

North Country Community Justice Collaborative - www.community-wealth.org
based on Democracy Collaborative in Cleveland

One of many projects - project around composting
key phrase - community wealth-building strategies
fiscal agent: Northfield Union of Youth

1. Discussion:
 - a. How do you define community?
Answers from group:
 - b. shared interest - we're a community right here!
 - c. a group where everyone knows your name
 - d. people living and interacting together
 - e. doing something together
2. Types of communities:
 - a. social - the ones you choose to spend your time with
 - b. institutional - ex. work, school
 - c. geographic - physically living nearby
3. Discussion:
 - a. How do you define justice?
4. Answer:
 - a. self-determination
 - b. people living their lives the way they want to as long as they're not impeding on someone else's right to live a healthy life
 - c. changing a wrong into a right
 - d. fairness
 - e. equality/equity
 - f. the same courtesies extended to all people
5. Both a verb and an adjective and a noun
6. "Community Justice is the foundation of our work"
7. Abstract ideas makes it hard to measure. How do you measure a community justice? How do you measure the health of a community?
8. Principles: human and ecological rights and responsibilities
 - a. physical, social, political, economic
9. From the principles we create criteria
 - a. makes the abstract a little bit more concrete
 - i. but still not an actual number
10. From criteria to indicators
 - a. examples: income, air quality, decision making by-laws, equity owned, energy use, organic/GMO free
 - b. took these indicators from the Main Street Project in Northfield

Discussion:

1. How do people feel about the concept of community justice? Any questions at this point?
2. Responses:
 - a. How equal should income be?
 - i. We don't take a stand as an organization on whether it should be equal or not. Everyone should have the right to get the things they need.
 - b. What's the difference between community justice and restorative justice?
 - i. They're intertwined. Restorative justice falls under the umbrella of community justice and is about righting a wrong.
 - c. [Discussion about inflation and minimum wage, effects of restorative justice, repairing harm]
 - d. Restorative justice is a practice of some indigenous tribes. That's where the idea comes from. When a crime is committed, restorative justice goes to the victim and asks them what they need to recover.
 - e. Income injustices are very valid but there are also injustices to our air, water, food, ecosystems.
 - i. We like to think about it human and ecological rights, as if they're separate. But we see them as the same.
3. Community Wealth Building - a theory, a strategy, a set of practices
 - a. community based institutions dedicated to justice and sustainability
 - b. build, and build on, assets
 - c. What is community wealth, and how do you build it?
 - d. Anchor institutions - schools, hospitals, etc that are not going to leave the community
 - i. focus on increasing the local circulation of goods and services
 - e. Supporting intermediaries
 - f. Work across sectors
 - i. ex. TORCH - Tackling Obstacles, raising College Hopes
 1. highlighted because they're excellent at pulling multiple stakeholders together
 - g. Invest in individuals
 - i. ex. land trusts - cooperative land ownership to give individuals ownership and power
4. Question:
 - a. There are different reasons why home-ownership fails. Does this address that?
5. Answer:
 - a. No single one of these things are going to solve all of problems. We put education into any of these strategies. It's going to take a lot of different strategies to actually make change. These don't necessarily create a better home-ownership situation, but they can.
6. What if employees could own their work place? What if students could own their education?
 - a. Co-ops are what drew me (Cliff) to this work in the first place - the idea of ownership

7. 4 pillars of CWB
 - a. Building on assets
 - b. Anchor institutions
 - c. Investing in individuals
 - d. Cooperatives

8. Why Community Wealth Building and Community Justice?
 - a. Root Cause Analysis
 - i. This is not just another change-making strategy; it really gets to the root of why injustices exist in the first place

9. System → Institutions → Structure → Culture
 - a. These things work together to perpetuate each other

10. Capitalism:
 - a. System = maintain the centralized ownership of capital
 - b. Institutions = banks, wall street, corporations, media, schools
 - c. Structure = hierarchy (centralized power of decision-making)
 - d. Culture = diminished self-worth, diminished sense of inherent ability to determine one's own life (power), history shows oppression, white supremacy, patriarchy

11. Question:
 - a. Are there minorities in your organization?

12. Answer:
 - a. Theo, a couple people in training. About half of our organization is people of color, but there are only six of us.

13. Question asker:
 - a. I ask because we hear a lot about injustices and it's very often people from the dominant culture that are talking about it. Are they making a valid effort to reach out to all communities?

14. Does this all make sense? We want to fix the disease, not the symptoms.

15. Discussion:
 - a. Does this resonate with you? How do you see it play out in your own life?

16. Answers:
 - a. You have these conglomerates that are always going to exist. It can be possible to change and break those down. Seeing Montgomery Ward close. That was an effort of people, consciously. In planning and meeting, I don't think that's going to be accomplished. In smaller groups, area by area by area by area, we're going to have to refuse GMOs, bring compost, we're gonna have to keep bombarding. If we each go back to our communities and make a concerted effort and have this one focus we can make change.
 - b. This has to be a hyper-local vision for how we make change. Building from the bottom up. Communities will change and that will affect larger change, as opposed to marching on Washington against GMOs. It's a locally-grown, organic movement.

- c. I want to piggy-back on how important grassroots community movements are. Trickle-down doesn't work because the rich don't let it trickle down.
- d. Documentary suggestion: Robert Reich's "Inequality for All"
- e. It seems like the grassroots vision is not anti-capitalist, but it's reforming capitalism. You're not anti-ownership, you're just adjusting ownership.
- f. It's about changing ownership and control.
- g. A lot of what's been said we can see in our day-to-day lives. People who come in to office are talking about wealth building and bringing in big businesses. They think that's wealth building but it's only going to create temporary income. It's not wealth building. How do we know those things aren't going to leave us the same way they left the last place?
- h. Wealth building came out of Cleveland because of that same idea - there were a lot of corporations coming in and then leaving and local people stepped up with something different.

Intervening with direct action

- point of destruction
- point of production
- point of decision
- point of distribution
- point of consumption
- point of finance

In CWB, intervention points are: institutions, structure, culture

ex. a worker cooperative is an alternative institution, with an alternative structure, to create an alternative culture

Projects:

- CWB and CJ education program
- CJ program of the Key (youth non-profit)
- Northfield Food Hub
- Farm to Plate Farms Cooperative (youth run farm)
- CWB Northfield strategy (working to develop this with other institutions)
- Composting worker co-op

Community Composting (worker/community cooperative)

- pilot program last winter for a few months followed by surveys
- the city wants it to be done
- creating the business plan for a worker cooperative
- North Country is not the workers, just making the plan

Collaboration:

- Transition Youth
- Young Peoples' Action Coalition
- Institute for Local Self Reliance
- Northfield Enterprise Center
- Pollution Control Agency
- Democracy at Work Network (help set up cooperatives)

Blandin Crew
Colleges