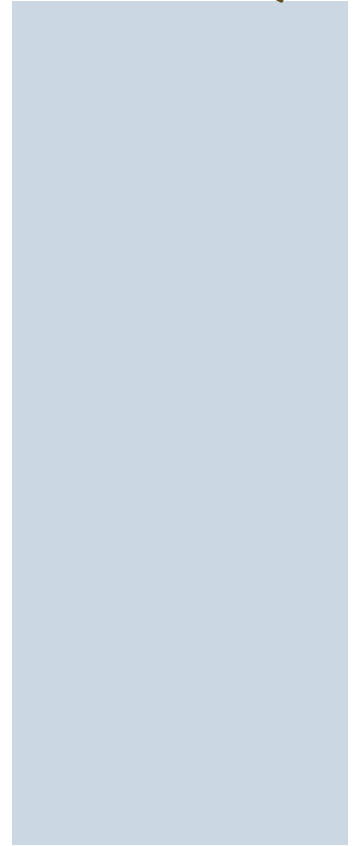


ADVOCACY, THE MEDIA AND YOU

Change in a Time of Uncertainty



Proceedings Paper

2009

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About Marguerite Casey Foundation

Marguerite Casey Foundation is dedicated to creating a movement of working families advocating on their own behalf for change. We strive to bring humility and hope to our work. Our actions are guided by the firm belief that significant positive change is not only possible, but absolutely necessary. Within this framework, we seek to do the following:

- Support and nurture strong, vibrant activism within and among families, enabling them to advocate for their own interests and improve the public and private systems that affect their lives.
- Examine, change and inform the advancement of social and economic policies and practices that promote the development of strong families and strong communities.
- Encourage the development of a coherent knowledge base for advocates, families and the organizations that serve them.
- Invest in system change and cross-system change in order to generate greater knowledge and provide effective working models for practice.



Dear Friends and Colleagues:

On behalf of Marguerite Casey Foundation, I am pleased to share with you the proceedings of our *Equal Voice Policy Convening, Advocacy, the Media and You: Change in a Time of Uncertainty*, which took place on October 9 and 10, 2009, in San Francisco.

Nearly 300 individuals representing families and organizations from across the country gathered to discuss how to carry forward the Equal Voice for America's Families Coalition (Equal Voice Coalition) by promoting policies and messages that reflect the needs and voices of families. The Equal Voice Coalition is a burgeoning movement of families and family-focused organizations that grew out of the yearlong Equal Voice for America's Families campaign (Equal Voice campaign).

Through the Equal Voice campaign, nearly 15,000 families attended 65 town hall meetings across the country between 2007 and 2008 to shape a platform that captures the needs and priorities of families in the United States. The resulting national family platform, released at a three-city convention in September 2008 attended by 15,000 families, is a blueprint for change that proposes tangible policy solutions in the eight priority areas identified by families:

- Child Care
- Criminal Justice Reform
- Education
- Employment/Job Training
- Health Care
- Housing
- Immigration Reform
- Safe and Thriving Communities

In October 2009, we gathered in San Francisco to continue the conversation about how all of us can work together to support a family-led movement by tapping into the desire among families to create change in their communities.

In this report, Marguerite Casey Foundation presents a synthesis of the discussions and the key messages that came out of the Equal Voice Policy Convening. Marguerite Casey Foundation hopes that families and organizations across the country will use this report as a resource to advance family-responsive policies and messages.

The foundation extends its deepest gratitude to everyone who joined us for the Equal Voice Policy Convening; to those who engaged in the Equal Voice Campaign, and, now, move forward with the Equal Voice Coalition; and to all people working to improve the lives of low-income families in the United States.

Sincerely,

Luz Vega-Marquis
President & CEO

welcome

Introduction

October 9 and 10, 2009, Marguerite Casey Foundation hosted its 2009 Equal Voice Policy Convening, *Advocacy, the Media and You: Change in a Time of Uncertainty*, in San Francisco, California. Nearly 300 individuals representing families and organizations, all members of a movement known as the Equal Voice Coalition, gathered in San Francisco with an ambitious goal: Together, they would devise strategies to push the concerns of low-wage working families into the national discussion. The mood of the meeting was upbeat, closer to a family reunion than a policy debate, but the mindset was grim determination.

Among those in attendance was Star Paschal, a 28-year-old single mother of three from Alabama. Paschal manages Section 8 housing in the city of Auburn and counts herself lucky to have a job that pays \$32,500 a year, though that modest income means she is \$30 over the monthly limit to qualify for a child care subsidy. “I feel like the government is sending the wrong message,” Paschal said. “Once a person makes even a little bit, we take things from them. People like me, we’re the missing class between middle class and lower class, and we’re completely stuck.”

Among Equal Voice families, Paschal’s situation is typical. Most of those present at the San Francisco convening reported earning under \$50,000 annually (with fully a third making less than \$25,000) and, before joining the Equal Voice Coalition, had never conceived of themselves as political activists. Yet through the Equal Voice movement, supported by Marguerite Casey Foundation, they and 30,000 other Americans in similar circumstances have come together across geographic and racial divides to develop a national family platform of interrelated family issues, from health care to affordable housing.

National statistics confirm the Equal Voice experience. Poverty, according to figures from 2008, now includes more than 13 percent of the U.S. population – an 11-year high – and economists forecast that the rate will continue rising into 2010. Researchers at the Economic Policy Institute note that 2.6 million more people fell into poverty between 2007 and 2008, and that this is “only the tip of the recession iceberg.”

The Equal Voice Coalition is an effort by Marguerite Casey Foundation and its grantees – more than 250 local, regional and national nonprofit organizations working with families in the poorest areas of the country – to support a family-led movement that advocates on behalf of families and advances the Equal Voice National Family Platform, which was created by working families.

Through 65 town hall meetings, 15,000 families came together between 2007 and 2008 to contribute to the platform. In September 2008, the platform was released at a three-city convention attended by more than 15,000 families in Birmingham, Chicago and Los Angeles. The platform identified eight priority issues — and presented policy solutions in each area: child care, criminal justice reform, education, employment/job training, health care, housing, immigration reform, safe and thriving communities.

For many families, the Equal Voice campaign was the first time they realized that family voices might be able to influence policy. Supporting opportunities for families to lead efforts to create change in their lives and in their communities is at the heart of Marguerite Casey Foundation’s mission and vision.

Our Mission

Marguerite Casey Foundation exists to help low-income families strengthen their voice and mobilize their communities in order to achieve a more just and equitable society for all.

Our Vision

We imagine a just and equitable society for all, where all children are nurtured to become compassionate, responsible and self-reliant adults; where families are engaged in the life of their communities, the nation and the world; and where people take responsibility for meeting today’s needs as well as those of future generations.



The year following the release of the Equal Voice National Family Platform was a time of action and reflection. In February 2009, 150 families traveled with Marguerite Casey Foundation to Washington, D.C., to present the platform to elected officials and advocate for the inclusion of the platform’s priorities in the stimulus funding. In Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, the Rio Grande Valley and beyond, organizations and families convened on their own to advance the platform in their communities. For example:

- In Marin County, **California**, Grassroots Leadership Network created the Equal Voice Leadership Academy, a collaboration among two Marguerite Casey Foundation grantees and two other organizations. The purpose: to build the capacity of 50 families to engage in local and regional issues that are connected to the Equal Voice National Family Platform.
- In **Chicago**, the Sweet Home Chicago Network – 12 organizations working together for the Chicago Affordable Housing Campaign – formed as a result of relationships built during the Equal Voice campaign.
- In **Alabama**, the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice - a six-group coalition - is coordinating opposition to anti-immigrant bills and facilitating dialogue between Alabama immigrant communities and decision-makers.
- In **Arizona**, Border Action Network is forming a statewide network to strengthen advocacy efforts and the multistate U.S.-Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force.
- In **Atlanta**, the Joshua Generation project will focus on building the civic engagement capacity of young African-American pastors.

Having spent one year developing a national family platform and another year working in communities to advance issues that concern families, Equal Voice Coalition now seeks to:

- ▶ Spark a national dialogue about policies that negatively affect families.
- ▶ Ensure that families are a part of the national discussion.
- ▶ Build a movement of families to sustain long-term change.
- ▶ Increase civic engagement among families.

At the October 2009 Equal Voice Policy Convening, organizations and families came together to discuss how to advance policies and media strategies that support families. As a result of the convening, the organizations and families:

- ▶ Strengthened connections with each other through networking and peer learning.
- ▶ Engaged in discussions to build their policy and media skills, as well as their capacity to advocate for themselves.
- ▶ Provided input about the next steps for the Equal Voice Coalition.

Equal Voice Timeline

2006
The Idea
 Marguerite Casey Foundation and its grantees decide to launch a yearlong campaign – Equal Voice for America’s Families – to raise the visibility of issues facing low-income families by crafting a platform of priorities and solutions.

2007
National Family Platform
 The Equal Voice National Family Platform is released and ratified by 15,000 families attending simultaneous conventions in Birmingham, Chicago and Los Angeles.

2007
Equal Voice Across the Country
 Local and regional projects emerge across the country to advance the Equal Voice National Family Platform.

2007
Families Get Involved
 Between 2007 - 2008, 15,000 families attend 65 town hall meetings to shape a national Family Platform.

2009
Equal Voice in Washington, D.C.
 150 families travel to Washington, D.C., to present the national family platform to elected officials.

2009
Advocacy and Media
 Equal Voice Policy Convening in San Francisco

Who Was Present

Marguerite Casey Foundation welcomed representatives from 158 grantee organizations and 82 families to the Equal Voice Policy Convening.

- The attendees came from 12 states across five distinct regions of the country.
- One-third were from households that make less than \$25,000 per year; two-thirds make less than \$50,000 per year.
- Nearly half said the well-being of their families was worse or much worse than it had been a year before.
- The participants had been extremely active in the past year – connecting with others, participating in direct actions and volunteering. Fifty-nine percent said they had contacted an elected official about an issue in their community.
- Health care topped the list of issues of most concern to those convened, followed by education and immigration reform.

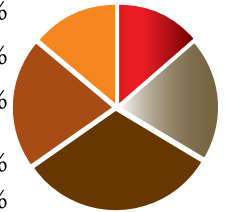
Convening attendees represented the foundation's five grantmaking regions:

■ West/California	20%
■ Midwest/Chicago	19%
■ Deep South	26%
■ Southwest	20%
■ Washington state	14%



The annual household income of attendees was as follows:

■ Less than \$10,000 per year	14%
■ Between \$10,000 < \$25,000	32%
■ \$25,000 to \$50,000	20%
■ \$50,000 to \$75,000	21%
■ More than \$75,000 per year	14%



Compared to a year ago, attendees said the well-being of their family had become:

■ Much better	6%
■ Better	19%
■ No change	30%
■ Worse	39%
■ Much worse	6%



Convening attendees reported that the following national family platform issues are of most concern to them now:

Health Care	47%
Education	42%
Immigration Reform	30%
Employment/Job Training	27%
Safe and Thriving Communities	19%
Criminal Justice Reform	15%
Housing	13%
Child Care	7%

Convening attendees reported taking the following actions in the past year to improve the lives of families in America:

Connected with others in my community to identify issues and possible actions	68%
Participated in a demonstration, march, rally or some other type of organized direct action	62%
Volunteered in a community organization and/or school	59%
Contacted an elected official about issues in my community	60%
Built a coalition of organizations to advance issues	54%
Trained to be an advocate or trained people to be advocates	51%

Key Lessons From the Equal Voice Policy Convening

Marguerite Casey Foundation asked what actions and messages were needed to build a movement and to advance the Equal Voice National Family Platform. Participants identified strategy development, networking, communications and other commonly identified fundamentals of Movement Building, but more often than anything else, participants said:

We need to believe we can make a difference.

We need to make family issues everyone's issues.

We need to do the hard work of educating people, bringing them together and mobilizing them to create change.



The media has turned into pundits and people who are able to give shocking statements rather than talking to the real people that are affected by issues.

Vanessa Elkan

Southern Education Foundation

The key lessons that emerged at the convening coalesce around a few salient points and offer important insights into how best to advance the Equal Voice Coalition and the issues that matter most to families, as expressed in the Equal Voice National Family Platform:

▶ **Build connections**

We must take the initiative to reach out to families in our communities, to other organizations working with families, to elected officials and to the media to talk about the Equal Voice National Family Platform and about solutions to the issues that face families. To have greater impact, we must work together.

▶ **Build trust**

Successful movements are based on trust; trust is based on accountability. By working together and being accountable to each other, our movement will become stronger.

▶ **Do the work**

We must do the hard work of building a movement: that is, reaching out and engaging other families and organizations and taking action in our own behalf.

▶ **Build solidarity**

One group, one community or one issue alone cannot create a movement. The efforts and collective cooperation of as many families as possible are important to achieve sustainable change. We build solidarity by having a deep understanding of each other's struggles.

▶ **Advance an inclusive concept of families**

In building a family movement, we must advance the message that families are as diverse as America, that immigrants are families, that youth often play leadership roles within families, that low-income families from communities throughout the United States share common challenges.

▶ **Frame the issues**

We must frame the issues in ways that capture the diverse voices of families and their needs, along with solutions to those needs. Telling our stories is perhaps the most effective way to frame the issues.

Advocacy, the Media and You

Change in a Time of Uncertainty

Michael Ettlinger

Center for American Progress is a think-tank dedicated to improving the lives of Americans through ideas and actions. Mr. Ettlinger spoke about the current recession and federal stimulus efforts to improve the economy. He presented an overview of the stimulus planning process, current spending, and anticipated future trends, along with advice for how local communities and organizations can track spending gain and access to funds.

How the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) works

According to the Center for American Progress analysis of the final bill, 16 percent of ARRA funds are allocated to help those most in need. These include low-income households and the recently unemployed. Eleven percent of funds are for aid for states and localities, and 23 percent utilities for investments in transportation, utility, health care, education, broadband, etc. Thirty-two percent of the bill was tax cuts, and 18 percent was green investments. The recovery package is designed to produce long-lasting multiplier effects that ripple through the economy, boosting demand for products and services, thus leading businesses to grow and hire again.

How ARRA has helped the American economy

ARRA played a vital role in preventing an economic meltdown. At the end of 2008, gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 5.4 percent. In the first quarter of 2009, it went down another 6.4 percent. However, in the second quarter of 2009, it shrunk by only 0.7 percent. This rise in GDP from the first quarter to the second was the largest increase in almost a decade, and the second largest in the last 25 years.

ARRA also has slowed job losses. A year ago, we were losing more than 600,000 jobs a month; the rate has decreased significantly in the year since ARRA funds began entering the economy. Though there is much room for improvement in the job market, the recovery package has had an important impact on stemming the job losses.

Resources for those seeking funds

ARRA has provided, and continues to provide, funds to community-based organizations around the country. Examples include the Health Resources and Services Administration, which received \$2 billion through ARRA to expand health care services to low-income and uninsured individuals through its health center program. To date, more than \$1.3 billion of these funds have been awarded to community-based organizations around the country.

The Strengthening Communities Fund provides money to community- and faith-based organizations that help promote economic recovery for local residents. Through this fund, the Nonprofit Capacity Building program will make one-time, two-year awards of up to \$1 million to organizations that will use the funds to support other faith-based or secular nonprofit organizations.

Those are just a few examples, and the federal government is constantly improving the way it provides information on gaining access to the funds. Various Web sites, including individual agency Web sites, have useful and easily retrievable information on available grants.

www.grants.gov Lists all federal grant opportunities, including non-recovery grants.

www.recovery.gov U.S. government's official Web site provides easy access to data related to Recovery Act spending.

www.cfda.gov Comprehensive listing of all federal programs, projects, services and activities that provide assistance or benefits to the American public.

These are not the issues that get elevated; they are not the issues that get amplified without the type of power that we are trying to build nationally.

Rami Nashashibi
Inner-City Muslim Action Network

Panelists

Michael Ettlinger

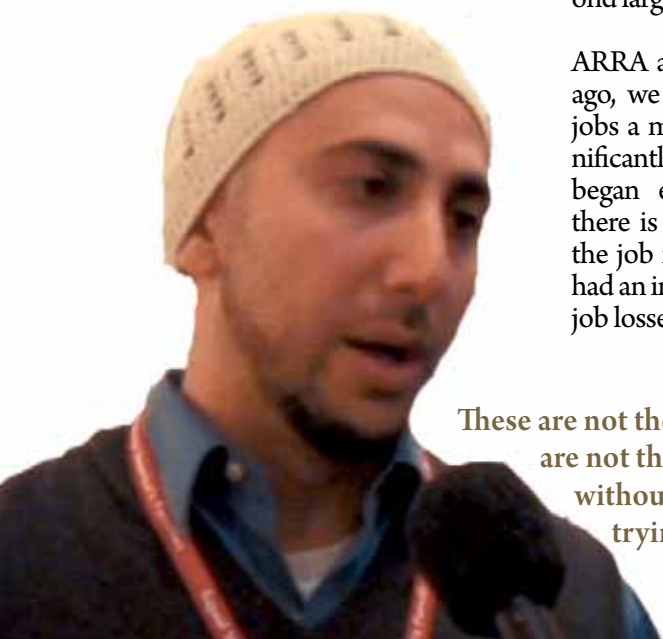
Center for American Progress
"The Federal Role in the Recovery"

Sandy Close

New America Media
"The Changing Role of the Media"

Joe Brooks

PolicyLink
"The View From the Ground"



Sandy Close

New America Media produces, aggregates and disseminates multimedia content and services for and from the youth and ethnic media sectors. Ms. Close discussed issues related to advancing media messages.

In the current media landscape, community-based organizations must create their own media and become their own communication hubs. The reasons are clear:

- ▶ Our society has become increasingly fragmented and diverse as people have become increasingly mobile.
- ▶ Technology has given us new ways to communicate but it has also separated and isolated us from one another. Instead of reading one daily newspaper or watching one nightly news program, we are now apt to ignore these outlets in favor of our own private networks.

- ▶ Mainstream news organizations are losing audiences and reducing reporting staffs. Never that good at covering communities they considered marginal to the mainstream, they now lack the resources to do justice to the diversity of their communities even if they wanted to.
- ▶ Ethnic media are a vital intermediary for underserved communities and the organizations that serve them, but ethnic media have been hard hit by the recession, losing many of the small business advertisers on which they have long relied.

Community-based organizations need to communicate to their own constituents; they need to communicate with the wider community in which they live and work; and they need to project their issues, concerns and perspectives onto the public radar. This is all the more important because in our very public culture, people long-underserved by traditional media want to be visible, want to tell their own stories, want to have their voices heard.

Young people represent the most important resource for building community based media and communications capacities.

Community-based organizations can engage young people with the idea of developing them into their own communications infrastructure. Doing so will not only help organizations cross generational lines and build visibility; but also empower young people to connect to their communities and become their frontline messengers.



Joe Brooks

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity. Mr. Brooks shared the approach that PolicyLink takes toward building an equity frame into policy advocacy and what it means to pursue policy change in the Obama era.

The PolicyLink equity frame

- Equity is about just and fair inclusion.
- An equitable society is one in which all can participate and prosper.
- The goals of equity must be to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potential.
- Equity creates a path from hope to change.

Policy actions – examples of what “equity” looks like

Transportation

Accessible, affordable transportation sited in low-income communities; transportation spending on projects

and programs that connect low-income residents to economic opportunity and essential goods and services.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure investment done right connects low-income people and people of color to low- and middle-skill construction and project-management jobs.

Jobs

Green jobs; community, labor and government partnerships; workforce development; community/technical college program pipelines; community benefits agreements.

Policy advocacy in the Obama era – an opportunity and a call to action

The current unprecedented focus on community issues offers the opportunity for dialogue with an administration that is open to our ideas, but nothing is going to happen without the advocacy of every one of us.

We need allies in state legislatures and in Washington, D.C. And we need to do the hard work of engaging our local communities and making sure that families affected by the policies that need to be changed are at the table.

Become Your Own Advocate

Policy Guided Table Discussion

Convening attendees were asked to build on the panel conversations by exploring three questions about the Equal Voice Coalition with fellow attendees. Following is a summary of the key points that emerged from the table discussions.

What are the benefits to you of participating in the Equal Voice Coalition?

Panelists

Joyce Parker

Citizens for a Better Greenville
“Identifying Your Issue and Mobilizing Community”

Marcela Diaz

Somos Un Pueblo Unido
“Making Your Case – From Issue to Policy”

James Elmendorf

LAANE
“Building a Policy Campaign”

The panelists, all of whom represented organizations that are Marguerite Casey Foundation grantees, discussed their experiences with developing and implementing policy campaigns. The panelists emphasized the need for grassroots engagement, for ensuring that families take the lead on identifying priority issues and solutions, and for providing support to develop the leadership of families.

Increased awareness

Knowledge of other communities, issues and policy changes; recognition of power and what it takes to really make change; hearing what others are doing around the country; opportunities to see that there are moments to celebrate and that there is winning in the process; cross-cultural exchanges; perspectives of young people; knowing how far others have gotten in their struggle and that working together is how they did it.

Motivation

Being inspired by the commonality of issues; creative ideas for building movements and implementing programs; getting new ideas and energy.

Mobility

Having mobility to speak on and participate in other issues; cross-issue organizing; building relationships across traditional divisions.

Networking

Building relationships; identifying collective issues by bringing people together; validation between and from peers; developing an extended support network; learning about ideas that have worked for others.

Family engagement

Opportunities to bring and engage families and foster them as leaders.

Leverage

Potential to effect change at a larger level, including at the national level; using the efforts of organizations to garner additional funding; bringing non-advocacy groups into advocacy work.

Visibility

Increased visibility for our organizations, communities and issues; giving a voice to people that have been left out of the conversation.

A defined platform

Having a framework for education and advocacy; a sense of belonging to a group and of a shared struggle; clear principles.

Responsibility and accountability

Working with others means being accountable to others; collective and individual efforts benefit from regular check-ins with each other.

In order for families to have a well-being and to be well, they need to have their basic needs met. We need to address housing; we need to address health care, child care, employment.

Andrea Hall

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless



How can you contribute to the work of the Equal Voice Coalition ?

Build community resources

Start a youth newsletter; participate in the events of other organizations; provide technical field support for organizers; provide leadership workshops; mentor young leaders; share stories; see everyone as a leader.

Reach out to elected officials

Work with elected officials; work on campaigns.

Be an ambassador for Equal Voice

Speak on behalf of the platform and the coalition; be visible in the community

(town halls, walks, fundraisers); take the platform back to local community.

Reach more families

Take the issues to the community in a language they can understand; use social media/networking; educate the community about the national family platform.

Reach more organizations

Recruit other organizations, and help them see the bigger picture; network with each other between convenings and events.

Create a local network:

Strengthen existing networks; create an assessment survey to engage other local organizations; make policy demands specific to our local communities; go back to our communities to share and implement the process.

Document our work

Document our progress to justify supporting coalition building.



If we all stand together, we can actually get a lot done. If the three people in my family, your family, and all these other families get together, we can really actually do a lot. I think that's the thing the Equal Voice campaign gave us. Wow—15,000 families coming together is so much louder than one family.

Sarah Freeman

Equal Voice participant

What actions should the Equal Voice Coalition take in the next year?

Develop a structure for the coalition

Create a structure for the Equal Voice Coalition (for example, local committees, national steering committee); create a toolkit on how to use the Equal Voice National Family Platform; pick one platform issue and focus on it; support intergenerational engagement and succession planning so that the Equal Voice campaign never ends; leverage funding from other foundations and sources to support the work; build the capacity of organizations to integrate the platform into local work; hire a network coordinator for policy advocacy

Support local and regional organizations coming together

Focus on local actions, priorities and plans; hold regional convenings and strategy sessions; bring local organizations into coordinated actions and events (for example, an "Equal Voice Day").

Conduct focused actions

Mobilize the coalition for action in Washington, D.C.; create advisory committees to monitor stimulus funding; participate in the U.S. Social Forum 2010; conduct a postcard campaign and voter education; complete a power analysis of the platform; align efforts with Census 2010.

Engage more people

Engage more youth in the coalition; educate families; create resources and toolkits on how to develop community-focused elected officials (such as a boot camp training approach); help grantees and families understand national policies (provide access to simple ways of understanding the policies and getting involved); provide child care at meetings.

Develop media and communications strategies

Produce easy-to-distribute pamphlets; use social networking; facilitate communications among Equal Voice participants; connect participants with trainings,

experts, tools; network organizations working on specific issues; build a resource database as a way to know the strengths of different participants and how we can help each other.

Engage with the current political structure

Align efforts with President Obama's focus on urban development, universal health care, after-school funding, youth violence prevention, and green jobs; speak to elected representatives.

Evaluate

Take time for reflection and assessment.

Media Workshop

The media workshop opened with a panel presentation from New America Media, the country's first and largest national collaboration and advocate of 2,000 ethnic news organizations.

Are the media covering issues identified in the Equal Voice National Family Platform? Are the voices of all families being included in the media?

Definitely not.

Many groups, including rural communities, divorced families, American Indians, and foster families, are left out.

Only in cases of extreme impact.

Extreme events or situations, such as Hurricane Katrina, the beating death of a teen in Chicago, and decades-high unemployment rates, attract media attention. Otherwise, poor people, rural communities, people of color, immigrants and other marginalized groups are invisible.

Depends.

Coverage depends on the region and media source. Ethnic media outlets have given more families a voice and have covered national family platform issues more than mainstream media.

Coverage also depends on the issue: Health care, education and employment get covered, child care and criminal justice reform do not, housing is covered, but the subtopics of gentrification and rent control are

not; immigration is covered, but the coverage tends to be negative and anti-immigrant.

When family issues are covered, they are not done well.

Coverage is not consistent, not in-depth and not positive.

The majority of coverage is misplaced in terms of the "face" matching the story. People speak on behalf of families, but are not representative of those affected by the issues.

When there is coverage, the voices of families are chopped up or reduced to sound bites. For example, health care has become a politically marginalized conversation instead of focusing on the needs of people.

The media treat family issues as if they are not connected. Media coverage does not create a platform for issue-based solutions, and leans toward fear-mongering.

Panelists

Adrian Ramirez

New America Media
"Make Your Own News"

Raj Jayadev

New America Media
"Media = Organizing"

Kevin Weston

New America Media
"Toolkit for Action"

The panelists discussed strategies and resources for media advocacy and facilitated a discussion among convening attendees about three questions in small table discussions. This is a summary of the main points that emerged from the discussion.

What can we do to improve media coverage?

Media training is critical to building movements.

Although traditional media can be effective and should be cultivated, media strategies should not be limited to traditional sources.

Build relationships with all types of media.

Buy spots to tell the story ourselves.



Ain't no power like the power of the family, and the power of the family don't stop.

What message about the well-being of families would you like to communicate?

Following are the phrases and messages voiced by the convening attendees. The ideas are grouped into the common themes that surfaced.

Who we are

We are what America is all about.

Our families should be seen and welcomed as a collage.

Our voices + Our rights =
The true American family.

I am who I am, an ever-changing family.

We are working together for family unity and for just and humane immigration reform so that families are not separated, we are making our voices heard by elected officials so that they know the necessity of legalizing immigrants to grow the economy of what is now our country, where all have the opportunity to educate themselves and to work.

Our families are trying to do the same thing as all families. We want to raise our children in a supportive environment with other people. We want to share and care for our children and vulnerable groups. We may have different obstacles and different paths, but we have the same aim.

What we need and what we want

America's families are working harder, making less and falling farther behind!

All families have the power to change things when they demand respect and dignity.

Families are in trouble and need help.

All voices need to be heard.

America's families want to have a voice at the decision-making table.

Our families want our government back.

The well-being of families is not so well because families desire the basic human rights addressed in the Equal Voice National Family Platform.

Every issue
is a family
issue.



Families have power

We are the solution we've been waiting for.

Families are struggling, and we have the power to shape the policy if we come together.

We are hardworking, venerable people, and we are America! These are our needs. These are our contributions.

Help is here! And this is what it looks like.



The well-being of our nation depends upon all of us. We are connected by our love, worthiness, determination for freedom. Every human being deserves basic human rights, education, housing and health care.

Media Workshop

America's families are working harder, making less and falling farther behind!



Messages with a broad appeal

Everybody does well when every family's needs are met through secure local economies.

As a community, we all have to be responsible for each other.

It takes a village to raise a child, and we're taking the village back. Society begins in families.

Our families built and are continuously building and supporting this country with our minds, body, souls and spirit.

Every family wants what is best for their children.

The well-being of children MUST be a priority.

Time for public funds to be used for the public good.

All families have a human right to the issues of the Equal Voice National Family Platform.

Every issue is a family issue.

Family values defined by us.

Our well-being is connected with the lives and struggles of others. We are interconnected.

Ain't no power like the power of the family, and the power of the family don't stop.

It takes a village to raise a child, and we're taking the village back.

Well-being starts with a healthy and safe family that is secure economically, environmentally and medically.

Families want to be respected and recognized. They know what their solutions are.

The well-being of families can be achieved only if human dignity and equal access to social well-being are respected.

The well-being of our nation depends upon all of us. We are connected by our love, worthiness, determination for freedom. Every human being deserves basic human rights, education, housing and health care.

One America where all families rise and thrive together.

Strategies for getting the message out

Stop skirting around the issues, and start telling our own stories. All of the policies and legislation affect real people... show it in real people's stories.

Righteous storytelling involves and must include our families. They need to be seen as the mainstream American family as opposed to being seen as the minority.

We cannot talk about only one issue. Housing, employment, child care and others go hand-in-hand.

Analyze and discuss the contradictions around blatant racism.

Address systems issues by focusing on the roots of problems.

Develop a structured media campaign that all families have a human right to fulfill the needs identified in the Equal Voice National Family Platform.



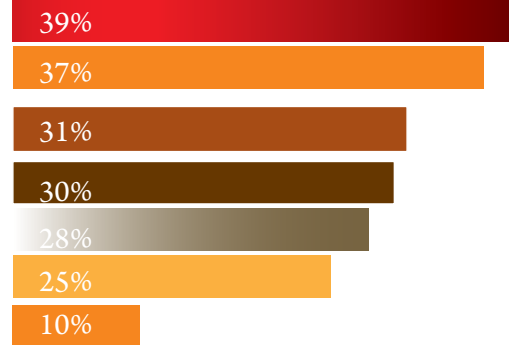
We want the Equal Voice National Family Platform communicated out!

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Equal Voice Policy Convening closed with a focus on what actions the Equal Voice Coalition should take in the next year. Marguerite Casey Foundation staff reviewed the ideas from the individual table discussions and identified the seven most common suggestions. The top seven suggestions were then presented to the convening attendees for a vote. Following are the suggestions and the vote results.

What actions should the Equal Voice Coalition take in the next year?

- Mobilize the coalition for action in D.C.
- Engage youth in the coalition
- Build the capacity of organizations to integrate the national family platform into local work
- Hold regional convenings and strategy sessions
- Develop grassroots media strategy
- Support local organizations coming together
- Complete a power analysis of the platform



We are hardworking, venerable people, and we are America! These are our needs. These are our contributions.

It is the hope of Marguerite Casey Foundation that the families and organizations in attendance at the Equal Voice Policy Convening, along with their colleagues and allies across the country, will feel inspired, supported and equipped to take action and to create the changes they seek in their communities and in their lives.

Equal Voice Policy Convening Agenda

Friday, October 9, 2009

- 6:00 p.m. Opening Reception
- 7:00 p.m. Showing of documentary *Raising Hope: The Story of the Equal Voice Campaign*

Saturday, October 10, 2009

- 7:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast
- 8:00 a.m. Welcome and Overview
Welcome by Luz Vega-Marquis
Facilitator Greg Hodge presents overview and goals for the day.
- 8:30 a.m. Plenary Session (Moderated by Greg Hodge)
Panel: Advocacy, the Media and You: *Change in a Time of Uncertainty*
Michael Ettlinger, Center for American Progress: *The Federal Role in the Recovery*
Joe Brooks, PolicyLink: *The View From the Ground*
Sandy Close, New America Media: *The Changing Role of the Media*
- 9:30 a.m. Break
- 9:45 a.m. Policy Workshop (Moderated by Greg Hodge)
Panel: Become Your Own Advocate
Joyce Parker, Citizens for a Better Greenville: *Identifying Your Issue and Mobilizing Community*
Marcela Diaz, Somos Un Pueblo Unido: *Making Your Case: From Issue to Policy*
James Elmendorf, LAANE: *Building a Policy Campaign*
- 10:45 a.m. Guided Table Discussion:
What are the benefits to you of participating in the Equal Voice for America's Families Coalition?
How can you contribute to the work of the Equal Voice for America's Families Coalition?
What action should the Equal Voice for America's Families Coalition take in the next year?
Keypad Voting
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch
Raffle of six notebook computers
For those who preregistered there will be a presentation by Tamara Watts from K&L Gates regarding changes to the Form 990 for 501(c)(3) organizations.
- 1:15 p.m. Media Workshop (Moderated by Sandy Close)
Panel: Become Your Own Media
Adrian Ramirez, New America Media: *Make Your Own News*
Raj Jayadev, New America Media: *Media = Organizing*
Kevin Weston, New America Media: *Toolkit for Action*
- Guided Table Discussion
Is the media covering issues identified in the national family platform?
Are the voices of all families being included in the media?
What message about the well-being of families would you like to communicate out?
- 3:15 p.m. Summary and Closing (Moderated by Greg Hodge)
Present results from table discussions and keypad voting.
Vote by keypad on actions that can be taken by the Equal Voice for America's Families Coalition.
Closing: Where do we go from here?
- 4:00 p.m. Adjournment

Equal Voice for America's Families

A Snapshot

The Equal Voice for America's Families National Family Platform is a blueprint for change as heard from more than 15,000 families at 65 town hall meetings held across the country in 2007 and 2008, and ratified by 15,000 families at a three-city convention in Birmingham, Chicago and Los Angeles in 2008.

Through the Equal Voice Coalition, communities across the country are working to advance the policy recommendations in the national family platform at the local, state and federal levels.

Our Vision for America

We envision a nation in which America's promise of prosperity, security and opportunity is enjoyed by all families, a nation in which all families are nurtured, supported and celebrated, and a nation in which families work together to build a better future for themselves, their communities and their country. We envision an America where equal opportunity translates into equal outcomes.

We envision a future where all families have decent jobs, health care, education opportunities, affordable housing, child care, and safe neighborhoods. We hope for a future where no family has to struggle to meet basic needs such as food and health care.



We Believe

No family should live in poverty.

Prosperity and security begin with every person's right to work in a well-paid job, to be healthy and educated and to live in a safe community.

Equal opportunity should lead to equality of achievement.

Public policies should promote everyone's ability to reach their fullest potential and advance the common good.

Families should have an equal voice in shaping policies and the future of their communities.

Society should support family unity, encourage the healthy development of children and youth and foster respect for all people.

Strong families make America stronger.

Our Commitment

We will work for change.

We will work collectively in support of families.

We will protect the rights and opportunities of all families.

We will be involved in our communities.

We will teach our children values and character.

We will support our youth.

We will inform others of the issues we face and what we need to do about them.

We will hold our elected officials accountable to the common good.

Ten Ways to Make Your Own Media

New America Media

1 Publish a newsletter or 'zine

Newsletters, brochures and manifestos have been with us for centuries for one reason: The printed word works. A newsletter, 'zine, newspaper or magazine can be used as an organizing tool and also as a way to recognize and unite the voices of your group. Nothing beats a first-person narrative from a constituent/someone involved in the movement to bring an issue to life. Send your publication out at regular intervals (once a week, once a month, every two months) so that your readers can expect and rely on it. Cost: Photocopying (consider double-sided to save money) is about \$.03 per page. You will also need a stapler and staples to bind the page, plus postage if you mail it out. Color copies are considerably more.

2 Start a blog

You can set up a free blog platform at WordPress.org, BlogSpot.com, or Blogger.com. All three services offer a large selection of designs to choose from, so you don't need Web-coding experience. Blogs are a great way to get news and reactions to news out quickly. Early on, it is important to decide the focus of your blog – will it be neighborhood news, political views and ideas, or reflections on raising your family? The title of your blog should reflect that focus. Cost: You need a computer with Internet access; libraries offer this service for free. At least three blogging services offer free subscriptions and design templates (WordPress, BlogSpot, and Blogger).

3 Interact with social networks

Another way to create an online presence for yourself or your group is by using social networks such as MySpace, Facebook and Twitter.

Social media are incredibly easy to use. Facebook offers you the chance to connect with many, Twitter is the social media tool for second-by-second information on what's happening. The service allows you to "micro-blog," that is, share your thoughts in 140 characters or less. Cost: Twitter and Facebook are both free services.

4 Build a Web site

A Web site offers a place to house a huge amount of information that you want to share with the public. The easiest way to create a Web site is to sign up for a free account at a service like Weebly (www.weebly.com), Webs (www.webs.com), or Homestead (www.homestead.com). All of those services offer dozens of templates and add-on options for your site. Most will host pictures, videos, music and audio, documents, maps and photo galleries. You can also build your own social network through Ning (www.ning.com), which allows you to create a community site for that purpose. Cost: Services are free, but premium packages will cost you per month.

5 Start a cable access TV show

This is probably one of the most underutilized media out there for groups doing local community organizing. Public access television is one of three types of PEG (public, educational, and governmental) media access required under the 1984 Cable Franchise Policy and Communications Act. Your area may offer a number of public access programming options —and you could have a regular running television show for free or next to nothing. Cost: Some towns may offer you the production services needed for your show; if not, a Flip camera is a great tool and costs about \$200.

6 Get on the radio

Having a radio show can give voice to your organization. You can promote events, and share stories, and having your own radio show adds a certain stature to your organization in the public arena. Some commercial radio stations have a few community time slots. Your local college or your school district, may have an FM station. Most stations will have a program manager who can explain to you the process for getting on the air. Another option is to stream broadcasts over the Internet for free with blogtalkradio.com. Cost: There is no cost for having your own program on community radio. There is no cost for Internet streaming. Fees for owning a low-power FM station begin at \$400 per year (this does not include the costs of the operating equipment and necessary power).

7 Hold an event

Holding an event where people who have direct experience with an issue speak from their experience, as well as offering their own suggestions for how to change policy and practice, can be tremendously powerful. Organizers, activists and researchers can speak alongside them, but those who have walked the walk should hold center stage. Events are a great way to get press coverage for your issue – send out a press release to local media, followed up with personal phone calls, and make sure to let media know if panelists will be available before or after the event for one-on-one interviews. Cost: If you can't find a free venue, renting a space can be costly. You may be able to recoup some or all of this by asking for donations at the door.

8 Build a text tree

A text tree, or mass text message, is the fastest way to get the word out. Texts feel more immediate

and intimate than e-mail message. If you're hosting an event, give a bulk invite a personal feel by sending out a mass text (the list of people receiving your text is not visible to the individual recipients). If you want to increase the attendance at your event, be sure to tell your text recipients to pass on your text to their friends. Cost: Almost all cell phones and plans allow you to text multiple recipients, even if you do not have e-mail or Web capabilities on your phone.

9 Make flyers and postcards

Flyers and postcards can be designed on the computer, or simply with a pen and markers. You can copy them in en masse at your local copy shop and pass them out or post them in grocery stores, community centers, libraries etc. For maximum effect, consider, handing them out at local events (street fairs, parades, sporting events). A low-cost alternative is to do this via e-mail. Cost: Black and white photocopies are about \$.03 per sheet. The more you make, the lower the price per sheet will be. Using colored paper increases the price a few cents. Printing postcards online runs about \$20 for 500 cards.

10 Create swag

Swag is slang for stuff given away to promote something — posters, stickers, buttons, T-shirts, water bottles. Swag, printed with your group's or project's name/slogan, can be an effective tool in getting out your message or promoting your organization. Cost: Prices for swag created on the Internet vary greatly. As with photocopies, the more you order of the same product, the cheaper it gets per item. You may be able to recoup the costs by selling the items you make at events or by raffling them off.

Participant List

ACORN Leroy Bell Stephen Bradberry	Arkansas Public Policy Panel Alejandro Aviles K Brett Miracle	Center on Policy Initiatives Barbara Obrzut Quynh Nguyen	Community Culture and Resource Center Ann Brown Denise Jennings Flora Pilgrim
Action Communication and Education Reform Al White Lydia Seals	Asian Immigrant Women Advocates Soo Kyoung Park Myung Ja Koo	Centers for New Horizons Johnnie Owens Jeannetta Bradshaw	Community Media Organizing Project Damekia Morgan Ebony Thomas
Adults and Youth United Development Association Gloria Arenivas Flor Samaniego Olivia Figueroa	Asian Pacific American Legal Center Jessica Viramontes Stewart Kwoh Thanh Vuong	Central American Resource Center Marvin Andrade Raul Borbon Susana Zamorano	Community Organizing and Family Issues Ellen Schumer Karen Lynn Morton
Advocates for Community and Rural Education Dorothy Singleton Melanie Yelder	Asian Pacific Environmental Network Mimi Ho	Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño Nayamin Martinez Cossio Juan Santiago	Community to Community Development Erin Thompson Rosalinda Guillen
Albany Park Neighborhood Council Jenny Arwade Maria Paula Degillo	BASE Initiative/Peace Development Fund Paul Haible Teresa Juarez Schreck	Chicago Coalition for the Homeless Andrea Hall Stephanie Hooker	Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County, Inc. Marilyn Mckay-Young Melvin Young
American Friends Service Committee Benjamin Prado Jeff Smith Luis Magana Mariana Ramirez Maria Pascua	Border Action Network Julissa Villa Angelita Nuñez	Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers Gail T. Smith Margaret Martinez	Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norte América Maria Salazar Arturo Carmona Vanessa Aramayo
American Indian Center, Inc. Joseph Podlasek Cyndee Fox-Starr	Brownsville Community Health Center Alix Flores Elvia Alcalá Maria del Carmen Guerra	Chicanos Por La Causa Maria D Parra Renato Ramos	Developing Communities Project Gwen Rice Beatrice Winfrey
Americans for Indian Opportunity Jasmine McGee	Campesinos Sin Fronteras Emma Torres Rogelio Torres	Children's Alliance Teresa Mosqueda	Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment Anna Marie Frazier Carol Davis Lori Goodman
Applied Research Center Tammy Johnson	Casa de Proyecto Libertad Alvaro Sosa Dina Nunez Maria del Rayo Treto	Chinatown Community Development Center Angela Chu Yue Hua Yu	Direct Action and Research Training Center, Inc. Holly Holcombe Sharon Dove
Arise Citizens' Policy Project Shakita Jones April Lewis	Casa Familiar Irma Castro Estela Flores	Citizens for a Better Greenville Joyce Parker Tisna Hall	Doña Ana County Colonias Development Council Lucia Veronica Carmona Esmeralda Salazar
ARISE Support Center Ramona P. Casas Lidia Dalia Guajardo	CASA Latina Veronique Facchinelli Lucina Hernandez	Coalition of African, Arab, Asian, European and Latino Immigrants of Illinois Francisco Ramos Nada Touma	
	Center for Community Change Lupe M. Lopez	Columbia Legal Services Aurora Martin	

Participant List

Ella Baker Center for
Human Rights
Joyce Cook

Enlace Chicago
Jaime Deleon
Andrea Cirillo

Environmental Health
Coalition
Diane Takvorian
Jose Medina

Equal Rights Advocates
Arcelia Hurtado

Equal Voice Coalition
Michael Seifert
Beverly Leach
Brenda Green
Fernando Tafoya
Jerry Fiamordze
Juan Lopez
Maria Bures
Patty Lopez
Star Paschal

Erie Neighborhood House
Maureen Hellwig
Maria Herrera

Every Child Matters
Education Fund
Deborah Wicker-Jones
Shacara Lewis

Families and Friends of
Louisiana's Incarcerated
Children
Wendi O'Neal
Ernest Johnson

Farmworker Association of
Florida, Inc.
Isidoro Quezada

Farmworkers Self-Help,
Inc.
Margarita Romo
C. Limas

Federation of Child Care
Centers of Alabama, Inc.
Teumbay Barnes
Jamila L. Rowe

Federation of Southern
Cooperatives
Osagie Idehen
Ethel Giles

Fiesta Educativa, Inc.
Josefina Nieves
Sayuri Tanabe

Gamaliel Foundation
Atlantans Building
Leadership for
Empowerment
Sherita Edwards
Lawerence Soublet

Georgia Citizens' Coalition
on Hunger
La Tausha Nedd
Sherice Chisholm

Georgia Living Wage
Coalition
Shyria Coleman
Jennifer Hughes

Georgia Strategic Alliance
for New Directions and
Unified Policies Inc.
Lache Pool
Melissa Conrad

Grassroots Collaborative
Amisha Patel
Marsha Godard

Greater Birmingham
Ministries
Lauren Banks
Byl Boyd

Haitian Neighborhood
Center Sant La Inc.
Gepsie Metellus
Junie Dareus

Highlander Research and
Education Center, Inc.
Tufara Waller Muhammad

Hispanic Interest Coalition
of Alabama
Caitlin Sandley
Horacio Gutierrez

Illinois Coalition for
Immigrant and Refugee
Rights
Ahlam Jbara
Tahani Hammad

Indian Pueblo Cultural
Center
Marth Beckett
Michelle Chalan

Inner City Struggle
Henry Perez
Salvador & Yolanda
Rodriguez

Inner-City Muslim Action
Network
Rami Nashashibi
Haroon Najam

Institute of American
Indian Arts
Jaime Eyrich
Ramus Suina

Instituto de Educacion
Popular del sur de
California
Raul Anorve
Lidia Romero
Maria Isabel Medina

Interfaith Worker Justice
Jennifer Dillon

Juvenile Justice Project of
Louisiana
Bridgette Butler
Kyron George

Kenwood Oakland
Community Organization
Jhatayn Travis
Princella Lee

La Mujer Obrera
Irma Montoya
Maria C Medina

La Union del Pueblo
Entero
Martha Sanchez
Margarita Vasquez

Latino Center for
Prevention & Action in
Health and Welfare
Ana Carricchi
Rosalia Pinon

LeClaire Courts
Community Development
Corporation
Heather Parish
Lynn Domingo

Legacy of Equality,
Leadership and Organizing
Linda Jones

Little Black Pearl Workshop
Zakeya N. Cartman
Staci Plant

Logan Square
Neighborhood Association
Nancy Aardema
Marla Bramble

Long Beach YMCA —
Community Development
Branch
Robert Cabeza
Deshaunte Lewis

Los Angeles Alliance for a
New Economy
Irma Carranza
James Elmendorf
Ana Jara

Los Angeles Metropolitan
Churches
Jayme Swan
Shaunda Quartman

Louisiana Children's
Museum
Julia W. Bland

Louisiana Justice Institute
Jacques Morial

Low Income Families'
Empowerment Through
Education
Diana Spatz
Mary Canoy

Participant List

Marin County Grassroots Leadership Network Ericka Erickson Gayle Theard Flor Campos-Imert	New Mexico Acequia Association Janice Varela	Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide Christi Bowman	Southern Echo, Inc. Brenda Denise Hyde Dianna Freelon-Foster
Mariposa Community Health Center George de la Riva Patty Molina Rosa Gutierrez	Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc. Loretta Blair Rosie Walden	Proyecto Azteca Saul Villarreal Gerardo Javier Jackson	Southern Education Foundation Lauren Veasey Vanessa Elkan
Metropolitan Area Group for Igniting Civilization Joseph Strickland Robert Aspholm	Nonprofit Assistance Center Jennifer Brower Kissy Gaston	Puget Sound SAGE David West	Southern Mutual Help Association, Inc. Marva Porter Peggy L. Gerac
Metropolitan Tenants Organization John Bartlett Kristie Williams	North Florida Educational Development Corporation Carolyn Ford Arriane Ford Graham	Pushback Network Brigit Flaherty	Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative Latisha Latiker Mary Morris
Mikva Challenge Jaime Arteaga Rohan Barrett	Northern California Grantmakers Colin Lacon	Quitman County Development Organization, Inc. Carol Blackmon. Brenda Hopson	Southwest Center for Economic Integrity Kelly Griffith Ana Pope
Minority Executive Directors Coalition of King County Dorry Elias-Garcia	Northwest Federation of Community Organizations Danisha Christian	Refugee Federation Service Center Jama Musse	Southwest Organizing Project — Illinois Maureen Fitzpatrick Esperanza Marrufo
Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance Rev. Goya de la Cruz Cusi de la Cruz	OneAmerica David Ayala-Zamora	Refugee Women's Alliance Jeffrey Sikora Mohamed Roble	Southwest Organizing Project — New Mexico Marisol Enyart Robby Rodriguez
Mississippi Low-Income Child care Initiative Jearlean Osborne Sherrie Jones	Pacific Institute for Community Organizing Tom Amato	SafeFutures Youth Center Sokunthea Ok Oun Yeav	Southwest Workers' Union Genaro Rendon
Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights Sarah White Jannie Mitchell	Parent Voices Patricia Siegel	Seattle Young People's Project Jeremy Louzao Pavielle Montes	Southwest Youth Services Collaborative Camille Odeh Keith Redmond Vennessa Jones
Mujeres Latinas en Acción Estela Melgoza Maria Gonzalez	Parents for Public Schools Sally Gray Carolyn J. Poston	Serving Children and Adolescents in Need Cynthia Garza Victoria V Ruiz	Spokane Alliance/Justice Alliance Education Fund Wim Mauldin Mirya Roach
National Indian Youth Leadership Project McClellan Hall Beulah Allan	Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane Liz Moore Myca Pearson	Social Justice Fund Northwest Magdaleno 'Leno' Rose-Avila	Statewide Poverty Action Network Tony Lee Sarah Freeman
	PolicyLink Joe Brooks Ron Stief	Somos Un Pueblo Unido Marcela Diaz	Strategic Actions for a Just Economy Paulina Gonzalez Elba Cuevas
	Potlatch Fund Lawrence Leake	South Texas Adult Resources and Training Center Liliana Renteria Erika Segundo	
	Powerful Voices Abrehet Francis Heather Robinson		

Participant List

Strategic Concepts in
Organizing and Policy
Education

Naomi Boas
Marilyn Johnson

Sunflower County Parents
and Students Organization

Kimberlyn Galvin
Betty Petty

TARGET Area
Development Corp.

Patricia Watkins
Steve Perkins
Maureen Perkins

Tewa Women United

Kathleen M. Sanchez
Louise Baca

Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Ildefonsa Sifuentes

Tohono O'odham
Community Action

Tristen Reader
Karen Blaine

Tonatierra Community
Development Institute

Arriane Ford Graham
William Aguirre

Tucson Indian Center

Veronica Boone
Yolanda Molina

United Congress of
Community and Religious
Organizations

Josina Morita
Maureen Perkins

United National Indian
Tribal Youth

J'Shon Lee
Jered Sullivan

United South Broadway
Corporation

Diana Dorn-Jones
Alma Olivas

Village of Hope

Giday Adhanom
Laquinta Severe
Mary Flowers

Voices for Alabama's
Children

Melanie Bridgeforth
Stephanie Kelley

Voices for Opportunities,
Income, Childcare,
Education and Support

Kiondra Bullock

W. Haywood Burns
Institute

Michael Harris

Washington Community
Action Network Education
and Research Fund

Marcelas Owens
Gina Owens

Washington State Budget
and Policy Center

Remy Trupin

Westside Health Authority

Jacqueline Reed
Virgil Crawford
James Ruffin

Working Partnerships USA

Cindy Chavez
Mike Potter

Yakima Interfaith Coalition

Luz Monroy
Mireya Chavez

Youth Innovation
Movement Solutions

Drustella Neely
Stephen A. Jones

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Piilani Pang, Administrative Specialist
Nathan Sorseth, Human Resources Assistant
Sunny Hong, Administrative Assistant
Karen Urlic, Administrative Assistant

Presenters

Joe Brooks, PolicyLink
Sandy Close, New America Media
Marcela Diaz, Somos Un Pueblo Unido
James Elmendorf, LAANE
Michael Ettlinger, Center for American Progress
Raj Jayadev, New America Media
Joyce Hall-Parker, Citizens for a Better Greenville
Adrian Ramirez, New America Media
Kevin Weston, New America Media

Convening Facilitator

Greg Hodge, Community Development Associates, Inc.

Proceedings Report Author

Meghan McVety, Capacity for Change



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Marguerite Casey Foundation • 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Suite 115 • Seattle, WA 98109
www.caseygrants.org • Phone: (206) 691-3134 • Fax: (206) 286-2725 • TYY: (206)273-7395