



## OUR HISTORY

### Origins

Drawing from his experience of working with dozens of community organizations over the course of three decades in the field, Andy Mott, former Executive Director of the Center for Community Change, decided to launch the Community Learning Partnership. His goal was to focus exclusively on the severe shortage of community organizers and other agents of community change which he saw crippling grassroots groups and other organizations tackling issues of poverty, race and social justice. He concluded that this crisis demanded more resources of money and expertise than the nonprofit sector could marshal on its own.

Inspired by the unique community college program in Community Planning and Development which Denise Fairchild and Benjamin Torres had developed at CDTech in Los Angeles, Andy decided that the Community Learning Partnership should systematically explore how other nonprofits could team up with community colleges and universities to develop new educational programs. These would draw on the strengths of both the practitioner and academic worlds. The programs would be designed to produce a new generation of community organizers and other change agents, focusing especially on people of color and others from low and moderate-income backgrounds.

The Community Learning Partnership based its initial strategies on lessons learned from Andy's studies of CDTech and other college programs in the United States and overseas that related to community change and social justice. These resulted in the publication of two reports, a 2007 report on U.S. programs: *University Education for Community Change: A Vital Strategy for Progress on Poverty, Race and Community-Building* and a report developed by an international working group in 2009: *Advancing Higher Education for Community Change*.

Based on this research, Andy and the stakeholders he began to identify chose as the main strategy the building of local partnerships between community colleges and nonprofit organizations that are immersed in community organizing and development. He recognized that community college partnerships offer several key advantages. Those colleges offer great access to students of color and others from lower income backgrounds, they are accustomed to working with potential employers

in devising new educational programs, and, as public institutions, they are relatively affordable.

With this background, the Community Learning Partnership assembled a staff and Steering Committee composed of people with great experience in community organizing and development, higher education and training, including representatives of the primary sites where we are now working.

### **Founding Program Sites**

Beginning in 2009, the Community Learning Partnership concentrated on building local partnerships that would result in community college degree and certificate programs in Community Change Studies. In its initial four-year implementation phase, the Partnership experimented with the building of educational and skill-building programs in four cities. In Los Angeles, we worked with CDTEch, a nonprofit committed to organizing and development in South Central Los Angeles, to broaden its educational programs to include community organizing. CDTEch launched the Los Angeles Community Organizing Academy in collaboration with Los Angeles Trade and Technical College and engaged dozens of students and community leaders.

In northern California, we helped DeAnza College, which enrolls students from San Jose and Silicon Valley and is one of the nation's premier community colleges, as it planned and launched a Certificate in Leadership and Social Change in 2012, and quickly began enrolling and graduating students.

In 2011, Syd Beane, a former colleague of Andy Mott's at the Center for Community Change, connected the partnership he organized between the Native American community and organizations in the Twin Cities, and Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC) to the expanding Community Learning Partnership network. Soon after, Syd a nationally known American Indian community organizer, community development specialist, and educator, joined the Community Learning Partnership staff as National Field Director. The partnership in the Twin Cities has led to the creation of a new A.S. Degree in Community Development at MCTC. It now is developing a pathway to further education in organizing and development at Metro State, a four-year public university located in St. Paul.

The Community Learning Partnership's work with the Association of Neighborhood Housing and Development, a citywide affordable housing coalition in New York, helped finance creation of a year-long paid apprenticeship in community organizing. While this program doesn't include an academic tie, it includes a highly successful partnership with Public Allies, which has provided stipends for ten apprentices each year. The apprentices are recruited through the coalition's member groups, which also provide the placements for training. Most of the graduate apprentices move into jobs as organizers. We highlight the impact of this program in our tool: "*The Greatest Thing I've Ever Done: Apprenticeship Program/New York.*"

## **Replication and Expansion**

As we gained experience, we gave serious thought to how we might grow and replicate these early successes. In 2010 the Partnership obtained funding from the U.S. Department of Education and used this to develop systems to facilitate replication. We began a series of Faculty and Partners Institutes to help the initial sites and new sites learn from each other and create new curriculum and training programs. We developed a website with an extensive resource library and information on curricula and innovative features that provide useful guidance to new sites and to the established programs. In 2013, following extensive consultation with community organizers, development experts and other change agents, our new National Program Director, Joan Minieri, brought her extensive experience in popular education, teaching, and training and organization building, to producing: *Listening. Building. Making Change. Job Profile of a Community Organizer*. This job profile details the knowledge, skills and personal traits of effective beginning and career community organizers/change agents and has proven to be an important, useful guide for developing Community Change Studies programs across our network of sites and beyond.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Ken Rolling, the Partnership is undergoing significant expansion. Leaders from the programs in Minneapolis, New York and Los Angeles team up with our national staff to help academic and community-based partners in five additional locales plan and develop new partnerships that build on the strengths of local nonprofits and community college educators.

In the fall of 2013, Oakland's Urban Strategies Council and Laney College began enrolling their first students in a new Community Change Studies program. Rapid progress has taken place in the Detroit area where, under the leadership of staff from Southwest Solutions, a partnership has formed among Henry Ford Community College, the University of Michigan-Dearborn, Marygrove College, the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) and several neighborhood organizations and agencies in Dearborn and on the south side of Detroit, with course enrollment beginning in the fall of 2014.

The Partnership's strategic plan projects the creation of two more sites each year, towards a goal of 30 programs and 3,000 trained change agents by the year 2020. The plan reflects a Steering Committee consensus on the importance of ensuring Community Change Studies programs help prepare people for lifetimes dedicated to social change, whether they are paid organizers or staff for community groups, promote change through work in other institutions, or serve as leaders in reform efforts and campaigns.