



KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS

Those interviewed for this report were asked: *What are the main issues and trends that will affect how diverse groups form and sustain viable partnerships in the future?*

The following is a summary of the responses. These comments have been grouped into three categories: organizing and advocacy, public policy, and philanthropy; covering such topics as leadership development, race, technology, changing demographics and the role of foundations.

“There are no forums for people of color to come together to discuss issues and trends. Other groups with common interests meet on a regular basis.”

“We need to re-think the question of race, reframe the debate from ‘civil rights’ to ‘racial justice’ and recognize class differences within and among ethnic groups.”

ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY

1. **Building Partnerships**

Multi-ethnic/multi-issue collaboration is both a critical need and a major challenge for diverse organizations and communities. It is essential for progressive groups with diverse interests to work in partnership across racial and political lines. They need to identify their mutual interests, form viable partnerships and pursue a joint policy agenda.

2. **Constituent Participation/Empowerment**

One of the keys to bringing about institutional change is organizing local constituents and empowering them to define their own needs, in their own way, on their own terms and with their own voice. Constituent groups have both the wisdom and capacity to effectively address community issues. Strong constituent participation is at the heart of the social change process.

3. **Leadership Development**

One of the essential goals of the community-building process is to develop the indigenous leadership and organizational capacity in local communities to address

“Real resident participation is critical. Community-based organizations can no longer be used as proxies for the voice of residents.”

“Most organizations are functioning on the basis of their own self-interest; they need to have a broader vision of social change.”

“There are so many things besieging people from so many directions – our two main challenges are keeping activists from burning out and getting more people involved.”

“Battles over where development takes place will get only bigger and uglier.”

organizational capacity in local communities to address chronic social, economic, and environmental problems. To achieve this goal, it will be necessary to identify new leadership paradigms and set new standards of leadership rooted in the basic principles of duty, justice, equity and community empowerment.

4. Race

Race is an important issue that has to be addressed in a very open and honest way. The highest priority should be given to bridging the racial divide among progressive, multi-ethnic/multi-issue groups. New strategies must be developed to reduce cultural conflict, improve inter-group relations and build lasting partnerships for social change.

5. Youth Development

There is a need to develop multi-cultural initiatives that enable youth from different ethnic backgrounds to work together on social, economic and environmental issues. It is imperative that youth develop their leadership skills, deepen their cultural consciousness, and build trusting, multi-ethnic relationships with their peers.

6. Technology

Technology can be used more effectively as a community education and organizing tool. However, it is imperative that the limitations of technology be recognized, especially the fact that it is not widely available in low-income communities.

PUBLIC POLICY

7. Shifting Priorities

In the 1970's, there was a widespread belief that California had better schools, better roads and better governmental services. Today, this is no longer true. As a result of shifting political priorities and a reallocation of tax dollars, California now lags behind many other

*“I don’t like the term ‘sprawl’
– it’s been used to castigate
the only communities that have
allowed affordable housing
in the last decade.”*

*“We may want to do
community development [in
low-income communities in the
Bay Area], but thanks to
gentrification, we may end up
just kicking the poor
out to Stockton.”*

*“We should critique the
organizations we’ve created in
the last 20 years. Are they still
relevant? If not, what are we
going
to do about it?”*

*“The environmental
movement is aging – where is
the new energy going
to come from?”*

“The most profound trend is

states in providing basic public services. By and large, these policy changes reflect a major shift in public attitudes about the role of government in addressing socio-economic problems in poor and diverse communities.

8. Changing Demography

In recent years, there have been major public policy decisions with adverse effects on communities of color, especially in the areas of affirmative action, immigration and welfare reform. However, as a result of recent demographic changes, the balance of political power is shifting in the state. People of color have more voting power and will have a decisive voice in shaping public policy in the future.

9. Devolution

Devolution is a two-sided coin. On the one hand, it represents a significant policy shift by the federal government resulting in the elimination of basic entitlement programs for poor people. On the other, it offers a unique opportunity for local communities to develop progressive public policies and increase the democratic participation of under-served groups.

10. Regionalism

Some of the most important quality of life issues in the San Francisco Bay Area are population growth and urban sprawl; jobs and housing; transportation and traffic congestion; and land use and water policy. It is essential that all key stakeholders consider the equity implications of policy initiatives that are developed to address these quality of life issues in our region.

11. Globalization

Globalization of the economy is having a major effect on the quality of life in urban and rural communities across the nation. Consequently, there is growing recognition of the need to link economic, social and environmental issues at the local, national and international levels.

PHILANTHROPY

*that people now realize we
cannot have a successful
society unless diverse groups
are brought together to
address their common needs.”*

*“We have to bring the struggle
to protect the biosphere in
alignment
with the struggle for
human justice.”*

12. Foundations

Over the past decade, foundations have shown a strong interest in promoting collaboration among multi-ethnic/multi-issue organizations. However, there is considerable evidence that many collaboratives fail due to inadequate resources, unrealistic goals, unclear member expectations, dysfunctional operations, cultural conflict and/or poor interpersonal relationships. There is a need for funders to invest more resources in the development of *sustainable* collaboratives that function in accordance with the “best practices” in the field.