

Fundraising is Organizing!
2008 Anne Braden Participants
Reflections on Grassroots Fundraising

Greetings 2009 Anne Braden Participants! All of us who went through the 2008 Program are so excited for the great work and community building, you all are doing. This document was created from interviews with the 2008 participants to help you make the most of your grassroots fundraising experience in the program and beyond. Some of you are seasoned fundraisers while others are new and excited, freaked out or curious. Fundraising is a revolutionary opportunity to explore our deep and complicated feelings and attitudes about class, race, money and power both personally and politically. Consider these ideas and lessons little chunks of sparkly gold from us to you. Hope they are helpful. As always, you may call on anyone of us on the leadership team, especially Rani, Sasha or I and your fundraising support point people for questions, brainstorming or support. Together we can strengthen our ability to align the flow of our communities resources of time and money with our visions for racial and economic justice. Enjoy!

In community,
Philippe Lonestar

"The grassroots fundraising workshop was really helpful. I was originally going to be in Arizona to work with the Native organizations I work with and I remembering being like 'oh I will go that week because I don't want to deal and am not interested in fundraising'. I ended up being there and I was really excited. I took on a new perspective. I just got more comfortable around money and it just helped build my analysis around grassroots things rather than just being funded by Ford and things like that."

-Dixie Block

"The statistic about how low-income people give and give more of their income was really cool to see that the less money you have the more money you give. That rich people aren't the only ones who give. It's a misunderstanding."

-Megan Shaughnessy-Mogill

"I think learning the concept that we don't talk about money for a reason and that we feel uncomfortable about it and it is not transparent is a political strategy to keep us quiet was really revealing. I did a lot of fundraising to participate in the Braden Program. I sent letters to a ton of family and friends. It was pretty cool. The people who ended up wanting to support me were from the Lutheran volunteer program with little understanding of anti-racism work. Like an older couple who paid for the majority of my training who had no idea what anti-racism was or why it is important. They had a ton of questions. He called and grilled me about why it was important and what I would gain. He is a Republican guy, and he's the one that ended up deciding to support me. We had dinner at the end and he wanted to hear all about it. I'm not sure how it affected him politically but he wanted to listen. He is supportive of a volunteer program because of the

idea of service. No one is going to say it is weird or wrong to work in a soup kitchen but to have someone support political work around something that white people don't usually want to talk about it pretty amazing. On a personal level as a donor and a giver, that concept of money really changed how I think of the money I have and spend and the power behind my choice in where I give it. I learned a ton about how to make an ask and really believe that I don't have to feel guilty about it. I asked people from a place that was entirely different."

-Leah Bock

"I loved it. I had never done fundraising [like this] before in my life. Maybe a little bit but not in such a comprehensive way with a timeline and support and a goal. I learned a ton from it. It was an awesome way to engage my friends and family in conversations about white privilege and white supremacy. It sparked a new curiosity and enthusiasm in me. I always used to run away from fundraising and now I am totally curious and interested. Hell yeah, I contacted some unexpected people [who ended up donating]."

-Nina Rizzo

"Grassroots fundraising helped me think more broadly about who I could ask for support for political projects. The process gave me a different framing around asking for money. It was unexpected that my great aunt and uncle donated. I am still going to send catalyst fundraising information out to my great uncle who I interviewed for the family history project. I would have never considered getting in touch with him before this process. Chris offered to do a follow up with a work plan. It was helpful to be accountable. Ingrid wrote me a letter. It was really helpful in feeling appreciated and appreciating myself for following through with this aspect."

-Rebecca Tumposky

"It was helpful to talk it out and talk about issues of doing fundraising as white folks for white people. In general it made me realize the necessary connection between organizing and fundraising and not separating them... It did help to talk about money and challenge myself and my own donating."

-Alex Fischer

"I have always really linked it to an education piece. Most of the money I raise is from a presentation about the work and then I ask for money. So it's always a way of having people connecting to the work. I don't think you can tell where people are at in how much money they donate but if they give at all. Most people can give at least 5 dollars. One thing that came up is something like mailing a CD as a fundraiser. I found it more effective to ask first and then give them the CD as a thanks for donating. Because it was more cost effective. I am cultivating donors because I have the same fundraising commitment every year. So I am offering something to them to build those relationships. Face to face asks are the most valuable. I think that you usually get everyone you know to give money. Everyone you have a relationship with. It is really important that I get everyone in my family. Starting with the people closest to you is really valuable because I think it operates more as an organizing tool when you are asking from people close to you. Then you are more likely to approach it as organizing rather than just money."

Because it is where you are already. Organizing your own community first. Start close and expand from there.”

-Kate Raven

“My biggest challenge in embracing the fundraising process was just getting started. Once I got started it was much easier. I felt good making calls and then sending letters. It was hard to do the work of letters. It cut down the work because some people just donated immediately. Half I got their credit card number over the phone so I only sent out half as many letters. I did not customize the letters because I already had phone calls and they expected it. Almost everyone I asked donated. I asked people to be monthly sustainers and it helped that I was one. I asked people that were already monthly sustainers unbeknownst to me. So then I asked them to increase and two people did. Just because they are already does not mean they can't give more.”

-Ari Lev Fornari

“Overall it was healing around class because it was great to see that the less money people have the greater percentage of their income they give. People have a choice to give so it's ok to ask and people can say no. The deeper impact of the grassroots fundraising process was that I realized how much fundraising I do for things I don't even want to be fundraising for. Talking about what is exciting about anti-racist organizing is an opportunity to be developing funders and allies. I used it as an opportunity to connect with folks I had not been in contact with for years. I picked something creative – a mixed CD and a zine. It was an opportunity to be creative. The process gave me a chance to reflect on my life, where I am at and what is important to me. I reached out to 30 people total and 10 of them were people I would not have initially thought of to ask. My suggestion is to get psyched for making some phone calls because that is what it takes. Make a STRONG ask. Now I am more excited and willing to take on fundraising work. And I have with the abolitionist paper with Critical Resistance Oakland. Making calls! Less fear. The main tip I would offers other people is just do it! There are a lot of reasons to wait or get more addresses or whatever but you should just get started early and keep plowing.”

-Ari Clemenzi