

23. Moving to Scale by Changing Public Policies

“Courage, my friend. It is not too late to change the world.”

— Tommy Douglas

Throughout this e-book I have focused on America’s need for a new wave of community building and leadership development in our older neighborhoods and towns. We need a surge of people with the backgrounds, lived experience, commitment, knowledge and skills to bring people together and win significant victories on the interlocking issues of poverty, race, community-building and strengthening our democracy. To revitalize democracy from the grassroots up, we need to develop and support community leaders, organizers, and allies who can build strong vehicles for collective action on our nation’s toughest issues.

These efforts must be based firmly on the **fundamental understanding shared by all the CLP Network’s partners – our country cannot continue to waste the latent talent which exists in every low-income neighborhood and community of color.** Instead we must develop programs which take advantage of the central fact all the CLP programs demonstrate – there are many people in every community who want to “give back” to their communities, to help their families and neighbors have better lives and greater opportunities. In words often used by our incoming students -- “I want to help. But I don’t know how.”

CLP’s pathways answer this call. They are developing the great untapped potential of students and emerging community leaders who start with firsthand knowledge of poverty, discrimination, and institutional neglect. That lived experience provides them with invaluable insights, people skills and unique advantages in serving as role models as they work in communities like their own. Our educational programs build on those strengths, equipping people with **the depth of knowledge, practical organizing and alliance-building skills, and critical and strategic thinking capacities they will need to win on the fundamental**

issues they and their neighbors face. CLP programs also provide them with academic credentials which open doors which otherwise would be closed to them.

Decades of experience have shown us that organizing and popular education work is not for amateurs. To succeed in creating positive change, people need to develop deep understanding of: the issues they are addressing and possible remedies; how best to inform, educate and organize people on those issues; and lessons from earlier efforts to tackle them. This will require supporting new and existing initiatives to rapidly expand the number of outstanding community leaders, organizers and popular educators.

Partnerships which bring together the worlds of practical experiential learning working at the community level and college-based learning and credentials offer the best opportunity for moving rapidly to develop the knowledgeable, skilled and committed workforce and leaders needed. In large part because of CLP's efforts, there now are a growing number of such community partnerships at community colleges and public universities. Furthermore, the CLP Network has developed systems for adapting them to meet the needs and preferences in other cities and towns and helping other programs broaden and deepen so they are equally successful in developing the next generation. A growing number of academics as well as leaders in the community organizing world are now showing great interest in learning from our Network's experience and expanding and broadening their education and training efforts.

Scaling up will require committing major support to building new educational pathways and fortifying existing ones. It also must include concerted outreach to the communities of color and low-income and working-class neighborhoods which are so often ignored when programs are designed and staffed and policy decisions are made.

This will require significant government funding to meet the scale of the need for a new generation of well-prepared community leaders, organizers, and change agents. CLP's decade of experience has demonstrated clearly that private philanthropy simply will not fund the hundreds of well-paid internships which low-income students need to gain intensive on-the-ground experience they need. Furthermore, our experience has also proven how difficult it is to raise planning

and start-up money for new Community Change Education programs despite the incredible Return on Investment our local programs are delivering. (see *Chapter 21 above*).

This will require federal support for a major new initiative which finances a dual strategy:

1. **Creation of large numbers of earn-while-you-learn Community Building Internships** for low-income and working-class students, earning a living wage while preparing for creating positive change on issues of climate change, sustainability, community development, criminal justice reform, and health promotion; and
2. **Creation, expansion and support of local academic/community partnerships to be jointly responsible for operating those Internship programs**, ensuring that Community Building Interns receive the mix of college courses, deep immersion in community work, college credentials, mentoring and career preparation they need.

These two interrelated programs would offer quadruple social benefits. They would --

- Provide both **immediate jobs** and preparation for **long-term family-supporting careers** for low-income and working-class young people
- **Meet great social needs** by expanding the workforce of skilled, knowledgeable people in careers in sustainable communities, community development, community and public health
- **Strengthen communities** by focusing on strengthening local leadership and community-based organizations

The Learning Partnership is currently exploring the possibility of creating State funded programs along those lines. One example is in California where the Governor's Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery is including a CLP-initiated proposal among its recommendations, and the California Endowment has approved a planning and start-up grant to the Learning Partnership so a new California Community Leadership Corps can be launched by community+college partnerships at 5 sites in 2021. The Corps would consist of cohorts of students enrolled in CCS programs and receiving well-paid internships in community-building, incorporating the elements in CLP's design, which is described below.

Two hundred low-income and working-class students would be enrolled in this initial phase with plans for expansion to additional campuses in the state.

Meanwhile, legislation is being introduced in the US House of Representatives to create federally funded Community-Building Internships. And efforts have begun to incorporate its initiatives into one or more different broader pieces of legislation. These include legislation related to the Green New Deal, expansion of National Service, and a new initiative at the Department of Labor to create apprenticeship-like new program of earn-while-you-learn Community Building Internships. Efforts are underway to persuade the next federal Administration to support such initiatives.

Outline description of the two key elements of CLP's policy proposal:

Creation of a pilot program which would be tested in 12-15 pilot cities and small town/rural areas, evaluated, and considered for expansion in later years, requesting an initial appropriation of \$50 million.

Targeted to benefit low-income and working-class people (18-50, with priority on youth)

Offering 4 major social benefits to communities throughout the US --

- Providing immediate jobs as well as preparation for good long-term careers for low-income and working-class young people.
- Meeting great social needs by expanding the workforce of skilled, knowledgeable people in careers in community development, community health and sustainable communities.
- Strengthening communities by focusing on strengthening local leadership and community-based organizations.

Funding local 2-4 year programs in which people earn while they learn, preparing for careers in one of the following community-strengthening fields -

- Community development careers (neighborhood improvement and issues).
- Community health careers (health promotion and education, and elder care).
- Careers in sustainable communities and environmental justice

Perhaps broaden the program after it is well-established to also cover preparation for careers in --

- Criminal justice and community safety.
- Youth development.
- Rural development and services.
- Working on other community issues and initiatives.

Essential ingredients of local programs:

- Partnerships of low-income and working-class communities with community colleges and/or public universities.
- Community-based nonprofits as well as academic institutions eligible for planning and long-term operating grants if they have created a community+college learning partnership or are committed to developing one.
- Intensive training on the job plus classroom instruction, constituting a full-time commitment by students so they can concentrate fully on learning, complete their studies on time, and enter the workforce rapidly.
- Federal funding for the partnership which would operate the program locally and for needed technical assistance and cross-site sharing.
- Students would be selected by the colleges and their community partners, which would also collaborate in providing placements, mentoring, student support and career guidance.
- Students would receive income for 20-40 hours/week at \$15/hour, earning while learning on the job and through college courses (totaling up to \$31,200/year, 100% paid through their employer which would be reimbursed on a 100% basis by federal funds in year 1; 67/33 split in year 2; 33/67 in year 3); this amount would be adjusted downward by the amounts a student receives from Pell grants and other scholarship grants).
- Resulting in college credits for college-level learning on the job and through their coursework, resulting in a college Certificate or Degree.
- Student learning would include --
 - Credit for college-level learning from previous jobs, training, leadership and life experience (applying Prior Learning Assessment).
 - Knowledge and skills related to their field of concentration.

- Knowledge and skills in leadership, group-building and volunteer management.
- Knowledge and skills in change leadership, strategy and participating in civic life.
- If needed, remedial education/GED.

If instead there are political or operational advantages to building on existing legislation, the Labor Department could expand its “earn while you learn” initiatives to include the Community Building Internships, and the institutional support could be funneled through two authorized but now dormant federal programs – HUD’s Community Outreach Partnership Centers program (COPC) and the Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE).