

Initiative for Regional and Community Transformation

Strategic Learning Today...Transformation Tomorrow

Opportunity and Equity in a Global Society

A Case for a Unified Approach

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Preface

The IRCT mission says that it “assists community residents and leaders in the public and private sectors frame workable policies that will bolster the political, economic, and social participation of marginalized communities within larger metropolitan economies and societies.” This paper written by Paul Scully, a member of the IRCT’s Advisory Board, is just such an attempt to think through workable strategies to promote communities of opportunity. Paul is a community organizer—and a great one at that. We welcome this important contribution by a seasoned architect of change as much as we recognize there are many other strategies that might get us to those communities of opportunity.

The IRCT will always be a venue where scholars and architects of change can find a place to discuss reasoned solutions. We see this as part of the democratic project that this country has embarked on, recognizing that no one person or institution has a monopoly on social improvement. We commend this paper to you in hope that it encourages readers to think about how our democracy can be strengthened and improved for all of us.

Roland V. Anglin
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Introduction

Andrew Barlow, in his book *Between Fear and Hope*, sees the modern suburban gated community as a by-product of globalization and the pressures it generates on U.S. workers and residents. The forces of fierce global competition for low-wage labor, the surge of immigrant workers in the United States, the flight of industry from our major manufacturing centers, advancements in automation, and innovations in communication technology have all put the American worker on the auction block with the rest of the world.

Barlow presents the gated community not as a metaphor but as an actual by-product of the fear and economic insecurity that are pushing people further apart and creating a more fragmented and alienated society at home, while the world is moving closer and closer together through technology, communication, and the movement of capital and labor. He shows how historic patterns of racial and economic segregation are being employed in new ways in the United States as they are overlaid by the new realities of the global marketplace.

This paper will examine these forces of economic change and social/political division, in order to understand and overcome them. Without this understanding we cannot begin to create the conditions necessary to change inequitable policies and insecurity that are undermining middle- and working-class families today. More importantly, it attempts to articulate an approach to broad-based, interracial organizing that recognizes both the challenges and opportunities handed to us under these new and changing economic and political arrangements. It will look at organizing opportunities in the face of the new global society, as these new realities shape local relationships, and how organizing can

and must respond in a more sophisticated, realistic way to the problems and contradictions that emerge from these arrangements.

Divisive Forces Affecting Americans

Most Americans are moving toward more income equality. While the wealth gap is widening, the space between the middle class and Americans at the very bottom is actually narrowing. This is not because people at the bottom are moving up; it is because people in the middle are moving down—fast.¹

There is no better indicator of the radical shift in the American economy than the meteoric rise of Wal-Mart as the world's largest employer and the swift free fall of General Motors and the Ford Motor Company in the beginning of the twenty-first century. The implications of this seismic economic shift for America is enormous and of sweeping historic significance.

For the largest employer to suddenly switch from one of the highest-paying manufacturers in the nation—one that provides health insurance, pensions, and union-protected job security—to one that is vehemently anti-union, pays some of the world's lowest wages, uses part-time undocumented labor, and provides no job security, health insurance, or retirement is having a corrosive effect on every aspect of our economy. This is especially true for working- and middle-class people and their communities.²

The most obvious and immediate effect is on people's income and buying power. As fewer workers make GM wages and more make Wal-Mart wages, fewer middle- and working-class Americans can afford the lifestyles they once had or aspired to have. Millions of American can no longer afford the homes, cars, and neighborhoods or college educations they, or their parents, were once able to acquire.

Much of this is still hidden under a thin but opaque veil of credit. Americans are the most indebted people in the world, and personal and family debt is continuing to grow.³ Increasingly, the economic impact of the new economy is beginning to be seen and felt as the veil becomes worn and frayed. Credit can hide, to a point, the impact on

consumer buying power, but it is less able to conceal the growing cost of health care, college education, transportation, homes, and property taxes.

Destruction of the Black Male Worker

These dynamics are wearing thin the fabric of the middle-class compact—good jobs, insurance, pensions, and home ownership. This standard of living, which many white working-class families achieved or strived for in the second half of the twentieth century, is becoming literally only an American dream. But for many African American workers, the slide backward has been more sudden and much harsher. Black male workers have seen the most dramatic economic decline of any group of Americans. Workers who were, only a generation ago, forming and joining unions in manufacturing, government, hotel, janitorial, and other service industries are now seeing their sons and grandsons experience the highest unemployment rates since the Great Depression.⁴ Black college enrollment is down, and black workers account for the largest share of the decline in labor union membership.⁵

Place, Race, Class, and the Destruction of the Urban Core

All during the economic expansion of the late twentieth century there was a corresponding physical expansion in metropolitan regions across the country. As African American workers migrated to cities and onto assembly lines before and after World War II, white workers began to flee to segregated neighborhoods while African Americans were steered into black ghettos.⁶ But today many older whites and blacks still talk nostalgically about the old days when people of different races and ethnicities lived (almost) together in city neighborhoods. Compared to today's standards, they did.

It wasn't until the civil rights movement and successful desegregation efforts, especially the Brown I and II decisions ordering the integration of public schools, that whites began to scatter in a great migration to suburban school districts across each metropolitan region. When the federal government drew the line at the city boundary, refusing to enforce integration of suburban schools, white flight really took off and metropolitan regions came to look increasingly like a slipshod patchwork of hundreds of small, self-contained bastions of white privilege and exclusivity.⁷ And because of a le-

that combination of racialized federal housing policies, as well as land use and transportation decisions, most blacks were left behind in cities that rapidly began to suffer from the decay associated with the flight of tax base, jobs, and the remainder of their middle class.

Since most white working people are generally not as privileged as they think they are, many of these suburban towns turned out not to be the places of peaceful prosperity that they were said to be. In fact, not all whites got the same deal. Some got the prize towns—those with the malls, office parks, and lots of wealthy white people. Others got the towns that didn't make the cut. They didn't get the powerful expressway intersections and the tax base that can flow from those politically driven decisions. Many of these towns got poor white people along with middle- and working-class people. They tended to have a more mixed housing stock to accommodate a more economically diverse population.

These arrangements, established during the late 1950s and into the 1970s, along with the global economic forces described previously, set the stage for the current structure of class and racial segregation and the political decline and economic collapse of middle-class America.⁸

The Betrayal of the White Working Class and the Decline of Older Suburbs

Millions of white workers moved to these suburbs escaping the crime and poverty of the urban core communities that they were abandoning. Many were motivated by racial fears and prejudices fueled and perpetuated by government policies. They were also motivated by powerful economic incentives created by government policy and a new set of American values promoted by the real estate industry and the promises of a new consumer-driven society.⁹

But the promise began to look as if it were being broken as many of these towns began to face the realities of paying for their own schools and services without an industrial or major commercial tax base. And as African Americans began to flee the cities in greater and greater numbers, the myth of security, safety, and prosperity so closely associated with whiteness began to be challenged. In some towns that myth

was only further reinforced as whites fled to newer towns farther from the core and a new kind of municipal decline was invented—the older built-out and decaying suburb. Where most cities took well over half a century to go through their uniquely American boom and bust cycle, the older suburbs could have a life cycle of twenty years or less.¹⁰

This new dynamic of flight and shifting migrations from suburb to suburb during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s left the regional suburban patchwork pockmarked with pockets of poverty, abandoned strip malls, and declining schools. But it also did something else: it sorted the suburbs out into economically and racially segregated communities much like those older city neighborhoods but now with a new twist. Each suburban town was now on its own left to fend for survival in this new terrain. You lived off your own tax base, and if you did not think far enough ahead to allow housing affordable for poor people, you had to take care of them yourself. And if, as a resident, you didn't like it, you could always move to a town with a big new mall, lots of money for schools and services, and no poor people—providing, that is, you made enough money to buy a house out there—whether you were white or not.

Dying Congregations, the Defeat of Organized Labor, and the Decline of Urban Political Power

With the swift decline in urban populations as a percentage of each region, big city political machines were losing both the power to help people who stayed and their relevance to those who left for the suburbs. Working-class populations who in the past had competed for power in large political organizations through ethnic and civic organizations, party structures, churches, and unions were now fragmented and vulnerable; they became split between the big industrial cities and their many suburbs, with their local and ethnic ties shattered. In the past, even competing and belligerent groups could be part of large labor unions and big city political organizations that gave them some access to power and some ability to compete with elites around issues of wages, taxes, services, and education, and generally keep corporate greed in check.

Union membership declined around the same time as the great suburban migrations were taking place. As populations moved away from union strongholds, major industries fled overseas, and the job market shifted to a suburban service economy; with the exception of public-sector unions, labor became less and less influential in national party politics. As a result, labor laws were weakened; corporations began to bust unions with impunity; and public support for unions declined as result of corporate-sponsored anti-union propaganda. This led to a cycle of deunionization that continues to this day as most American jobs shift to corporations that have never even been unionized, in communities that are hostile to unions and as Americans are forced to compete with a global labor market.

The shrinkage of organized labor and the decline in urban populations have left working people very few institutions or political structures that give them any access to power. The power of corporations is now unchecked by any counterforce except other corporations.¹¹

With the decline of these large organizations, religious congregations and other community institutions have no political structure to operate in, other than their denominations, which, in the United States, have never been united enough or large enough to act on a power stage themselves.

Globalization and the Economic Exploitation of Immigrants

In the 1990s a succession of international free trade pacts were pushed through Congress despite the intense and determined opposition of a then unified labor movement making its last stand. As economic conditions in poor countries eroded (partly as a result of international banking policies and free trade agreements), the migration of low-wage undocumented workers surged to new highs throughout the nation. An easily exploitable class of workers began to spread across the country and into industries and places new to immigrant labor. A political mixture of reality and fear fueled in part by the attacks of 9/11 and the “war on terrorism” has led to greater and greater restrictions of immigrant movement across borders. These restrictions are actually keeping more immigrants in the country than out of it. And recent proposals in Congress for immigration reform mixed with even more restrictions and border enforcement have the

potential for creating a new permanent low-wage servant class in the United States—a class of legal noncitizens to compete with other workers over expanding Wal-Mart type jobs in a global race to the bottom.

The Final Assault

Now that working people have been thoroughly split apart, politically disarmed, and scared into mortal fear of each other, the final assault appears to have been launched. Aid to urban communities and the poor is abolished, pensions are plundered, college and health care costs soar out of reach, wages are cut, corporations lay off tens of thousands of blue- and white-collar workers. Nonunion, low-wage industries expand in power and size. The federal government cuts taxes for the rich, cuts social and education spending to states. States respond with cuts in aid to towns, school districts, and cities. The burden falls on the smallest local unit of government, and the rest falls on the family and on congregations and social services agencies. Property taxes in working-class towns skyrocket, schools decline, racial tensions ignite, immigrants are attacked, urban communities and children are declared failures. Meanwhile, better-off suburban communities and wealthy enclaves begin to resemble armed camps. The gated community becomes the fashionable architecture and a symbol of social relations of the early twenty-first century.

The Petrol-Dependent Society

One legacy of the once preeminent U.S. auto industry is the car- and oil-saturated society that we live in today. It's no coincidence that within the modern gated community each single-family home has attached to it a three-car garage. The role that this industry (along with its related industries of rubber, steel, and oil—as well as road builders and developers) has played in creating the sprawling, segregated landscape we live in is immense. GM's past history and role in the destruction of the public transit systems throughout the nation is well documented.¹² Less well documented and harder to calculate is the industry's role in promoting the expansion of highways and the automobile-dependent society that we live in today. The overproduction of the automobile has always found a market, and public policy at the regional and national level

has always expanded and subsidized that market—and still does. As the auto industry, once dominated by the United States, morphs into new international combinations of Asian and European public/private conglomerations, and the oil industry is at the center of a worldwide struggle for power and control over the remaining known oil reserves, there seems to be no lessening of the expansion of the markets that are fed by these sprawl-related industries.

In fact, the “sprawl machine” has only gained more powerful partners in corporations and their stockholders, who compete for market share through the Wal-Marts and other “big box” stores¹³ that battle each other from strip mall to strip mall with no regard for the empty shells that are left behind after broadside battles over home-repair-market supremacy.

There is growing awareness that a global environmental crisis and potentially cataclysmic climatic changes are caused in large part by our suburban sprawl and petrol-dependent culture. That awareness, however, is rarely connected to a broader analysis of regional development patterns driven by race and class and the global economic forces that both benefit from and support those patterns. Nor is much attention paid to the political implications on a regional and state level when middle- and working-class communities are created and discarded as part of the churning process of sprawl, abandonment, fragmentation, and segregation.

Crash at the Intersection of Global Warming, Segregation, and Sprawl

Just as 9/11 and the U.S. war response exposed the limits of U.S. foreign policy, Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, exposed the deep divisions and flaws of fifty years of failed domestic policy in the United States. And for many of us it showed how little progress has been made over the last century since Homer Plessy boarded a “white-only” train car in New Orleans in 1892.¹⁴

Katrina literally tore the veneer off the quaint image many of us had of a racially, economically and culturally diverse city. What we saw instead were hundreds of thousands of poor people trapped by poverty, isolated within a region, and segregated by class and race. As the floodwaters rose after the storm, suburban Jefferson Parish po-

lice formed a barricade to stop victims from crossing a bridge out of New Orleans. Fleeing survivors were fired at and told, “We don’t want no Superdome here!”

Not only did the storm uncover the failure of U.S. policies to redress racial segregation over the past hundred years, it also saw those policies collide smack into our segregation-driven, oil-consuming sprawl machine, which sustains and perpetuates global warming and cataclysmic climate change.

Now, more than a year after the disaster, most philanthropic institutions, churches, and community organizations are focused on the “rebuilding” of New Orleans and those “hardest-hit” communities by returning people to their segregated neighborhoods and homes. But there are right now hundreds of thousands of families trying to rebuild their lives in hundreds of communities throughout the state and region—places where they ended up or chose to go after being displaced by the storm.

While much attention and money has been given to helping people return home and programs to rebuild, nothing is being done about helping people overcome the obstacles (economic, racial, or otherwise) of relocating in new communities. The battle cry of “no Superdome here” is being shouted throughout the region (and all over the country) as poor people from New Orleans are relocating to towns and cities with failing schools and declining tax bases or told to go back where they came from.

Katrina not only exposed the ravages of racial and economic segregation visited on the people of New Orleans, it hit the whole country like a punch in the stomach, reminding us that people are drowning on dry land in cities and regions across the United States.

Community Organizing in the Global Economy

As the global economy, like another great and slow-moving hurricane, shatters the old myths and assumptions about security, prosperity, and middle-class aspirations, many middle- and working-class Americans are turning away from multiracial and interfaith alliances and toward group identification and an embrace of separation, racial and ethnic identity, and competition. These cultural forces of “diversity” are being promoted by commercial and corporate media and both conservative and liberal institutions. Many

of our congregations and community organizations are embracing this new segregated worldview.

At the same time, the technology of community organizing has changed little to adapt to the new arrangements of the global economy and segregated, spread-out regions of the country. Its structure and strategies are essentially the same as they were in the time of Saul Alinsky's Back of the Yards Organization in Chicago. Organizations have become larger or more spread out, but as communities and whole towns became racially and economically homogeneous, community organizations have moved away from the interracial efforts of the past and have begun to adapt to and accept the conditions that were imposed on them rather than to the changing structures of society. That is, they stayed still while the world changed around them.¹⁵

Organizing: A Fragmented or a Unified Approach

Regionalism vs. Traditional Organizing and Wedge Issues

Organizing in the United States has been going in two general directions in the last decade. In one direction, regional organizing has attempted to bring together working-class communities with poor urban areas to fight for greater equity within fragmented and segregated metropolitan areas. These efforts have attempted to focus working people of different races and ethnicities on common themes such as tax base disparities, access to transportation and jobs, school funding, and regional housing policy.

The other direction has been a continuation of a very traditional, Alinsky-based organizing model along with its jargon, structures, and self-image and themes. At the same time there has been a move away from unifying issues of self-interest and toward national campaigns that correspond to a particular group and tend to be divisive within the broader regional community that a regional organization might seek to bring together.

This fragmented approach is frequently based on national policy. It focuses on group identity and themes but not necessarily on the power of those groups as an institutional base for organizing. These themes include issues such as immigrants' rights and immigration policy for immigrants or efforts to defend gains of the civil rights movement like affirmative action and voting rights for African Americans. However, resistance to the deliberate and wide-scale dismantling of the hardest-fought-for gain of the civil rights movement—desegregation—has not been a focus of these groups' efforts

These are not irreconcilable approaches. But we risk moving further apart if we do not recognize the degree to which we are beginning to mimic the fragmentation of our society. We need to look at how we are being drawn into our own doctrine of separate but equal when we create departments and divisions that look more like competing camps demanding equal attention, turnout, and money rather than a national organization with a unified message and strategic command center.

The regional movement in organizing has failed to look at the larger historical pattern of racial segregation leading up to the current morass. It has not understood segregation in the context of state power and politics. Most of our regional work has focused on regional analysis and not on state policies and state politics. At the same time we have failed to find common ground (beyond the liberal jargon) with growing immigrant populations and the passions behind immigrant causes. Bludgeoning people with the erroneous rhetoric of “we are a nation of immigrants” and “immigrants only take jobs American don't want” may be good fodder for liberal guilt, but it is not winning over allies among working-class whites or African Americans.

Issues relating to immigration and the growing number of immigrants seem to be generating tremendous support, opposition, tensions, fear, and passions that are not being meaningfully addressed through our fragmented approach to issue organizing. The very real and devastating conditions of large segments of the African American population are not being seriously considered in most of our initiatives and campaigns. The economic exploitation of immigrant workers is not part of the national immigration debate.

Until now, our approach to regionalism has too often neglected day-to-day concerns of Latinos and immigrants on issues such as education, housing, health care, and oppressive property taxes. As we ignore the way these everyday problems undermine their economic and mobility aspirations, we impede our ability to integrate Latinos and immigrants into a unified power base.

Nor has support for unions and workers' rights been the priority of the pro-immigration movement as it was during past cycles of large-scale, low-wage labor migration into the United States.

Our agenda lacks an economic dimension because it tends to be set by wealthy liberal institutions with romantic visions of "black/brown unity" reaching across the separate but equal ghettos and barrios. These institutions are not interested in challenges to wealth, privilege, and corporate power. Nor are they interested in the impact that our international trade policies have had on poor countries on immigration and on American workers, industries, and local communities

Unifying Analysis/Unified Message/ Shared Self-Interest

This is not to say that the issues being addressed are wrong. It is to say that we need to begin to meld together our analysis of the issues and problems facing all working people in cities and suburbs if we are going to have enough power to impact them. The greatest danger of the fragmented approach is fragmented power. Power that is fragmented is easily defeated.

Our analysis needs to reflect our desire to build a majority power base, not multiple single-constituency power bases. That means bringing together immigrants, working-class whites (the descendants of immigrants), and African Americans (the descendants of American slaves). Our organizing strategies, targeted communities, denominations, and territories need to be based on that objective, to build such a coalition of groups in each of our regions and states.

Our message to congregations and leaders needs to take into account religious values, faith, economic self-interest, and institutional loyalties and traditions. Group identification plays a role but not the only role. That message needs to recognize the

pressures that are mounting against ordinary Americans, and it must offer them an explanation of what those forces are and a belief that they, with their faith and through their institutions, can have an impact on those forces and can change them. The message needs to be a unifying message and not one that challenges people to act against their economic self-interest using guilt and shame.

Unifying Organizational Structures, Critical Power, and Fault-Line Organizing

In order for us to respond to the global forces and economic and racial fragmentation of society, we need to build organizations that have the capacity to resist that fragmentation in a unifying and strategically significant structure.

The one unifying structure that can transcend racial and ethnic divisions among working people and counter the power of wealth and privilege is a statewide organization or one that is large enough to engage power at a critical level. That is: a power base must include a territory with enough strategic significance that it can influence policies that impact fundamental causes of decline, abandonment, poverty, employment, and policies such as housing, zoning, transportation, tax, and others that shape or determine development and growth within a region or state.

A statewide organization, if it corresponds to a strategic analysis of electoral and demographic politics, can leverage more power with less work than dispersed and uncoordinated projects within a state. State legislatures are the political marketplace where middle- and working-class people have the greatest access to power and the best chance to counter the influence of corporate greed and segregation. State government and state politics are where federal districts are created, where federal judicial appointments originate, and where patronage flows through and from.

In some areas, reaching critical power does not require a statewide organization. Where counties and regional government structures have meaningful decision-making power, reaching critical power may only require a region or county to be effective in impacting important public policies. In some states, critical power at a state level can be achieved with a concentrated effort on the most pivotal districts—the fault-line communities.

Organizations seeking critical power cannot simply be a stitching together of small urban organizations. They need to become strong networks of regional groups that bring together the many suburban communities that are dispersed throughout a state or region and that bring working-class and low-income communities together to create enough power to influence legislators and governors. To do this, there needs to be a sophisticated analysis of political leverage points and swing districts—or fault-line communities. And there needs to be an organizing structure that encourages and supports constituency building based on such an analysis of power.

Institutional Self-Interest—Clergy and Congregations, Mayors and Municipalities

To engage institutions in these communities we need to have a sound analysis of how external forces are wreaking havoc on churches, local organizations, and judicatory bodies through sprawl, segregation, and the flight of jobs and tax base. This is happening not only on urban congregations but more and more in older suburban communities, where congregations are now dealing with tremendous instability, racial change, and population decline. If we are to get the attention of bishops and judicatory leaders we need an analysis that shows what is happening to a majority of their still-viable congregations—the hundreds of congregations scattered throughout a region that are not so far gone that they are seen as charity cases but are nevertheless experiencing steady decline and growing deficits. We need to have an analysis that shows how organizing can combat the breakdown of community through relationship building and leadership development, but we also need an analysis that helps to explain what is happening to their institutions and show that something can be done through organizing and public policy to impact the forces that cause instability, social separation, and the decline.

In our fragmented society, churches and synagogues are not the only units of organization that can be engaged. Municipalities and school districts themselves (especially in very fragmented states like New Jersey, Ohio, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania) are experiencing build-out, resegregation, dwindling tax base, and the downward pressures caused by federal and state tax cuts, industrial decline, rising school costs,

and tax rates. Mayors and municipal and school district leaders in these communities can and should be engaged and organized as allies and members.

The Need for a Racial Analysis

We need to have an analysis that allows people to deal with race in an open and constructive manner—one that affirms what people already know but some don't entirely understand:—that race continues to be a key trigger for flight and instability of communities and therefore for political alienation. There needs to be an analysis that takes the blame off black city mayors and leaders and puts it on a system of segregation and isolation—one that takes the blame off white working-class families and one that engages whites, blacks, and Latinos, especially in racially changing fault-line communities, and shows how segregation and racial steering hurt middle- and working-class neighborhoods, and one that holds up a positive vision of a stable, balanced, and diverse community.

Issues Campaigns That Unify and Expose

There need to be campaigns and victories achieved at a state level that address the most pressing issues facing people and families and institutions locally—jobs, health care, schools, tuition, taxes, utilities, transportation, and housing. This is not to say there will not be local-issue campaigns, but if we are to succeed in creating victories that fundamentally address inequity in wealth and opportunity, such issues will not be won at a neighborhood level. Local issues are tactical. They help to secure a base, test leadership, and build confidence. They should not be encouraged as an end in themselves but as a step (when necessary) toward state power.

Technology

Communication technology, when it is used to replace individual relationships and face-to-face transactions, can become a deadly toxin that will erode the relational substance of an organization, turning it into a facade of power prone to sudden collapse. However, when technology is used to save time, reduce distances, and better focus the organizing, it can be a powerful tool for relationship building and therefore organizing on a much larger scale than in the past.

We need to use technology to enhance communication and mobility on a larger statewide level so that leaders can make decisions and mobilize quickly across a large territory and at the same time build relationships across the whole organization. Examples of this are the tools that corporations are using, such as Internet communication, telephone conferences, and even video conferencing. Organizations are beginning to employ more sophisticated and unifying database tools for the purpose of fund-raising, but much more can be done to enhance and unify our analytical capabilities by creating statewide databases that merge political, membership and demographic data in a way that makes our work much more precise and efficient.

Structure

We need to have simpler structures that allow for the greatest local activity and relationship building while at the same time permitting people to plug into statewide or regional leadership teams and engage power at the highest levels. That means a single consolidated power organization with local groups that are identifiable but do not require a bureaucratic maintenance of boards, budgets, and staff. The structure needs to be organized to win victories at the state level and build leadership and teams at the congregational level and local level. Local structures must not separate but must instead create racially diverse groups of institutions and leaders operating collectively.

Money

Money should be centralized at a state or regional level. Dues payments, fund-raising, and the soliciting of foundation grants can have whatever flexibility is advantageous to the whole, but experience has shown that the larger the entity the more success there has been in leveraging money at all levels. Technology needs to be employed here as well. New innovations for identifying, tracking, and cultivating sources and money can be used to significantly increase ongoing and continuous fund-raising efforts. Relationships with allies and members must be exploited to leverage more money from more sources. With a broader statewide or regional structure, the expectations for raising money and the budgets have to be much higher than they have been for local and regional groups.

Allies and the “Cartel” State

As organizations move to statewide power structures, statewide allies become more visible, relevant, and valuable. Policy advocates and analysts, political operatives, university leaders, union officers, and civil rights organizations are just some of the organizations and people being engaged in states throughout the country. This has been most effective in places where a table has been formed at a regional or statewide level that brings together constituency leaders with regional and statewide allies who understand the importance of grassroots political power to move an agenda. These alliances only work when everyone at the table is bringing not only expertise but also institutional resources and power relationships. Those relationships can be only financial, only political, or both.

Conclusion: Working toward the Opportunity Society

The message or framing of the opportunity society needs to start with a sound unifying analysis: one that attempts to bring middle- and working-class people together across racial lines by revealing the global and national forces yielding a shrinking but unevenly sliced pie at the regional level; one that shows how historical structures of racial discrimination and segregation and modern patterns of sprawl and segregation intersect to create powerful disparities and unstable communities; one that shows that as wages and incomes stagnate more and more of the burden for health care, fuel costs, retirement, and schools is falling on individuals, families, and congregations in the communities least able to support them.

Second, it needs to reveal the ongoing institutional, corporate, and political forces behind these disparities and instability. It also needs to show how national and global trends of immigration, deindustrialization, and capital flight are negatively impacting whole regions and, in turn, how the economic and racial fragmentation of our regions hurt our economic competitiveness globally while contributing to sprawl, oil dependency, and even global warming.

Third, it needs to give some hope that something can be done. It needs to make the case that power can be impacted at a state level or a level in which enough critical

power can be accessed to have an impact on important policies. It needs to demonstrate that policy decisions can more evenly distribute the burdens and benefits of society, whether the issue is health care, housing, school costs, or opportunities and mobility for families and children currently living in devastating poverty or recent immigrants seeking a better life for their families. It needs to show that the shrinking pie is not caused by immigrants or poor people but by policies that benefit a small number of very privileged people and communities.

More importantly, it needs to show that those privileged people do not include the vast majority of middle- and working-class families, especially those living in the thousands of older built-out and racially changing suburbs that are so often the most hotly contested swing districts today. These economically stressed communities need to be engaged as allies and recruited as members.

Third, there needs to be a more powerful and realistic vision of what an opportunity community looks like. There are many older suburbs and some urban neighborhoods that should be held up as models of stability, prosperity, and integration (or at least diversity). These communities should be recruited and organized, because their own stability is threatened by the same institutional forces and because they can become powerful allies as well as examples.

Fourth, there need to be an organizational structure and policy campaigns that bring together this analysis, message, and regional constituencies on a critical power stage or statewide level. Such a structure needs to bring together all the principles of community organizing, including leadership development, institutional membership, dues, and democratic decision making with a broader analysis, much more money, far more allies, and a broader definition of membership.

Fifth, it has to have the ability to win and a track record for impacting state or regional policies to slow sprawl, reduce poverty, desegregate housing, reduce regional disparities, and stabilize communities.

Sixth, we need to promote a national movement with unifying themes and a common analysis—and many of the same national thought leaders and advocates and

allies. This national movement needs to reinforce, through the use of technology, policy analysis, and national leadership and organizing support, the ability of state and regional organizations and their leaders to recruit institutions, engage major leaders, secure powerful allies, raise a great deal of money, and continue to move a powerful agenda that promotes, advances, and brings more and more people into a vision of the opportunity society.

Notes

1. To some extent this leveling is happening on a worldwide scale as developing countries experience a growing middle class and rising wages while American workers' incomes stagnate or decline. See also U.S. Census, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce).

2. With 1.4 million employees worldwide, Wal-Mart's workforce is now larger than that of GM, Ford, GE, and IBM combined. At \$258 billion in 2003, Wal-Mart's annual revenues are 2 percent of the U.S. GDP, and eight times the size of Microsoft's. In fact, when ranked by its revenues, Wal-Mart is the world's largest corporation. See also Floyd J. McKay, "Wal-Mart Nation: The Race to the Bottom," *Seattle Times*, February 18, 2004.

3. The average credit card debt among American households has more than doubled over the past decade. Today, the average family owes roughly \$8,000 on its credit cards. This debt has helped generate record profits for the credit card industry—last year, more than \$30 billion before taxes, See *Frontline*[®] (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/credit/>).

4. The share of young black men without jobs has climbed relentlessly. In 2000, 65 percent of black male high school dropouts in their twenties were jobless—that is, unable to find work, not seeking it, or incarcerated. By 2004, the share had grown to 72 percent, compared with 34 percent of white and 19 percent of Hispanic dropouts. Even when high school graduates were included, half of black men in their twenties were jobless in 2004, up from 46 percent in 2000. In the inner cities, more than half of all black men do not finish high school (“Plight Deepens For Black Men, Studies Warn,” *New York Times*, March 20, 2006). See also Ronald B. Mincy, *Black Males Left Behind* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 2006).

5. Despite a growing economy, the number of African Americans in unions has fallen by 14.4 percent since 2000, while white membership is down 5.4 percent. For a while in the 1980s, one out of every four black workers was a union member; now it is closer to one in seven. This loss of better-paying jobs helps to explain why blacks are doing worse than any other group in the current recovery. Labor leaders have acknowledged the disproportionate damage to African Americans, but they decline to make special efforts to organize blacks and offset the decrease, saying that all groups need help. The decline was particularly sharp last year. Overall union membership fell by 304,000, and blacks accounted for 55 percent of that drop. The trend seems likely to continue, and perhaps accelerate, as General Motors and its principal parts supplier, Delphi, cut costs in their struggle to be profitable (Louis Uchitelle, “Labor’s Lost: For Blacks, A Dream In Decline,” *New York Times*, October 23, 2005).

6. Arnold R. Hirsch and Raymond A. Mohl, *Urban Policy in Twentieth-Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

78. See *Milliken v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717 (1974), an important United States Supreme Court case dealing with the planned forced busing of public school students across district lines among fifty-three school districts in metropolitan Detroit. It placed an important limitation on the first major Supreme Court case concerning school busing by holding that such remedies could extend across district lines only where there was actual evidence that multiple districts had deliberately engaged in a policy of segregation.

8. Hirsch and Mohl, *Urban Policy in Twentieth-Century America*.

9. Ruy A Teixeira and Joel Rogers, *America's Forgotten Majority : Why the White Working Class Still Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

10. See Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitcs: The New Suburban Reality* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002).

11. See 1985 Pennzoil antitrust award of \$10.53 billion from Texaco in the largest civil verdict in U.S. history. Contrast this with Texaco's \$170 million paid to settle racial discrimination lawsuits filed by black employees at the company. It was the largest racial discrimination lawsuit settlement in the United States at the time and was particularly damaging to Texaco's public relations when tapes were released containing ethnic slurs used repeatedly by company officers at high-level corporate meetings.

12. In 1936, National City Lines (NCL) was formed by GM with Standard Oil of California (now Chevron) and Firestone Rubber Company. They converted electric transit systems in sixteen states to GM bus operations, also boosting fuel and tire sales. By this method the hundred-million-dollar electric rail system in and around Los Angeles was largely scrapped in favor of buses, and ultimately cars. By 1949, GM buses had replaced one hundred clean, efficient electric transit systems in forty-five American cities. In 1949 a federal court fined GM five thousand dollars—and its treasurer one dollar for criminal conspiracy for their role in the conversion.

13. See David Rusk, *Inside Game/Outside Game Winning Strategies for Saving Urban America* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999). These days this includes everything from Wal-Mart and Home Depot to Italian restaurant chains, bookstores, and health clubs, most of which are publicly traded companies with no ties to communities or regions, as are the real estate investment trusts (REITs) that own the malls and office parks.

14. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision set the precedent that “separate” facilities for blacks and whites were constitutional as long as they were “equal.” The “separate but equal” doctrine was quickly extended to cover many areas of public life, such as restaurants, theaters, restrooms, and public schools. Not until 1954, in the equally important *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, would the “separate but equal” doctrine be struck down.

15. See Robert A. Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).