What about the Next Generation of Leaders of Color?
Advancing Multicultural Leadership

New research reveals ways to build capacity through diverse organizations, leaders, and training.

By Marla Cornelius & Steve Lew

The fact that the nonprofit sector hasn't kept pace with the shifting population of our nation has been the subject of many recent reports. But what's often missing is a discussion about why it matters and what we can do about it.

The latest census data reports that the nation's racial minority population has reached 100.7 million—one third of U.S. residents. And by all predictions, racial and ethnic diversity will continue to in-

> ### 85% of participants reported improved fund development practices.

crease so that by 2010 nearly half the workforce will be what we traditionally called "minorities."[1] This same level of diversity is not, however, reflected in staff and boards. The nonprofit sector is approximately 81% white, as are the executive directors leading these organizations.[2] Our nation's boards are even less diverse: 86% of board members are white, and 51% of boards are composed entirely of white members.[3]

There does appear to be slightly more racial diversity within other staff positions in nonprofits. *Ready to Lead? Next Generation Leaders*

Speak Out, CompassPoint's national study of nearly 6,000 next-generation leaders, found that 28% of nonprofit staff members were people of color. And among *senior managers and directors,* there was less racial diversity than the whole sample. This suggests that in most nonprofits, as you look higher up the organizational chart, you will generally find increasingly fewer people of color.

What are the barriers for people of color?

There is evidence to suggest that people of color often face a disproportionate number of barriers to nonprofit leadership positions than whites. One area of concern from the CompassPoint study is that people of color more often than whites experience disadvantages in job advancement. Next-

> "I would love to be that person that people look up to and for African American girls to say, 'Hey, look, she's running a whole organization. This is something I can do as well.' "
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> "As an Asian American public interest attorney, I feel that it's necessary for me to establish a record of leadership that will hopefully encourage other people to engage in this type of work."
>
> *–Ready to Lead*
> survey respondents

generation leaders of color are more likely than whites to feel the need to leave their organizations to advance their careers, to leave the nonprofit sector for their next job, and to invest in training to prepare for executive positions.[4] (See the data table on page 00.)

What does it matter?

We have high ethical expectations of nonprofits. After all, nonprofits are where so many of our nation's social justice movements began and continue to be sustained. The idea that nonprofit employers are lagging in terms of equality and inclusivity is unacceptable to those of us who care about social change organizations and what they stand for.

There's another reason beyond principle to consider. *If nonprofits fail to include a diversity of perspectives, might they be undermining their mission impact?* Assessing social needs and designing culturally appropriate programs require the full inclusion of people who have similar experiences and an authentic understanding of the populations they aim to serve.

Despite these barriers, the *Ready to Lead?* study also uncovered some promising findings. Next-generation leaders of color spoke passionately about their work and wanting to make a difference in their communities. Moreover, a significant 10% more people of color than whites reported that they aspire to become executive direc-

tors. This is an important point at a time when many nonprofit executives are retiring without an equal number to take their place.

Clearly, we need to recruit more people of color into the sector. We also need to do a better job of developing talented people of color to ensure that this tremendous potential is realized.

Developing Multicultural Leadership Programs: Going Beyond Diversity Goals

Leadership development programs are one effective strategy to develop a healthy nonprofit workforce. The need for greater diversification in our sector's workforce begs this crucial question: *How should we structure leadership development programs to ensure accessibility and relevance for diverse groups and their varying needs?*

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Many organizations have approached this question by recruiting trainers from diverse backgrounds and performing outreach to participants. While these activities are important, they don't directly lead to creating leadership programs for the next generation of leaders from communities of color. Moreover, we need to deepen our understanding of multiculturalism and recognize that oppression based on age, class, gender, sexual orientation, *and* race are crucial factors in designing leadership programs.

Like many in the capacity-building field, we at CompassPoint have been providing leadership development programs for many years. And while we have deep experience working with people of color, it wasn't till a few years ago that we explicitly addressed the question of multiculturalism in the *design and execution* of leadership programming. What follows are some of the dimensions of program design

Ready to Lead? **National Survey Findings:**
Responses of People of Color (POC) and Whites (W)

	POC	W
Percent of whole sample in senior manager/director positions	28%	33%
Committed to staying in nonprofit sector for next job	45%	55%
To continue to develop professionally, feel need to leave current organization	60%	53%
To continue to develop professionally, feel need to get an advanced degree	46%	36%
To become an ED, need to further develop technical/management skills	52%	42%
To become an ED, need to further develop leadership capabilities	36%	31%
To become an ED, need to further develop external connections/networks	48%	43%
To become an ED, need to further develop ability to lead/supervise/manage staff	33%	28%

that we find important to consider, as well as a few questions that we continue to grapple with as we learn from each new experience.

Cultural backgrounds of participants: The racial and cultural backgrounds of learners can have a huge impact on the overall learning experience. For instance, in

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our Women Executive Directors of Color Leadership Program, participants talked about leadership struggles that were firmly rooted in race and culture. One participant described barriers to getting funding based on these dynamics:

You definitely run into funders for whom it's hard that I'm a woman of color. I don't communicate in a way that they can feel, and the nature of funding is based on relationships. If the people funding you are white and you're not able to communicate in a way that elicits trust and confidence as much as someone they feel more comfortable with, it's difficult to get the funding.

Particularly in positions where people of color are underrepresented, addressing the ways that racial barriers can become entangled in job-related challenges are important conversations to facilitate.

Curricula development: Just as multicultural groups of learners can improve program outcomes, curricula will be taught more effectively when it is designed and delivered using multicultural frameworks. A framework that examines

racial and ethnic cultural dimensions within a particular content area can have a big impact on participants' learning.

For instance, the Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color was developed by CompassPoint and the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT) five years ago to address two main issues: Many minority-led nonprofits weren't raising significant income from individual donors, and there continued to be a dearth of people of color in the fundraising professional field. We created learning groups of executive directors and development staff of color. Then we provided a framework for identifying the cultural dimensions of cultivating donors and asking for money. The results have been promising: We have seen higher levels of participant engagement and learning than in fundraising trainings offered in other settings, and 85% of participants reported improved fund development practices as a result of participating in the Fundraising Academy.

Furthermore, in a recent survey, 95% of respondents in minority-led nonprofits found significant value in fundraising programs designed specifically for communities of color. One person noted:

> There aren't enough people of color who know how to effectively raise funds. I usually see white people in development positions, and I feel we need to develop the leadership of people of color in those positions in grassroots organizations so the organizations reflect more of the community where they work.

We have confidence that these approaches to developing leaders of color aren't just qualitatively different from traditional programs but more effective. This experience has led us to ask the same questions about other content areas: What about people management, finance, or governance? Do

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they each require a framework for understanding racial and cultural dynamics? And if so, how do we adapt existing curricula accordingly?

Collaborating for Greater Impact

We don't have definitive answers or approaches to developing leaders of color, but we do believe in the importance of exploring these questions further in our own work and in partnership with others. Many organizations are doing innovative work in the area of leadership development and multiculturalism. However, few of us know about these innovations. If we worked together, our efforts would have exponentially greater impact. Collaboratively, we could establish best practices for designing multicultural programs, document successes and failures, and disseminate these learnings around the country. If you have thoughts to share, please contact us at CompassPoint Nonprofit Services. ∎

Footnotes

[1] These statistics and others on diversity are from U.S. Census Bureau data.

[2] *Daring to Lead 2006* (CompassPoint), a national study of executive directors, reported that 82% of its respondents were white.

[3] See *Nonprofit Governance in the United States* by Francie Ostrower, Urban Institute (www.urban.org), and "Board Diversity: Your Biggest Challenge," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (www.snpo.org/members).

[4] This is a partial list of barriers reported in *Ready to Lead?* For a complete discussion of these barriers and other findings, download the full report at www.compasspoint.org.

Articles in this department are written by the staff and members of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management (www.allianceonline.org).

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