

LOOKING BACK, TURNING FORWARD

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Leadership Reflection & Planning Conversations: the words of 9 student leaders

From the desk of the Ohio Student Environmental Coalition

compiled and published January 12, 2009

oh-sec.org



: Theory : Action : Reflection : Theory : Action : Reflection : Theory : Action : Reflection : Theory : Action : Reflection :

- - PROBLEMS - -

-What problems is your group addressing? (Be as specific or as broad as you like)

ON CAMPUS

--

majority of the time has been Power Vote, trying to register people and sign the pledge
we're so far behind environmentally
the university has no real environmental plans
replace styrofoam trays in the cafeteria with something else
the two goals for this year were a green fee and glass recycling back on campus, and both of those have been taken over by student council
they say there's no money for it, so the green fee would help
making our campus more sustainable is important
trying to get composting at the school
the school is doing construction and we're making sure it's sustainable
all the things our campus is doing that we could easily change, and the things that might be more difficult but would still be worth it, like where our energy comes from and how much we waste

OFF CAMPUS

--

AMP-Ohio coal plant
Wendy's campaign, reforming corporate practices
coal, energy, climate issues
climate issues
global warming/climate change
neighborhood pollution, rising asthma rates and cancer rates
we have local potential with windmills
environmental justice issues, things that are more relevant to daily life, specifically to low-income people and people of color
something at the city and statewide level with politics
there are a lot of environmental problems and the main way to get things through is through politics and grassroots political action
deforestation, which is a huge contributor to global warming

ORGANIZATIONAL

--

a lack of time, people don't want to put time into things
getting people to commit to do things
it's difficult to get people committed to planning and taking on leadership
passing more responsibility to members, get them more directly involved in the process
there's a lack of motivation, people don't want to take time to do things
having enough people at meetings
developing new opportunities for people, making things appealing and compelling
team building
bond some more in the group
we had a holiday costume dance party just for fun, brought in a DJ to a lecture hall and had a good turnout
have a vegan cook come in and show how to make some stuff just for fun
we split people into groups and decided on two leaders to each
there's a lack of campaign strategy and understanding of types of leadership internally – keeping up inertia and addressing disorganization in our group
we're trying to address a lot of things at once
it can be disheartening, you have to be patient, you have to see the greater things
our goals were often unclear, which made it hard to keep motivating ourselves
I don't think we did enough to educate ourselves, which leads to other problems like starting something other people have already done
we've been dealing with avoiding duplication, that also deals with educating ourselves
we're so new that it makes sense for us to be trying to figure things out, but we've been flighty/flaky, moving from issue to issue because of an ill-defined scope or focus
we didn't quite know where the line was between open and flexible vs. having a path and goal and following it, and didn't know how to find that except by trial and error
it's hard to define what's effective – are we effective if we accomplish our goals or get institutionalized, if that means we have sacrificed our roots or original agenda? or are we effective if we're stubborn and comprehensive and true?
it's a challenge if you don't see immediate results, people caring about what you're doing
money is a big problem, in the sense that initially it's too intimidating to abandon old ways, common practices

SYSTEMS/INSTITUTIONS/POWER

--

since all the classes are inside and they're talking about things, it's hard to actually get people out and show them stuff first hand and get them interested

high schools are set up to prepare students to live how the adults want them to, by force rather than guidance

there are a lot of problems with group structures and hierarchical leadership

in terms of green-collar jobs, we were trying to focus on environmental and economic and social justice issues which also then encompasses racial justice issues and other groups who are generally and thus often unfairly marginalized from the gains of our economy and the environmental movement

there's this absurd overlap between all the bad products of our economy and all the good things, like employment and food

a lot of the gains are not accessible in the same places where all these negative byproducts are being concentrated

we tried to raise awareness and bridge race and class issues between the college and the town, which is some microcosm of issues that are happening nationally

getting companies or larger bodies to address these issues and make positive changes using privilege and access to resources for positive change

student groups have a big advantage, but there's also a disadvantage because you don't get respect in return from around the table

other bodies don't take these issues very seriously

corporations and people in power shouldn't be so high up, dissociated from the people

I don't like when people act like they can walk all over people, they don't respect us or see us as serious people

there's a disconnect between college kids and what's going on in the rest of the world for most people we've established ourselves, but some still don't know what we're doing

a lot of adults don't feel like youth can't take leadership

CONNECTIONS AND SEPARATIONS

--

with high school work, there's not a connection to the issues, they don't have concrete ideals to work towards

people are pretty apathetic about nature, we're trying to help them see a connection to it a lot of students stay within the campus bubble, they don't really engage in the nature that's around, like the river or the parks

there's a lack of cohesion between adults and students, they're working for rather than with the students, and being really patronizing

overall negative responses from campus and not being able to get people involved, either administration or other students

we've still been trying to figure out how to convince people that this is important and what they can do to implement change

overcome social barriers in the group – alternative kids, Chinese kids, etc., trying to get them to mingle and go outside of their usual groups

we work with lots of different groups

we connected with other nearby schools to check out their recycling, and found they don't have anything, students there were starting up programs for recycling themselves, planning to make instructional videos for their peers

sometimes we sound arrogant or pretentious, it's hard not to

-What is causing these problems? What are the roots?

INDIVIDUALS

--

it's also a matter of taking initiative, people would just prefer someone else doing it for them – somebody has to have some passion about it and go ahead themselves
it's difficult to ask people to change or make an effort, it makes it sound like people were doing things wrong before, but we have to get over that
people aren't taking it upon themselves to get involved
some leaders have lots of influence but don't do the day to day work
we're just turned off to everything other than our own lives
it's a matter of convenience and familiarity
older people don't get concerned about too much, they're too focused on jobs and stuff
people being racist and greedy

SOCIALIZATION

--

it's just not something I've been around, environmentalism hasn't been on the forefront of what's going on in society until recently
we're accepting of it because we've grown up with it
a lot of people who have the power to do something just don't know about it
we just weren't raised to conserve anything
nobody's been thinking about repercussions of our actions, cutting down whole forests
people think the rivers are just dirty, they don't know what's available to them
high school kids aren't exposed to the right information, the right experiences
schools teach kids to be part of the system instead of part of the world around them
there's a lack of awareness of the scope of issues, people realizing if things impact them
you don't care about something until you know it, until you give it a name, like identifying trees
mundane things that are really ubiquitous in everyone's lives, that are small but common and don't get noticed, and don't get changed
people don't think about consequences of their practices, and nobody's reminding them
this is something we never thought about, we always had what we needed and never thought about where it's coming from, and now people are following the chain back
the people that are doing it try to keep it out of the media
it's not the same mentality to talk with someone who watches greenwashing on tv versus someone who really values the environment in a different way

SYSTEMS

--

I don't know
that's one of the things that you think you have an answer, but then you realize that's a symptom of something
it's just the way the system is set up

MONEY & ECONOMICS

--

it's also a matter of cost, and how that would affect normal functioning
in terms of coal, there's a power dynamic where in a capitalist economy it's expected that we have the cheapest price for energy without factoring in oppression to the environment and humans
the cost is only in profit and not in lives and the planet
there's also a terrible power dynamic in how the power plants are placed in communities that don't have a strong of a voice in terms of money, social standard, hierarchy
the people that are being oppressed by the coal companies don't have the support or time enough to speak up, at least not yet
our economic system and the way it has been handled, current inequalities have perpetuated past inequalities
there are little things they could do on energy efficiency, but they haven't gotten any attention for the last 50 years
part of the problem is people are getting overzealous with development, they're thinking more about completely new buildings instead of revamping old ones
money issues, not having the resources to do things
I'm always asked “how much is this going to cost”
planned obsolescence and perceived obsolescence, everything has to be shiny and pretty
companies are so huge and so not mom and pop, not looking out for the best interests of everyone in the community, that's a huge difference in how I want the world to work
money comes along because a company wants to be successful and powerful, whatever that means
it's capitalism in a nutshell, why would they want to change their company if it's not going to result in power and money?

CULTURE

--

we've got the idea that natural resources are all profit, we can just pump out as much as we can and forget about regulations or find a way around them, pay someone off

there was always more, we're a throw away culture

we're a society on the move

we don't have any roots, and don't want any, just pick up and go wherever, so we don't take time to appreciate a place, it's natural history, how it's evolved, etc., this is a big problem in the campus area obviously

the idea of progress, the school keeps building new buildings but doesn't pay attention to old buildings

there's been a bad connotation associated with the whole movement, that it was a lower quality or dirty

there's this barrier about why this stuff is important, why it benefits them, so you get into stuff that doesn't have monetary value and it's hard to tap into that, to talk to someone holistically about land, it's not so relevant to them so it's hard to make them care

it's how people look at things, what is it that they think makes them happy? What I look for is very different, where some people really think a new car will make them happy, it ties in to what people value as happiness and success and valuable

I know I value other things more important compared to maybe a CEO, and my idea of success is very different from someone else's

people value things in terms of money, inherent value of things is different for people

- - MOTIVATION AND ROLES - -

-Why do you do it? Why is doing this work in your own self-interest?

PERSONAL

--

I'm interested in being a school's sustainability coordinator or something like that

I actually foresee myself making a future out of what I'm doing now

I tried to develop taking into appreciation the simpler things in life, which don't cloud us with distractions and confusion of what you really value and work for

I personally have such a strong connection to the natural world in all senses

all these issues are really important and they really speak to me

it's a personal choice for my life

I'm interested in forestry

health care is a really big issue for me, so framing it in terms of health issues was compelling for me

it's important to me to make sure everyone has access to clean water

PEOPLE/EXPERIENCES

--

Van Jones

green jobs are an incredible idea, they make so much sense, in terms of taking something that addresses the system we have right now it offers a multi-faceted understanding of the problems

green jobs was this amazing thing where I didn't have to pick and choose between issues

I had a friend who worked for the Sierra Student Coalition and it sounded interesting

being brought up how I was, being appreciative of things

my family is a very labor-oriented family, my dad did union organizing, and we generally sympathize with the side of the workers

when I went to power shift 07, it gave me a purpose; before I was doing all the other stuff because everyone else was doing it

once people connect with nature, they'll be a lot more willing to take care of it, that was true for me

THE COMMUNITY; IT FEELS GOOD

--

I love the community

the people are really cool, so on the surface that's a big motivator

good to see a lot of people excited with similar interests

I love working with people that are passionate about what they're doing and the world they live in without oppressing others and the world around them

the active community is supportive of each other because we're working towards the same goals

going on adventures

I love being outside and going on trips is a lot of fun

this is important, it makes me happy

it makes me feel good

it makes me feel better because I know I'm doing something

I think it's great, the feeling of actually making a difference, rather than just sitting back

to see things getting done through your own work is very fulfilling, that's something humans in general enjoy, to see the final product and sit back and say I did that myself

it's tangible and something can actually happen and you know what you're actually working for

I wanted something more hands on and have a lot of people involved

it's embedded in me so I have more of a purpose, my goal is to be happy in the sense that I'm doing something not only for myself but for the earth

I think that society today really needs a connection with nature because I think sometimes without nature, well people need that to take a break and relax and reflect, and nature provides a really good opportunity to do that

RESPONSIBILITY

--

cuz everyone should, and they don't

I just feel like there's not enough people doing anything

It seems like after the last club leader left, nobody else was going to do it, and I've always thought if nobody else is going to do something, I should do it

I prefer not to be the person doing things myself, but it's a necessity and I thought I need to take it upon myself

I prefer not to be a leader, but if I need to be a leader, I will

it's something that needs to be done and taking a leadership role just seems to make sense, to make sure more will get done

things like this aren't always in our own best interest, people have responsibilities

I learned about stuff in classes, and now feel personally responsible to go do something about it

if you're aware of this, and understand that it's part of people's lives, you have a responsibility to make it part of your life in a way that positively impacts that situation

I see what's going on and I just don't wanna be associated with that, everyone talks about how everyone hates America and how young people don't do anything, and I don't wanna be associated with that

in my lifetime I'm working towards what I want to see changed in the world rather than what I want to have for my life in 20 years, and realizing the problems we're having and working to find and implement solutions for them now – living in the present

because I want future generations to enjoy what I've had, or to enjoy better

& JUSTICE

--

especially when you have the time and the money and the awareness, it's a responsibility it gives me an opportunity to take being privileged and try and use it for the betterment of society and the planet

it's not just the polar bears, it's also people's lives that are being impacted right now by pollution, it's really powerful to have a fuller understanding and evidence of that

there's a social justice aspect as well, we haven't been involved in that so far but I'd like to do more with that

one side of the river is the more affluent white neighborhood and the other side is the African American side, one hope we have is that the river can unite rather than divide

-Where do you fit into the bigger story, to the movement? How does this make you feel?

SPECIFIC ROLES

--

I don't know

starting small, in conjunction with other people in other communities, we'll build up to a larger consciousness

starting with the youth, they take that with them, and it just grows from there

whenever I can do something I try, just trying to get my feet wet, get as much knowledge as I can on getting something done

I'm like the public relations person on campus, because when I talk people usually listen and respect what I say

people always follow up and ask me – what was that thing you were talking about or essay that you wrote, etc?

I think agitation with a goal is important, not just agitating to bug

trying to motivate people and get them involved, trying to educate people

trying to live as sustainable as I can myself

doing a favor for the community, reminding people how important it is to be environmentally conscious

somebody needs to provide information and plant more of a consciousness in the general location that I'm in

I guess you could say I'm an organizer

I'm the organizer of a campus environmental group

a small community organizer

I consider myself more of an organizer than an activist, I help people to be active more than I actually take action

I'm an organizer, in my group we have different roles, but none of us are overarchingly above or below, we use leadership based more on specific abilities than on people's title

I feel like my current position in the movement is mainly being an organizer, an educator, and just helping make people aware of what's going on

I'm a youth organizer, if I'm not working with youth I'm the youth representative

an agitator, we were trying to stir things up

a connecting point or networker

I bring people together

my main focus is school

a group member

maybe a go-fer

I'm an activist, though I think of that more as a given

FLEXIBLE ROLES

--

I don't see myself as a leader, I don't identify with that, so my role is less set

I try to approach it in a way that makes sense to people

I have different niches depending on the situation

depending on the need in any given sub-group of the movement(s), it has to change

I get leeway to be both directions, to be serious and get down to business, and be silly and have fun and put things out there, not be so stiff all the time

with racial issues, privilege and whiteness plays a role, especially in environmental justice work

my role is versatile

on campus I'm covering a lot of areas because things just kind of fell into place for where I can be influential, from having an in with Deans and the President, being involved in different activities and groups on campus

at our state conference, it felt like nobody cared about environmental justice as I think about it on their radar, or definitely not really green jobs

in my local group, I try and provide legitimacy and education, articulate ideas, and push the group to stick with ideas before moving on

in student groups, people I've worked with are more or less demographically like me, so I'm oriented towards helping people understand how privilege impacts their actions

in my community, I'm a student, so my role focuses more around resources I have through the college, and how this is a time for me to do things like research and learning; I'm still figuring this out because I haven't done enough of it, but I can connect to larger resources of the college and the country, because I'm not from the area and am in some ways more affiliated with this national movement

in the movement as I understand it from large gatherings, part of my role is to be a responsible and contributing member in a way that is neither not doing anything because I'm afraid of being privileged, or stepping on other people because I have the resources or access or time because of privilege

as I would like to get involved, which would include me not as a student but just as a person, it would be in more real world places like unions or my neighborhood or business or government, working with them

STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

--

working on a more personal level

I'm better working with small groups than large groups

I'm not good at motivational speaking

I've been doing a lot of learning and I wanna do a little more acting on what I learned

I would like to get something concrete accomplished

I would like to progress into being able to take it up a notch with environmental activism

HOW IT FEELS

--

I just feel like I'm doing what I can, what most people should do

it makes me feel like there's some hope for the future

it also makes me nervous as to whether or not I'm getting stuff done on time

it makes me feel like if I'm not doing something for the club, I'm wasting time

it's a productive nervousness, it makes me functionally engaged in something

if I didn't have this work to do I would feel unhappy with myself

it makes me feel happy and productive

I enjoy doing it and like working towards things that I feel are important

working with people, especially for an environmental cause, is really important to me, it makes me feel fulfilled and I enjoy doing it

a good feeling

one little group isn't gonna accomplish much, but I'm amazed there's as much networking as there is, it's kind of mind blowing

it makes me feel strategic because at this point in my life I can relate to a lot of different groups, and it's useful to have someone who's still learning but also has experience and wisdom in organizing

it's beneficial because everyone can draw support off each other, share ideas for fundraising and stuff

it's been kind of exciting, we made this "corporate vampire" puppet for power vote around Halloween and that was fun

it's a lot of fun

I like being able to have fun and do things, that you couldn't do in the lobbying business

I like the role of helping put things out there to people

I like it because talking to people and building relationships is good, they tell me new things and I tell them new things and they tell other people

- - REVIEW ACTIONS - -

-What has your group done to address the problems and their roots?

CAMPAIGN ACTIONS

--

the rally that we had during Board of Trustee weekend, administrators and faculty and students still talk to me about it, it was better than any pizza party, it really stood out

the more effort that we put in the more they see students want things to happen

when we were in a meeting with the President and the Provost we were really prepared and it made them think and made them scared a little

the work we've been doing with the curriculum committee has been really good, the faculty involved have been doing lots of extra research, because they have personal interest and care about us

we've done a really good job with the President's Climate Commitment

I talked to a local development project and got them on board with with energy efficiency and green building, and got some media coverage of that

a call-in day for a corporate campaign

getting lots of Power Vote pledges, we reached our goal

OUTREACH

--

I think we identified a good way to start to understand the problems and their manifestations in our community, by doing a listening project

setting up tables

recruiting students to help out

what we did in the fall was just building up to where we are now

we really increased our group's size

the group has done a good job growing, having different committees worked for us

connecting with a local church

by networking and coming together, we can learn from each other and gain resources, ideas, and involvement through coalitions and open spaces

EDUCATION

--

getting people to know that there's an alternative, like green jobs and energy alternatives

spreading knowledge

just addressing the disconnection between products and their origins

we're good at putting up flyers and stuff

we have educated our group members about the issues we're working on

internal education, which we're starting to apply

we are more about discussion, but that's starting to change, people are realizing that education and discussion aren't enough, that you have to follow through

we might find stuff interesting but the large student body isn't gonna care, we got to a point where education is just part of the procedure to get something done

EVENTS

--

when Elisa Young came to speak

Focus the Nation last year was great because so many people were required to go a mountaintop removal awareness festival and engaging all the incoming freshmen

we had a concert, and planning for Mountain Justice Spring Break is going good

helping out with the metro parks system

rivers awareness day

took people on trips

GROUP DEVELOPMENT

--

questioning things about ourselves and the movement, and how we fit in; that was good, but would have been better while doing other things at the same time

we've reassessed what is strategic, and we're starting to realize that the issues we want to work on aren't necessarily the most tangible or the most needed

we thought about what we wanted to accomplish, and going through that process made things go more smoothly

I haven't been entirely overjoyed with actual solutions, but we've worked on the organization, and building towards solutions

involving more group members in the process has been a positive change, they get more connected to the issues and gain leadership and involvement

keeping things pretty organized, the leaders kept things rolling

keeping people involved, that's been a success

making sure to keep members involved and actually have them do stuff

-How did the fall close out for your group? Are we closer to our campaign goals?

YEP

--

hell yeah

we had a party

in some ways, we left off very positively for next semester

people already know what to expect when they come back from break

we did a Power Vote debrief, providing an ending note

we got into working groups to start our projects after power vote, to start doing research and come up with fresh ideas and stay in touch over break

NOT REALLY

--

realistically we're not nearly there on our actual objectives and goals, there's a lot more work to do

we're in the same spot

I kinda feel stagnant right now because we haven't done anything really big recently

I don't think we're closer to our goals because we haven't had any movement with the decision makers in our campaign

we left off talking about our February event, but we kind of left off in the middle

we're somewhat disconnected now, and need to come together for after break

we closed off on an awkward note

IT DEPENDS

--

our goals have shifted a lot

I'm going to re-contact people who were coming earlier in the year

we can do more mountaintop removal work on campus

the women's studies will co-sponsor bringing Elisa Young to speak

maybe focusing on recycling so we can expand that and move past it

a couple of us are getting credit for doing research on our project this spring

we could be stronger, it's dependent on what we do next

-What do you want to do next? What's on your calendar for the rest of the year?

ACTION

--

city council meeting on the AMP-Ohio coal plant with Ohio Citizen Action

whatever OCA needs to do

focus on AMP

work on the AMP-Ohio coal plant

I would love to work with climate change and energy issues

apply for an OSEC co-chair position, and work on statewide campaigns

really getting stuff done, getting at the heart of things and not just passing stuff out

I'm glad the election is over so we can do more than just Power Vote

getting a meeting with our campaign target, and if not then getting in their faces more

action, education, negotiation, and recruiting people

I'd like to help set up small wind turbines around town

make it easier to have bikes on campus, maybe bike rentals or bike lockers

follow up on recycling and Green Fee, make sure something actually happens

a petition for campus sustainability

INFORMATION

--

I wanna keep talking with people during break

do more research about the social effects of the river and apply that

spreading information about bike trails and bus routes, maybe at orientation next year

we may continue a listening project in the community

I'm doing my own research over break

I'm doing a winter term project on it

a for-credit course spring semester

the February global warming teach in, more community based than just the college

teach in for earth week, though we haven't talked about that much yet

CONNECTIONS

--

getting stores involved

the Ohio Citizen Action connection will be helpful but it's all up in the air right now

help high school groups and do summits with them, teach them about leadership and campaign strategy

working with other groups in a campus coalition

PLANNING

--

we need to figure that out

we need to figure out how to integrate education, jobs training, and youth programs

make our problems into components of a solution

we're planning to have a 3-4 hour planning session for these two efforts

keep up with the campus coalition, make it into a cohesive group based on people's real interests

coalition meetings every other week

POWER SHIFT 2009

--

Power Shift

Power Shift 09

Power Shift 09

Power Shift 09

Power Shift 2009

Power shift 2009

a Power Shift organizing meeting

Power Shift outreach – need to do a lot of organizational outreach

I wanna have a big Power Shift meeting when we get back, it will be really motivating to people

OTHER EVENTS

--

Obama's inauguration, that can have a lot potential if we did something collaborative

we're doing a green week the last week of January

late Jan/early Feb is an e-waste drive on campus with prizes

spring break road trip, camping, backpacking, and checking out logging sites

getting Elisa Young to come, showing a movie and doing a presentation around Mountain Justice Spring Break

the women's studies department will co-sponsor bringing Elisa Young to speak

2 high school sustainability summits per season

some recycling event

Earth Day tree planting

occasional volunteering with Metro Parks

- - ASSESS NEEDS - -

-What does your group need at a local level - trainings, materials, restructuring, experience, information, etc?

TRAINING & INFORMATION

--

a campaign planning session

leadership seminar for the next officers, near the end of the year, May or June

leadership training

training might help – phonebanking and other skills to help provide diffuse leadership

lobbying and negotiations training/roleplay, how to approach people in power
there's a gap between how we talk to people and what people actually care about

we could benefit from sending people to conferences

activist legal rights 101

Info about bike sharing programs

green jobs training research

GROUP DEVELOPMENT

--

developing organization and accountability

leadership is really concentrated, the officers run the show

more involvement would help everyone get involved in the process, feel more ownership and be more productive

we kind of lost the connection we used to have to the city council and the community environmental group, and that was really good so we should try and get that back

STUFF

--

the stupid shit that everyone likes – the stickers and shirts or whatever

money

materials for summits, paper, pens, driving expenses

-What does the state network need in order to be strong, and supportive to local groups?

OUTSIDE SUPPORT

--

more full-time organizer types

students have a lot going on already so outside help is useful, though college students could possibly do a lot if they have more time on their hands

internships

more people involved in OSEC, and with more experience

CONFERENCES

--

hold summits twice a year

support Power Shift 09 in the spring

all the conferences are really good

bringing a lot of things together, events and gatherings and actions

SOMETHING LARGER

--

it means it's not just a bunch of hippies who think something is a good idea

OSEC offers some legitimacy, having the backing of a statewide thing is a big deal

being connecting to something larger helps local groups stand out

helping people step back and look at a bigger picture

connections to the larger world through working groups like media, the website, etc.

need to keep sight of the overall goal

collaborative projects or campaigns

concrete campaign goals and active engagement opportunities

NETWORKING

--

a regular knock on the door

ideas and resources, it's really helpful and motivating to talk to people

discussion keeps everybody going

just staying in touch

networking within OSEC, sharing ideas and experiences

information on what works on each campus

information sharing, feedback, and accountability

google group, good communications

things like this

knowing people from other groups, finding kindred spirits

Methodology

These are quotes from 9 Ohio Student Environmental Coalition leaders. Each was asked the same questions in separate conversations, lasting from 35-90 minutes each during December 2008, 7 of which were done by phone and 2 in person. The students' words were arranged by me, Mattie Reitman, OSEC Coordinator. The arrangement and categorization here is to help you read and understand the responses, while the categories are of course flexible and overlapping.

I also asked the questions. While I'm not a trained educator or interviewer, I do have a degree in Sociology and have done some work in qualitative research and door-to-door listening projects.

One of the students is in high school, 1 a college freshman, 4 college sophomores, and 3 college juniors. 5 attend public schools and 4 go to private schools. 7 grew up in Ohio and 2 are from the east coast. 7 are female-bodied and 2 male-bodied. All are white or pass for white.

Purpose

Much of the purpose of these conversations was intrinsic – that is, it gave these 9 leaders the opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings. Mattie served as an active listener while they worked through each of the questions. The calls also finished with some specific planning conversations.

Beyond this immediate gain, these conversations have led to the creation of this document, which we hope can be a tool to inform the larger youth movement for sustainability. This is here for us all to see, reflect on, and act from.

Lessons Learned

There are many lessons from this process, some simple and some deep. Here are 4 key takeaways as I see them:

- **PROBLEMS: Many of our problems are internal.**

This speaks volumes about how much these leaders are thinking not only as activists but as organizers, as people who invest in lasting and democratic organizations. It also demonstrates that our socialization, based largely on hierarchy and authoritarian decision-making, has created an enormous hurdle for us. Young people today have a lot of work to do to unlearn the lessons of our past, while we build a future worth fighting for.

- **MOTIVATIONS: We are motivated by community, responsibility, and justice.**

These students fill a number of different roles and overall they feel very good about the work that they do. Most of them describe today as a time of exploration and trying new things, with varying levels of success. All are motivated by a sense of community and responsibility, and most by justice.

- **ACTIONS: We could benefit from doing more action and strategic planning.**

Looking at the responses under “Review Actions”, there really just isn't much there. At a time when everything we hold dear is threatened, and when it's easy to seek information, find evidence of wrongdoing, and share solutions, we should transition towards strategic campaign planning and direct action. We should be physically and urgently building the world we want while resisting the ones we don't. Power Shift 2009 stands out as a significant opportunity to do just this.

- **NEEDS: Networks play an important role.**

People learn from each other and have the ability to do great things together. To the extent that it benefits local groups, we as a movement should invest more in state and regional youth-led networks – these can and should be a source of new energy and ideas, and a rewarding and productive experience for rising leaders.

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