

2000

An Approach to Community University Partnerships: Discoveries on the road to America's Promise

Nancie Teresa Biver
nbiver@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcepartnerships>



Part of the [Service Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Biver, Nancie Teresa, "An Approach to Community University Partnerships: Discoveries on the road to America's Promise" (2000).
Partnerships/Community. Paper 16.
<http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcepartnerships/16>

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Barbara A. Holland Collection for Service Learning and Community Engagement (SLCE) at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Partnerships/Community by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.





AN APPROACH TO
COMMUNITY
UNIVERSITY
PARTNERSHIPS

Discoveries on the road
to America's Promise

research, writing,
layout, and cover design by

Nancie Biver

National Service Fellow

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

Created in 1993, the Corporation for National Service oversees three national service initiatives - AmeriCorps, which includes AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps, and hundreds of local and national nonprofits; Learn and Serve America, which provide models and assistance to help teachers integrate service and learning from kindergarten through college; and the National Senior Service Corps, which includes the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

NATIONAL SERVICE FELLOWS

The National Service Fellowship Program, launched by the Corporation for National Service in September 1997, involves a team of individual researchers who develop and promote models of quality service responsive to the needs of communities. The goal of the program is to strengthen national service through continuous learning, new models, strong networks, and professional growth.

July 2000

Corporation for National Service
1201 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20525

(202) 606-5000
www.nationalservice.org

This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National Service under a National Service Fellowship. Opinions and points of view expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation for National Service.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sarah Blascovich, Catharine Croft, and Eric Gilroy, Tulane student interns. These students embodied commitment for the duration of the process and I am extraordinarily grateful for the insight and joy they brought into this project and my life.

Michelle Rothengast, Director of Higher Education for America's Promise. Michelle was a consistent supportive resource.

Tulane University, especially President Scott Cowen for supporting my work at its initiation and Denise Taylor, Associate Dean for Housing and Residence Life, who provided me with office space throughout my fellowship.

Dr. Morris F.X. Jeff and Mr. Robert Lewis, Jr. for generously sharing their thoughts and their time.

The work of Margaret Wheatley and the support from Tenneson Woolf and The Berkana Institute.

The People's Institute and European Dissent for providing a place for me to learn about and struggle with issues of racism.

Jay Vogt and the Open Space list serv community for generously providing the opportunity for me to learn more about Open Space Technology.

My fellow Fellows who proved to be a tremendous source of support and wisdom.

The positive support and creative freedom provided by the National Service Fellows Management Team, Tom Flemming, David Morton, and Jeff Gale.

*T*ABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Let go.

- 1* Imagine. The story unfolds.
- 3* Acknowledging Community and the Dynamics of Racism
- 8* Community Voices
- 16* Communities as Living Systems
- 20* Open Space Technology
- 23* Process at Tulane University
- 26* Implications for Leadership Development
- 28* Recommendations/Opportunities

Bibliography

Appendices

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROBLEM/RESEARCH QUESTION

This paper is a journey that explores the complexity and optimism of community/higher education partnerships to support youth. It provides an analysis of the dynamics and history of power and racism. It raises critical questions regarding the role and approach of higher education and America's Promise, the national alliance for youth. Ultimately, it offers an opportunity to view our communities differently and engage in a process that provides the potential for authentic democratic solution generating, inclusive of the grassroots voice.

This work seeks to enhance the process and intellectual thought supporting the higher education initiative within America's Promise and community/higher education partnerships in general.

I explore this journey through the lens of institutionalized racism and communities as living systems. These seemingly evasive and separate constructs provide clarity for this work in examining barriers to community/higher education relationships and opportunities for working through and understanding these barriers.

METHODOLOGY

Ultimately, the intent was to implement at Tulane University what we determined to be the best way to make a commitment to America's Promise. Therefore, practically and intellectually, we were operating on two levels - important elements to enhance the capacity for higher education to support youth on a national level and local implementation. This provided an essential element of reality as it offered first hand the complexities and barriers to such an initiative.

I conducted this research in an informal manner. The creativity and interaction among a team of student interns supported the development and evolution of thought. We began by examining current university/college commitments to America's Promise and exploring the current status of this initiative. Discussion, community involvement, workshops and independent research revealed to us the multiplicity of layers in this project and invited us to ask critical questions as an important component of the research.

Interviews were conducted with three community/grassroots leaders to provide depth and authenticity to the content. We used a self-organizing process called Open Space Technology as a means of initiating the process at Tulane University. This process was the pinnacle of the effort at Tulane. It involved interested community members, Tulane students, staff and faculty. It provided both the production of ideas for how a university can work with its community to support youth, a wealth of new knowledge, as well as a framework of experience for using Open Space to build partnerships to support youth.

KEY FINDINGS

We found that it was easy to marginalize the very people who were most directly affected by university/America's Promise initiatives. We found that it is our history and tendency, especially historically white four-year institutions, to "do to" youth and the community rather than create with. We also acknowledged that working with non-profits and social services does not necessarily include community voice. These institutions, too, have a history of not including in the process those directly affected by it.

We found that engaging in a process frees institutions from the struggle of coming up with the "right answer." Process provides the opportunity for ownership of the solution within the community. We found that meaningful interaction and relationship building are at the core of creating workable solutions to support local youth and must be a priority in any initiative. We discovered that working with Open Space Technology provides a tool to effectively engage in a collaborative manner. We found that race was difficult to talk about, but that process freed us up to talk about it in a very natural way. And we found more questions than answers, but are comfortable relying on the process to deal with those questions.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research represents the opportunity for us to begin to give up control, to support an understanding of process and the use of tools such as Open Space Technology as a means to build relationships and heal our communities. This implies offering training and support for volunteers and professionals in mobilizing self-organizing systems. It also suggests that the best solutions for our communities do not lie in higher education's ability to determine the solutions, but rather in our ability to let communities construct solutions for themselves. This means not mandating paradigms that limit our communities such as forty developmental assets or five promises. These constructs are only as useful as the community finds them.

This research also suggests the opportunity to explore the dynamics of racism as integral to supporting minority youth. This includes acknowledging the barriers of racism and the potential that lies for our communities in taking the risk to explore a very emotional and volatile subject. Acknowledging the uncomfortable truths of these dynamics is critical to creating community partnerships as well as creating the communities that we want. This can begin with participating in university-sponsored anti-racism workshops, engaging in dialog with the community, and on an individual level through reading, asking questions, and listening.

There is significant opportunity to examine the potential of America's Promise grown from "the inside out." This necessitates working with those most directly affected. It includes a commitment on the part of the universities and colleges to explore institutional racism and educate those directly involved and those interested. It also includes relying on community and university participants working in process and letting the solutions generated from the process give life to the actions taken to support youth.

NOTES TO THE READER

What follows are perspectives gained while exploring America's Promise - The Alliance for Youth and the role of higher education. This paper unfolds as our experiences unfolded.

It is my belief that this paper is best served as a starting point for dialogue. It does not have all of the answers. It doesn't even have all the questions. Please consider this an invitation to join us in this process of asking questions and working through them through meaningful dialogue. The questions we have raised have significant implications for America's Promise, higher education and our paradigm of service. We think they need to be asked in order for us to act in the best interest of youth, particularly youth living in poverty.

At the end of each section you will find critical questions for discussion. These are the burning questions that rise from each section, questions that we believe need to be talked about to move forward effectively.

THE FOLLOWING MAJOR QUESTIONS WILL LEAD YOU THROUGH THIS PAPER:

1. What is racism and why is this important when talking about supporting youth?
2. Is higher education, in providing services to community and youth, at risk of perpetuating a cycle of dependency and disempowerment?
3. What do those most directly affected by America's Promise and services/initiatives for youth think about higher education working in communities?
4. How can higher education take a role of asking rather than imposing its ideas on the community as it looks to support local youth?
5. How can universities and communities create solutions to support youth in a way that those most directly affected have a voice?
6. Where do we go from here?

I hope you enjoy and join us in the journey.

LET GO

Oh take me to the place
where the worrying ends
where life begins
and twists and bends
Where days arrive
one each by each
For love and beauty
there to reach
Where dreams unfold
as time eludes
What was forbidden
forsaken or rude
Is now revealed
for play and life
A way that's free
relieved from strife
That road I search
has but to say
that there is still
a simpler way
A way that is
not real per se
but engages the mystical
the creative, the way.
So what would be
of life and such
if each day
revealed as much
as we could take
of dreams and love
worrying tossed
to up above
and we let go
forgot and trashed
what we have learned
Our lives it's thrashed
A new life,
new ways await
Let go Let go
Don't hesitate.

-by Nancie Biver

I M A G I N E . T H E S T O R Y U N F O L D S .

Imagine the promise. Idealism and good intentions. Universities sharing their resources and creating programs to support local youth. Students, faculty and staff supporting the five promises through tutoring, creating after school programs, and partnering with local non-profits. Imagine a model that shows higher education the best way to infiltrate the five promises into its culture and use them as a guide to serving youth. A busy boardroom filled with the president of the university, faculty, staff and students combining brainpower and resources to maximize the power of their commitment to America's Promise. Connecting with the Community of Promise and working collectively with the United Way, local businesses, and Sites of Promise.

Now stop. Look again. Closer... Closer still. It's not that simple.

From the front lines of Tulane University it becomes increasingly clear. A headfirst dive into the world of America's Promise and higher education. At first glance it seemed we could not go wrong - a university sharing its resources to provide five promises to local youth. Tulane, like so many institutions of higher education, was already doing so much for youth. There were so many individuals working hard, myself included, with the best of intentions.

Beyond the path of good intentions there is another story to be told. A story laden in the history between historically white four-year institutions and the community. A story rooted in a world of privileges and the assumption that help is needed or wanted, no invitation necessary. A dynamic of power where one group becomes dependent on the services of another. And a further assumption that universities or colleges have the answers, the framework, the paradigm shift. A history of telling rather than listening. And a voice of truth raised in the streets not invited to the table. What initially seemed like a task of mobilizing and connecting resources among universities and colleges for America's Promise slowly became a mandate for truth and accountability.

What lingers is the potential. Honesty, integrity, and humility invite us to listen, to create and to be different. Our destiny is to imagine - to be more. To harness the positive, own the past, and connect with the humanity in the people that comprise our institutions, communities, public housing, government and social services. The vision of an appropriate and workable way to support youth is ours to create in partnership with our communities.

Providing resources to youth is a small piece of a complex, off-balanced societal system. It is not as simple as plugging up holes in the dam. Success rests in an intricate web of relationships. This exploration takes us to the big picture, the system, understanding how to work together so that we can create viable options to support youth. Solutions

lie in creating a space where everyone who chooses to can be heard, where injustices can be voiced, practices challenged, and action taken. A place where the hierarchy that limits such a relationship is stripped away

Ultimately, this project is about listening, critical thinking, and raising difficult issues and questions. It is about America's Promise and higher education, but has broader implications for university-community partnerships, issues of race, and our paradigm of service. The purpose has become not to generate answers or solutions, but to recognize and honor the process and acknowledge that the solutions are in the process.

OVERVIEW OF AMERICA'S PROMISE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

America's Promise - The Alliance for Youth is a national catalyst looking to mobilize people and organizations in every sector to rally support for youth around five promises. The five promises include:

1. An ongoing relationship with a caring adult - parent, mentor, tutor or coach.
2. A safe place to be with structured activities during non-school hours.
3. A healthy start.
4. A marketable skill through effective education.
5. An opportunity to give back through community service.

Universities and Colleges can support America's Promise by becoming Commitment Makers. As articulated on the America's promise webpage, they are asked to:

1. Determine university or college expertise and how you might best contribute to one or more of the five promises.
2. Define the outcome. Outcomes should be measurable and a method for quantifying outcomes should be described.
3. Develop a plan for implementing your commitment and a good faith estimate of how many people your efforts will affect.
4. Complete a commitment form and commitment letter for review by America's Promise. (see Appendix A)
5. Include a letter on college or university letterhead from the president or chancellor briefly describing your commitment.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The initial charge for the project was to create a model for infiltrating the five promises of America's Promise into the culture of higher education. Part of the means for doing this was to create Tulane University as a University of Promise. This initiative was spearheaded by me, Nancie Biver, and was supported with three student interns from Tulane University, Sarah Blascovich, Catharine Croft, and Eric Gilroy. We met regularly and worked as a team while I spent more time independently with the project. We

struggled and talked and tried to think of a way to make it all work. We made mistakes. We made assumptions. This project became a journey revealing its complexity and ultimately its simplicity piece by piece. Through this journey, it became clear that what needed to be addressed first was about ten paces before we even got to making a commitment to America's Promise. Even then, we felt limited rather than set free. People wanted to support youth, but were confused about how their mission plugged in with the five promises. Some people were suspicious of a national organization calling the shots. Others felt pulled between the mission of America's Promise and the calling from the community.

What follows is a compilation of informed understandings, critical analysis, direct responses from community members in New Orleans, Boston and St. Louis, and the collective wisdom of committed individuals from the New Orleans community and Tulane University. It addresses what revealed itself to us as subtle elements of truth about universities supporting youth, unanswered questions, and a process to deal with all of this. In the end are recommendations for higher education and America's Promise. This journey is not just about New Orleans and Tulane University. It is about systems, dynamics and processes, that infiltrate and affect us on a daily basis and are significant when making promises to America's youth.

ACKNOWLEDGING COMMUNITY AND THE DYNAMICS OF RACISM

"The racial divide is still up and well. It is an outrage that should be at the forefront every single day - and we should be talking about that. It is one of the most divisive forces today." Robert Lewis, Jr., Executive Director, City Year, Boston.

The more I got involved with the community of New Orleans, the more it became clear that I and America's Promise were making many assumptions. We were assuming that the package of the five promises of America's Promise were a good thing for the community. That providing these would "help" the community. And the best way for universities to get involved was to simply pool their resources and put together a good plan. The more that I listened, the more these assumptions began to fade away.

I attended an Undoing Racism workshop presented by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. This organization is based in New Orleans and does workshops internationally. The Institute looks at the systemic construct of institutionalized racism and ultimately undoing racism. After this experience it became clear that talking about supporting youth without talking about racism was like talking about gardening without mentioning the soil.

Since this workshop I have explored the notions of race and racism through informal and inquisitive conversations. I talked with anti-racist organizers, members of

the Black community, members of the White community, students, family members and colleagues. I initiated a dialogue on racism through a professional list-serv to which I subscribe.

I spoke with Chris Corrigan, a consultant in Canada who works with First Nations youth. He urged me to consider the notion of decolonization and his belief in the power within as the ultimate route to liberation. He suggested reading the words of Black leaders including Malcolm X and bell hooks or books about the Black Panthers. He also reminded me to “go to the people”. In a conversation with Tenneson Woolf of the Berkana Institute, he pointed out that race is an artificial category that we have created and that racism allows us to see how we’ve fabricated categories that separate us.

Racism was hard to talk about. Many people had gut reactions. This topic was met with passion, fear, defensiveness, alienation, and occasionally with compassion and willingness.

In this struggle to wrap my brain around the concept of racism and its implications for our country’s promise to youth, I came to think of it in a metaphor. I imagined that Americans were standing on the edge of a great forest that must be traversed in order to get to Zion, the Promised Land if you will, or even America’s Promise. Many people had explored this forest before us for centuries in an attempt to reach their destination. Through those years of exploration, riddled with pain, bigotry, determination, success, compassion and failure, a path was worn. The whittling and creation of a dominant culture, the constructed reality, the norm. This path did not exist before we walked it. We made it. It was an inviting and accessible way to travel through the thick forest - but it never led us to the other side. Traveling this path always created a country where white youth had more opportunities and resources than youth of color. We didn’t always mean to do it. It just seemed natural. Think about it. When you go hiking, what is most often your natural inclination? To find the worn trails and follow them, right? We don’t often grab our sickle and explore the dangers and entanglement of the unexplored forest. So every time we begin this journey, it seems conventional and inviting to take this worn path. But the way to the other side is not on the worn path. It never will be, but it will always seem the easiest and most comfortable way to go. The forest is life with its challenges and beauty. The original path is the path of racism. The opportunity is in exploring new routes. While racism and race may be a fabrication of our culture, the path that we created, the path exists nonetheless and is still traveled by well-intentioned people.

Exploring racism does not suggest sightings of overt displays of bigotry. In an institutional and cultural context it is subtle, basically invisible to the untrained white person’s eye. In the book Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America, racism is defined as “basing policy decisions on race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and controlling it. The definition focuses on power. For racism to exist, one racial

group must have the power to impose its will on a less powerful group.”** The People’s Institute defines racism as Race Prejudice + Power. According to the Institute, racism is manifested into society “through the normative behaviors of individuals, through the policies of institutions, through the invasion of a dominant culture, through the medium of language, and through the martial enforcement of genocidal policies against a subjugated race.”** The underlying question of racism is, “Who has the power?”.

It is important to explore who has the power to decide how and what will be done to support our youth. Is it the major’s office? Social services or local not-for-profits? Businesses or politicians? If those directly affected by youth-directed initiatives are not in a position to create, contribute and shape the ways we support local youth, we are, although unintentionally, perpetuating a cycle of dependency and disempowerment. The poor community is so caught up in dealing with current systems and services that it does not have an opportunity to know its own power. As stated by Ron Chisom, author and trainer for the People’s Institute, “If you want to work with poor people, you need to understand why people are poor. People are poor because they lack power.”

Impoverished communities need a sense of power and the opportunity to contribute in meaningful ways. As stated by John McNight in *A Community of Counterfeits*, “Our problem is not ineffective service-producing institutions. In fact, our institutions are too powerful, authoritative and strong. Our problem is weak communities, made ever more impotent by our strong service systems.” This is not to suggest that the current service system be done away with. Instead, it is to suggest the opportunity for higher education and America’s Promise explore a new role - a role in mobilizing and being part of a strong community that supports youth. A role in fostering education and understanding of racism. A role of listening before we decide if and how to support youth. This is a new path, though. It’s the road less traveled.

WHO HAS THE POWER?

COMPOSITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY RACE

STUDENTS

71% White
8.75% Hispanic
9.75% Black
6% Asian

FACULTY

86.8% White
8.75% Hispanic
9.75% Black
6% Asian
1% American Indian
3.5% International

YOUTH LIVING IN POVERTY BY RACE

40% of Black and Hispanic Youth
20% of Asian Youth
18% of White Youth

*Carmichael & Hamilton, 1992

**Undoing Racism. A philosophy of international social change. By Ronald Chisom and Michael Washington. Published by the People’s Institute Press

Statistics show that higher education supporting youth in need has everything to do with race. Let's begin by looking at the race composition of higher education in the United States. In 1997 the Department of Education reported student enrollment by race from 3,300 institutions throughout the nation. Of the 14,502,334 students accounted for, 71% of them were white, 8.75% Hispanic, 9.75% Black, 6% Asian, 1% Asian and 3.5% international. The Department of Education also described the race composition of faculty at 817 colleges and universities nationwide from a survey in the fall of 1992. They report 86.8% of faculty are White, 2.5% Hispanic, 4.9% Black, 5.3% Asian and .5% American Indian. Clearly, students and faculty at universities and colleges through the country comprise a strong white majority.

According to a report by the Council of Economic Advisors for the Presidents Initiative on Race, "race and ethnicity continue to be salient predictors of well-being in American society. On average, non-Hispanic whites and Asians experience advantages in health, education and economic status relative to Blacks, Hispanics and American Indians." Statistics from the report support this. Forty percent of children in the Hispanic and Black community are living in poverty while only 20% of the Asian community and 18% of the White community are poor. White youth score higher in reading proficiency and math proficiency than both Black and Hispanic Youth. Minority youth are more likely to live in a high crime neighborhood, less likely to have an educated parent in the home, and less likely to be read to on a regular basis.

This information demonstrates that when higher education provides resources to local youth in need, it will very often be White people serving People of Color. At first glance this doesn't seem unusual or bad, but reexamine who has the power. If people are poor because they lack power, this dynamic between higher education and youth in the community must be explored very thoughtfully. How can institutions of higher education foster a sense of power in youth and poor communities rather than perpetuate the model of dependency and imposed service?

Next time you volunteer or work on a community service initiative with youth or otherwise, notice how many service providers are White and how many service receivers are People of Color. In my experience, a majority of White people serve People of Color. This includes local civic organizations, student-based community service, the newly evolving service "professional" in higher education, and national service volunteers and professionals. "Solving community problems" whether it's providing resources to youth or homelessness, has a history of imposition, cultural imperialism and dependency. White culture has a history of being missionaries and imposing solutions and power. This is not to suggest that we stop working towards making a better America. It's just to suggest that we do it differently.

Thom Hartmann, author of *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*, explores cultural imperialism in the chapter "Respect Other Cultures and Communities." He says, "In

many ways the call for inclusiveness in modern society is really a friendly mask put over the twisted face of the dominator city/state culture which has worked so hard for so many years around the world to destroy indigenous peoples and their traditions. It's a form of cultural evangelism. Many people are completely unconscious of this because it's part of today's dominant story - it's the way things have always been, as far as they know. But notice it implicitly carries the message 'We'll gladly make room for you to join our culture because ours is so much better than yours'"(p.249).

This shifted perspective warranted a flood of immediate questions: Who is America's Promise defining as community? Does it go beyond the service providers and penetrate to the actual people affected by the initiative? What is higher education's history with the community? Is higher education ready to be partners and actually share power? What will this take? Why are America's Promise commitments monitored and judged by national staff and not a local group? Who is America's Promise accountable to? How can higher education and America's Promise really shift the power to the community? How can America's Promise provide an opportunity for the community to define the promises and the solution for itself?

The answers to many of these questions are rooted in the voices of our communities - those most directly affected. I realized that my experience provided a limited perspective. I wanted, needed, to hear the voices of people who lived in and grew up in poor black communities. Their voices have been marginalized. Giving power to these voices holds the key to creating health communities that support youth.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

If 40% of black and Hispanic youth are born into poverty, shouldn't racism be part of the discussion for America's Promise or any initiative that supports youth?

Is providing services disempowering to communities? What can we do to foster a sense of power in communities rather than a sense of helplessness?

Are we asking questions of and listening to those most directly affected by our initiatives - including youth and members of poor communities? Are we inviting them to create our initiatives with us?

What role do communities want higher education to play in support for youth? Have we asked? Have we included those most directly affected?

COMMUNITY VOICES

I started with attending a community meeting called *Reclaiming African American Youth*, a part of New Orleans Black History Month. The panel was comprised of local black community leaders including grass roots organizations, the City of New Orleans, Juvenile Court, and a children's advocate organization. When presentations were over and the floor was opened, my question to them was "What does my institution of higher education need to know to work effectively with the community to support youth?"

Following are the responses I got:

"Go into the community and listen."

"Don't be missionaries anymore."

"Remember that we are one."

"Take a role of asking."

"Don't assume that you have the solution. Don't already determine the solution."

"Know the history of people of color. Learn about the community before you go."

"Leave your paradigms at home."

"Know your motive. What is the relationship to the black community? What is your institution getting out of the deal?"

These words were spoken freely without hesitation. There was a degree of frustration and urgency in their voices. One woman commented, "White people just don't get it." It was becoming clear to me how blinded our White/dominant culture had made me. It was additionally clear that Black culture is willing to share its perspective if we just ask.

COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

Following are three interviews with community members from different parts of the nation. All three of these people grew up in urban black communities. These interviews are by no means intended to be scientific, but instead to introduce a strong community-based voice and flavor. The main emphasis of these interviews is community-university partnerships to support youth.

Dr. Morris F.X. Jeff, Jr.
New Orleans, LA

“Leave your paradigms at home.”

While attending *Reclaiming African American Youth in New Orleans* I met Dr. Morris F.X. Fox, Jr. His official title is Director of Human Services, City of New Orleans but you could add a few unofficial titles including poet, James Earl Jones voice-over, and father. He’s the one who bellowed “leave your paradigms at home.” And he meant it. He is a native New Orleanian who appreciates the lifestyle of the Big Easy. He also has a lot on his mind. New Orleans and her people are struggling. In a city that is 70% Black, White flight has affected the city’s resources and viability. He has a lot on his mind.

Dr. Jeff is no stranger to higher education. Educated locally, he received his undergraduate degree at Xavier, a historically black college, and was the first African American male to receive a doctorate at Tulane University. He has taught at Tulane, Southern University and the University of New Orleans. He’s been a visiting professor at Loyola University and Holy Cross.

Dr. Jeff sees amazing potential for universities and colleges to support local youth. “I think there’s a lot that could be done if the university really made up its mind that they wanted to develop the underdeveloped. There hasn’t been that much of a commitment from universities to do that.” he says. Dr. Fox suggests that doing this first starts with a spirit. “There has to be a spirit with an altruism built into it where the university just lays out that it wants to be integral to the community. It wants to be a partner with the community. It doesn’t have an agenda other than the community’s agenda. That there is some honesty and sincerity to cut through some of the distrust over the years....this spirit can’t be measured. You can’t do an evaluation on it. You know it.”

Dr. Jeff talks about universities’ history with the community of New Orleans. He acknowledges that the community has been used as the guinea pig for research. “Local medical schools are classic for that. Yes, you get medical services - used to get a lot of indignities along the way as well. But the students learned

“THE COMMUNITY
*has to be subject
to the decision
making as to what
the university can
do, will do and
should do.
There has to be
one voice in this
thing and those
who are impacted
by it should be
the major voice.”*

-Dr. Morris F.X. Jeff

a lot because they were exposed to a lot. But it wasn't a quid pro quo. I think the students got a lot more out of it than local folks in the experiment." He added, "Sometimes universities wished the underdeveloped parts of the city would go away for their behalf rather than making that which is underdeveloped developed." He refers specifically to an area of New Orleans right across the street from Tulane that used to be called Nigger Town. "The white community decided that they would take over. They couldn't take over Nigger Town so they renamed it Black Pearl. Tulane could have played a very positive role in developing it...rename it and claim it and remove those that are out of it to another location so Tulane could stretch its wings. [Tulane never] set up programs guaranteeing that Black Pearl becomes highly educated, highly developed with all of the resources, after school programs, day care center, even the lab schools where education components could tie in." Today, Dr. Jeff reminds us that the privileged have a responsibility. "Their privilege is on the backs of somebody," he says.

The phrase community accountability is frequently heard in service circles. I asked Dr. Jeff what that meant to him. "Being accountable is that a university is more than a separate isolated entity unto itself and it is located within a community with the community having all kinds of needs...being held accountable is receiving all these federal dollars to do all kinds of things, some of them anti-ethical to the community, but no one knows what's going on, particularly private universities...accountability is good. But someone needs to set up a structure by which the evaluation takes place. And have some kind of authority other than just moral authority to enforce the will, even if its against the university's will, to hold the university accountable." Dr. Fox acknowledges the difficulty the community has to hold people accountable. "People who are surviving find it very difficult to hold anyone accountable when they're trying to just basically survive." He adds that "the community has to be subject to the decision making as to what the university can do, will do and should do. There has to be one voice in this thing and those who are impacted by it should be the major voice."

Dr. Jeff calls to question some of the discrepancies between higher education and the community in New Orleans. "How can we have a medical school without the medical school really making a difference in the community other than through internships? How can we have a public health school with such poor public health in the city? Why isn't Tulane on the cutting edge of advocating for the community?" He acknowledges that the Tulane Law Clinic has done a magnificent job, but not without repercussions.

"Why doesn't Tulane guarantee scholarships to this community other than through the political arena?" he asks. He suggests the idea of offering ten scholarships per housing development for those "who would make the commitment and sacrifice to make the achievement." "There are geniuses all across the housing developments," he adds. "All they are lacking is opportunity."

"Leave your paradigms at home," Dr. Jeff reminds us. The problems with para-

digms, he says, “is that students meet the real people and the people don’t fit into those paradigms because there’s something more and the students get lost...they give definition to people with their vocabulary, which has nothing at all to do with the people that they’re dealing with...then there are walls with the paradigms built. You have to be objective. You can’t over-identify with your client. Leave your paradigms behind and then you’ll have a wonderful human experience.”

When asked about paradigms such as organizing around “x” number of developmental assets or “xyz” promises he responds, “I don’t like them. Because usually those paradigms are developed by someone else’s community. It’s cultural imperialism. They just come in and superimpose their values and views and attitudes upon a community that has its own orientation, values and rules...we’re better off if we can define these things that we need...if you think there ought to be some values that need to be elicited from those experiencing a particular kind of problem - ask them. They will tell you...all these things that fail in communities are because somebody came in with an idea. A preconceived idea.”

Interview Summary Points

- Commitment from universities to develop the underdeveloped starts with a spirit of altruism.
- There is a history of mistrust between communities and universities resulting from indifference and indignities over the years.
- Community accountability is good, but there must be structures in place to hold the university accountable.
- The people of the community are better off defining what they need rather than having their needs and solutions superimposed. Initiatives that fail in communities are because somebody came in with a preconceived idea.

Paula Foster St. Louis, Missouri

“Don’t try to push your ideas out on the community... Because if you force it, it’s not a community thing it’s a university thing and that does not work.”

Paula Foster is a wise woman. The mother of three, two girls in grade school and one boy in college, Paula is an active resident of the Blumeyer Housing Development in St. Louis, Missouri. She has served as the president of the Blumeyer Tenant Association since 1992. In this role she works as a liaison between the housing authority and the residents. She speaks with a calmness and her words ring true to her community. She has some important things to say.

Ms. Foster and the Blumeyer Housing Development have formed a partnership with

Saint Louis University (SLU). As she describes it, “It just fits. They provide us the service that we need and we provide the students with the chance to learn on-the-job training.” Current services include legal service, counseling, business, tutoring, and mentoring. She adds, “They haven’t let me down yet.”

This partnership between SLU and Blumeyer didn’t happen overnight. There is a history between the two. “You have to understand,” Paula says, “that five, six years back the university wanted this development and wanted everyone to move out and was going to take over this development. So we had to change the image of the university and let residents know that the university is here to help them and not take over the development.” She adds, “We have some residents that are still skeptical, but most of our residents appreciate the service that they get from the university.”

Paula has some very clear advice for universities and colleges working with communities. “Get to know the community before you go in and listen to them. And don’t try to push your ideas out on the community because if the community don’t like your idea, they don’t accept it anyway,” Paula states. “If you force it, it’s not a community thing it’s a university thing and that does not work.”

Paula gives an example of this. “A couple of years ago,” she says, “Washington University tried that. They tried to write a grant and they pulled us in it. But they wouldn’t let us see what they was putting in the grant. And we wasn’t getting anything out of it, they was just using our name because this was a low income housing development and they had to have a low income housing development. So they tried to use us and we said, ‘oh, no’...if the university was doing something that we didn’t want, they wouldn’t be doing it too much longer.”

Paula shares a time when someone from the University wanted to do a program a particular way and didn’t listen to the advice of those that lived and worked in the community. “She said I’m gonna do it this way and we told her this is not going to work and she didn’t listen. So we said go ahead and do it.” She continued, “And when she didn’t get any response she felt so hurt and we said, ‘we told you it’s not going to work.’” Paula reinforces the idea, “You gotta understand you can’t come in and do it your way. You’ve got to listen to the people that’s here. They know it’s gonna go.”

I asked Paula about universities being accountable to communities. She referred back to the university/community partnership. “We can’t hold them accountable,” she says. “We can hold our joint effort accountable when it does not happen. It’s not on one person. It’s not just on the university that this didn’t happen.”

Paula also has some thoughts on working with youth. “You start by just hanging out with them and doing things they want to do. Then work your way in,” she advises, then adds, “Don’t put demands on them and say well you come over here and we’re going to do this and that. You’ve got to leave the door open for them and if they want to come in they’ll come in. You can’t force them in, the parent’s can’t force them in.”

Paula also advises further about universities working with communities. She believes it's all about working together. "Get to know each other. Be part of a grant when you first put it together. The university has to let the community have a say so and the community has to let the university know how they feel and what it is they want to do."

Interview Summary Points

- Universities need to get to know their communities and listen before they do anything else.
- Don't impose your ideas on the community. If you force it, it's not a community thing, it's a university thing.
- University/Community partnerships mean that both the university and the community are accountable.
- When working with youth, start by just hanging out with them. You've got to leave the door open for them and if they want to they'll come in. You can't force them.
- It's all about working together. The university has to let the community have a say and the community needs to let the university know how it feels.

Mr. Robert Lewis, Jr. Boston, MA

"If people have a voice and they have a say and they feel comfortable and feel like they're heard - then you're working towards what's right."

When you meet Robert Lewis, executive director of City-Year, Boston, buckle your seat belt and hang on for the ride. This man, a Boston native, found his way through the streets of Boston and lives today with commitment, love and passion for his city, its people, and its children. Having a conversation with Lewis is like taking a wild but joyful journey - destination "let's make this world a better place." To get a feel for his presence, read his words quickly with great enthusiasm and periodically jump up out of your seat and dance around.

Lewis, the proud son of a single mom, believes he was privilege to get a public education in Boston because he grew up in the bussing times. At 16 he took an active role in the bussing issue because, he says, "someone was trying to prevent me from going to school. From getting what I needed." He attended college and through his civic involvement has spoken at universities and colleges including Harvard, Massachusetts state colleges, Penn State and the University of South Carolina.

Lewis is a dreamer who calls people to action. "We have all the power to make sure that every person that walks on the soil of the United States has equal access to everything. We have enough money to make sure that they do that," he says.

Education and high expectations are guiding pillars for Lewis. But his definition of education is far broader than the 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. classroom experience. For him education includes opportunity, understanding, risk, decision-making, and process. High expectations means high expectations for everyone. “We get kids [at City Year] who grow up in the suburbs, these communities around Boston,” notes Lewis, “and a lot of folks wonder are they going to be doctors and lawyers and are they going to be running companies. But we ask kids in Boston are they going to graduate high school. Why aren’t we looking at that same kid from Boston and asking him or her the same question we ask the kid from the suburbs? I don’t think it’s that you don’t believe they can do it. I think the fear factor is that they might just do it.”

He calls my attention to racial issues as a major barrier in society today. “The racial divide is still up and well,” he says. “It is an outrage that should be at the forefront every single day - and we should be talking about that. It is one of the most divisive forces today.” He uses the example and outrage surrounding Columbine High School and points out this isn’t the first time a tragedy like this has happened. “It happened 20, 30, 40 years ago. The difference is the community. That same day [as Columbine] on page 22 there was a shooting of these young brothers in New York but, oh, that’s expected. We’ve educated the community to think it’s okay when it happens in urban environments to those folks. It is not okay.” Lewis also addresses current discussions that say in twenty or thirty years there won’t be a majority race. There is a lot of talk about that, he says, and he thinks people are afraid. “People are talking about it because all of a sudden we got to figure out how to make sure folks are in the mainstream. Why wait? We’re here now,” he says. He adds, “You say there won’t be a majority race. You’re basically saying the minority will become the majority. Call it what it is. And when you look at it there is a majority race - they’re just people of color. Let’s not be afraid of that. Let’s look at that as an opportunity.”

“THE SAME DAY
[as Columbine]
on page 22
there was a
shooting of these
young brothers
in New York.
But, oh, that’s
expected. We’ve
educated the
community to think
it’s okay when
it happens in urban
environments to
those folks.
It is not okay.”

-Robert Lewis

When asked what colleges and universities, particularly historically white institutions, need to know about working with

youth of color, Lewis smiles and responds “I think you need to be careful that these folks might succeed. These young folks of color. These young people that come from backgrounds that are supposedly [statistically speaking] not supposed to make it. I always ask folks when they talk about these kids - they say they’re risky. And I say, what are they risky of - succeeding?”

He invites higher education to set some high expectations for their work with communities and youth. “I think colleges and universities need to jump ahead of the game and say, ‘hey folks - it’s gonna happen!’ Let’s get way ahead of it. Let’s learn about it and let’s move forward. Don’t do diversity for the sake of saying diversity. Diversity doesn’t mean squat unless it’s inclusive. And if people have a voice and they have a say and they feel comfortable and they feel like they’re heard - then you’re working towards what’s right.” Lewis poses the question to institutions of higher education, “What in the 22nd century do you want people to say about your institution?” He adds, “I hope at the end of it, it is more value driven in what you are looking to do. Playing a role in not just the lives of young people, but in the role of a common community, which is your neighborhood, your city, your state, your town, your region, your country, and our world. Realizing that we have those opportunities in front of us, but we want to make sure those opportunities exist for all. Equal access for all.” He also encourages higher education to ask the community if they’re doing the right thing. “Let me participate in the process. Let me feel like I have work to do to make that institution better...[but] don’t ask unless you want to know it and unless you’re ready to do something with it.”

Lewis believes a community-university relationship should be about a commitment to mutual respect. “A commitment of understanding and a commitment of work” he says. “There is dialog and an inclusive process of both... it has to be mutually beneficial.” He gives the example of Northeastern University in Boston. At Northeastern, every kid who grows up in public housing, who graduates from Boston public schools with at least a B average gets a free scholarship. “That’s an investment back into the community and a great way to be a university that’s in the heart of the city,” he says. According to Lewis, universities have the opportunity to set the example. “They should open their doors to Black scholarships...[create] opportunities for students to take [college] courses while in high school.” He adds, “Boston is the richest community in the world for higher education and look at our school system. You tell me if Harvard, MIT, Tufts, Northeastern, Boston Conservatory, Boston Community College - all of them stood up and said, ‘you know what - let’s start playing the game. We want every single child that comes from Boston to be the best of the best and we’re gonna show the country that we’re world class.’ Would our kids be the best of the best? You’re dog-gone right they would.”

Interview Summary Points

- Very often we get what we expect. Why don't we expect the same of urban youth as we do kids in the suburbs? What are at-risk youth "risky of"? Mr. Lewis thinks they're risky of succeeding.
- The racial divide is a major barrier in society today.
- If higher education wants to make a difference in equal access for all, include the community in the process and be prepared to do something.
- University-community partnerships must be mutually beneficial.
- Higher education could set the pace and make a real impact on youth in the community if they made it a priority.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

How do those most directly affected feel about organizing around the five promises? Have we asked? Are these promises the priorities of your community?

Is our college/university ready to listen to the community, those most directly affected, rather than impose solutions?

Are we ready to be inclusive and honor the contributions of those most directly affected rather than thinking "we know what's best"?

COMMUNITIES AS LIVING SYSTEMS

"Our limited experience has not prepared us for the kind of world that we can create." Dr. Michael Washington, trainer, People's Institute and Director of the Afro-American Studies Program at Northern Kentucky University.

This world we have created is complex. We've created separateness through race and racism, history of white dominance, systems and organizations breeding dependency. All of these things come into play when considering effective support for youth. With all of this complexity, we need to explore new, effective, and easier ways of working together. Ways that support the expression of all voices, reduce fear, foster experimentation, and build relationships. Ways that allow people to create solutions that are unique to their particular situation rather than seeking assimilation to our one-size-fits-all society. This starts with viewing our world and our communities differently. One such way is exploring our communities as living systems.

What is a living system? According to Margaret J. Wheatley, contemporary expert on organizational change, a living system is an organization comprised of living beings that behaves in ways characterized by all living systems. This behavior cannot be

described in neat increments, but rather through an intermingled web of relationships that welcomes communication and change in quick and often concealed ways. Exploring our communities as living systems invites a whole new way to relate that values openness and acknowledges interdependency. It highlights interaction among people within the system.

A living system is comprised of living beings. Working with the natural tendency of life is critical for working effectively with living systems. According to one current definition of “life” in biology, something is alive if it can produce itself. This implies the sanctity of the freedom to choose, to create oneself and to become more as the fundamental element of being alive. Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers, authors, consultants and co-founders of the Berkana Institute, are observing that people need to be creatively involved in how work gets done. Asking for obedience is asking people to give up their vitality, they say, the essence of what makes them alive and what makes our communities work.

In living systems, change happens through emergence. It is not the directive mandated by the manager. It is instead the shifted perspectives, the unexpected partnership or the surprising solution that emerges through process and interaction. It is grounded in identity and a shared understanding of purpose.

This shift in viewing our communities is an invitation and permission to give up control. We have tried to control ourselves to success with our strategic plans and good intentions, but it’s just not working. According to Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, CEOs report that up to 75% of strategic organizational change initiatives do not produce the intended results. In fact, these initiatives often create negative unintended results and management spends significant time recovering from what was supposed to make work better. Life has a natural propensity towards self-organization and creation. Learning to work with that means moving towards creating the communities we want. We can direct intent, but ultimately we don’t know what we will get until we get there. An example of this is raising children. Parents can have all of the dreams and intentions in the world, but the key to success is their willingness to adapt to the unexpected. Children, like our organizations and communities, have a will and mind of their own. Parents guide with intent, but expect the unexpected.

This inevitable demonstration of freedom can be seen on a daily basis in our communities. Youth wearing their shorts a good ten inches below the waist or starting extra-curricular church groups when prayer is forbidden in the classroom. People in our communities exercise their inalienable right to express or assert themselves. Regardless of rules, policy, controls or discrimination, life always emerges in some way to create more of itself. What if we tapped into that natural tendency rather than attempting to control it and generating unintended results?

Authors Frances Moore Lappe and Paul Martin DuBois explore a connected

concept called a Living Democracy. In their book, *The Quickening of America*, they support their conclusion that serious societal concerns will only be solved once more individual citizens are involved in the process and see themselves as problem solvers.

They support that:

- The most effective problem solving comes from those most directly affected.
- The best decisions come from interacting with diverse experiences and perspectives.
- The best decision making is an on-going journey, not a one shot deal.
- To be successful, problem solving must include those that ultimately make the decision.

The element of choice cannot be overlooked in a living system. A living system cannot mandate. It can try, but it will always reap unintended results - hostility, failure, rebellion. We choose what disturbs us. This choice invites us to find shared significance. Living systems come together organized around shared meaning, not obligation.

Imagine individuals at universities/colleges and in the local community free to come together over issues of genuine concern. Imagine that those most directly affected were invited to openly create the solution with no predetermined agenda or model. Creating such an environment is the opportunity for the people and children of our communities. Wheatley highlights four principles for practice:

1) *Participation is not a choice.*

People support what they create. If we ignore people's need to participate, our initiatives and communities will experience unintended consequences — hostility, frustration, rebellion. Life cannot be “bossed” into accepting our well-intentioned plans. It will always assert its right to participate in contributing in one capacity or another - intended or unintended.

2.) *Life always reacts to directives, it never obeys them.*

Our well thought out messages and ideas never result in compliance, only reaction. Working with life means inviting people to think with us as partners, not listen to us as bosses or the ones with the “right” solution. If we insist on obedience, we will get it at the expense of loyalty, intelligence, and responsiveness.

3.) *We do not see “reality.” We each create our own interpretation of what's real.*

Working with others in a living systems means accepting that we all see reality through our unique individuality. Debating who's right and wrong is futile. It only works to separate us from our desire and power in working together. Opening ourselves to hearing the world and perspectives of those we are working with frees us to expand our own thinking and perspectives and become richer, fuller individuals as our communities do the same. We can agree on what needs to be done without having to share identical values or struggle for “rightness.”

4.) *To create better health in a living system, connect it to more of itself.*

We cannot impose change on systems. Systems change themselves as they receive new and richer information. The solution to this is expanding who and what we consider part of the system. Think of this in terms of university/community partnerships to support youth. Who have we acknowledged as part of our system? How could our information and solutions be richer by connecting more people to the system? Youth, teachers, grassroots organizers, parents, the underprivileged, the privileged, foundations, national service volunteers, social service providers, policy makers, faith based organizations. Imagine the richness of information if these people began to talk with each other as a means to learn and change.

Implications for university/college and community partnerships to support youth include:

- Do not set the agenda or determine solutions or directives before you get there.
- Provide a forum that allows for:
 - The choice to attend.
 - An opportunity to engage freely.
 - An opportunity to create the solution.
- Do not expect “THE solution” to emerge, but rather an on-going evolution of workable solutions.

Viewing communities as living systems invites a new way of working together and eliminating boundaries. It also provides the opportunity to create shared values, plans, structures and measures that are more likely to be supported and effective in each individual community.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Are America's Promise and institutions of higher education exploring democratic processes as a means of working together both within our organizations and in our partnerships?

Do models and best practices support living systems and our need to create what works for us? Are there other ways to spend time and money that supports facilitating creation from the bottom up?

What leadership development needs to be in place to assist promise fellows and commitment makers in leading an inclusive process?

What is in the way of meaningful partnerships among organizations with similar missions including COOL and Campus Compact?

Is our loyalty to our models and paradigms or to the best interest of youth and communities?

OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

“We finally figured out we don’t have all the answers. Now we have to realize we also don’t have all the questions.” Catharine Croft, Tulane student intern, from Baltimore, Maryland.

To work effectively as a viable living system, we need a new way of working together that supports our knowledge of living systems. This includes removing barriers so people can work together in a more open environment and giving the people most interested and directly affected the opportunity to create their own solutions and self-organize. Ultimately, we need to create circumstances that deepen the choices that people can make which lead to sustainable systems.

Open Space Technology (OST) is a process we discovered that supports living systems and their need to have ownership and create. This means of conducting meetings removes the constraints of inappropriate structure and control to maximize creativity, ownership, and productivity. It creates the condition to capitalize on the essence of chaos in organizing and allow it to work for you rather than you working against it. Using this method is consistent with the concept of living systems.

OST blossomed as the brainchild of Harrison Owen, organizational consultant, after a grueling organizational effort for an international conference. This 250 participant conference came with an agonizing year of preparation, detail management, ego management and frustration. At the completion of the conference, the only thing that everyone liked was the one thing he had nothing to do with - the coffee breaks. This led to an effort to tap the synergy of a good coffee break within the framework of a productive meeting.

With this fresh in his thoughts, Owen found himself in a small West African village called Balamah working as a photojournalist. There he had the privilege of watching the village prepare for the rites of passage for the boys. This occurred every seven years and was a major celebration. The celebration lasted four days with many rituals and other activities. Throughout it all, in its joyous organization and implementation, there was not one planning committee, not one strategic plan, not one agenda distributed. And yet it was planned and executed in an organized and enjoyable fashion.

From this experience, Owen sought to tap some of the significant elements that he witnessed emerging from the village. These included organizing within the framework of a circle - no head or foot, no right or wrong. He also noticed the use of a community bulletin board and a village marketplace. The bulletin board ultimately is an easy means to communicate what you’re interested in. The marketplace provides a way to bring ideas together in an orderly fashion. These simple concepts work together to form the heart of Open Space Technology. Through years of refinement, collaborative input, and experimentation, OST is a resounding testament to the notion that it is possible to do and

accomplish amazing things without the typical conventions of organizations.

In an Open Space meeting you will discover how to:

- Take risk and develop practical visions.
- Rekindle the passion for your job or community.
- Take responsibility for your own changes of agenda.
- Self-organize with others in work teams.
- Develop greater awareness of yourself, others and the organization/community.
- Flow with the energy of the moment, and with team spirit, for maximum creativity.

Open Space consistently promises that:

- Every single issue that anybody cares enough about to raise will be on the table.
- All issues will receive as much discussion as people care to give them.
- All discussion will be captured in a book and made available to all participants.
- All issues will be prioritized.
- Related issues converged.
- Responsibility assumed for next action steps.

There are several features to an open space meeting. Chairs are arranged in a circle to facilitate communication and there are no tables. The role of the facilitator is to open the space and to hold safe space open. The process acknowledges the potential for leadership in every person. The people in the room create the agenda. Passion and responsibility are the two keys to a successful meeting. Without passion, no one is interested, and without responsibility, no one will follow-up.

There are four principles and one law for conducting an open space meeting, which enable participants to stay focused on the event at hand and acknowledges that the wisdom to resolve the issue is present in the room.

The four principles are:

1. Whoever comes is the right people. (Reinforces that the wisdom to achieve solutions is present in the room and the group is not to worry about who is not present nor to panic about who is.)
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have. (Keeps the attention on the best possible effort in the present, not worrying about what we “should have done.”)
3. Whenever it starts is the right time. (Reminds people that creativity cannot be controlled.)
4. When it’s over, it’s over. (Encourages people to continue their discussion so long as there is energy for it. This may result in a short session not filling the entire time allotted, or it may result in a session longer than time allotted.)

The Law of Mobility states that if persons find themselves in situations where they are neither learning anything or contributing anything, they are responsible for moving to another place, for example to another group meeting. The principles and law enable people to participate in ways that are most meaningful to them.

Having explained the process, the facilitator opens the meeting to let the group create the agenda by identifying topics that are important to the individual regarding the theme. The individual puts his or her topic on a sheet of flip-chart paper, announces the topic to the group, and then posts the topic on the agenda wall. There is a means of assigning room spaces and times for the topics that are generated. When all the topics are up, everyone goes to this “marketplace of topics” and signs up for the topics of discussion that interest them. The facilitator gets out of the way. The group self-manages the discussions and produces a report of the proceedings at the end of their discussion for all to read. The facilitator oversees what is happening at the computer station, which is where the reports from each group get inputted, and reconvenes the group collectively at day’s end and in the morning.

Following the generation of all of the reports, the facilitator moves into a more guided process to identify priorities of the group and then to identify next steps and future action. And then there is a closing circle, further identifying the commitment of participants to the theme and to the future.*

Chris Corrigan, an Open Space Technology consultant in Vancouver, British Columbia, demonstrates the power of self organizing systems in his work with the urban Aboriginal youth community. Vancouver Aboriginal youth face a number of issues including alienation from their traditional territories and culture, loss of identity, racism, drugs, gangs, and prostitution as well as the culmination of problems associated with poverty.

He was approached to facilitate an open space meeting by a group of youth who had attended a previous Open Space Meeting. The theme for the meeting, determined by the youth, was “Youth Empowered Solutions.” It was a four hour meeting attended by 50 local youth. Corrigan notes that they were really exuberant and came up with 20 topics to convene in no time flat. With only four hours, there were two time slots of one hour each. The youth took full advantage of the law of mobility and used it to freely move and exchange thoughts in multiple sessions. In the end, Corrigan noted how eloquently they spoke about how much the process meant to them.

Corrigan has been asked by the youth to work with them and Open Space on an ongoing basis. They have elected to use OST in all of their conferences, planning meetings, and retreats. They will also receive basic training in Open Space so ultimately they will be able to facilitate the process themselves. Corrigan offers, “I feel sometimes that,

*The preceding information came from the web page www.openspacetechnology.com/about.html

in learning and practicing OST, it's as if I have been given a gift from a genie.... 'You have one wish.' Okay, let's see what kind of genie you are. I wish for a miraculous meeting technology that taps people's spirit, truly empowers and changes things for the better. 'Done.'"

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

How might Open Space Technology work at our organizations/institutions? What is a good starting point?

What is in the way of exploring new ways of working together such as Open Space Technology?

*P*ROCESS AND IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES AT TULANE UNIVERSITY

As mentioned earlier, one of the original expected outcomes of this project was that Tulane University would make a commitment to America's Promise. However, with all of the preceding information and experiences revealing itself to us, shaping our initiative around the five promises of America's Promise seemed inconsistent at best. With community feedback including specifically "leave your paradigms at home" and a general community suspicion for initiatives not created within the community, it seemed that the most important thing was to put supporting youth at the forefront regardless of what we called it. There was also confusion both within the university and the larger community that America's Promise was a new organization seeking to "recreate the wheel." We wanted to focus on organization as process, but when we talked about America's Promise and the five promises people from other organizations saw themselves as separate from us.

It also became important to create an environment that invited anyone with passion and responsibility to come to the table and participate. It didn't seem right to tell people that we were inviting them to the table, to an open environment, to create support for youth as long as it fit within these five promises. The five promises began to feel like a box. And we knew we wanted to support youth and communities outside of that box.

We decided instead to focus on process and to create a mechanism whereby anyone at Tulane or in the community who had passion and responsibility for the topic at hand could roll up her or his sleeves and participate. We scheduled an Open Space meeting for a Friday evening and all day Saturday. We were taking a risk in asking for such a big time commitment, but thought that time for the process was important. Our theme focused around the question, "How can Tulane in partnership with the community expand

its capacity to support youth?”

We formed a small planning committee to assist with spreading the word and inviting people. Collectively, we invited university colleagues and students, grassroots organizers, parents, youth, social workers, and non-profit professionals. We attended community meetings as well as the local children’s services collaborative. We spread the word on the university-based list-serv and in the local paper. We made specific, targeted requests for participation as well as general, broad-based invites. Through it all, we kept an important principle of living systems and open space in mind - whoever comes is the right people and surprising things happen when people come together out of personal commitment and passion.

The meeting itself was highly productive and successful. There were about 40 participants, many of whom stayed for only part of the process. Participants had an amazing range of experiences and perspectives from committed citizen or involved professor to student activist or concerned parent. As is standard in open space, the participants first had the opportunity to create the agenda. Agenda items included:

- Empowerment. Make empowerment a goal, not just a byproduct. It’s a risk, but it’s also the point.
- Keeping it real - community involvement, avoiding politics.
- Being accountable to the community/youth Tulane “serves.”
- Tulane Resources.
- What does the community want and how can we find out?
- How can Tulane connect with the community?
- Human and Financial Resources.
- Tulane (along with other local colleges) working collaboratively to provide resources to local youth.

By late Saturday afternoon, we had documented reports from each session, prioritized the group’s five most pressing issues, and discussed and identified immediate next steps. As a result of this process, the following immediate next steps were identified:

- Inform people about issues/problems going on.
- Hold a town meeting at a local church.
- Seek training on training people to teach within their own communities/mobilizing community people. What current projects could be adapted?
- Recognize this network/energy and continue discussions and work.
- Bring in people to give workshops/training to students or organizing.
- Hold a big town meeting. Ask community members to raise issues. Ask community members what they can do. Ask how Tulane students/faculty can help. Then ask a professor to shape a service -learning course around this.
- Where can students/faculty/staff go to meet, learn and listen to community? Need a starting point.

- Create a community service council with representatives from each organization and its community members.
- Create a community research evaluation board that reviews, approves, and requires accountability.

New relationships and connections were formed between the university and the community. I received informal feedback from several people regarding how surprised they were at how much they learned and gained and how much meaning the process had to them. Another participant was surprised at the level of honesty there was at the end when talking about race issues. In a phone call with a participant and colleague, she volunteered the information that planned to work on the piece “she was responsible for” after the rush with the university’s commencement. The process fostered ownership and openness, and it focused on what had meaning to the people involved.

Following this meeting, a Tulane faculty member and student took the initiative and secured funds to meet again using Open Space Technology. We formed a planning committee comprised of the director of Upward Bound, the director of service learning, a community activist, a student activist, and myself. There was good representation of people of color in the planning committee. Collectively, with the end of the spring semester and New Orleans community festivals burgeoning, we opted for a three hour Saturday meeting. We focused less on advertising and more on personal relationships to invite people to attend. Our theme was based on the emerged priority from the previous meeting, “Community-University Partnerships. Keeping it Real and Moving to Action.”

We had a turnout of about thirty people. The participants included grassroots leaders, Tulane faculty and staff, community parents, youth from the Tulane Upward Bound program, and Tulane students. The issues raised included:

- Community Involvement (Program Planning and Participation)
- Multi-Ethnic Communities for more involvement and integration of the public school system.
- How to create empowerment among youth.
- Education Reform.

The general feeling during the closing of Open Space was that the second meeting had been productive but it is now time hold our meetings within the communities that work with Tulane. Comments on the evaluation forms included, “Good stuff,” “Let’s keep it up,” and “I do enjoy the participation.”

The bottom line is that using process is gradual and unfolding. The initial meetings are a mere starting point and, as demonstrated above, process is taking us to the next point.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Exploring the dynamics of racism, working with process and living systems have implications for leadership development. Developing our leaders is critical to expanding our capacity to create authentic university-community partnerships to support youth.

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF.

My personal experience with this project demonstrates the transformative power of personal experience, education, and openness as a critical component of any initiative to create real change in any capacity. The essence, the root of any national initiative needs to include the value of individual and personal transformation and provide opportunities to explore that personal transformation. Collectively we are only as wise as the culmination of voices.

A Social Change Model of Leadership Development, created out of the Higher Education Research Institute - UCLA, explores self-knowledge as a fundamental aspect of leadership development. It explores this development through three elements - consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment. This model acknowledges that these elements of self-knowledge are the foundation for social change.

Consciousness of self. Consciousness of self means knowing oneself. This includes not only a general knowledge of self such as talents, interests, concerns, limitations, goals and values. It implies a deeper sense that one might call “mindfulness,” or “an ability and propensity to be an accurate observer of your current actions and state of mind.” (p. 31, Social Change Model). It is an intense self-honesty. This includes knowing our thoughts and biases, the thoughts behind our thoughts. The ones we don’t tell people, but hide in our minds and affect our actions. The authors of the model point out that self awareness is especially important when it comes to our personal limitations because “unaware people tend to project on to others their own limitations and unacceptable beliefs and thus deprive themselves of the ability to see and hear others as they really are.” (p. 32) Our own limitations affect our ability to come together effectively and authentically and affect our ability to work through complex dynamics such as those of racism.

Congruence. Congruence is thinking, feeling, and acting consistently towards others. It refers to our most deeply held thoughts and the thoughts we consider most personal. Congruence is closely connected to Consciousness of Self as it is difficult to be congruent without really knowing oneself. Congruence is at the heart of social change and group cohesion. When we are living lives of congruence our ability to work collectively and authentically is significantly increased.

Commitment. Commitment implies intensity and duration and requires significant involvement. Commitment is not something that we’re coerced into doing or feel obli-

gated to do. Commitment originates from within. It is where passion and responsibility live. We find commitment through knowing ourselves, living congruently, and connecting with others to create social change.

Our own personal commitment to developing ourselves as well as providing the means for others to do the same is a critical component of enhancing our ability to work together for the good of our youth. The three “C’s” are not the solution, only a framework for starting to focus inward as we look to create change.

LEADING PROCESS

Working with living systems and process has different implications for the role of leadership. Living systems, collaborative and complex in nature, imply the opportunity for multiple leaders to emerge. Living systems and collaboration are about relationships and the way human beings work together. Relying on process opens organizations to learning and growth.

According to Wheatley, “leaders have to forego any desire they may have held for complete repetition or sameness, whether it be of persons or processes.” In a living system, we all need to know that there is a way for us to contribute, to include ourselves, to provide some input.

Leaders of process and systems do best to explore how they can connect more of the system to itself and expand who is included in the system. Wheatley specifically suggests the following:

- Increase the diversity, numbers, and connections within the system.
- Bring in more remote or ignored members.
- Create a means for everyone across the system to access information and each other.
- Create situations where people can create more information.

For university/community partnerships to support youth, examples of this may include:

- Attending meetings of minority student organizations. Invite them to be part of the process to support youth. Ask how they’d like to contribute. Invite them to participate in an Open Space Meeting.
- Attend Community Based meetings. Explore potential partnerships. Can the university contribute? If so, how? Be prepared to meet with them in their space.
- Hold a small Open Space meeting of diverse participants to create new information around the topic, “How can we facilitate equal access to all of the information emerging from this initiative?”

The Berkana Institute describes these leaders as Leaders for Life. They explore such leaders as ones that are driven to a vocation, who feel compelled to serve. They are driven by their hearts and their desire to solve the afflictions and problems they experience and observe. Leaders for life:

- Believe in People
- Use participative process to solve intractable problems.
- Rely on a know how to foster human creativity and commitment.
- Convene and host conversations that really matter.
- Create trusting relationships.
- Motivate people with meaningful work.
- Express gratitude and appreciation.
- Know they cannot lead alone.
- Know that human nature is the blessing, not the problem.

Power is rooted in knowing that there is no power equal to the power of a community conversing with itself about what it wants.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

How can America's Promise and universities and colleges develop leaders as a means to supporting communities, the national initiative, and local youth?

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

It is important to acknowledge the enormity of the questions raised and the significance and opportunity in simply raising the questions. It is also freeing to acknowledge that exploring new ways of working together can provide a way to move through the questions in the best interest of our communities, our youth, and ultimately ourselves. The recommendations here are not to suggest that any of this can be wrapped up in a neat package or a well illustrated and thought out model. To suggest a model would be inconsistent with everything just mentioned. The opportunity is to create what works for each of our communities, uniquely and independently, lead by the voices of those most directly affected.

Relying on working in process such as Open Space Technology gives us the opportunity to come together, inclusively, and sift through our questions. It frees us from having to figure everything out on our own and having to “get it right.” Trusting process is an invitation to work through even the toughest questions.

APPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND AMERICA'S PROMISE.

Open Space Technology and process start with organizing an inclusive, interested, and responsible group of people around a question. For the purpose of America's Promise and higher education, this inclusive group must comprise those most directly affected including:

- People living in poor communities receiving services from non-profits and youth organizations.
- Youth and parents representing all races.
- Grassroots organizers.

Choose a guiding question

This paper has raised some significant questions, any of which is a starting point for working with process and Open Space Technology. Examples include:

National Level - America's Promise

“If we could create America's Promise, what would it look like?”

“How can America's Promise expand its capacity to support locally instigated and created initiatives to support youth?”

“How are the dynamics of racism affecting the America's Promise initiative?”

National Level - America's Promise and Higher Education

“How can higher education support local youth in true partnership with the community?”

“What is our vision for the role higher education will play in supporting local youth?”

“How can the America's Promise initiative best support community/higher education partnerships to support youth?”

Individual Institutions of Higher Education

“What is the role of our university/college in supporting local youth?”

“How can our university/college, in partnership with the community, expand its capacity to support youth?”

ThIS welcomes a new vision for America's Promise and Higher education. A vision that starts with building relationships FIRST. From there, forming a design team of people from the grassroots community and the university to decide on the theme/guiding question to begin the process. Let process lead you. When people most directly affected are invited to participate in the process, workable solutions emerge without imposition.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**Colleges and Universities**

- Hold an Open Space Meeting to explore the issue of racism.
- Support educational initiatives such as Un-doing Racism to expand the university/college and community's capacity to understand the complex dynamics of university/community relationships
- Create leadership development opportunities that support development of self and leading process for students, staff, faculty and community members .

Higher Education and America's Promise

- Provide national training or resources that support campuses/communities using a self-organizing facilitation method such as Open Space Technology.
- Provide an open means for universities and colleges to explore their connections to each other and the community, such as a conference using OST.
- Hold an Open Space meeting for current universities of commitment and their community-based partners. Give them an opportunity to create what they need to take this initiative further.
- Invite national organizations including Campus Compact and Campus Outreach Opportunities League (COOL) to an Open Space Meeting to freely explore the potential of working together.

America's Promise

Bottom line, this experience has taught me how important it is for local communities to have the power to create a means to support youth that works for them. It has also taught me how unaccustomed we are to doing this. These are skills we need to develop and America's Promise has the opportunity to do so.

- Offer the five promises as a guide and not a mandate. The five promises are only helpful if they make sense to those directly affected in the community.
- Hold an Open Space meeting to create the plans to take America's Promise to the next level. This meeting must include the voices of those most directly affected by the initiative, youth and the grassroots community.
- Don't spend national staff time creating models for commitment makers. Models do not give people the opportunity to create what works for them and are a product of limited, detached participation. What works as a model for one community may not work for another. Those creating the models often have not had the experience of being a child in a poor community with limited resources. With creating what works for them, a community has ownership and a real investment in seeing the initiative work. Don't deprive people the opportunity to feel power and help themselves.

- Provide appropriate training and support for PromiseFellows.
 - Provide training for PromiseFellows that prepares them to go into complex, critical situations where their role is not to “do” but to facilitate the community “doing.”
 - Provide personal development for PromiseFellows that invites them to critically reflect on their role in the community, institutional racism, and how they may or may not be contributing to that paradigm.
 - Provide local support that nurtures their development and honors the complexity of the situation.
- Provide a way that average citizens committed to supporting youth can connect with the national movement. Current structure does not allow for interested, committed groups to emerge from within the informal community. Communities as living systems support what they create. If America’s Promise is controlled locally by government initiatives, very often there is not freedom for those directly affected to create what they need rather than the charge they’ve been given.

Individuals

- Be the change you want to see in the world.” - Gandhi
- Participate in a workshop on institutionalized racism.
- Join a discussion group on institutionalized racism.
- Read books that challenge your current constructs on youth, race, service, and leadership.
- Ask questions.
- Listen.

RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

RACISM

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond

New Orleans, LA (504)944-2354

Undoing Racism. A philosophy of international social change. By Ronald Chisom and Michael Washington. Published by the People's Institute Press.

Undoing Racism Workshop

National Conference for Community and Justice

www.nccj.org (212)206-0006

A human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry, and racism in America, the NCCJ promotes understanding and respect among all races, religions, and cultures through advocacy, conflict resolution, and education.

Anytown. An NCCJ summer program for youth and emerging leaders where participants share perspectives on race, culture, and diversity.

The President's Initiative on Race

www2.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/america.html

A World of Difference Institute

www.adl.org (212)885-7800

Diversity education programs utilized by schools, universities, corporations, community organization, and law enforcement agencies. Mission is to combat prejudice, promote democratic ideals, and strengthen pluralism.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

McNight, John (1995). The Careless Society. Community and its counterfeits. Basic Books, NY

LIVING SYSTEMS

Margaret J. Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers.

The Berkana Institute. www.berkana.org

A Simpler Way. 1996. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco.



On-line articles.
“Bringing Life to Organizational Change”
“Remembering Human Goodness”

Harrison Owen

Open Space Technology: A user’s guide. Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc. San Francisco.

Dalar Associates.

www.openspacetechnology.com

Training in Open Space Technology.

Study Circles Resource Center.

www.cpn.org/SCRC (860) 928-2616

Helps communities use study circles to involve large numbers of citizens in public dialog and problem solving on critical issues such as race, education, crime, and youth issues.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.

<http://greenleaf.org>

Leaders for Life.

Berkana Institute. www.berkana.org/working/LeadersForLife.htm

The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond

New Orleans, LA (504)944-2354

Expeditionary Leadership Institute

<http://blueridgeeli.com/eli/>

Reading

hooks, bell (1994). Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom. ISBN 0415908086

Chatterjee, Debashis (1998). Leading Consciously. A Pilgrimage Toward Self-Mastery. Butterworth-Heinemann, Boston.

A Social Change Model of Leadership Development (1996). Higher Education Research Institute - UCLA. Distributed by the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs, University of Maryland - College Park.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Astin, A. & Astin, H. (1996). A Social Change Model of Leadership Development. Higher Education Research Institute, University California, Los Angeles.

“Changing America. Indicators of social and economic well-being by race and Hispanic origin.” September 1998. The Council of Economic Advisors for the President’s Initiative on Race.

Carmichael & Hamilton (1992). Black Power. The Politics of Liberation in America.

Chisom, R. and Washington, M. (1997). Undoing Racism. A Philosophy of International Social Change. New Orleans, People’s Institute Press.

DuBois, P. M. and Lappe, F. M. (1994). The Quickening of America. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Harmann, T. (1998). The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight. New York: Harmony Books.

Kellner-Rogers, M. and Wheatley, M. (1996). A Simpler Way. San Francisco: Barret Koehler Publishers.

McNight, J. (1995). The Careless Society. Community and Its Counterfeits. New York: Basic Books.

Owen, H. (1997). Open Space Technology: A User’s Guide. San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Publishers.

APPENDIX A

AMERICA'S PROMISE COMMITMENT FORM

**COMMITMENT SUBMISSION FORM
For Higher Education**

Date: _____ **AP Point of Contact:** _____

AP Telephone Number: _____

NAME OF INSTITUTION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

WEB Site URL: _____

PRESIDENT: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ *State:* _____ *Zip Code:* _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Main Point of Contact: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ *State:* _____ *Zip Code:* _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Media Point of Contact: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ *State:* _____ *Zip Code:* _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

AMERICA'S PROMISE
THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH™

1. Description of the college or university. (Please provide information on your mission, number of students, number of faculty, and information on any community outreach efforts.) Please include your annual report.

Your Mission: _____

Number of Students: _____ *Number of Faculty:* _____

Community Outreach Efforts: _____

2. What promise(s) does the organization intend to provide?

(Please circle all that apply)

- **Promise 1:** Ongoing relationships with a caring adults — parents, mentors, tutors or coaches
- **Promise 2:** Safe places with structured activities during non-school hours
- **Promise 3:** A healthy start and future
- **Promise 4:** Marketable skills through effective education
- **Promise 5:** Opportunities to give back through community service

3. Please describe proposed commitment in as much detail as possible.

AMERICA'S PROMISE
THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH™

4. Please provide locations and communities where the commitment will reach children.



Location A: _____

Location B: _____

Location C: _____

Location D: _____

5. Please describe the implementation plan and timeline for the commitment in as much detail as possible.

6. How many children is the proposed commitment expected to reach?

7. Is the proposed commitment a “new undertaking” or an expansion of an existing program or initiative? (Please describe which part is new)

8. Does the institution have the resources needed to fulfill the commitment?

YES _____ NO _____

AMERICA'S PROMISE
THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH[®]

9. How will the institution track the commitment?

10. What other organizations (not-for-profit or for-profit/internal or external), if any, will be involved as partners in executing the proposed commitment?

11. Do you plan to coordinate with the local Community of Promise in the location(s) where your commitment is reaching children? If there is not currently a Community of Promise in your location(s), would you be willing to work to establish one?

12. Has America's Promise received an official letter from the president or chancellor of your college or university?

YES _____ NO _____

13. How would you like your commitment to appear on the America's Promise Web site and/or in America's Promise publications (200 words or less)?

When this form is completed, (Please attach additional pages if necessary), it can be returned by:

E-mail: MichelleR@americaspromise.org

Fax: (703) 535-3904

Mail: Michelle Rothengast, National Commitments Director
America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth
909 N. Washington Street, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314-1556

If you have any questions in completing this form, please contact:
Michelle Rothengast at (703) 535-3848 or by e-mail at MichelleR@americaspromise.org.

APPENDIX B

TULANE'S OPEN SPACE INVITATION

imagine the promise

You are invited to create Tulane's vision for working with the community to provide resources to local youth. Plan to attend our two day think tank on *Friday, March 24, 7-9:30 p.m. and Saturday, March 25, 9a.m. – 6p.m.* ***It will be held at the Caroline Richardson Building near Newcomb Place and Willow St. on the Tulane Campus.***

THE FIVE PROMISES

Our mission is guided by the five promises of America's Promise, the national initiative for youth led by Colin Powell. These promises are not to limit the conversation and will be used only as the group finds them beneficial. The five promises are:

- An ongoing relationship with a caring adult – parent, mentor, tutor or coach.
- A safe place to be with structured activities during non-school hours.
- A healthy start.
- A marketable skill through effective education.
- An opportunity to give back through community service.

This initiative is not about creating another program at Tulane, but rather about coming together with the resources that we already have and working together to become more than we were separately. We believe that when we come together with youth, passion, and commitment at the forefront, we will find surprising ways of supporting this initiative.

This initiative is also not intended to be a comprehensive solution to supporting youth in New Orleans, but instead about carving out an appropriate way for people at Tulane to provide resources to youth.

WHO IS INVITED?

- Community organizers working with youth.
- Community members with passion and commitment for the topic.
- Tulane students, faculty, and staff directly involved with providing resources to youth.
- Tulane students, faculty, and staff with passion and commitment for the topic.
- Children's service providers.
- City and state America's Promise staff.
- National Organizations directly connected to America's Promise or support for youth

PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES:

1. All participants must have a natural passion for the issue and a willingness to be responsible for the follow-through.
2. A willingness to put the best interest of youth at the forefront of all decision-making.
3. No action will be done for or to the community, only with the community.
4. No personal agendas.
5. Participants work to accept the limitations of humanity - both in ourselves and others.
6. A willingness to focus on creating solutions and seeing the positive.

OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

This meeting, Imagine America's Promise at Tulane, will be guided by an innovative method of meeting facilitation called Open Space Technology (OST). OST is a new way of working together – everybody participates and decides what the agenda will be. OST must be experienced to understand, but makes the following specific promises:

1. Every single issue that anybody cares enough about to raise will be on the table.
2. All issues will receive as much discussion as people care to give them.
3. All discussion will be captured in a book and made available to all participants.
4. All issues will be prioritized.
5. Related issues converged.
- 6 Responsibility assumed for next step actions.

Feedback from past OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY participants:

- More energy and vitality here than at any convention.
- All of my meetings will now be in Open Space!
- You are responsible if you didn't get what you wanted out of this. Take ownership of your problem. For me this was an exciting, positive, experience. Let's keep it going.
- This was an exhilarating experience. To see so many people come together with differing ideas and motivations and in a free and open format come together to collate those ideas into a plan of action and unity. Powerful!
- The process provided a voice for all that wished to use it.

If this is important to you, please make a commitment to attend. Call 862-8000 x1538 or email nbiver@mailhost.tcs.tulane.edu to confirm your participation.

For more information on this project and America's Promise, visit our web site at www.tulane.edu/~amerprom.

APPENDIX C

NOTES FROM TULANE'S OPEN SPACE MEETING

Top Five Issues/Opportunities *that emerged from the question “How can Tulane, in partnership with the community, expand its capacity to support youth?”*

1. WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY WANT AND HOW CAN WE FIND OUT?

Associated Issues

The motivation for and ideas behind programs should come from community – not Tulane.

Let the community know and see our sincerity and concern (action to be taken).

Talk to parents of the children you assist.

Assessing community voice as a whole (not just 1 or 2 organizations/groups).

Action To Be Taken

Do survey of community needs – plan WITH the community.

Plan meetings in churches without a set agenda – like a “speak out.”

Have long term people to work on the programs. It has to be longer than 5 years.

Real involvement and power in the decision-making process.

Stop keeping concerns silent.

Use assessment/intake info to plan programs the community needs (not just for statistics) and could benefit from (self-sufficiency.)

Equal distribution of resources and opportunity to create sustained community development projects that produce positive results.

2. HOW CAN TULANE CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY?

Associated Issues

Race.

Tulane-Community History.

Listen to Community's Interests.

Socio-economic Status Barrier.

Stereotyping of People.

Those “in charge.”

Building relationships one by one.

Action to be Taken

Go there – example: today's events could have been held at a community center.

Involve community in planning phase.

Joint funding for collaborative programs.

Community Service council at Tulane – with community members centrally involved.

Be empathetic to community needs – do not ASSUME that because of research information that you know what is needed.

Have a community based research approval team that has to weigh costs/benefits of research in the community and has the authority to approve/disapprove.

3. EMPOWERMENT

Associated Issues

Lack of Empowerment.

How does Tulane perpetuate a lack of power?

How does power play a part in each problem/issue community raiser?

Let kids know that they are responsible to give too!

Trust between community and people/organizations that are empowering them.

Poverty/environment

Community commitment to programs as well as organizers' commitment

Self-esteem and emotional health (kids and their families)

Lack of knowledge by people of government policy and procedures

Action To Be Taken

Give kids the skills to help each other (tutoring, peer meditation).

Teach kids how to use their voices, why it's important to act and how to speak and act (take action) effectively (use their voice and resources.)

Inform/educate community members about services available to them.

Role models that they can identify with.

General and program specific training.

Must have a vision – let them know that the power is with their goals and what they want to accomplish.

Maybe we should redesign community service so that we train people (students, etc.) to be organizers rather than people who go do jobs that we pay institutions to do.

Provide education opportunities of residents. Formal and informal.

Do a power analysis on your own self and community.

4. KEEPING IT REAL – COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Associated Issues

“Buy in.” (Can't make anything happen unless community understands and wants it.)

Politics.

Must be on community terms and led by community members, community-driven.

Why do you want to help? (Just for resume filler, etc?)

“Be focused.”

Actions to be taken

Inform community/needs assessment.

Diversity of ages, sex, ethnicity, and race reflecting community profile in creating involvement strategies.

Form committees of parents to oversee that program objectives are met.

Make connections with people in the community – form a trust base.

Identify formal and informal leadership with the community.

Go in, ask what the problems are, ask what community members can and want to do about it. Provide training and resources as asked for by the community.

Have real committed relationships (not just because part of job description.)

5. BEING ACCOUNTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY/YOUTH TULANE “SERVES.”

Associated Issues.

Can college students (4 years) truly be accountable?

Power structure – choose to work within an institution that allows you to be a GOOD gatekeeper so you're accountable to people, not money.

Will Tulane initiate and then pull out?

Actions To Be Taken.

Create opportunities to receive feedback.

-Published reports.

-Community meetings.

-Money! Who has it and how is it spent?

Create an accountability system for all individuals involved.

Create and implement an evaluation plan.

- Programs
- Students
- Recipients
- Community Members
- Outreach and selection process
- Select measurable objectives – outcomes prior to program implementation.

Assist community in finding other resources.

Find solutions/plan of action for issues raised/found with community input.

Imagine America's Promise at Tulane

Immediate Next Steps

- Inform people about issues/problems going on.
- Hold a town meeting at a church.
- Seek training on training people to teach within their own communities/mobilizing community people (adults, high school students). What current projects could be adapted?
- Recognize this network/energy and continue discussions and work.
- Bring in people to give workshops/training to students on organizing.
- Hold a big town meeting. Ask community members to raise issues. Ask community members what they can do. Ask how Tulane students/faculty can help. Ask a teacher to offer a class with service learners.
- Where can students/faculty/staff go to meet, learn, and listen to community?

Need a starting point.

- Create a community service council with reps from each organization and its community members.
- Create a Community Research Evaluation Board that reviews and approves university based projects and research that affects the community.