



**NC Peoples' Coalition for Giving  
On the Precipice: Launching a New Conversation on Race and Giving  
October 28, 2008**

**DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU FELT POWERFUL GIVING/RECEIVING:**

- as a nursing mother, demonstrated that givers are recipients and vice versa, I was giving the food of life and I was receiving a connection with the universe
- giving birth
- giving different sermons each week
- amount of giving that other people notice even if I don't think of it as giving myself
- giving up one's spot to create a space for someone else; giving up power made me feel powerful
- easier to talk about giving than receiving
- when I need affirmation and sustenance, I drink from my community well
- what Mother Nature does and how we use that
- powerful to receive from someone who knows you, sees you
- time and energy to the black gay community in Charlotte, seeing people come out
- singing from my truth
- sitting at the feet of elders
- when I receive, my whole self-worth comes into play
- I can receive when it doesn't feel like only receiving but an exchange

**FISHBOWL WITH PROVOCATEURS:**

*"Our power is inextricably connected to our ability to live in community. Our challenge and honor is to do the opposite of letting ourselves be separated by a dominant structure."* Rev. Nelson Johnson

**WESLEY:**

- Remembers being 9 or 10 and witnessing the giving that occurred in his own family. This giving centered around: Need, supply, timing, knowledge.
- This generation coming up is seeing so much outpouring---setting an example that you can give. Observation and participation is opening avenues for people to give.
- Qualitative vs. quantitative. Example of mother being hard-working, and always giving regardless. Communities of color have always giving, it is now time to be more wise in our giving. How, what, and why we are giving. Getting into deeper matters...beyond purpose, policy and intent.

**PAULINA:**

*"when the people dreamed, their dreams came true"* (opening poem)

The implications of giving of our wealth, and what we imagine that wealth to be. We may not believe in democracy as it stands, and we're in it. How do we have enough courage and smarts to engage democracy as it stands, even as we're envisioning an alternative future?

I know Latinos who can't vote, and are still giving to this campaign. Obama is able to articulate back to us what we were so desperate to hear. Nothing new is being said, but it is coming from a really different source.

**IMPLICATION:** Contributing to something that has our shared values reflected back to us.

**LEVERAGE:** not just the impact, but the momentum. So that regardless of what happens, our hearts don't get broken. What kind of infrastructure for a progressive left are we creating supported by people of color? I want to engage people of color when we are not speaking to whiteness. An infrastructure that comes from our perspective and has our best interest at heart.

How is the organization that I am giving it to accountable to my survival? Underlying conflict with money and capitalism. What does it mean to live a generous philanthropic life that does not equal capitalism? If I give up my safety net, what sort of support will I have?

Eg. coming out---not knowing what is on the other side. The negation of self and spiritual violence that occurs. We can't even imagine what is on the other side if we leave capitalism behind. Giving in communities of color is about taking that next step. If we had a bail-out package, would we know what to do with it? Would we have to give it back the next day?

**NELSON:**

Story of conversation with homeless man---"I want to vote for him, just because I want to vote for him". His ability to transcend himself beyond his immediate circumstances.

Study in Greensboro: Giving in communities of color is above average when it comes to resources, below average when it comes to social capital. The purpose for some giving is to get people away from you. News report that Wall Street is governed by two principles: greed and fear.

People moved by fear, but also by generosity. There is a spirit of hope and new possibility which touches this new generosity. How do we build on that?

Communities of color are historically giving communities (per capita, we give at higher percentages). We need to affirm the propensity to give that already exists in our community. Not arguing that we shouldn't do more or better---but we should challenge the notion that we are not a giving community.

**LEVERAGE**---we need to do a better job of projecting relevance of organizations in communities of color. We haven't quite gotten our arms around a certain kind of public relation. Project our story and invite people to be part of that. We need to take a page out of that book---of Obama's organizing mechanism.

At the end of the day, community is our insurance. Walking away from scarred relationships born out of hustle and greed and to see in each other as support. We belong to one another. Drive for money and things---we need to own it, and not let it own us. Our work is community building, and the issue is the opportunity to do it. To win issue, and not have different, more profound relationships, leaves us with just a win. Affirm the goodness that exists all around us.

**CONNIE:** When Obama becomes president, it won't be a magic bullet, a heal for all wounds. Our hearts have already been broken at a local level...hope in one person is a shallow hope. The community building is the structure for folks to continue doing their work in an inter-generational way, where all voices are valued.

Institutional perspective: Eg. of hiring first African-American to city council. Into a structure/system/culture that did not allow for much space for the person of color. As we travel the road to institutional power and oppression we walk into a system that is corrupt and is already in place. Win or lose---what is the work of the community to have voice at a local, state, and federal level.

Base-building in organizations that are not nickel and diming, so that we have opportunities for skills-building, and ready to accept leadership from other people who are not like us. All that is

happening now needs to be channeled from a local perspective, rather than expecting Obama's presidency to magically change the condition in our communities.

**PAULINA:** Reality-check that Obama is running for president of the US, not president of the movement. Post-colonial people of color led countries are a mess—heartbreak in questioning if we can govern ourselves? We have to address our own hypocrisies within the movement and align it with the justice places we see.

**NIA:** Can we govern ourselves? Do we tear down first, do we create? If we destroy capitalism what do we have to replace it with? Will it be with what already know? Don't really expect much from Obama, although she supports him. Understanding the scope of work that needs to be done. We want to squash the dreams of some of the community we're working with, saying it's not enough, and then turn around and try to mobilize.

It will require having real conversations around need. Breaking away from scarcity and trusting that we have everything we need. Obama has been good at convincing people that there is a possibility that we can level the playing field. This is all that he has promised. Obama has ignited something, now we have to decide what we do with it.

**PAM:** Obama is a quarterback and we put him there. We as a movement missed our opportunity, because we don't have our shit together. If we did, then Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> would be more of our celebration. Now we have to ask ourselves, as a movement, how do we support him getting there and how we elevate each other? We are missing the boat---for bridge-building amongst ourselves. What Obama has done is visual. Our work is not visual. We have to hold the people who gave to the Obama campaign accountable to the message. We have to become a conglomerate beyond the nonprofit industrial complex. It's been a long time since we had someone we could trust at this level.

**NIKKI:** Obama said this isn't his campaign, it's our campaign. How do we hold on to that? It needs to continue beyond the election. If we see a need within our community, we do what it takes.

**NIA:** the challenge is what are we creating...together, not about individualism.

**LEAH:**

What Obama has done is opened up space for people to be active. Age-old debate in the Black community---'what is wrong with us, and why can't we do right?' Can't do the either/or---either blame the system, or the individual, not really looking at how the factors are working. Factors not directly racist today, but the impact still is. What has been the impact on us that makes us think that we are not worthy or not able?

Work with African-American women, where fundraising feels like begging or like being in an auction block. Challenging elements---one being our own mindset being self-defeating. Transformation to 'where there is a will, there is a way'. We are the most fractured movements in steel-bound silos, how do we integrate? Our work is about the connections. Our communities consist of people from everywhere....who is community now? How do we build community with people who don't look like me? One practice to help build community is through affirmations of one another on an individual level. How are we integrating this in our life fully.

**MARISOL:** Difficulty with Obama is that he hasn't addressed immigration directly. We've projected all of our hopes into Obama. Fear that once he gets into office, the momentum will stop, and we will all look at him and say 'do it'. In the end he is just a president. It's one thing to have a movement build around a specific action (an election), it's a more challenging to try to address a broken system.

VISION---the future of our countries lies in our people and communities, NOT multi-national corporations and globalization. So many of our organizations have been succeeding beyond the

neo-liberal agenda. Rooted in local economy and social capital could fundamentally shift everything. This has a real potential to keep the momentum moving towards a peoples' movement.

**LEAH:** Obama is opening up space for us to push through. Unless there is pushing from us, it would just be tinkering. New Ecuadorian constitution that gives rights to land, people, beings on the planet. Opportunities for people to come together and build together---what keeps us separate? Eg. Labor department and EPA---if these entities were one, there would be healthy workers.

**ALBA:** What if the only things that I did in my life, were only things that I am as excited about doing now. 'Another world'---is me only doing the things that fill my soul. What if we brought ourselves FULLY to every space I was in?

**MONICA:** what if we all owned our power, tapped into the source, and then operated from that place of power? What if we began to work on ourselves...did that internal work first? All that we want to conquer and get taken care of, will get taken care of. How can we do those things that make us happy?

**PAULINA:** I'm creating middle step, between where we are now, and the grand vision. We have embraced that class is the way to transcend race, poverty, homophobia. Interested in the philanthropic giving that also addresses class. Frustrated with private foundations that want us to align to the donor's vision, versus our vision as a people. Self-determination and sovereignty. As a country, it is clear that we are living beyond our means, how do we start living within our means. Not excess. We live in communities that validate consumption. You don't have to understand everything there is to know, but you have to believe in my self-determination and freedom and I in yours...and we can work together.

**ROY:** The power and dreams are right here. The more I extend them, the more I loose them. If I project them to a person in Washington, I've lost it. I appreciate the people here, the energy. This is the path, it is right in front of us.

**JILLIAN:** Social change as part of a historical process. At this point in history, what can we do to set ourselves on a trajectory towards more of what we want? NC is the center of the universe, all good stuff happens here. Exciting and empowering to work with people who build community, infrastructure, eg...really, really free market. Figuring out ways that communities can function without the state or capitalism, we can provide for ourselves. How to build community self-sufficiency and self-autonomy? Important to look at this work as part of a whole movement, it's not always about getting funding.

**LILLIE:** Never had a grant to run Sanders Service Center, have been in existence for 15 years. Have to treat neighbors well, because she never knows when she'll need something from her. If you take every hurt that you ever had, and try to prevent others from feeling that hurt you will create a better world.

**WESLEY:** My vision is speaking from my heart than from my mind. More synthesis, and more integrated. Bringing heart closer to home, and making sure not to loose self in it to forget individuality. Word inheritance: Obama's message tapped into something that is inherent. Need to input hope into someone's life is an inheritance. Even when we have no knowledge of this inheritance, it shapes our lives. Community is the only way to get the historical reference point. Just as much as we inherit debt, we inherit other things.

Learned about his direction to fight, versus using his thinking to nurture himself and his work. Deception in our thinking turns into fear in our culture that disconnects us from our own light.

**NELSON:** Sometimes the most difficult thing to recognize, is the thing that you are doing. We are raised in a culture that pits one thing against another. It is something that we need to unlearn. Vincent Harding would always say 'try both/and not either/or'. It takes all of the

components to make us who we are in our inter-relatedness. People are called to do a great diversity of things. Learning to honor that and celebrate that.

“what time is it on the clock of history” Grace Leigh Boggs. It is a crisis of enormous proportion. When these periods come, there are great dangers. The white folks had to vote Obama in, before he had the support of POC. Our trust is not in him, or the system, it’s in each other. The key is building community. We have to do things on many levels. Communities of place, color, profession, vocation. The universal community is affirming the dignity and worth of every single person. I can exist in a community of color without being in contradiction with other communities. The challenge of the world right now is to redefine ourselves as a universal community. We have to come up with some way for people to survive together. Give thought to the possibility of creating local currency. The money system is a big gambling operation. People have to unlearn that and learn an economy that is based on something real.

A way of thinking where you do things that please you. We can’t have freedom by ourselves, it’s a relational category. Be careful of being happy when everyone else is miserable. We live in a system that sets that up. When we live in community, most of what we need, can be guaranteed.