

Reclaiming Research Camp

DataCenter's Research Training Academy

2007

We recently hosted our pilot "Community Research Camp" in the bay area as a key component to our Community Capacity building work with groups on the ground. The two-day long training academy transferred critical research skills, tools and resources to participants from various local social justice organizations so that they can better utilize research as a tool to advance their social justice agenda.

We are excited to say that the camp was a huge success!

Highlights and developments

- Why was/is this important?
Community knowledge can be made powerful, but often it becomes so because an academic institution outside the community has conducted the research, analyzed and presented it. In the process, community voices are typically diminished and community analysis and ownership is often lost. Such inequality of knowledge is part of how oppression works. The continued reality of the systemic and intentional devaluing of community knowledge and methodologies in decision-making directly influence communities' strategic decisions around how to utilize research and how to package the information as an effective ammunition to achieve intended outcomes. Information is power so long as it is deemed legitimate in the eyes of the beholder who is compelled to act as a result.
We are convinced without a doubt that the Research Camp is a crucial, powerful means through which to fulfill our goal of reclaiming "research" as a tool for liberation and to build grassroots research capacity IN the community, BY the community, FOR the community.
- Participants were able to tap into their wealth of experiences and knowledge through in-depth discussion and group strategy sessions. They emerged with the explicit recognition that they ARE the "experts" that they had been waiting for all along and even developed some guiding principals around Community based and Participatory Research (attached).
- The panel of four grassroots groups - Youth United for Community Action, All of Us or None, Mujeres Unidas y Activas, and POWER (People Organized to Win Employment Rights) - who spoke about how they strategically used information in their organizing efforts to advance their agenda
- A binder of research resources on various topics, as well as a Decolonizing Research framing toolkit, and DataCenter's own unique tools for research strategizing and planning for all participants - they were consolidated from years and years worth of research knowledge accumulated in the organization

- One of the widest range of tactical research topics in one afternoon: FOIA, public records search, profiling public and private companies, personal information, uncovering corruption, court records, the census and more.
- Rarely offered but invaluable group exercise opportunity to visualize the movement landscape with a research justice lens, and discuss strategies to navigate the terrain of imposed invisibility and marginalization to empower the community voice
- Excellent community facility equipped with on-stage projector screen, break-out rooms, auditorium, wireless
- "Amazing facilitators" (from multiple evaluations)
- Using one's own actual research need for the "developing a research project" exercise session, to put the research planning tools into use and get peer feedback
- And the best measure of success lies in the words of the participants who prevailed two whole days to go home better-equipped for the continuing struggle:
 - "[What I learned was] absolutely and immediately applicable info"
 - "Why aren't there 200 people here? This needs to reach all of our peoples out there."
 - "Love what you have done to assist community based orgs in achieving their goals."
 - "[I appreciated] the access to 'how to strategize research' in order to develop campaigns."
 - "The search tips were extremely useful I'm looking forward to using those."
 - "comfortable environment."

How often do you come across any one in the community excited about "research"?

When communities reclaim research, they are owning the very process of knowledge production and can use it to define their lives, as well as those of others around them, and finally, the institutions that impact all of us and our future generations.

We hope you will continue to support the DataCenter in our proactive pursuit of Research Justice - and the commitment to promote research as an exciting, empowering and liberating tool for our allies in the movement.

To learn more contact datacenter@datacenter.org

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