

## **Intro to the Second Edition of CLP report on University Education for Community Change: A Vital Strategy for Progress on Poverty, Race and Community-Building**

When this report was published two years ago, it hit a responsive chord in the United States and internationally. Comments on the report and our experience since its publication have shown the pattern it described to be universal.

There are three interwoven strands in that pattern. First, in the US and throughout the world, there is a desperate shortage of people who are expert at bringing poor people together to build strong organizations and movements for tackling the immense issues they face daily — society's most fundamental issues of entrenched poverty, prejudice, and people being left behind.

Second, domestically and internationally, pitifully few colleges or universities have created educational programs to address that often crippling "pipeline" crisis. This difficult work is left almost entirely to nonprofits.

Third, the university educational programs which do help people learn how to be effective community change agents suffer from being isolated, marginalized, and held back from developing the breadth and depth which would maximize their value. This pattern is as common in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe as in the United States.

The people who have pioneered important programs in the emerging academic field we call Community Change Studies years ago, it hit a responsive chord in the United States and internationally. Comments on the report and our experience since its publication have shown the pattern it described to be universal. There are three interwoven strands in that pattern. First, in the US and throughout the world, there is a desperate shortage of people who are expert at bringing poor people together to build strong organizations and movements for tackling the immense issues they face daily — society's most fundamental issues of entrenched poverty, prejudice, and people being left behind. **Nevertheless, these pioneering efforts have resulted in impressive examples of the pay-off of practitioners and academics working together to create learning opportunities for the community organizers, developers and leaders who are sorely needed throughout the world. These programs help the next generation learn how to play these roles with unusual skill, broad knowledge, and sophisticated strategies.** They thus contribute greatly to the success of efforts to involve grassroots people as leaders in transforming their own communities and expanding opportunities.

Since writing the report, the Community Learning Partnership has had an opportunity to concentrate heavily on these issues with others in the US and internationally. This experience has surfaced important additional examples of highly creative Community Change Education programs which are tailored to meet local needs. As with the programs profiled in this report, they vary tremendously, from midcareer Masters programs in Tanzania and rural Uganda to organizing apprenticeship programs and new courses on community organizing and civic education in the US. Collectively they offer valuable lessons for us all.

Recent experience has fortified our earlier conclusions on the **urgent need to develop concerted strategies for strengthening current Community Change educational programs and establishing new ones.** In the US it is also providing us with exciting opportunities to work with others in creating new programs which focus specifically on educating people of color and others from low-income and working-class neighborhoods for important the next generation learn how to play these roles with unusual skill, broad knowledge, and sophisticated strategies. They thus contribute greatly to the success of efforts to involve grassroots people as leaders in transforming their own communities and expanding opportunities.

As a result, the Community Learning Partnership is now pursuing a three-part strategy for expanding University Education for Community Change. This strategy includes:

- Developing and enriching pilot educational programs which are tailored to provide young and midcareer people with new opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills, effectiveness and impact as organizers and leaders of community and social change efforts;
- Developing new ways of encouraging others to learn from these programs and to launch 6 University Education for Community Change new initiatives which respond to local needs and opportunities for expanded education and training for community change agents; and
- Developing new networks to enable now isolated academics and practitioners to learn from and collaborate with each other in building this important new field of study.

Some of this work has been focused internationally, bringing together leaders in the field of Community Change Studies for peer learning and collaboration across the globe. Through the International Working Group on University Education for Community Change, a number of us are collaborating to provide educators and activists from different countries with new opportunities to learn from the highly creative programs which are emerging in different parts of the world. Our goals are to help them use this knowledge to broaden current programs and develop new ones, while also helping generate the recognition and resources their programs need to expand and succeed.

Through this international collaboration we are learning that we share a common vision of the key components and values for any program of Community Change Studies. This vision is remarkably similar despite the rich variations in our programs, each of which is deeply grounded in local needs and circumstances.

### **Key Concepts of Community Change Studies:**

A number of key concepts and strategies have emerged as we have combined on-the-ground program development with exploring theory and practice. These should be useful to others who share our interest in expanding education and training for people seeking to create significant community and social change.

One central point of consensus emerged during a two-day meeting at New York University. All the participants agreed that **three areas of study should be combined in education and training programs on community change so students have the full range of knowledge and skills they will need.** These are depicted in the Venn diagram below. They include mastery of:

- the **tools of collective action** — getting people involved and participating, organizing them for action, and helping them build movements and organizations through which they can have a growing impact;
- **strategic thinking, analysis and reflection** (or STAR) – helping people understand the environments in which they are working, including analyzing trends, power, and potential allies, and developing their skills in strategy and reflection so they can become increasingly effective; and
- **knowledge of the specific issue(s)** they are most concerned about, including understanding the root causes, current policies, how decisions are made, and alternative strategies for creating significant change. The values and vision behind community change work are also consistent from country to country. They provide a guiding framework which underpins all our thinking and planning.

The principal values which unite us are:

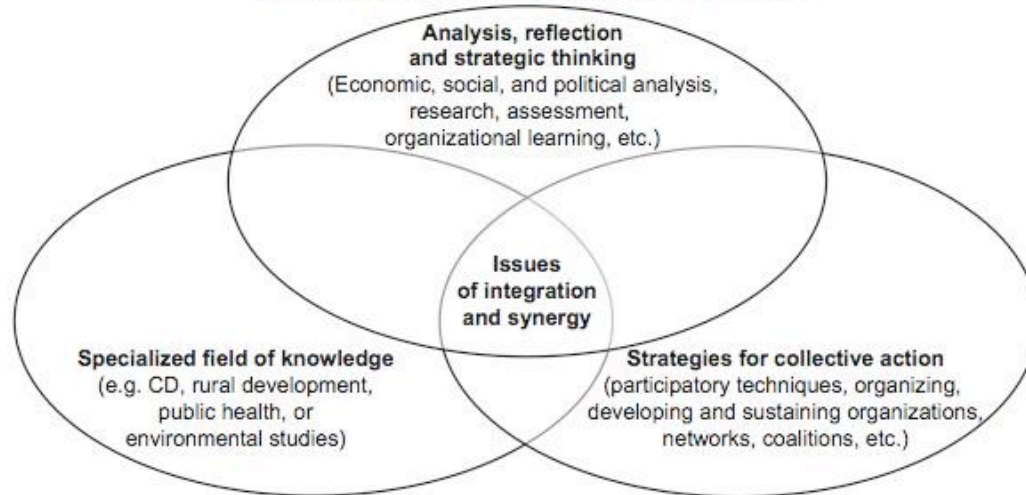
- a bedrock commitment to democracy, to strengthening democratic practice, and to helping ordinary people create social and community change from the bottom-up; and
- an equally strong commitment to justice and to helping community leaders and grassroots organizations and movements build the strength, vision, and practical programs and policies which are needed to significantly reduce poverty, discrimination and exclusion.

Members of the Working Group are candid in acknowledging that most of their own programs do not yet offer this breadth. Instead they focus on developing only one or two of these forms of expertise. One key reason is that — because the importance of Community Change Education is not yet widely recognized — they find it extremely difficult to garner the resources and bring together the faculty and practitioners needed to broaden their programs to offer a full range of courses and field experience.

Despite this reality, the Working Group's members strongly desire to achieve that balance and richness in their own curricula and in programs which are developed in the future. **We find that Community Change Studies programs are most successful when they combine these three key elements in an integrated program within a framework which reflects the strong common values and vision which are central to community change.**

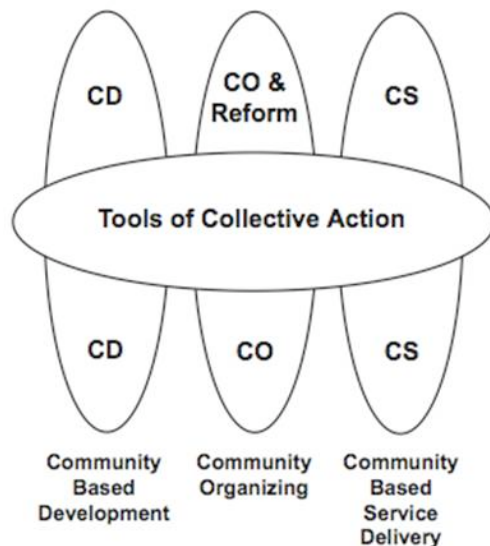
We have fleshed out each of these three areas of competency in the table on page 7 showing the skills and knowledge which are needed by people who are seeking substantial improvements in their communities and major policy and institutional reforms.

## Areas of Knowledge and Competency



The Partnership sees knowledge of the "tools of collective action" as being fundamental to any significant change strategy. Democratic change requires the involvement of large numbers of people in setting the agenda, taking the leadership, and making major decisions. Creating this level of involvement requires skill in fostering people's participation and channeling it into action.

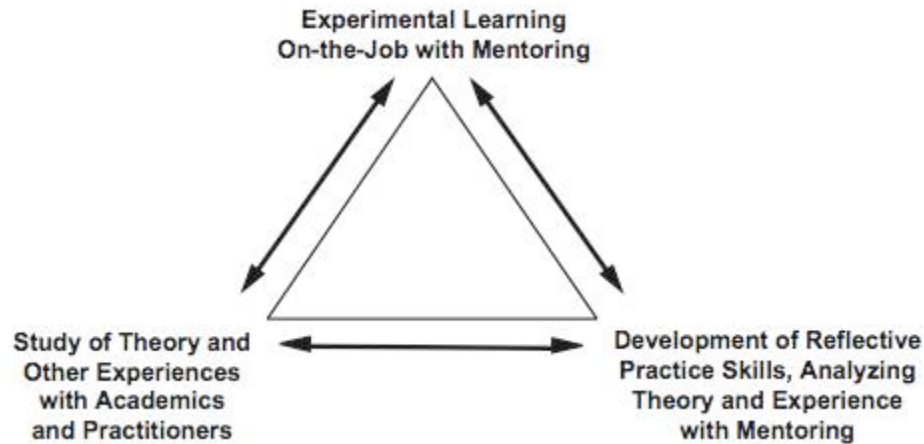
**How deep must a person's collective action skills and knowledge be? That depends upon the roles he/she plays and the strategies their organizations follow.** Professional "organizers" organizing large numbers of people to build power and press major institutions for reforms need extensive skills in every aspect of collective action, including leadership development and sophisticated campaign strategy development. Those who concentrate instead on service delivery or community development programs or on community change education need a basic grounding in participatory techniques to ensure their approach is democratic and their programs are responsive to community needs, accountable to the people they serve, and successful in accessing resources from recalcitrant public agencies or other institutions. The following diagram illustrates this need among different levels of knowledge which are required by different types of community workers — developers, organizers and service providers.



In addition, it is important to incorporate three ways of learning into each curriculum. Together they reinforce each other, deepening a student's mastery of the subject and his/her ability to apply their new knowledge and skills in their community work. As illustrated below, these three techniques for learning are:

- reading and classroom work, including attention to theory and to learning from the experience of others;
- experiential education through field work with expert mentoring; and
- a strong emphasis on disciplined reflection which deepens each student's learning from both theory and practice.

Cooperative educational approaches which combine study, work and reflection are particularly powerful. Highly realistic situations create great opportunities for people to test the theory and ideas they gain from reading, research, and discussion. And "academic" programs enable practitioners to go beyond the immediate issues they face to analyze their historical context, examine root causes and the roles various institutions play, and learn about the widely varying, often highly creative strategies which others have pursued in addressing those issues.



Experienced practitioners clearly have important roles to play as educators, bringing great knowledge and skills to teaching in this field. However, their full involvement in university programs is still rare. While some college programs involve practitioners as formal adjunct faculty-members, or in co-teaching with regular faculty, or as guest lecturers or "community scholars", there are tremendous barriers to involving practitioners in these ways. Unlike medicine and other fields in which "clinical" professors are understood to be essential, community change educators are often based in academic departments which are leary of being too practice-based. Their reward systems are usually biased against faculty-members who stress field work, multidisciplinary studies, or community service rather than research, and promotions are contingent upon success in publishing heavily researched and highly academic articles in prestigious journals.

Academics can make tremendous contributions in developing people's knowledge and skills related to community and social change. In particular, experts in learning techniques and in developing people's analytic and strategic capacities can add greatly to the depth of the understanding, thinking and learning skills of their students, be they traditional students or activists, organizers, developers, researchers, or otherwise engaged in bringing about social change.

Furthermore, anchoring practitioner education in colleges and universities can add greatly to its credibility and enables practitioners to earn credentials and the concomitant respect and influence. Other advantages of higher educational institutions? Their unparalleled access to young people and to special funding streams from government and philanthropy for tuition subsidies, scholarships, program development and other purposes.

Leading nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations have, of course, created their own training programs, many of which are of exceptional quality. In the US, for example, some national community organizing networks offer 2, 5, 10 or 20 day training programs on organizing, plus additional in-service education. There also are nonprofit-run certificate programs in community economic development (as well as university degree programs) in that field. To date, however, none of these nonprofit-initiated programs offer their students college credit – an especially significant benefit for people who, because of income or other barriers, have not had an opportunity to earn academic credentials which can help them in their careers. Furthermore, these nonprofit training programs are starved for resources: unlike college-based programs they do not have access to streams of government funding for tuition, scholarships, stipends or seed money.

Practitioners feel the pipeline crisis acutely. Many see the need to design dramatically new pathways into organizing and for "continuing education" programs to enable practitioners to gain the knowledge, practical experience, and academic credentials which will help them increase their impact. The Community Learning Partnership therefore is working with community organizers, nonprofit leaders and academics in several American cities to build new partnerships between the nonprofit and academic sectors to tap into the talent and resources each sector offers, creating ambitious new educational programs which respond to the talent crisis.

Another key concept which is emerging from the Partnership's work is the need to create lifelong learning opportunities in the field of community change. Because of the complexity of the challenges which poor and excluded people face and the barriers to significant social change, change agents need access to additional training, education, and assistance at different points in their careers. This starts with making young people aware that they can have careers in which they are paid to tackle issues of poverty, discrimination, and community development, while also creating new educational pathways into those careers. It includes opening up learning opportunities in high schools, community colleges, and universities to provide the combination of "hard" skills, theoretical understanding, and competencies in strategic thinking, analysis and research skills which effective organizers need. And it includes opportunities for midcareer education when people are at important junctures, especially when they need the stimulus of being with peers, teachers and trainers, focusing on challenging issues they face, being exposed to new ideas, analyses, and strategies which are new to them, and preparing for the next stages in their careers.

Pioneers in Community Change Education therefore have developed specific programs which are geared to be helpful at different points in people's careers. The following chart illustrates the continuum of lifelong learning in community change studies.

### Matrix on Lifelong Learning

	<b>Tools of collective action</b>	<b>Strategic thinking, analysis, reflection</b>	<b>Issue expertise</b>
<b>Grassroots training</b>			
<b>Certificate or AA</b>			
<b>4 year BA</b>			
<b>Postgraduate</b>			
<b>Midcareer</b>			

### Sources of Students

<p><b>1. Youth in Low-Income Neighborhoods –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Especially people of color, including kids not now college-bound</li> <li>• Showing interest in and potential for organizing</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Community Leaders –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Especially people of color</li> <li>• With experience in organizing, being a leader, sharing power</li> <li>• Showing potential to be organizers</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. University Students –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showing interest and potential but without access to educational pathway on community organizing and social change</li> </ul>	<p><b>4. Early and Midcareer Organizers –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At critical point in careers and needing chance to reflect, learn, look ahead</li> </ul>

In our work in the US, the Learning Partnership has identified four major sources of potential candidates for careers in community change. These are depicted in the chart below.

At the Partnership, we have chosen not to focus on recent college graduates at this point but instead to concentrate on the other three talent pools. We have made this choice so we can focus heavily on the fundamental problem which gravely weakens community organizing and change work in the United States today – the shortage of people of color and low-income people as organizers and community change agents.

This shortage now feeds on itself in a vicious cycle. On the race issue, for example, because there are few organizers of color, there are relatively few minority candidates for advancement to positions as executive directors, consultants, and trainers. This pattern contributes to the perception among many minorities that the community organizing field is dominated by whites. This in turn reduces the organizing ability to attract people of color into organizing and community change work. To help break this cycle, we are concentrating on two approaches.

First, we are focusing on creating programs for new organizers and leaders, especially people of color and people from low-income and working class neighborhoods.

The goal of these programs is to address directly the often crippling shortage of community organizers and

change agents who – because they have directly experienced poverty and exclusion are particularly well-equipped to lead and organize efforts to change these conditions. The programs therefore include:

- targeted recruitment efforts through a system of "spotters" in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color;
- curricula which address issues of identity, race, class and gender as well as the combination of practical experience and knowledge-building which organizers need;
- pathways which start with practical training outside university walls and morph into college degree programs linked to continuing on-the-job experience with organizing campaigns;
- programs which allow a person to earn credentials as they advance, proceeding step by step from credit for individual courses to a college certificate, AA, BA and advanced degrees; and
- a combination of stipends or salaries and low or free tuition to make the education affordable.

To make these programs sustainable and able to move to scale, CLP and its local partners are leveraging the impact of their private funding by designing programs which take full advantage of existing flows of government funds. These include:

- youth employment stipends;
- subsidized tuitions in state and local institutions of higher education;
- federal stipends through VISTA and other Americorps programs; and
- the \$4725 those programs grant to their graduates for education.

Most of these resources are, of course, not available to stand-alone nonprofit training programs.

Second, we are beginning to work with others in the US to address the need for intensive midcareer education for organizers. Our shared goal is to reduce the rapid turnover which is now hemorrhaging community change work. We believe that midcareer seminars and educational programs can reduce turnover substantially if they are designed specifically to address staff burnout and discouragement, providing them with a respite from their normal pressures and an opportunity for renewal. These programs should provide people who already have 5, 10 or more years of experience with opportunities for reflection, peer learning and support, intellectual stimulation, and renewal of their vision and sense of vocation. They also should enable participants to develop new skills and strategies, prepare themselves for growing management and leadership responsibilities, and earn a graduate certificate or degree. Involving academics who are grounded in community work as well as leading organizers and community change leaders from the US and overseas would add greatly to the appeal and stimulation midcareer programs can offer. In early planning for one possible midcareer program in the US, we developed the following matrix to illustrate the mix of courses we were considering. This listing provides an example of the stimulating combination of

learning topics which could be included in a new Master's level program in Community Change Studies.

<b>History, theory and values</b>	Where are you in your journey as an organizer? What do you want from this learning community? Identity, satisfaction and frustration, thinking ahead to the next challenge	History of social movements and organizationbuilding in the city and the US	Values, theory and vision behind organizing, community change and community development efforts; different schools of thought on building organizations, coalitions, etc
	Balancing work and your personal lives, family, friends, etc.	Challenges to democracy and strategies for rejuvenation	
<b>Trends and challenges affecting community and social change</b>	Class, race, gender, age in the US; addressing issues of bias and institutional behavior	Demographic and public policy changes and their implications for community groups in the city; challenges of working across race, class, gender and age lines	Growth, gentrification, and urban trends and their implications for grassroots groups
	Globalization and the relative decline of the US economy – implications for city neighborhoods	The changing role of government, including the reduction in social programs, and its implications	Current philanthropic trends and their impact on organizing and issues of poverty and race
<b>Skill-building</b>	Advanced organizing and leadership development	Coalition-building and partnership strategies	Building solid, sustainable organizations; management for midcareer organizers
	Developing staff; creating a learning community	Preparing for the long haul and continually rejuvenating your career in community change	Fundraising and financial planning
<b>Skill-building</b>	<b>Option 1:</b> Participatory and action research; citizen monitoring and accountability	<b>Option 2:</b> Advanced use of technology	<b>Option 3:</b> Strategic communications
<b>Issue knowledge</b>	<p><b>Independent study on moving to scale and creating reforms on specific issues you work on (eg. Jobs, housing, youth development)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understanding root causes of the issue, the broad policy issues, and the roles of key institutions and actors</li> <li>- becoming familiar with different strategies others have used</li> <li>- developing vision and direction for longer-term work on the issue</li> </ul>		