J.Jefferson 692

Organizational Outreach: Positive Outlooks on Youth Voices

Exploring the possibilities; when addressing the presence of nonprofit organizations in the inner city trying to help at risk youth use their own voices and create positive opportunities in their own lives, what works? What does not?

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12/9/2016

Imagine you are a teenager; and you are constantly stressed and distracted at school due worrying about outside stressors of life, such as: having to pick up a younger siblings you have to watch, because mother or both parents are at work and maybe even working late. Or, just maybe there is no basketball tonight, or you have a lost a friendships. You may think: "who am I" or "what other purpose do I have?" Each day you walk by gang members on corners selling drugs. They are trying to convince you that they can be your "family"; they know you are alone, "mother's" working long hours and you spend a lot of time looking after your siblings. Your father is gone, may be "daddy" is locked up, so they assume and try to convince you they know what is best for you and they can help you get quick money to help the family so your mother does not have to work those long hours any longer. These are some of the daily struggles many inner city youth deal with on a regular basis.

It does not take much effect to overlook the very important messages, which is the guidance and support one might need to move forward and remain productive, when you are in a situation where there is a lack positive people in your life. I would like to express my thoughts and opinions regarding this matter since I in fact grew up in the inner cities of both Boston and Brockton Massachusetts. Personally, I have seen the gang violence. I have been a witness to the struggles my peers' faced by being involved with gangs, by dropping out of school and by lacking positive people in their life to assure them on the right path. Growing up I have seen what can happen without proper guidance and that was enough for me. I knew then, the importance of the advantages of the opportunities set forth before me and I took advantage of those opportunities. In 8th grade growing up in the Dorchester/Roxbury areas, I took advantage of a program called Citizens Schools where enrolled in and become a member of the "8th grade Academy". 8th Academy is/was a nonprofit organization in Boston: providing youth with

opportunities of hope, college exploration, vocational skills, mentorship and self-reflection. You

will further read about the importance of organizational outreach for the inner city youth. I would

like you to evaluate the questions of and provide the basis of the effectiveness, what works? Or

the inefficiency, what works less when introducing nonprofit organizations into the inner cities

whom, try to help at-risk youth use their voices and create their own positive opportunities in

their lives?

In today's inner city, it is evident that youth are not the only, affected people in these

neighborhoods. Living in the inner city can be characterized by one having minimal educational

opportunities, the high unemployment and crime rates, inadequate housing, and over

crowdedness of neighborhoods. Inner city areas have been described as ''islands of risk and

despair (Fitzpatrick and LaGory 200 pg 121) However, my choice to focus youth see that it

appears that youth deal with the most challenges when it comes to education, responsibility,

identity and other contributing factors that disrupt their focus. Youth living in the inner city are

further challenged by depression because of their stressors. For example, "African-American

adolescents residing in inner city low-income environments have a higher risk of mental illness,

including depression, than their counterparts possibly due to increased exposure to community

violence, criminal and gang activity, drug use, and poverty (USDHHS 2001; Fitzpatrick et al.

2005)". Knowing the possibilities of depression and the struggles inner city youth deal with one

is better able to understand the importance of the presence of nonprofit organizations in the inner

city. In most communities, "youth are the least valued stakeholders. Without the resources

needed to thrive and with their voices going unheard, some young people resort to violence to

express discontent and to bring about change (Helgenson and Schneider)". Furthermore, "youth

must be provided appropriate avenues to ignite positive change in order for them to break out of

the communities of violence they have created as a result of being undervalued and consequently under-engaged. The result will find empowered youth, ready to take ownership in shaping the communities where they live, go to school and work (Helgenson and Schneider)". These effects are present in non-profit community organizations, proving evident of the importance of these organizations for the reason that they have inflicted change amongst the lives of young individuals.

When reflecting on the things that work well when addressing non-profit organizations one must be familiar of the things that do not work well and what affects the outcome of the program and its effectiveness. Non- profit organizations cannot be affective without the proper engagement and involvement of staff. Once engaged, they (the youth) should to be empowered in ways in which provides with them with an understanding of their natural talents and skills that will assist them in becoming constructive members of society (Quigley, 2014). With lack of empowerment and involvement nonprofit organizations cannot succeed and cannot create positive changes in youth. Engagement consists of conversations, showing interest in one's life: the good times, the struggles, as well providing interaction with games and projects, life ventures and etc. Without the following nonprofit organizations would fail to thrive and the success would be none.

Leadership is one that works well with non-profits; it's the lack of it which does not work well when dealing and helping youth. This form of leadership goes beyond the staff, it is high management whom controls the different issues the organizations publicize and address. A lack of leader assessment in the context of nonprofit crisis is particularly disconcerting given that nonprofit leaders (a) are a heterogeneous group embedded across numerous spaces and roles

within their organizations and (b) build and maintain organizational relationships required for nonprofit success—especially during times of crisis. The most well-known nonprofit leadership roles (i.e., board members, executive directors, chief executive and financial officers, directors of development, well-networked stakeholders) exert influence over executive leaders and influential stakeholders in the form of community leaders as well as individuals who build ties between nonprofit organizations and government (King 2002). Leaders a needed to how others how to be leaders and not followers. Leaders set high expectations and move forward and further than those who are not. Leaders are also the voice of the communities; we see them in our mayors, politicians, activists, and amongst others. By having exceptional   leaders you set the bar for others to want to become one of those leader too.

Nonprofit organizations that do not include effective mentors are the contributing factors and reason of why nonprofit organizations are not effective. Mentors in these programs become an outlet for these struggling youth to express themselves, share good moments with, obtain advice from or just be an ear to listen to them; especially if they don't have older siblings, good relationship with their parents or just being there simply because they are alone. The cornerstone of an effective mentoring relationship is a strong interpersonal connection characterized by mutuality, trust, and empathy. This connection is built over time.

It seems more likely that successful mentoring of youth is more often characterized by a series of small wins that emerge sporadically over time. Yet these mundane moments, which might be laced with boredom, humor, and even frustration, can help forge a connection from which the mentee may draw strength in moments of vulnerability or share triumph in moments of accomplishment. (Rhodes. 2005, p. 32). Without effective mentors to youth in struggling

situations even if that mentor is just a really caring staff, nonprofit organizations are not effective to youth and don't promote positive changes in their lives.

In conclusion, what was laid out as factors in what works less in regards to nonprofit organizations are the very factor in which need instill to help the organization be successful. The lack of leadership, mentors and engagement are things that do not promote youth positivity. Furthermore, these are the same things we require youth to demonstrate as they grow and engage with other young children. Subsequently you would read of effects that worked well in regards of nonprofit organizations and how they created positive platforms for youth to positively use their voices and create changes in their lives.

Looking into; the Center for Teen Empowerment (TE) in Boston, "a Boston-based nonprofit organization that trains and supports youth, and adults who work with youth, to develop more inclusive, healthier, and more productive communities, schools, and institutions (Fusoni)". This program has locations in Rochester, New York, Somerville, Massachusetts, and the South End/ Roxbury area of Boston and three Boston public schools locations. The program focuses on the need to build relationships as well as community building. This program was effective in the Boston area because it addressed the real life issues youth deal with. For example, "in the winter of 1999–2000, with results that gained citywide attention. These youth organizers had been selected for their jobs by means of TE's intensive interview process, during which staff met in groups and individually with more than one hundred neighborhood teens. In the interviews, youth repeatedly brought up difficult relations with police as a serious problem (Fusoni)".This program hired youth lived in the community and who know the community struggles and concerns: and when dealing with other youth wanted to make it a more relatable experiences

because they were all in it to create a difference in their community. TE staff and the youth in the community over a three-month period, youth organizers distributed the survey in their high schools, local community centers, on the streets, and at events that they organized for neighborhood youth. Ninety- five percent of respondents were Boston youth of color. The results were startling: 70 percent reported being stopped and questioned by police without reason, 52 percent reported being searched by police without reason, and over 50 percent thought that police treat youth unfairly. The Boston Globe reported on these troubling results, 2 and the publicity helped bring TE's executive director into dialogue with the chief of the Boston Police Department and the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority) Police.3 As a result of this meeting, both expressed a willingness to meet with the youth.

That meeting sparked the Police- Youth Reconciliation Project, 2001-2002. A 2year project that allowed police to focus on building troubled relationships, more community building systems and community restoration with the police. TE continued to work with police development with youth for the course of years. This was a program made by the youth, for the youth to address the issues they seen with the community police being a problem in their community. At the conclusion of this project a youth were reported saying, "I changed my misconception about the police for the better". This organization changed the negative thinking the youth had against the police in their community and had positive responses because they were working hand and hand, also providing and platform for youth in the program deal with the issues they were having with the police.

Every organization represents something different to each person, each community and people take in different elements from the type of organization they are involved. There are

many other nonprofit organizations in the Boston area: The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Boys and Girls Club, Youth Build and Citizens Schools just to name a few.

In Washington D.C a program called Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY) is a program that "provides youth with comprehensive support and services, caring and trusting relationships and gradually increasing leadership opportunities (Detzler, Dorward, Jenkin, Teslicko and VanLiew)". Through this program youth are becoming, "leaders with the skills and passion to facilitate positive social change in their communities (Detzler, Dorward, Jenkin, Teslicko and VanLiew)". Youth from the ages of 9 to 18, spend an average of four days a week during the school year and 5 days during the week in the summer for the programs summer program. Youth who participates in the program has a increased in their school engagement, leadership skills, life and social skills there has been a, "prevention of risky behaviors; increased positive peer relationships and healthy decision making; and increased connections with caring adults (program staff and tutors or mentors) (Detzler, Dorward, Jenkin, Teslicko and VanLiew)". The youth who participate in FLY come from families living in poverty, deteriorating school systems, little to no supportive resources with increasing violent and crime. One can imagine how these kids would be affected without FLY considering their life conditions and circumstances. A lot of the youth will be in hopeless situations. FLY also works with teens who are, "involved in more advanced leadership activities, including speaking in public, facilitating meetings, attending conferences, creating visual media, mapping community resources, and training other local teens (Detzler, Dorward, Jenkin, Teslicko and VanLiew)". From this you can see how not only the youth but teens are empowered and the opportunities they are given through the program.

Other nonprofit organizations as such as Empowerment Groups for Academic Success Approach (EGAS) that prevents high school dropout rates and focuses on improving academic performance for youth. **High** dropout rates as a result of cultural misunderstandings, negative stereotyping (Jackson, 1999), and fewer resources (Education Trust). Although youth problems stem from a wide range of both internal and external forces (Atkinson, Thompson, & Grant, 1993), oftentimes students having problems in **school** are preoccupied with concerns outside the **school** setting (Benmak, Chi-Ying, Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005)".As such as the many concerns mentioned above.

In conclusion, from this one is able to see that nonprofit organizations contribute a great deal to the live of inner city youth. Another very important factor for youth in these organizations is working with staffs that are not only diverse but also who have a great sense of cultural competence. One organization states:

> We provide development opportunities for staff that go beyond a training session. We encourage them to actively collaborate across diverse settings; we continuously engage them in conversations about new approaches to reach diverse communities. In addition, a shared learning cohort model helps staff to understand their privilege, culture, and diversity's role in their work, to develop the ability to shift between perspectives, and to cultivate an attitude of mutual respect and caring by finding and sharing a link between personal experiences and professional practices.(Landrieu and Pearson, 2014)

Young people are receptive to those they can not only relate to their struggles but those who are informed of the struggles the dealing with being of a specific culture. For the nonprofit organizations that bring forth all or most of these important factors to assist youth, will see positivity and change amongst the youth because these youth will know these people are trying and willing to do good things for them. These things work well for nonprofit organizations when dealing with inner city at-risk youth.

All things considered, from reading the above excerpt one can arise to the benefits from these organizations and how they do more good than harm in coordinates to those living in the inner city especially the inner city youth. These facts listed are working less in non-profit organizations and are the things that are needed to help the organization move forwards and be successful. Thus far, the things that work the best are learning from the things that didn't work. Learning from them and making them better. Today, nonprofit organizations create opportunities for youth who live in oppressed communities. Furthermore, from completing this assignment I've learned that non-profit organizations exist everywhere. Every child whether living in the inner cities of Boston, the cities of California or cities in Brazil benefit from the things non-profit organizations mission. Each Organization has its own mission but every mission is geared towards helping youth who need resources, advocated, outlets, mentors or a line or communication where they can be surrounded by people that too wants better things for themselves.

Moving forward and beyond this course, my goal is to create and establish my very own a non-profit organization. Working with the inner city kids in my own community providing mentors, helping youth advocate for their needs, showing them how to fill out job applications and college applications. This would include job seeking assistance of teenage youth, as well as providing an outlet for them to communicate with teens that share their same struggles and or interest. My program would consist of college trips and tours, historical sites, events and ultimately bringing brighter awareness possibilities' to their unknown. Current I am not aware of any organization in my community which provides opportunities such as this for teens. Addition to this I think it would be an awesome idea to hold special quarterly events just for the youth, teens and children alike can gather together to showcase their talents, either through poetry,

music, art or spoken word; A place and time for teens and for younger children to appreciate each other and moment where the staff can see them in a essences that further tells each of their story.

before I go, I would like to say: from working on this assignment I become even more interested in learning how non-profit organizations differentiates between working with elementary and high school children. Their struggles and needs are different, just to know how an organization go about assisting these needs will be defiantly insightful.

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