



CONFRONTING THE GLASS CEILING OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

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AED•

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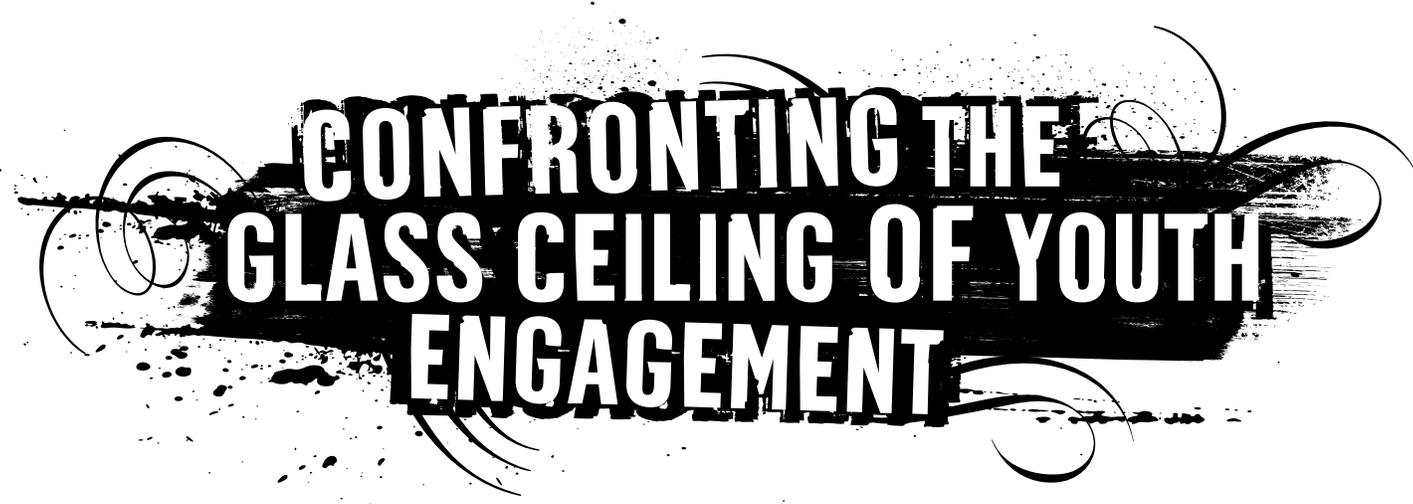
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[Jessica A. Bynoe]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As young people are rapidly becoming more engaged in local civic and political affairs, they also risk encountering a glass ceiling to substantive participation. Examples from the Youth Innovation Fund and interviews with youth engagement experts indicate that seemingly successful partnerships between young people and adults with institutional power can suddenly and without good reason be diminished or terminated—especially when young people begin to ask for more change and push harder on the operation, policies, or culture of the targeted institution than adult allies are prepared for.

Glass ceilings not only prevent young people from making systemic change, but also discourage their desire to be involved in their communities in the future. Furthermore, the young people with an agenda for change—and therefore the most likely to encounter resistance—often come from communities experiencing some injustice related to economic disparity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, or ability. When these young people are offered a chance to create change, their purported adult allies may not share the same justice-oriented goals. A glass ceiling goes up, and the very young people a community most wants to engage can develop lasting feelings of powerlessness and cynicism.

The glass ceiling to youth engagement is fundamentally an issue of power imbalance. Because efforts that visibly affect the whole community are usually sanctioned and managed by adults, young people often approach the work with an intention or need to gain power and access. Inherent in this scenario is the idea that adult-led institutions can choose whether or not to give young people what they want. Unlike adult led “external” interest groups that are also pushing up against institutional power, young people are perceived by those inside the system as having little to trade in return. They do not have votes, large amounts of money, or other forms of political currency or leverage.

Yet, all community members—including young people—have their own power. The first step to breaking the glass ceiling is for young people to understand, embrace, and leverage their power as citizens so their success does not depend solely on the support of their adult and institutional partners.



Methods of Breaking the Glass Ceiling

- Young people need to realize that power comes from many places. One way is to activate a large group or constituency. While they may not hold formal positions, young people can have influence by effectively building, mobilizing, and maintaining a broad base of supporters.
- Rather than emerge simply when one party wants something from another, relationships between institutions of power and young people should be organic and long lasting. Informal interactions over time should be used to build relationships and exchange information, laying an important foundation for future engagement.
- Once a relationship is established, young people must understand and assess an institution's readiness to partner; interviews and observations should address the institution's current culture, structures, practices, policies and attitudes toward youth engagement. If they decide to go forward, partners should establish a clear understanding of outcomes and roles—especially if an institution is both a partner and a target for change.
- To limit the possibility of getting shut out, young people can use multiple strategies and assert pressure on multiple systems to move forward their agendas. Like any group of engaged citizens, young people can effectively engage in their communities through governance, organizing, philanthropy, media, and (social) entrepreneurship.
- Likewise, young people can diversify their goals and expand their definition of success beyond specific policy and structural changes. When young people take a systemic approach to community change, they have an increased chance of getting youth voice in the “water supply” of a community. Once youth voice is prevalent in multiple community systems, young people will have created access and opportunities to affect each of these systems.

Adult-led institutions also have a responsibility to develop these relationships. Young people must be counted as active citizens and contributors to community, not show pieces and tokens to elicit good press and a positive reputation for institutions. Adults should treat young people as equal participants in civic life during every phase of the relationship.

Furthermore, adults in power must approach relationships with young people with an intention to increase the transparency, accessibility and inclusivity of the organizations and agencies that serve the public. As a result, they need to foster the systems, policies and practices that can support young people's interaction and participation.

As individuals and organizations and as young people and adults we must confront the glass ceiling to youth engagement. It exists, and by naming it, understanding it, and preparing young people to address it, the glass ceiling can be shattered. When we overcome this barrier, youth engagement will lead to “youth infusion” where young people will be recognized and valued as equal contributors and change makers in all aspects of community life.



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CONFRONTING THE GLASS CEILING OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Young people are one of a community's greatest resources for fresh ideas, innovative solutions, and a healthy questioning of the status quo. Individuals, organizations, businesses, schools and governments are increasingly working with young people who are becoming more engaged in community life. As young people continue to realize their power, individually and collectively, they are participating in an array of public work. However, a common and disturbing phenomenon is emerging where young people encounter a "glass ceiling," which prevents them from making real, sustainable change. Just as women have faced a glass ceiling in the world, young people face an invisible barrier to their success as effective citizens and change makers.

Young people are given or seize opportunities to challenge policy or process, but after they conduct research, understand systems and policy, uncover injustice, and present hard-hitting findings and recommendations, they are challenged by the very institutions that originally embraced their engagement. As a result, young people's ideas and proposed changes are blocked. These events force the question: Can young people truly engage in community institutions and decision making or are they destined to hit a glass ceiling? And, furthermore, if there is a glass ceiling, what can young people, adult allies, and communities do to prevent, circumvent and crush this obstacle?

There are in fact many glass ceilings that young people encounter when they engage in community life. Often, these obstacles are preventing young people from creating policy and structural changes in communities. Such changes are important outcomes for youth engagement work, and when they are not accomplished it may appear as though the work failed. However, these changes are not the only goals of youth engagement. Successful youth engagement will prepare young people as leaders and actors; prepare and persuade adults to accept young people as equal contributors; create the opportunities in institutions for young people to change policies and structures; and, change the culture of communities to embrace young people as fully participating members.

The broader outcomes of youth engagement—those focused on preparing young people and changing a community's culture are not as easily threatened by the glass ceiling. Even with the glass ceiling in place, young people's actions can still lead to their continued participation as effective citizens and to a community which values their engagement. These successes in shifting a community's culture are too often ignored or overshadowed by the struggle to break through the glass ceiling and create policy or structural change. Both sustained culture change and policy change are vital, and mutually reciprocal, to the successful engagement of young people. It is necessary to fully understand the glass ceiling confronting youth engagement because this obstacle inhibits both young people's ability to create policy changes as well as their ability to recognize and embrace their success in creating cultural changes.

This paper examines how and why glass ceilings exist when young people assert their power to create change. It also presents several recommendations to consider so that the policy and structural outcomes as well as the longer term youth leadership and community culture outcomes of youth engagement increase.

In the current climate, adult-led institutions are looking to involve young people in areas such as electoral politics, school reform, solutions to climate change, and emerging media and technology. Decision makers enjoy a certain amount of “good press” when they engage young people. Many adults welcome young people into their institutions in exchange for a better reputation because there is a perception that young people are not interested in tackling the hard questions. Perhaps this is true of some young people afforded leadership opportunities, but certainly not all. Especially in high stakes situations, young people seemingly fall short of success in the work they were encouraged to lead. As soon as young people start to address the difficult questions a community or institution faces, the same institutions and individuals that supported youth involvement often begin to question or restrain young people’s opinions and power.

It would be easy for those champions of youth engagement to explain this scenario by pointing to the under appreciation of youth voice and value, and the ignorance among adults in civic leadership positions. However, the origin of the glass ceiling is more complex. All community members, regardless of age, have potential to contribute to the community. Civic participation and citizen-centered change is not dependent on the permission granted by institutions of power. Young people, like any group of engaged citizens, can use several strategies to effectively engage in their communities: governance, organizing, philanthropy, media, and (social) entrepreneurship. Governance is defined as holding a position of power through representation on a board, council, or other governing body. Organizing is the mobilization of fellow citizens to advocate for a change—often a formal policy change—in the community. Philanthropy is the giving of time or money to support civic actions to improve the community. Media includes the creation or public analysis of any form of media to express specific perspectives about the community at large. Social entrepreneurship encompasses the creation and management of social ventures that have a sustained impact for community improvement.

Each of these strategies is available for any citizen to use. However, compared to adults, young people have limited access to use each of these strategies. As Adeola Oredola, executive director of Youth In Action in Providence, RI, reminds us, “There are a lot fewer resources for youth driven work . . . [and] people do not get behind something unless there are resources.”¹

In addition to the lack of access and resources, many of these strategies are in fact controlled by adult-led institutions such as government, businesses, foundations, or major media outlets. Furthermore, young people are often in a position where their ability to engage or create change through any of these strategies is dependent on adult leaders.

Of course, there are underground, authentically youth-led efforts. However, these efforts are considered underground for a reason—they do not affect whole communities. Efforts that visibly affect the whole community are usually sanctioned and managed by adults. This relationship leads to a power imbalance; as a result young people more often confront the glass ceiling than do their adult counterparts.

In order to understand this challenge, which inhibits more ambitious youth engagement efforts, it is necessary to analyze the characteristics, strategies, impact and opportunities of youth engagement. For the purposes of this paper, young people are defined as in and out of school youth between the ages of 13 and 19. Youth engagement includes work that is led by young people and supported by adults to ensure the authentic voice, value and visibility of young people in communities. Youth engagement is about preparing and supporting youth and adults as young people make key

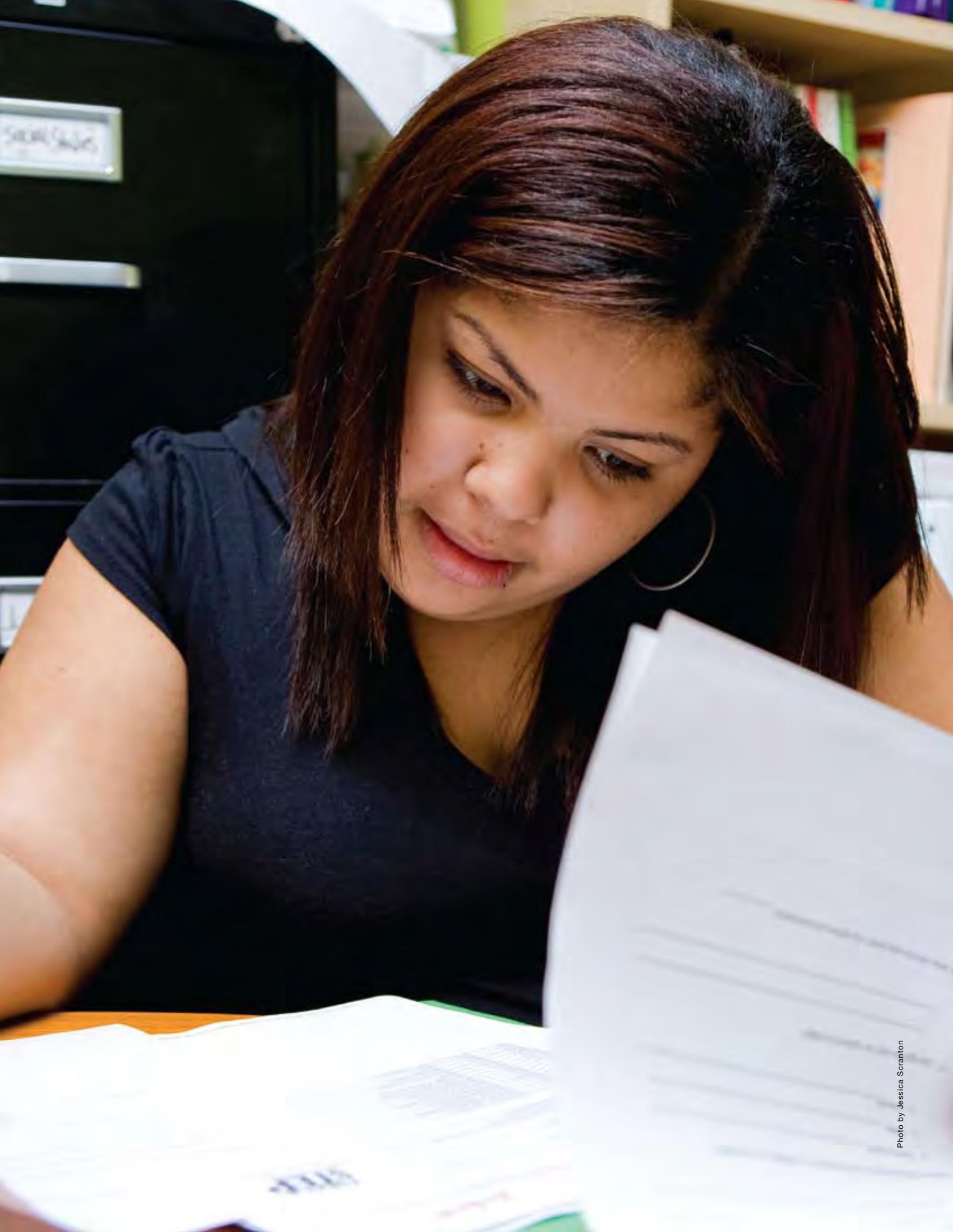


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decisions and influence civic life in all sectors of a community. At its best, youth engagement leads to “youth infusion” with a goal to “integrate youth and young adults into all spheres of community life and to ensure that their voice and action are valued and utilized in efforts aimed at social or community change. At the organizational level, an institution is ‘infused’ when youth are valued as effective partners and when structures are created at multiple levels to ensure that the voice of young people is represented in decision-making.”²

The infusion of young people in all spheres of community life suggests that young people must be integrated in formal decision making as well as organizing and advocacy campaigns. However, as is the case in most communities, when the formal systems are dominated by adults, an inherent tension emerges as to how young people can and should use their informal power to pursue increased formal power. The dominant strategies often include community organizing in which young people demand attention to specific issues or call for more voice in decisions about them. These campaigns strive to create and sustain policy or structural change and to include more young people in major institutions of power.

As with any movement for inclusion there have been remarkable examples of success. However, for every success story there are countless others in which young people failed to achieve these ambitious goals because they confronted a glass ceiling. Too often the stories of young people who attempt, but do not succeed, to create change in major systems in their communities go unshared. Whether it is because people see these efforts as failures, unfinished, or uninspiring, they are often reserved solely for internal group reflection among rightfully frustrated youth activists. However, there is much to uncover and learn by looking at this regrettable trend. Embedded within these unfinished or “unsuccessful” efforts are the lessons that can help improve the practice of supporting youth engagement.



METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

This paper attempts to define the glass ceiling confronting youth engagement, identify the circumstances that lead to a glass ceiling for youth engagement, and present recommendations to ignite a conversation in the field to more purposefully prevent, circumvent and crush these ceilings. The paper is based on case studies from five years of work of the Youth Innovation Fund and interviews with young people, adult allies, community organizers and other supporters.

Established in 2003 with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Youth Innovation Fund is a youth-led investment strategy that increases the value and visibility of young people in communities. By positioning young people as investors of time, money and strategic expertise, the Youth Fund is changing the way in which youth civic engagement is conceptualized, encouraged and supported. Sponsored and managed by the AED, the Youth Fund is a multi-faceted initiative where young people are not only investors of financial, social and intellectual capital in youth-led community change strategies, but also:

- Conveners of youth and adults to set an agenda for community change,
- Advocates for the community change agenda by informing and influencing city, school, media, businesses, philanthropic leaders, etc, and
- Evaluators of investments to ensure outcomes and results.

Today, as a result of the Youth Fund's unique approach, thousands of young people in eight cities across the country—Nashville, TN; Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA; Portland, ME; Portland, OR; Hampton, VA; Ypsilanti, MI; and Cleveland, MS—are mobilizing their fellow citizens, including adults, and an array of public, private, and nonprofit organizations, to take action on behalf of entire communities and, in turn, helping to build civic participation in those communities.

While the work has seen great success in five years, there have been obstacles. This paper will investigate three case studies about youth engagement and its glass ceilings in Nashville, TN, Portland, ME, and San Francisco, CA. These three communities are in very different youth and citizen engagement environments. By investigating the glass ceiling in all three studies, clear trends emerge that can help communities understand how to identify and prevent this obstacle. First, however, a more detailed explanation of the glass ceiling and its dangers is necessary.

RECOGNIZING THE GLASS CEILING

A glass ceiling of youth engagement may become an obstacle in any major institution: government, business, schools, media, organizations or philanthropy. It is best characterized by a seemingly successful partnership between a young person or group of young people and adults in power within an institution that is suddenly and without good reason diminished or terminated.

The partnership often centers on a change or improvement the young people seek. For instance, this desired change may take the form of a proposed policy concerning school curriculum, a suggestion for better youth representation in the local newspaper, or a call for local businesses to employ young people. The glass ceiling appears when young people begin to ask for more change and push harder on the current operation, policies, or culture of the targeted institution. At that time, the adults representing the institution seem to renege on the partnership and treat young people as the “dispensable asset.”

Not all young people who are invited to participate in an institution will reach a glass ceiling. Some may not want or know how to push for policy or structural change that has a competing point of view than the status quo or involves a contentious issue. Hal Cato, CEO of Oasis Center in Nashville, TN observed, “Most youth engagement is in service opportunities where young people are involved in planning direct service projects. Fewer youth opportunities take it further along to organizing, issue analysis, and taking a broader view. But, that is when there is the glass ceiling—when young people start questioning why is there this and why is there that. It makes people nervous.”³

It is likely that these more activist young people have an agenda for change. They are interested in opportunities to do more than participate as what Westheimer and Kahne refer to as “personally responsible” or even “participatory” citizens. These young people are further along the continuum of participation and are eager to engage as “justice-oriented” citizens who “need opportunities to analyze and understand the interplay of social, economic, and political forces.”⁴ Their motivation and approach is inherently different from those young people who are involved solely to “help out” in ways deemed useful by adults.

In addition, the more activist young people are often more likely to come from communities experiencing injustice related to economic disparity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, ability, etc. When these young people are offered a chance to create change, the adults they are working with may not share the same justice-oriented goals as the youth. Instead, the adults, in their best intentions, believe they are doing right and being helpful to idealistic young people. However, when the actions and requests of young people become more substantial than the adult champion is comfortable with, the adult reaction is frequently to erect a glass ceiling.

Josh Todd, coordinator of the Multnomah Youth Commission in Portland, OR explains, “Higher ceilings get hit when you start hitting new and different power structures where there is a cultural breaking point . . . community members get uncomfortable and pull their support.”⁵ This barrier is especially dangerous when blocking the engagement of disenfranchised youth. These young people already have limited opportunities to contribute, and frustrating interactions only reinforce an “us versus them” mentality and perpetuate a system of power that is accessible to only a few.

While some people may view this scenario as similar to situations faced by adult community organizers and active citizens on a regular basis, for a young person the defeat is more dangerous and can have a longer lasting cost to the civic health of a community. When young people confront this dilemma, they can develop a sense of powerlessness and cynicism that lasts far beyond one experience.

This is not to say institutions ought to make it easier for young people to achieve goals of systemic change. We know from Kahne and Westheimer that creating civic engagement opportunities that always lead to success will not engender a motivation to create change.⁶ However, glass ceilings can undermine the internal efficacy that Kahne and Westheimer point to as critical for young people to continue to engage as active justice-oriented citizens. Crushing this internal efficacy at a young age can permanently turn off young people from serious civic engagement, destroying future motivation to participate in the tough work of community change. Adeola Oredola further explains, “It makes it difficult to make the case [for youth engagement] to young people when adults are oppressing them and their creativity in institutions and systems they travel in.”⁷

The glass ceiling is dangerous for other reasons. It sets young people up to fail. If organizations and institutions encouraging young people to exercise civic and political leadership short-circuit the work when young people begin to more seriously challenge unjust and inefficient policies or systems, young people will feel like they were merely sold a bill of goods by their adult-led institutional partner. Kenny Holdsman, director of the Youth Engagement Team at AED notes, “Young people know when their purported adult allies are ‘really’ there for them. Because community change work is not for the faint of heart, the commitment of adults and adult-led institutions is put to the test when young people begin pushing harder on power and raise contentious issues without apology. In the end, young people are savvy enough to detect soft commitments and lack of authenticity.”⁸ When a glass ceiling is erected by an adult institution it makes young people believe there was never a good faith partnership. They will be less likely to try again if they become disenchanting with the institutions and systems in which they are trying to engage.

Additionally, as long as glass ceilings exist, apparent “failures” will outnumber successes. Again, this is probably true of many organizing efforts whether they are led by youth or adults; however, young people conduct their efforts during a much shorter life stage than adults.

Adeola Oredola explains, “Young people have a limited window to be engaged in terms of time and in terms of this being a small piece of their life. They are weighed down by many demands and concerns. At the same time, young people are the heart of the community. They are hot with everything at once.”⁹ Perhaps because of limited time, young people often use more creative methods to

achieve change, employing multiple strategies and asserting pressure on multiple systems to move forward their agendas. When this work is done well, young people compel communities to recognize their voice, value and visibility. Therefore, while young people may fail to make inroads in one institution, another one may be eagerly awaiting to walk the talk of youth engagement.

However, if their indirect, intermediary, and informal successes are not recognized, young people can become discouraged in their efforts as civic leaders. More broadly, communities pay a high opportunity cost by failing to recognize the power and impact of youth voice and innovation in their decision and policy making.

Now that the glass ceiling and its dangers have been defined, it is necessary to understand how and why the glass ceiling exists. The next sections present three case studies from the Youth Innovation Fund, followed by an analysis of the trends emerging from the case studies.

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- Adeola Oredola



Nashville, TN: Research and Organizing for School Change

Early in its existence, the Nashville Youth Innovation Fund, housed at Oasis Center and locally known as the Youth Innovation Board (YIB), identified education as a major issue in the community. The young YIB leaders knew that there were inequities in the quality of education in their community and that these inequities were associated with neighborhood, race, and economic status.

In 2005, the YIB members began a multi-strategy campaign to identify what was needed to improve the learning environment in Nashville's high schools. As part of this campaign, the YIB trained hundreds of young people in Nashville to identify problems in their schools and create projects to address them, conducted a citywide action research project, and partnered with local organizations and school administrators to plan and identify systemic recommendations for school improvement.

As a first step, YIB members designed and carried out an action research project to collect data on school climate. In the fall of 2005, YIB members designed a survey on the safety, climate and culture of schools, both magnet (i.e., selective) and neighborhood comprehensive high schools. To distribute the survey, the YIB partnered with Metro Public Schools, Students Taking A Right Stand (STARS), and Alignment Nashville, a private nonprofit with a goal of aligning community resources and activity in the public schools to positively impact the Nashville community by helping youth and public schools succeed.

Many of the board and committee members involved with Alignment Nashville hold key positions in Metro Public Schools. Alignment Nashville staff and board members, particularly those from Metro Public Schools, encouraged the YIB to engage in their action research project because the results would help Alignment Nashville and Metro Public Schools better understand and address the needs and concerns of Nashville's public schools. There was even eagerness to use the results of the report, whatever they may be, in high school leadership classes sponsored by Alignment Nashville.

STARS is also a private nonprofit organization with a direct presence in Nashville's public schools. Through a STARS specialist in each school, the organization helps young people tackle tough issues that threaten their emotional, psychological and academic well-being.

By partnering with STARS and Alignment Nashville, the YIB gained some credibility and access to conduct their study. The YIB members organized teams of student researchers to administer the survey in each of Nashville's 15 public high schools. They collected 8,000 completed surveys, which represent roughly half of the high school population.

Throughout the spring of 2006, YIB members entered and analyzed the data. At first the data seemed quite positive; however, during a series of follow up focus groups, the YIB members noticed striking differences in responses from students in comprehensive high schools and in magnet schools, and decided that these differences should be a focus of their analysis.

Upon further review of the data, YIB members noted differences in the responses from students attending magnet schools from those attending comprehensive schools, so much so that the positive responses from the magnet schools had skewed the entire data set to appear positive.

Even more troubling, those students reporting they were unsafe, unprepared and disrespected in comprehensive schools were predominantly from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These inequities became the basis for a report prepared by the YIB on school climate in Nashville's public high schools.

Titled *Separate and Unequal: Students Look at Culture and Climate in Nashville Public Schools*, the report highlights differences in survey responses between students in magnet schools and students in regular comprehensive high schools. The report includes a description of their research method, survey results, analysis and recommendations to the Metro Public Schools.

The YIB engaged in varied activities to publicize the report's findings. In October 2006, they made three presentations to the school district leadership — to the superintendent and his staff, the superintendent's cabinet, and all principals in the district. The report and its recommendations seemed to be well received by the district leadership. The YIB publicly released the report on Martin Luther King Day in January 2007. In March 2007, YIB members trained between 300 and 400 young people on the report and school equity during the Mayor's Youth Summit.

During its public release, *Separate and Unequal* sparked considerable controversy and a negative reaction from the Metro Public Schools. Metro Public Schools did not receive a final copy of the report before it was released, and there was disagreement about ownership of the data and the proper procedures for release. Oasis staff and YIB members, intent on preserving the leadership role of youth in the project and on promoting youth voice, had released the report without consulting or sharing advanced copies with the adult partners who supported the work. YIB coalition partners had been unprepared for the focus of the YIB report on the difference between magnet schools and comprehensive high schools.

A spokesman for the Metro Public Schools wrote an opinion piece for the newspaper criticizing the YIB report and the release of the survey data. His commentary questioned the right of the YIB to speak for Nashville students. YIB members had sent their own opinion pieces to the newspaper calling for Metro Public Schools to address the inequities and heed their recommendations. However, Metro Public Schools and Alignment Nashville no longer saw the youth-led research as an asset, but rather a liability that was exposing the school system as complicit in perpetuating an inequitable system of secondary school reform. By the end of the 2006-07 school year, Metro Schools had taken no action in response to the report, had not engaged in any additional discussion with the YIB, and had made none of the policy changes recommended in the report.

However, near the end of the 2006-07 school year, the district held a meeting for all school principals on the importance of personalization and relationship building with students. The YIB coordinator noted that, while the YIB was not directly involved in implementing changes, this emphasis on school climate and on relationships with students in the district's work with principals was entirely consistent with the themes raised by the YIB in its own research. Eventually, Metro Public Schools began to engage Oasis Center staff in school improvement discussions, but young people continued to play an outside role conducting research and organizing campaigns.

Portland, ME: Media Advocacy and Accountability

The Portland, ME Youth Innovation Fund—YOUTHINK—is located in a state with one of the oldest average age of residents in the nation, but also in a community with an increasingly diverse and young new immigrant population. From the beginning of their work, YOUTHINK made a concerted effort to engage those young people from diverse communities. While the effort was challenging, the results paid off: young people offered new and unique perspectives on how they could increase youth engagement and address pressing issues in Portland.

One issue was the lack of fair and balanced youth representation in the local media—particularly representation of young people of color. YOUTHINK captured the attention of a local reporter at the *Portland Press Herald* and began securing regular news coverage in that publication. However, the coverage of YOUTHINK in the *Portland Press Herald* was the exception rather than the rule. YOUTHINK members believed that most stories about youth were about sports or, worse, about negative activities.

YOUTHINK leveraged its relationship with one reporter to pitch the *Press Herald's* editorial staff with a youth-led audit of how young people had been depicted in the articles. Recognizing their desire to build their current and future readership, they agreed to partner with YOUTHINK on the youth-led audit of news and editorial coverage of young people. By all accounts, this was the first time a mainstream news outlet has willingly agreed to be audited by a group of young people. That summer YOUTHINK began an intensive action research “media watchdog” project. YOUTHINK members were trained in and used best practices in media accountability developed by the Youth Media Council (now known as the Center for Media Justice) in Oakland, CA. After a year of compiling results from the media analysis, YOUTHINK released a report with their data, analysis and recommendations. The report highlights the following findings, which mirror national media trends: during the course of the study, no youth were quoted in education articles; youth athletics trumped education coverage by 300%; while youth 12-25 make up almost 20% of the population, their voices were heard in less than 6% of articles.

YOUTHINK members then met with the *Press Herald* editorial staff and key reporters to discuss the findings and present potential opportunities and challenges of engaging youth. YOUTHINK was eager to start a broader conversation with local media outlets and community members about how Portland's young people can participate in the important conversations about issues that shape their lives.

By the time the report was released, the *Portland Press Herald* had a new editor who was quite skeptical of the methods and results presented by YOUTHINK. In a meeting with YOUTHINK members, the editor and other *Portland Press Herald* leadership questioned the information in the report and challenged the recommendations YOUTHINK developed. Days before YOUTHINK's public release of the report, the *Portland Press Herald* decided it would not go public as a partner in this study because the results were too unfavorable to the paper. This was a major downfall for YOUTHINK as it was counting on this support for increased credibility and potential for action attached to its report.

The original champion reporter did write a favorable article about the media audit. There was also good coverage in another local newspaper. Nevertheless, a formal partnership with the *Portland Press Herald* did not seem to be part of YOUTHINK's near future. Since the release of the study there has not been another accountability study; however, there has been a noted increase in the number and quality of articles written about Portland young people. Additionally, there is new talk in the Portland community about the need for youth voice in the local media.

San Francisco, CA: Focusing on Youth Governance

The Youth Innovation Fund San Francisco (YIF-SF) was housed and supported by Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), one of the premier organizations in the Bay Area where young people and their adult allies come together to create positive social change. YIF-SF decided in the beginning of its work to focus exclusively on school and education issues. In its first year of operation, with the support of several partners, YIF-SF supported youth-led projects to increase youth voice and engagement in local schools. At the same time, YIF-SF was developing relationships with its grantees and partners to eventually scale up youth-led change in the San Francisco Unified School District.

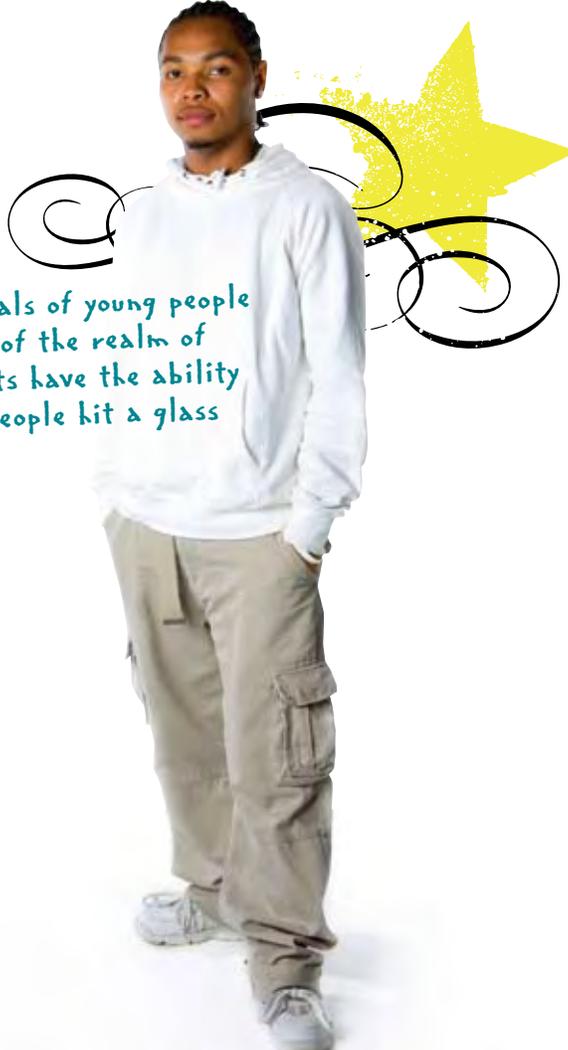
During this time, YLI was contracted by the district to support the Student Advisory Council (SAC)—a board of young people with a formal role in district governance. The SAC weighs in on district issues by interacting with the superintendent, as well as by introducing resolutions to the School Board through its youth representative. The SAC has been a shining example of youth voice in San Francisco for many years, and it had the support of many adults in the district.

With YLI's support of both YIF-SF and the SAC, it was natural for the two groups to work together. As a result of the SAC's power and credibility among the district leadership, at the end of YIF-SF's second year the SAC assumed leadership over YIF-SF activities. In many ways the YIF-SF became a committee of the SAC and could have become a mechanism for community outreach and mobilization. Nevertheless, in 2005 the power of student voice in San Francisco was challenged.

The SAC student representative to the school board introduced a resolution for the superintendent to renegotiate the large increase in her contract in the face of intense budget constraints. A resolution passed by the SAC would carry little weight unless it was then adopted by an adult school board member as a policy to be voted on by the entire board. When the superintendent heard about the pending resolution, she attempted to cancel the SAC meeting. She later explained she was concerned the youth members were being used as pawns of school board members who were her known opposition.

The SAC held their regularly scheduled meeting, which was also attended by some of the superintendent's staff. The resolution passed by a majority. At the next public school board meeting a statement from the superintendent condemned the actions of the SAC. This was in turn followed by a speech by the youth representative explaining their actions and the need for the authentic voice of youth and the public in district decision making. Ultimately, no policy was introduced to force the superintendent to renegotiate her salary; however, many board members and district leaders began to view the SAC as a liability and the youth representative on the school board as irrational and immature.

YLI opted out of its contract to support the SAC since the district was not practicing authentic youth engagement. The investment made by YLI, YIF-SF and the SAC to align their work cost precious time not spent in building a coalition of external partners to support youth voice and engagement in the school district. The young people involved in both initiatives were left to rebuild their credibility, partnerships and power if they hoped to influence future school decisions.



When the recommendations and goals of young people become either too renegade or out of the realm of their adult champion's power, adults have the ability to stop the momentum and young people hit a glass ceiling.



TRENDS LEADING TO A GLASS CEILING

Across the case studies from Nashville, Portland and San Francisco, several trends can be observed that may have led to their adult partners erecting a glass ceiling. These trends prevented young people from accomplishing their intended goals. In addition, once the glass ceiling was established by the institutions, youth engagement work was thwarted.

Adults Granting Power and Access

In each community young people approached community change with an intention or need to gain power and access from adults. Adult support tends to lend credibility to youth-led campaigns. In Nashville, young people needed to partner with Alignment Nashville and STARS to gain access to all schools and an inroad for implementation of their research results. In Portland, the young leaders of YOUTHINK were eager to partner with the *Portland Press Herald* to gain credibility for their data. In addition, their recommendations were for changes over which the paper's leadership had power. Finally, in San Francisco, the youth members could not introduce policies to the school board themselves; they needed to ask adults to do so. Non-voting youth seats on a school board are created by adults for young people. In many ways this is a situation where young people—even if they are voted by their peers to hold such a position—are invited by adults to participate in major decision making.

Beginning a youth-led change campaign by asking for or accepting an institution's or adult's power and credibility puts young people in an inferior position. When the recommendations and goals of young people become either too renegade or out of the realm of their adult champion's power, adults have the ability to stop the momentum and young people hit a glass ceiling. In the same way adults are giving young people power in these situations, by accepting it, young people are giving adults power over their engagement.

In Nashville, when the report focused on inequities between magnet and comprehensive schools and the media began questioning the school district, Alignment Nashville and Metro Public Schools failed to recognize the results and reliability of the young people's research. These organizations did not maliciously back out of their partnership with young people; the results of the research were publicly embarrassing and at the moment they were not prepared to deal with it. Because the young people had put a lot of faith in the power of their partnerships, they were able to be shut down by those partners. Even though the school district ultimately recognized the importance of the results, the young people were not recognized as the leaders of the work, nor were they any longer a major part of the plan to implement improvements.

In Portland, the newspaper pulled out of its agreement to be in partnership with YOUTHINK right before the release of the report. While the young people of YOUTHINK released the report on their own, and their champion reporter covered their work favorably, they lost the ability to work with the *Press Herald* to implement the recommendations. When developing its recommendations, YOUTHINK believed the paper's leadership would offer the young people access to help improve the paper. Nevertheless, when the results of the report made the paper appear unfavorable, the access and power to create change was taken away by the paper's leadership. Similar to Nashville, the institution targeted for change did ultimately see some improvement, but it was without any recognition or roles for young people.

Finally, by being institutionalized within an adult-led system, the SAC was in a position inferior to the larger adult-led institution. While this may be comfortable when smaller or more benign issues are addressed, unpopular issues can generate discomfort from the adults in power. In San Francisco, when young people took on the superintendent's compensation and severance package, the superintendent and school board members were able to exercise their power over the youth positions to ensure that their position gained no traction.

The reliance on adult-granted power and access undermines the work of youth-led civic engagement. All community members have their own power. It is necessary for young people to understand the power they already have as individuals and as a community. When they approach their work with this understanding their success will not depend solely on the support of their adult and institutional partners.

Relationships Based on Need and Want

In each case study young people developed relationships with institutions of power based on things they needed or wanted from those institutions. Similar to relying on power from these institutions, developing relationships solely on need puts young people at a disadvantage. The institutions choose whether or not to give young people what they want. Unlike adult-led interest groups, young people are perceived as having little to trade in return. They do not have votes, large amounts of money, or other forms of political currency or leverage. As Cindy Gibson notes in her white paper *Citizens at the Center: A new approach to civic engagement*, "Young people are disproportionately represented among the civic innovators, those dissatisfied with politics as usual and committed to creating new, constructive, citizen-centered opportunities. But many young people are left out of civic life, partly because their assets (creativity, energy, idealism, and fresh thinking) are overlooked."¹⁰

Young people are trying to use these assets to create change, but they are perceived as trying to persuade institutions to just "do the right thing" based on research and community needs. Two of the three case studies began with young people undertaking research to gather the data they needed to make their case. This research, while important, was not enough to persuade the schools or media to change their policies.

Furthermore, for many of these institutions, relationships based only on need are inappropriate. Institutions that serve the public ought to have ongoing and transparent relationships with the people they serve. Perhaps advisory councils like the SAC in San Francisco attempt to address this need for transparency; however, agendas of such groups are still based only on requests, needs and changes. There is little dialogue between youth and adults to understand the workings and perspectives of each.

Blurring Inside and Outside Change Strategies

Another theme of the narratives is the creation and dissolution of young people's partnerships with the targets of youth-led change. It is important that young change agents are not harboring an "us versus them" mentality. Instead, they are partnering with the "targets" of their campaigns and using a sophisticated blending of inside and outside strategies to achieve change. However, in the three presented case studies, the blending of inside and outside strategies tended to blend too much into singular inside strategies. With the exception of Nashville, which launched high profile trainings for hundreds of young people, the young people in the case studies did not focus on building a broad enough base to support their recommendations. They had relied on their partnerships so much that they let their work become co-opted by the institutions. Even in Nashville, they were hoping the school district would create space for the trained youth to launch mini-school improvement projects.

Admittedly, the development of a partnership between young people and a powerful adult or institution can be an accomplishment by all parties. However, too close a partnership, without other outside strategies, can prevent change. On the extreme, such as in San Francisco, a youth-led governance body became so closely tied to the institution of power that it became part of that institution. There is no longer external pressure for the institution to adopt the recommendations of young people.

In each case study the partnering institutions appeared to be surprised when the results of youth-led research became public, or the ideas and goals of the young people ran counter to those of the institution. This surprise is a realistic reaction. The institution believes it is in partnership and the youth believe they are targeting the institution for change. In Nashville and Portland the institutional partners were embarrassed by the negative results of the youth-led research. In San Francisco, the young people took on an issue the superintendent later referred to as politicking. It is difficult to position an organization as both a partner and a target unless there is clear understanding of outcomes and roles in the beginning. If this is not clear, as soon as a partner feels too much like a target they will erect a glass ceiling that prevents young people from achieving their ultimate goals.

Narrow Definition of Success

In each case study the definition of success centered on one or a small handful of policy and structural changes to enhance youth voice. In Nashville, young people made policy recommendations to increase equity in schools. In Portland, young people set goals to change how a newspaper operates. Perhaps most narrowly, in San Francisco young people were defining success as putting a resolution before the Board of Education.

When success is defined so narrowly, young people's vulnerability to the glass ceiling increases for two reasons. First, once a ceiling is erected to block a specific policy or structural change, the campaign young people undertook could end just as quickly as it began. Narrow definitions of success, coupled with the fact that ultimately the choices to make these changes rests with adults, undervalue the real power young people have to effect change in public institutions. Second, it is unrealistic to believe any movement for voice and visibility is defined by the singular moments associated with policy or structural change. Ultimately policy and structural changes add legitimacy to social justice efforts; however, alone they are not what will lead to the implementation of such change. When young people fail to define success beyond these moments they limit the impact and recognition they can achieve by more broadly changing a system or community. Once adults erect a glass ceiling for a singular policy change, it will appear as though young people have failed.



By using their voice, and building a base of support, young people have the ability to reclaim their power and change their communities.



BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

Given the trends noted above, which lead to a glass ceiling, it is clear that young people, adult allies and communities must take steps to prevent this obstacle. The recommendations below are based on the investigation of the three case studies as well as in depth interviews with young people, youth workers, community organizers and other supporters of youth engagement.

Define Power Differently

Young people have power. They do not need to ask for it or be granted power by any formal institution. However, Anderson Williams, director of new initiatives at Oasis Center in Nashville, TN, explains that “youth have been taught to defer their power and adults claim power at every turn.”¹¹ This approach to power needs to shift. Young people need to realize that power comes from many places. One way people gain power is by representing a large group or constituency. Young people have demonstrated this in current and past youth organizing. While they may not hold formal positions that recognize their representation of a larger group, they can have influence in a community by building and mobilizing a broad base of supporters.

Alexie Torres-Fleming, executive director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the Bronx, NY, cautions us to “not rely solely on institutional leaders and politicians to save us. Youth need people power. Poor people of color are taught that the electorate will save us and the power of people goes against the grain. . . We have given up our birth right to have power.” By using their voice, and building a base of support, young people have the ability to reclaim their power and change their communities.

Most importantly, young people must continue to build and maintain their base of support. If they do not, they will constantly need to ask adults for opportunities to participate. With effective support, young people are able to assert more pressure on targeted institutions. They become more nimble and able to create change in other spaces or through other strategies, even if adult partners do not fulfill promises of partnership.

By embracing their existing and potential power—independent of adults—young people will no longer be stopped by a glass ceiling. One young person in Portland, ME, reminds us of the importance to “arm [young people] with the power that they already have and to encourage them to exercise that power and not accept things at face value.”¹² In effect, by approaching civic engagement and community change work with a knowledge of and ability to use their own power, young people will be much less hindered by adult attempts to limited youth-led change efforts. The ceiling is erected only when adults can give and take away young people’s power. Once this ability is taken away from adults, young people have a better chance of achieving success.

At the same time, we cannot be naïve and think that a recognition and use of young people’s power alone will lead to success in policy and system change. However, it is the first step, which when used with the other recommendations can fundamentally shift how young people can successfully engage in civic life.

Build Relationships with Institutions before Launching Specific Campaigns

As previously mentioned, the institutions that young people often try to engage and change are public institutions created to serve local citizens. Unfortunately, young people, and other citizens trying to create more fair and just communities, often engage with these power structures only when they have a specific and immediate request of them. Alexie Torres-Fleming explains, “Some of the greatest failings [in organizing work] have been when no one knew how to stop being the angry activist.”¹³ Relationships between institutions of power and young people should be more organic and long lasting. They should not be created in an ad hoc fashion just because one party wants or needs something from the other.

Understandably, this recommendation will be difficult for any group trying to create change because it requires more time and patience. It is a different way of working with institutions. However, when relationships develop over time each group will understand the other’s needs, motivations and intentions better. Dr. Robert Long, former vice president for philanthropy and volunteerism, and current director of Greater Battle Creek programming and senior program officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, states, “The relationship strategy will work. The adversarial approach to policy change has not worked. We have a lot of experience where policies are passed using adversarial strategies, that required inclusion but the culture did not change. . . We need some new commitment to the oneness of humankind and build our relationships by who we are and not our age.”¹⁴

Groups of young people seeking to change and sustain engagement with major institutions of power need to be open to dialogue with adults in leadership positions before introducing any agenda.¹⁵ Youth ought to schedule time with adults in power just to get to know them and develop mutual understanding and respect. These meetings can offer an opportunity to learn about the inner workings of an institution, find out what pressing challenges it faces, and understand the needs and goals of the organization. During these meetings young people also ought to take the time to educate adult leaders about young people’s aspirations for and concerns about the community. Again, this information should not be framed as an appeal. Rather, these informal interactions are for relationship building and information exchange which lay an important foundation for future engagement.

Adult-led institutions also have a responsibility to develop these relationships. Young people must be counted as active citizens and contributors, not show pieces and tokens to elicit good press and a positive reputation for institutions. Adults are eager to treat young people as regular citizens when denying a request and erecting the barrier of the glass ceiling, but for some reason young people are treated with “kid gloves” when asked to participate in the more benign ways with which institutions

in power are comfortable. In order to eliminate the glass ceiling, adults should treat young people as equal participants in civic life during every phase of the relationship. Adults in power must approach relationships with young people with an intention to increase the transparency, accessibility and inclusivity of the organizations and agencies that serve the public. As a result, they need to foster the systems, policies and practices that can support young people's interaction and participation in systems.¹⁶ Young people are often discounted as consumers of public goods and services, but the reality is they are consumers of education, transportation, media, recreation, public safety, and almost every other service adults consume. Furthermore, young people's buying power and influence in family decisions are significant. They are powerful and valuable people. With this in mind, adults ought to be invested in building relationships based on these factors, not on those that serve only their own agendas.

After a sound relationship is built, there will be a difference in the culture of the institution. Adults in leadership positions will be accustomed to having young people around. Once trust and mutual respect on both sides is gained, young people and adults can come together as equals to discuss the community and changes which might make sense for all residents. A young person from Ypsilanti demonstrates the importance of this strategy by reflecting on the group's experience with the city council: "Change is not in a month or even a year. It takes many years. But if you stick with it and invest in it, eventually they will listen and take you seriously. It took us four years to get a meeting, but then we got it. . . . At first, when we gave a presentation they thought we were cute. And they didn't care. Then we kept going back. After the last one, they realized we have been coming for years. They realized that we are serious and want change."¹⁷ After building relationships, both groups will have a deep understanding of what the other has to offer. This is the direct opposite of young people asking something only of adults. As such, adults will have no ability or reason to stop youth action and engagement; they will have a more intimate understanding of what it really means to have youth as resources. Taking these steps could contribute to a culture shift not only in how these institutions work with young people but also in how they work with the broader public.

Do Not Rely Solely on Individual Champions

Even after young people build a relationship with several adults in institutions of power, they need to enlist the support of other champions. Individual champions are incredibly important to help advance the work by highlighting the skills, knowledge and ability of young people; nevertheless, this type of "over reliance" does not present a sustainable strategy to effect change. Individuals in positions of power hold only temporary power. When they leave their positions, or when leadership elsewhere in an organization changes, so too does that person's ability to provide support and access to young people.

Furthermore, champions of youth engagement often have a more difficult role to play than champions of other types of citizen engagement. Champions of youth campaigns must first agree to support the voices of young people and encourage others that young people, despite their age, have the ability and interest to inform public decision making and debate. Beyond that, these champions must



also believe in the issues and answers of young people. This creates a complexity of supporting youth engagement as both a means to address issues in community as well as an end in and of itself to increase the civic health of an institution or community.

When supporting youth engagement as an end, young people are bound to address many issues. The chances that a champion will agree with every idea and issue supported by young people are slim. Young people's efforts could be severely undermined should a champion of youth voice no longer side with young people on specific issues. Vesting too much power in these champions—just as is the case when young people are “granted power” from adults—will inadvertently decrease young people's ability to use their own power to achieve change.

A better strategy is to engage champions not just as advocates for young people and the issues they address, but rather as champions for more inclusive and transparent systems within public institutions. This broadens the issue in such a way that champions will not need to stand with young people on every issue. In strengthening citizen involvement in democratic practices, there is room for disagreement and debate.

Along a similar vein, as young people build relationships with institutions of power, they must talk with supporters and non-supporters alike. If youth-led campaigns ignore the value of strategic alliances with internal institutional players with a variety of viewpoints, young people will spend too much time talking and cheering with the people who agree with them and an equally expansive time arguing with people who disagree with them. Confrontation may still occur in negotiations. Young people still need to be well versed in the various strategies necessary to agitate institutions from the outside. However, by making an early commitment to building relationships, these tactics can be seen as a last resort. With a deeper understanding of the people and processes embedded in an institution of power, young people will have a more nuanced appreciation of when and how to use conflict. Rather than using this potentially divisive and confrontational approach, young people will be well-positioned to change the script by building relationships with champions and adversaries alike. While conversations with those in disagreement may be more difficult, this approach can help young people create change through collaboration rather than confrontation.

Understand and Assess Readiness for Youth Engagement

Perhaps one of the most important steps youth and youth supporting organizations must take before attempting to increase youth engagement in institutions is understanding and assessing the readiness of those institutions. Unlike efforts to increase adult citizen engagement in institutions of power, increasing youth engagement requires convincing adults of the ability, skills and knowledge of young people. Without adults in power appreciating this, they will never listen to the ideas and positions of young people.

Assessing readiness for youth engagement includes examining the current structures, practices, policies and attitudes that may or may not support youth engagement. This can be accomplished

through observation, interviews, and researching an institution's past interactions with young people. This step can prepare young people for the reception they can expect for their ideas and contributions. Before approaching an issue area, they may need to do more work to explain why youth engagement is important for an institution. They may need to spend more time building relationships without agendas for change. They may even need to be prepared for no one agreeing to meet with them in the beginning.

It is important to note that this last scenario is not a glass ceiling; there was never an invitation or expectation on the part of adults for young people to engage. It would be difficult to continue trying to convince one institution or adult in power that young people are of value when their tolerance level is so low. When this situation arises, young people can rely on their creativity to engage with other institutions of power and use a combination of strategies for change to demonstrate their own power and effectiveness. Eventually, this may increase the likelihood that skeptical adults will change their opinions of young people, in turn increasing their readiness to listen to and engage with young people. However, this alone is not enough to ensure success, and may in fact lead to a glass ceiling down the line.

Anderson Williams recommends that we “acknowledge that [a glass ceiling] is a possibility anywhere, anytime. We need to prepare young people for this early and have it become part of the strategy. We need to be ready for [adults in power] to shift gears.”¹⁸

Readiness for youth engagement must be understood and appreciated at all levels of an institution. Regardless of an organization's starting point, or the changing perceptions of individuals, it is absolutely necessary to understand the full context of change in which young people are working to avoid glass ceilings.

Use Multiple Strategies in Tandem to Create Change

A glass ceiling is most prominent when the efforts of young people are too focused on one strategy to create change. Often this strategy is directed at internal changes to an organization or institution. Furthermore, the strategy operates inside that institution—for instance, a formal advisory role or supported research study. These strategies are important, but they cannot stand alone and be successful. They must be intertwined with outside strategies, such as organizing, media, philanthropy and entrepreneurship.

By using various strategies to affect a single institution or policy, young people are no longer subject to the whims of the adult leadership in that institution. Furthermore, these more comprehensive, representative and complex strategies can foster more cultural change in communities. These citizen-centered approaches can lead to more sustained and effective change.¹⁹ Young people are able to gain momentum and assert pressure in ways that do not rely on the existing institution's policies and procedures. As a result, leaders in the original target institution will no longer see young people as a dispensable asset.

On an even larger scale, when young people take a systemic approach to community change, they have an increased chance of getting youth voice in the “water supply” of a community. Once youth voice is prevalent in community institutions, young people will have created access and opportunities to affect each of these institutions. It is especially powerful when the efforts to work with and in each institution stem from a united group of young people. Recognizing that each young person—just like each adult—will have different ideas, talents, interests and goals, a community working together creates a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. When this system-wide approach is employed, young people build on their strength in such a way that they create a groundswell of youth-led community engagement.

Track and Embrace Cultural Shifts as Success

There is no doubt that cultural shifts in a community or organization are difficult to track and especially difficult to claim as an outcome of any one group’s work. However, at its core, youth engagement—just like any other movement—is as much about cultural shifts as it is about policy and structural changes. Without widespread behavior change, policy and structural changes will not be effective. Alexie Torres-Fleming explains, “Bottom line [is] the legacy that we leave when we do this work is not going to be new laws. These things are great, but are temporary. The real legacy is the sense and belief that we as a citizenry have power. That understanding of success fundamentally changes a young person and how they move and navigate.”²⁰

Youth engagement has several outcomes. When done well, youth engagement changes young people, adults, institutions and entire communities. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize that when young people “fail” to achieve policy or structural changes, they may have still contributed to wider cultural change through indirect success and breakthroughs in communities. The efforts of young people in one campaign may have inspired a different city agency or institution to embrace youth voice in their decision making process. These are the longer-lasting youth leadership and community outcomes that must be claimed as progress even if they were not the original goals of a given campaign.

Acknowledging such wins does not suggest that we let young people “off the hook” and set a lower bar for success. Kenny Holdsman adds, “Young people should be pleased, but not satisfied, when they make incremental change before being rebuffed by adult-led institutions. Structural change takes time and it begins with small fractures in the glass ceiling. I am hopeful that just as women, people of color, and gays and lesbians have galvanized a movement for change in our country, so too will this generation of innovative and fiery youth activists.”²¹

Low or soft expectations can also be damaging. The broadened definition of success should not be about more boards having young people; cosmetic youth engagement is never enough. Robert Long suggests, “We do not have to lower standards to have youth involved. We can change what is going on by getting clearer on the intent. No only should we not lower standards, but instead we should be adding standards.”²²

By embracing the accomplishments of young people in shifting the culture of communities, we begin to circumvent the glass ceiling. It is only then that we may finally begin to realize the true impact of youth engagement . . .





By embracing the accomplishments of young people in shifting the culture of communities, we begin to circumvent the glass ceiling. It is only then that we may finally begin to realize the true impact of youth engagement efforts, even when—on the surface—they do not achieve their intended goals. One young person's reflection on the Nashville example highlights this different perspective of success. "The day after we released the report, when it was all over newspapers and TV, and after a few months later, we are still hearing things about education. What's going on in education is the new hot thing. That's a wonderful thing, now that it's started from what we did with our report. The whole fall-out from the report—you know if it's causing this much of a stir-up, there really has to be something good in the report. The stir-up was a tough process. . . . But at the end of the day, they have to respect what we were contributing."²³

By highlighting these kinds of outcomes it may be possible to increase the demand and respect for youth-led community change and engagement. This strategy will not only prevent future glass ceilings, but circumvent those that may have blocked young people from achieving a specific policy or structural change goal.

"...a glass ceiling is a possibility anywhere, anytime. We need to prepare young people for this early and have it become part of the strategy."

- Anderson Williams

As individuals and organizations and as young people and adults we must confront the glass ceiling to youth engagement. It exists, and by naming it, understanding it, and preparing young people to address it, the glass ceiling can be shattered. This paper is meant to begin a conversation among youth engagement supporters and non supporters alike to identify and deal with this barrier to youth civic engagement. Some first steps to break through this barrier include understanding how we can best redefine the relationship between youth, adult and institutional power. Also, we must define success across all outcomes of youth engagement, rather than just the outcomes associated with policy and structural changes. Recognizing, claiming, and capitalizing on the community-wide cultural effects of youth engagement will help youth and their allies break through, circumvent and destroy the glass ceiling.

- ¹ Adeola Oredola, interview, December 17, 2007.
- ² Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A.K., Topitzes, D. & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in Decision-Making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations*. Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council (www.atthetable.org).
- ³ Hal Cato, interview, December 17, 2007.
- ⁴ Kahne, J. and Westheimer, J. (2004) What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, Volume 41 No. 2, 237-269.
- ⁵ Josh Todd, interview, January 10, 2008.
- ⁶ Kahne, J. and Westheimer, J. (2002, Aug) "The Limits of Efficacy: Educating Citizens for a Democratic Society" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston Marriott Copley Place, Sheraton Boston & Hynes Convention Center, Boston, Massachusetts* Online <.PDF> Retrieved 2008-03-07 from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p65117_index.html
- ⁷ Adeola Oredola, interview, December 17, 2007.
- ⁸ Kenneth Holdsmann, interview, October 16, 2008.
- ⁹ Adeola Oredola, interview, December 17, 2007.
- ¹⁰ Gibson, C. (2006) *Citizens at the Center: A New Approach to Civic Engagement*, The Case Foundation.
- ¹¹ Anderson Williams, interview, January 7, 2008.
- ¹² Russell, C.A., LaFleur, J.J., & Cooc, N. (2008, April). *Youth Voice in Action: Evaluation of the Youth Innovation Fund*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.
- ¹³ Alexie Torres-Fleming, interview, January 9, 2008.
- ¹⁴ Robert F. Long, interview, January 8, 2008.
- ¹⁵ Zeldin, S., Camino, L. & Calvert, M. (2003) Toward an Understanding of Youth in Community Governance: Policy Priorities and Research Directions. *Social Policy Report*, 17,3.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Russell, C.A., LaFleur, J.J., & Cooc, N. (2008, April). *Youth Voice in Action: Evaluation of the Youth Innovation Fund*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.
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- ²¹ Kenneth Holdsmann, interview, October 16, 2008.
- ²² Robert F. Long, interview, January 8, 2008.
- ²³ Russell, C.A., LaFleur, J.J., & Cooc, N. (2008, April). *Youth Voice in Action: Evaluation of the Youth Innovation Fund*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.

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About AED

Founded in 1961, AED is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to solving critical social problems and building the capacity of individuals, communities and institutions to become more self-sufficient. AED works in all the major areas of human development, with a focus on improving education, health and economic opportunities for the least advantaged in the United States and developing countries around the world.

AED believes young people can and must play a significant role in creating more vibrant, equitable, and healthy communities. From service-learning and youth organizing to youth media and philanthropy, AED gives young people the chance to make a real difference in the world while creating the systems and structures needed for future generations to become—and stay—involved in the civic and political lives of their communities. With deep experience in leadership development, education, community organizing, and non-profit management, AED works at all levels—local, state, regional, and national—and with a variety of constituencies—grassroots organizations and community leaders, schools and districts, municipal governments, state agencies, national non-profits, colleges and universities, grantmakers, and the media—to develop and implement a strategic approach to youth civic engagement in the United States.



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