

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE</b> <b>LESSONS FROM THE FIELD</b></p>
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**RACIAL DIVERSITY ISSUES IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**  
**(2003)**

In our broad experience working with diverse organizations and communities, we have found that conflict about diversity issues follows a predictable course – namely, from the demand for fair representation...to the demand for meaningful participation...to the demand for equitable utilization of resources in addressing community needs.

- *Who is at the table?*  
The first level of diversity conflict is usually about representation – i.e., how many people of color are involved in the organization as board members and staff? People of color want a seat at the table and to have a voice in setting an organization's agenda.
  
- *What type of roles?*  
The second level of conflict is usually about participation – i.e., the positions that people of color have and the roles that they play in an organization. People of color are no longer willing to accept token involvement in an organization.
  
- *Who benefits?*  
The third level of conflict is usually about utilization of resources – i.e., the allocation of resources and how they are used to address community problems in a given community.

So be advised...adding new faces of color does not solve a diversity crisis...rather, this will require changing the organizational culture and redistributing the resources. When one understands the pattern of diversity conflict in organizations, then they are more likely to deal with these matters in a thoughtful, proactive way.

# **NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE LESSONS FROM THE FIELD**

## **WHY COLLABORATIVES FAIL**

In our broad experience working with diverse communities, we have found that collaboratives are likely to fail for the following basic reasons:

- Lack of shared vision
- Lack of shared values
- Lack of shared leadership
- Lack of shared power
- Lack of shared resources
- Lack of shared responsibility
- Lack of shared accountability
- Lack of shared interests
- Lack of shared information
- Lack of shared expectations
- Lack of shared policies/operating procedures
- Too many egos and too little humility

# NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

## LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

### RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

From our extensive experience working on projects such as the NII, NCDI has identified the following operating principles for achieving high levels of resident engagement in communities of color:

- *Residents have a right to know:* Residents must be informed about community needs/issues in order to play active, relevant and meaningful roles in the social change process.
- *Residents have a right to learn:* Residents must be trained and provided state-of-the-art information about community needs/issues and social change strategies to effectively solve their problems.
- *Residents have a right to participate:* Residents must have a central leadership role and participate in all phases of the community-building process.
- *Residents have a right to decide:* Residents must define their own goals, develop their own plans and make their own informed decisions about the future direction of their community.
- *Residents have a right to be culturally grounded:* Residents must be able to participate in the community-building process in their own culturally authentic ways.
- *Residents have a right to tell their own story:* Residents must be able to document and share their story with the neighborhood, the city and the region.

NCDI is guided by these fundamental principles as we promote community engagement through our capacity-building work in communities of color.

When communities are engaged in a social change process, there are multiple challenges that have to be addressed if residents are to achieve their goals. In our view, four of the most difficult challenges are:

- ✓ Developing a shared vision, common goals and collective plan of action;
- ✓ Developing a stable organization with adequate resources, sound management practices and an active constituency;
- ✓ Developing strong relationships among diverse racial and cultural groups; and
- ✓ Developing resident leadership and sustaining high levels of community participation.

It is important to note that these very difficult problems can usually be overcome when the capacity-building process is community-driven, culturally-based and change-oriented. To promote such a process, capacity-builders like you and I have to simply follow these basic rules: **Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Accountable, Be a Listener and Be a Learner.**