



From the Ground Up: Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change

By Carol Chetkovich, Frances Kunreuther

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"Grassroots social-change organizations are a critical resource for progressive movement-building in the United States. They provide political education and sites for constituent engagement, and they are beginning to create networks across issues and/or communities; they promote home-grown leadership among groups that have been disadvantaged; they contribute to a shared understanding of the problems of inequality and injustice; and they offer a public space for the dialogue needed to identify common principles." From the Ground Up From community organizing for affordable housing in neglected neighborhoods to providing antiviolence training for youth or litigating for the rights of sex workers, grassroots organizations are engaged in energetic efforts to increase the power of marginalized groups. Social-change organizations operate in communities all over the United States, but little has been written about the details of their operations. From the Ground Up takes a close look at how social-change organizations address challenges related to leadership, staff development, decision-making, resource needs, and collaborations. Carol Chetkovich and Frances Kunreuther, both experienced nonprofit managers, draw on their in-depth interviews with leaders and staff members from sixteen diverse social-change organizations to provide a detailed analysis of these groups and their activities. They note that even working in isolation, these organizations make important contributions to justice in their communities; together they might form the base of a larger progressive movement for change.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The authors do an excellent job of defining the dimensions of social change work and situating it in social movement theory. This volume should prove very valuable to activists and theorists alike, and it does a fine job of integrating theory and practice. Highly recommended. All levels/libraries."?P. Seybold, Choice, January 2008

"From the Ground Up is a detailed study that addresses the empirical gap. The authors, Carol Chetkovich and Frances Kunreuther, offer a rich description of sixteen organizations involved in grassroots efforts to create social change. Based on interviews with organizational leaders and an analysis of demographic data as well as organizational documents, the authors provide a view into the structure, everyday practices and problems of organizing social change efforts."?Mobilization

"The growing number of local and regional social change-oriented groups in the country have had a major impact in improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who are low income and at the margins of our society. Their activities have not only provided essential services but also enabled formerly voiceless citizens and noncitizens to become civically engaged and involved in the political process. But we haven't known much about who they are, how they function, and how they relate to larger, national organizations. From the Ground Up by Carol Chetkovich and Frances Kunreuther is a must-read for all of us who are interested in grassroots efforts, anti-poverty strategies, and social movements. The authors have done an admirable job of mobilizing data and pinpointing trends, yet they have not hesitated to express their own views about what it will take to sustain and strengthen these social change organizations. Their book is a job well done."?Pablo Eisenberg, Georgetown University, author of Challenges for Nonprofits and Philanthropy: The Courage to Change

"From the Ground Up is an immensely readable exploration of the largely unexplored relationships among grassroots organizations, social movements, and systemic social change. Carol Chetkovich and Frances Kunreuther do something rarely seen: they combine a thorough summary of pertinent academic literature with the testimony of practitioners to give activists and academics alike a helpful and thoughtful book."?Kim Klein, founder of Grassroots Fundraising Journal and author of Fundraising for Social Change

"Carol Chetkovich and Frances Kunreuther view social change organizations as an important feature of today's sociopolitical landscape that is too often overlooked. Drawing from information about sixteen small nonprofit organizations in a variety of service realms whose goals include systemic/structural social change, the authors analyze the goals, structure, and challenges of such organizations. From the Ground Up will appeal to a wide audience, including nonprofit and foundation practitioners and scholars, social workers, sociologists, and political scientists."?Nancy Jurik, Arizona State University, author of Bootstrap Dreams: U.S. Microenterprise Development in an Era of Welfare Reform

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About the Author

Carol Chetkovich is Associate Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Public Policy Program at Mills College. She is the author of Real Heat: Gender and Race in the Urban Fire Service. Frances Kunreuther is Director of the Building Movement Project at Demos, a senior Fellow at New York University's Research Center for Leadership and Action, and a former Fellow of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University.

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