona is doing this for the group. The sage takes away what is negative, the cedar brings what is positive. One again, we were brought together in ways which celebrated cultural expression and understanding.

### **Problem solving through culturally expressive ways**

Often misunderstanding occurs because of lack of information and familiarity.

Misinterpretations occur because what we say is only a fraction of what is conveyed in a conversation. The **way** we say it, show it, and tell it conveys meaning and is culturally interpreted.

### **Conveying commonalities and differences**

Cultural expression such as song, dance, poetry, drama and art provide ways among many, of deeply appreciating and learning about difference. For example, we sang songs from the women's movement, such as, "We Are a Gentle, Angry People" by Holly Near. The lyrics exemplify a way of bridging cultural difference, bonding, building, and establishing a positive tone for the conference. Joining our voices in this way provided an open door for the didactic, more formal information to be exchanged. We could, therefore, more easily understand and support the various presentations on how to establish multicultural organizations.

On the other hand, cultural values are expressed in many different ways -- sometimes directly or at times communicated by behavior. As well, cultures have developed ceremonies that have religious roots and in recent decades, alternative celebrations have developed as a replacement for traditional ceremonies. The important thing is that no one group imposes their cultural ways upon another. There is also a question of appropriating a group's ceremony in a trivializing way, thereby appearing to be disrespectful. An example would be the use of Native American regalia as a Halloween costume. Some aspects of a group's culture can be experienced as oppressive, especially by women. The group needs to address this issue as well.

Si Kahn suggests that we try out techniques in small group meetings which encourage people to talk about themselves, their histories, their hopes and dreams, their values, where they came from, where they're going.

### **Closings**

In closing, it is important to express what we experienced. How do we communicate what we will take with us as well as what we will leave with the gathering? Group poems are an effective way of collecting associations and giving them back to the community. In the videotape, Perlstein demonstrates a closing group poem called "goodbye and hello." Women expressed the values of sharing, cooperation, exchange of information and ideas. For example:

Each woman speaks to what she will leave and what she promises to take with her. "Goodbye to victimhood, hello to leadership"... "Goodbye to inspiration that encourages me to speak and hello to action."

### **Conclusion**

Ceremonies help bring a sense of trust and openness to people in a group, and a sense of community and connection. Beginnings, endings, and transitions are good times for ceremonies, as are celebrations of group victories and holidays. Sometimes events that acknowledge personal or community tragedies or hardships can help mobilize the strength of the group.

"As people begin to organize together, they also begin to learn from each other's values. We are not simply building an organization, we are also re- establishing people's culture. We are creating a shared sense of history and democratic values, a common set of expectations within which to develop our strategies and tactics...that can help make more possible and powerful a real majority movement in our country." (Kahn, 1991)

**Notes:**

See Starhawk's *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery* (1987, New York: HarperCollins) for a rich discussion of ritual, myths, games and ceremonies which empower and create a new culture for positive change. Also see *Women's Rituals: A Source Book* by Barbara G. Walker (1987, New York: HarperCollins).

Si Kahn's 1991 book, *Organizing: A Guide for Grassroots Leaders* (revised edition, Maryland: NASW Press) is an excellent discussion of culture as an organizing tool and how to build peoples' cultures into our organizing. This chapter was written by Barbara Joseph with the materials from Susan Perlstein, who coordinated cultural activities at the Advance conference.

## **SCRIPT OF VIDEO**

### **Women, Organizing, and Diversity: Struggling with the Issues**

[See *Women on the Advance* for affiliation of women in the video]

Beth Richie: Diversity means that people don't just sort of get all mixed up, but that people really have a sense of home. And when we think about becoming diverse organizations, I expect everybody to leave home, not just me.

Laura Unger: You can't stop and self-examine forever because then you never get anything done, but on the other hand, if you don't stop and self-examine periodically, everything gets screwed up.

Barbara Joseph: There is no position of safety. If you really accept that to be a whole human being and to be personally transformed you cannot be in a safe position while somebody else is being attacked.

SUSAN LOB (voice- over scenes from the conference; participants are dancing and exercising)

In February, 1989, fifty women organizers with diverse backgrounds from across the United States, met for 3 days in Stony Point, New York. This event, called (Women on the Advance, celebrated the Strengths and Struggles of women organizing for progressive social change.

What follows in this type are a few snapshots from the conference. We see women coming together to discuss, to explore, and to reflect on their struggles to end racism, sexism, and heterosexism - struggles central to women's organizing.

We show women grappling with how to create organizations that are diverse and meet the needs of women.

Yolanda Sanchez: I am Yolanda Sanchez, a Puerto Rican woman born and bred in New York City and as someone said, I didn't know I was organizing, but I've been involved in my community since having left college. And I've always acted and reacted as "a Puerto Rican" on nationalist terms and most recently have shifted that energy, that focus to think of myself as a Puerto Rican woman and begin to gather that energy and do on that. So, Alice Cordona and about 4 other women, we've come together and done the National Latinas Caucus.

Crystal Lee Sutton: I'm proud that I helped 3,000 workers to organize into a union to help themselves to a better way of life in North Carolina.

Kapp de Villar: I was working on a gay and lesbian hotline just answering the phone out of my room or rather my home and so many people started calling that they didn't have anywhere to go that we organized getting a community center together and when we finished we ended up about a year and a half later with a \$400,000 gay and lesbian community center.

Barbara Joseph: I currently direct a labor/liberal arts college program for working people, primarily women people of color, white working-class people. Workers who never thought that they could go to school, not necessarily to get a college degree, but to put theory behind their practice so that they would be empowered for the long run.

Kathy Acey: Saying I'm a feminist means that I am doing organizing that is talking about all people because I don't think you can do anything that will benefit women that's not going to ultimately benefit all of our society. So, while my focus is mostly on women, another thing that I've gotten involved with in the past couple of years is more the global issue, particularly doing some work around Central America and most recently around the Middle East, which is for me cause I am of Arab background is very important.

Charlotte Dickson: I think what I'm most proudest of is that I think as an organizer I have a very, I have extremely good relationships with people and I think that I have a talent for organizing across through the different ages and also across race lines and I'm very proud of that.

Madonna Beard: I serve on the Tribal Action Planning Committee and what we're trying to do is, one of the big things we're working toward is having sober leadership and so that makes us unpopular. And trying to make a tribal action plan that addresses alcoholism among our people.

Karen Artichoker: The big focus right now that I'm real pleased about in our country, Sioux country is the tribes beginning to pass tribal ordinances against elderly abuse, against child sexual abuse and battering. Mandatory arrest for any violence committed against anybody else and one of our goals, our visions as a people is that those kinds of issues are not inherent nor traditional for us that we didn't treat each other like that and so our vision is that some day, we can repeal all of those

ordinances because we 11 know how to live and walk in harmony again.

Guida West: I was proud of having taken my first step in 1960 to help organize in the north in the civil rights movement and that was a real even though it may not seem so, it was a real step of courage for me to take that step for me. Then I went to help organize welfare rights and then continued. I've stayed with welfare rights for many years and also joined the feminist movement.

Andrea Hill: I guess the thing that I'm most proud of is what I did, what I'm been able to do on a somewhat volunteer basis. And that is in Washington, D.C. for about 4 years, I've served on a board of something called Housing Opportunities for Women, where we established permanent housing for homeless women and that's something that I got into out of the work I was doing with housing and also out of the reality that "there but for the grace of God go I."

Title: STRUGGLING WITH DIVERSITY

Stephanie Roth: I grew up in a middle class white suburb in California and did not have the experience of growing up in a diverse community and did not have the experience of growing up with messages about racism being something to struggle against or work on. And what happened was that I got involved with the women's movement and women's organizations and was involved in one organization after the another that either self-destructed around racism or just the work just couldn't move forward as a result of racism.

Beth Richie: Diversity is different than charity. Trying to figure out how to do anti-racism work, for example is very different than saving people of color and until there is sort of an acceptance of diversity as something that enriches all of our lives then I think we won't make very much difference.

Barbara Joseph: If you really understand that all of the "antis" really hurt whoever is not experiencing it, there is no position of safety.

Beth Richie: And so, one of the first things that I think is important is for white women to understand what women of color can offer to you - skills, incredible skills, and history and organizing ability and culture and strength. And straight women need to understand what lesbian and culture can offer.

Stephanie Roth: It's really important that you don't bring women in saying work on our issue. I think that's sort of an obvious lesson, but what does that actually mean, I mean what does it mean to bring women in an organization where you have very strong ideas, I mean we're very opinionated women in this room. Right, we have clear ideas about what is the correct way to do things, what's the correct way to think about things. And so, you open your organization up to difference, well that means difference in terms of how people want to do things, how people think about things and how open are we to that.



Beth Richie: Diversity means that people don't just sort of get all mixed up, but that people really have a sense of home. And when we think about becoming diverse organization, I expect everybody to leave home, not just me. And I think that's one of the things we hadn't figured out very well in terms of working with diverse organizations. We've figured out how to open our doors somewhat to other people, but we haven't figured out how to move into their homes in the same way.

Guida West: This is critical because if we don't learn how to live together and work together, we're never going to get anywhere. This is what our opponents want us (to do). Our enemies want us to fight and I don't want it. We have to learn to work together and we have to learn the things that pain us and to learn how to heal.

Stephanie Roth: I think it's important to understand that we can do anti-racism work even in times and within our organization situations where there aren't a lot of women of color there. I think it's also important to realize that some of the reasons that we find ourselves in organizations and situations where we are mostly white, I mean it's ultimately about racism but sometimes, in a particular time and place, it's about women of color not wanting to be there. Now why they don't want to be there is partly about racism but it's partly about what their priorities are at that time.

Caroline Pezullo: What we keep before our eyes is that we're all so interconnected and we have a natural base to work with who are facing in a hopeful way some of the solutions of those problems.

Beth Richie: I also think that we need strategies and models that it's not enough for you to care about racism or care about homophobia or for me to care about anti-Semitism. It's critical that we figure out what to do with the good intention. What to do with the care.

Title: A MODEL FOR DIVERSIFYING ORGANIZATIONS

*Presentation by Beth Richie:*

There are 3 different sorts of phases or sets of organizational action that have to happen in order for organizations to become and maintain diversity. One is you have to do outreach, which means you have to change the appearance of the organization so that one of one things that I assume went into planning this conference is outreach to women of color to let them know that his conference was happening and what was available in terms of how to get here, etc. And outreach changes appearance. That means that you have more diversity. More. You sort of color it up a little bit if you use the example of women of color. Outreach also includes self-education about other cultures. But, you don't have to change your organization very much just to do outreach. That's the kind of open the door c'mon if you want to and be with us.

That needs to be supported by a multi-cultural atmosphere. This is when you really change what it feels like to be here. It includes things like development of affirmative

action strategies like we're going, for example, some organizations will plan a conference and say we're going to have a quarter women of color and there aren't a quarter women of color then we're going to reduce the number of white women that come. Also included in being multi-cultural are things like when we have entertainment on, we have music. What kind of music gets played? So, it's really about sort of the cultural environment, so it's not the same place with just a little color added; it's a different place.

Outreach and multi-cultural activities are internal to the organization. They need to be supported by the third process, which is external. What can we talk about here at this conference that doesn't necessarily have to do with this group, but is creating oppression for women of color outside of this group that we can make a public statement about, for example. So that's when we start to take on racism in the larger society as it not only affects us, but affects people who aren't here and perhaps, why they're not here. Okay, so this is a really external kind of set of activities. I think that organizations if they're going to create and maintain diversity, need to do some of this, each one, and need to do it all the time.

And sometimes you need to do a little more outreach and a little less anti-racist and sometimes there's a particularly racist issue in the community and so you need to focus on that and not worry so much about multicultural. But because we're working so much against, to create diversity we're absolutely working against every force in this society. We have to be vigilantly and vigorously involved in activities that support primarily these three areas.

Heather Booth: In the work that I do and in the organizations that we consult with, we are filled with examples that don't work. Where the staff is overwhelmingly white with a few exceptions, where the base may be black. There was an organization described in the Bronx here that I, not fully familiar with, but that's apparently doing extremely effective work in the community. All the staff was white. Well, it says something about the organization. Then you're facing conflicting goals. One goal is embodying the future society and the other goal is transforming the lives of the people in that community, not just their consciousness, but also their lives by getting them housing.

Charlotte Bunch: What I feel we haven't fully taken in is the way in which diversity is central to everything we want to see in the future. I know many groups that never get to action because they're so consumed with trying to do outreach and multi-cultural correctly, that they can never get to action because they think you have to do 1 and 2 before you can do 3. And that's where I agree with Heather that if the group is so consumed with it, they have to get 1 and 2 right before they can do 3, then you get in to this if you don't embody the future and you're not perfect now, you ought to disband. Now there are moments when you probably should disband, but by and large I think, the struggle is constantly to keep the vision and figure out what you can do to move toward it, not to think that you can already be there.

Heather Booth: Even things that don't work, in terms of prefiguring the future society may also help to achieve the goal of providing a base for the transformation of the

society and for other activity that will work.

Stephanie Roth: It takes an incredible amount of commitment, of time, of organizational resources, of thinking about it, of constantly reevaluating the work. One year the women of color in the organization wanted to do, have the annual conference be for women of color only. Well, this was very controversial and there were a lot of white women in the organization who said "Wait a minute this is a conference for all women in New York that we do every year and it is not right to exclude anyone. But, there was enough organizational support for the conference to happen and what it meant was not, not just that the white women didn't get their conference, but it meant having to spend organizational resources on something that they weren't going to be part of

Laura Unger: You can't stop and self-examine forever because then you never get anything done. But on the other hand, if you don't stop and self-examine periodically, everything gets screwed up. I work in New York City and I have a, my local is divided between mainly, we used to have operators, but mainly black women clerical workers and mainly white men technical workers, you know, with the normal wage disparity and we're all in this organization. Now this is the first time, I mean we just ran a slate, I just became president last year when we ran a slate that was consciously, I mean, I'm the first woman president in about thirty years. My secretary treasurer, which is traditionally the woman's, the woman's role in union leadership is a white man and my vice president is a black man and my board is very mixed so, and I mean that was a conscious thing.

But, the difficulty is a question of that the union has always been seen and because that's the history of the American trade unions as to protect the most skilled, basically the white men jobs and crafts. And we're in a situation where we're just beginning to grapple with how do we organize the clerical workers and then you tie that to how do we organize the, that's it's not just that they're clerical workers and they're underpaid and they feel the difference between the plant workers, but they're black clerical workers, who have a whole other set of ties within their community that have nothing to do with the union and all their major ties are either with the churches in their community, with organizations within their community and the union is about the last thing on their list. On the other hand, to be able to defend everybody's rights if we don't begin to build some unity in that organization, the unions are dying anyway. If we don't begin to build some unity in that organization, we're all dead.

(Photographs and music)

Susan Kaiboni: Ourselves, as women whether we are in Africa, Latin America, United States, we have to be able to start getting together and discuss these problems and come up with solutions to the problems. The men are the ones who are trying to find problems for us, but if we don't find the problems and find ways of getting these problems looked at by ourselves at the same time, we won't get anywhere. So, I feel we should continue organizing. I did not know I was and I think I am organizing.

Beth Rosenthal: I found a way to bridge a lot of experiences and get into situations like this where connections can be made amidst a lot of diversity and it's a very great interest of mine and something that I hope to be able to foster more.

Susan Perlstein: I feel so happy to be here and really what I think I'm most proud of and glad I've lived to see this moment is that I persevered because I must tell you that just three months ago, I was almost ready to cash in my chips because you know, between funding and life pressures, I'm a single parent just, I didn't know how I was actually going to make it through. And I feel like I'm glad I made it to come here. And I'm really proud that I've managed to hang in there for twenty years.

Jan Peterson: I've spent some twenty some years coming out of being born in the civil rights movement and going through the peace and the neighborhood movement and the women's movement and have never lost the feeling that change is possible.

Stephanie Roth: I'm proud of having survived some organizational splits and stayed committed to activism and social change.

Susan Kinoy: I've been doing this for 49 years; I can't believe it.

Barbara Joseph: Us coming together is part of my vision. Women need time to theorize. People are afraid to talk about theory because they forget that theory is the stimulus to action. And if you don't have a correct theory your action is not going to fail cause I loved what you said; it's just going to take us a longer time. So, my vision would be that we have enough time, and this is why this meeting is hopeful to me, so that all the agendas flare up and highlighted for us that we begin to think of the theories and the concepts that hold people for the long range. A lot of us in here, most, all of us in here are here because we have committed ourselves for the long range and we do that because we have ideology and principles. They've been said in other movements before and they need to be articulated again by the women of the 80's so that we can sustain beyond the 90's, so that we can carry out the meaning of the women's movement, the meaning of the black movement, the meaning of the human revolution movement for the basic needs of people to be met and for a kind of collective solidarity of people to be one so that real cultural human living can occur. We want to go to the human revolution where we can all live as human beings to our capacity.

\*SINGING

\*GOOD-BYE / HELLO Exercise

(Voice-over Narration by Susan Lob)

In the two years since the conference, racist violence has increased. And civil rights have eroded. In this climate, multi-cultural organizing is even more important but also more difficult.

Feminists need to include a strong anti-racist position in all their organizing efforts. Also, the issues we choose to work on must address the devastation of communities of color.

We hope this tape can act as a springboard for analysis, action, and change.

*\*See Session 6 for more on the role of culture and rituals.*

*The Women on the Advance* Conference on which this video is based, took place in 1989. Susan Lob's voice over narration was recorded in 1991.

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## **Women Organizers: A Beginning Collection of References and Resources**

The Women Organizers' Collective:  
Barbara Joseph, Susan Lob, Peggy McLaughlin, Terry Mizrahi, Jan Peterson, Beth Rosenthal, and Fran Sugarman.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1986, eight diverse feminists, who practice and teach organizing, began to meet and share experiences. The discussions that came out of these meetings lead to the formation of the Women Organizers' Collective. We began by exploring the various issues that inform and affect women and organizing. This bibliography is one of the projects of the Women Organizers' Collective. Our aim is to identify and examine what has been written for and by organizers with a feminist perspective.

In an effort to share information and resources on women and organizing, we compiled this list of books, articles, manuals and videos. The materials range from the theoretical to the practical. Some reflect a feminist analysis while others are simply non-sexist good organizing practice.

This bibliography is a developing work in progress. Many of the references were collected from organizers world-wide in response to a questionnaire sent to over 7000 women.

We are grateful to all the people who worked on this document. The bibliography was originally compiled by Susan Lob for the Women Organizers' Collective with Barbara Joseph, Peggy McLaughlin, Terry Mizrahi, Jan Peterson, Beth Rosenthal, and Fran Sugarman.

Additional people who worked on the bibliography include Lucy Fotis Brady and Bea Segal. The final editing was done by LuAnn Chiola.

We would like to thank Cheryl Hyde, Guida West, Elise Boulding, Mary Cronin, Mary Bricker-Jenkins, Susan DiMatteo and Sara Gould for the generous use of their bibliographies and resource lists. Not all the materials have been reviewed by us, and therefore, a particular listing does not necessarily constitute an endorsement of its content.

Since our goal is to fill an informational gap and to make these references usable organizing tools, we are requesting additional material, as well as critiques and summations of the references in annotated form from everyone who receives this. Currently, annotations for the references are being further developed.

An evaluation form has been added to the bibliography for any suggestions, criticisms, clarifications, more material etc. Please note that some of the citations are incomplete. Therefore, we have added these listings in a separate category for easier visibility in the hopes that others could provide the missing documentation. We recommend that this section be looked at with care and if full citations can be provided, please do so on the evaluation sheet.

The sections of the bibliography are basically self-explanatory; however, it is important to note that there may be some overlapping in theme. Also, some references may fit in more than one category. In situations such as these, we simply chose to list the material only in the section we thought best. Eventually we hope to have the bibliography cross-referenced and indexed. Again, comments and/or questions concerning this are welcomed.

We have also tried to put in as much information as possible, including where one may locate the material. Articles identified as being within the WOC File can be obtained through ECCO for 5 cents a page to cover copying expenses. Additional copies can be obtained through ECCO for \$10.00 each.

To order additional copies use order form attached.

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With the Cuban Women. Octavio Cortazar. (Cuba). Color. 1975. Tricontinental Films, 419 Park Avenue South (19th Floor), New York, N.Y., 10016, (212) 989-3330. 48 minutes.

Women and Apartheid. Women, Equality and the World Economy. The Plight of Women as Refugees and Migrants. Prostitution and International Trafficking of Women. Strategies for Eliminating Discrimination Against Women.

If Women Ruled the World: Women in Politics and Leadership. Visions Productions, Inc. Elaine Trotter. 275 Magnolia Ave. Larkspur, CA. 94939, (415) 927-0555. Video Format: 3/4" - \$65., VHS and Beta II - \$50. Series discount: 3/4" - \$325.,

Women in the Global Assembly Line. Lorraine Grey. AFL-CIO Newsreel Film 1986. 815 16th St. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006.

Women of Northside Fight Back. Christine Noschese, Marian Gioffre, Valerie Bouvier. B & W, 1/2" video. 1975. Metropolitan Avenue Film Project, 31 Crosby Street, New York, N.Y., 10013 (212)266-3387. 25 minutes.

You Have Struck a Rock. U.S.A. 1981. 28 minutes.

### **XIII. Resources and Guides to Films and Videos**

Guide to Films on Reproductive Rights. Reproductive Rights National Network (in cooperation with the Film Fund). Media Network, 121 Fulton St. New York, N.Y. 10038, (212)619-3455. Available 12/1989;

Images in Action: A Guide to Using Women's Film and Video. Norman Abigail. Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 1987. Between the Lines Press, 229 College St., Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4, Canada.

In Focus: A Guide to Using Films. Linda Blackaby, Dan Georgakas, and Barbara Margolis. 1980. Media Network (see above). \$5.50.

Media Networks Guide to Community Media. 1984. (see above). New Society Publishers 4527 Springfield Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19143 (215)382-543. Perton, Patrica (Ed.).

Reel Change: A Guide to Social Issue Films. San Francisco: The Film Fund, Inc., 1979. P.O. Box 909, San Francisco, Ca., 94101.

"Reproductive Rights: Films as Organizing Tools." Jump Cut, #31. Hunter College. Women's International Resource Exchange (WIRE) 2700 Broadway, rm. #7, New York, N.Y. 10025 (212)870-2783.

Women Make Movies. 225 Lafayette Street, suite 211 New York, N.Y. 10012 (212) 925-0606.

## **Women on The Advance: Highlights of a National Conference on Women and Organizing**

**Stony Point Conference Center Stony Point, New York  
February 16-18, 1989**

### **Women on the Advance**

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September 1990

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## Introduction

In 1986, Barbara Joseph, Susan Lob, Peggy McLaughlin, Terry Mizrahi, Jan Peterson, Beth Rosenthal, and Fran Sugarman began meeting to re-examine their work as organizers through a feminist lens. They had been inspired by two surprisingly successful events in 1985 that explored issues related to women and organizing sponsored by the Education Center for Community Organizing (ECCO) at the Hunter College School of Social Work. They came to agree that feminist principles are not encouraged or employed by organizers, and that feminist practices are used only in isolated settings. This was the case even though many organizers, as well as the targets of organizing, are women. They felt strongly that there were conflicts between the collective, connected style being emphasized in consciousness-raising groups, and the traditional, aggressive Alinsky style of organizing that is taught in most curriculums.

Barbara, Susan, Peggy, Terry, Jan, Beth, and Fran decided to take on the challenge of developing a new model of organizing that would incorporate feminist principles and practices.

It was slow moving at first:

Jan: Women tend to get isolated for doing the upfront stuff. We are not trained to give support to other women leaders. Only men can delegate.

Fran: I don't think men can delegate.

Peggy: Men don't know how, women do it for them.

Terry: Will we turn off women who do not say they're feminists? Barbara: I don't see men doing feminist work.

Fran: I disagree. I think there are a few men who do.

Barbara: I think the point is do men *identify* themselves as doing feminist organizing. Terry: There's the issue of dress.

Susan: We should have a discussion of



dress.

Jan: Bertha talks about her dress in the 60's and during Reaganism, and she says...

But little by little, their model of feminist organizing began to take shape. The group, now formally named the Women Organizers' Collective, combined lessons learned from their organizing, readings, and discussions to draft a preliminary list of Feminist Organizing Principles. However, the Women Organizers' Collective knew that to be truly feminist, the input of more women organizers was needed.

Two strategies were employed to achieve this end. First, in 1988, surveys were sent to over 7,000 women organizers across the United States to find out about their experiences and the materials they had written or used. This resulted in close to 300 responses, which formed the basis for an international Women Organizers' Bibliography<sup>1</sup>. Second, a meeting of the 47 Advisors<sup>2</sup> to the Women Organizers' Project was arranged. The meeting brought to the fore many

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<sup>1</sup> For more information contact the Women Organizers' Collective.

<sup>2</sup> Advisors include Mimi Abramovitz, Kathy Acey, Pat Alvarez, Diana Autin, Eleanor Bader, Safiya Bandele, Harriet Barlow, Norma Becker, Heather Booth, Gwen Braxton, Gale Brewer, Tess Browne, Mary Bricker-Jenkins, Charlotte Bunch, Michelle Cahill, Pat Callair, Alice Cardona, Fay Chiang, Charlotte Dickson, Marjorie Fine, Theresa Funciello, Terry Haywoode, Emily J. Goodman, Cheryl Hyde, Rosemary Jackson, Susan Kinoy, Janice Kydd, Joellen Lambiotte, Wendy Luttrell, Rev. Virginia Mackey, Elizabeth Minnich, Nancy Naples, Karen Nussbaum, Sue

frustrations about the limited time available for discussing the needs of women organizers, and the complex issues they face.

From this, the idea for an Advance (and not a Retreat!) was born. The Women Organizers' Collective decided to bring together 50 women from diverse backgrounds and with diverse experiences. They sought a balance of grassroots and professional women, women of color and white women, and lesbians and straight women. Initially, their efforts were thwarted by a lack of funds, and outreach had to be limited to local areas only. However, with the help of locally based funding and solicitations made through ECCO<sup>3</sup>, the Women Organizers' Collective was soon able to do outreach across the country. Questionnaires were used to ensure that the Advance genuinely addressed the concerns and interests of the women organizers chosen to participate.

The Advance was held from February 16th through February 18th, 1989, at the Stony Point Conference Center in Stony Point, New York. What follows is a summary of the major themes, ideas, sentiments, and feelings expressed, with an attempt made to capture the spirit of the Advance as well.

At this point, a word needs to be said about the process that went into preparing this document. Considerable time had passed since the Advance was held when I began work on this project. During that time, tapes were misplaced or lost, much of what was said had already been forgotten, and some of the notes that were written in pencil had faded. Furthermore, I did not attend the Advance - I am a woman of color studying community organizing, and this project was part of my internship<sup>4</sup>. These excuses are offered in anticipation of the undoubtedly countless omissions and lost insights that will be found. But I want to make it clear that, excuses notwithstanding, I take full responsibility for this summary of the Advance.

However, in the event that you have any corrections, additions, deletions, suggestions, and/or criticisms regarding this document, please contact the Women Organizers' Committee. After all, internships and sisterhood have their limits!

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Reynolds, Beth Richie, Irma Rodriguez, Stephanie Roth, Yolanda Sanchez, Andrea Savage, Susan Schechter, Barbara Levy Simon, Sharon Smolnick, Miriam Thompson, Patrice Wagner, Marie Weil, and Guida West.

<sup>3</sup> Funding sources include The Funding Exchange, The Northstar Fund, the Women's Research and Development Fund of CUNY, The Faculty Delegate Assembly's Faculty Development Fund of Hunter College, Hands Across America, and The Aaron Diamond Foundation. In addition, The Ms. Foundation sponsored the attendance of one of the participants.

<sup>4</sup> As a consequence of this, throughout this document I will use "we" to refer to women and women organizers (as well as to women of color), and "they" when I am referring to the women who attended the Advance.

## The Women Organizers in Attendance

### THE WOMEN ORGANIZERS' COLLECTIVE

**BARBARA R. JOSEPH:** Educator and Organizer. Director of the Hofstra University Institute of Applied Social Science at District 65, UAW. Interested in liberation movements; developing theories about human needs and education for empowerment (with special emphasis on women of color); and women workers and learners.

**SUSAN LOB:** Community Organizer in poor and working-class neighborhoods for the past 15 years. Activist for women and housing issues. Advocacy Coordinator of the Park Slope Safe Homes Project. Teaches an undergraduate course in organizing at York College. Interested in ending violence against women and racial violence; multi-racial coalition building; and leadership development of women and older people.

**PEGGY McLAUGHLIN:** Organizer and Attorney. Assistant Professor of Social Work and Law at Ramapo College. Founded battered women's shelter, tenant's councils, and homeless programs. Interested in women's psychological and social development.

**TERRY MIZRAHI:** Professor at Hunter College School of Social Work. Coordinator for the Education Center for Community Organizing (ECCO). Author of manuals on health organizing and book on physicians entitled, GETTING RID OF PATIENTS. Interested in building coalitions; and women as health consumers and workers.

**JAN PETERSON:** Community Organizer and Feminist Psychotherapist. National Director of the National Congress of Neighborhood Women. Interested in adding women's perspectives to community development; leadership training for low income women; developing training to assist women to work across class, race and ethnic lines; and building a women's community development education exchange linking domestic efforts with international ones.

**BETH ROSENTHAL:** Consultant and Trainer in development and planning. Former Director of the

Washington Heights-Inwood Coalition. Interested in building coalitions and empowerment; development of immigrant communities; and an interracial social justice movement.

**FRAN SUGARMAN:** Consultant and Organizer. Former Director of the Kingsbridge Heights Neighborhood Improvement Association (Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition). Worked with the Women's Housing Coalition. Former Organizer with ACORN and the People's Firehouse. Interested in alternative methods for organizing women; linking the personal and political in organizing; and childcare and education issues.

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<sup>5</sup> All of the biographies are as of February 1989. Telephone numbers and addresses can be obtained by contacting the Women Organizers' Collective.

## THE WOMEN ORGANIZERS

**MIMI ABRAMOVITZ:** Professor at Hunter College School of Social Work. Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Family Policy at Hunter College. Researcher of women and social policy (especially low-income women and women of color). Author of *REGULATING THE LIVES OF WOMEN: SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT*, South End Press, 1988. Editor: *CATALYST*, a socialist journal of the social services (soon to be *Journal of Progressive Human Services*). Past experience organizing with unions, and the women's, civil rights, and anti-war movements.

**KATHY ACEY:** Executive Director of the Astraea Fund.

**EBUN ADELONA:** Anthropologist and Practitioner of Nu Age nursing. Involved in community mobilizing at the local and international level in the area of health, and feminist organizing in the area of domestic violence, sterilization abuse, and adolescent rites of passage. Currently developing institutions that will sustain community transformation in a 30-block area of Harlem.

**KAREN ARTICHOKER:** Winnebago/Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Coordinator of the South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

**MADONNA BEARD:** Therapist, Educator, and Consultant.

**HEATHER BOOTH:** Organizer for social change for over 25 years, from the earliest days of the civil rights and women's movement, to directing the Midwest Academy, a leading national center for training organizers in social change. Now the President of Citizen Action.

**GALE BREWER:** Chair of the National Women's Political Caucus/NYS.

**CHARLOTTE BUNCH:** Author of *PASSIONATE POLITICS*. Editor (with Sandra Pollack) of *LEARNING OUR WAY*.

**ALICE CARDONA:** Education Advocate and Organizer. Program Associate for the NYS Division for Women.

**LUANN CHIOLA:** Community Organizing Student at Hunter College School of Social Work. Affiliated with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition.

**SARAH CYTRON:** Lesbian Comedienne.

**KAPP DEL VILLAR:** Community Programmer and Organizer. Provide women's leadership training (women learning to impact and nurture community) with Colorado Women's Agenda. Member of Fort Collin's Coalition for Civil Rights. Interested in Gay and Lesbian Rights.

**CHARLOTTE DICKSON:** Organize tenants with the Committee for Boston Public Housing. Recently started a coalition to address teen pregnancy prevention in Boston. Interested in urban youth and multi-cultural work.

**LUCY FOTIS:** Social Work Student at Hunter College School of Social Work.

**JACKY GRIMSHAW:** Political Organizer with the campaigns for Harold Washington for State Senator, Senator, and Congressman in Illinois. Currently developing a center dedicated to the memory of Al Roby at Roosevelt University.

**BEA HANSEN:** Community Organizing Student at Hunter College School of Social Work. Affiliated with the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition.

**SUSAN HAMMOVITCH:** Video Filmmaker.

**TONI HARRIS:** Coordinator of the Knightsbridge Heights Child Care Network. Founding Member of the Women's Committee of K.H.D.I.A.

**TERRY HAYWOODE:** Sociologist and Researcher of women in community organizations.

**VIRGINIA HAZZARD:** From 1960 to 1968, worked in Morocco with the American Friends Service Committee Program for Algerian refugees. Joined UNICEF in 1969, and assisted with a UNICEF/FAOUN Social Development Division assessment of the education and training of girls and women. Served as an Advisor to the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association from 1970 to 1973. Formally joined UNICEF in 1974 as a Program Officer for Kenya and Regional Adviser on Programming for Women in Eastern Africa. From 1981 until her retirement in 1983, served as the Deputy Representative for UNICEF in the People's Republic of China.

**ANDREA E. HILL:** Associate Director of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition. Community Organizer in the areas of civil rights and housing. Provides training in organizational development, decision making, and problem solving.

**JEANINE HUBERT:** Transitional Services Project.

**PAULA JOHNSON:** Organizer for Matrix, a women's group addressing children's services. Organizer for Worcester Area Lesbian and Gay Alliance. Member of Mass Coalition for the Homeless; the Worcester AIDS Network Housing Committee; and the Homeless Children's Task Force.

**SUSAN KAIBONI:** Educator, Administrator, and Consumer Advocate. Interested in women's issues related to development and empowerment.

**SUSAN K. KINOY:** Social Worker and Union Organizer. Chief Grants Officer of the Villers Foundation. Active in welfare rights, civil rights, and peace movements.

**RHODA LINTON:** Independent Consultant in program evaluation, specializing in women's programs (U.S. and Caribbean). Community Organizer, mainly in welfare rights and the Seneca Women's Peace Camp. Currently working on a monograph documenting women's organizing efforts.

**CARMEN LUNA:** Assistant Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Leo McCarthy of California. Member of

Comision Femenil Mexicana Nacional. Committed to the empowerment of Hispanic women.

**BETTY REID MANDELL:** Welfare Rights Organizer. Co-Editor of SURVIVAL NEWS.

**NANCY NAPLES:** Social Worker and Sociologist. Interested in participatory research for social change, coalition building, and feminist approach to organizational design and practice.

**SHIRLEY OBERG:** Organizer and Educator for Women's Action, a transitional housing group. Trainer for a women's curriculum called, "In Our Best Interest."

**SUSAN PERLSTEIN:** Cultural Worker and Founder of Eldershare the Arts.

**CAROLINE PEZZULLO:** Chair of International Task Force on Grassroots Networking. Consultant with International Women & Development. Board Member of the National Congress of Neighborhood Women. Board Member and Vice President of Society for International Development, NY Chapter. Chair of UN NGO Committee on Shelter and Community.

**BETH RITCHIE:** Instructor of the Community Health Education Program at Hunter College. Organizer in the battered women's movement.

**STEPHANIE ROTH:** Activist for stopping violence against women, lesbian issues, and reproductive rights. Coordinator of the Long Island Technical Assistance Program.

**YOLANDA SANCHEZ:** President of the National Latinas Caucus. Social Worker with a specialization in community organizing and development. Worked mostly for Puerto Rican CBOs. Helped to develop almost 800 units of low income housing in el Barrio, and created and developed new programs like neighborhood health centers, etc.

**ANDREA SAVAGE:** Professor at Hunter College School of Social Work. Formerly involved in NWRO Organizing and the women's movement. Interested in women in organizations and child abuse projects.

**PAMELA SPARR:** Economist, Popular Educator, and Writer. Member of National Planning Committee of Women's Economic Summit. Write, consult, and facilitate workshops on economic issues for women.

**CRYSTAL LEE SUTTON:** "The REAL Norma Rae" - Southern born and bred. Lean and hungry, and looks like Sally Field – honest! Committed to caring for working class, poor, and oppressed people of the world. Wants to be part of a movement that will get free and decent health care and education for all Americans.

**LAURA UNGER:** Activist. Director of Community Action Programs, Local 259, UAW. President of Local 1150, CWA.

**JACKIE VAN ANDA:** Deputy Director of Local Development Corp. del Barrio, NYC. Graduate Student at Union Theological Seminary and the New School for Social Research. Community and Labor Organizing in Appalachian cornfields and North Carolina.

**GUIDA WEST:** Political Sociologist, Author, and Welfare Rights Advocate. Works with Rutgers University Institute for Research on Women, and co-Founder of Women's Agenda of New Jersey.

**ANN WITHORN:** Professor at the College of Public and Community Service of the University of Massachusetts. Writes about welfare and radical practices in the human services.

The following **TIME LINE** was displayed on a wall at the Advance to offer a visual depiction of the years of organizing represented by the women organizers in attendance.

1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s
<p><b>CAROLINE PEZZULLO</b> 1943-1953 – Young Christian Community (NY &amp; USA) 1950s – YCW Intl (LA &amp; Asia)</p>	<p><b>BARBARA R. JOSEPH</b>  1952 – Labor Youth League (Socialist); Jr. NAACP Youth Council; Parents Workshop for Integration; 1958 – SNCC</p> <p><b>YOLANDA SANCHEZ</b>  1954 – Hispanic Young Adults</p> <p><b>ALICE CARDONA</b>  1954 – Hispanic Young Adults</p> <p><b>GUIDA WEST</b>  1956 – Civil Rights &amp; Racial Justice; Welfare Rights</p> <p>1954 – 1960s – Civil Rights Movement &amp; War on Poverty; Worker Training Center</p>	<p>1960s - Civil Rights; Welfare Rights; MFY; SWCR; Women's Strike for Peace;</p> <p>1964 – SSWR; Health Care Org. of Harlem;</p>		

		<p>Alternative Education; R&amp;D Social Service Workers</p> <p>1960s – Project Head Start</p> <p>1960s – Civil Rights &amp; Racial Justice; Welfare Rights (Book)</p> <p><b>TERRY HAYWOODE</b> 1960s – Civil Rights; Peace Movement; Women's Movement</p> <p><b>TERRY MIZRAHI</b> 1960s – Health Community</p> <p><b>PEGGY MCLAUGHLIN</b> 1960s – Battered Women's Movement; Feminist Psych</p> <p><b>JAN PETERSON</b> 1963 – March on Washington</p>		
1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s
			<p>1970s – Amer. Bus. Training &amp; Upgrading programs for low income workers; EEO &amp; Compliance Groups</p> <p>1970s – Women's Movement</p> <p>1970s – National Latinas Caucus</p> <p>1970s – ASPIRA of New York</p> <p>1970s – Peace Movement; Feminist Movement (Book)</p> <p>1970s – Professor; Health Policy Coalitions</p> <p>1970s – Battered Women's Movement; Feminist Psych</p> <p>1970s – National Congress of Neighborhood Women Grassroots Women</p> <p><b>SUSAN LOB</b> 1970s – Comm. Org. for Transportation &amp; Food</p> <p><b>SHIRLEY OBERG</b> 1970s – Women's Movement in MN; Crime &amp;</p>	



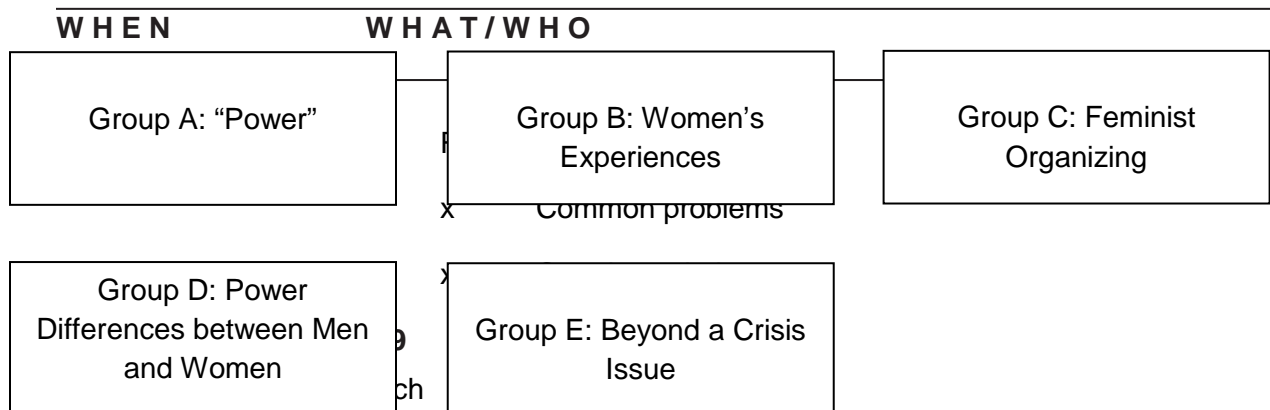
			Justice Reform	<p>1980s –Development Training; Natl. Congress for Neighborhood Women Grassroots Women Intl.</p> <p>1980s – Adult Workers – 85% Women (Labor/Liberal Arts); Teaching &amp; Learning radical consciousness &amp; praxis for social transformation</p> <p>1980s – National Latinas Caucus</p> <p>1980s – Governor's Task Force on Women</p> <p>1980s – Federation of Protestant Women in Social Protest</p> <p>1980s – Professor; Director of ECCO</p> <p>1980s – Battered Women's Movement; Feminist Psych.</p>
1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s
				<p>1980s – Battered Women's Movement; Housing Devel.</p> <p>1980s – Women's Movement in MN; Crime &amp; Justice Reform</p> <p>JEANINE HUBERT Displaced Homemaker</p>

## Women Organizers' Advance Program (Unrevised)

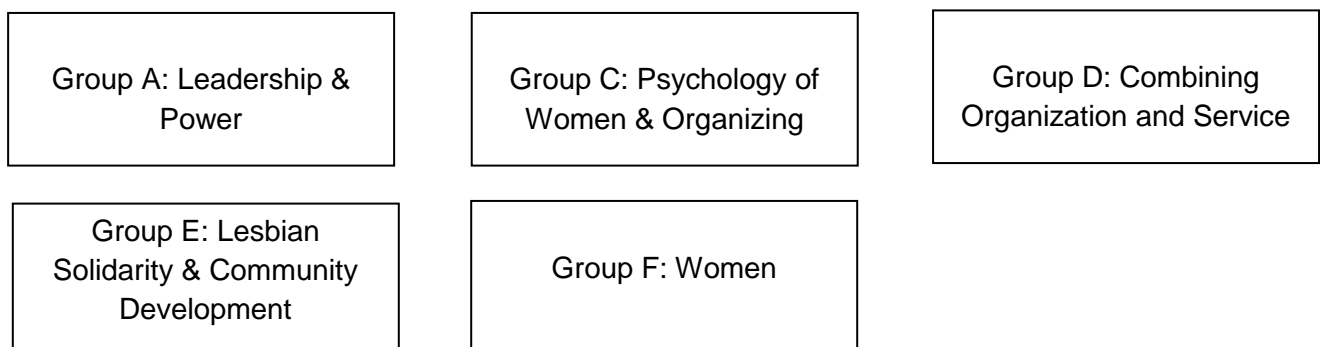
Stony Point Conference Center, Stony Point, New York  
February 16-18, 1989

W H E N	W H A T / W H O
<b>Thursday Evening, 2/16/89</b>	
5:00 PM On	Check-In
6:30 - 7:30 PM	Dinner
7:30 - 8:30 PM	Opening: Building the Bond of Gender. Welcoming comments and overview by members of the Women Organizer's Collective.
	x      Our Vision - Barbara Joseph
	x      Our History - Terry Mizrahi
	x      Our Advance - Beth Rosenthal
8:30 - 9:00 PM	Opening Circle: Introductions with Fran Sugarman.
9:00 - 10:00 PM	Opening - small group introductions. Who we are: sharing ourselves.
10:00 - 10:30 PM	Selected story tellers from small groups meet with Susan Lob to plan Friday AM panel. 10:00 PM On Mingle and imbibe (if you wish).
<b>Friday Morning, 2/17/89</b>	

7:00 - 8:00 AM	Early bird activities. Stroll and stride with Peggy; Stretch and strive with Terry and Beth.
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Breakfast. Orientation for newcomers with Jan Peterson.
9:00 - 9:45 AM	Panel: sharing our stories. Susan Lob and selected story tellers share their experiences as women organizers.
9:45 - 11:15 AM	Small groups: Women organizers' experiences. Enhancing our capacities; minimizing our limitations.



1:30 - 2:15 PM	Organizing across class and color differences; dealing with diversity. Presentation by Beth Ritchie and Stephanie Roth.
2:15 - 3:45 PM	Small groups: Dealing with diversity.
3:45 - 4:15 PM	Report back: Effective approaches and ongoing issues in dealing with diversity.
	Also, open forum/time for feedback on the Advance. Facilitated by Jan Peterson.
4:15 - 5:45 PM	Focus groups: Exploring issues that women organizers face and identifying themes, problem-solving methods and strategies.



NOTE: Group B – Working with Men – was cancelled.

### Friday Evening, 2/17/89

6:30 - 7:30 PM          Dinner

9:00 PM On              Fun Time/Organizer Antics

9:00 - 10:00 PM        Sarah Cytron - Comedienne

10:00 PM                Fear-Wish-Fantasy Drama led by Susan Perlstein.

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W H E N	W H A T / W H O
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### Saturday Morning, 2/18/89

8:00 AM          Early bird activities. Stroll and stride with Peggy; Stretch and strive with Terry and Beth.

8:00 - 9:00 AM          Breakfast

9:00 - 12:00 Noon        Advancing ourselves and our work.

9:00 - 10:30 AM        Open panel: Lessons we have learned from each other/moving on.  
Barbara Joseph and panel of visionaries.

10:30 - 12:00 Noon      Work groups

Group A: Women  
Organizers' 1990 Agenda

Group B: Feminist  
Organizing Principles

Group C: A Women  
Organizers' Center

Group D: Writing About  
Our Organizing

### Saturday Afternoon, 2/18/89

#### Lunch

The personal is political: Sustaining ourselves for a lifetime of activism.

- x          Discussion of how to continue connections and sustain support.
- x          Good-bye/Hello with Susan Perlstein.
- x          Native American rituals and prayer with Karen Artichoker  
and Madonna Beard.
- x          Closing circle with Jan Peterson and Beth Rosenthal.

## Women Organizers and the New Psychology of Women

*“Most of the human beings described in the works of Freud and Eriksson and their successors were not really human beings at all, but were males” - Peggy McLaughlin.*

Some of the inspiration for developing an organizing model that values the distinct roles and styles of women comes from the writings of women psychologists. Since the 1970s, groundbreaking works by Jean Baker Miller, Nancy Chodorow, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Carol Gilligan, Mary Belenky and others began to genuinely reflect the development and life experiences of women. These women psychologists challenged the male theorists who described women as "incomplete," "undeveloped," and "masochistic." Differences in the psychology of women traditionally attributed to various deficiencies and/or defects (i.e., the lack of a penis) were now being attributed to our subordinate status and to social conditions that relegate responsibility for childrearing and tending to human needs almost exclusively to women.

In addition, these women psychologists showed us that out of these circumstances emerge not only weaknesses, but STRENGTHS: We emphasize caring, connectedness, unity, and working collaboratively. These are characteristics that would certainly benefit the human race as a whole if adopted by us all. They are weaknesses only when they prevent us from assuming roles associated with power, initiative, and change because of fears of isolation or ostracism.

Peggy McLaughlin has written an article on the influence of feminist psychology on organizing, and she distributed it at the Advance to begin a dialogue on the topic. One woman organizer described how she started out studying casework and then later switched to community organizing. She felt that the separation made between the two methods is unnatural. She found herself at one point in her career trying to organize a very diverse group of women, and nothing seemed to work. She reviewed some of the literature written by feminist psychologists and realized that the emphasis in her community organizing training on "the issue" – to get to it and keep focused - was undermining the process of building relationships, which is so important to women. She began taking more time to nurture, talk, listen and utilize her casework skills, and gradually progress began to be made.

These women organizers then discussed how emphasizing the personal breaks down the distance between themselves and the members of communities they are organizing. Is that "unprofessional?" They came to agree that being professional does not mean that organizers must remain separate and objective. Taking time to talk and build relationships helps to break people out of their isolation, and making connections is critical to the process of empowerment. This is what we have learned from consciousness-raising groups, and it should be incorporated into community organizing principles and practice.

## Women Organizers and Organizing

*“I was told to organize poor whites like my relatives, so I headed up north. You have to like people to organize them - and I hated my relatives” - Ann Withorn.*

We are trained to be organizers in what is largely taken to be a gender-neutral model. But, as is usually the case, this "neutral" model is not neutral at all, because by claiming gender blindness it ignores issues and concerns specific to women. It was these issues and concerns that were finally given a voice at the Advance. These women organizers wondered how we can continue to employ feminist processes which are slow, unaggressive, and cooperative, while still being able to get the money, power, and attention we need to challenge the status quo. They wondered if organizing has to be lonely or if it is possible instead to stay connected. They debated whether there is any room for younger women to organize around women's issues when so many veteran women organizers continue to hold the reins. And then there are the problems and concerns associated with conflicts between our roles as mothers, wives, and lovers, and our work as organizers. Is it possible to "do it all" and still be effective?

The "feminization of poverty" has now extended these concerns to organizing on the national level around such issues as housing, childcare, human rights, education, work, and health care. And with this shift, these women organizers are now also faced with the problems that concern all organizers today. In these conservative times, organizing has lost much of its steam, and many of our struggles are around just maintaining the gains already made. We are trying to mobilize people who were virtually paralyzed by the Reagan Administration. Currently, polls show that the tide is beginning to turn. Many people are saying that more should be spent on social services and less on military spending, the reverse of what they were saying five years ago. We need to ask how we can capitalize on this. We need to start strategizing on ways to offer real alternatives that will truly bring about a "kinder and gentler nation."

The obstacles seem monumental, but these women organizers are optimistic. They discussed the importance of cultivating a new generation of women organizers, and the importance of passing on their work to others by serving as mentors. We must continue to emphasize feminist process and recognize that it is critical in spite of the frustrations we experience with its slowness. And we need to find new ways of working: we need to take breaks and vacations more, we need to find the strength to take risks and be more innovative, and we need to learn how to make organizing fun!

In addition, these women organizers agreed that being told we organize like "one of the guys" or that we are "exceptional women" is not progressive. The WOMAN in woman organizer is important, and it doesn't stand for "amateur man." It stands for a growing awareness of different tactics and techniques, and maybe even a growing awareness of unique goals.

## Women Organizers and Leadership

*"Collective leadership is not leaderlessness" - Terry Mizrahi.*

In general, leadership has presented problems for women. We are afraid of leaders because we've learned to associate them with our oppression. We are afraid of being leaders because we don't want to feel separate from the group. And when we do assume leadership roles, we are often not taken seriously or respected; often we are criticized or even attacked. This has led some women to reject the idea of leadership altogether, and place an emphasis on collectivities. However, many so-called leaderless organizations are actually not leaderless at all. There are women who continue to perform the functions of leaders, but they are not given the credit they've earned and deserve. Nor can they be held accountable if something goes wrong.

This dilemma has led some women to begin to develop a new model of leadership (rather than a model of no leadership), and these women organizers made their contributions toward that

end. They envisioned a leadership model based on nurturing and enhancing. They felt leaders should be observant and facilitate change in others, Leaders should both have a following and have been followers, and should "embody the people they are leading." Leaders should act as initiators and elicit the best from everyone. And leaders should sustain the group by remembering the group's past and have a vision for the group's future. One woman organizer felt that we should view leadership as representing functions and not a role. Viewed in this way, the concept of leadership embraces the participation of many as opposed to creating competition over the elevation of only a few.

These women organizers felt that women are particularly suited for this more egalitarian form of leadership because women have a more "collegial style" and are more "sisterly." We are generally more flexible and open to new ideas. We can admit our imperfections, which takes the pressure off, and we can tolerate criticism. Women tend to fluctuate more and are more dynamic

– we don't aspire to obtain leadership positions and then to stay in them until we are thrown out or until we die. We need to watch other women who are already leaders and experiment with their roles to see what works for us and what doesn't. And we need to improve and encourage those leaders who we already have.

Some of these women organizers feel "organizer" is a better term for what women do than "leader." Organizers make things happen - leaders get or take the credit for it.

## Women Organizers and Power

*"For me as a woman TO GET HEARD IN MIXED GATHERINGS I HAD TO SPEAK LOUDER AND FASTER or they wouldn't let my ideas get in" - Jan Peterson.*

Power seems to have been a difficult topic for many of these women organizers. Discussions about power were often fragmented and disjointed, and there were many digressions as well as anxious laughter whenever the topic came up. When asked to define what power is, they spoke of the threat of violence, media abuses, political corruption, judicial injustices, and economic dependence. It was troubling to discover that, in an effort to define power, these women organizers more readily defined powerlessness.

Unfortunately, associating power with what the "bad guys" have makes it difficult for us as women to mobilize and fight back. The first (and least offensive) definition of power given in the dictionary is the "ability to do; the capacity to act." Is it possible for everyone to be equally able to do and capable of acting? Does this necessarily imply winners and losers? Can we accept a strategy that enhances the power of the many at the expense of the few?

Generally, these women organizers feel that much of the power gained in the women's movement was on a personal level, gained mostly in consciousness-raising groups. We now need to ask ourselves how we can translate that personal power into social power. And, as was the case with leadership, we need to try and redefine what "power" is. We need to find a way of understanding power that is more defensive than offensive in nature. We need to be able to view power as a way of regaining and maintaining rather than obtaining or restraining.

When we recognize that "all of life is politics," we begin to consciously strategize about ways to improve our lives using the political arena. Empowerment is the first step. We must begin by seeing that collective action is the most advantageous strategy for us, and we need to believe that we can really change things. But we must move from empowerment to political action in order to really gain control over our own destinies. We need to start reaching out to all levels of



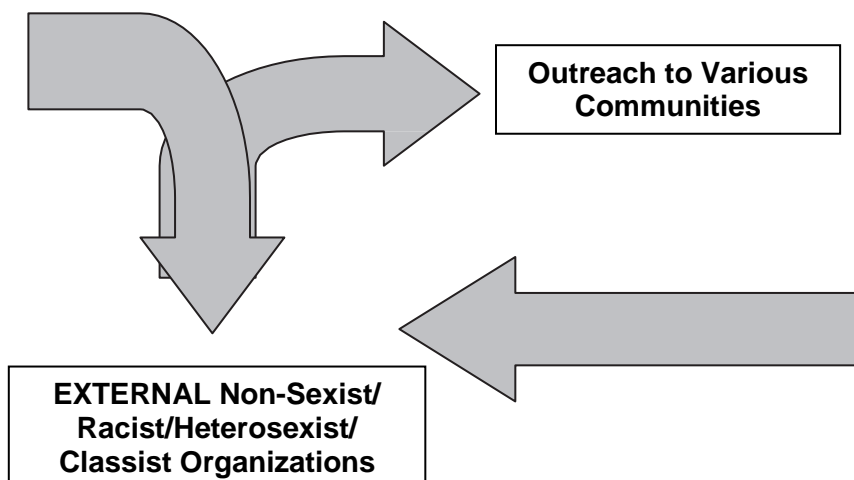
government, not just to the president. Without doing this we will remain powerless.

## Women Organizers and Creating Feminist Organizations

*"Organizations need to be a place where women feel at home" - Beth Ritchie.*

It was generally agreed by these women organizers that typically male dominated organizations, which are characterized by hierarchies and dominant/subordinate relationships, do not make women feel at home. We feel at home when everyone is encouraged to participate, and special attention is given to those who are reluctant to speak out. We feel at home when there is a cooperative style that emphasizes involvement from the "bottom up" rather than the "top down." And we feel at home in organizations committed to a society that respects diversity, and in organizations that reflect that diversity.

Beth Ritchie offered the following formula for developing non-sexist, non-racist, non-heterosexist, and non-classist organizations:



## **INTERNAL All Inclusive Atmosphere Develops**

Organizations begin this process by actively pursuing members from various communities. After a while, the organization begins to have an all-inclusive atmosphere, where members of the various communities become "part of the fabric" of the organization. This is largely an internal process. But this leads to changes in beliefs and attitudes, which then motivates the organization to take action against sexism, racism, heterosexism, and classism in the external surroundings.

These women organizers confronted problems they have encountered in trying to develop organizations in which women feel at home. The feminist process is a slow one, and for organizations required to meet certain ends in times of severe cut-backs, this can be more than frustrating - it can mean the end of the organization. Some women spoke of organizations that they worked hard to build with progressive ideals only to see them later turned into service-providing agencies that had no feminist consciousness or process perspective.

As stated, these are hard times for organizing. But these women organizers reminded themselves that we are not working in a circular-rather-than-linear fashion, but in a spiral-rather-than-linear fashion. We are moving forward! And though all recognized the difficulty of keeping our actions in total harmony with our goals, most of these women organizers agreed that we feel most at home in organizations whose means reflect our visions, and not in organizations whose visions justify any means.

## **Women Organizers and Diversity and the "Isms"**

*"My parents would say, 'Don't forget you're an Indian, but don't be THAT Indian'" - Madonna Beard.*

Discussions related to diversity and the "isms" came up often at the Advance. These discussions were filled with a wide range of emotions and sentiments, self-reflection and intellectual debate. Does cultural diversity "enrich our lives," or does it "separate us?" Are we perpetuating a myth by continuing to refer to "race?" Can we recognize "race" as a myth while still recognizing racism as a reality? Is it selfish to be concerned with issues of oppression regarding gender when other people are starving? For those of us who are "multi-cultural," are we "what we are perceived to be?" Are we "what we are?" Are we "Americans" first and everything else second?

The women's movement has been consumed by these issues for many years. Some of the staunchest critics of the women's movement have been women of color. Challenges became so severe that the women's movement came to be regarded by some as a movement that really only represents the interests of white American middle-class women. This motivated many women concerned with making the women's movement truly representative of the interests of all women to begin reassessing their feelings and thoughts related to diversity and the "isms." One woman organizer said that the inability to reach resolutions to these issues led many women's organizations to "self-destruct."

One woman organizer said that she genuinely feels deprived when issues of diversity and the

"isms" are not openly and honestly dealt with. She sincerely believes that dealing with these issues has enhanced her sense of well-being. But another woman organizer said that she occasionally resented the amount of time spent discussing issues of diversity, and complained that such discussions sometimes prevented progressive actions from being taken. Although all of the women organizers at the Advance were committed to a social vision in which no one is devalued on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation, there was disagreement about how much of that vision needs to be incorporated into the process.

There was also disagreement about what are and are not acceptable things to say when discussing issues of diversity and the "isms." Several times many of the white women organizers in attendance said they were "afraid of saying something wrong." One woman organizer had been accused once of being a racist for reporting what someone else had said. She was forced to give a formal apology although she did not fully understand what she had done wrong. She was still noticeably shaken up by the incident almost 30 years later.

If we are to really deal with these issues, do we need to be able to speak freely and openly? Does "stopping the process" really work to change attitudes? Or does preventing someone from expressing themselves just tell them that they should keep certain thoughts hidden? Looming conflicts and dilemmas related to diversity and the "isms" came up again and again and again at the Advance - scheduled for discussion or not - and at times tensions grew unbearably high.

But these women organizers persisted, and they concluded that the willingness of women to grapple with these issues is a plus rather than a minus. They are committed to examining their own biases, and accepting challenges to their beliefs. They are committed to recognizing and tackling classism along with other isms, and trying to bridge the gaps that exist between themselves and the communities they work with. They will also be more sensitive to ageism, and encourage more older women to join us in our struggles so we can grow together. And ultimately, these women organizers are committed to fighting for social change that brings us closer to an egalitarian world.

## Women Organizers and Lesbian Issues

*"As a lesbian, I don't turn myself upside down when I go home from work. I can be the same person everywhere - I don't go home and cook for a man" - Kapp del Villar.*

The Women Organizers' Collective made a conscious effort to invite women from the lesbian community to join in the Advance, and lesbians constituted the largest subgroup. However, despite this, lesbian organizers at the Advance felt disrespected at times. For example, after the various small groups had been assigned to different rooms, these women organizers found themselves relegated to an unenclosed area. They felt that this unfortunate act of insensitivity discouraged women less open about their sexuality from joining them. It was also an oversight that made these women organizers feel less than welcome. And if an event designed by women for women could be guilty of such insensitivity, is there really any place where they as lesbians could feel safe?

Many emotions and thoughts were stirred. They discussed their work organizing the lesbian and gay community. How can they encourage women and men to "come out" and identify themselves as lesbians and gay men when it really isn't safe to do so? They risk not only social ostracism, but the loss of their jobs, possible violent attacks, and even death. In rural areas, it is customary to receive anonymous donations at lesbian and gay fund raisers; at garage sales people bring their stuff and disappear. Is it possible to organize an anonymous group or act to

promote change anonymously? Building solidarity can someday make lesbians and gay men safe, but they are not safe now.

They discussed difficulties uniting lesbians and gay men. Resistance is greater in urban areas, where each community is large enough so as not to feel any real urgency to unite, and less in rural areas, where there is typically only one "gay" bar. Younger and older lesbians felt they needed to work together one-on-one to see how they differ and how they are the same so that they can learn from each other.

They also discussed the need to identify what really constitutes lesbian issues. They work on women's issues such as reproductive rights, they work on gay male issues related to AIDS, but what about custody rights or lesbian bashing? Issues like these are largely ignored. These women organizers are committed to re-examining this, as well as promoting lesbian visibility.

As stated earlier, the Women Organizers' Collective and the women organizers in attendance at this Advance are committed to dealing with issues of diversity and the "isms." Once the frustration experienced by these lesbian organizers was made clear, it was recognized that the best of intentions may not be enough. When we are not ourselves members of groups that we are working with, we need to ask questions regarding how we can better serve and meet the needs of group members, and we need to listen and respect their unique experiences and perspectives. It is a lesson well learned and taken to heart.

## Women Organizers Discuss Women

*"Women were afraid if they got involved in union organizing they would lose their husbands - and it turned out their fears were justified..." - Susan Perlstein reporting back what was said by Crystal Lee Sutton.*

Mobilizing women can be difficult as well as rewarding. These women organizers agreed that the most difficult thing is getting women to act on their own behalf. Women are afraid to be viewed as "selfish." But in this weakness, lies also one of our greatest strengths - we care for and about others, and we are sensitive to the needs of others. The challenge is getting women to see that we can be concerned with others as well as with our own needs. It was suggested that self-interest should be redefined to mean meeting our needs in ways that meet the needs of others, and it was added that being concerned with others may be a way of meeting our own needs. We should also recognize that in our reluctance to appear "selfish," we often do not demand the credit we deserve for the work we do. Ultimately, this only serves to reinforce a world-view that essentially characterizes women as contributing little or nothing.

For these women organizers, the biggest reward in organizing women lies in feeling "more connected" and "more committed." The main drawback is "over-identification." Some of these women organizers found it difficult to separate their needs from the women they work with. Other problems stem from the negative aspects of our shared circumstances and socialization. As one-woman organizer put it, "A lot of trips have been put upon us." Some of these women organizers spoke of the suspicion that sometimes exists between women. We often see each other as competitors and not as friends. We need to be sensitive to this, and we need to bring those kinds of misgivings out into the open. We can't join together if we don't trust one another.

## Women Organizers Discuss Men

*"I don't think we always have to compare what we do with men" - Mimi Abramovitz.*

As this statement suggests, the Advance was not a man-bashing fiesta, as many women's gatherings are characterized. In fact, a group designed to explore problems working with men generated so little interest it had to be cancelled. The Advance was not a denunciation of manhood, but a celebration of womanhood!

But men did come up occasionally:

"Some of the most brilliant men I know act like people who have been raised by wolves!" "We work as women in this egalitarian style, and then one man shows up and takes over!" "Even in gay groups men tend to take over - including in situations where there are few men!"

"Women are taught to give - men are taught to take!"

"Women's hierarchy of motivation is the opposite of men's. Men typically place

themselves first. Women usually try to please their husband or children or family before themselves."

"Men don't even have to ask for help - women will take care of everything they need without their ever asking!"

"The men pit the poor women against the better off women in Zimbabwe!" "But men are out in the street - women are not!"

"...like people who have been raised by wolves!"

Hmmmm. I wonder if this is what they mean by, "You were always on my mind?"

## Women Organizers Discuss Their Own Issues and Concerns

*"How are you going to make a revolution happen if you have a social life?" - Fran Sugarman.*

The Advance was a time for learning, developing ideas about new models of organizing, building commitments, and establishing agendas. But it was also a time for sharing and learning about each other. Four women were selected by their respective groups to tell their stories because they exemplified what these women organizers felt this Advance was all about. Their stories deserve re-sharing.

**PAULA JOHNSON'S STORY:** Paula was an abused child, and she was brought up at a time when girls didn't have many options. Women were expected to get married and have children. So, at age

18, Paula got married, only to find herself again being abused, this time by her husband. At 28 she gave birth to her fourth child and she had a near death experience. As Paula was lying there dying, they brought in her husband, and she thought, "Great, I'm dying. This is it."

And then Paula remembered her children. There was no one she could trust to take care of them, least of all her husband. So, Paula survived, and she decided to start living. Paula got a

divorce. Then she joined the Battered Women's Movement because of the closeness of the issue to her. Today, Paula is involved in many issues and is feeling overwhelmed - there are just so many issues that need to be addressed. She's had to learn to say 'no.'

And now, looking back, Paula wonders, "Does it have to come to life or death before we as women get involved?"

**YOLANDA SANCHEZ'S STORY:** Yolanda was brought up in New York City and educated quite well, to a Master's Degree. She went through school almost always the only Latina. When she was asked to join a Puerto Rican group, she jumped at the chance. She became thoroughly Latina.

The Puerto Rican community works very hard to cover up its problems related to gender, race and class. Puerto Ricans are not supposed to air their dirty laundry. But when Yolanda ran for City Council in 1977 and was photographed with her afro, it became quite clear to her that gender, race, and class are definitely issues in the Puerto Rican community. And where were the Latinos and blacks at this Advance - why were we not there in representative numbers? They are issues for everybody.

Said Yolanda, "I was raised as a very nice Puerto Rican girl, and what I hope I have become is a very nice Puerto Rican woman!"

**SHIRLEY OBERG'S STORY:** Shirley is from Minnesota. She has worked in the domestic violence field for 12 years. At the time of her awakening, she was what is commonly referred to as "co-dependent." Shirley calls it "a well socialized woman." She had been physically and sexually abused. But when she came into a community with other women who experienced the same thing, she realized that "the personal is political."

Their first organizing efforts emphasized breaking the silence. They then learned that "the oppressed house the oppressor," and that the women they worked with and they themselves had internalized the oppressor's views. They then saw their organization become white, middle class, and heterosexual, and go from one based on social change to one based on providing services. So, they realized then that "the oppressed become the oppressors." But then they found that "transformation proceeds social change," and that by reflecting on the process they had gone through they had become aware of the effects of their own oppression. They are now in the business of, not empowering victims, but liberating the oppressed - and they are in the business of encouraging personal transformation.

**SUSAN KAIBONI'S STORY:** Susan started organizing by accident in a way. She came to the United States because women could not study on an advanced level in Zimbabwe. Her parents pushed her to go because they thought they would benefit from it. "Of course, they never actually did benefit from it...."

She worked with a group in New York to aid in the liberation of Zimbabwe, which achieved independence in 1980. Women were at the forefront of the organizing. They raised funds for clothing and food to send over there. In New York, they all felt they had to contribute to the struggle because they would also benefit from liberation. Those who came to meetings more and organized more were women. Susan didn't actually notice that at the time, but after liberation came and the women did not get any positions, they began to talk about their oppression. "So, we are now fighting for our rights socially and politically!"

These women truly exemplify all of the women organizers present at the Advance in terms of their strengths. But these women organizers also shared their weaknesses. Many were exhausted - the phrase "over-extended" came up time and time again, and some said they felt "fragmented." Some were actually frightened by how burned out they were feeling. They agreed that we need to understand that if we can't do it, someone else can. We need to ask ourselves



what is doable and focus our efforts on smaller pieces. And we need to recognize that issues are interconnected. We need to let go of some issues, and trust that others will take them on, and together we will get things done.

## Women Organizers and the Future

*"I don't want to change the system - I want a new one" - Karen Artichoker.*

These women organizers shared their vision for the future and discussed an agenda for the 1990s. Karen Artichoker's words pretty much sum up their vision for the future. What follows is their agenda for the 1990s, developed by LuAnn Chiola and Solveig Wilder from a session led by Beth Rosenthal.

### WOMEN ORGANIZERS AGENDA FOR THE 1990S

#### WOMEN ORGANIZING ISSUES

We need to:

1. Build solidarity between women and unions;
2. Recognize the connections between domestic violence and child abuse;
3. Share in the struggles of women with AIDS;
4. Link grassroots organizing to the political process;
5. Join the fight for housing and against homelessness, and for economic development;
6. Work for welfare reforms;
7. Continue to struggle for reproductive rights;
8. Identify health care as a major issue;
9. Make recovery from substance abuse a strategy for community rescue and development;
10. Stop women from silencing their discontentedness with drugs and alcohol. II

#### SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

We need to:

1. Network with other groups and build coalitions ("We have more power than we know!");
2. Work on a multi-issue basis;
3. Take on new issues that directly affect women;
4. Empower women internationally;
5. Recognize education as a critical means to empowerment;
6. Utilize social services as a means to empowerment;
7. Make the transferring of skills, strategies, and information integral to our role as organizers;
8. Develop a theory for action;
9. Use humor as a tool in organizing.



### III WOMEN, POWER, AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

We need to:

1. Recognize that inclusion and solidarity are the hallmarks of women organizers;
2. Get more women in positions of decision making who can put women's agendas into practice;
3. Increase political involvement through voting and registration drives;
4. Use the political arena to maintain gains already made;
5. Build coalitions of progressive women and men. IV

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCESS

We need to:

1. Recognize that how we achieve our goals is just as important as what we accomplish;
2. See the process as lifelong with no beginning or end - therefore there are no failures;
3. Have a key vision of the whole while we chip away at it a piece at a time;
4. Recognize that issues and values are one - values must be turned into issues;
5. Recognize that theory and values infuse practice, and practice shapes theory and values. V

### "ISMS" AND DIVERSITY

We need to:

1. Recognize "ageism" along with other isms;
2. Find ways to reach out to ALL women;
3. Develop multi-cultural, anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-heterosexist, and anti-classist organizations.

### VI THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

We need to:

1. Work together for maternity leave;
2. Work for the expansions of day care;
3. Secure child welfare;
4. Support the development of meaningful jobs;
5. Seek job alternatives that are fulfilling to us as women;
6. Fight to increase the minimum wage;
7. Recognize organizing as holistic – it must consider and include one's personal life;
8. Recognize organizing as a lifelong commitment.

The Women Organizers' Collective drafted A Foundation for Feminist Organizing Principles, which was partially modified by women organizers at the Advance. They are included next to offer us a frame of reference for achieving the many ends outlined above.

# A FOUNDATION FOR FEMINIST ORGANIZING: PRINCIPLES, GOALS, METHODS, ROLES AND DILEMMAS

## (FORMERLY TITLED, "FEMINIST ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES")

Premises: Feminist organizing is based on values and actions carried out in a democratic, humanistic framework. Its central imperative defines its unique character. Feminist organizing must affect the conditions of women while empowering them. It is based on women's contributions, functions, roles, and experiences and is derived from their strengths, while recognizing the limitations of their socially ascribed roles and the nature of their oppression. A women's perspective affects: Which issues are selected and worked on; how a problem is defined; what needs will be met; what tactics and strategies are used; and how success or victory is defined.

### A. VALUE BASE\*

1. Belief in the dignity and strength of the individual; respect for life.
2. Belief in the individual and collective human capacity to grow and change.
3. Belief in the power and ability of individuals and groups to make changes in the world.
4. The personal is political: The interconnectedness of problems and solutions.
  - a. Personal problems have political (cultural, historical) causes and solutions.
  - b. Personal choices and actions are political and affect solutions or lack of same.
5. Women have distinct perspectives, experiences and histories based on their functions and socially defined roles and have the right to operate from those distinctions.
6. Cooperation rather than competition is the rational way to relate. (Rationality = life over death, quality over quantity, people over property, protection over exploitation of the earth.)
7. Belief that life/living things are interdependent and that people need and seek mutuality and community.
8. Acceptance of different ways of being, thinking, knowing and acting.
9. People have the right to develop and control the institutions that affect their lives. B.

### B. GOALS\*

1. Create a more democratic and egalitarian society; transform society through the reduction of class, status, and power differentials.
2. Meet human needs through resource recovery and development, and in ways that support the ecological balance of earth and universe.

3. Eliminate sexism.
4. Eliminate racism, ageism, homophobia, and discrimination against the disabled.
5. Build community (cooperative, economic, social, and political arrangements).
6. Enhance recognition and respect for diversity and differences (of color, class, sexual preference, religion, age, ethnicity, and healing systems).

\* Revised at the Women Organizers' Advance.

## C. METHODS, APPROACHES, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

### 1. Community involvement:

- a. Validate residents'/consumers'/constituencies' reality, gain knowledge of each "community," and recognize women's abilities to plan for ourselves.
- b. Involve women in the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
- c. Identify risks as well as benefits of participation. Recognize service recipient/resident/member vulnerability, and facilitate informed choices.
- d. Recognize differential ability and willingness to commit time, and facilitate varying degrees of involvement.

### 2. Emphasis on collective problem-solving:

- a. Assess and build upon strengths.
- b. Assess and build upon personal, natural, informal networks and relationships.
- c. Demystify planning and organizing processes.
- d. Respect and utilize different kinds of expertise.

### 3. Emphasis on process as part of the product/goal:

- a. Build social and emotional support.
- b. Recognize different types, levels, and styles of leadership.
- c. Create opportunities for leadership and skills development.
- d. Grapple with differences between vision of the organizer and the group's vision(s).
- e. Struggle against group's potential dependency on the organizer, and, at different points in time, the possibility of rejection or hostility toward the organizer.
- f. Act with people, don't do to or for.
- g. Build in the time and make it a priority to work issues/differences through.
- h. Create a safe environment.
- i. Recognize complex needs, functions, and responsibilities of many women; i.e., women's connections to family and neighborhood (plan meeting space, time and agendas accordingly).

### 4. Utilize consciousness-raising:

- a. Name feelings of self and others.
  - b. Build confidence and self-respect.
  - c. Identify how women have been kept out, isolated from others, and separate from their inner voice.
- 5. Emphasis on consensus, cooperation, collaboration and coalition building:
  - a. Assume principle of least contest.
  - b. Anticipate conflict and work toward a conflict-resolution model - a willingness and skill to bargain, negotiate, and compromise.
  - c. Assume common cause and a common social reality on the part of the participants/workers in a system.
  - d. Assume power is not a limited/fixed quantity, but mutable through collective action.
- 6. Emphasis on unity and wholeness:
  - a. Minimize compartmentalization/segmentation of functions and roles.
  - b. Recognize difficulties in splitting the public/private self and arenas.
  - c. Minimize dichotomization or polarization - seek continuity and make connections.
- 7. Emphasis on a collective/shared problem-solving approach:
  - a. There are multiple definitions of the problem.
  - b. The definition of the problem shapes the solution.
  - c. There is no such thing as objective, value-free planning, yet there is a need to be logical, systematic, and consistent.
  - d. Recognize the value of qualitative as well as quantitative data.
  - e. Emphasize effectiveness as well as efficiency.
  - f. Recognize tension between meeting survival/immediate individual and group needs and organizing for structural and comprehensive social change.
- 8. The use of praxis:
  - a. Build in mechanisms for developmental feedback, evaluation, and criticism/self-criticism.
  - b. Build in mechanisms for evaluation of theories, approaches, strategies and tactics.

#### D. FUNCTIONS/ROLES/STYLES OF THE ORGANIZER

- 1. The organizer's role is multi-faceted and flexible.
- 2. The function of enabler/facilitator is neither passive nor neutral.
- 3. The relationship between the organizer and the constituency/ group is transactive: each brings to the effort different/complementary competencies, ideas, experiences and visions.
- 4. The organizer may be outside the experience, but not the process: the organizer searches for elements of common cause.

5. The organizer guards against elitism, omnipotence (self or other imposed).
6. There is a distinction between professional/work functions and personal relationships.
7. The organizer's style is grounded in authenticity rather than affectation.
8. The organizer inevitably is viewed as leader and role model. The goal is to transfer skills and minimize group's dependency on the organizer.
9. Recognize the inevitability of sexual dynamics and the aura of patriarchal privilege in working with men organizers or constituencies.

#### E. TENSIONS AND DILEMMAS FOR WOMEN ORGANIZERS (Partial List)

The social conditions that shape the lives of women organizers result in both strengths and weaknesses. The following table describes the positive and negatives ways that roles and functions can be performed by women organizers.

<b>Role/Function</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Catalyst/Activist	Initiates and supports the process of empowering others; provides leadership.	Seen as aggressive and controlling; reinforces ideas and insecurities that people cannot lead themselves.
Nurturer	Supports others; sensitive; empathetic; sharing.	Denies self.
Educator	Identifies sources for information; encourages self-directed learning for action.	Allows group to rely on organizer as THE source, or treats group as a fount.
Advocate	Doing with.	Doing for (with some exceptions, i.e., young children, frail elderly, etc.).
Connector (Boundary Spanner)	Links personal with political; limits victim blaming.	Inability to separate value/worth of people from their ideas.
Juggler	Flexibility – work is not all-consuming; recognizes multiple roles in others lives.	Lack of efficiency; single-mindedness.
Facilitator	Fosters cooperation, sharing; tuned in; not invested in her own solutions. Able to let group decide and let others get credit.	Denies differences in natural or acquired abilities; group may not focus; interest in product and goal may wane. Too accommodating; self-effacing.
Mediator	Respects diversity, while identifying common human needs and attributes.	In the face of conflict, gives up responsibility, direction and control.

Relationship with Men	Uses chauvinism as a strategy (i.e., creates access when viewed as a brilliant exception). Validated for work on women's issues (not as threatening).	Ignored, patronized, disparaged, abused.
Relationship with Women	Builds solidarity, common cause, and gender specific relationships; sisterhood.	Traditional hurts of women acted out/tested with the woman organizer.
Add your own...		

Adapted from the writings or ideas of Martha Ackelsburg, Eboni Adelona, Ruth Brandwine, Mary Bricker-Jenkins, Charlotte Bunch, Susan Ellsworth, Nancy Hooyman, Jeanine Hubert, Cheryl Hyde, Barbara Joseph, Susan Lob, Peggy Mathews, Peggy McLaughlin, Terry Mizrahi, Jan Peterson, Beth Rosenthal, Fran Sugarman, Marie Weil, and Guida West.

## Conclusion

As I neared the end of this project, I found that I was stuck on the conclusion. I wanted to write something humorous and "fun," but I couldn't really think of anything from the extensive materials I had reviewed so far. I decided to look over the evaluation forms from the Advance turned in by all of the women organizers who attended.

In response to a question asking for one word to describe the Advance, these women organizers answered AWE-INSPIRING! A BEGINNING! DISAPPOINTING! ENCOURAGING! ENERGIZING! EXCELLENT! GREAT! HEARTENING! INFORMATIVE! INSPIRING! NEEDED! ONENESS! OVERWHELMING! POSITIVE! REAFFIRMING! SLOW! STIMULATING! STUPENDOUS! SUPPORTIVE! THANKYOU! and WELCOME! They felt they benefited the most from discussions related to diversity, from discussions that linked the "personal" with the "political," and from discussions that linked organizing to the larger political arena. They also greatly appreciated the opportunity to once and for all affirm their distinct experiences organizing as women. They thought the Advance would have been better if there had been more diversity among the women organizers in attendance, more emphasis placed on a historical perspective, more structure in the small group discussions, less seriousness, and more "play time."

Overall, I found the evaluations very informative and instructive. I did not, however, find them particularly humorous or "fun."

So, I then decided to watch the videotapes from the Advance - I heard they contained footage of the play, the comedienne, and the "good-bye/hello" go around, among other things. I was sure they would be fun to watch, and that something humorous would jump out at me. While viewing the first video I started chuckling. No one looked the way I had imagined. Some were older, some were younger, some were thinner, some were taller. But none of the women organizers looked the way I thought they would. Maybe I would write something about that.

And then I started listening. These women organizers were talking about organizing that spanned 10, 20, 30, and even 40 years! They worked not only with the women's movement, but with unions, the socialist movement, Hispanic organizations, Native American coalitions, the peace movement, and the civil rights movement. Some had run for office, some worked with Ella Baker, some spread the word with "living theatre," and some worked with the SNCC.

And then they stood together hand-in-hand and sang.

*We are gentle, angry people*

*We are singing, singing for our lives*

*We are gentle, angry people*

*And we are singing, singing for our lives.*

-- Holly Near

And I realized these were the faces of women who fought so we could someday take for granted that black, brown, yellow, red, and white are all equally as good. These were the faces of women who fought so we would never again tolerate being abused by any man. These were the faces of women who continue to fight so we may all love and flourish as we see fit. And I realized these were the faces of women who are not only singing for their lives, but for my life - for OUR lives - as well.

While working on this project I have learned about "shared leadership functions," "bottom up" decision making, "horizontal" rather than "vertical" organizational structures, "cultural richness" rather than "cultural diversity," "heterosexism" as well as "homophobia," and I've learned that we can each take a piece and still change the whole.

But above all, I've learned how important it is to encourage the contributions of all, and to work collectively to reach our ends. It is only by checking out and sharing our principles and practices with each other that truly egalitarian visions can emerge.

As I mentioned earlier, internships have their limits. But I've learned that sisterhood is forever.

I suggest that we make this work a living document, open to all forty-nine women who participated in the Advance for corrections, additions, deletions, suggestions, and/or criticisms. Then I think we should open this up to women across America; no, the world. And men too - I think we should involve men too. Think about it! All 5 billion people on the planet working together to make this document a testament to our convictions!

Just make sure that you direct all of your feedback to Barbara Joseph, Susan Lob, Peggy McLaughlin, Terry Mizrahi, Jan Peterson, Beth Rosenthal, and Fran Sugarman of the Women Organizers' Collective.



## WOMEN ON THE ADVANCE

### Contributors

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**Contributors:** All of the women organizers who attended the Advance.

**Sources of Inspiration:** All of the writers and theorists listed in the Women Organizers' Bibliography.

**Special thanks to** Kapp del Villar and Bea Hansen for providing interviews that bridged many gaps.



# REFERENCES for WOMEN ORGANIZERS from 1990-2002

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## Women and Organizing Reference Guide

### Introduction

The following organizing reference guide is a compilation of books, journal articles, and other published works that focus on women organizing and activism, feminist organizing, diversity and international issues related to activism and organizing from the years 1990 to 2002.

This updated "women and organizing" collection begins where our previous reference guide left off, and spans the last decade, and in particular, the last few years. The reference list was created as a result of the many one-on-one interviews conducted, where numerous ***Women on the Advance*** participants in 1989 and other women surveyed in the late 1980's. They listed the works that influenced them and that they use, or they themselves wrote.

The list also includes the results of an extensive search of contemporary books, journal articles, and other sources that reflect on issues related to women and organizing, activism, and diversity on both a national and international level.

We thank all of the ***Women on the Advance*** participants whose time, effort, and materials helped make this reference guide possible. We hope you will find these resources useful in your work and lives! We are also interested in receiving additional documents, reports and other materials that you think would be valuable to organizers and activists, especially women.

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This project was made possible with a small grant from the Diversity Fund of CUNY- Summer 2002.

9/02

## FROM THE USA

Acker, J. (Summer, 2000). "Revisiting Class: Thinking from Gender, Race, and Organizations." Social Politics 7(2): 192-214.

*This article explores gender and organizations and their intersections with race and class. The article addresses class by retheorizing feminist thinking, and suggests that gender, class, and race relations are mutually produced in ongoing processes. It discusses "regimes of inequality" and explores inequality within organizations.*

Ackelsberg, M. (2001). "Reconceiving Politics? Women's Activism and Democracy in a Time of Retrenchment." Feminist Studies 27(2): 391-418.

*This article reviews and describes 6 books relevant to women and organizing and activism.*

- Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work and the War on Poverty by Nancy Naples
- Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing across race, class, and gender. Edited by Nancy Naples
- No Middle Ground: Women and Radical Protest, edited by Kathleen Blee.
- The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from Left to Right, edited by Alexis Jetter, Annelise Orleck and Diana Taylor.
- Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements by Temma Kaplan.
- Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures: Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements, edited by Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelivia Dagnino and Arturo Escobar.

Alonso, J. (October, 1997). "Women's Way of Organizing." Women's Review of Books 15(1).

*This article reviews the book "We Can't Eat Prestige: The Women Who Organized Harvard," by John Hoerr Profile of Kristine Rondeau, a lab assistant and union organizer at Harvard Medical School; Questions women domination.*

Brandwein, R. A. (Summer/Fall 1981). "Toward the Feminization of Community and Organization Practice." Social Development 5(2-3):180-193.

*The history of women's involvement in the origins of community organizing in the U. S. has largely been hidden from view. A revisionist view of that history is presented and the sex -role models of C. O. practice are defined. New role models are suggested against the context of power and control and emerging notions of "wholistic" practice. The implications for curricular design are then presented.*

Briskin, L. (September/October 1999). "Autonomy, Diversity, and Integration: Union Women's Separate Organizing in North America and Western Europe in the Context of Restructuring and Globalization." Women's Studies International Forum 22(5):543-554.

*This article analyzes the significance of educational programs and conferences organized by and for women. Evolution of women's response to male domination and patriarchal cultures; Representation of women and constituency building; Impacts of the changes in social, political, and economic organization on women,*

Dawson, R.P. (Fall 1996). "When Women Gather: The NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995." International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society,

10(1):7-27.

*This article details and reviews the events and discussions that took place at the Fourth World Conference on Women.*

East, J.F. (Summer 2000). "Empowerment Through Welfare Rights Organizing: A Feminist Perspective." Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work, 15(2):311-328.

*This article describes a community-based welfare reform-welfare rights organizing coalition that is based on a feminist empowerment model of practice. The experiences of women who have participated in the coalition are highlighted, and suggested courses of action for organizing such coalitions are proposed.*

Esman, M. (1997). "Organizing for Equality: The Evolution of Women's Racial- Ethnic Organizations in America-1955-1985." American Journal of Sociology, 103(1):239-240.  
*This article briefly describes and reviews the book.*

Faver, C.A. Faver, C. A. (Fall/Winter, 1994). "Feminist Ideology and Strategies for Social Change: An Analysis of Social Movements." The Journal of Applied Social Sciences 18(1):123-134.

*The feminist worldview, epistemology, and vision emphasize connectedness, equality, interdependence, and diversity. Based on this foundation, feminist ideology is manifested in women's social activism through consciousness raising, empowerment, holistic spirituality, egalitarian leadership styles, inclusiveness, and integration of life spheres. The analysis of feminist ideology and women's social activism suggests three feminist strategies for social change: first, in defining issues and creating an agenda for action, make explicit connections between the different spheres of life (home, work, and community) and between local organizing efforts and national politics; second, nurture community within women's social networks as the context for motivating, empowering, and sustaining women in their work for social change; finally, build coalitions among groups of women having different primary agendas by confronting directly the racism, elitism, and homophobia that threaten women's solidarity.*

Ferguson, K. E. (2001). "Women and Grassroots Organizing." Women and Politics 22 (1): 97-111.  
*This article describes and reviews 5 books on women and organizing and activism.*

Grahame, K. M. (1998). "Feminist Organizing and the Politics of Inclusion." Human Studies 21(4): 377-393.

*This paper examines the attempts of one mainstream women's organization to organize and include women of color ..The analysis problematizes the concept of "organizing women of color" and "inclusion/exclusion."*

Gutierrez, L & Lewis, E. (1994). "Community Organizing with Women of Color: A Feminist Approach." Journal of Community Practice, 1(2):23-44.

*This article considers ways in which community organizing methods can be made more effective for use with groups of women. The deficiencies of feminist theory in analyzing women of color's lives and experience is addressed. The article suggests organizing methods that simultaneously address race and gender.*

Haywoode, T. (1997). "Working-Class Women and Local Politics: Styles of Community Organizing." Research in Politics and Society 7:111-134.

*This article describes poor and working-class women's styles of organizing and activism including the usage of daily social ties and informal bonds in organizing and activism. The article discusses working class feminism.*

Hoyman, M. (1989). "Working Women: The Potential of Unionization and Collective Action in the United States." Women's Studies International Forum 12(1): 51-58.

*This article examines instances of working women's direct action historically as well as the prospects of organizing women workers in the future.*

Hubbard, A. S. (1996). "The Activist Academic and the Stigma of Community Housework." Sociological Imagination 33(1): 73-87.

*This paper explores the special challenges faced by academics who are also involved in community organizing. For example, activist academics face certain risks when they espouse unpopular ideas, whether popular or not. However, as community organizers they also engage in low-status, unpaid work which is considered unprofessional by the academic community. This paper draws on feminist critiques of housework and women's volunteering to argue for a deeper understanding of the difficulty of integrating both academic work and activism.*

Hyde, C. (September, 1986). "Experiences of Women Activists: Implications for Community Organizing Theory and Practice." Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare 13(3): 545-562.

*This paper explores the experiences of women activists, primarily in the labor, peace, and feminist movements. A number of salient themes, generated in interviews with and presentations by women activist are identified. Suggestions are made as to how and why these themes should be integrated into community organizing practice.*

Lee, B. & Weeks, W. (July, 1991). "Social Action Theory and the Women's Movement: An Analysis of Assumption." Community Development 26(3): 220-226.

*This article explores and challenges the class, poverty and unity assumptions present in community organizing theory and how these are both important to and challenged by Women's Movement organizing. The authors assert that gender as well as the structure of women's lives are important variables that must be included in social analysis. Looks at community organization theory and women's movement organizing.*

Martell, D., Avitabile, N.E. (Winter, 1998). "Feminist Community Organizing on a College Campus." Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work 13(4): 393-410.

*This article illustrates the application and evaluation of feminist community organizing principles by a college women's center during the early to mid 1990's. Purpose of community organizing; Information on Sexual Assault Task Force; Analysis of feminist community organizing techniques.*

Prindeville, D.-M. & Bretting, J.G. (1998). "Indigenous Women Activists and Political Participation: The Case of Environmental Justice." Women and Politics 19(1): 39-58.

*This article examines the political identity, demographics, and experiences of 16 Latina and Native American activists in environmental justice organizations in New Mexico. A model*

*of grassroots activism is developed. Additionally, alternative conceptualizations of feminism and environmentalism are presented from the perspective of indigenous women leaders.*

Rose, M. (Winter, 1995). "Women Power Will Stop Those Grapes": Chicano Organizers and Middle-class Female Supporters in the Farm Workers' Grape Boycott in Philadelphia, 1969-1970." Journal of Women's History 7(4): 6-36.

Smith, B. E. (December, 1995). "Crossing the Great Divides: Race, Class, and Gender in Southern Women's Organizing." Gender and Society, 9(6):680-696.

*This article addresses the question: How can we create coherent, inclusive political movements when the race, class, and gender oppressions we seek to dismantle divide us internally? The article explores the history of the Southeast Women's Employment Coalition which sought to unify women across these lines. The author concludes that gender is insufficient to effect political unity and suggests that a 'politics of solidarity' based on an appreciation of the intersections of race, class and gender is possible.*

Stall, S. & Stoecker, R. (1998). "Community Organizing or Organizing Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment." Gender and Society, 12(6):729-756.

*This article examines and compares 2 methods of community organizing - the Alinsky model and the "women-centered-model."*

Tronto, J. C. (Summer, 1990). "Women's Movements: Organizing for Change." NWSA Journal: A Publication of the National Women's Studies Association 2(3): 492-495.

*Lists and briefly describes five books on women's movements and activism:*

- Women in the Judicial Process by Beverly B. Cook, Leslie f. Goldstein, Karen O'Connor, and Susette M. Talarico
- Women's Movements: Organizing for Arange by Joyce Belb and Ethel Klein.
- Women and Power in American Politics by Hilda K. Hedblow
- Women, Political Action, and Political Participation by Virginia Sapiro.
- Women's Rights, Feminism, and Politics in the United States by Mary Lyndon Shanley.

Whittier, N. (Fall, 1994). "Contemporary Women's Movements." NWSA Journal: A Publication of the National Women's Studies Association 6(3):

475-483. *Reviews five books related to women's movements and activism*

- Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States edited by Constance Baddouse and David H. Flaberty.
- Inviting Women's Rebellion: A Political Process Interpretation of the Women's Movement by Anne N. Costain
- Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America since 1960 by Flora Davis.
- Gender Shock: Practicing Feminism in Two Continents by Hester Eisenstein
- Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement
- Ideology and Activism by Barbara Ryan.

## FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY



Arunachalam, J. S., R: Meera, S. (1996). "Grassroots Women Organizing: The Working Women's Forum Experience." Development 3.

*Looks at the formation and activities of the grassroots Working Women's Forum (WWF) in India. The WWF arose in reaction to charity and patronage approaches to poverty alleviation, fueled by the belief that poor women can and must participate in their own development.*

Campfens, H. (1990). "Issues in Organizing Impoverished Women in Latin America." Social Development Issues 13(1): 20-43.

*An investigation of the recent growth in organizing activities among women of the popular sector residing in shanty-towns across Latin America.*

Cunnison, S. (November, 1995). "Trade Unions and Women's Way of Organizing: A Case From..." Journal of Gender Studies 4(3):327-332.

*Reports on the methods and forms of trade union organizations developed by women in Northern Ireland. Fight against privatization of public services; Role played by Inez McCormack in devising organizing policy of trade unions.*

Dawson, R. P. (Fall, 1996). "When Women Gather: The NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995." International Journal Of Politics. Culture, and Society 10(1): 7-27.

*This article details and reviews the events and discussions that took place at the Fourth World Conference on Women.*

Desai, M. (Spring, 1996). "From Vienna to Beijing: Women's Human Rights Activism and the Human Rights Community." New Political Science 35:107-119.

*The narrowing gap between two factions of the women's human rights movement (WHRM) is examined in reference to the efforts of the international WHRM at the two UN world conferences: The Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria (1993), and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.*

Huiskamp, G. (June, 2000). "Identity Politics and Democratic Transitions in Latin America: (Re)Organizing Women's Strategic Interest Through Community Activism." Theory and Society 29(3): 385-424.

*This article draws on revisionist feminist and social movement 'Yransitology' literature to examine the impact on political transformation of popular sector women's movements in contemporary Latin America, particularly among rural women.*

Khor (Fall, 1999). "Organizing for Change: Women's Grassroots Activism in Japan." Feminist Studies 25(3): 633-662.

*Explores women's activism and women's organizations in Japan. Ideas and orientation underlying such activism: Feminist organizing as constituting one of many sites of feminist practice; Aim of countering literature on the subordination and submissiveness of Japanese women; Contradictions embedded in woman centered approach; Progressive potential of Japanese feminism.*

Moghadam, V. M. (July, 2001). "Organizing Women: The New Women's Movement in Algeria."

Cultural Dynamics 13(2): 131-154.

*Examines the women's movement in Algeria in the context of domestic, regional, and global developments. Expansion of feminism in the region; Factors contributing to the emergence of the movement; Link of emergence of Algerian feminist politics with global feminism.*

Saptari, R. U., Artien (1997). "Gender Interests and the Struggle of NGO's Within and Beyond the State: The Experience of Women Organizing in Indonesia." Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik 13(3): 319-339.

*Examines the constraints and potentials of nongovernmental organizations and women's groups in Indonesia in advocating for women's interests and needs, in the context of domestic and international politics. Looks at constraints of NGO's.*

Shayne, J. D. (2001). "Unconscious Feminist Consciousness: The Women's Movement in Post-Insurrection Cuba (1959-1999)." Southern Sociological Society.

*This article discusses the status of women in post-insurrection Cuba and considers the concept and/or existence of Cuban feminism or feminist consciousness.*

Stewart, S. T., Jill (1995). "Women Organizing Women-'Doing It Backwards and in High Heels'." IDS Bulletin 26(3): 79-85.

*Discusses the formative stages of Zimbabwean nongovernmental organization (NGO), the Musaba Project. The process of arriving at a particular organizational model is examined, with attention to problems experienced in an organization run by and for women, the issue of gendered "dis-ease" in tech public sphere and how it affects performance, and the impact of increased external funding on the organizational model.*

Subramaniam, M. (July, 2001). "Translating Participation in Informal Organizations into Empowerment: Women in Rural India." Dissertation Abstracts International. A: The Humanities and Social Sciences 62(1): 352-A.

*This dissertation research analyzes the degree to which poor women are socially empowered because of group participation.*

Trotz, D. A. P., Linda (June, 2001). "Work, Family, and Organizing: An Overview of the Contemporary Economic, Social and Political Roles of Women in Guyana." Social and Economic Studies 50(2): 67-101. *This article attempts an overview of the contemporary landscape of factors that have affected the formation of Guyanese women's economic, social, and political roles since independence in 1966.*

## BOOKS

Blee, K. M. (1998). No Middle Ground: Women and Radical Protest. New York, London, New York University Press.

*This book brings together a wide variety of studies that produce new insights into women's role in radical and nonmainstream political movements in modern U. S. society.*



Minikoff, C.D. (1995). Organizing for Equality: The Evolution of Women's and Racial- Ethnic Organizations in America. New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press.

Naples, N. (1998). Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender. New York and London, Routledge.

*This collection of writings reflects on women's community activism and organizing efforts towards progressive social change. It presents an array of women's activism from the 1960's to the 1990's.*

Pope, J. (1986). Organizing Women on Welfare: Planning at the Grassroots Level. Ann Arbor, Columbia University.

*This case study examines the successful mobilization activities of urban poor women, for social change and how they struggled to convince the larger society of the legitimacy of their cause.*

Robnett, B. (1999). Chapter 5- "Women in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee: Ideology, Organizational Structure, and Leadership." In P. Ling, et.al., (Ed.) Gender in the Civil Rights Movement, pp. 131-168. New York, Garland.

*Focuses on the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to argue that ideology shapes organizational structures, which in turn affect the potential for women to become leaders. Looks at issues of women's empowerment, consensus, participatory democracy, etc.*

Ryan, B. (1992). Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism New York, Routledge.

*This book draws on participant observation of diverse groups involved in the women's movement, interviews with 44 long-term activists, and readings of historic and contemporary movement publications to integrate a broad historical view of the US women's movement with an analytical framework drawn from the theory of social movements.*

12/02

## Strength and Struggles of Women Organizers: A Longitudinal Study\*

Given the continuing conservative political climate and right-wing ideology that was prevalent in the 1990s and early 2000s, a follow-up longitudinal study of the women was conducted in 2002. Notwithstanding the more centrist Democratic Clinton administration, which was sandwiched between the two Republican Bush presidents, these years saw the weakening of an agenda of inclusion, social justice, and rights and benefits for people in need. This article specifically compares the women organizers' individual and collective differences on the basis of the changing political context and the women's career paths and aging. It reexamines the framework (Joseph et al., 1991) to ascertain its relevance for women organizers as it was applied to the stories of these women.

### Literature Review

ECCO did an extensive document search of materials that were used and written by women organizers in the late 1980s (ECCO, 1989). More than a decade later, this document was updated and annotated (Nakleushev, 2002). It included edited books, several case studies, and some qualitative research that reflected the complexities and richness of women's organizing experiences (Faver, 1994; Ferguson, 2001; Gittel, Ortega-Bustamante, & Steffy, 2000; Haywoode, 2000; Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; Naples, 1998; Ryan, 1992; West & Bloomberg, 1990).

The characterization of a feminist worldview that was linked to progressive social change was further developed in the 1990s; the vision of this worldview emphasizes connectedness, equality, interdependence, and diversity. Feminist ideology, Faver (1994) posited, is manifested in women's social activism through consciousness-raising, empowerment, holistic spirituality, egalitarian leadership styles, inclusiveness, networking, and integration of life spheres. Faver saw the need to build coalitions among groups of women with different primary agendas by confronting directly the racism, elitism, and homophobia that threaten women's solidarity.

Faver (1994) and others (Gluck, 1998; Zinn & Thomas, 1996) used the term *multiracial feminism* to address the differences within and omissions from what is generally referred to as the liberal or traditional women's movement. Abramovitz (2002) and Haywoode (2000) extended analyses of women's activism by focusing on working-class women whose organizing is tied to family and community more often than to the workplace.

In discussing feminist community practice, Hyde (2004) was careful not to assume that all the elements fit together in a harmonious whole and challenged women practitioners to become more analytically robust. Stall and Stoecker (2004) attempted a more sophisticated and nuanced analysis by comparing two methods of community organizing—the Alinsky (an implicitly male) model and a “women-centered-model.” The Alinsky style focuses on issues and instrumental strategies for social action in the public arena; the feminist model brought process and the “personal” sphere into the equation. Noting divisions between these two perspectives, Stall and Stoecker called for an integration of the notions of public (male) and private (female) spaces.

There is still a dearth of empirical evidence to confirm or modify the existence of feminist

or womanist models of organizing. Gittell et al. (2000) conducted one of the few studies of women leaders of community development organizations across the country from a variety of racial and class backgrounds. The common themes they found were based on human needs, the connectedness of issues, a holistic approach to social and economic development, a “process-oriented” style, emphasis on community participation, and the importance of networking.

This study of women organizers presents new evidence on the commonalities and differences among women who share a similar feminist ideology. Specifically, it applies Joseph et al.’s (1991) framework to the experiences of a group of self-identified women organizers in two time frames: 1989 and 2002. The part of the framework (see Table 1) that is used in this article includes a statement of principles and then outlines four components: (a) value base; (b) goals; (c) methods, approaches, strategies, and tactics; and (d) functions, roles, and styles of the organizer.

## **\*Method**

### **The Participants**

In 1989, 48 women attended a national gathering, called Women on the Advance (Not a Retreat!). The 48 attendees were selected by reputation, and a conscious effort was made to ensure that there would be a diverse group of participants (by class, color/race, sexual orientation, age, and ethnicity), although White professionals constituted the largest group. Of the 48, who ranged in age from their 20s to almost 70, 25 were White, 13 were African American, 5 were Hispanic, 1 was African, 1 was Arab American, 2 were Native American, and 1 identified herself as part Black, Native American, and European. Of the 25 White women, at least 6 self-identified as “ethnic working class.” Although the women were not selected for their professional backgrounds, social work was the predominant profession, no doubt, because all but one of the original 7 conference planners were social workers (including the author). A total of 10 of the women identified as lesbians.

In 2002, in attempting to locate the original 48 women, I and my research assistants found that of the original group, 2 had died and 1 was in a nursing home. Unfortunately for the diversity of the sample, those we did not locate were disproportionately women of color and White, ethnic working-class women. The 2002 cohort of 27 women included 5 women of color, 6 lesbians, and 1 working-class woman. Hence, the findings for the 2002 cohort were now skewed in that the views of the White majority were overrepresented.

In 1989, these 27 women held a variety of paid positions although all identified as organizers. They included 10 in academia, 9 union or community organizers, 5 in staff positions in nonprofit organizations, and 3 executive directors or program officers in nonprofit social change organizations. By 2002, 11 were in academia, 5 were executive directors or administrators, 3 remained organizers, 3 were in other nonprofit organization staff positions, 1 moved into politics, and 4 were retired.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In 1989, the women were asked open-ended questions using a questionnaire about the strengths of women and women organizers, the hardest issues faced by women organizers,

and the hardest issues they faced organizing women, characterized in the findings as “struggles.” The questions posed in 2002 were in an interview format. They included the same questions as in 1989, plus questions about the women’s career paths; whether the women still considered themselves to be organizers; their definitions of feminist organizing; how they integrated (or not), their personal, professional, and political worlds; and the impact of class, gender, and race on their organizing.

The 2002 interviews were conducted mainly over the telephone and lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed (with permission). Four women responded via e-mail, and four were interviewed in person.

The transcribed interviews were read by me and another interviewer. Themes were identified according to a topic, such as “women’s strengths.” The entire transcript interview was perused for content related to that category, and a content analysis was performed of the question itself (Mizrahi & Abramson, 1994). A draft of the report on the analysis was then sent to all the participants for “member checking” (Padgett, 1998), which gave them a chance to comment on, clarify, and question the interpretation. Seven women provided substantive feedback.

The participants’ names and particular identifying characteristics are disguised. In this article, the women are identified by race and/or ethnicity—White woman (WW) or woman of color (WOC), sexual orientation—heterosexual (H) or lesbian (L), and specific career status—academic (A) or retired (R).

## **Findings**

### **Career Direction and Identification as Organizers**

In 2003, most of the 27 women still identified as organizers and were involved in organizing, although that was not the formal job description or function for many of them.

Others considered themselves to be “activists,” a broader, but related term to “organizer.” Those in nonorganizing staff positions defined at least part of their jobs as related to organizing (e.g., policy, advocacy, fund raising), and all but one was working for a “progressive” organization.

By 2002, only a few of the women had changed jobs or career tracks. Almost all the 11 women who were in academia specifically identified projects that were related to organizing programs, students, conferences, and/or collaborations. What is important is that almost all the 27 women were doing additional nonpaid work for a range of grassroots, advocacy, and policy organizations, including 3 of the 4 who were retired, as the following two comments illustrate:

*I’ll speak to my volunteer organizing with [a Jewish organization related to peace]. We are actually, trying to organize other Jews so that there is a stronger Jewish presence in the movement. . . . So, although it’s not my job, I would say I am organizing. (WWL)*  
*I’m not a grassroots organizer, but I’m doing agency-based organizing, working with [name] project related to survivors of violence. I’m trying to develop programs and working interorganizationally.*

*. . . What comes closest to community organizing is that we built in a consumer advisory committee. (WWHA)*

None had changed careers because of disillusionment, better financial opportunities, or to pursue another passion. This group of predominantly middle-class White women recognized that they were privileged to have career paths that integrated their professional, personal, and political lives, and that fact had implications for the ways in which they sustained themselves for the “long haul.”

The career perspective was a bit different for the following two women of color, whose ethnicity, in the former instance, and sexual orientation, in the latter instance, drove their work:

*[I'm an organizer], though I don't think it is in the traditional sense of organizing. . . . As a volunteer . . . I am organizing programs in the Latina community. . . . I came back to my . . . [Latino neighborhood] . . . So, I am organizing, . . . but it is not a conscious definition because I am no longer per se an active feminist working with women's groups. . . . It is just who I am and how I live. (WOCH)*

*[I'm doing organizing], although my title is executive director. I'm fortunate to work in an organization that has an activist orientation and a social and economic justice framework. . . . We do a lot of behind-the-scenes organizing and advocacy within philanthropy, the women's movement, and the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] community. (WOCL)*

Nearly all the 27 women strongly identified with the women's movement, and most considered themselves to be feminists without always defining themselves that way. This view was different from most of the women in Gittell et al.'s (2000) study. But the identity of women of color and lesbian women was more complex. These women had multiple and, at times, competing perspectives on issues that went beyond gender and complicated their responses. These data are presented elsewhere (Mizrahi & Lombe, in press).

### **Strengths of Women Organizers**

1989. In 1989, the women drew a rich picture of the strengths of women organizers. As one participant said, “*Women are survivors; very generous; very creative; extremely courageous, committed and passionate*” (WWH). Another noted that women's strengths are “*their personal resources; they're more supportive. Their willingness to change and their ability to raise moral concerns [are strengths]*” (WWH). Still another said, “*Women have more patience, empathy, and understanding in certain situations. Women learn easier from other women*” (WWHR).

Many women implied that female organizers are different from male organizers in many respects. As one woman said, “*Women don't stereotype; they're less patronizing*” (WWHR). Heavy emphasis was placed on a “process” orientation, as the following comment indicates, “*Women use a greater repertoire of interpersonal techniques than do male organizers*” (WWHA). This style of organizing was that of a facilitative leader. Another woman commented, “*Women hold out longer than do men in responding to rewards; it takes longer to co-opt them*” (WOCH). Yet another woman stated, “*There's less abuse of power [by women] when it is not destroyed by notions of expediency, success, or playing women against each other*” (WWHA). In the last two comments are also the seeds of a negative critique of “the system”; that is, the

women condemned institutionalized power and decision making predominantly held by White men. Only one woman, a Latina, did not think that women *qua* women was a relevant category. “*Organizing is not gender related; rather, its task is getting everyone to buy into a ‘hot’ issue*” (WOCH), she said. 2002.

Thirteen years later, many of the same “strength” themes emerged in more detail, as this comment indicates:

*[My strengths are] connecting with people—promoting a sense of inclusion. I’m more concerned about process, paying attention to what other people are feeling. Women are concerned with how to get people involved. They’re more willing to share power. (WWHA)*

The words *leader* and *leadership* appeared more often in 2002 than in 1989 in two ways: in the women’s own roles and in their roles in building the leadership capabilities of other women. The latter role was typified by this organizer: “*I look at the strength of women to have leadership potential; they want to change the system*” (WWH).

Two related themes emerged dramatically as the participants elaborated on their styles and connected them to the process and outcomes of organizing in much more detail. One theme was what a few labeled the “developmental” approach. This theme appeared to give new meaning to the traditional feminist adage: “the personal is political.” The women focused on the relationship between the self/individual and group/collective, as typified by this comment:

*Women are more likely to be open to being developmental, seeing the individual and group intertwined; they pay attention to how organizing activity affects the person, how the person is growing within that context, and how that growth contributes to the context. (WWHA)*

The second theme was tied to what some labeled a “holistic” perspective and related to the concept of inclusiveness, as this woman stated,

*Women think holistically; they’re nurturing. Their ability [is] to look at what is happening to an individual besides just the issues and create an atmosphere of excitement and inclusion, versus the Alinsky model. (WWH)*

The term *inclusion* was used by many women, but its meaning went beyond the important, but traditional, ways of viewing diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation.

It also meant bringing the whole self into the professional activity (Burghardt, 2006), as these women made clear:

*Women have a different way of organizing: inclusive, nonauthoritarian, and collective. Women’s organizing allows people to grow and change and develop themselves . . . seeing organizing as participatory, experiential, and community building. (WOCHA)*

*I bring a real appreciation of process, a real understanding that . . . how you reach the goal is equally important to reaching it. . . . A feminist way figures out how to really engage people. (WWL)*



Gardella and Haynes (2004) also found that successful women leaders did not compartmentalize their relationships or put them in rank order. Rather, these women drew from and connected people from all spheres of their lives, which gave them strength.

This type of inclusive “developmental organizing” was presented with a strategic emphasis. It was viewed not just as a preferred way of working but as a more effective way of engaging women for “the long haul.” It may not be coincidental that with 13 more years behind them in doing the difficult work to attain progressive social change, several of the women specifically mentioned “staying power” as an asset in itself. They saw no contradiction between investing in women’s lives and encouraging women to grapple more with complex issues at a time when external forces and diminished resources seemed to be stacked against the achievement of their goals. Because it takes more time, sensitivity, and skill to do “developmental” and “inclusive” organizing, one needs a long-range perspective to justify the investment of the necessary time and resources. Gittel et al. (2000), citing Belensky, Bond, and Weinstock (1997), also identified this holistic approach and a “developmental leadership” style in their study.

The following is a summary of the themes that were related to the collective strengths of women organizers. The dates in parentheses indicate the years in which these perspectives predominantly appeared.

- Relationship to men: “standing up to them”: overcoming obstacles and fighting discrimination (mostly in 1989).
- Attributes: sensitivity, flexibility, courage, empathy, persistence, and patience (in 1989 and 2002).
- Process-related perspectives: building networks, working collectively, listening, willing to share information and experiences (in 1989 and 2002).
- Inclusiveness: diversity, bridging differences, stressing togetherness (mostly in 2002).
- Leadership: skills, styles (mostly in 2002).
- Connecting the personal and political: focusing on self and group, a developmental approach (mostly in 2002).
- A holistic perspective: connectedness of issues and different life spheres (mostly in 2002).

### **Struggles of Women Organizers: 1989 and 2002**

In 1989, two questions were posed to the women: what were their struggles (i.e., “their hardest issues”) as woman organizers, and what were their struggles (i.e., “hardest issues”) in organizing women. In 2002, the women were asked one question that combined both. *1989*. The women frequently focused on the psychological and personal aspects of women’s subordination. One said, “The hardest thing I face as a woman organizer is . . . my own insecurity; I wasn’t good enough” (WWH). A few women questioned their capabilities.

As one woman put it: *“I’m reluctant to assert my expertise and leadership in working with women”* (WWHA). Another woman stated,

*Being credible as a white woman in civil rights and welfare rights [is a struggle]. . . . I make myself stop and think if my problems as a white middle-class woman are on a continuum with women who are doubly and triply oppressed.* (WWHR)



Issues related to men loomed large among the women's struggles, both explicitly and as a code word for the dominant culture. This theme was expressed in a variety of ways. One woman noted, *"In nontraditional jobs, men don't accept me"* (WWH). Another woman said that the hardest issue was "overcoming my [discomfort] around dealing with sexist male organizations" (WWH). Still another thought that the hardest issue was *"the lack of sensitivity and support from community officials who are mostly men"* (WOCL).

Many women complained about myriad external factors that prevented or inhibited them or their colleagues from organizing. They found that it was harder than anticipated for women to balance family, work, and volunteerism, they also noted that they underestimated the enormity of the social and economic problems that women in need face. And although they recognized the importance of linking "survival" issues to organizing, they often found it difficult to do so, as the following comments illustrate:

*[The hardest problem] is trying to organize around an issue that affects low-income single women and kids (such as affordable day care) and have it be an organizing issue. Women have little time outside working and family.* (WWL)

*[The hardest problems are] getting women to organize across ethnic and racial lines and maintaining connections for low-income, grassroots women between activism and immediate issues like public assistance or housing.* (WOCH)

Several women had difficulty in the late 1980s building bridges and making connections, especially across color and class lines, as these two comments indicate:

*[The hardest thing is] to convince people of the need to create ethnic groups and go beyond [traditional] women's issues.* (WOCHR)

*[The hardest thing] is working together, sharing strategies and goals.* (WWH) 2002.

In 2002, the struggles for these women organizers had intensified and expanded. In the 13 years since they came together, most recognized that the conservative political context for organizing women and for organizing around women's issues was more difficult and complex. In spite of the stick-to-itiveness of these women, certain issues, such as "the old boys' network," seemed to have more staying power.

Once again, these women faulted men's "macho" styles as an impediment to organizing women and raising women's issues, but they also pointed to gaps in women's leadership positions. Some faulted women for being deferential to men or jealous of other women's achievements, but less so in 2002 than in 1989. *"We are our own worst enemies"* said the one working-class woman (WWH). Others discussed the systems' obstacles in more detail than they did 13 years before, characterizing those traditional (implied male) organizational structures and systems as disempowering. One woman, who had moved from a grassroots organizer to an administrative position inside the service delivery system, said that her biggest challenge in moving inside the system was *"working for access and starting new programs . . . without compromising my values"* (WWL).

Two new themes were evident in 2002. The first was the marginalization of women and/or their method of organizing, which many believed was the only way to make fundamental change in

society. This theme was confirmed by Gittell et al. (2000), who found that women, particularly women of color, are not connected to mainstream power structures. As one woman noted, We haven't been able to embed into community organizing and the community development process that gender matters. *[We should] consider the "gender audit" [that is] so popular in other countries. It measures the impact on women of various public policies and programs.* (WWH)

One veteran woman of color eloquently articulated many of the challenges that women organizers faced in 2002:

*As a black, Native American, and now older woman, my organizing has reflected those challenges around racism, sexism, ageism, and classism and the fact that society . . . always gives women a harder time. Despite the existence of feminist materials, not enough people are taking it up seriously. Besides, women have a different responsibility for family and community; women are held to a higher standard.* (WOCHA)

She elaborated on the connection between economic and cultural issues and was one of the few to connect and then transcend the women's movement to the "human movement," as did many of the women leaders in Gardella and Haynes's (2004) study.

Another woman of color summed up the many challenges that remain, even for successful and experienced organizers:

*I face a lot of challenges: First, being a progressive person—a lefty, a lesbian, and a woman of color—all wrapped into one. . . . A second challenge is . . . to resist being marginalized. As feminists, we take a broader framework of human rights. A third challenge is to have a political ideology and vision and to communicate it in a way that people embrace it and it brings more people to the table. . . . The need for resources is always a challenge. Another challenge is how to dialogue and share responsibilities with younger women—how to listen and recognize that we both have things to learn from each other.* (WOCL)

The second theme had to do with the hard times that women are encountering, especially disenfranchised and oppressed women and those in low-income communities. There was more discussion, particularly by the women of color, about the powerlessness of low income Black and Latino communities. One woman mentioned that *"it is harder and harder to be out there"* (WOCH). Two other women of color specifically expressed their disillusionment with the organizing strategies that are used to combat domestic violence, which, they believed, benefit White middle-class women and ignore low-income Black women.

The following is a summary of the major themes that emerged related to struggles, again with the years in which they appeared in parentheses:

- Self and/or internal factors: lack of confidence, low self-esteem; self-consciousness (mostly in 1989).
- Other women: jealousy and isolation from (mostly in 1989).
- Men and power: lack of recognition, not being taken seriously, impact of sexism, and male chauvinism (in 1989 and 2002).
- Situational and/or external factors: lack of time and resources, balancing the personal and

political (in 1989 and 2002).

- Building closer connections: the difficulty of working together, the division of the “isms” (mostly in 2002).

Overall in 2002, much more frustration was expressed about racial and class divisions within the “women’s movement.” Most of it came from the women of color who were working directly with diverse or totally oppressed communities. The impact of these and other divisions is discussed in greater depth elsewhere (Mizrahi & Lombe, in press).

### **Perspectives on Strengths and Struggles: 1989 and 2002**

Two themes emerged across the great diversity of these women’s backgrounds, positions, work settings, and age. First, the women’s views on the strengths of women organizers changed more often than did their perceptions of the struggles, and second, the types of struggles identified were more consistent, persistent, and pervasive. Indeed, in the 2002 interviews, the responses regarding the struggles of women organizers were longer and more elaborate than were those related to their strengths. And although the women described many different strengths in 2002, including developmental and holistic models, these descriptions were tempered by intractable and additional difficulties, including women’s socialization; structural factors, such as tougher economic and political conditions; the continuing white male-dominated system; and the white women’s movement itself.

### **Application of the Framework**

Joseph et al.’s (1991) framework was applied to the strengths and struggles articulated by the 27 women in 2002. Because the document was written much earlier, it seemed, at times, overly optimistic and a bit simplistic for today’s conditions, yet most of the principles that were intended as a guide to practice seem to have had incredible staying power (see Table 1). With the addition of data from this study, the framework can now be modified and embellished with real-world experiences that include additional principles, as well as a reconfiguration and refinement of several existing ones.

The aspect of the framework to be reviewed includes four components: Values, Goals, Methods, and Functions, with several elements identified under each component. The first refinement relates to the way in which the participants viewed the elements of the Values component, particularly Item 4, “Personal is political,” and Item 7, “Belief that life/living things are interdependent.” Although these elements still held weight, the women had learned that they do not necessarily lead to an emphasis on “consensus, cooperation, collaboration, and coalition-building strategies” (Item 5 of the Methods component).

Although many of the women still preferred nonconfrontational strategies, they were more realistic and strategic about the need to use power; hence, they did not rule out conflict strategies. Second, if directly asked, the women might have questioned two elements in 2002: Item 6 in the values component, “Cooperation rather than competition is the rational way to relate,” and Item 5d in the methods component, “Assume that power is not a limited/fixed quantity”. In addition, some would probably have included a new element in the Methods component: “Amass a power base.”

Third, the women would probably have stressed the first part of another Methods element:

Item 5b, “Anticipate conflict,” over the second part of that same element: “Work toward a conflict-resolution model.” Although many of the women still regarded Item 7 of the Methods component—“Emphasis on a collective/shared problem-solving approach”—as an end in itself, by 2002, connecting people and problems had also become an instrumental means for accumulating more power and a greater voice in policy making. This additional strategic emphasis was different from women in Gittell et al.’s (2000) study, who emphasized only developmental processes in spite of the political obstacles they identified and faced.

The fourth refinement also falls under the Methods component related to developmental organizing. Many women continued to stress Item 3: “Emphasis on process as part of the product or goal.” However, they would more likely have explicitly connected it to Item 6 of the Methods component: “Emphasis on unity and wholeness.” This item includes advice to “minimize the compartmentalization of functions and roles” (6a), “recognize difficulties in splitting the public/private self” (6b), and “minimize dichotomization or polarization; seek continuity and make connections” (6c). The participants emphasized the need to ensure the interaction between development of the self and of the collective. This developmental approach was also discussed by Stall and Stoecker (2004, citing ECCO, 1990) and Gittell et al. (2000, citing Belensky et al., 1997).

The fifth change would be additions to the framework related to the participants’ perspectives on women. Although most of the participants continued to assert the importance and power of women’s voices, all the women of color and some of the White women were much more alert to divisions within the women’s movement in 2002. By implication, many would separate feminism from gender and add, as an element under the Values component: “Understand that not all women organizers embrace or embody a framework for feminist organizing.” Under the Values component, they might also have added, “Belief in the diversity of women’s perspectives” while they attempted to build unity among women. They would probably have added an element to the Methods component as well: “Do not assume that all women speak with one or a unified voice,” although some might have phrased it more optimistically or constructively: “Recognize the multiplicity of women’s voices,” as the women leaders in Gardella and Haynes’s (2004) study asserted.

The sixth refinement is related to models of organizing. The women had shifted from uncritically touting a feminist model to a more pragmatic and complex view of the world of organizing in this increasingly conservative era (Hyde, 2004; Stall & Stoecker, 2004). Stall and Stoecker (2004) used the term *women centered*, rather than *feminist organizing*, and discussed the need to integrate the public and private worlds of a women-centered model—to create a “hybrid” or transformative model. Many participants would have agreed with Stall and Stoecker’s concept of the “community as liminal space” to build primary relationships around social reproduction issues, while also using public sphere tactics to press for broader social changes. To reflect this shift, the framework would include a new element: “Be open to new models and ways of organizing without giving up values and fundamental goals.”

The seventh change to the framework is related to contradictory relationships with men in the Roles component. Many participants continued to express their frustration with the dominance of male power and the recalcitrance of patriarchy (Hyde, 2004), and several expressed general

frustrations with the lack of recognition for a “women’s way of knowing.” This frustration also reflects the intractability of sexism and other “isms” in American culture. But many of the women had also come to recognize the need to have men as allies, and some articulated the belief, based on their experiences, that “men could be feminist organizers.” The new principle that they would no doubt have added to the framework is “Recognize that men could be allies and/or adversaries.”

### **Implications for Education and Practice**

There are several implications of this longitudinal study for education and practice. First, there is much to be learned from the rich experiences of professional women who have continued to work as organizers or frame their careers through an organizing lens. Educators and practitioners can gain a new appreciation of the need for mentoring and networking to minimize isolation and atrophy. Educators may develop lifelong training and resource-development programs to provide the current generation of women organizers with the strategies, skills, and supports that are needed to sustain a pragmatic, yet visionary, feminist organizing practice. They could also bring together a new generation of organizers with old-timers and more experienced women to learn and grow together. These women clearly could serve as role models for other women and men.

Second, there is a need to infuse macro community practice with alternative or integrative models, strategies, and approaches (Halseth, 1993). There is still a lack of women centered strategies in textbooks on organizing (Hyde, 2004), and too few women organizers write. These talented and productive women (including many of the participants in this study) must be encouraged to write about their rich experiences and place them in a conceptual framework. Given that more women are career organizers, it is essential to bring practice wisdom and case examples from women like those in this study into the educational arena to implement “the use of praxis,” as Joseph et al. (1991) called for in the framework.

Third, there is a need for scholars and practitioners to collaborate and link their principles, goals, and objectives to measurable outcomes (Johnson, 1994). Women organizers need support from scholars and researchers to develop participatory action research projects that will document the strategies and methods they use (Gittell et al., 2000; Naples, 1998). Anecdotal and qualitative measures need to be complemented by empirical evaluation (Padgett, 1998). These projects could, in turn, precipitate more funding from progressive foundation, corporate, and governmental sources and create interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships. All this will help women organizers continually evolve and grow and to assert their visions in their efforts to achieve a humane world in which the rights and needs of women become more prominent. Moreover, the fact that women constitute more than half this country’s population should not be the only justification for why they should be heard and listened to.

### **Limitations**

Four limitations need to be noted in relation to the literature review and this study. First, I learned from the women in this study that a much richer body of unpublished work has been produced and disseminated through specific organizations, such as the Association of Women in Social Work. These documents need to be more widely analyzed and disseminated to have a complete literature on theory and practice.

Second, the variability and inexactness about concepts, such as women versus feminist organizing, organizer versus activist, and differences in the way community is understood, result in confusing and contradictory findings at times. This can only be identified as an issue to be addressed because definitions were not provided to the participants, nor were the participants explicitly asked to define the terms that they used.

Third, the study obviously did not include male organizers, so perspectives on differences between the sexes reflect only the views of the female participants. There is an urgent need to compare empirically the perspectives of men and women who are doing this work to address systematically the following questions: Whether and under what conditions can men be “feminist” organizers? Do all women practice with a feminist organizers’ lens?

Finally, given the skewed sample of women in this study, it would be premature to generalize to a broader population of women organizers. Although the participants believed they were typical of their generation of feminists, there is no way to prove this belief.

## **Conclusion**

The 48 women who came together in 1989 were a multigenerational cohort of long-term organizers with diverse perspectives, approaches to their jobs, and strategies used to promote progressive social change. In 2002, 27 who were reinterviewed demonstrated an enduring commitment and exceptional competence as career professionals. They had learned to combine visions of a better world with pragmatism that included redefining success in these hard times. Over time, they had become political realists without becoming cynical. Even the women of color who were disappointed with the impact of the women’s movement on communities of color were not embittered; they still recognized the historic value of feminist achievements and ideology.

Over the years, the women focused more on the struggles than on their strengths, partly as a result of external circumstances. In a “male-centered, if not a man’s world,” the women wove strategic planning and politics into their repertoires. Most participants lamented the deep structural and attitudinal differences that divided women. Some were hard on their own gender but also articulated that it is the larger male-dominated, individualistic, market driven ideology that separates people.

Nevertheless, struck by the complexity and intransigence of many social problems and conditions, most responded by being proactive, adapting to the political climate, seeking new models of organizing, and/or modifying their short-term goals to include realistic, identifiable outcomes. Their more nuanced and elaborate responses to the struggles that they faced should not be confused with either capitulation to or a defense of incremental change. Rather, the women’s responses stemmed from a strategic assessment of how their backgrounds and experiences could most effectively be used in the short term without giving up their long-term vision.



**TABLE 1: A Framework for Feminist Organizing: Values, Goals, Methods, Strategies, and Roles**

**Feminist Organizing Principles**

*Premises.* Feminist organizing is based on values and actions carried out in a democratic, humanistic framework. Its central imperative defines its unique character. Feminist organizing must affect the conditions of women while empowering them. It is based on women's contributions, functions, roles, and experiences and is derived from their strengths while recognizing the limitations of their socially ascribed roles and the nature of their oppression. A women's perspective affects which issues are selected and worked on, how a problem is defined, what needs will be met, what tactics and strategies are used, and how success or victory is defined.

**A. Value Base (in no order of importance)**

1. Belief in the dignity and strength of the individual, respect for life.
2. Belief in the individual and collective human capacity to grow and change.
3. Belief in the power and ability of individuals and groups to make changes in the world.
4. Personal is political: The interconnectedness of problems and solutions.
  - a. Personal problems have political (cultural, historical) causes and solutions.
  - b. Personal choice and action are political and affect solutions or the lack of solutions.
5. Women have distinct perspectives, experiences, and histories based on their functions and socially defined roles and have the right to operate from those distinctions.
6. Cooperation, rather than competition, is the rational way to relate. (Rationality = life over death, quality over quantity, people over property, protection over exploitation of the earth.)
7. Belief that life/living things are interdependent and people need and seek mutuality and community.
8. Acceptance of different ways of being, thinking, knowing, and acting.
9. People have the right to develop and control the institutions that affect their lives.

**B. Goals**

1. Creating a more democratic and egalitarian society; transforming society through the reduction of class, status, and power differentials.
2. Meeting human needs through resource recovery and development that support the ecological balance of earth and universe.
3. Eliminating sexism.
4. Eliminating racism, ageism, homophobia, and discrimination against the disabled.
5. Building community (cooperative economic, social, and political arrangements).
6. Enhancing recognition and respect for diversity and differences (by color, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, ethnicity, and healing system).

**C. Methods, Approaches, Strategies, and Tactics**

1. Community involvement
  - a. Validating people's (residents', consumers', constituencies') reality and knowledge of "community" and women's abilities to plan for themselves.
  - b. Involving women in the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
  - c. Identifying the risks, as well as the benefits, of participation: recognizing the service



- recipient's, resident's, or member's vulnerability and facilitating informed choice.
- d. Recognizing individuals' differential ability and willingness to commit time and facilitating various degrees of involvement.
- 2. Emphasis on collective problem solving
  - a. Assessing and building upon strengths.
  - b. Assessing and building upon personal, natural, informal networks and relationships.
  - c. Demystification of planning and organizing processes.
  - d. Respecting and utilizing different kinds of expertise.
- 3. Emphasis on process as part of the product or goal
  - a. Building in social and emotional support.
  - b. Recognizing different types, levels and styles of leadership.
  - c. Creating opportunities for leadership and the development of skills.
  - d. Struggling between the organizer's and the group's vision(s).
  - e. Struggling against the group's potential dependence on the organizer and, at different points in time, the possibility of rejection or hostility toward the organizer.
  - f. Acting with people, not doing to or for.
  - g. Building in the time and making it a priority to work through issues or differences.
  - h. Creating a safe environment.
  - i. Recognizing the complex needs, functions, and responsibilities of many women, such as women's connections to family and neighborhood (planning meeting space, time, and agendas accordingly).
- 4. Utilizing consciousness-raising.
  - a. Naming feelings of self and others.
  - b. Building confidence and self-respect.
  - c. Identifying how women have been kept out, isolated from others, separated from their inner voices.
- 5. Emphasis on consensus, cooperation, collaboration, and coalition building
  - a. Assume the principle of least contest.
  - b. Anticipate conflict and work toward a conflict-resolution model: a willingness to and skill in bargaining, negotiating and compromising.
  - c. Assume a common cause and a common social reality by the participants and workers in a system.
  - d. Assume that power is not a limited or fixed quantity, but mutable through collective action.
- 6. Emphasis on unity and wholeness
  - a. Minimize the compartmentalization or segmentation of functions and roles.
  - b. Recognize difficulties in splitting the public-private self and arenas.
  - c. Minimize dichotomization or polarization; seek continuity and make connections.
- 7. Emphasis on a collective/shared problem-solving approach
  - a. There are multiple definitions of the problem.
  - b. The definition of the problem shapes the solution.
  - c. There is no such thing as objective, value-free planning; yet there is a need to be logical, systematic and consistent.
  - d. Recognize the value of qualitative as well as quantitative data.
  - e. Emphasis on effectiveness as well as efficiency.
  - f. Recognize the tension between meeting survival/immediate individual and group needs

- and organizing for structural, basic comprehensive social change.
8. The use of praxis
    - a. Building in mechanisms for developmental feedback, evaluation, criticism/self-criticism.
    - b. Building in mechanisms for the evaluation of theories, approaches, strategies, and tactics.

#### **D. Functions, Roles, and Styles of the Organizer**

1. The organizer's role is multifaceted and flexible.
2. The function of the enabler/facilitator is neither passive nor neutral.
3. The relationship between the organizer and the constituency/group is transactive; each brings to the effort different/complementary competencies, ideas, experiences, and visions.
4. The organizer may be outside the experience, but not the process; the organizer searches for elements of common cause.
5. The organizer guards against elitism, omnipotence (self or other imposed).
6. There is a distinction between professional/work functions and personal relationships.
7. The organizer's style is grounded in authenticity rather than affectation.
8. The organizer inevitably is viewed as leader and role model. The goal is to transfer skills and minimize group's dependency on the organizer.
9. Recognize the inevitability of sexual dynamics and the aura of patriarchal privilege in working with men organizers or constituencies.

<b>Role/Function</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Catalyst/Activist	Initiates and supports process of empowerment of others; provides leadership.	Seen as aggressive and controlling; reinforces ideas and insecurities that people cannot lead themselves.
Nurturer	Supports others; sensitive; empathetic; sharing.	Denies self
Educator	Identifies sources for information; encourages self-directed learning for action.	Allows group to rely on organizer as the source, or group treats organizer as fount of information.
Advocate	Doing with	Doing for [with some exceptions e.g., young children; frail elderly].
Connector [Boundary Spanner]	Links personal with political; limits victim blaming.	Inability to separate value/worth of people from their ideas.
Juggler	Flexibility; work not all consuming; recognizes multiple roles in others' lives.	Lack of efficiency, and single-mindedness.
Facilitator	Fosters cooperation, sharing; tuned in; not invested in her	Denies differences in natural or acquired abilities; group may not

	own solutions, able to let group decide and let others get credit.	focus; interest in product and goal may wane. Too accommodating; self-effacing.
Mediator	Respects diversity, while identifying common human needs and attributes.	In the face of conflict, gives up responsibility, direction, and control.
Relationships with Men	Uses of chauvinism as strategy; [e.g., when viewed as the “brilliant exception” it creates access]; validated for work on “women’s” issues [not as threatening].	Ignored, patronized, disparaged, abused.
Relationships with Women	Building solidarity and common cause, gender specific relationships; sisterhood.	Traditional hurts of women acted out/tested with the woman organizer.
[Add your own]		

\*Adapted from: Mizrahi, T (2007). The Strength and Struggles of Women Organizers: A Longitudinal Study. *Affila: Journal of Women in Social Work* 22(1), 39-55.