

Grassroots Fundraising Journal

VOLUME 29 NUMBER 6 • NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2010

A PUBLICATION OF



Sustaining Social Justice Movements

- + Money for Our Movements Keynotes
- Fundraising for the United States Social Forum
- A Case Study in Collaborative Funding
- Community Organizing During the Recession

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Our cover photo is of GIFT staff and board at Money for Our Movements 2010: A Social Justice Fundraising Conference. Our board members work all over the country in different roles and issue areas, and they come together at GIFT—volunteering time, giving money, and raising money—because they are committed to building social justice movements.

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Keep up the momentum...

by Jennifer Emiko Boyden

WITH ELECTION AND FALL FUNDRAISING SEASONS fully upon us, this is a busy time of year for grassroots fundraisers. Here at GIFT, we're ready to launch our own fall fundraising campaign. We're also committed to continuing the conversations that started at GIFT's Money for Our Movements conference about moving from competition to collaboration, from organization-building to movement-building, and mobilizing resources to sustain social justice movements for the long haul.

We're proud that it wasn't just conference content that focused on movement-building—the process of bringing the conference to fruition itself built movement. More than 40 volunteers helped plan and spread the word about the conference, more than 100 people and organizations donated funds to keep it accessible for grassroots groups, and more than 60 presenters gave their time and expertise. Folks came together across issues, organizations, geographical boundaries, and identities. They openly shared their contacts and lists for the sake of creating something larger than any one organization—creating systemic change on a national scale!

Inspirational conferences like Money for Our Movements—where I connect with folks with shared values and political beliefs while learning new skills and engaging in stimulating conversations—leave me feeling refreshed, invigorated, validated, and connected, with renewed hope that together we can indeed advance a social justice agenda. After returning home, excited to share my renewed enthusiasm for the work and all that I learned, I find I gradually retreat back to my old ways of focusing on just my issue, my group, and my community.

This issue of the *Journal* is meant to disrupt this all-too-common pattern and keep the conversation and momentum going by sharing some highlights from the Money for Our Movements conference and other stories of collaborative fundraising. We begin with excerpts from the GIFT conference keynote speakers: Ai-Jen Poo of Domestic Workers United shares fundraising and organizing lessons learned from the group's six-year-long campaign to pass the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in New York, and former GIFT intern Cara Page offers thoughts on how grassroots fundraising can be a vehicle for building collective wealth and resiliency.

Next, members of the Resource Mobilization Workgroup of the United States Social Forum debrief their experience on raising money for movement-building. Andy Heaslet follows by documenting the evolution of Justice and Peace Shares—a collaborative of seven nonprofit groups in St. Louis who decided to combine their donor lists and sell "shares," with proceeds distributed equally to each group. Last, we include a snapshot of a recently released study by the DataCenter and National Organizers Alliance on the effect of the economic downturn on community organizing groups, including strategies groups have used to sustain their work.

We hope these articles inspire you to keep thinking beyond your own group and cause, toward building well-resourced social justice movements!

Speaking of sustaining social justice movements, be sure to register for GIFT's Nov 16th webinar with Margie Fine on raising money for community organizing! Call me toll-free at 888-458-8588 x302 or register online at grassrootsfundraising.org/webinars.

Until then, we wish you all the best in your fundraising efforts!

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Jennifer".

The cost of publishing the *Journal* is covered solely by subscriptions and donations made by people like you. Please help us continue this great resource! Subscribe, renew, or make a donation today at grassrootsfundraising.org or call us toll-free: 888-458-8588 x304. Thank you!



GIFT Conference Keynote I: **Money for Our Movements**

by Ai-jen Poo

I WANT TO START BY SAYING THANK YOU to GIFT for all the tremendous work you have done to bring us together and to support us in becoming more sustainable as a movement.

I work for the National Domestic Workers Alliance. We organize nannies, housekeepers, and companions for the elderly—women doing the work in the home that makes all other work possible—for respect, recognition and basic labor standards.

There are 2.5 million women, mostly immigrant women of color, working in other peoples' homes every day across the country. It's an enormous workforce, and it has been excluded from the most basic labor laws since slavery. When I started organizing domestic workers in 1998, there were only four organizations nationally; today there are at least 33 domestic workers organizations in 17 cities. This year, we're celebrating a major victory in the state of New York where, for the first time, domestic workers have won recognition and basic rights.

When we started the campaign to pass the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in New York, the Assembly staff said we were fringe radicals who would never get anywhere. I'm happy to say we proved them wrong! It took six years, but we passed a law that provides unprecedented protection for more than 200,000 working-class women of color. I'd like to share some of the lessons of those six years, because we think there's wisdom there for both organizing and fundraising.

Lesson #1: Sometimes your best resources are right under your nose.

When we started our statewide campaign in 2003, we brought together domestic workers from across the city for a convention at SEIU Local 32BJ, the union that represents doormen in luxury apartment buildings. The doormen see what goes on in the buildings where they work—they know which apartments have domestic workers, which employers are abusive (because they are usually rude to the doormen too), and which domestic workers work the longest hours. Doormen

often also provide the shoulder that domestic workers cry on when they are mistreated. We also found that many doormen have domestic workers in their families. After we decided to hold our convention at their union hall, we asked the doormen to help us reach the domestic workers in their buildings. Several of them said to me, "It's about time you all started organizing. These women really need a union!"

Not only did the doormen help us turn out more than 200 women to the convention in 2003, they cheered us on for six years. They joined us in Albany and talked about the abuses they witness where they work. They paid for buses for others to attend hearings and actions. Their secretary-treasurer, Hector Figueroa, was one of our most outspoken union leader supporters. Last year alone, the doormen's union contributed more than \$12,000 to the campaign, and their staff and members as individuals contributed more than \$1,000.

Lesson #2: Break out of narrow notions of self-interest—there is no such thing as an unlikely ally.

Another group that we reached out to early on were employers. We knew that in order to win, we had to show that it was also in the interest of employers to have standards. We thought it would be a challenge to bring employers into the campaign and that most employers would not join. But our friends at Jews for Racial and Economic Justice helped us reach those who would. Over the course of the six years, they built an Employers for Justice network of 150 families who organized in synagogues throughout New York City, journeyed to Albany, testified at hearings, and helped organize key actions to push the bill through. We even brought the children of domestic workers together with the children they care for in a children's march for the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. They carried signs that read both "Respect my mommy" and "Respect my nanny."

These employers also organized a Jewish communal meeting that brought together more than 200 people in an Upper West

Side synagogue, including Jewish legislators and 16 rabbis from various synagogues. This meeting was pivotal in helping push the bill through the Assembly.

For Domestic Workers United's 10th Anniversary celebration this November, employers will be honoring their domestic workers' contributions to their households by purchasing tables in their nanny's name at the anniversary dinner.

It is true that self-interest is important in organizing, but people are full of competing commitments and values. Rather than thinking about self-interest in terms of identity and experience more narrowly, what would it look like to think about it in terms of vision: whether people see their own hopes and dreams reflected in the vision for social change that you are putting forward? When we framed the campaign in terms of bringing value and dignity to the work that makes all other work possible, many people could see their vision for a better future reflected. That allowed us to build and fundraise for the campaign.

Lesson #3: There is a role for everyone in the movement we must build.

We rooted this campaign in the stories and struggles of domestic workers to maintain their human dignity in an industry and society that treats them as invisible and disposable. We found that not only were people moved by the workers' stories, they connected their own story to those stories—whether it be homeless people and displaced workers who feel various types of exclusion, young people who were raised by domestic workers, legislators whose relatives were domestic workers, or professional mothers who struggle with work-family balance. We created space for everyone who felt connected to the issue to join the campaign and not only participate but take the lead in reaching out to others in their own circles. Once this happened, the campaign took on a life of its own. Within the contours of the overall campaign strategy, anyone who had the will could take initiative and ownership of a piece of work.

Eventually, we had engaged so many people in the campaign that we created a membership program that allowed anyone to join DWU as a donor-member. Like worker members, they pay dues and receive updates and calls to attend events. Donor-members each contribute from \$60 to \$1,000 per year. Our inaugural class of donor members last year included 15 people who committed to giving \$1,000 over the course of the year.

Stepping Back and Visioning

Taking a step back, let's think about what we are up against: economic and ecological crises at scales we are still struggling to

understand. A fundamentally violent and unequal system that is deeply and historically rooted—that is run by the corporate lobby and fundamentally set up to fail the working majority of this country and the world, that criminalizes entire communities and puts profit before people. The rapid growth of the Right. The forces that we are up against are enormous, entrenched and incredibly well resourced.

Now, imagine for a second a social justice movement—with strong leadership and broad organizing among poor and working-class communities of color, united together with white working-class communities organized to scale—say we had all of the 11 million displaced workers in the economic crisis, *and* we had millions of students and youth in campuses around the country, *and* we had the millions of precariously employed professionals, *and* we had a movement culture and infrastructure that could hold anyone and everyone you meet walking down the street who shares our values, from San Francisco to Omaha, Nebraska, where anyone could join or contribute tomorrow and find a home in our movement. Imagine the force of that kind of movement directing its energy together.

Given what we're up against, we're going to have to build a movement like that in order to realize our vision for another world.

Like domestic work and organizing, fundraising is a labor of love. It is really, really hard, but we do it because we know it is fundamental to our survival and growth as a movement.

Like domestic work and organizing, there is tremendous dignity in fundraising. If we approach it as providing opportunities for connection and relationship, it can be as transformative and powerful as it is challenging.

As people, we spend most of our lives chasing love—we are completely committed to the notion that we need love, will find love, should be in love. Love helps us feel less alone in the world, it brings us joy, helps us feel connected. It's also incredibly generative. It changes us, it helps us feel that the impossible is possible, that we can reach our human potential.

It's been our experience in the domestic workers movement that, given the right conditions, most people will choose love and connection, to be a part of something positive.

It's up to us to create those conditions and frame the work we do so that people can see their own human potential in it. We must create the everyday opportunities for millions of people to demonstrate—with their time or their money or both—their love for humanity, human dignity, and the earth. ■

Ai-jen Poo is director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.



GIFT Conference Keynote II: **Collective Wealth—No One Should Go Unfed**

by Cara Page

I AM HONORED TO BE HERE as a community organizer, a grassroots fundraiser, a comrade from the South, a former GIFT alum, and an artist and healer.

Thank you also for the land we are standing on and the people who have come before us—and gratitude for these intersections that have brought us here to this moment.

I am a poet, so I have taken poetic license in how I wrote this speech/poem.

I first wanted to look at the context in which we are doing our movement-building and moving community wealth to build our vision.

So many of us are countering the oppressive conditions that would have us believe—and internalize—that we are not valued to begin with

That we are not worthy of resources/infrastructure

That we are not worthy of money/wealth/safety/and our collective/individual well-being

Coming from a society that deems many of us less than human based on our gender identity, our physical ability, our political beliefs, our immigrant status, our race, our ethnicity, our sexuality, right down to our molecular make-up

Many of us are told we are something that can be bought, borrowed, or sold

In a society that values profit over people and individualized wellness over collective resiliency and communal emotional/physical/spiritual/psychic well-being, we enter grassroots fundraising already combating the scarcity of knowing our movements and communities are already expendable.

That we are increasingly being taught to individualize and isolate our experiences of violence and oppression and to further isolate and decentralize our leadership, whether fragmented by region, rural vs. urban, intermediaries vs. organizers, large budgets vs. small.

Our capacity to be a collective voice has been shaken and uprooted inside of the nonprofit industrial complex.

We Are All Fed

What does it mean to raise money and community wealth inside of increased state violence and hyper-surveillance of our activism, our notion of families and our “family values”? What does it mean to take care of each other beyond generating cash capital, but also to generate food, safety, security, and wellness together? This is the state of things and the places of opportunities we are coming from.

I come from the communities of Black Georgia sharecroppers, Black Seminole Florida Tribal Nation, and Austrian and English immigrants. All of these communities were a model of grassroots fundraising, if you will, or what I would like to call models of community wealth and resiliency. They did not rely on the state to build their own infrastructure of survival and longevity.

What would it mean to transform our collective sense of well-being—by remembering and tapping into strategies of well-being and community wealth that consider how we take care of one another fiercely and love one another fiercely? That our collective resiliency would extend much farther than our commitment to the nonprofit industrial complex. I stand before you as a healer who organizes with other healers around community accountability and ways to transform and intervene on state and communal violence. There is little to no institutional money—nor has there ever been—to support lay midwives to birth Black, Latino, Asian, and Indigenous babies at home; to fund root workers traveling across geographical borders to heal our communities; to imagine subsistence farming that would allow us to reclaim traditions that healed our communities through times of genocide.

In the South we have always had to be resilient in how we could imagine surviving on our own community wealth and resources inside of liberation, while a history of genocide and slave labor bled the South of our autonomy and economic infrastructure. It is one of the most resilient regions in this country, based on what First Nations and communities of color, working-class and rural communities have been able to sustain despite full-on destruction.

What happened after Katrina and Hugo is not a farce. You watched again and again—on live television—the systemic destruction of a region and its Black & Brown people. And now in

A COMMON BELIEF AMONGST WORKING-CLASS ORGANIZERS IN THE SOUTH IS THAT EVEN IF WE ARE ALL POOR EVERYONE WILL BE FED.

the Southwest with abominable anti-immigration laws they are coming for us again in live view. Yet despite infrastructure and a slave labor economy that profited on us—not for us—the South continues to survive.

I moved to the South in 1997 to learn about Southern political and cultural movements that consciously integrated practices of root workers, cultural workers, and rural working-class organizers as core traditions and practices of movement-building in the South. I went there to understand what had been created and dreamed—to systemically challenge, transform, and regenerate the region. What became fiercely clear to me was a certain level of resiliency and humility of Southern organizing that I only came to understand after living there. First-hand understanding that despite the attempt to erase and take away all land and practice from First Nations and through the enslavement of Indigenous and Black people there still swelled a significant sense of pride and survival—outside of organizational models—that requires a relearning and remembering of the importance of community wealth as the resources that we hold inside of our collective liberation.

A common belief amongst working-class organizers in the South is that *if we all are poor it does not mean we cannot all eat*. I'm sure this is a principle for many of us and I am stressing it here because it is the root of what resource building and resource distribution can look like. Within and outside of our fundraising models, where do we feed each other?

GIFT Experience

I got placed by the GIFT Training for People of Color at the Institute for Southern Studies, in Durham, North Carolina. The Institute creates a political and cultural magazine, *South-*

ern Exposure, which has become an archival bank of critical Southern media and has held the history of labor organizing and movement-building strategies for years.

Many of us in that GIFT People of Color training cohort peeled back layers of the insidious culture of wealth and worth that had defined and/or redefined our relationship to money in our movements, families, and communities. We wrapped ourselves inside of how-to-do house parties and also created a sacred space/altar in the room of our training that gave homage to the collective wealth of our people. We honored the many ways our communities had accessed wealth and well-being,

whether through owning land as Black farming families or owning small businesses in immigrant communities, or honoring the musicians, nurses, doctors, lawyers, healers who kept our families safe and secure. And we also held the contradictions and the risks many of our families had to take to survive.

This was transformative—to heal from our legacies and to honor our peoples' collective resiliency and wealth. This taught me a lot about giving beyond just the technical tools of fundraising. We committed ourselves to raising money but also to raising the awareness of how we have held wealth in our communities through stories, holding onto cherished memories and healing from violence in our lives. We recognized in that GIFT training that we were resilient in being able to take care of our own and to lift up our own survival as collective resources and wealth.

Here I want to rise up again the core belief inside Southern working-class organizing communities I learn from: *even if we are all poor everyone will be fed*.

Community Wealth

What does community wealth look like when we come from an understanding of shared power and collective well-being and resiliency that does not value one's wellness over another's?

I want to share two stories of collective wealth that redefine grassroots fundraising as opportunities for organizing collective wealth and well-being—wealth that is built from ongoing relationships and resiliency that does not default to the traditional ways we imagine around giving. These stories ask us to maintain a certain level of humility and a collective memory of the places we hold in our communities' and movements' survival that remain creative, open-hearted, and curious. These stories

help us to imagine how we can network and build for our collective survival.

Intervening on Capitalism

A South Asian woman lands in Durham, North Carolina in a South Asian immigrant community. She is a mother of three and committed to food and media justice. She also happens to be a fantastic chef. She cooks for close friends and family and they urge her to feed other communities and community organizers in Durham.

She is committed to building food justice, so she begins to work with organic and subsistence farmers in the community in the mid- to late-1980s—when it was less popular and less well known as a practice—and begins to gather all her grains, fruits, vegetables, and meats to support the local economies of this Southern city. She begins to cook dinner for the community.

Almost ten years later, her children have grown and she is still feeding the community with gorgeous plates of South Asian cuisine at \$10 a plate every Wednesday or Thursday night; no one goes unfed if they cannot afford it.

She decides to open a little restaurant and asks the community to help her raise capital; she raises the \$80,000 she needs from community individuals in three days. She will still supply community dinners and the community will still feed her with love and resiliency for being a consistent participant in the well-being of our collective lives.

Intervening on Disaster Tourist/Fund Economy

After hurricanes Katrina and Hugo and other rampant storms that ripped up the Gulf Coast and New Orleans, many folks living within and mostly outside the region decided to give to larger state and federal programs that in the end did not equitably distribute money or resources to the Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities most directly struck on the Gulf Coast. Then, to make matters worse, developers swooped in to consume the drowned land of the storms' wake and cordoned off areas that had been targeted in previous years as "ideal vacation spots" for newcomers and seasonal tourists. The world watched, traumatized, and passively just kept feeding the USAID money machine to feel resolved about the genocide they were witnessing—again in the Southern region.

And now we watch the devastation of the BP oil disaster—and we are still seeking and creating mechanisms to respond outside of state and corporate dependence.

A Creole woman from a city in Louisiana was raised to think about her collective wealth and resiliency always as a communal experience of well-being: *that you do not do for yourself what you*

cannot do for many. After years of feeling helpless around the state attacks and violence on her Black family and other indigenous and immigrant communities on the Gulf Coast, she committed to becoming a lawyer in immigration law. She got into law school but would not be able to afford to come home to visit. Word traveled of her financial plight and the town decided to have a fish fry to bring her home to visit. This became an annual tradition of this small Louisiana community until she graduated. And when she graduated she kept close ties with home for several years.

After Katrina, she returned home with several huge trucks of water, chainsaws, and progressive legal services and scientists to help rebuild. She returned to give back to the community that had held her for so many years—and now she came back to hold them. This is community wealth and well-being.

Many Lessons

How do we imagine and lift up these stories as grassroots fundraising for our collective survival? What are our community remedies of resiliency?

The lessons here in these community wealth examples are many:

- Long-term relationships support collective and individual wealth and well-being
- Longevity and community accountability breed sustainability that can be amplified to unimaginable places
- In the midst of chaos and capitalism we are capable of transforming our human condition, and a lack of an economic infrastructure does not make us unable to change our outcomes or our will to live

I am now trying to raise money for three collectives predominantly run by queer women and gender-nonconforming trans people of color intervening on state violence, including the criminalization of midwives and healers in the South. There is no map for this on how to raise money and there never has been. We have done our work based on alternative economies and bartering, on growing gardens in exchange for birthing babies or giving remedies from homemade rue. We have built our movements on sustenance, not always dollars, and some of us have always been outside the confines of foundation monies—and always will be. Yet we will succeed and survive because *when we are all well no one goes unfed and unfunded.* ■

Cara Page is the Regional Coordinator and co-founder of the Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective based in Atlanta, GA. She is also an organizer with Southerners on New Ground (SONG), INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and the Atlanta Transformative Justice Collective.

Fundraising for the United States Social Forum 2010: Reflections from the Resource Mobilization Working Group

Image courtesy DesignAction

by Sha Grogan-Brown, Michael Leon Guerrero, Priscilla Hung, and Genaro Lopez-Rendon

THESE REFLECTIONS ARE BASED ON A DISCUSSION HELD AT GIFT'S AUGUST 2010 CONFERENCE, MONEY FOR OUR MOVEMENTS 2010: A SOCIAL JUSTICE FUNDRAISING CONFERENCE.

THE UNITED STATES SOCIAL FORUM (USSF) is a movement-building process. It is an important step to building a powerful, diverse, inclusive, internationalist movement that is multi-racial, multi-sectoral, and inter-generational and that transforms this country and changes history. The USSF provides spaces to learn from each other's experiences and struggles, share our analysis of the problems our communities face, build relationships, and align with our international brothers and sisters to strategize how to reclaim our world.

The first US Social Forum took place in June 2007 in Atlanta, GA, with 12,000 people; the second was held in Detroit, MI this past June with 18,000 people. (For more information, visit ussf2010.org.)

The work of planning and organizing such a massive effort was distributed among working groups, and fundraising was no exception. The national Resource Mobilization Working Group, run by volunteers and a part-time paid staff member, was tasked with raising \$1.8 million in 12 months. This amount does not reflect all of the in-kind support that is critical to the success of a broad-based, multi-pronged effort like this, as well as the fundraising that groups and organizations led on their own to pay for their travel and other participation in the forum.

"Aside from the direct cash we raised, if we could calculate all the donated time and resources, we would see that they make up the overwhelming majority of the resources it takes to organize a national mobilization of this scale," said Sha Grogan-Brown, grassroots fundraising staff for the USSF 2010. "What's amazing is that so much of it comes from our communities."

Lessons Learned

Raising money for movement-building presents a unique set of fundraising challenges and is new ground for many of us. We hope our reflections and lessons learned can be applied by other groups and collaborations to their fundraising efforts.

Lesson #1: The bad habits we practice in fundraising for our own organizations will show up in our fundraising efforts as a movement. The same challenges that beleague fundraisers—feeling isolated from the mission and programmatic work, and a lack of interest and participation in fundraising from others in

the organization—were present in raising money for the USSF 2010.

Like other organizations that struggle to recruit for their fundraising committees, the Resource Mobilization Working Group (RWG) was among the smallest of the USSF working groups. And maintaining interest in fundraising was difficult, with some members' participation erratic over the year and others starting strong but disappearing after a few months.

There was also some isolation from the larger planning processes. With the first USSF, funds were tight and participating groups understood that the forum would not happen without their monetary and in-kind support. This year's USSF had substantial up-front monies from several social justice foundations. Although the grants provided critical support, especially during an economic recession where many groups were suffering financially, the funding also exacerbated the fact that fundraising was not integrated into the culture and planning for the forum.

"Groups that were part of the planning were identifying items that were critical for the forum to take place, but they weren't willing to help raise the money to pay for those items. They expected the RWG to take care of it," said Priscilla Hung, Executive Director of GIFT and one of the Co-Chairs of the RWG. This was a big contrast with 2007, when the lack of foundation support sparked a grassroots fundraising campaign initiated by the USSF National Planning Committee and taken up as a rallying cry for the movement. That year, for example, Bay Area groups took it upon themselves to raise \$10,000 for translation and interpretation services for the entire forum.

"There's something about the culture of our organizations, where fundraising gets compartmentalized and we raise money in isolation and often in competition with one another," shared Michael Leon Guerrero, Director of Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and a Co-Chair of the RWG. "But at the previous USSF, people collectively took ownership of the fundraising and got creative, innovative, and fun about it. The question is how can we do this more."

Lesson #2: Raising money for movement-building is more successful when everyone gets involved. Because movement-building work is not limited to a particular program or person

within an organization, many groups used the USSF as an opportunity to involve members, allies, and non-fundraising staff in helping raise money. For example, after the first USSF, organizations based in Asian communities decided to meet annually to exchange information and build relationships. Said Helena Wong of CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities, one of the participating groups, “The members want to see each other and continue to talk and learn from each other. To raise money for these meetings, we had a cooking demo, yard sales—we tried everything we could. Our members did it because they were really invested.”

Ari Clemenzi of the Bay Area Child Care Collective described how members of the collective volunteered to raise enough money for parents in another organization to bring six children from San Francisco to Detroit. “Fundraising is a new thing for us, but online tools helped make it super accessible and easy. I reached out to people I went to high school with and to family members,” said Ari. “I told people that I grew up in a working-class family and I’m standing in solidarity with working-class mothers who are trying to get to the USSF with their kids.”

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) involved their entire staff in fundraising and brought in 70 new donors. Miya Yoshitani of APEN noted, “It was a great internal learning process, even for staff like me who didn’t go to the forum. I have not seen our staff fundraise that much money so quickly for anything before. They exceeded their goals. It was really important for us to have that lesson learned, with all staff, not just development staff.”

Lesson #3: From selling noodles to major donor asks, a wide variety of strategies are needed. Forty percent of the funding for USSF 2010 was contributed through a wide variety of efforts—registration fees, vendor fees, program page sponsorships, online appeals, personal donor asks, major donor asks, shirt and poster sales, and proceeds from a large party organized by Leftist Lounge. Each revenue stream required planning and time to be successful, and each stream paid for critical parts of the overall budget.

Similarly, groups raising money so their members could participate in the USSF also undertook an assortment of fundraising activities. Southwest Workers Union hosted a community BBQ, had high school youth sell candy, held a raffle with gifts from local businesses, asked current funders for discretionary grants, and sold seats on their bus caravan to Detroit. “The high energy and participation from our members and staff were important to help raise the needed money,” said Genaro Lopez-

Rendon, Director of SWU and a Co-Chair of the RWG. “We had nearly 50 people lend a hand in raising the money to take a busload to the USSF.”

In addition to asking for money from friends and family, the staff at APEN found themselves selling Laotian noodles to neighbors in their office building. Timmy Lu of APEN noted, “It was a different type of fundraising than what we normally do. It gave us the opportunity to experiment with fundraising that was really grassroots, and it motivated us to try to tell our stories and connect with people we don’t normally talk to about our organization in this way. We didn’t limit ourselves to what worked before, and tried to open up. This experience really showed us that there’s a benefit to doing that.”

Lesson #4: Time, tracking, and communication are challenging...and will never be perfect. For movement-building efforts that involve multiple donors and askers around the country with different needs and requirements, data tracking and reporting are absolutely critical. New online tools and the immediacy of email have helped in these efforts, but clear person-to-person communication and understanding different stakeholders’ needs are still challenging.

In addition to the Resource Mobilization Working Group, the National Planning Committee (NPC), and the Organizing Committee, dozens of other key parties were involved in fundraising, including hundreds of individual and organizational donors at different giving levels. Information-sharing and trying to keep multiple people around the country up-to-date were extremely difficult. Activities such as following up on donation pledges, confirming receipt of grants, and getting current financial reports required talking to multiple people with different responsibilities, and in many cases, multiple organizations. With limited capacity and most of those involved volunteers, it was not possible for the data management and communication to keep up.

“Tracking transactions made by 15,000 people registering is easily the largest tracking effort most of us have ever tried to do,” said Sha Grogan-Brown. We used CiviCRM, as well as several listservs and wikis to share information. We tried our best to maintain the USSF commitment to using open source software, but occasionally we relied on Google Docs to share and update spreadsheets and to edit documents within the group.

Keeping up with the flow of overall information about the USSF was critical to the messages we were sharing with potential funders and donors. Keeping on top of meeting notes and updates were critical to staying informed. We made frequent use of online notepads and whiteboards like EtherPad to share

notetaking responsibilities. Months after the USSF, information is still being consolidated and some things may never be documented. But as a continuous movement-building process, a level of change, uncertainty, and evolution is to be expected.

Lesson #5: Starting the relationship-building process early with major donors and funders makes a big difference. For the first USSF it was difficult to get investment from funders, especially in the early stages of the process. It was the first time something like this had been organized in the United States and it was being led by social justice grassroots organizing groups, an effort some funders viewed with skepticism. Eventually, some funders saw that there was important momentum across the country for the USSF and realized that they had missed a key opportunity.

After the first social forum, the Funders Network on Transforming the Global Economy (FNTG) convened funders and organizations to discuss movement-building. Some funders stepped up to rally support for this year's forum, resulting in significant grant dollars. In addition, FNTG and the NPC worked together to coordinate political education, monthly funder calls, regional forums, and opportunities for funders to organize themselves.

The time and investment put into building relationships and engaging early on with funders helped lay the groundwork; by the time grant dollars were needed for the second USSF, many funders were ready. The RWG raised 60 percent of the money for USSF 2010 from foundation grants, with key funders including the Ben & Jerry's Foundation, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, Solidago Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock. We approached a variety of foundations with all types of requests—general support, discretionary, travel fund, multi-year, local development in Detroit—with just as many funders turning us down as saying yes.

Many individual donor solicitations, on the other hand, went out at the last minute and were presented as one-time requests rather than as part of a donor development process. This lack of strategy and planning were obvious in the small number of major donor gifts received.

Similarly, individual groups haven't yet begun to educate donors about the need to fund movement-building. Said Miya Yoshitani, "APEN hasn't invested a lot in educating our current donor base about the importance of movement-building, not just our particular campaigns and program work. So going to our entire donor base with this message wouldn't have been as fruitful because this was a really different ask. Incorporating a

movement-building perspective in how we talk about our work and educating the people who support us has to be a larger part of our work."

Some groups that raised money to participate in the USSF didn't use movement-building language when asking donors for support, instead asking donors to help youth and community members participate in an important national gathering. We are working to develop accessible and compelling ways to talk about movement-building.

Lesson #6: Limited funds increase the need to be strategic. Although grassroots and social justice organizations have always received a disproportionately small amount of total national funding, the financial crunch meant that organizations didn't have the resources to invest in participating in this year's USSF at the same levels as in 2007. Groups had to be strategic about their fundraising efforts for the USSF and overall. For example, because GIFT's Money for Our Movements 2010 conference was held only two months after the USSF, GIFT decided not to solicit funds for participation in the USSF, instead focusing fundraising on its own conference. In contrast, the Southwest Workers Union used discretionary funding requests to focus on the USSF.

As well, with many funders investing discretionary funds directly into the USSF planning process, fewer such funds were available for individual groups' mobilization. Jobs for Justice, for one, had hoped to apply for discretionary grants to attend the USSF, but when that didn't pan out, they decided to produce their annual Workers' Rights Directory early so that donations resulting from that project could be allocated to the USSF.

Conclusion

These reflections are just the beginning of thinking about how we, as a growing movement, raise money for social justice movement-building efforts like the USSF. We need to prioritize time to collectively craft solutions to key questions, such as who should resource this work, what resources in addition to direct donations are available, how do we have conversations cross-sector about money and resources, and what are creative ways to share resources within our movements. As we develop the answers to these questions, we will be more successful at raising the money needed to build strong social justice movements. ■

Sha Grogan-Brown, Michael Leon Guerrero, Priscilla Hung, and Genaro Lopez-Rendon were all members of the USSF 2010 Resource Mobilization Working Group.

Justice and Peace Shares: A Case Study in Collaborative Funding

by Andy Heaslet

IN 2004, SEVEN ST. LOUIS-BASED NONPROFIT organizations came together to form Justice and Peace Shares (JPS). This unusual, collaborative fundraising organization is an interesting example of what can happen when small organizations work with one another, as opposed to competing for resources.

As the nation claws its way out of these rough economic times, we can start to see through the settling dust at the debris this recession has wrought. Several of my favorite advocacy organizations did not survive, many peers lost jobs, and many important struggles have gone unnoticed as endowments dried up and forced the causes they support to look for other means of financial support.

JPS was not immune to the woes, and some of our organizations had to downsize and/or get creative with staffing arrangements and other organizational costs. But our general grassroots funding model—a wide, diverse base of donors able to make regular, affordable contributions—has helped each participating organization weather the financial storm.

Seeing Challenges to Sustainability

Discussions about forming JPS started in 2003, initially among 12 organizations. These groups shared a common goal of working for peace and social justice through nonviolent action and grassroots organizing.

Through these conversations, we identified four challenges to long-term sustainability as small, nonprofit organizations: unintended competition, reliance on grants, lack of engagement by contributors, and few opportunities for professional development.

For some time, our nonprofit community has been supported by a common pool of individuals or households that are members of two or more of the organizations that now make up JPS. Like many small nonprofits, each of our groups appeals to their memberships once or twice a year for \$30-\$100 per household. Receiving requests from several local organizations in addition to appeals from other service-providing nonprofits and national organizations can be overwhelming to even the biggest of hearts—not to mention to their recycling bins! Before our seven groups joined forces, these frequent appeals were inadvertently creating an atmosphere of competition for limited resources among our organizations.

Around the time of these initial conversations, our individual groups had become over-dependent on grants from progres-

sive foundations and religious organizations, which not only could not be relied on as a continuous funding source but required staff time for research and writing grant applications. In some respects, staff persons found themselves in the infamous trap of working to keep themselves employed, spending more time fundraising than working toward fulfilling the mission of their organization.

Partially as a result of our Sisyphean quest for financing, active programming had begun to suffer. We noticed that a portion of our contributors did not actively engage in the work of the organizations. Perhaps because our organizations were struggling just to do that work in the first place, there wasn't always something with which to engage.

In addition to fumbling around financially, our professional staffs and organizational leaders were craving opportunities to learn how to improve their efficacy. We wanted to share skills, information, and strategies among organizations and to find a way to provide and participate in useful trainings.

Remarkably, in a relatively short amount of time, we were able to face each of these challenges and, if not solve the problems, lessen their negative effects.

Creating Justice and Peace Shares

Seven of the twelve organizations agreed to form Justice and Peace Shares. We identified regular and mutual donors and asked them to make monthly contributions to be distributed equally among the participating organizations.

A "JPS share" is a monthly \$25 donation. Share commitments continue year after year, with no annual renewal process. Contributors are designated as "JPS Shareholders" and no longer receive direct appeals for contributions from individual participating organizations. Shareholders are still invited to program and fundraising events hosted by participating organizations, and they get special shareholder discounts as a perk for participating and as encouragement to remain involved with the organizations.

In addition to financial collaboration, JPS has organized training workshops for members and peers of the participating organizations. So far, these workshops have provided new know-how on board development, planning nonviolent campaigns, organizing among communities of color, accessing mainstream media, working with and creating alternative media, and alternative economics.



Making It Work

Making this collaboration come together required significant time and energy. In June of 2004, each of the seven participating organizations provided a list of 100 of its most consistent contributors. Twenty households that had consistently made substantial gifts to one or more of the participating organizations were identified and personally invited to become founding shareholders. Most of these households became multiple shareholders, creating an initial pool of 80 shares committed. By choosing to approach this small pool first, we were able to build a base of trust and success among the organizations, encouraging each group to move beyond their reluctance to share the names of more substantial contributors.

Two months later, with these initial shareholders listed as founding members, we sent letters and made follow-up phone calls to 180 households that had donated annually to two or more of our participating organizations.

In September, we hosted a benefit concert to announce JPS to the larger community. The proceeds were equally divided among the participating organizations as their first JPS distributions, compensating them in part for the staff and board time they had devoted to the initial stages of the JPS outreach plan.

We planned a second concert for November as an incentive for potential shareholders: each household that became a shareholder by the night of the concert was given a free ticket.

In October we asked more than 600 households, all consistent donors to at least one of the participating organizations, to become shareholders. By the November concert, more than 160 shareholder commitments had been secured, most of them consisting of one or two shares per household.

Like most effective organizing and fundraising campaigns, we've found that the best way to get new shareholders is through one-on-one conversations. We've tried to encourage current shareholders and leaders of the individual organizations to meet with potential shareholders at least once a year since our initial push. This has meant brunches, ice cream socials, and gatherings in the garden of a local pub. Each gathering resulted in about a dozen new shareholder commitments.

We've also held benefit/recruitment concerts roughly every other year, offering existing shareholders a venue to introduce friends and colleagues to JPS and its participating organizations. Each concert has brought new shareholders to JPS.

Keeping the Lights On

Today, JPS consists of six organizations, with the seventh founding organization reevaluating its role in the community and bowing out amicably. We have more than 200 shareholders; each organization can count on receiving between \$800 and \$1,200 a month from these pledges.

Individual organizations may still seek grants and each still has its own membership list and appeals to non-JPS members for money through fundraisers, campaigns, and semi-annual appeals. For the smaller member organizations, JPS funds meet their needs as currently organized. For those with full-time staff, JPS provides a consistent, ongoing source of income, which is particularly helpful in lulls between major fundraisers and campaigns, when organizations would otherwise have to dip deep into savings. What we all have in common, though, is that we are no longer consumed by figuring out how to keep the lights on.

JPS has most definitely had a positive impact. You can tell because we've been working! And, whether working to reduce military spending, end wars, help immigrants in need, keep track of Latin American struggles, or protect human rights, there's no shortage of work to be done!

Honing the Model

Things aren't perfect yet. We're still figuring out the best ways for staffs and leadership to work together and have regular meetings without simply creating more work. Every now and then an individual organization makes an appeal to a JPS member or forgets to advertise a discount for a fundraiser or event, and has to apologize to shareholders.

As a relatively young organization, we're still learning how best to collaborate and cooperate beyond our financial ties. Many of the staff members meet on a regular basis in addition to monthly coordinating council meetings. We make efforts to schedule events far in advance so that we're not competing for participants or burning out members.

We collaboratively organized an action a couple of years ago with modest success. While everyone chipped in, some of the participating organizations are more equipped to mobilize people than others. There are also varying opinions among the organization of how best to influence change, which can make it difficult to come to consensus on much beyond how much of our income we should distribute on a monthly basis.

Of course, the bad economy has affected JPS. Some households with multiple shares had to reduce their total donation amount. We simply lost others. But this simple, affordable, predictable process has made contributing easy for our supporters, and our funding base is still solid.

The biggest challenge is that we seem to have reached a plateau in recruiting new shareholders. As with most donation-based organizations, there is a natural attrition rate due to deaths, policy disagreements, and that villain, apathy. We've been able to replace those lost through outreach events and conversations, but we've been unable to get beyond the roughly 300 monthly shares level that we reached within the first two years.

Our initial goal was to reach 500 monthly shares, and our wide-eyed ambitions look to 1,000 monthly shares, but for now, we'd be delighted with regular growth.

Several things might have led to arriving at this plateau:

We haven't gone back to early decliners. We are not explicitly continuing to ask our organizations' individual members who chose not to join JPS initially to consider doing so now. Often it takes several attempts to get someone to make any donation. Years of success and testimonials from current shareholders should encourage those who might have been skeptical early in the process.

We're content with our current level of income. We're successful enough that we are not eager to devote the intense amount of time and energy required for building this organization. Indeed, since we've been able to spend more time fulfilling the missions of our individual organizations, we're not eager to return to another wave of fundraising.

Individual organizations are only experiencing modest, if any, growth. Given the reality that it's hard to grow in these financial times, it's a natural assumption that our collective organization would reflect that sluggishness.

We need to educate prospects about options beyond a traditional share. Some might consider \$25 a month a hefty burden, others might be able to afford more than \$25 but less than \$50. Providing options to give as much as one can afford is always helpful.

We're not using money to make money. Rather than using our operational funds to try to expand our membership, for now, we're putting the JPS donations into organizational program work.

Staying Strong

Although calls to merge our organizations were initially considered and are still occasionally voiced, we always return to the fact that our individual issues are distinct and our constitu-

ents are unique. A more traditional merger would risk watering down the issues our bases are passionate about and could alienate individual members.

What JPS allows is for people who are passionate about and supportive of a broad spectrum of issues to support all of those causes equally and effectively with one monthly donation.

A collaboration like JPS requires a donor base that understands how nonprofit organizations work and about the kind of support they need. St. Louis is the perfect place for such an effort, as it has a strong and sustained history of social justice struggles since before Dred Scott. St. Louisans are willing to support causes they care about both financially and through organizing efforts.

JPS is also successful because it is composed of organizations that are individually unique but have a history of working

Current JPS Member Organizations (All Based in the St. Louis, MO Region)

Peace Economy Project, www.PeaceEconomyProject.org

Instead of War Coalition, www.InsteadofWar.org

Interfaith Legal Services for Immigrants, www.ilslegal.org

Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America, www.IFCLA.net

Human Rights Action Service, www.humanrightSACTION.net

Catholic Action Network for Social Justice,
www.catholicactionnetwork.org

together when opportunities presented themselves. JPS includes groups with a strong history, possessing a good understanding of their respective bases and what those individuals expect in return for their support. JPS also has younger, more nimble organizations that aren't necessarily slowed by the "stuck-in-their-ways" traditions that older organizations might have. This blend of new and old allows for creativity and wisdom to work in unison for common good.

But what made JPS successful from day one is that it was founded on relationships. People and organizations familiar with one another came together and discussed their needs honestly. We haven't found a perfect solution to all of our problems, but by articulating our challenges and desires, we found we could work together so that, ultimately, we could all do better work. ■

Andy Heaslet is Director of the Peace Economy Project. He thanks JPS organizations' staff people Marilyn Lorenz, Bill Ramsey, Colleen Kelley, and Megan Heeney for significant help with this article.

SUSTAINING ORGANIZING

A Survey of Organizations During the Economic Downturn



By DataCenter and the National Organizers Alliance

JUNE 2010

Sustaining Organizing: The Impact of the Recession on Community Organizing

By DataCenter and the National Organizers Alliance

MUCH RESEARCH HAS BEEN DONE on the “Great Recession” of 2007-2010 and its impact on the nonprofit sector. However, very little is known about how these times have affected groups that focus specifically on community organizing. To help assess this impact, DataCenter and the National Organizers Alliance released the report, *Sustaining Organizing: A Survey of Organizations During the Economic Downturn*, this past summer, based on a survey of 203 organizations.

The results showed that organizations continued and advanced their work to support and address myriad crises within their communities while facing decreased capacity and resources due to the economic recession. What follows is an excerpt from the report that highlights the changes in the organizations’ revenue sources since the downturn, along with a table that illustrates that reality.

In documenting the impact of the recession on organizing, we had two goals: to unearth strategies used by organizations in order to sustain organizing work, and to identify ways to further strengthen the work in order to build a sustainable infrastructure that can support organizing.

Major Findings on Organizational Resources

The economic crisis impacted philanthropic institutions’ ability to give, which in turn affected funded organizations. Most organizations experienced some level of shifts in their revenue sources, and 8 out of 10 organizations attributed that change to the economic downturn.

Revenues Overview

The survey probed the type of assets organizations had in the past three years as a gauge of the types of revenue streams they have. 7 out of 10 reported receiving general support grants and 64% had multi-year grants. As one organization noted, without a three-year grant, they would have gone under when the economic crisis hit. A little less than half (43%) had a major donor program in place.

A third of the organizations expected their budgets to decrease in 2010. However, 1 out of 4 expected growth during the same year. The remaining are planning on maintaining their current budgets. But the process to maintain the funding hasn’t been easy. As one organization noted: “We have been able to more or less maintain funding levels but have had to diversify and work harder to do so.”

Foundation and Government Funding See Largest Decrease

Almost two-thirds of organizations (65%) reported a decrease in foundation giving. There were various ways organizations experienced the decrease. Some noted getting fewer grants or reduced amounts. Others were impacted by protraction of the funding cycle (i.e. from 12 to 18 months), foundations not taking on new grantees, delayed grant decision making or payout, or terminal grants (grants that will not be renewed from a given funder).

A smaller percentage of organizations noted an increase in giving. One organization described how their “ability to raise resources can be attributed to supportive program officers, a strong track history of proven effectiveness, and exploring new opportunities.” A couple of organizations that experienced increases expressed concern about being able to sustain them: “While we have indicated an increase, we are just now beginning to feel the effects of the economy. We recently received our first ‘deferred’ grant. This will have a devastating effect on our programming.”

Though only one-third of organizations received government funding, more than half (55%) of them saw a reduction of that funding. For certain communities, that loss is devastating. As one Indigenous organization noted, they don’t have access to casino money, so the government funds were critical in supporting their communities. Eighteen organizations accessed stimulus funds.

Donations, Fees for Services, and Membership Dues also Decreased

Direct donations, fees for services, and membership dues saw a smaller decrease than foundation and government funding. One-third of organizations reported decreases in direct donations and one-quarter had decreased fees for services. There were many comments about the decrease in donations and individuals not being able to give as much. “Many donors spoke candidly about how difficult it was for them this year. Some had lost money in the crash, others’ income had decreased and they were finding it difficult to make ends meet, so they were unable to continue.”

But there were also stories of organizations that were able to maintain or increase support by diversifying their sources of income. One-third of organizations had increased their direct donations and one-third saw an increase in their fees for services. One group stated that “individual contributions came to help sustain us.” Another used the downturn as a way to create a fundraising plan: “Because of the downturn and some strategic planning we have sought to diversify our source of donations and establish a membership program.”

More Time Needed to Fundraise

Sixty-seven percent of organizations found that time spent on fundraising had increased. “Staff has played a larger role in individual donor work. We have experimented with doing full-staff, full-day calling days for individual donations and set concrete individual goals for staff for grassroots fundraising events. In general, we are broadening the responsibility for fundraising to include the entire staff and to have staff dedicate more time for fundraising in their work plans.” This sometimes included staff fundraising for their own positions. Other roles included having staff participate more in grassroots fundraising, donor cultivation, doing “asks” and putting on more events.

The issue of resources has been challenging. One organization was able to give us a positive spin in the ways that, even in these economically strained times:

Foundation money has become less available and more competitive for past years, the economic crisis made it worse. We didn't have state money anyway but indirectly, the shelters that did receive it have been hit hard, some closed down, and more people now are in need, so indirectly, increased our work so much that we have no time left to be more creative, and more of our own resources had to be dipped in. People have less money to give, especially if they lost their jobs. However, there is a spirit of generosity and caring that is also visible, and more people are coming together trying to do something about it.

Amidst the recession and resource scarcity, to grow program,

as most organizations did, meant that the price had to be paid from somewhere other than revenue. One organization quite bluntly said, “Suck it up, do more with less.” And the reality is that’s exactly what organizations did. But the cost on sustainability, staffing, and health is impacted.

RESOURCES		
In the past three years, organizations had the following revenue sources or assets		
General Support Grants	70%	
Multi-year grants	65%	
Major donors	43%	
Property Ownership	14%	
Endowments	9%	
Loans	8%	
Planned giving	6%	
Changes in the funding resources - Decreased (D) or Increased (I)		
	D	I
Foundations	65%	19%
Government Funding (not including stimulus) (71 orgs)	55%	18%
Endowment (31 orgs)	50%	10%
Direct Donations	35%	34%
Membership Dues	28%	27%
Fee For Service	27%	34%
Stimulus Funds (18 orgs)	22%	61%
Expect their budgets to be		
Less than in 2009	37%	
Same as in 2009	39%	
More than in 2009	24%	
Attribute change in resources to the economic downturn	82%	

Download the rest of the report at datacenter.org or noacentral.org. ■

DataCenter unlocks the power of knowledge for social change, supporting grassroots organizing for justice and sustainability through strategic research, training, and collaborations. The National Organizers Alliance advances progressive organizing for social, economic, and environmental justice and sustains, supports, and nurtures the people who do it.



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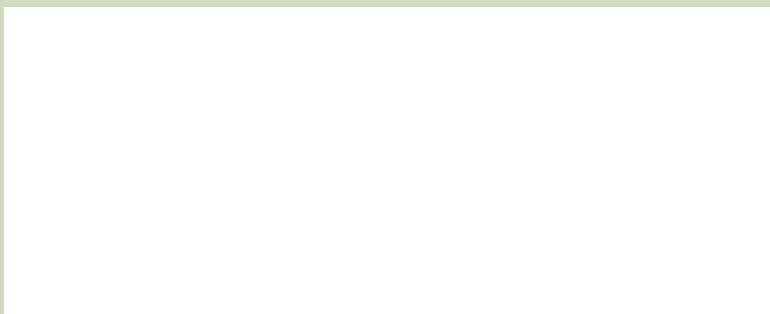
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