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Urban League of Central Carolinas – Civil Rights Organizations in a New Era: An Action Research Study of One Organization's Pursuit of New Strategies

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CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN A NEW ERA:

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I embarked upon this doctoral program in pursuit of a demanding academic challenge and as a nod to the critical role of higher education to black America. It has been that and more. This dissertation is the culmination of a collective journey in exploration of a number of issues and concerns for a more just society. I did not make it this far alone. Thank you to family, friends, loved ones, and colleagues, who supported me, helped me, put up with me, pushed me, and kept me whole during these years in good times and not so good times. I am ever grateful.

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Abstract

What leadership approaches and operational strategies should traditional civil rights organizations, like the Urban League, undertake to in this post-civil rights era? Specifically at the local level, what expectations must the Urban League of Central Carolinas satisfy to reassert its leadership in Charlotte? In recent years, an increasing array of social enterprises across different sectors has emerged to address failures in civil society. Civil rights organizations have long served a niche in the battle for an equitable society. However, the role of civil rights organizations in community revitalization has been diffuse and subject to fundraising constraints. I undertook this action research study to assist the Urban League of Central Carolinas in developing earned-income strategies based upon their assessment of market needs, resources and socio-political realities. The pursuit of such strategies will enable the agency to create new partnerships, renewed community engagement and greater financial sustainability. This study demonstrated the recurring nature of strategy development and execution. Interestingly, both external and internal environmental factors surfaced the following lessons: (1) Civil rights organizations remain relevant. There remains an important role for the ULCC (traditional civil rights organizations) in ameliorating the conditions of social and economic inequality; (2) Leadership by the ULCC must be fluid, vigorously asserted and continuously exercised. In addition, capacity building, engaged leadership and strategic alliances are necessary steps; (3) The depth and breadth of problems such as poverty, homelessness, and educational failures require comprehensive solutions, collaborative efforts and shared leadership; (4) Social enterprise strategies require organizational change and generative governance; and (5) Action Research practitioners must be alert to organizational readiness. Undertaking A/R efforts asks us

to pay keen attention to team development and team process as key elements of one's methodologies. This study contributes to the field of community development and social change by broadening our understanding of the ways in which community-based organizations and their leaders evolve in response to economic and social influences. Such an understanding may enable us to improve organizational practice and improve local policy decisions. The electronic version of this dissertation is available in the open-access OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd.

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Chapter I: Introduction

> People rightly seek a society in which racial prejudice no longer limits opportunities. But any close observer of American society cannot help but see the many ways in which, covertly and overtly, consciously and unconsciously, actively and as a consequence of inertia, racial differences that have long been in the making continue to thwart aspirations for an open and just society. (Bowen & Bok, 1998, p. xxiii)

Civil Rights Organizations Face New Challenges

The 2008 Presidential campaign of President-Elect Barack Obama has thrust the topics of race, diversity and inclusion to the forefront of the news. His advancement is viewed by many as an example of how far the United States has come since 1968. In 1968, the country experienced the assassinations of Robert F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) issued its report which concluded that the nation was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal" (Kerner, 1969, p. 1).

The U.S. Census Bureau's *2007 American Community Survey* estimated the total population at 301.6 million. When compared with 2000 census estimates we find the following changes in percentage population by race: White from 75.1% to 73.6%, Black from 12.3% to 12.7%, Hispanic or Latino (any race) from 12.5% to 15.1%, Asian from 3.6% to 4.5 %, American Indian and Alaskan Native from .9% to .8%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander remained at .1%, and other races from 5.5% to 6.3%. Blackwell, Kwoh, and Pastor (2002) observed: "It is projected that by the year 2050, the United States will be nearly a 'majority-minority' country – a demographic sea change" (p.22). Population projections (as percent of total) by the U.S. Census Bureau for the year 2050 by race and Hispanic origin are as follows: white alone (72.1%), black alone (14.6%), Asian alone (8.0%), all other races (5.3%), Hispanic of any race (24.4%) and white alone, not Hispanic (50.1%). Lastly, 2004 Census

projections indicated that children under the age of nineteen would represent the fastest growing age segments of our population for the period 2010 to 2050.

The ubiquitous presence of African-American pop culture icons, the emergence of women and minorities in the upper echelons of corporate America, and the broadening acceptance of workforce diversity might suggest that our society has reached a post-racial era. Such claims may be wishful thinking. Commenting on social and economic inequities in a 2002 interview, Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, foresaw a coming period where those concerned about social equity and healthy communities would need to craft an entirely different framework for the long haul "a framework that would require people to mobilize around an agenda to tackle the over-arching political economic issues and result in a new political paradigm based upon human rights, social equity and nationwide access to human development opportunities" (Alperovitz, 2002, p. 50).

In *Debating Race with Michael Eric Dyson*, Dyson recounts a panel discussion with scholars Gary Orfield and Arturo Vargas on topics including race and ethnicity that was later broadcast on "Conversations from Wingspread" moderated by journalist Mara Tapp. As a part of this discussion, Gary Orfield observed,

> We are going through a huge demographic change; the largest of any major democracy…There are tremendous inequities in our society today, [measured] by race and by poverty. We have the most unequal distribution of income and opportunity of any major democracy…We think it will all work out automatically, and it won't. And we have to face up to that. We have not cured the problems of our history. (Dyson, 2007, p. 6)

Arturo Vargas responded,

> The defining issue, I would say, is power. And how do we share power? How do we shift power from one group to another? Or do we have to shift? Does somebody have to lose in order to win? How do we share political power, how do we share economic power? I think there's an incredible discomfort today in communities – not just white

communities, but African American communities, Latino communities – about this change in demography. (p. 6)

Since the 1970's, we have witnessed African Americans enjoy access to opportunities in education, housing, employment and other areas that heretofore were unavailable. Much of the credit for this progress must go to the efforts of the Black political organizations of the Civil Rights movement. However if we are honest in our appraisal, we will recognize that Black America was not the only beneficiary or participant in these societal changes. Yet these organizations and their leadership face questions about their continued relevance in today's environment. Voices from within and outside of these organizations now ask whether they are out of touch and no longer effective. At a time when the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" continues to grow in general the same is true within the African American community. The advancement of the Black middle class and stagnation of the Black poor has become increasingly a point of contention. And yet, Hamilton and Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda of African American Organizations since the New Deal* (1992) took a historical view of the NAACP and NUL and found that "these two civil rights groups have always understood the existence of two agendas: social welfare and civil rights and they have attempted to deal with both" (p. 436). It appears that the unrest is rooted in the ability of these organizations to define appropriate and effective strategies for the times.

Two recent articles highlighted the complexities that confront these organizations and their leadership. "Black in America: The Study" by Aisha Jefferson (2008) for blackenterprise.com reports on the "Black American Today" study conducted by Radio One Inc. Radio One Inc is a media company that owns and/or operates 53 stations in 16 urban markets across the country. Finding no in-depth research on the African American consumer, Radio One

commissioned a survey of more than 3000 black Americans between the ages of 13 and 74, from across the country and from various socioeconomic backgrounds on a myriad of topics. The study suggested that African Americans are not one monolithic group. Researchers identified 11 distinct segments among black Americans. Matt Bai writes for *The New York Times*. His August 2008 article, "Is Obama the End of Black Politics?" provided an assessment of the changing era for African-American political leadership. He observed a generational transition that is reordering black politics – the struggles of the civil rights movement are coming to fruition in a new generation of black leaders. Bai found that the core of this shift lies in how these different generations of leaders define leadership.

> Black leaders who rose to political power in the years after the civil rights marches came almost entirely from the pulpit and the movement, and they have always defined leadership, in broad terms, as speaking for black Americans. They saw their job, principally, as confronting an inherently racist white establishment…This newly emerging class of black politicians, however, men (and a few women) close in age to Obama and Jesse Jr., seek a broader political brief. Comfortable inside establishment, bred at universities rather than seminaries, they are just as likely to see themselves as ambassadors to the black community as they are to see themselves as spokesmen for it. (p. 4)

As we look to the 21st Century, traditional civil rights organizations must address a different context for confronting social and economic issues. They must effectively bring forth new leaders, solve complex problems and renew their organizations. The question is how to do so and remain true to their missions and the visions that brought them into existence.

A Society Divided

Today, in spite of the advances attendant to a vibrant global economy, quantum leaps in the application of technology and information and the emergence of the knowledge worker we find a society divided by social and economic disparities that belie available resources. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey, 13.3 % of the

population and 9.8 percent of all families lived at or below the official poverty level (Webster & Bishaw, 2007). In May 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau issued a report indicating that in the United States; relatively few households hold a large proportion of the wealth. Based upon monthly household income, the top 20% of households have an income that is over 25 times that of the lowest 20% of households (Bishaw & Iceland, 2003). The growing concentration and persistence of poverty in urban America has consequences for the poor and nonpoor (Brown, 1996). The complex forces that are at work in our cities require broad, holistic solutions that include an equally broad coalition of stakeholders including institutions of higher learning. In *The State of Black America 2006*, Maya Wiley, Director of the Center for Social Inclusion wrote, "We have eliminated legalized racial discrimination against people of color, but have left the structures it produced intact" (NUL, 2007, p. 9). She implored us to "cross urban and suburban governmental fragmentation, business and community group divisions, and racial group identities to work together and invest in the poorest people and their communities" (p. 9). Similarly, Myron Orfield (2002) observed "an evolving pattern of intense, unequal competition and inefficient, environmentally damaging local land use threatens every community and region, undermining the nation's promise of equal opportunity for all" (p. 1).

The National Urban League introduced its Equality Index in *"The State of Black America 2004,"* drawn from examining the status of black Americans in the areas of education, economics, health, social justice and civic engagement, the index defines the equality gap as a statistical measurement of the disparities that exist between black and white America. Marc Morial, President wrote, "Our equality index has determined that now, 216 years after the Constitution of the United States of America was voted into being, black Americans once defined as three-fifths stand at less than three quarters – 0.73, to be exact – of where White

America stands" (Morial, 2004, p 8). The most recent findings of the Equality Index indicate the following values.

Table 1.1: NUL Equality Index (2007 – 2010)

Report Year	Total Equality	Economic	Health	Education	Social Justice	Civic Engagement
2010	71.8%	57.4%	77.0%	77.6%	57.1%	102.2%
2009	71.2%	57.4%	76.8%	77.0%	57.2%	97.6%
2008	73.71%	56.8%	75.7%	78.2%	71.7%	103.6%
2007	73.3%	56.8%	75.3%	78.6%	65.4%	105%

Source: National Urban League – State of Black America Reports (2010, 2008, 2007)

More than a decade ago, Gates and West observed, "Race differences and class differentials have been ground together in this country in a crucible of misery and squalor, in such a way that few of us know where one stops and the other begins" (Gates & West. 1996, p. xiii). The fact that our societal inequities persist along racial and ethnic lines is shameful enough but is exacerbated by the tension between these disparities and our American ideal of individual rights and the promise of democracy for all. Blackwell et al. stressed that "restrictions on minority progress, intended or unintended, therefore hurt more than minorities themselves, for the very future of the American economy and society will be based on how well opportunities are opened to all the nation's people" (2002, p. 25).

Race and the American Dream – Persistent Questions

A considerable body of literature throughout our nation's history illuminates the dilemma of race and the American ideal. Numerous studies, including presidential efforts by Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson and Clinton have sought to engage the nation in dialogues about issues of race, civil society and equal opportunity. Political and social theories abound across the entire spectrum - from integrationist to separatist, from accommodationist to protest—as to the best means for African Americans and other minorities to secure the American dream. Economic

and demographic data highlight disparities along dimensions such as health, education, and wealth in the United States. National polls demonstrate that there are consistent gaps in perception about racial progress and well-being. Yet, problems persist. All of these studies will mean little at the individual and community level unless some action takes hold to address such concerns. In their critique of free-market revitalization models, Whitehead, Landes and Nembhard (2005) advanced a community building approach for inner-city revitalization. They stated:

> In fact, more than thirty years of research on inner city revitalization suggest that local revitalization initiatives must be comprehensive and holistic, extending beyond economic issues. The motor of a local revitalization initiative may be economic development, but crucial to its success may be programs in such areas as family support, improved public education, drug rehabilitation, mental health, environmental cleanup, community policing, and cooperative enterprise development. (p. 350)

The National Urban League was founded at the turn of the twentieth century to address the bleak conditions confronted by African Americans in northern the northern urban centers. "The cornerstone of the League agenda has been its goal of impacting the community by delivering direct social services" (Wade & Williams, 2002, p. 40). Wade and Williams described the National Urban League as pursuing direct action through social services as a way to distinguish it from other civil rights organizations. It carries out its mission at multiple levels—local, state and national—through strategies that include direct services, advocacy, community mobilization, collaboration, and research and policy analysis. There is a tremendous volume of literature that deals with the civil rights movement in the United States, its actors and outcomes. However, one finds relatively little written about the challenges and adaptations facing civil rights organizations. This is somewhat surprising given the dialogue in the public sphere concerning the future and relevance of these organizations. *Black Political Organizations in the*

Post-Civil Rights Era (Johnson & Stanford, 2002) is one of few publications that address the more contemporary contributions of black political organizations. In their contribution, Wade and Williams (2002) stated, "Current scholarly literature reveals little attention to the contributions made by this organization, its leadership, and its affiliates during the post-Civil Rights era" (p. 40). They observed that we are in a period of where contemporary American society has lost its social conscience and many African Americans and other disadvantaged persons no longer share a common agenda or political compass. This study looked at the leadership and operational strategies of one civil rights organization to understand how they might better respond to these persistent and complex circumstances. Taken in the context of today's political, social, economic and environmental landscape, how might local organizations influence a move toward economic and social parity and justice? What leadership strategies are necessary in this post-civil rights era? What creative synthesis must be constructed that increases the civic capacities of marginalized citizens to assume greater roles in determining society's future?

Social Enterprise and Community-Based Organizations

The devolution of social service intervention and assistance from the federal government has resulted in greater demand upon local agencies and organizations to carry out urban agendas. In recent years, nonprofit organizations have begun rising to the challenge to bring innovative solutions to social problems. Jerr Boschee, Founder and Executive Director, The Institute for Social Entrepreneurs, recounts in *Migrating from innovation to entrepreneurship* ((2006) that significant pressures on nonprofits have been building for more than two decades. The emergence of the social entrepreneur is taking flight. Dees, Emerson, and Economy (2001, p. 5) described entrepreneurs as "innovative, opportunity-oriented, resourceful, value- creating change

agents" and go on to distinguish social entrepreneurs as setting out with an explicit social mission. Wei-Skillern, Austin, Leonard, and Stevenson in *Entrepreneurship in the Social Sector* (2007) extend this definition to include entities across the nonprofit, business and government sectors and define a set of characteristics that make the social enterprise unique:

1. The centrality of social mission takes precedence over personal shareholder wealth.

2. The fragmentation of capital support from the philanthropic sector without which most could not be financially viable.

3. A limited amount of resources to attract and maintain human resources.

4. They are increasingly challenged to blend social and commercial approaches in their operations.

5. The opportunities for forming alliances represent great potential.

6. They are confronted with the challenge of taking opportunities forward to large scale implementation.

7. Market signals can prove to be ambiguous for performance management purposes.

8. They often have dispersed and distinct roles within their governing structures.

Community-based organizations work on behalf of individual community members. Couto (1999) defined such organizations as mediating structures that exist to address the real social, human, economic, and community needs left unfulfilled by our market economy. Sherri Wallace (1999) placed their role in the context of community economic development to better examine the role of nonprofits in community revitalization. She stated, "Community economic development has early roots in the nineteenth-century social and political contributions of African-American leaders such as Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and W.E. B. DuBois, who sought to find constructive responses to institutional economic and social segregation and

discrimination policies" (p. 156). Understanding the role of community based organizations is easier if one distinguishes community organizing from community development. Community organizing mobilizes resources to acquire new or improved services from others or to require that some other group stops harmful action. Community organizing is focused on forces external to the community and its members. Community development entails the mobilization of resources for the provision of a service by the group mobilizing the resources, not by someone else. Community development addresses capacities internal to the community and its members. Reid and Flora (2002) described community development as a holistic approach that is centered on recognizing and serving the needs of the communities and all its stakeholders. "Community-led development is not simply a matter of money. It is a matter of hope and of participatory processes toward collective goals and toward increased community leadership capacity" (p. 1).

Capacity-focused development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) is where the individuals, associations and institutions of a community come together in a way that multiplies the power of their resources. They emphasized, "Rather this strong internal focus is intended simply to stress the primacy of local definition, investment, creativity, hope and control" (p. 9). They continued, "If a community development process is to be asset-based and internally focused, then it will be in very important ways relationship driven" (p. 9). On October 27, 2007, Community Wealth Ventures gathered 40 philanthropic leaders in a summit to discuss the application of market-based strategies to assist nonprofits in fulfilling their missions. As part of their discussion highlights, *Achieving Impact and Sustainability through Market-Based Approaches (2007),* Clara Miller (President, NonProfit Finance Fund) suggested that the nonprofit sector exists to fix three kinds of gaps in the for-profit economy.

1. To provide services (such as shelter, food, medical care) to people who don't have the money to pay for them;

2. To provide services where qualitative considerations make commercial scale difficult to attain (for example, manageable classroom sizes);

3. To do things that have no predictable commercial return whatsoever but turn out to be fundamental to civil society (basic science research, environmental advocacy, civil rights).

The concept of social entrepreneurship seems to have taken hold on a global basis and the application of business practices appears to be in favor for the resolution of social problems. However, can these approaches be successful if their underlying premises are not held to closer examination for fairness and justice? How can we insure that decisions are controlled at the local level? Sherri Wallace said that if community economic development is to become an effective strategy for social change then it will have to "build upon established community organization practice and holistically integrate economic development into its rich cultural traditions" (Wallace, 1999, p. 159).

Problem Statement

The traditional African-American focused civil rights organizations are challenged to find ways to remain relevant to their historical missions yet adapt to changing values, expectations, demographics and economic and political circumstances. What leadership approaches and operational strategies should traditional civil rights organizations, such as the Urban League, undertake to in this post-civil rights era? What business or operational models must they utilize to achieve their mission?

In recent years, considerable attention has been directed to understanding the application of market-based approaches to the nonprofit sector. An increasing array of social enterprises across different sectors has emerged to address failures in civil society and resolve persistent social problems. Civil rights organizations have long served a niche in the battle for an equitable society. However, the role of civil rights organizations in community revitalization has been diffuse and subject to fundraising constraints. I proposed an action research design to assist in the development of a social enterprise approach based upon a local agency's own assessment of market needs, resources and socio-political realities. It was felt by agency leadership that the pursuit of such a strategy could open the door for new partnerships, renewed community engagement and greater financial sustainability.

Action Research Study

The National Urban League published *The Opportunity Compact – Blueprint for Economic Equality* in July 2007. It sets forth a comprehensive set of principles and policy recommendations "to empower all Americans to be full participants in the economic and social mainstream of this nation" (NUL, 2007b, p. 1). There are four cornerstones to The Opportunity Compact:

1. *Opportunity to Thrive (Children)* – Every child in American deserves to live a life free of poverty that includes a safe home environment, adequate nutrition, and affordable quality health care. Every child in America deserves a quality education that will prepare him or her to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

2. *Opportunity to Earn (Jobs)* – Every willing adult in America should have a job that allows him or her to earn a decent wage and provide a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families. Every adult in America should have equal access to

the resources that enhance employability and job mobility, including postsecondary education and other investments in human capital.

3. *Opportunity to Own (Housing)* – Every adult in American should have access to the financial security that comes from owning a home.

4. *Opportunity to Prosper (Entrepreneurship)* – Every individual in America who possesses entrepreneurial vision, ingenuity, drive and desire should have access to the resources needed to establish and grow a viable business enterprise.

In creating The Opportunity Compact, the National Urban League drew upon many and diverse resources. The policy recommendations reflect a clear and profound interest in drawing upon the collaborative efforts of "private citizens, national, state, and local governments, community-based service providers and the business community" to expand opportunities for the poor, disadvantaged and underserved (NUL, 2007a, p. 2).

The Urban League of Central Carolinas was established as the 116th affiliate of the National Urban League in November 1978. It was formed following a study *The State of African Americans in Charlotte-Mecklenburg* indicating that too many black workers were either underemployed or unemployed. For thirty years, the Urban League of Central Carolinas has advocated for workforce opportunity and workforce preparedness.

In September 2007, Patrick C. Graham, Ph.D. was appointed as President/CEO Urban League of the Central Carolinas. Prior to assuming leadership of the Urban League, Dr. Graham served for six years as the Director of Emergency Financial Assistance and Economic Self-Sufficiency at Crisis Assistance Ministry. As part of his efforts to refocus the Urban League and address issues of community revitalization, Dr. Graham instituted a community input process for strategic planning which was completed in May 2008 and incorporated into a new strategic plan

by year's end. He is committed to utilizing an open and collaborative leadership process that is geared toward the organization's "Visionary Roadmap" (www.urbanleaguecc.org) which states:

- Engage the Community

- Foster New Collaborations and Partnerships

- Redevelop Our Advocacy Role in the Community

- Raise the Visibility of the Urban League and Reassert Our Role in the Community

- Increase Capacity

- Our overall goal is to make the Urban League of Central Carolinas a great place to receive a continuum of services, work and invest/donate or volunteer.

Discussing study opportunities, Dr. Graham felt that a study concerning, community engagement, social venture creation and collaborative leadership would be valuable to his organization and would parallel their current strategic planning process. Reasserting itself as a leader in the Charlotte community requires that the Urban League of Central Carolinas:

1. Be seen as an agent of change to address the social and economic disparities that exist in the region.

2. Exert a leadership that reflects the needs, expectations and aspirations of the communities it seeks to serve.

3. Be seen as a voice for the African-American community.

4. Be recognized for its ability to mobilize its constituencies around target issues.

5. Be recognized for its ability to form partnerships that reach across boundaries in order to address common concerns.

6. Establish itself as a financially strong organization with a growing membership.

Action research is an interpretive process to extend and clarify people's understanding of issues, assist them in identifying priorities and defining courses of action. It has the dual commitment to both study a system and collaborate with members of that system to bring about desired change. I proposed an action research study to inform the League's Strategic Planning Process in two areas: *Social Enterprise Strategies and Shared Leadership Strategies*. Developing a social enterprise approach that is based upon the League's own assessment of market needs, resources and socio-political realities can open the door for new partnerships, renewed community engagement and greater sustainability. In addition, the successful use of market-based income strategies will help finance the programming and capacity building initiatives of the organization. Success in addressing issues of social and economic disparity and communicating those successes will heighten the recognition of the Urban League as more relevant than ever. The use of Shared Leadership Strategies will increase community engagement, surface important issues to be addressed, encourage creative problem solving, empower constituencies, and facilitate collaborative partnerships.

Study Overview

In response to the previously outlined questions, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the social and political debate concerning sustainability options for community-based organizations, especially traditional civil rights organizations. It utilizes the recursive and dialectical approaches of collaborative inquiry to find what works. This dissertation develops through the following chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Study Design, The Charlotte Context, Findings, and Discussion and Recommendations. As an action research study, I anticipated that there might be shifts resulting from the cyclical nature of such studies and process adjustments had to be made as we worked toward our goal. Herr and Anderson (2005)

cautioned that the researcher must anticipate that "as data gathering and analysis proceed, the questions, methods, design and participants may all shift somewhat. In fact, for action research, these shifts are anticipated as part of the spiraling synergism of action and understanding" (p. 70). A brief summary of the dissertation framework (Chapters II-VI) follows.

Chapter II: Literature Review provides a review of the literature and empirical research on social enterprise development, shared leadership, and civil rights organizations and their role in comprehensive community development. Emphasis is directed toward (1) understanding the social and economic complexities that maintain economic disparities, (2) exploring the dilemmas and challenges faced by the traditional civil rights organizations, (3) and reviewing the potential of collective leadership and social enterprise strategies to define possible solutions in the wake of these persistent problems.

Chapter III: Study Design situates the researcher in terms of interest and participation in this collaborative action research study. It describes the study design, associated timeline and boundaries for carrying out the research. This chapter also provides a review of action research and puts forth a rationale for using action research as a method for this study.

Chapter IV: The Charlotte Context creates a fundamental framework which outlines the social, political, and economic landscape in which the study takes place.

Chapter V: Findings provides reflections on the research process, an analysis of findings and presentation of outcomes.

Chapter VI: Discussion and Recommendations reflects upon the key findings in the context of the study research and settings. Discussion also includes limitations of the study, conclusions and suggested recommendations for further research in the field and the practice of the agency.

Chapter II: Literature Review

"The great challenge of any democracy is to ensure that all of its citizens are stakeholders in a common project called civil society." (Marable, 2002, p. xiv)

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing traditional African-American focused civil rights organizations and their strategic responses, in what many view as the "post civil rights" era, an era of changing values, expectations, demographics, and economic and political circumstances. Researching a topic of this complexity inclines the researcher to confront a very expansive range of literature, one encompassing civil rights and social movements, race relations and social science, community and economic development, leadership and nonprofit management, social entrepreneurship, political science and sociology. Each area has substantial research literature available, yet has not been drawn together to focus on the question of the strategic and operational evolution of community-based organizations (CBO), in general and civil rights organizations in particular. This led me to shape the conceptual framework for this dissertation as an examination of practice occurring at the intersection of African American leadership, race relations, community and economic development, social entrepreneurship and CBO leadership.

American Dilemma – Our Differing Points of View

In 1903, W.E. B. DuBois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* as both an observer and a participant of segregated America. Since then, his often quoted remarks, "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line" (Du Bois, Hare, & Poussaint, 1969, p. 54) have been reemphasized by many to focus our attention to the persistence of race as an American problem that remains to be dealt with in a forthright manner. In his thoughtful critique of *Souls*, Poussaint recognized that "It still powerfully exemplifies the fierce belief in man's willingness to

reason with man" (p. xxxii).   In 1938, Dr. Gunnar Myrdal accepted a commission from the

Carnegie Corporation to lead a team to study the status of Negroes in the United States.

Although not without its detractors, *An American Dilemma – The Negro Problem and Modern*

Democracy published in 1944 is considered a foundational study on race relations in America.

Set against the ethos of the American ideal of liberty, equality, justice and fair opportunity for

all, Myrdal observed that both White and Negro are under the spell of this great national

suggestion. He described the "Negro Problem" as a moral issue.

> It suggests something difficult to settle and equally difficult to leave alone…. The very
> presence of the Negro in America; his fate in this country through slavery, Civil War
> and Reconstruction; his recent career and his present status; his accommodation; his
> protest and his aspiration; in fact his entire biological historical and social existence as
> a participant American represent to the ordinary white man in the North as well as in
> the South an anomaly in the very structure of American society (Myrdal, 1944 p. xiv).

Returning to Du Bois, there are two points regarding Du Bois' remarks in *Souls* that may be

easily overlooked, first that he was not merely speaking of race but also of the relations of those

of privilege and power to those without. And second, that in the years following *Souls* he arrived

at a more radical position on his earlier more optimistic views about integration and moving

toward equitable society. Linda Faye Williams, in *The Constraint of Race* (2003) challenged us

to deal directly with not only the politics of race but in particular the politics of whiteness in

American social policy. She argued that the use of race in party politics has reproduced racial

inequality more often than it has diminished it. In short, there are voices that insist that race still

matters and should be taken into consideration. However, exemplifying a perspective that the use

of race should be diminished, Chief Justice John G. Roberts stated for the plurality opinion in the

case *Parents Involved in Community Schools vs. Seattle School District No. 1 et al* (551 U.S.

2007*),* "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis

of race" (p. 41). It is within the span of these two perspectives that today's civil rights organization and its leaders must marshal resources and alliances to advance the American ideal for all people.

Excerpts from Gallup Polls in 2006 and 2003 offer some interesting data for consideration regarding the way that we see the landscape of American society and promise. The 2006 *Annual Minority Rights and Relations* poll (Jones, 2006) found that non-Hispanic whites are much more likely than blacks or Hispanics to express satisfaction with the way minority groups are treated. In response to questions to assess their level of satisfaction with the way minority groups are treated in society poll results reflect the following:

- Americans are most likely to express satisfaction with the way Asians (76%) and women (67%) are treated;
- A majority are satisfied with the treatment of blacks (61%) and Hispanics (57%);
- Less than half of Americans are satisfied with the treatment of immigrants (47%) and Arabs (45%);
- Blacks and Hispanics are generally much less positive than whites about the way each of the six groups are treated;
- The gaps in satisfaction expressed between whites, blacks and Hispanics are quite large for all groups except Arabs.

Table 2.1: 2006 Gallup Poll (Satisfied with the Way Groups Treated By Society By Racial and Ethnic Group

Group	Total Sample	Non-Hispanic Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Asians	76%	82%	63%	58%
Women	67%	74%	51%	60%
Blacks	61%	66%	37%	46%
Hispanics	57%	62%	45%	40%
Immigrants	47%	52%	38%	26%
Arabs	45%	47%	41%	37%

Source: Gallup Poll conducted June 8-25, 2006, the Gallup Organization, Princeton, NJ

Lydia Saad (2004) reported that the results of Gallup's annual audit of minority rights and relations for 2003 indicated that only 37% of blacks said they were "very satisfied" with their lives as a whole compared to 42% of Hispanics and 55% of non-Hispanic whites. A large number of blacks were "somewhat satisfied" bringing the total satisfaction level to 82%, still lower than the whites whose level of satisfaction was 92%. Black satisfaction lags in all nine areas but particularly with respect to the areas of housing, personal safety and opportunities for success. Additional highlights of the report include:

- 77% of blacks believe civil rights have improved for the blacks over their lifetime but only 25% feel that their situations have "greatly" improved.

- Most blacks report that they have experienced racial discrimination in public life or employment at some time in the past year on account of race. 26% of blacks say it happens at least weekly, 13% indicate once a month, 25% a few times a year, 15% at least once a year and 19% indicate never.

- Nearly 3 in 5 (59%) black Americans are dissatisfied with the way blacks are treated in society.

Table 1.2: 2003 Life Satisfaction Survey - Percent "Very Satisfied"

Area of Satisfaction	Non-Hispanic Whites (%)	Hispanic (%)	Black (%)	White-Black Gap (%)
Family Life	75	73	61	-14
Personal Health	58	59	52	-6
Jobs/Work	59	51	52	-7
Education	54	49	48	-6
Housing	69	50	44	-25
Physical Safety	63	59	43	-20
Community	67	49	42	-25
Opportunities to Succeed	61	47	41	-20
Financial Situation	32	24	22	-10
Average	60	51	45	

Source: Gallup Poll conducted June 12-18, 2003, the Gallup Organization, Princeton, NJ

The areas with the largest gaps in this survey - Housing, Community, Opportunities to Succeed, and Physical Safety – are likely to be influenced by economic circumstances. In *Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground* (2002), Angela Glover Blackwell, Stewart Kwoh and Manuel Pastor, three authors who have worked on issues of race and social justice, offered reflections and recommendations on the distinctions between achieving diversity and achieving social justice. Their book acknowledged two important points: First, "race in American continues to be a volatile, changing, and confusing issue today – just as it has throughout our history" (p. 11). Second, "this project is based on the notion that race in America can no longer be viewed through a black-white prism, though that continues to be an important and persistent dimension" (p. 12). Ronald Takaki provided a retelling of American history in *A Different Mirror – A History of Multicultural America* (2008) that built upon the lives of minorities in our American experience. Takaki presented this work as a counter to what he defined as "the Master Narrative of American History" where "according to this powerful and popular but inaccurate story, our country was settled by European immigrants, and Americans are white" (p. 4). Through the arc of history told through multiple lens, Takaki concluded, "A new America is approaching, a

society where diversity is destiny" (p. 439). Indeed, our nation is changing in its demographic, political, economic and global dimensions. And excepting our recent economic recession, we might comfortably assume that we have adequately embraced the promise of diversity and collaboration. Blackwell, Kwoh and Pastor (2002) cautioned that "Growing diversity does not mean racial justice has been achieved" (p. 82) but did observe that impressive strides have been made at both the individual and collective levels. Writing for the *Uniting America: Toward Common Purpose* series, Blackwell et al. draw upon their work on race and social justice to explore the implications of a heightened awareness and sensitivity to issues of race in the United States. The authors framed their discussion around five dimensions of race that they feel must be explored for the development of new strategies and policies to address prevailing inequities. These five themes were as follows:

1. The Black-White Paradigm Versus Multiculturalism – This dimension reflects an understanding that looking at issues of race from a purely black-white perspective is insufficient to understand the nuances and dynamics of other minority groups with whites and other minorities. Yet, it is necessary to know that the way we treat and understand race in America is largely based upon a black-white dynamic.

2. Diversity Versus Racial And Social Justice – It would be a mistake to equate the successes of individuals within the various ethnic groups with racial equality. Having diverse representation in the upper echelons of politics, business and income classes is important but we cannot lose sight of those who have been left behind.

3. Universal Versus Particular Strategies – These two approaches to advancing the cause of racial equality are steeped in tension. On one hand, many would see specifically-focused efforts (i.e. bilingual education) as critical to meeting the needs of

disadvantaged groups. Conversely, those who support universal strategies seek to unite around a common goal (i.e. improved education for all). Either approach requires an honest appraisal of the role of race in our society.

4. National Versus Local Responsibility – This debate turns on the role of the national government in reducing racial inequality versus local authority and responsibility for such work. There are also historical factors at play. Those familiar with civil rights history are wary of states' rights and local jurisdiction to take these issues seriously. Over the recent decades, grassroots efforts and community coalitions coupled with more progressive municipalities have delivered more efficiently and effectively in the fight to revitalize communities. However, the fact remains that national policy and direction establish the context for local success.

5. Structural Factors Versus Individual Initiative – We want to believe in the American Ideal that anyone can rise above their circumstances based upon merit and hard work. Herein lies the challenge – to accept that just as failure can be due to personal short-comings, it is true that success is based upon mediating factors and supports such as educational resources, financial access, training, key personal networks and access to opportunities (Blackwell et al., 2002).

They also concluded that the key will be leadership – leadership that will tie people together in a 21st Century program for racial justice. This type of leadership demands the facility to draw people across differences and build community. These authors observed that we must understand that "America is moving into a world where 'minoritarian leadership' will be needed" (p. 42) because no single demographic group will dominate and that many minority leaders have

developed these skills by operating from disadvantaged or singular positions while seeking cooperative solutions aimed at achieving equity.

Civil Rights Organizations: History and Challenges

Harold Cruse posited that contrary to the American Ideal of individual rights, "The individual in America has few rights that are not backed up by the political, economic, and social power of one group or another. Hence the individual Negro has, proportionately, very few rights indeed because his ethnic group had very little political, economic or social power to wield" (Cruse. 1967, p 8). I think most people would readily agree that the purpose of the civil rights movement was to secure these very rights and privileges. Although his observations were issued in the mid-sixties, more recent works (Dyson, 2007; Marable, 2002;Nieman, 1991;Walters, 2003; L. Williams, 2003; Williams, 1995;) reflect Cruse's observations.

The modern civil rights movement, generally thought of as the 1960's and 1970's, was actually the pinnacle of a struggle for racial equality extending back to the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. The Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation buttressed by the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1875 and the 14th and 15th Amendments had promised freedom for former slaves and their descendents. However, segregationist policies and practices maintained systems of injustice more than 100 years later. The legalization of "separate but equal facilities" in the Supreme Court's 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision was but one example of how ingrained these practices were in our society. Participation in two world wars along with the "Great Migration" of blacks from the rural south to the urban north set the stage for continued pursuit and persistent advocacy for equal rights. Under pressure of civil disobedience, Presidents Roosevelt and Truman were "persuaded" to issue Executive Order # 8802 (signed by President Roosevelt) to desegregate war factories and Executive Order # 9981 (signed by President

Truman) to desegregate the military. The 1950's presented several watershed moments in our country's history of struggle with equal rights. In 1954, Thurgood Marshall led the NAACP's legal team in finally overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine in the Brown v. Board of Education (a class action suit that combined five cases) which declared that segregated schools were inherently unequal. In 1955, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of Montgomery, Alabama extended for almost a year to protest segregation in the City's transportation system. In 1957, President Eisenhower found it necessary to send federal troops to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas over the exertion of state's rights by Governor Orval Faubus. Increasingly, mass protest strategies such as sit-ins, freedom rides, voter registration drives, marches, etc. were met with violence and intimidation. This escalation of events included the March on Washington in 1963 famous for Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech and Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama in 1965 infamous for one of the most brutal attacks on peaceful protestors in our nation's history. The Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Acts (1965) were hallmarks of the 60's but so were urban riots and frustration with advances for equal society. By the time the decade drew to a close, America had witnessed the assassinations of President John Kennedy (1963), Malcolm X (1965), Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968) and Senator Robert Kennedy (1968). Moreover, integration strategies were being viewed as ineffective by many. The mood was shifting by the seventies toward an attitude of self-determination, cultural pride and self-defense. Black Power was coming of age. This era was short-lived. The seventies saw a shift to black electoral participation with blacks capturing increasing numbers of leadership roles in elected positions from local government to capital hill (Walters & Smith, 1999). However, the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 ushered in a new conservative momentum and retreat from social policy that extends to the current day. This transition period

also propelled the emergence of the new black conservatives. Walters (2003) characterized the ideological framework of this group as strongly conservative in economic and social orientation, as well as anti-civil rights in posture. Preston Smith (1999) argued that the black conservative agenda plays upon the African American history of self-help to bolster their criticism of civil rights organizations complaining that civil rights organizations facilitate the expansion of the welfare state, make the poor dependent as opposed to self-reliant, and take advantage of poor blacks' misery to advance their own self-interests. "The problems faced by the urban poor today, conservatives conclude, are due less to racism than to a paternalistic government bureaucracy in alliance with a complacent black leadership" (Smith, 1999, p. 262). Nelson (2003) found that progressive black leaders were confounded by the powerful positions gained by black conservatives during this period even as their views were at odds with traditional black leaders and the black masses they claimed to represent.

In *Plural but Equal,* Harold Cruse (1988) looked over the landscape of U.S. history and stated, "The end of the civil rights cycle has left the black minority without a leadership consensus or even a leadership forum that can claim to speak on behalf of the entire black minority inclusive of class, gender, ideological, and factional divisions…What is lacking is the quality of black leadership capable of harnessing black potential" (as cited in Cobb, 2002, p. 276). Since the 1970's, we have witnessed African Americans enjoying access to opportunities in education, housing, employment and other areas that heretofore were unavailable. Much of the credit for this progress must go to the efforts of the Black political organizations of the Civil Rights movement. Voices from within and outside of these organizations now ask whether they are out of touch and no longer effective. Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) found that civil rights organizations have faced these arguments about

subordinating the race concern to larger societal concerns. Civil rights organizations "have always had to balance legitimate concerns for both agendas on a delicate scale of political calculation and pragmatic politics" (p. 436). In the shadow of legislative successes and the country's shift to the right, it has become more difficult for civil rights organizations to advance social welfare policies. Hamilton and Hamilton observed, "The political coalitions available for pursuing a liberal social welfare agenda might well not be available for achieving a race/gender specific agenda" (p. 452). Nelson (2003) wrote that wretched housing conditions, unemployment and other poverty-based issues expanded during the increased political conservatism of the 1970's and 1980's but the NAACP and NUL were saddled with an indifferent audience. "Most middle class blacks and whites focused on personal and career development, family and pursued hedonistic endeavors" (p. 259), therefore, it became difficult for those in the hierarchy of these old line organizations to lead if those upon whom they depended for moral and financial support elected not to follow. At a time when the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" continues to grow in general the same is true within the African American community. The advancement of the Black middle class and stagnation of the Black poor has become increasingly a point of contention. Two recent articles highlighted the complexities that confront civil rights organizations and their leadership. "Black in America: The Study" by Aisha Jefferson (August 12, 2008 for blackenterprise.com) reports findings from the "Black American Today" study conducted by Radio One Inc. Radio One Inc is a media company that owns and/or operates 53 stations in 16 urban markets across the country. Finding no in-depth research on the African American consumer, Radio One commissioned a survey of more than 3000 black Americans between the ages of 13 and 74, from across the country and from various socioeconomic

backgrounds on a myriad of topics. The study suggested that African Americans are not one monolithic group. Researchers identified 11 distinct segments among black Americans.

Matt Bai writes for *The New York Times*. His August 2008 article, "Is Obama the End of Black Politics?" is an assessment of the changing era for African-American political leadership. He observed a generational transition that is reordering black politics – the struggles of the civil rights movement are coming to fruition in a new generation of black leaders. Bai found that the core of this shift lies in how these different generations of leaders defined leadership.

> Black leaders who rose to political power in the years after the civil rights marches came almost entirely from the pulpit and the movement, and they have always defined leadership, in broad terms, as speaking for black Americans. They saw their job, principally, as confronting an inherently racist white establishment…This newly emerging class of black politicians, however, men (and a few women) close in age to Obama and Jesse Jr., seek a broader political brief. Comfortable inside establishment, bred at universities rather than seminaries, they are just as likely to see themselves as ambassadors to the black community as they are to see themselves as spokesmen for it. (p. 4)

As we look to the 21st Century, traditional civil rights organizations must address a different context for confronting social and economic issues. They must effectively bring forth new leaders, solve complex problems and renew their organizations. The question is how to do so and remain true to their missions and the visions that brought them into existence.

Civil Rights Organization Profiles

In spite of their rich and storied histories, many observe that civil rights organizations are the victims of their own successes (civil rights legislation, advances in education, employment and business) and a failure to adapt to current times. Four organizations and their leaders are generally viewed as the major players in the fight for civil rights. The National Association of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL) were formed following the aggressive enactment of Jim Crow laws and disenfranchisement of blacks that followed

Reconstruction. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in Chicago to tackle segregation in the north and went on to champion the Freedom Rides for political participation in the South. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) came into being following the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In addition to these four organizations, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was created in 1960 on the campus of Shaw University in Raleigh, NC to coordinate sit-in protests against segregated facilities. The organization would grow to put college students in the forefront of such issues as the Freedom Rides, Viet Nam, feminism, the rural poor and Black Power. Many giants of the civil rights movement gained their skills and learned the art of leadership as members of SNCC but by the 1970's the organization was essentially no more. Brief profiles of these four major organizations are as follows:

NAACP. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), formed in 1909, describes itself as "the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization" (www.naacp.org, "About" tab) with the objective of insuring the political, educational, social and economic equality of minority groups. "The NAACP has as its mission the goal of eliminating race prejudice and removing all barriers of racial discrimination through democratic process" (www.naacp.org/pages/our-mission,"About" tab). A look at the strategic priorities of the NAACP reveals that there are ten strategic initiatives that fall under two categories: capacity building (enhancing the organizations ability to carryout its mission) and civil rights (addressing the barriers to political, social, and economic equality).

The National Urban League. The Urban League describes itself as "working to empower and transform African-American communities since their founding in 1910" (www.nul.org, "Get Involved" tab). The National Urban League, headquartered in New York City, has over 100 local affiliates located in 35 states and the District of Columbia. The affiliates

provide direct services to more than 2 million people nationwide through programs, advocacy and research that are consistent with its five point strategy: education and youth empowerment, economic empowerment, health and quality of life empowerment, civic engagement and leadership empowerment, and civil rights and racial justice empowerment. Local affiliates tailor their programs to meet local needs. The mission of the Urban League Movement is to enable African-Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights.

CORE. Founded in 1942 on principles of nonviolent resistance, CORE (www.core-online.org), the Congress of Racial Equality is the third oldest and one of the "Big Four" civil rights groups in the United States. As the "shock troops" of the civil rights movement, CORE has fought Jim Crow in the 40's, led sit-ins in the 50's and Freedom Rides in the 60's, advanced self-determination in the 70's, equal opportunity in the 80's and community development in the 90's and now champions access to information. CORE seeks to establish, in practice, the inalienable right for all people to determine their own destiny – the freedom to govern yourself will lead to the realization of all other freedoms. Headquartered in New York City, CORE operates through chapters and local affiliates across the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Central and South America.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "With the goal of redeeming the soul of America through nonviolent resistance, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was established in 1957 to coordinate the action of local protest groups throughout the South (King, "Beyond Vietnam", 144)."(Martin Luther King, n.d.). Today, the organization, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia is made up of nationwide chapters and affiliates which focus on issues of human rights, hate crimes, discrimination, and the achievement of social, economic,

and political justice through nonviolent action. One of SCLC's current initiatives is to provide training globally in nonviolent conflict resolution.

In the years since their establishment, the essential missions of these organizations have not changed much (the pursuit of equal rights and equal justice) although their mission statements have been refined to encompass more than securing legal rights. By and large, the problem of their continued relevance is one of public perception, organizational development, resource development and most importantly being able to demonstrate they can affect change in the areas of people's lives that need it most. Reflecting upon the 100 year anniversary of the NAACP, Kai Wright made this observation: "Given how much pain and sacrifice black America endured to kill Jim Crow, it's tough to accept a clear truth: Securing rights and breaking color lines was the easy part" (Wright, 2009, p. 2). He continues,

> But equal rights and equal opportunity are not the same thing. The latter demands a far more complex battle in which we must fight villains – the broken criminal justice system, predatory lending, crappy schools – that utterly consume the poorest of us while remaining abstractions to many, many others. (p. 2)

The important question for our traditional civil rights organizations is not whether they are needed but how will they define their 21st Century roles and strategies especially when it is easier for us to believe that opportunity is there for anyone who is willing to work for it.

African American Leadership in the Context of Contemporary Social and Economic Disparities

Are the traditional civil rights organizations still needed? The answer can be found in the disparity that characterizes opportunity in our country. Our cities remain a central battleground for American society, if for no other reason than the concentration of people. According to U.S.

Census Bureau reports, in 2005, 54 percent of the U.S. population lived in 50 metro areas with populations over 1 million or more. Richard Florida (2002) argued that place is the key economic and social organizing unit of our time and that human creativity will be the ultimate economic resource. Regional economic growth he says will be driven by the holders of creative capital. He observes the evolution of a new economic class, the creative class "whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content" (p. 8). Florida does not consider class traditionally as based upon ownership of property, capital and means of production. He states, "My definition of class emphasizes the way people organize themselves into social groupings and common identities based principally on their economic function. Their social and cultural preferences, consumption and buying habits, and their social identities flow from this" (p. 68). He observes that this segment of the population is growing in number and influence yet for all its promise,

> It is not a panacea for the myriad of social and economic ills that confront modern society… In some respects, left unchecked and without appropriate forms of human intervention, this creativity-based system may well make some of our problems worse. (p. 23)

As place takes prominence in the social organization of society, Florida observed geographic organization that aligns itself along these dimensions of class: the *Creative Class,* the *Service Class* comprised of those in low-wage, low-autonomy service sector occupations that principally support the creative class and *Working Class* enclaves that have very small concentrations of creative class persons. This re-sorting of the working population is occurring on a regional basis and has some disturbing implications. Florida observed, "The new geography of class in America may well be giving rise to a new form of segregation – different from racial segregation or the old schism between central city and suburb, and perhaps more threatening to a national

unity" (p. 242). Florida observed that migration of the Creative Class cuts across demographics and is more than a function of economic opportunity alone. At the same time that this new class is emerging, those same choices of opportunity and lifestyle do not appear to be available to those who would find themselves in the other two groups. For the last few decades, we have witnessed growing disparities even amid times of growth and prosperity.

Persistent Social and Economic Disparities

In the 40 plus years since the passing of major civil rights legislation in the U.S., we now find substantial shifts in our demographic landscape accompanied by comparable improvements in the standard of living for all citizens. However, we still find significant fissures in the foundations of our society. In *The Great Wells of Democracy* (2002), Manning Marable stated, "Affirmative Action policies were successful in fostering greater racial and gender diversity with the existing social-class hierarchy, but they did little to transfer wealth to working class or poor minorities and failed to create greater democratic access to the real centers of power for the broad majority of Americans, regardless of race" (p. xiv). Blackwell et al. (2002) commented on current diversity trends and the implications for changes in the structure for the opportunity in America, "The country has reached a crucial juncture and, as people of color grow in number, it becomes even more imperative to reverse the pattern of inequity that has taken root and that undermines the nation's founding ideals" (p. 61). Commenting on social and economic inequities in a 2002 interview, Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, foresaw a coming period where those concerned about social equity and healthy communities would need to craft an entirely different framework for the long haul, a framework that would "require people to mobilize around an agenda to tackle the over-arching political economic issues and result in a new political paradigm based upon human rights, social

equity and nationwide access to human development opportunities" (Alperovitz, 2002, p. 50). He identified several factors that make this shift an American imperative. Our current domestic realities include:

- Massive redistribution of income that concentrates income at the top one percent of the population;

- An expanding gap between the American elites and middle class both economic and cultural;

- Demographic shifts projecting that perhaps by the middle of the century blacks, Hispanics and Asians will become a majority.

Demographic trends. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2007 American Community Survey estimated the total population at 301.6 million. When compared with 2000 census estimates we find the following changes in percentage population by race: White from 75.1% to 75.6 %, Black from 12.3% to 12.7%, Hispanic or Latino (any race) from 12.5% to 15.1 %, Asian from 3.6% to 4.5 %, American Indian and Alaskan Native from .9% to .8%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander remained at .1%, and other races from 5.5% to 6.3%. Blackwell et al. (2002) observed: "It is projected that by the year 2050, the United States will be nearly a 'majority-minority' country – a demographic sea change" (p.22). Population projections (as percent of total) by the U.S. Census Bureau for the year 2050 by race and Hispanic origin are as follows: white alone (72.1%), black alone (14.6%), Asian alone (8.0%), all other races (5.3%), Hispanic of any race (24.4%) and white alone, not Hispanic (50.1%). Lastly, 2004 Census projections indicated that children under the age of nineteen will represent the fastest growing age segments of our population for the period 2010 to 2050.

Today, in spite of the advances attendant to a vibrant global economy, quantum leaps in the application of technology and information and the emergence of the knowledge worker we find a society divided by social and economic disparities that belie available resources. According to the U S Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey, 13.3 % of the population and 9.8 percent of all families lived at or below the official poverty level. In May 2003, the U S Census Bureau issued a report indicating that in the United States; relatively few households hold a large proportion of the wealth. Based upon monthly household income, the top 20% of households have an income that is over 25 times that of the lowest 20% of households. The growing concentration and persistence of poverty in urban America has consequences for the poor and nonpoor (Brown, 1996). The complex forces that are at work in our cities require broad, holistic solutions that include an equally broad coalition of stakeholders including institutions of higher learning. In *The State of Black America 2006*, Maya Wiley, Director of the Center for Social Inclusion wrote, "We have eliminated legalized racial discrimination against people of color, but have left the structures it produced intact" (NUL, 2006, p. 9). She implored us to "cross urban and suburban governmental fragmentation, business and community group divisions, and racial group identities to work together and invest in the poorest people and their communities" (p. 9). Similarly, Myron Orfield (2002) observed "an evolving pattern of intense, unequal competition and inefficient, environmentally damaging local land use threatens every community and region, undermining the nation's promise of equal opportunity for all" (p. 1).

> Equality. The word represents the essence of the American Ideal, and of the vision that has fueled and nurtured African Americans on their epic quest of nearly four centuries to hew a place of comfort and opportunity out of what is their native land. But the striving for equality by African Americans continues to be shadowed by an unsteadiness that has always cloaked the progress blacks have made in an extraordinary complexity. (Morial 2004, p 8)

In *Race Matters*, Cornel West (1993) challenged all Americans to see that "a serious discussion of race in American must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society – flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes" (p. 3).

Economic challenges. In 1987, the Hudson Institute published "Workforce 2000: Work and Workforce for the 21st Century." The report anticipated that four major trends would shape the American economy as it moved into the Twenty-first Century. These trends were: expectations of relatively steady economic conditions; a much smaller role of manufacturing in the economy; a workforce that grows more slowly and becomes older with a higher proportion of females and minorities (disadvantaged); the emergence of new service industries requiring much higher skill levels and education. The report raised several policy issues that would have to be addressed if the United States were to maintain its competitiveness in the new world economy. Among these issues were:

- Fully integrating black, Hispanic, and immigrant workers into the economy.

- Reconciling business and family demands when the workforce is increasingly female.

- Preparing our workforce for a service-oriented economy where human and intellectual capital are the key components for productivity.

Although the report primarily focused on economic forces, it also served to escalate the conversation about the changing demographics in the United States.

Income and poverty. Income distribution in the United States has been studied for almost half a century and the factors of income inequality are just now becoming better understood (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor & Lee, 2005; Jones & Weinberg, 2000). Income inequality is driven by changes in the labor market with higher skilled and better-educated workers seeing

real wage gains and a movement away from goods producing industries that tended to provide

higher wage opportunities for low-skilled workers. In addition, the trend toward lower-income

single parent and non-family households has impacted the gap between the rich and the poor.

In *The State of Black America 2002*, Franklin Raines, former CEO of Fannie Mae wrote,

> It goes without saying that wealth gives you more choices in where and how you will live, the quality of your schools, and whether your kids will go to college, medical school, law school-or even art school. Wealth lets you start a business and absorb losses. Investment income can help you weather stresses from job dislocation, illness or family break-up…Wealth improves the content and quality of your social, business and political influence. (p.17)

Net worth is one of the most defining factors of economic status in the United States

(Orzechowski & Sepielli, 2003, p.1). In their study of net worth and asset ownership,

Orzechowski and Sepielli (2003) found that "Non-Hispanic White households in every income

quintile had significantly higher levels of median net worth than their Black and Hispanic

counterparts" (p. 12). Raines' essay also observed: "Owning a home is the single, most common

and powerful way to build wealth in America" (Raines, 2002, p 19). With this thought in mind, it

is not surprising that the homeownership rates of whites to be considerably higher than all other

race and ethnic groups in the United States (Orzechowski & Sepielli, 2003).

Minority business. Owning a business is the American Dream. Black America entered

the 20th Century with significant entrepreneurial prowess but at the dawn of the 21st Century

progress remains paradoxical. Blacks have an expanding middle class, buying power of $645.9

billion that exceeds that of many countries, a cadre of well-educated businessmen and women,

and business growth that outpaces that of all the nation's businesses. Still, a significant portion

of Black (and Brown) America is substantially below the poverty line, under-educated, and

denied access to the capital necessary to build business enterprises and purchase homes.

The Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners (formerly Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises) reflects that between 1997 and 2002, the number of minority-owned businesses has increased at a growth rate that exceeds the increase for all U.S. firms by as much as three times. Black-owned firms grew in number by over 45 percent and revenues increased by 25 percent. Interestingly, the one percent of Black-owned businesses with revenues over $1 million account for 55 percent of the total receipts for Black-owned firms. Hispanic-owned firms experienced a 31 percent increase in the number of firms and a 19 percent increase in revenues. The number of Asian-owned firms grew by 24 percent and their revenues by 5 percent. Numbers for American Indians and Hawaiian & Pacific Islanders were less robust. Overall, minority-owned firms made up approximately 15 percent of the nation's businesses and generated 3 percent of all receipts. Vibrant businesses can fuel economic development and assist in closing the gaps that undermine equality in America. While the black business sector cannot solve all the employment opportunities of our communities, its behavior indicates that it is more willing than its white counterpart to recruit, train and employ people from low income neighborhoods.

Health disparity. *Eliminating Health Disparities in the United States (2001)* is a report of the Health Resources and Services Administration. This report stresses that the United States offers superior health care treatments and advanced technologies to those of society who are in position to access and take advantage of these opportunities. However, people of color and other vulnerable populations are more likely to experience health care barriers and to suffer from high rates of disease and early death. Populations can suffer from health disparities based on race/ethnicity, gender, age, income, insurance status, rural or urban geographic location, sexual orientation, housing status, occupation, or health behaviors.

Educational disparities. There are also recognized educational disparities. *A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream? (2003)* concluded that the country has been returning to greater educational segregation for more than a decade. The authors stated, "Since the end of the Civil Rights era, there has been no significant leadership towards the goal of creating a successfully integrated society built on integrated schools and neighborhoods" (Frankenburg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003, p. 67). A couple of the study's key findings illustrate this problem: (1) Statistics from the 2000 – 2001 school year showed that on average white students attend schools where eighty percent of the student population is white which makes them the most segregated group in the nation's public schools; and (2) The authors identified the emergence of a substantial number of what they describe as "apartheid schools," schools that are virtually all nonwhite and located in areas of concentrated poverty, limited resources and social and health problems. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2004 the percent of high school dropouts among persons age 16-24 by race were 6.8 percent (White non-Hispanic), 11.8 percent (Black non-Hispanic) and 23.8 percent (Hispanic origin). The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act for the reform of elementary and secondary education was a national recognition of the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. *The Nation's Report Card 2005* for both math and reading indicated that scores have increased at the 4th and 8th grade levels over previous years for all groups. Yet, significant gaps persist: the percentages of Black, Hispanic, and Alaskan Native & American Indian students who score "at/above basic" and "at/above proficient" is much lower than the percentages of White (non-Hispanic) and Asian & Pacific Islander students. The same holds true for the gaps between those students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch and those that are not. These gaps at

the elementary and secondary school levels adversely affect advancement to college and university study and beyond, as well as, future earnings potential.

In his analysis of conservative public policy and the Black community, Walters (2003) illustrated that even in good economic times like the late 1990's, Blacks did not fare as well as Whites. The relative absolute economic gains made by Blacks stand in contrast to the structural distance between their economic fortunes. He stressed, "For a minority group, this comparative measure is critical, since it is the condition of the majority that sets the price and nature of the quality of life" (p. 259). His book, *White Nationalism – Black Interests* is a discomforting attempt to call attention to a political phenomenon that Walters felt moves us away from a project of an inclusive American Democracy. The thesis of his work suggested that if a race is dominant to the extent that it controls the government of the state it is then able to utilize those institutions and policy outcomes as instruments through which it also structures its racial interests. Walters allowed this is a problematic conception:

> Given a condition where one race is dominant in all political institutions, most policy actions appear to take on an objective quality, where policy makers argue that they are acting on the basis of "national interests" rather than racial ones. In fact, how to separate the objective civil interest of the state from the subjective racial interests of those who manage it constitutes a critical problem, posing an impediment to the achievement of democracy – partially defined as racial equality – within the context of a multiracial state. (p. 2)

To fully wrestle with the problem as posed by Walters, some acknowledgment and discussion would be needed around the varying perspectives and conditions of life in America. Without an understanding of our conditions and the perceptions that surround those conditions, it is doubtful that leadership can emerge capable of mapping a new path forward that can reconcile our differing points of view. This is not to say that citizens and community-based organizations are not tackling and succeeding in arresting some of these disparities. For example:

- The Manchester Bidwell Corporation (www.manchesterbidwell.org) is nationally recognized for its work in career training and development. It was founded in 1968 as the Manchester Craftsman Guild by Bill Strickland to confront the economic and social distress in inner-city Pittsburgh. *The Collaboration Challenge: How Nonprofits and Businesses Succeed Through Strategic Alliance* (Austin, 2000) highlights the partnership between The Bidwell Training Center and the Bayer Corporation. These partners have developed a chemical technician training program for disadvantaged youth and unemployed adults. The program has grown to include other companies and government entities to expand resources and job placement opportunities (Austin, 2000).

- In *Owning Up: Poverty, Assets and the American Dream* (2002), Miller-Adams wrote about the stark division of the distribution of wealth in American society and how assets (economic, human, social, and natural) can make all the difference in lives of the poor. She states, "The greatest promise for those living in poverty lies in approaches that enable them to acquire new assets and draw greater value from those they already possess, thereby increasing their own capabilities and those of their children" (p. 5). Miller-Adams described the work of Neighborhoods Incorporated in Battle Creek, Michigan. As a charter member of NeighborWorks America (a network of more than 230 CBOs nationwide), Neighborhoods Incorporated utilizes a strategy of lending for home purchase and rehabilitation while requiring home buyers to invest in homes and neighborhoods. The organization sees its major task as helping neighborhood members create healthy neighborhoods.

- REACH US is a national, multi-level program which serves as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cornerstone effort to eliminate health disparities. Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) works through its grantees to deliver community-based programs and culturally sensitive interventions. *REACHing Across the Divide: Finding Solutions to Health Disparities* (Collins, 2007) highlighted stories from both urban and rural regions that demonstrate the importance of community engagement in building the trust and collaboration that enable REACH interventions to succeed.

These are but a few examples of community-based efforts helping to address social and economic disparities. Substantial work is being undertaken on a number of issues such as affordable housing, healthcare, education, and judicial reform but it is difficult to close these gaps in the absence of broad institutional infrastructures and unified efforts. Most community-based organizations only have resources to direct toward one or two issue areas. This is one of the reasons why comprehensive community building initiatives are so daunting to undertake. Given the experience of other CBOs, it seems reasonable that traditional civil rights organizations, by virtue of their original (integrated and collaborative) approach, can be agents for building alliances to work for the elimination of these disparities.

African American Leadership Approaches – Current Perspectives

The broad challenges outlined above seem to highlight problems that are not bound by race yet are often inextricably linked by dimensions of race. Nonetheless in recent years, there has been momentum building toward characterizing this as a post-racial era. Our current era will pose unique contexts for those who seek the mantle of leadership. This is especially true in light of President Barack Obama's election on November 4, 2008. By many accounts, this period

referred to variously as "Post Modern Civil Rights Era" (R. Jones, 2008), "Post-Black" (Taylor,

2007), "Post-Soul" (Glaude, 2007) and other similar phrases covers the period following passage

of the major civil rights legislation. Glaude (2007) grasped the contradiction within this new

terminology when he described this new era as follows:

> That new phase was marked both by many African Americans experiencing
> unprecedented inclusion in American society, which altered the nature of their
> political commitments, and by heightening levels of poverty and unimaginable
> violence, which circumscribed the life chances of large numbers of African American
> men, women and children. (p. 133)

Koch (2004) also cast light on the problematic nature of this new language when he observed,

> Current discussions of race relations reflect a complex and contested state of affairs.
> The situation is illustrated by two widely divergent alternatives. One position is that,
> both morally and legally, there are no large-scale social difficulties involving race.
> The alternative position is that racial oppression, prejudice, and even violence against
> minorities, especially African Americans, are persistent, pervasive, and seemingly
> permanent features of American social life. (p. 33)

In his examination of African American thought, politics and culture unfolding since the end of

the civil rights era, Paul Taylor found that of the different viewpoints, there are three significant

positions:

> Some argue that race-thinking is obsolete and indefensible, and should give way to
> some variety of nonracial humanism, universalism, or cosmopolitanism. Others argue
> that race is a storehouse of social meaning that we can appropriate and play with as we
> see fit. And others argue that race-thinking remains a useful tool for navigating and
> understanding the world that previous race-thinking has made. (Taylor, 2007, p. 638)

Ricky Jones, Associate Professor of Pan-African Studies at the University of Louisville,

commented on the shortcoming of not dealing explicitly with race: "If one defines race out of

existence or denies the reality of racism, neither requires engagement" (R. Jones, 2008, p. 11).

How then can we best move past identity politics if the disparities found in society appear to be

so closely aligned to demographic markers? Who do we turn to for direction? As African

Americans, our first instinct and our first desire are to look within the community for leadership and direction. H. Viscount Nelson views Twentieth Century black leadership as a tragedy. His evaluation of African American leadership, *The Rise and Fall of Modern Black Leadership* (2003) is grounded upon a view that defines Black leadership by a commitment to ameliorate the condition of the African American majority. From this vantage point he offered his motivation for this historically-focused research project: "Given the high incidence of poverty, incarceration, the deteriorating family structure, and other social aberrations inherent in black communities, I wondered how blacks speaking confidently of true egalitarianism in America could ignore the black underclass with impunity" (Nelson, 2003, p. ix). Although there is no singular definition for black leadership, a general view emerges that its contours include the following: it is exercised by people of African descent, it focuses on the advancement, interests and concerns of the black race, it operates at multiple levels (local, national, global), and it reflects a subordinate power position of blacks relative to whites (Gordon, 2000; James, 1997; R. Jones, 2008; Marable, 1998; Nelson, 2003; Reed, 1999; Smith, 1996; Walters & Johnson, 2000; Walters & Smith, 1999). Most often, this leadership has been presumed to be the role of a political elite (individuals or organizations) speaking on behalf of a broader constituency. Glaude (2007) recognized that this concept was born of exclusionary practices but observes, "Many, however, have come to see that such a politics simply fails to speak to our current moment and the complexity of African American conditions of living" (p. 140). *In A Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America* is Glaude's argument to embrace a framework of American pragmatism. Observing that black cultural writers, sociologists, philosophers and scholars have long drawn on pragmatic principles, he asserts that it is past time for African American leadership to operate "in light of an understanding that democracy is a way of life not

merely a set of procedures" (p. xii) and to no longer mimic the political and social strategies of the 1960s. The tradition of American pragmatism seeks to utilize intellectual activity and knowledge gained of experience to resolve the problems we encounter in the course of our human experience. Specifically, Glaude draws upon the works of John Dewey who viewed philosophy as a form of cultural and social criticism bound to the tenets of participatory democracy (Glaude, 2007). Similarly, Lawson and Koch (2004) reasoned that "the race problem" is uniquely American originating with slavery and its aftermath, therefore classic pragmatism which recognizes thought as a phase in the active working out of problems in the human experience can be reworked to address our contemporary problems. Koch (2004) advances a need for a new formulation of the race question that will enable us to move beyond the observation of existing difficulties to inquiry into the problems themselves. Glaude (2007) calls upon African American leadership to consider pragmatism because "To embrace pragmatism is to hold close a fundamental faith in the capacities of ordinary people to transform their circumstances while rejecting hidden and not-so-hidden assumptions that would deny them that capacity" (p. x). The successful presidential campaign of Barack Obama was lifted by the desires of many ordinary citizens to see and act on behalf of a transformation of their circumstances. Even in the face of considerable economic, social and global problems a hope emerged resting in the possibility they would be part of an inclusive and re-energized participative democracy. Hope alone however is insufficient to bring about a change in the conditions and situations of everyday people. Addressing our prevailing disparities and circumstances are vexing problems that will require thought and action. Dewey asserted that indeterminate situations are the antecedents to inquiry and likewise problem resolution. He stated, "A variety of names serves to characterize indeterminate situations. They are disturbed,

troubled, ambiguous, confused, full of conflicting tendencies, obscure, etc." (Edman, 1955, p.

230). If a problem well-put is half-solved then what types of leadership must emerge sufficient to

the challenges of our current and future environment? In *Leadership Without Easy Answers*,

Heifetz (1994) speaks directly to an image of leadership where leadership influences a

community to confront its own problems. Implicit is a new social contract, not of leader-follower

but mutual, shared leadership, a leadership that understands in order to solve large societal

problems a change in values, attitudes and behaviors is required – what he calls adaptive work.

Like Burns (1978) more than a decade earlier, he stated that we face a crisis in leadership, yet we

misconceive the nature of these crises. The leadership crisis has more to do with the "scale,

interdependence, and perceived uncontrollability of modern economic and political life" (p. 2).

Heifetz defined these as adaptive problems arising from Type II and Type III Situations: Type II

Situations are those where the problem can be defined but no clear-cut solution available,

therefore responsibility for meeting the problem must be shared along with recognition of a need

for change. The Type III Situation is where problem definition is not clear cut and technical

solutions are not available. The complexities at the seat of our social and economic disparities

have proved resistant to all but our most earnest efforts. They involve multiple interdependencies

and often seem to be unresponsive to our programs and initiatives. The leadership crisis is not

simply in defining a problem but in achieving participatory and beneficial solutions. To do so

will call forth leadership that is adaptive and engages leaders and followers to transform our

society.

Emerging Black Leaders: African American Leadership in the 21st Century

Operating in new shared power context and assuming power in new dimensions are

beginning to be exhibited by a new cadre of African American leaders. This new generation of

men and women see themselves first and foremost as leaders and politicians with responsibilities to all to address the problems of all.

In her examination of Obama's accomplishments, *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama,* Gwen Ifill (2009) argued that this is a pivotal moment in American history and a period where the black political structure coming out of the civil rights era is being transformed. She described the night of his presidential nomination as being about more than his nomination. "It was about the past, about progress, and about race – the most divisive issue in the nation's history" (p. 15). However, reflecting on the change in the political landscape, journalist Ifill stated,

> To be clear right off the bat, I do not believe this to be a "postracial" moment, as so many have claimed. After talking to scores of people for this book, I am still not even entirely sure what the term means. My well-reported suspicion is that it is the type of code language that conveniently means different things to different people. (p. 16)

Ifill utilized her journalistic access to examine Barack Obama's path to the White House and the path of many of his contemporary black politicians, most notably Cory Booker (Mayor of Newark), Deval Patrick (Governor of Massachusetts) and Artur Davis (congressman from Alabama) as they traverse the political landscape. In an interview with Christopher Edley, Jr. (an advisor to the Obama-Biden transition project), Edley described three generations of black political engagement – law school & activist, pursuit of business/corporate America, and the move into mainstream politics rather than protest politics. Ifill (2009) observed "that in the twenty-first century, the breakthrough generation of black politicians is aiming to capture much bigger territory" (p. 12). As this new cadre of leaders comes to the foreground, Ifill points to a key distinguishing feature between the generations of leaders, the new generation has lived "in a world shaped by access instead of denial" (p. 35). These two worldviews result in different

approaches to issues and political alignments. *In a Shade of Blue* (Glaude, 2007) sought to demonstrate that pragmatism can clear the way for a more imaginative and effective form of politics to be taken on by black America. This aligns neatly with pragmatism's underlying philosophical chords that the value of ideas and beliefs can be found in directing them toward solving problems that confront people's lives. Ifill's *Breakthrough* (2009) offers some glimpses at how the emerging cadre of black politicians values the practical adjustments necessary to get things done. For example, she described Obama's message from the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church at a Martin Luther King Holiday celebration: "This was classic Obama. When given the chance to talk about race in the ways that most expected to hear, he resisted. Race was worth talking about, he thought, but only in the context of broader issues" (p. 53). In addition, she observed that a number of this new generation of city executives believes: "improving public education requires going up against an entrenched establishment often made up of constituencies that have formed the backbone of black political support" (p. 222). Those of more activist sentiments, see the "get things done narrative" as beginning to win the day in the ideology vs. pragmatism debate. Yet they find these approaches as failing to bring forth real and substantial change but rather results aligned with existing dominant institutions (Street, 2009).

Politics provides a reasonable framework to look at the challenges of leadership because of its broad impact. As Ifill (2009) observed, "Politics affects every decision we make, as well as every decision taken out of our hands. It defines our past and dictates our future" (p. 19). It is inevitable that the current moment would call African American or black leadership into question. *What's Wrong With Obamamania? Black American, Black Leadership and the Death of Political Imagination* written prior to Obama's election, draws out some of these competing questions. Ricky Jones (2008) uses as his context the paradoxical position of privileged African

Americans who may find their values and allegiances questioned while attempting to negotiate power within a larger corporate or institutional structure. Jones described the new landscape of black America (and its leadership) as "less progressive, more nihilistic, and numb" and continues, "black leadership in this new reality has definitely expanded in quantity, but its quality and commitment trouble many" (p. 7). For Jones, quality black leadership requires political imagination – the ability to define a different future than the existing political reality. It is this imagination that he sees as fundamental in order to engage in a liberatory praxis that is dedicated to "unselfishly challenging the systemic inequities of the society that marginalize the African-descended community" (p. 39). Commenting on Obama's challenge in satisfying the demands of black American, Jones offered, "At the end of the day, Obama's greatest challenge when dealing with black Americans will be balancing their legitimate quest for leadership that speaks to their concerns and the illegitimate and unhealthy yearning for a savior" (p. 117). Nelson expressed the following concerns: "Regardless of the presence or absence of a black visible consciousness of high profile Africans, disadvantaged blacks require far more than symbolic 'first' in high profile positions to ease the conflicts, tensions, poverty, and pressures of inner city life" (Nelson, 2003, p. 314). In response to a question as to what type of leadership is required to address the disparities that exist in many communities, political pollster Cornell Belcher observed, "There is a larger back-and-forth debate that's going on right now that's either going to completely destroy what we know as black politics or reinforce it. And I don't know how that debate is going to play out" (Ifill, 2009, p. 240).

This is not new terrain. In the *Bibliography of African American Leadership – An annotated guide*, Ronald Walters and Cedric Johnson (2000) observed, "First, an appropriate conclusion made possible from the breadth of materials included here is that there is no era in

which Black leaders or their organizations did not play a seminal role in the advancement of the Black community" (p. xii). Just the same, the voices, direction and nature of that leadership have endured a historical chasm. Harold Cruse (1967) traces the origins of this divide to the conflicts between integrationist and separatist tendencies as argued by such personalities as Frederick Douglass and Martin Delaney. Similarly in their important work, *African American Leadership,* Walters and Smith (1999) pointed out that "the most persistent and common basis in classifying Negro leaders has been in terms of some variation of the militancy concept" (p. 17). In an examination of nationalist and integrationist African American leadership traditions, Kershaw (2001) pointed to critiques of African American leadership that extend back to *The Souls of Black Folk* (Dubois et al., 1903) and *The Mis-Education of the Negro (*Woodson, 1933)*.* Historians and biographers (Franklin, 1995; Oates, 1982; Zinn, 1980), sociologists and political scientists (Marable, 1998; Myrdal, 1944), theologians (Cone, 1991; Tillich, 1980), civil rights scholar/activists (Dubois and James), leadership scholars (Walters, 1999; Couto, 1993) and others have explored parallel paths on the questions of leadership styles, purposes and efficacy for African Americans and other minority groups. Activist scholar Manning Marable (1998) longs for the day when "we achieve a full redefinition of America's democratic project… instead of leadership from above, democracy from below" (p. xvii).

Historically, African-American leadership traditions have been divided between variations of the nationalist and integrationist/accomodationist approaches. Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* developed a typology for Negro leadership based upon two extreme policies of behavior on behalf of the Negro as a subordinated cast: accommodation and protest.

> In a sense, accommodation is historically the 'natural' or the 'normal' behavior of Negroes and, even at present, the most 'realistic' one. But it is practically never wholehearted in any American Negro, however well adjusted to his situation he seems

to be. Every Negro has some feeling of protest against caste, and every Negro has some sort of conflict with the whole world. (1944, p. 720)

In his examination of black political ideology and public discourse, Michael Dawson (2001) found that "ideological conflict has been a constant feature of black politics since at least the early nineteenth century" (p. 10). He pointed out, "The fact that two African Americas can believe that their fate is linked to that of the race does *not* mean that they agree on how to best to advance their own and racial interests" (p. 11).   In observing the decades-long conflict over method within the Negro movement, Cruse (1967) stated, "The Negro movement is essentially dynamically independent, although the leadership as a whole has not learned how to make the most of this. Negro leadership of all persuasions acts from the urge of immediacy and expediency. And this urgency is both a source of strength and limitation" (p. 399).

Future Considerations

Van Jones, social entrepreneur, activist and author of *The Green Collar Economy* (2008) used the story of a New Orleans couple in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to set the stage for his argument for rapid pursuit of a green economy. "To be clear it wasn't Hurricane Katrina that wrought that catastrophe. It was a perfect storm of a different kind: neglect of our national infrastructure combined with runaway global warming and blatant disregard for the poor" (p. 22). In the wake of Katrina, Jones challenged, "we reject the ideology that says we must let our neighbors sink or swim" (2008, p. 17). The *Green Economy* identified a dual crisis confronting us – socioeconomic inequality combined with environmental destruction and warns that "no matter what we do, however, we can be sure that the economy and the environment will both get worse before they get better" (p. 33). The opportunity of the green economy as advanced in the book is for a broad alliance that cuts across race and class and drives toward

ensuring that all have a financial stake in the green economy. Here again, we find a vision of economic and social equity that will challenge our current and future leaders. Jones put it this way: "So I raise the possibility that we need a new guiding narrative, a new myth, for the new challenges that face us. Our leaders need a different yet familiar story that defines the kind of leadership we need" (p. 104). He suggested that Noah provides such a story – a leader that will charter a difficult way to a new future while trying to save as many as possible. He suggested that the work of leadership be more fully focused on resolving the contradictory problems of our times and be able to recognize and respond to these issues at multiple levels i.e. local, national and global.

In *The Great Wells of Democracy – The Meaning of Race in American Life*, Manning Marable asked, "Could we dare to envision another kind of democracy, based on a new social contract between the people and the state, anchored in the principles of human fairness and real equality under the law?"(Marable, 2002, p. xi). He challenged us to examine competing narratives on the interactions of race and democracy in this country. It is Marable's argument that we cannot advance without a new understanding of how racial politics works to reinforce class hierarchies and inequality today. He pursues what he defines as the great challenge of democracy – to ensure that all of its citizens are stakeholders in a common project called civil society. Ultimately, Marable (2002) offered that "small-scale, ad hoc, grassroots organizations represent a 'great well of democracy' an underutilized resource that has the potential to redefine our democratic institutions" (p. 222). Block (1993) stated that "empowerment embodies the belief that the answer lies within each of us" (p.9) and encouraged us to reconceptualize our definition of leadership so that we do not rest power, purpose and privilege in an individual but rather view leadership as acts of mutual accountability for the well-being of our larger

organizations and society. "Community revitalization initiatives have been one of the primary ways in which the social fabric of American communities has been repaired and democratic participation has been rejuvenated. Historically, the social movements of the poor and excluded have been some of the most important forces of democratic change in America" (Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 2001, p. 19). Who then can rise to the responsibility for addressing social and economic disparity? As we so easily find, there are more than enough finger pointing, philosophical, and ideological differences to muddy the water and obscure action. Blakely and Bradshaw warned whoever may take up the challenge,

> Therefore, community organizations or local government officials must carefully consider whether they possess the necessary institutional resources as well as economic development opportunities before they embark on any activities….. One thing is clear! The forces of economic change do not respect national, regional, local or community boundaries. (2002, p. xiv)

Efforts to bring about community revitalization, equal opportunity and build community wealth have seen the involvement of many actors. Often these efforts and strategies have been undertaken in different sectors resulting in silos around experience and knowledge. Community change and revitalization are generally viewed as economic issues and sometimes separate from civil rights. Yet they are inextricably intertwined. Civil rights organizations have often struggled to make explicit these connections as they carry out their work. The prevailing economic disparities require the development of new advocates and new approaches. Similarly, traditional civil rights organizations and their leaders are challenged to find new strategies in the furtherance of their missions.

Conclusions

The literature on civil rights organizations is robust concerning their history up to the achievement of major civil rights legislation as well as regarding their iconic leaders. It is much

less abundant when speaking to their responses to the demographic, economic and political shifts that were ushered in during the 1980's by the Reagan administration (the exception being critiques presented by progressive voices). Similarly, urban planning and community economic development literature, though expansive, do not explicitly take on the role of civil rights organizations to advance broad-based social equity agendas.

Civil rights organizations are still needed. The inequities that brought them into existence at the dawn of the Twentieth Century still persist even if the mechanisms by which they are created have taken on new and less obvious dimensions. These social and economic disparities confront us as intractable problems in the face of legal and social advances. Civil rights organizations and other community-based organizations need to retake leadership in driving solutions to these problems. Their challenge is to address a series of dilemmas embodied in what some view as a post-civil rights era. These dilemmas include:

- Complex structural barriers that maintain economic and social disparities
- Tensions between identity and coalition politics
- Changes in the black leadership paradigm
- Economic conditions that limit traditional funding resources for non-profit organizations

Social entrepreneurship may offer some answers to the complexities of equitable and sustainable urban revitalization. Already achieving success in developing nations, within the United States social entrepreneurship has been embraced mostly in the practice of social service delivery and as a form of corporate philanthropy. The question remains as to whether social entrepreneurship can be harnessed and scaled to aid in community economic development. David Gergen, Director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government called

social entrepreneurship "the most important movement since the civil rights movement" (as cited in Wolk, 2008, p.2). However, can these approaches be successful if their underlying premises are not held to closer examination for fairness and justice? How can we insure that decisions are controlled at the local level? Sherri Wallace said that if community economic development is to become an effective strategy for social change then it will have to "build upon established community organization practice and holistically integrate economic development into its rich cultural traditions" (Wallace, 1999, p. 159). Civil rights organizations are a part of the American landscape. Their history and that of black leadership have routinely been examined as separate and related phenomena. What remains to be examined is the practice of civil rights organizations in adjusting to this emerging generation of leaders and of these emerging leaders in guiding these historic organizations toward a broader equity agenda.

Chapter III: Study Design

Background and Entry

The devolution of social service intervention and assistance from the federal government, combined with growing disparities in wealth and well-being among different ethnic groups and economic classes, has pushed local agencies, nonprofits and community-based organizations to the brink as they strive to bring innovative solutions to social problems. For decades, civil rights organizations have played a significant role in seeking to bring about social and economic justice. However, today, traditional civil rights organizations must address a different context for confronting social and economic issues. They must successfully navigate new realties of economics, demographics, technologies, and societal values. Their survival depends upon it.

The National Urban League is one of the nation's most prestigious civil rights organizations with affiliates in 35 states and the District of Columbia. Given its focus on social and economic empowerment, it can prove instructive to take a close look at one of its affiliates. In September 2007, Patrick C. Graham, Ph.D. was appointed as President/CEO Urban League of the Central Carolinas ending a period of almost a year under the direction of an interim executive officer. Prior to assuming leadership of the Urban League, Dr. Graham served for six years as the Director of Emergency Financial Assistance and Economic Self-Sufficiency at Crisis Assistance Ministry. As part of his efforts to refocus the Urban League and address issues of community revitalization, Dr. Graham instituted a community input process for strategic planning purposes completed in May 2008.

As a participant in two of these planning sessions (3rd and 4th quarter 2008) and a fellow board member along with Dr. Graham for the Diversity Council of the Carolinas, I talked with him regarding his goals and hopes for the Urban League of Central Carolinas. Our discussions

dealt with the current dialogue around our entering a "post-racial" era in America's history. Patrick posed several interesting questions that he considered in his new role. Some of these included: "Does black America really need to shift its thinking about their condition?" "How do you get local people (communities) to think globally about economic opportunity?" "Why is it when we are asked to think differently about diversity that it is black folks that are assumed to take on new responsibilities for outreach?" He expressed to me that he would value a study that could address collaborative leadership, community engagement and social venture creation if the study would parallel their current strategic planning process. One of his goals is for the Urban League of Central Carolinas to reassert itself as a leader in the Charlotte community. He identifies the following as key requirements in achieving this goal. The organization must:

1. Be seen as an agent of change to address the social and economic disparities that exist in the region.

2. Exert a leadership that reflects the needs, expectations and aspirations of the communities it seeks to serve.

3. Be seen as a voice for the African-American community.

4. Be recognized for its ability to mobilize its constituencies around target issues.

5. Be recognized for its ability to form partnerships that reach across boundaries in order to address common concerns.

6. Establish itself as a financially strong organization with a growing membership.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The traditional African-American focused civil rights organizations are challenged to find ways to remain relevant to their historical missions yet adapt to changing values, expectations, demographics and economic and political circumstances. What leadership approaches and

operational strategies should traditional civil rights organizations, such as the Urban League, undertake to in this post-civil rights era? What business or operational models must they utilize to achieve their mission? Specifically at the local level, what expectations and requirements must the Urban League of Central Carolinas satisfy to reassert its leadership in Charlotte?

In recent years, considerable attention has been directed to understanding the application of market-based approaches to the nonprofit sector. An increasing array of social enterprises across different sectors has emerged to address failures in civil society and resolve persistent social problems. Civil rights organizations have long served a niche in the battle for an equitable society. However, the role of civil rights organizations in community revitalization has been diffuse and subject to fundraising constraints. I undertook this action research study to assist the Urban League of Central Carolinas in developing appropriate earned-income strategies based upon the local agency's own assessment of market needs, resources and socio-political realities. The pursuit of such a strategy will enable the agency to open the door for new partnerships, renewed community engagement and greater financial sustainability. Moreover, the study may contribute to the field of community development and social change by broadening our understanding of the ways in which community-based organizations and their leaders evolve in response to economic and social influences (internal and external). Such an understanding may enable us to improve organizational practice and improve local policy decisions.

Rationale for Methodology

Charles Hale (2008) wrote that, "research and political engagement can be mutually enriching" (p. 2) and further that activists scholars are more apt to view the idea of putting scholarship to service in their own communities' empowerment and well-being is a sensible and inevitable way to practice their profession. Such advocacy/participatory approaches speak to an

action agenda (Creswell, 2003) that summons a change in societal conditions. Minkler and

Wallerstein (2003) emphasized that power, trust and dialogue are central issues in community-

based participatory research and that these issues are driven by who defines the problems and

who takes ownership for acting upon the information.

> One of the hallmarks of community based participatory research is, of course, its commitment to starting with an issue that the community, rather than the "outside expert," identifies. In an ideal case, community members will identify such an issue on their own and will have approached the outsider about working collaboratively with them (p. 131).

I was invited to join the organization's Business Solutions Committee in their work to develop a

new strategic direction suitable to the times and the market. My primary role was to provide

information input, facilitate decision-making and provide feedback to their strategic planning

process. Fundamentally, strategic planning may be viewed as part of a change process that

incorporates business diagnosis, organizational assessment and program design. As such, this

process is an intervention that seeks to implement change and improve organizational

performance. Shani and Pasmore (1985) provided an appropriate framework for this study in

their definition of action research:

> Action research may be defined as an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioral science knowledge is integrated with existing organizational knowledge and applied to solve real organizational problems. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organizations, in developing self-help competencies in organizational members and adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry (p. 439).

Because the focus is on having organization members reflect upon both the desires and needs of

their constituents as well as the operational requirements necessary to fulfill those expectations

for the long-term, action research was selected as a process that would allow them to identify

their priorities and act on those interests. As an organizational change process, it is useful to

consider the observations of Jon Wergin in *Elements of Effective Community Engagement* (2006), "True transformative change usually consists of a series of incremental moves from the status quo" (p. 29). This process is bound to create some frustrations as expectations for new outcomes run into the realities of organizational resistance and resource constraints. In early consideration of this approach, I found myself asking any number of questions. Given the number of action research paradigms, Bradbury and Reason (2003) describe it as an orientation to inquiry while Coghlan and Brannick (2010) describe action research as "a bewildering array of activities and methods" (p. 43). These early questions were things like:

- How does one suspend expectations about necessary outcomes?

- What if the outcomes do not confirm or live up to expectations?

- Is leadership the primary focus or is there more at stake?

- To what extent must issues of race and community development come into play?

Greenwood and Levin (1998) viewed action research as a coming together of research, action and participation - a process carried out collaboratively to bring about change (solve a problem) and cogenerate knowledge that empowers the participants. They stated, "AR aims to increase the ability of the involved community or organization members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so" (p. 6). Herr and Anderson (2005) reminded us that there can be considerable variation among action research traditions spanning group or individual orientation, levels of participation, and desired goals and outcomes. The continuum ranges from business-oriented versions that embrace scientific management tools to emancipatory practice aimed at helping oppressed groups act on social policies and practices. Reason and Bradbury (2006) offered the following working definition:

> There is no 'short answer' to the question "what is action research?" but let us say as a working definition, that action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 1)

Stringer (1999) recognized the disparate literature on the actual genesis of action research (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Reason, 1994) and identified the core aspects of these processes:

1. Rigorously employ empirical and reflective (interpretive) practice

2. Actively engage those who have traditionally been viewed as subject in the process

3. Result in practical outcomes for the lives and/or work of the participants

4. Incorporate a variety of intellectual traditions

Capacity building is implicit as an outcome of this study which moves it in the direction of an action learning process. "Action learning is a group problem-solving process built on diversity; reflective questioning; and commitment to individual, group, and organization-wide learning" (Langdon, Whiteside, & McKenna, 1999, p. 52). Coghlan and Pedler (2006) see action research and action learning as sharing many values and antecedents in the field of management development but with a different emphasis. They stated: "Action learning emphasises the primacy of practical action, personal learning and working with peers in an action learning set" (p. 128).

Action Research and Community Development

Greenwood and Levin (1998) described action research as "a form of research that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social change

and social analysis" (p. 6). Based upon their varying disciplines, the authors of *Community-Based Research and Higher Education* advanced CBR as "research that is conducted *with* and *for,* not *on,* members of a community" (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003, p. xx). They also emphasized a central aim of community-based research: "To empower community groups so that they become better-organized and more proficient advocates for themselves and their constituents, as well as better able to control the resources that will contribute to their further development" (p.41). Herr and Anderson (2005) concluded that

> most agree that action research is inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community. But never *to* or *on* them…Action research is oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation. (p. 4)

In his discussion of the philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge claims, Creswell (2003) described advocacy/participatory claims as addressing important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation. He stated, "The advocacy researcher often begins with one of these issues as the focal point of research. This research also assumes that the inquirer will proceed collaboratively so as to not further marginalize the participants as a result of the inquiry" (p. 10). Ella Edmondson Bell considered her experiences as a black woman and scholar and reached several conclusions regarding race and action research including the following:

> In this new millennium we carry forward the unresolved issue of race in America. We must find new ways to dismantle both systemic and social dimensions of racial oppression, while at the same time addressing the interlocking forces of class, gender and sexual preference. By new ways, I am referring to action research techniques enabling us not only to get a broader and deeper understanding of oppression in all its manifestations, but to find better solutions for closing the gaps between humankind. (Bell, 2006, p. 57)

For many researchers engaged in action research, the knowing and doing are intertwined in a drive for social change. This orientation for change is a necessary prerequisite for their activist scholarship and work with broader publics. In his introduction to *Engaging Contradictions* (2008), Hale outlined this fundamental aspect of the discipline:

> Activist scholars work in dialogue, collaboration, alliance with people who are struggling to better their lives; activist scholarship embodies a responsibility for results that these allies can recognize as their own, value in their own terms, and use as they see fit. (Hale, 2008, p. 4)

Coghlan and Brannick (2010) reinforced this perspective by highlighting that action research challenges traditional research practice in several ways including advocating for the replacement of existing forms of social organization and sharing the power of knowledge creation with communities outside of researchers and policy makers.

Action Research Traditions

The history of action research (AR) extends along continua of intervention, change orientation, participative process and social justice aims that represent multiple disciplines. Bray, Lee, Smith, and Yorks (2000) pointed out that the AR tradition has opened up thinking about alternatives to the dominant experimental model of scientific thinking and in the process has created a platform for a broad array of collaboratively structured, action focused forms of human inquiry. A brief description of these traditions is summarized as follows.

Action research model. The work of Kurt Lewin emerged in the 1940s with a focus on solving workplace problems through action interventions that would enable and organization to "unfreeze," change and "refreeze" to return to a stable state. His work on human dynamics evolved into what we know today as organization development. Action research's insistence on worker participation was the foundation to framing its importance of solving real-life problems

(Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Strand et al., 2003). In their discussion of collaborative inquiry, Bray et al. (2000) acknowledged the emergence of two distinct camps of action researchers – the Northern School which seeks to reform institutions and make them more democratic and the Southern School which openly asserts knowledge production as a political act. Successors to Lewin have extended the Northern Tradition to emphasize practitioners as coequals in research and cooperative inquiry for problem solving (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003).

Action science model. Action science has as its principal concern a focus on the ability of organizations to learn (Herr & Anderson, 2005). The work of Chris Argyris (and others) looks to the change process as a key component of learning and that change is motivated by interventions that challenge the status quo. Argyris, Putnam, & Smith (1985) defined action science as "an inquiry into how human beings design and implement action in relation to one another" (p. 4). The authors feel, as Kurt Lewin before them, that one of the best ways to understand the world is to attempt to change it. Action science seeks to promote learning in a client system and to contribute to the general knowledge; however it is expressly designed to foster learning about one's practice. Regarding the importance of Argyris' work, Herr and Anderson observed, "It is also important because, unless solutions to problems under study tap into the complex theories of action that underlie and maintain the status quo, problems will only be solved in a superficial and temporary manner" (2005, p. 14).

The popular education model. The Southern tradition (arising from Latin America, Asia and Africa) of participatory research has at its core commitments to critical consciousness, social justice and emancipation (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Popular education is one such approach. Broadly seen, popular education involves people in educating themselves for social change. The work of Paulo Freire, particularly *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), is a

significant influence on community-based research as is the work of Miles Horton and John Gaventa of the Highlander Research and Education Center. The Highlander Center advances recognition of people's ability to generate their own knowledge for their own benefit (Herr and Anderson, 2005; Strand et al., 2003). The editors of *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990) observed that both Horton and Freire believed that "real liberation is achieved through popular participation. Participation in turn is realized through an educational practice that itself is both liberatory and participatory, that simultaneously creates a new society and involves the people themselves in the creation of their own knowledge" (p. xxx).

Participatory research model. "In both research and political terms, participatory research therefore challenges the material production of power in communities and the knowledge production of power through its dominant academic discourse" (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003, p. 31). The participatory research model emerged in the 1970s as part of the continuing critique of positivist research and has since been adapted to address the needs and concerns of disadvantaged groups (Strand et al., 2003). Greenwood and Levin (1998) chose not to dwell on distinctions of practice and offered an inclusive viewpoint that focuses on social change. Their perspectives on the aims of action research are in concert with participatory research: "AR explicitly seeks to disrupt existing power relationships for the purpose of democratizing society. It also instrumentally seeks to incorporate the great diversity of knowledge and experience of all society's members in the solution of collective problems" (p. 88). Herr and Anderson (2005) made an important point of distinction when describing researchers: "Participatory researchers assume that they will be resisted from above (i.e.,

powerful vested interests), whereas traditional action researchers are often consultants who are hired by the powerful" (p. 16).

Considerations for Research Methodology

      Collaboration and social change. Randy Stoecker (as cited in Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003) reminded academics to be very mindful and reflective concerning their role in community-based participatory research. He warned us that CBPR is not a research project; it is a social change project of which the research is only one piece. As such, the process requires four roles: leader, community organizer, popular educator, and participatory researcher. Stoecker emphasized that it is important to understand one's skills relative to the necessary roles when entering a CBPR situation. He suggested that the researcher should be critically reflective of oneself and the community and ask:

- How organized is this community?
- To what extent are the functional roles of leader, organizer, educator, and researcher filled?
- To what extent can the unfilled social change roles be filled by others?
- Which of the unfilled social change roles can I play? (p. 105)

Reason and Bradbury (2006) asserted that the "political dimension of participation affirms people's right and ability to have a say in decisions which affect them and which claim to generate knowledge about them" (p. 10). Issues of reciprocity and collaboration in participatory action research are quite complex. There is no single "best way" to carry out the work. However, it is important to understand the factors and practices that can work for or against the real sharing of power and responsibility in the effort. There needs to be a willingness to wrestle with real and perceived differences in power relating to the decision making processes, the

resource allocation processes, as well as processes for disseminating findings and benefiting from outcomes of the project.

Zuber-Skerrit and Fletcher (2007) provided a working definition of action research that includes the following characteristics, a situation in which:

- People reflect and improve their own situations by interlinking their reflections and action;

- People make their experience public to other participants as well as other persons interested in and concerned about their work; and

- There is participation in problem posing and decision making;

- There is power sharing and the relative suspension of hierarchical ways of working in a conscious move towards social democracy; and

- There is self-reflection, self-evaluation and self-management by autonomous and responsible persons and groups.

These characteristics indicate a situation where action research is taking place.

Criteria & validity. Considering the nature of this study, the organization, and the socio-economic context of Charlotte, Dr. Graham is most interested in the achievement of action-oriented outcomes (a viable plan of action) and information that can support implementation of the agency's strategic financial goals and objectives. Outcome validity and catalytic validity seem most consistent with these goals. Outcome validity is the extent to which the problem under study is satisfactorily resolved. Catalytic validity is the extent to which the participants and the researcher are "open to reorienting their view of reality as well as their view of their role" in order to transform that reality (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 56). Ernest Stringer (1999) stressed the use of participatory inquiry: "If an action research project

does not make a difference, in a specific way, for practitioners and/or their clients, then it has failed to achieve its objectives"(p.11). Kemmis and McTaggart (2003) observed that "The inevitability – for participants – of having to live with the consequences of transformation provides a very concrete reality check on the quality of their transformative work" (p. 376). Greenwood (2008) made the point in this way: "Action research, unlike conventional social science, to use John Dewey's term, issues "warrants for action" where the interested and at-risk parties gain sufficient confidence in the validity of their research results to risk harm to themselves by putting them into action" (p. 331). Thus it is the test of action that determines the validity of the work. Bradbury and Reason offered the following working definition of action research: "action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview" (as cited in Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003, p. 201). From this perspective, they arrived at choice points as criteria for validity:

1. Is the action research explicit in developing praxis of relational participation? Are we consciously working together in a way that engages one another?

2. Is it guided by a reflexive concern for pragmatic outcomes? Is the work helpful and useful and are we learning from our insights and experiences?

3. Does it ensure conceptual and theoretical integrity? As a participatory process, have we drawn on appropriate traditions of inquiry?

4. Does it include extended ways of knowing? Have we been open to different ways of knowing, informing and sharing our work?

5. Can it be considered significant?

6. Does it lead toward a new and enduring infrastructure?

Data collection & analysis. Douglas Ezzy (2002) cautioned that one of the main challenges of qualitative research is to ensure that the voice of the other is heard. "It is seductively easy to discover what we, the researcher, expect to find. This seduction should be resisted. Rigorously conducted qualitative research listens attentively to the data or to the other, and as a consequence reveals new understandings and builds new theory" (p. xiii). Important early decisions need to be made relative to participant involvement in the research activities. The levels of participation (active involvement) and inclusion (relevant individuals and issues) impact the type of relationship enjoyed between the researcher and the client organization. Herr and Anderson (2005) have developed a continuum that provides a framework for researchers to consider how they position themselves relative to the participants and their setting. This overview, based upon numerous action research studies, presents a range of relationships between the researcher and the setting under study. Their discussion speaks to the complexity that may be associated with defining one's position and that in some cases that relationships may change. Regarding these relationships, they observed: "participatory action researchers, who tend to be outsiders to the setting under study, report that their relationship to participants can shift throughout a study and can vary for different parts of the study" (p. 32). Their continuum moves from insider to outsider as follows:

1. Insider (researcher studies own self/practice) - the work contributes to knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, self/professional transformation.

2. Insider in Collaboration with Other Insiders – the work contributes to knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, and professional/organizational transformation.

3. Insider(s) in Collaboration with Outsiders – the work contributes to knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, and professional/organizational transformation.

4. Reciprocal Collaboration (insider-outsider teams) – the work contributes to knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, and professional/organizational transformation.

5. Outsider(s) in Collaboration with Insider(s) – the work contributes to knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, and organizational development/transformation.

6. Outsider(s) Studies Insider(s) – the work contributes to knowledge base.

The practice most closely aligned with this study is one of community empowerment where I as outside researcher (although asked to join the team and continue beyond the duration of the study) worked in collaboration with insider individuals (the Business Solutions Committee) to improve the organization and set it on a path to transformation. The agency (Urban League of Central Carolinas) serves as an intermediary and advocate for the community. When considering this study, the other aspects of researcher positionality that were considered are: researcher relationships with the informal power structure within the organizational community (relationships with CEO and staff members) and researcher position in relation to dominant power groups in society (the broader Charlotte community). Herr and Anderson (2005) remind us that each of us as researchers occupies multiple positions along different dimensions such as race, gender, class. These dimensions serve as lens for our political or ideological beliefs and cultural assumptions that we bring to our construction of our research products.

In anticipation and recognition of constraints on time, resources and availability of participants, it proved necessary to pursue multiple sources of data. Therefore, one key

consideration was to think clearly about the parameters for the selection of participants, places to observe and events to investigate and their relation to the research question. Data analysis in action research is part of a cyclical process and begins during data collection (Ezzy, 2002; Heron & Reason, 2006; Stringer, 1999), which allows for questions and answers to be shaped and reshaped as the process proceeds. Adhering to techniques for concurrent collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998, 2003), the following were utilized in carrying out this study:

- Member checking – a strategy utilized to verify accuracy of findings and descriptions or themes that emerged in the data collection process. I solicited participant views of data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions drawn. This occurred during team meetings, one on one discussion with participants, as well as by having them review transcripts of interviews and summary information derived from team work sessions.

- Triangulation – a strategy of using multiple sources of information to shed light on a theme or perspective. I examined evidence from different sources such as board meeting minutes, newspaper and magazine articles, historical documents, funding proposals, reports, studies, and transcripts from interviews to build coherent justification for themes that emerged from the study process.

- Peer Review – a strategy to utilize external persons as an external check on the process. Herr and Anderson (2005) described these persons as "critical friends" that work collaboratively with the researcher to make meaning of the data and to help the research take a step back from the research. I utilized a small circle of individuals familiar with the work of community-based organizations to review

my plans, strategies, and findings; to ask me questions and to offer feedback and ideas about the study as it progressed.

- Disconfirming Evidence – the utilization of information that may run counter to the main themes and positions of the study strategies and outcomes to point at additional needs for data collection or analyses. As a matter of reflection and dialogue, I challenged myself with questions that related to emergent themes and conclusions as a means to look for evidence that supported or refuted these concepts, strategies and conclusions, most often illuminating the need for additional inquiry and input.

Research Process Steps

Bounding the Study.

Setting. This study was conducted primarily at the site of the Urban League of Central Carolinas offices in Charlotte, North Carolina. The agency is a multi-service nonprofit organization that strives to promote economic self-sufficiency among African-American families and others and racial inclusion in the communities throughout the Charlotte metropolitan ar ea. The agency has served over 25,000 persons since its organization in 1978. At the onset of the study, it carried out its programs and advocacy with a staff or 14 persons and volunteers. During the course of the study, the agency experienced a reduction in staffing to ten agency staff persons and volunteers.

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 data estimated the population of Mecklenburg County as 890,515 and the percentage increase from 2001 to 2008 as 28.1% - a rate that is twice that for the State of North Carolina for the same time period. According to the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce the 2008 population was 695,995 and projected to 985,500 by 2018. The estimates

for the broader metropolitan area are 1.7 million for 2008 and 2.4 million by 2018. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey estimated that 9.3 percent of families and 12.7 percent of individuals live below the poverty line.

Actors. Early discussions centered on working with a committee of staff members as a vehicle for implementing the financial strategies outlined in its most recent strategic plan. Due to operational constraints, it was decided that the work would be carried forward by a subcommittee of the Board of Directors – the Business Solutions Committee. The members of the committee are: Mr. Raphael Sebastian, Vice Chair (Director, H.R. Operations, Coca-Cola Bottling Co. Consolidated), Ms. Wendy Taylor, Treasurer (Vice President, Internal Auditing Goodrich Corporation), Mr. Steve Boehm, At- Large (Executive V.P. First Data Corporation), Mr. Eric Watson, At-large (V.P. Talent Acquisition & Office of Diversity and Inclusion). At my request, additional team members are Mr. Patrick C. Graham, Ph.D., CEO/President and Ms. Sheila Funderburke, Sr. V.P. Programs. Dr. Graham and his Executive Assistant, Ms. Shannon McKnight served as the primary points of interface between the agency and me.

Events. Using an action learning approach, this study focused on the processes and experiences of those persons involved with producing the financial action plan necessary to deliver upon the financial goals set forth in the agency's strategic plan. Equally important to the study were the perceptions, meanings and learning attached to the process by the participants. Action learning takes an existing problem as the vehicle for organizational and personal learning (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; Coghlan & Pedler, 2006). The emphasis is to learn from the experience of attempting to solve a problem or make a change – it is focused on practice.

Processes. Particular attention was paid to the role of the Business Solutions Committee and Executive Director in responding to the prevailing economic and social conditions, setting new

agency directions, initiating change, building relationships, making decisions and exercising leadership for the agency. The study proceeded in five stages during the period November 11, 2009, to June 4, 2010.

Stage one. The goal of this stage is to gather marketplace data sufficient to:

- Understand the history of the Urban League of Central Carolinas

- Understand the socio-economic context in which the Urban League operates

- Identify potential participants

- Frame the study opportunity (role of the study in the Urban League's strategic planning process)

Most of this stage involved a review of literature that discusses the growth and history of contemporary Charlotte as a "New South city" and the factors driving that growth. In addition, this stage involved developing a convenience sample among my current networks of friends and colleagues to identify a list of potential key informants that might provide unique perspectives on the local socio-economic environment. This initial polling of five persons resulted in more than thirty potential persons across the public and private sectors. Based on these candidates, I identified a purposeful sample of eight persons based on those names that were repeatedly identified by a majority of my initial contacts. Purposeful selection allows the researcher to choose participants who can best help the researcher to understand the problem and research question (Creswell, 2003). It is a sampling technique based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research claims (Babbie, 1990). Accordingly, I developed and conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with these external (to the agency) resource partners. The objectives of these interviews were:

1. To gain a variety of perspectives on the social economic and political climate in Charlotte.

2. To gain a variety of perspectives on the role of the Urban League of Central Carolinas in the Charlotte metropolitan area.

3. To utilize these perspectives to assist in framing the context for and informing the action research study.

Each partner was contacted via phone call and email to discuss the purpose of the interview and their interest and availability to participate in the study. All persons were available and willing to meet within the requirements of the study schedule. Each interview was conducted at a place and timing of their convenience and an audio recording was made of the conversation. Although I maintained the same core questions, each interview improved my ability to be attentive to cues and nuances of the conversation and to note similarities and differences of perceptions and experiences of this city. These interviews ranged in duration from approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews were transcribed and returned to participants for their comments and clarifications as needed.

Stage two. The goal of stage two was to develop a body of information sufficient to inform and facilitate discussion of project parameters with the Urban League study team. This series of data collection activities began with one-on-one interviews with Urban League staff members. The purposes of these interviews were to gain understanding of the following:

1. Individual roles, responsibilities, and organizational relationships.

2. Personal assessment of the social economic and political climate in Charlotte.

3. Vision for the Urban League of Central Carolinas.

4. Perspective on CEO leadership

The CEO identified ten staff members as candidates for interviews. These persons were contacted via phone call and email to discuss the purpose of the interview and their interest and availability to participate in the study. Interviews were then scheduled at the agency to facilitate conducting the interviews on a single day. Each interview was conducted either in a conference room or the individual's personal office an audio recording was made of the conversation. Again, I maintained the same core questions, noting that each interview improved my ability to have a better appreciation and understanding of the programs delivered by the agency. These interviews ranged in duration from approximately 40 to 90 minutes. I contacted each participant following the interview to thank them again for their time and to see if they had additional questions or comments. The interviews were transcribed and returned to participants for their comments and clarifications as needed. Upon completion of these internal interviews, I began a review of organizational history and documentation such as board meeting minutes, press releases, annual reports, audited financial statements; and recommendations for external resources and possible participation by other institutions and organizations. Utilizing this supporting information, I worked in concert with the Urban League study team to review their redefined mission, goals and objectives and to define how this study should integrate with their strategic planning efforts. The clear focus and expectation was to advance the implementation of financial strategies and develop a plan of action that could respond to the changing philanthropic landscape and prevailing economic conditions. We came up with a general operating framework that would offer flexibility in light of team member schedules and personal circumstances (i.e., family problems, personal illness, travel schedules, etc.).

Stage three. Based upon the two series of interviews (external participants and agency staff members), I defined an initial set of research requirements that included gathering

information on (a) social enterprise models, (b) social change opportunities that may be addressed by the Urban League, and (c) competitive strengths of the Urban League. Throughout the course of the study, it was important to utilize a continuous process of comparing outcomes and results against intermediate goals and expectations, as well as data from other sources as a means of on-going feedback and consideration of the data, outcomes of tasks and activities. The key action item for this stage was a review of social enterprise strategies by various types of organizations to uncover a range of possibilities for impacting struggling communities and to gain an understanding of what it takes to transition to the use of earned-income strategies. This research was primarily my responsibility relative to other members of the Business Solutions Committee. Parallel to this effort was the identification of programmatic (social change opportunity) areas for the Urban League of Central Carolinas. Due to their understanding of community needs and agency resources, this work fell predominately to Urban League team members.

Stage four. The goal of stage four was to integrate the information gathering and data collection into real-time action learning and strategic planning. This was accomplished through a series of committee team meetings to (a) review strategic assessment findings, the results of key informant interviews; (b) discuss implications for the Charlotte Urban League if they elect to pursue earned income strategies and social venture creation; (c) identify criteria for social venture selection, and (d) define strategic requirements appropriate for attainment and achievement of newly refined mission, goals and objectives.

The initial content areas that formed the basis for project team discussion and planning included: Equitable Community Economic Development, African American Leadership, and

Social Entrepreneurship. Current trends and literature were used to offer a common framework to define implementation strategies appropriate for the newly defined agency mission and goals.

Inductive data analyses were used for this process. In this setting it was not possible, nor desirable, to presuppose what issues or priorities would emerge from the process and reflections of the participants and researcher. Similarly, the design for this stage of the study emerged based upon the needs expressed in team work sessions. The following actions comprised this stage:

1. Initial project team meeting – a discussion of study goals; external and internal interview findings; along with committee member perspectives as board members to identify strategic planning issues and opportunities and define near and long term priorities.

2. Meeting with CEO – a more in-depth discussion of internal and external interviews to identify potential leadership impact opportunities.

3. First team workshop/dialogue session – review social enterprise models and key requirements for social venture creation. The agenda for this meeting included the following points: The Non-Profit Landscape, The Socio-Economic Landscape, Discussion of Mission and Vision, 2009 Strategic Planning Goals, Social Enterprise Opportunities, Understanding Leverageable Assets, Assignments and Next Steps. Each member of the Business Solutions Team received an information packet prior to the dialogue meeting. Team members were asked to reflect upon these areas and offer their perspectives on opportunities and challenges for the agency. Following this session, I turned to my group of critical friends to offer insights, observations and ideas on the outcomes and stumbling blocks encountered along the way.

4. As result of some questions that emerged from the first session and follow-up conversation with the CEO, I decided it would be helpful to gain a better understanding of the economic development processes in the Charlotte metropolitan area. As such, information interviews were conducted with the following persons: Thomas M. Flynn, CEcD, Director, Economic Development Office for the City of Charlotte, Kenny McDonald, CEcD, Executive Vice President, Charlotte Regional Partnership and Isaac Heard, AICP, Community Economic Development Consultant; Part-time Professor of Geography & Urban Planning, University North Carolina Charlotte. These interviews were conducted at convenience and offices of each individual. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and provided for individual feedback on accuracy and content. The information from these interviews was utilized to assist in the study team's planning activities.

5. Second team workshop/dialogue session – a review of cause marketing, green economy opportunities and local factors for our action plans. The agenda for this meeting included the following points: Team Member Reflections on previous work session, Review of Social Enterprise Models, Overview of Cause Marketing Examples, Overview of Green Economy Opportunity Areas, Discussion of ULCC Leverageable Assets, Revisit Financial Goals and Action Plan Format, Determine Next Steps. Each member of the Business Solutions Team received an information packet prior to the dialogue meeting. Based upon the discussions held during this meeting, a framework was defined which advanced new financial planning goals and enabling strategies for the agency. Again, peer review was conducted to assess outcomes and study challenges. Both dialogue sessions were recorded using audio

and visual recording devises. The audio tapes were transcribed and utilized to inform action plan development. A copy of the video recording was made available to the agency CEO for their purposes as defined by the Board of Directors.

6. Third team workshop/action planning session – a review of the strategic plan and its implementation requirements. The planning proceeded from the recognition that earned-income strategies were a necessary strategy for the agency to pursue. The team brainstormed appropriate goals and objectives based upon development needs surfaced by the new mission and direction. In addition, the team highlighted some key organizational development issues, as well as the best way to utilize collaborative leadership strategies. While this session represented an important first step, attendance was low and additional follow-up was required. Based upon meeting outcomes, an expanded action planning framework was structured and forwarded to committee members for their detailed input and response.

7. Meetings with CEO and Treasurer – One on One meetings were held with agency CEO and Board Treasurer to get additional feedback on the final action plan, as well as, developmental needs for the agency (including Board of Directors) if the action plans are to be successfully executed. These meetings were held at the convenience of each individual at the office of the Urban League of Central Carolinas.

Throughout these phases of action, I found it useful to keep notes of my observations, reflections, and challenges encountered as the team worked through this process. This was particularly useful in raising new questions and challenging beliefs about the agency's relationship with its board. Developing an understanding of the data and information from interviews, select literature, and agency documentation was aided by the use of qualitative

analysis software as a tool to identity themes and make connections between the various sources of input. Charlotte routinely holds "public conversations" on major issues facing the region. I attend these gatherings consistently. On March 3, 2010, Patrick Graham was a panelist on such a forum entitled; "Can We Talk About Jobs?" and this presented an opportunity to observe how he works to advance the agency's impact on the community using popular education strategies.

Stage five. Consistent with community-based participatory research, reporting of the study results was shaped by the needs and issues of the agency and its constituents. Upon completion of the project team work sessions, the team provided recommendations for reporting the results and sharing strategies with the full Board of Directors and agency staff. In addition, strategies were recommended for utilizing and promoting the findings to the broader community.

Professional and Personal Interests

Considerable work, dating back to the industrial revolution, has been directed toward solving the urban problem. Traditionally, these solutions have been based upon need-based strategies that create a dependency upon outside services. I favor capacity-focused development (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) where the individuals, associations and institutions of a community come together in a way that multiplies the power of their resources. Traditional civil rights organizations struggle to find ways to remain relevant and viable in a post civil rights era as they seek to address the challenges confronting their historical constituencies. It is my hope that a closer examination of the strategies and choices made by the Urban League of Central Carolinas will reveal lessons for creating partnerships between large institutions and community-based organizations that result in the economic wellness of these communities. My intentions are to identify useful models (leadership, policies, and/or practices) that may be applied in other urban settings of similar context.

As someone who works to move our society closer to social and economic justice, for most of my career I have been involved in efforts to expand social and economic equity for African Americans. A large part of this work had been in building the capacity of minority small businesses and community development corporations (CDC). One of the things that I have learned along the way is that small businesses are critical to the economic foundation of our country. At the community level, these enterprises often provide jobs and new opportunities for those least prepared to compete in our new age economy. However, entrepreneurship alone is not enough to create viable and healthy communities. I recognize that my biases, views and knowledge may cause me to jump to conclusions or be overly critical in my assessment of success. This is especially true as it relates to my perspectives on community-based development. I came to this study with a view that community-based economic development involves job creation, business creation and wealth creation defined by and directly benefiting community members (residents and stakeholders). I see community development as the shared process of tackling our most persistent urban problems in specific communities and building internal capacity (residents and stakeholders) to sustain the improvements. However, I view my experiences in community building as valuable to creating relationships (reducing the distance between) with the various types of stakeholders whose viewpoints will contribute to this body of inquiry. Finally, I find it a most appealing coincidence that I am working with the National Urban League. For, it was with the Urban League during graduate school, that my father moved his career decidedly in the direction of civil rights advocacy while working under the direction of Whitney M. Young, Jr., who would go on to become CEO of the National Urban League.

Distinctions from Consulting Activities

It is important to think about how this action research dissertation differs from my usual consulting engagements. Perhaps the better way to consider this question is to focus on a few of the key elements in conducting community-based research – most importantly power and responsibility. My role in this process was more as information provider and discussion facilitator than expert and decision-maker. Two factors balance any power advantage, if any, that I may hold as researcher. First, the Business Solutions Committee is a subset of the Board of Directors and includes the CEO along with other executives from the corporate sector who are not likely to see themselves as other than senior partners in this exercise and the collaborative nature of this study in combination with its action learning focus required shared responsibility for its success. Greenwood and Levin (1998) continually reinforced the purpose of action research as: "the cogeneration of new knowledge, the development and implementation of plans of action, and the democratization of society" (p. 90). Such results are achieved through a series of dialogical interactions with and among organization team members. The research processes and controls outlined during this study enabled the Business Solutions Committee to arrive at the desired strategic decisions and action outcomes. Moreover, understanding the operational challenges and responses chosen by agency leadership may broaden the current literature and discussion regarding traditional African-American civil rights organizations and their role in the Twenty-First Century. Second, unlike a typical didactic consulting engagement where the consultant is asked to offer "an expert solution" that may or may not be accepted and implemented, this research enterprise was necessarily iterative involving cycles of action and reflection in order to advance organization learning and planning. Documentation of these processes including peer review and member checking served as a catalyst for collaborative

understanding and decision making. This focus on increasing participant control over the production of action plans and knowledge was necessary to meet the obligations of this effort to the intended communities. Likewise, these reflective cycles allowed me to step back from the engagement itself in order to connect the findings with extant literature on African-American Leadership, Community Economic Development, Social Entrepreneurship and Collaborative Leadership.

In addition, this was not a paid contractual relationship. In a typical consulting engagement, the consulting fee serves to solidify one's expert knowledge and passes some degree of power to the consultant for responsibility of the results and much of the work (and thereby relieving the client/partner of this responsibility). The result, if one is not careful, can be to reduce the consultant to an additional "pair of hands." Conversely, a paying customer often exerts the power of "the customer is king." Because there is no formal fee-based arrangement involved, the relationship development process began from a more level playing field. Decision-making was more collaborative in the way that choices were made to move the process forward. It was discomfiting but necessary to pull back from the desire to impose my process on the organization and trust that a process emerged suitable to the organizational challenges at hand. From an organizational perspective, this is a non-budgeted initiative that required time and internal resources. As such, it became something else to manage on top of everyday responsibilities. Typically, the client's fees entitle them to the results (final report) and I maintain work products for my future use. In this case, the results will become part of the Urban League of Central Carolinas' strategic action plans and the basis for the dissertation. Our mutual decisions on how these things serve to benefit all partners continue to emerge as I remain a part of the Business Solutions Committee. Beyond the local context, it is valuable to recall

Greenwood and Levin's (1998) reminder that transferring action research-developed knowledge from one context to another relies on understanding both context and making the assessment as to whether there are enough commonalities to make the link between them worthwhile.

Interview Protocol with Urban League Leadership Team and Staff Members

One-on-one interview objectives. Gain understanding of the following:

1. Individual roles, responsibilities, and organizational relationships.

2. Personal assessment of the social economic and political climate in Charlotte.

3. Vision for the Urban League of Central Carolinas.

4. Perspective on CEO leadership

Open-ended unstructured interview questions.

1. What is your present role and responsibilities with the Urban League of Central Carolinas? Aside from your formal responsibilities, what do you think is the most important role you play in this organization?

2. Have you had other roles with the Urban League prior to this? Please tell me about them.

3. How would you describe Charlotte as a place to live and work?

4. Imagine the Urban League of Central Carolinas as re-inventing itself, what do you think it should be doing given the Charlotte community as it exists today?

5. What key things must happen in order for that to be accomplished?

6. What other Urban League affiliates do you consider to be successful and why?

7. What do you feel are the responsibilities of the CEO?

8. How has the CEO affected this organization since his appointment?

9. What is the best part about working at the Urban League of Central Carolinas? The worst?

10. I'm wondering, how would your vision of the Urban League and its role have been different 5, 10, or 20 years ago?

Interview Protocol with City-wide Participants (target maximum of ten interviews)

One-on-one / small group interview objectives.

1. To gain a variety of perspectives on the social economic and political climate in Charlotte.

2. To gain a variety of perspectives on the role of the Urban League of Central Carolinas in the Charlotte metropolitan area.

3. These perspectives will be used to assist in framing the context for and informing the action research study.

Open-ended unstructured interview questions.

1. What is your present role and responsibilities?

2. Are you a native of Charlotte, NC? If not, how long have you lived here and what brought you to Charlotte?

3. What do you enjoy most about living and working in Charlotte? The least?

4. More specifically, how would you describe the social – economic – political aspects of Charlotte?

5. What key things must happen in order for these issues to be adequately addressed?

6. How do you think the Urban League of Central Carolinas serves to address these concerns?

7. What opportunities do you feel exists for the Urban League of Central Carolinas to exert greater community leadership? What do you think it should be doing given the Charlotte community as it exists today?

8. I'm wondering, how would your vision of the Urban League and its role have been different 5, 10, or 20 years ago?

Interview Protocol with City-wide Participants (Economic Development Approaches)

One-on-one / interview objectives.

1. To gain an understanding of the prevailing approaches and policies utilized for economic development in Charlotte, NC.

2. To gain perspectives on the topic of community economic development as it may be practiced Charlotte, NC.

3. These perspectives will be used to assist in framing the context for and informing the action research study.

Open-ended unstructured interview questions.

1. Would you provide me with an overview of Charlotte's economic development approach (underlying philosophy, key strategies over time, major emphasis, policies and practices) - If you will, a "Charlotte Economic Development 101..."
   - Underlying philosophy, major emphasis and responsible parties
   - Key strategies over time
   - Significant policies and practices

2. Does Charlotte's municipal approach seem to distinguish between "economic growth" and "economic development" in a meaningful way?

3. What types of things do you feel we do well in Charlotte and what areas of economic development must we improve?

4. The City recently reorganized to merge economic development and neighborhood services. What does the new department organizational structure mean for the citizens of Charlotte? What differences will they see?

5. Please tell me how you define community economic development?

6. What type of attention do you feel is paid to community economic development in Charlotte?

7. There are several urban centers that have pursued what they define as "an equity agenda." Do you feel Charlotte incorporates some of these policies and practices? Please describe.

Chapter IV: The Charlotte Context

Charlotte, North Carolina a New South City

Dr. Tom Hanchett, staff historian at Charlotte's Levine Museum of the New South describes Charlotte as a city that has reinvented itself from a tiny farm village in 1865, to a regional textile town in the 1920s to become America's second largest banking center by the year 2000 behind the driving forces of Hugh McColl, Bank of America and Ed Crutchfield, First Union Bank (Hanchett & Sumner, 2003). Hanchett's (1998) *Sorting Out The New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte 1875-1975* looked at patterns of land use, forces of urban change (economics, transportation, demographics, etc.) and southern traditions that influenced Charlotte's transformation. He ended his book on an optimistic note that the separation between black and white, poor and wealthy could be bridged. More than ten years later, Charlotte enjoys the fruits of its growth but finds itself faced with the nation's economic downturn. This downturn serves as a lens to look more closely at the 173 neighborhoods that make up Charlotte and some of the actors that strive to make the city a more equitable and inclusive place.

Like other growing Sunbelt cities, Charlotte welcomes its significant growth and enjoys a solid reputation for the same. The Charlotte Chamber website provides the following population estimates and highlights:

Table 4.1: Charlotte Chamber Population Data

Population	2008	2018
City	695,995	985,000
County	902,803	1.3 million
MSA	1.7 million	2.4 million
100 mile	6.9 million	9.4 million

In concert with this focus on growth, the Chamber highlights several of the city's accolades that include: # 1 Best Places to Live (RelocateAmerica.com, May 2008), #1 Best City for Black Families (BET Magazine, February 2008), # 1 Most Educated Workforces (Business Facilities – The Locater, July 2007) and # 2 Economic Strength Ranking (Policom Corporation, July 2007). *Business Outlook: Charlotte Economic Development* (Sharsky, 2009) describes Charlotte as a city in a perpetual growth cycle that capitalizes on its colleges and universities, a business friendly government and determined city leaders. This streak of boosterism was in evidence by the late 1800s and part of an already established practice of Charlotte entrepreneurs partnering with the City's elite to exercise a strong hand in the direction of development for the city (Hanchett, 1998). Although banks have spurred its city center growth for decades, the focus of the region is now directed toward and beginning to be driven by the following industries: health, energy, defense, finance, motorsports and film.

Charlotte Social Capital Surveys

With a population of close to 700,000 people, Charlotte has become this nation's 18th largest city and since 2006 the city has experienced the following shifts in racial and ethnic diversity:

- Percentage of households where a language other than English is spoken at home (from 14.6% to 17.2%)

- Hispanic or Latino Population (from 7.4% to 11.2%)

- Black or African American Population (from 32.7% to 33.5%)

- Asian Population (from 3.4% to 4.1%)

However, what the overall figures cannot show is how the city struggles to accommodate its' increasing ethnic, racial and economic diversity. Sadly, a century has passed since W.E. B.

DuBois wrote: "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" (as cited in Gates & West, 1996, p. 106), and in many cases it remains so. A study of social capital in the Charlotte region found that Charlotte was among the highest ranking areas in the country for volunteering and charity and that its residents were most likely to be engaged in formal civic associations (McCoy & Rash, 2001). This survey gained its momentum from Robert Putnam's national study built upon the popularity of his work *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000). Social capital has enjoyed a variety of meanings and uses; it is generally accepted to mean the value of social networks and enduring relationships between and among people. Markus (2000) defines civic engagement as "citizen's participation in activities intended to affect public policies or address public concerns" (p.2). In this regard, participation is expected if one is to be viewed as a leader in the Charlotte community. But Charlotte presents itself as a paradox if one agrees with Burns (1978) that leadership is causative and results in a change in our social relations and political institutions moving them to higher levels of moral development. This paradox is evidenced by the fact that just as Charlotte ranked highly in the social capital study on indices of civic engagement it ranked poorly on social and inter-racial trust (McCoy & Rash, 2001). The findings of the 2001 study caused concerned citizens to reassess their beliefs and move toward a more inclusive future. One of vehicles created to help bring about change was Crossroads Charlotte. Funded primarily by the Foundation for the Carolinas and the John L. Knight Foundation, Crossroads Charlotte is a countywide initiative designed to pursue an accessible, equitable and inclusive Charlotte. Since the earlier study, Charlotte's social capital has been put to the test primarily around issues of education, immigration, affordable housing, public safety and transportation.

The 2008 Crossroads Charlotte Social Capital Benchmark Community Survey (Caratao, 2009) suggests that the majority of participants find their community as an excellent or good place to live and more than half of respondents believe that to be the case for various groups of people. A comparison to the 2001 Survey indicates that on the indices of social trust, inter-racial trust, and giving and volunteering the number of respondents scoring high has shown little change but on the index of diversity of friendships, the percentage of respondents scoring high has increased from 23% to 51%. Other significant survey findings include:

- Education – a majority of respondents indicated quality of education was good or fair but with significant differences in satisfaction across racial and ethnic groups. Although more than half of the participants agreed that Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) promoted positive relations among students of diverse backgrounds almost the same percentage of participants believed that the schools are becoming more segregated.

- Public Affairs/Political and Civic Participation – the findings indicate differences in civic participation based upon educational attainment, race, ethnicity, and household income. Participants with only a high school education and less than $30,000 income are more likely not to have had any involvement in voting, community projects, political meetings, and so forth.

- Diversity/Informal Socializing – Results of the survey consistently revealed that age and education were significantly related to informal social interaction. Respondents ages 18-34 were more likely to report a high frequency of interaction across race and neighborhoods while those with less than high school education were less likely to socialize with friends outside their race or neighborhoods.

- Inter-Racial Trust – When respondents were asked "to rate their level of trust for racial or ethnic groups – Caucasians, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians and people of Arab ancestry – regardless of respondents' race or ethnicity" the responses indicated that Caucasians were most likely to trust each of the five groups "a lot," Hispanic/Latino participants were more likely to trust each of the five groups "a little," African-Americans were more likely to trust Whites, Latinos, Arab descent "some" but trust other African-Americans "only a little."

Other Evidence to the Contrary

As national publicity demonstrates, Charlotte appears to be doing relatively well in the face of a slowing economy. A closer look, however, offers a less than encouraging view. U.S. Census Bureau data reflect the following:

- The percentage of families living below the poverty level grew faster between 2000 and 2006 than the actual overall population growth for the same period.

- In 2006, 40% of housing was renter occupied and almost half of those renters spent more than 30% of their household income on housing.

- The 2006 infant mortality rate (deaths per 1000) for African Americans in Mecklenburg County is three times that of whites (12.3 versus 4.1)

- During May 2009, the Charlotte Observer ran a series of articles on homelessness that estimated at least 5000 and possibly 8000 persons without permanent housing in Charlotte. The article found that Charlotte's focus on emergency shelter ran counter to a national emphasis on getting homeless people quickly into affordable housing. (Leland, 2009)

Perhaps a more striking example can be found in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School (CMS)

system. In 1971, the Supreme Court upheld busing for integration in the *Swann vs. Charlotte-*

Mecklenburg decision and Charlotte was seen as a model for progress across the South and the

nation. Then in 1999, a group of white citizens reopened the case and a federal judge found

busing to be unnecessary and unconstitutional because it was a race-based remedy. The ruling

was upheld in 2001 by the full Circuit Court of Appeals (Gaillard, 2006). By 2004, fifty years

after the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, 66 of 134 schools in Charlotte-

Mecklenburg had enrollments that exceeded 75% nonwhite, and minority students represented

more than 90% of the population in 38 of these schools (Lassiter 2006). CMS End-of-Grade test

results in 2008-9 reflect the following performance gaps:

Table 4. 2: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools – CMS District Results
End of Grade (Reading & Math) and End of Course Composite Comparisons

	Percent Proficient (% at or above grade level) 2005-2006	Percent Proficient (% at or above grade level) 2009-2010
All Students	EOG: 62.0	EOG: 66.3
	EOC: 66.2	EOC: 84.2
White Students	EOG: 84.9	EOG: 88.4
	EOC: 83.3	EOC: 94.4
African American Students	EOG: 44.5	EOG: 51.6
	EOC: 50.0	EOC: 76.9
Hispanic Students	EOG: 51.0	EOG: 55.0
	EOC: 55.5	EOC: 80.1
Economically	EOG: 43.8:	EOG: 51.3
Disadvantaged Students	EOC:49.9	EOC: 77.0

Source: EOG and EOC Subgroup Composite Comparisons: Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Guilford County, Wake County, and North Carolina 2005-2006 vs. 2009-2010

Although Charlotte has not been subject to major public demonstrations or civil unrest,

the fault lines are often drawn along political and racial lines among neighborhoods, the City

Council, the Board of Education and the Board of County Commissioners. For example Gaillard

(2006) recalls in *The Dream Long Deferred: The Landmark Struggle for Desegregation in Charlotte, North Carolina*, during the fall of 2004, five term County Commissioner Bill James commented as to why the schools could not teach inner-city black children in an email to twelve hundred people. "They live in a moral sewer," said James, "with parents who lack the desire to act properly." Although there was great outrage at these remarks, Galliard accurately states that "the simple fact of a statement that divisive, uttered confidently by a public officeholder, revealed something basic about the city's changing mood" (p. 193).

The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South by Matthew Lassiter (2006) explores the political culture of the metropolitan South. His examination of the transformation of southern politics in Atlanta, GA, Charlotte, NC and Richmond, VA include the interplay of race, class, localism, nationalism, populist ideology, electoral politics and metropolitan space. Lassiter defines Sunbelt Synthesis as a growth blueprint comprised of an aggressive booster vision with pillars of rapid economic development and racial harmony enforced through de facto segregation and co-opting dissent. He offers the following commentary on the impact of Sunbelt Synthesis.

> The practitioners of the Sunbelt Synthesis pursued a strategic commitment to racial peace through the planning policies of residential segregation. The corporate leaders of the New South, a group that has received excessive credit for guiding local communities into compliance with desegregation, also played the most significant role in constructing a metropolitan landscape of spatial apartheid that first reoriented then outlasted the arrangements of Jim Crow. (p. 11)

Lassiter observes that Charlotte, more than any Sunbelt metropolis, "continues to embody the possibilities and the perils of the latest New South" (p. 327).

The Significance of Charlotte's Nonprofit Sector

To get a sense of these struggles, it is useful to consider the role of the nonprofit sector as well as the topics of "public conversations" that are convened when latent concerns begin to burst forth in the public eye. Ever since the struggles of the civil rights era, Charlotte has defined itself as a city willing to talk through difficult issues. In the last few years, the Community Building Initiative (CBI), Mecklenburg Ministries, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee, and WFAE – FM Radio have moved to the forefront of creating space for these conversations. A sampling of these conversations includes:

- "Politics & Race: Obama and Beyond" (WFAE Public Conversation – February 9, 2009)

- "Can We Talk to Each Other in Difficult Economic Times" (Community Conversation: CBI/Mecklenburg Ministries/Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee – June 30, 2009)

- "Charlotte Mission Possible" (WFAE Public Conversation – September 5, 2009)

- "Can We Talk About Jobs: Unemployment, Economic Recovery and Retaining Our Workforce" (Community Conversation: CBI/Mecklenburg Ministries/Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee – March 3, 2010)

- "Can We Talk About Affordable Housing: Fears, Facts and the Future" (Community Conversation: CBI/Mecklenburg Ministries/Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee – June 24 & 30, 2010)

Roger Sarrow is President and General Manager of WFAE, the Charlotte NPR affiliate station. When asked to describe Charlotte's philanthropic community, he offered the following comments in a personal correspondence:

> I think the non-profits are trying to decide if they have evolved into a "post-post" Old School era. When I arrived in Charlotte 20 years ago, everybody talked about the five (white) (male) leaders who controlled "everything"….which included philanthropy. Hugh McColl, Ed Crutchfield, and so on. Sarrow continues, there was an interesting OBSERVER article last month that said non-profits in Charlotte have to do a much better job of going beyond the "usual" 500 donors who are tapped by all the campaigns. (R. Sarrow, personal communications, May 14, 2010)

In short, nonprofit organizations must broaden their resource base and fund development strategies. The culture of Charlotte is such that volunteerism and charitable giving is generally accepted as part of the fabric of life. Therefore, the channels are in place making it relatively easy for anyone to participate while also making it somewhat more challenging not to engage in some aspect of civic life. The dominant paths for philanthropic giving are the Arts & Science Council (ASC), the United Way of Central Carolinas, the Foundation for the Carolinas (FFTC) and the Leon Levine Foundation. The ASC, founded in 1958, is the Charlotte community's chief advocate for the arts, science, culture, history and culture. It acts, more or less, as a trade association representing the interests of member organizations and fundraising on their behalf. The United Way of Central Carolinas supports 96 member charities through its Community Care Fund. In June 2010, the United Way announced that it would meet 93% of member requests. This follows two years of disruption due to controversy surrounding CEO compensation in 2008. The Foundation for the Carolinas is among the top ten community foundations in the nation. It serves as a major civic force in advancing initiatives to meet community challenges and serve the charitable purposes of its donors. The reach and impact of the foundation cannot be overestimated. The Leon Levine Foundation, founded by the owner of Family Dollar Stores, has emerged as a tremendous philanthropic force and granted over $75 million since its formation in 1980. The foundation seeks to improve the human condition in the areas of education, healthcare, Jewish religion, and human services. In light of the current economic downturn, a

select few news stories will serve to illuminate the distress felt among nonprofit human service providers in Charlotte-Mecklenburg in the wake of the collapse of the United Way:

1. August 2008—*United Way's Challenge: Rebuilding a Region's Trust.* (Frazier & Hall, 2008) describes how Gloria Pace King, CEO of the United Way of Central Carolina, was being forced to resign due to controversy over the recently approved $1.2 million compensation and retirement package. Although her compensation had often come under question, her results were impressive. During her tenure, the agency became one of the strongest in the system with campaign revenues growing from $18 million to over $45 million under her leadership (Price, 2008).

2. December 2008—The Critical Need Response Fund (www.fftc.org) was launched with a $1 million from the Levine Foundation. The fund was designed as an emergency relief program for Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents facing immediate and dire circumstances. Partners in fundraising and distribution included Foundation for the Carolinas, Mecklenburg Ministries, Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, and the United Way of Central Carolinas.

3. June 2009—*Does Our Philanthropic Community Understand That Jobs and Education are Basic Needs Too?* (Graham, 2009), the Urban League argues for a holistic approach to the current financial crisis. The agency advocates that philanthropic investment must flow not only to those providers of basic needs (shelter, clothing, food and other crisis-oriented services) but also to empowerment services (workforce development, job training, education and financial stability services). Their approach recognizes that employment and education are also part of our current economic crisis. Patrick Graham, CEO, stated: "We cannot continue to

give resources that keep people in the same social and economic condition" (Graham, 2009, p. 2).

4. August 2009—*More Changes Are Ahead for United Way of Central Carolinas* (Spanberg, 2009) reflected on the difficulties encountered by United Way agencies in the wake of a $14 million reduction in campaign revenues following the ouster of Gloria Pace King in 2008. Jane McIntyre, newly hired Executive Director (following period of intense change under an interim executive) foresaw sweeping changes over the next 12-18 months.

5. September 2009—In his Letter from the Editor, David Boraks of the *Davidson News* outlined a new media consortium – Charlotte Mission Possible. He wrote, "We hope to engage our separate and intersecting readership in a regional conversation about the situation." The goal of Charlotte Mission Possible was to outline the challenges facing local nonprofits and to seek citizen input for ideas to meet Charlotte's regional charitable needs. The database of responses was maintained by the *Charlotte Observer.*

6. October 2009—The Community Catalyst Program (www.fftc.org) was established to encourage the creation of a more efficient, effective and innovative nonprofit sector. Funded by the Levine Foundation's $1 million challenge grant, the program will award grants in support of new service models, mergers and other collaborations that will enable nonprofits to thrive in an environment of diminished funding and increasing demand. A 17-member committee of community leaders spearheaded the formation of the program and it will be managed by the FFTC and key partners—the United Way of Central Carolinas and the Arts and Science Council (ASC). Prior to

the formation of this program, the FFTC retained the Bridgespan Group to conduct a study which revealed that there were approximately 4000 nonprofits in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and nearly 800 were identified with potential for innovative service models, collaborations, partnerships and mergers (Foundation for the Carolinas, 2009).

7. June 2010—After the shortfall in the 2008 campaign where member charities lost an average of 40% of their United Way funding, the agency was able to provide 93% of the support requested by its 96 member agencies (Price, 2010). The Urban League of Central Carolinas received $104, 460.00 (an increase of over 58 percent) for workforce development.

Speaking to those of us in attendance at the "Can we talk to each other in difficult times?" community conversation, former Charlotte mayor Harvey Gantt reminded the audience that the city has the key ingredients to weather this storm – courage of leadership, grassroots followship, and generosity but we need to make investments in human services infrastructure and collaborations rather than depend solely upon charity to see the way forward. It is against this backdrop that Patrick Graham must guide the Urban League of Central Carolinas as it seeks to pursue the promise of *The Opportunity Compact* on behalf of the marginalized and underserved citizens of Charlotte. New directions may call not only for empowering communities but also for a reordering of relationships with the philanthropic and corporate communities. Dr. Michael Bennett, Professor and former Executive Director, Egan Urban Center, DePaul University comments on the challenges inherent in this direction.

> Given the fact that the issues are far more complex now that the voting rights or access to public accommodations grievances have been fundamentally addressed. Jobs and economic development, in general have long been a focus of black liberation

endeavors but traditional civil rights organizations have never been quite equipped to handle them adroitly. Public pressure/protest and legal approaches have seemingly been their strong suits. The other haunting factor, to me, has been the fact that black folks have never really "owned" our organizations. All of them, except for SCLC, are financed by white donors and or white philanthropic sources. The NAACP, Urban League, PUSH, etc. could not and have never survived on black dollars. That says a lot about the types of agendas that they can pursue. (M. Bennett, personal communication, July 10, 2008)

Along a similar line of thought, Walters and Smith (1999) pointed out in *African American Leadership*, "The consensus that clearly emerges from the literature reviewed here is that the theoretical constructs for Black leadership do so in terms of the subordinate power position of Blacks relative to Whites" (p. 64). As such, questions and considerations of Black leadership are all contextual and intertwined with social and political history – both past and present. "The concept of Black leadership, considering the socio-economic status of the community it reflects, must by definition be change-oriented as it confronts the dominant culture" (p. 236). In his assessment of the disparate benefits and consequences of Charlotte's school desegregation case, Stephen Smith (2004) draws upon Derrick Bell's interest-convergence thesis to asks, "Do black interests in securing racial justice receive short shrift when they do not converge with the business elite's interest in economic growth and development" (p. 221)? He concludes that civic tranquility and economic growth are generally stronger motivations than racial justice. With the changing demographics of American society, this clash of cultures is likely to accelerate when combined with the shadow of greater social and economic disparity in our new diverse urban cultural landscape.

A Brief History of the Urban League of Central Carolinas

In 1978, community leaders, elected officials, clergy and other concerned citizens came together to explore the need for an organization that would help ensure the economic self-

sufficiency of the area's African American citizens and racial inclusion. In accordance with the guidelines of the National Urban League, a study of the "State of African Americans in Charlotte-Mecklenburg" was conducted. The assessment indicated a need for workforce development and advocacy for black workers who were too often underemployed and unemployed. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League was incorporated November 6, 1978. A multi-service, non profit agency, it became the 116th affiliate of the National Urban League, the 31st in the South and the 4th in the Carolinas. In January 1999, the Urban League moved into its current home at 740 West 5th Street, Charlotte, NC and officially changed its name to the Urban League of Central Carolinas to better reflect its reach and impact (www.urbanleaguecc.org). Building upon its 2008 community-based strategic plan, the Urban League continues to engage in cutting edge programs including: the Professional Adult Empowerment Program (PEP), the Linking Youth to Technology Program (LYTE), the Young Lives on the Edge documentary and offering paths to Microsoft Site Certification, Broadband Fiber Optic Certification, Career Readiness Certification, financial literacy and furthering one's education.

A Way Forward

In her introduction to *Ethics, The Heart of Leadership*, Joanne Ciulla (1998) writes, "Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good" (p.xv). As the pace of change speeds up, as our communities become more diverse and as our lives become more complicated, we must work at building these relationships – it won't happen without considerable effort. A need exists to study effective leadership in order to build conceptual models for strategies that will enable us to tackle emotionally-laden policy issues such as social equity. We need to better understand the issues of constituents and how to bring them fully into

the process of building just and equitable societies. In *Beyond Deliberation: Citizenship as Public Work*, Boyte (1995) states that rebuilding a sense of commonwealth practice in our diverse communities will require "multidimensional work of people with different interests and perspectives who address common problems" (p. 16). But we must first see the commonality in our problems.

In August 2009, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation awarded the Urban League of Central Carolinas a start-up grant to examine disparities across ethnic and class lines, provide policy recommendations and measurements of community success. Commenting on this award, Patrick Graham said:

> As our leadership ponders a vision and plan for our community in terms of economics and human services, this initiative provides a way for us to identify key issues and precise measurements. We all must hold ourselves accountable and develop policies and measurements that lead to real change and inclusion (www.urbanleaguecc.org, para. 1).

This study, conducted in five stages, utilized an action research process to define the necessary and appropriate earned income strategies and supporting action plans given prevailing socio-economic and political factors. Chapter Five provides the findings and reflections on these processes.

Chapter V: Findings

Purposes and Objectives

This study is an examination of how one affiliate of the National Urban League seeks to execute its redefined mission in the midst of new realities that include changing demographics in the marketplace, a challenging economic environment, and a more complex political landscape than our African-American civil rights organizations have confronted in decades. The questions under study are: What leadership approaches and operational strategies should traditional civil rights organizations, such as the Urban League, undertake in this post-civil rights era? What business or operational models must they utilize to achieve their mission? The context for looking at these questions and their responses is through this agency's pursuit of a financial strategy that will open the door for new partnerships, expanded community advocacy and greater financial sustainability. This chapter presents findings that emerged from the study stages and iterative cycles during the period November 2009 – June 2010. The ongoing nature of action research is such that knowledge emerges as a consequence of actions (Greenwood & Levin, 1998) and increases the participants' understanding of the question or problem and hopefully leads to solutions (Herr & Anderson, 2005). This chapter includes discussion and analysis of the interviews, committee work sessions, results, reflections of participants, and my reflections on the process (interventions, successes, failures, outcomes and recommendations).

Background

This work did not begin simply with a set of research questions about the Urban League of Central Carolinas. Rather, it is the outgrowth of my relationship with Patrick Graham and our respective interests in Charlotte furthering equity and diversity. Some years back, I recruited Patrick to join the Board of the Diversity Council of the Carolinas while I was an officer of that

organization. Over the intervening years, Patrick has emerged as one of the up and coming leaders of Charlotte. One of his first steps as President and CEO of the Urban League was to open the agency's strategic planning process to public participation. It was during this time that we began to discuss some type of study that might assist the organization in achieving its goals and objectives. Our conversations touched on a number of topics that moved us in the direction of my partnership with the agency. First, 2009 and 2010 would see the centennial celebrations of two major black civil rights organizations – the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded in 1909 and the National Urban League (NUL) founded in 1910. In spite of their longevity, these institutions are continually questioned regarding their relevance to the current political, demographic and economic environments. Second, a closely related subject was that of President Obama's election. Manning Marable cast it in this light: "To many, the impressive margin of Obama's popular-vote victory suggested the possibility that the United States had entered at long last an age of postracial politics" (Marable & Clark, 2009, p. 1). Neither Patrick nor I accept the concept that race and ethnicity no longer matter in politics. Third, during the last twenty years, disparities in wealth and well-being have garnered more media attention. The NUL's Equality Index is but one example. Correspondingly, social purpose organizations have become more visible in our worlds. Bornstein and Davis (2010) offer a variety of descriptions of this industry sector including this one: "Social entrepreneurship is a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption, in order to make life better for many" (p. 1). Initially, Patrick saw social enterprise as a means to diversify the financial streams of the League in a tough economic climate. But, social enterprise has two other dimensions. These dimensions are innovation and self-

sufficiency. We felt these aspects needed to be explored by the Urban League of Central Carolinas (ULCC). And fourth, the shake-up among the local philanthropic community that centered on the changes at the United Way continued to send shockwaves through its partner agencies. The coordination of schedules and availability between me, Patrick and his leadership team proved to be a hurdle but the opportunity for an action research study eventually presented itself during the latter half of 2009. At a conceptual level, we agreed for me to join a task team to explore a path to financial stability for the agency. It took awhile for that team to take shape. At first, Patrick leaned toward a team comprised of his senior staff members but their competing responsibilities and work load proved to make that an unfeasible approach. Patrick and the Board of Directors decided that the Business Solutions Committee, an ad hoc committee of the Board would participate in this study. The Business Solutions Committee is responsible for creating and strengthening business partnerships and considering venture opportunities. In an effort to bring about more movement by this committee, Patrick decided to join the committee. I suggested that a senior staff member be asked to participate on the committee in order to help facilitate the transfer of any learning to the staff organization. The team was finally crystallized by December 2009.

Stages I, II, and III

The early stages of this process were intended to accomplish three goals: to develop an understanding of the socio-economic and political context of Charlotte and the issues that confront the ULCC; to develop a body of information sufficient to inform and facilitate discussion of project parameters with the study team; and to provide input for the committee planning process. These stages involved interviews with two groups: a external group of persons from the broader Charlotte community and a group of persons who worked within the

organization. The results of these interviews were summarized and served as discussion points in later stages in the process. The early stages of the process also included a review of information and materials sufficient to understand the history of the growth and development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and the history of the Urban League of Central Carolinas. This information is presented in Chapter Four – The Charlotte Context.

Stages IV and V

The latter stages of the team's process were designed to develop an action plan that built upon the agency's current strategic plan, specifically the section on financial strategies. The Business Solutions Committee was asked to explore:

- Concepts of social venture creation

- Opportunities associated with the green-collar economy

- Other income-related areas necessary for the agency to achieve its mission and goals

Moreover, in creating an action plan the committee was challenged to reflect upon and discuss the issues and opportunities represented by these strategies. Stages IV and V involved a series of three team planning sessions. During the course of the planning sessions, it became necessary to gain a better understanding of the region's economic focus and economic development approaches. This was accomplished through interviews with local economic development professionals. Finally, some decisions remain regarding how the financial strategy and supporting action plan will be shared with the appropriate audiences and implemented within the organization. This is consistent with the action research process. Herr and Anderson (2005) cautioned that due to the long term orientation of action research "It may not be possible to write up the whole undertaking, but rather just a piece of the understanding or intervention that has come about through the inquiry" (p. 85).

Stage One - External Interviews

In preparation for the planning work with the Business Solutions Committee, I drew upon friends and colleagues to develop a list of persons external to the Urban League that could offer a diverse set of observations and perspectives on this city and region and the role of the Urban League of Central Carolinas. Working from an initial list of over 30 persons, I selected a list of eight persons engaged in public/private partnerships across the Charlotte region. To provide some idea of the breadth of perspectives provided by these persons, I have identified these persons by their role and/or title:

- Director Emergency Financial Assistance (for a community based service provider)

- President & CEO (a regional economic development partnership)

- Director and Facilitator (a non profit leadership development organization)

- Director and Facilitator (a non profit leadership development organization)

- Director Urban Institute (a university research institute)

- Sr. Partnership Specialist (for U.S. Federal agency) and community advocate

- Retired Director Urban Institute (a university research center) and community volunteer (economic development, affordable housing, land use)

- Executive Director – Community Relations (a governmental agency)

Each partner was contacted via phone call and email to discuss the purpose of the interview and their interest and availability to participate in the study. I arranged to meet each person at a time and place of their convenience (most often their offices). These persons spanned in age from their early 30's to their early 70's; three persons were from the region but most have moved to Charlotte from other parts of the country. Their tenure in Charlotte ranged from four years to 45 years. There were three women among the eight and the racial mix for the

group included three white, four black and one Latino. Most importantly, each of these individuals was engaged in work that made them keenly aware of Charlotte's history, economic environment and social disparities. Interviews ranged in duration from approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Although I maintained the same core questions, each interview moved in a direction dictated by the enthusiasm of my partner in these conversations. These core questions were:

1. What is your present role and responsibilities?

2. Are you a native of Charlotte, NC? If not, how long have you lived here and what brought you to Charlotte?

3. What do you enjoy most about living and working in Charlotte? The least?

4. More specifically, how would you describe the social – economic – political aspects of Charlotte?

5. What key things must happen in order for these issues to be adequately addressed?

6. How do you think the Urban League of Central Carolinas serves to address these concerns?

7. What opportunities do you feel exists for the Urban League of Central Carolinas to exert greater community leadership? What do you think it should be doing given the Charlotte community as it exists today?

8. I'm wondering, how would your vision of the Urban League and its role have been different 5, 10, or 20 years ago?

Stage Two - Staff Interviews

After speaking with persons outside of the agency, the next step in data collection was to engage members of the Urban League's leadership team and staff members in conversation about their work and how they sought to impact the communities they served. An important

aspect of these interviews was hearing what they had to say about their vision for the agency and the leadership exhibited by the President/CEO.

The CEO identified ten staff members as candidates for interviews. They represented a cross-section of the organization from members of his leadership team to administrative assistants. I worked through his Executive Assistant to schedule as many interviews as possible on a single day at the offices of the Urban League. As it worked out, I was able to conduct all but two interviews on one day and completed the remaining interviews over the next couple of weeks. Again, I maintained a core set of questions but allowed the staff member to go with their strongest areas of interest in terms of the direction of the conversation.

1. What is your present role and responsibilities with the Urban League of Central Carolinas? Aside from your formal responsibilities, what do you think is the most important role you play in this organization?

2. Have you had other roles with the Urban League prior to this? Please tell me about them?

3. How would you describe Charlotte as a place to live and work?

4. Imagine the Urban League of Central Carolinas as re-inventing itself, what do you think it should be doing given the Charlotte community as it exists today?

5. What key things must happen in order for that to be accomplished?

6. What other Urban League affiliates do you consider to be successful and why?

7. What do you feel are the responsibilities of the CEO?

8. How has the CEO affected this organization since his appointment?

9. What is the best part about working at the Urban League of Central Carolinas? The worst?

10. I'm wondering, how would your vision of the Urban League and its role have been

different 5, 10, or 20 years ago?

These interviews ranged in duration from approximately 40 to 90 minutes. The ten staff

persons included seven women and three men, their tenure with the agency ranged from 1 year to

25 years and their ages ranged from the early twenties to mid-fifties. All but one of the persons

interviewed were black. The staff members seemed open and willing to share their experiences

and insights regarding the agency. For the purposes of this study, I have committed to maintain

the anonymity of their responses.

Findings from Interviews

The majority of these interviews were one-on-one situations. But, on two occasions, I

met with two persons together. These two occasions were the external interviews with the

University Research Center executives and the meeting with the nonprofit leadership

development organization. In general, the course of the interviews proceeded from an

introduction of the study where I described the proposed study and answered any questions or

concerns that they might have had. It was at this point that I offered them a consent form to

review and sign with their approval to participate. Next, they described their current roles and

responsibilities and the organizations where they worked. I also asked how long they had lived in

Charlotte and if they would tell me something about their background. With our introductions

complete, the interviewees were then asked to comment on Charlotte as a place to live and work

then, more specifically, to describing the socio-economic and political landscape of Charlotte-

Mecklenburg. Each person came to this question differently, thus providing emphasis on

different perspectives of Charlotte life. I listened attentively to discover what they first chose to

focus on, the areas of concern that they highlighted and the amount of discussion they dedicated

to particular topics. I made note of their responses and looked for commonalities among the participants' responses and also to see if there were unique perspectives that stood alone from others. I found that there emerged some common themes on topics like geographic location, economic opportunity, urban growth, education, diversity, affordable housing, and disparities in wealth. Following a discussion of the problems and issues faced by many in the region, I pursued a course of inquiry regarding the status of the ULCC and what role, if any, might the agency pursue in dealing with the identified issues. I was curious to see how the participants connected the issues they identified and the opportunity areas that might be addressed by the ULCC. As the interviews progressed, I would draw on points of emphasis in one interview to see if it held similar interest for other partners. The data collection and analyses process included having the interview notes transcribed and reviewed for accuracy by the participants then examining the notes and listening to the audio recordings to identify emergent themes and ideas.

The observations made in these conversations were not intended to offer a definitive view of Charlotte opinion; rather, they were used to fuel dialogue among the Business Solutions Committee regarding the strategic challenges and opportunities facing the agency in its efforts to claim a strong leadership role in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Traditional African-American focused civil rights organizations have been challenged in the last couple of decade for their relevance and their ability to make a difference by reducing some of the issues confronting black communities. One line of questioning more prevalent in the '90s has been, "what is your role since legal rights have been secured for minorities?" But, many insist that the injustices that black political organizations sought to address still remain today (Johnson & Stanford, 2002). The perspectives offered throughout this study confirm there

is indeed more work to be done to address current disparities. There were several commonalities between the remarks of the external practitioners and those of the ULCC staff regarding the need for action and the role that the ULCC might play. These themes are discussed in the following sections.

   Separation, disconnection and disparities. External participants and staff members alike spoke of Charlotte as a place of growth and opportunity. It is a city that is striving to be a world-class destination. It is fairly well accepted that Charlotte takes pride in its newness, its growth and economic opportunity (Hanchett, 1998). As I proceeded from one interview to the next these themes were reinforced. It seemed that everyone with whom I spoke highlighted opportunities that could be found here. An African-American woman from this region and in her mid-fifties remarked on her career in Charlotte: "Charlotte gave me – and I've been here a long time - economic opportunity." She stressed that as a college educated African American woman, had she lived in some of the smaller towns she may have been slotted towards becoming a teacher or some other more traditional role within the community. She continued, "So for me I think it represented economic opportunity." These sentiments appear to be quite similar to that of an African-American man within the same age group, also from the region who stated, "I've enjoyed the fact that there are opportunities here if a person is willing to work hard and take advantage of those opportunities." The Director of a university research center hails from one of the smaller communities not far from Charlotte. He feels that the city's growth has provided his generation of young people the chance to graduate from college to maintain a commitment to place, roots and traditions but to do so with some real opportunities that extended from the manufacturing base that supported his family. He commented:

I am a first generation college student as are my siblings. Neither of our parents and none of our grandparents had gone to college and they all worked at those manufacturing plants and so the changes we've seen here in Charlotte have given us different opportunities not only economically and professionally but also culturally, and I include in that cultural diversity our cultural changes.

However, almost without exception the interview participants quickly expressed concerns for those aspects of Charlotte life that they found to be discouraging or disturbing. One staff member observed: "Charlotte is a great place to live if you get properly connected but if Charlotte does not get to know you then you can have problems making it." While another staff member commented, "Charlotte promotes itself as a world class city but it is still a small town. It is also a city where the media promotes divisiveness by its coverage of stories, particularly focusing on negative aspects of communities of color." A retired university executive who has been in Charlotte for more than forty years summed up this segment of our conversation this way: "Well, I guess in broad strokes we have just said that there is a continuing segregation of housing, education, and practically everything in the community."   He offered this concise statement as someone who has studied Charlotte's urban development for many years.

Charlotte's social capital rankings highlight the separation that exists in Charlotte. In the midst of growth, vibrancy and civic engagement, we can remain disconnected from one community to the next. In 2003, Crossroads Charlotte (www.crossroadscharlotte.org) brought together 21 community leaders to imagine Charlotte ten years forward. They created four plausible scenarios as a vehicle to spark conversation, cooperation and collaboration. These scenarios were:

- *Fortress Charlotte* – where Charlotte changes for the worse. It becomes a city divided because no one paid attention to the warning signs.

- *The Beat Goes On* – Charlotte still seeks to become a "world class" city but ignores the growing anger and issues that linger just below the surface.

- *Eye To Eye* – Charlotte is making good progress and its citizens have the interests, tools and resources to work more closely together.

- *Class Act* – Charlotte has found its way to becoming a vibrant, inclusive, booming city.

Now seven years hence, the scenario you see as "most likely" depends upon your individual experience with Charlotte. An external partner, Latino woman and community advocate who came to Charlotte 12 years ago following job and family opportunities, spoke to her experience:

> So I don't know what it is. I have no idea what it is. It's a sense of – I find Charlotte very shallow in a way with no soul. Very materialistic. The community is so disconnected from each other. People can go from their, you know, gated community all the way to uptown to the Bank of America building and go to their job and never see that there's any need in our community. And so when you tell them about, you know, we have these issues, they're totally oblivious to what happens to community. They don't see the homeless, they don't see child abuse, and they don't see anything. They just kind of go on their way and I think out of all the communities that I lived in around the country, this is the one that is [more] segregated than any other place.

I asked both groups of individuals about the segregation in Charlotte, and they all seemed to feel that the contributing factors were the gaps in wealth and differences of race and ethnicity. In his analysis of the divisions among communities, the retired Urban Institute Director said: "The economic range in our community is probably wider than it's ever been and it's not necessarily because there are more poor [people]." He attributes the economic gap to the expansion of the upper class. Similarly, another of the external partners concludes that wealth has become a greater source of division than even race. She stated: "I think if you have wealth you have access; access to the economy, access to the social elite and access to politics… I'm saying that I think, money gives you access in Charlotte and that doesn't matter what color you

are." Yet, for others, race does seem to matter. A staff member said, "It took me a few years to get used to Charlotte. The people were not as friendly as I had expected. The city can be a bit closed to new comers. I would like to see more cultural opportunities. There are lots of indications of hidden racism."

In *Sorting Out the New South City*, Hanchett (1998) examined the city's growth and housing patterns between 1875 and 1975. He found that urban renewal projects did a lot to disrupt what were at one time fairly integrated neighborhoods. The flow of federal funding aided in the elimination of entire black neighborhoods in city center. It also directed financing in patterns that segregated communities and accelerated outward expansion in Charlotte and other cities across the nation. With the city's corporate growth of the eighties and nineties, families followed higher paying jobs to Charlotte and new developments continued to bloom as farmland gave way to an expanding metropolitan area. At the same time, Charlotte's skyline began to race upward and has only slowed due to the current recession and problems within the banking industry. One external partner, who works daily to meet the needs of people in crisis, puts it this way:

> Charlotte, like many other cities, has this phenomenal perimeter concept where those who want to live outside the city can get to and from in a way that circumvents the pockets of poverty and such. I often talk about there's folks in this community who can go to work, go to church, go to Harris Teeter, go to Belk Theater, South Park, and never really see poverty face to face.

A drive around Charlotte will confirm that the declining neighborhoods are to be found predominantly in clusters on the west, north and east sides of the city. As it happens, these are more than likely communities of color. One participant sees it as a problem for the region: "This notion that you can identify big chunks of Mecklenburg County as either almost all white or almost all black or almost all ethnic now is in my view a failure on our part to not do a better

job." The *2008 Charlotte Neighborhood Quality of Life Study* found that of Charlotte's 173

Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs) 63 (36.4 %) were classified as "transitioning" which is

defined as having some weakness in one or more indicators and 20 (11.6%) were classified as

"challenged" which is defined as having lower than average scores on some or all indexes. Of

Charlotte's NSA's, 73 fall within City Within A City (CWAC) boundaries and make up the inner

city communities. Within the CWAC neighborhoods, 18 (24.7%) were identified as challenged

and 24 (32.9%) were identified as transitioning. Slightly more than 40% were identified as

stable. The study is conducted every two years and the 2010 results will be forthcoming.

Table 5.1: Summary Quality of Life Study Results

Category	Charlotte NSAs	CWAC NSAs	Non CWAC NSAs
All	173	73	100
Stable	90	31	59
Transitioning	63	24	39
Challenged	20	18	2

Source: 2008 Charlotte Neighborhood Quality of Life Study

In December 2009, the unemployment rate for the Charlotte metropolitan area reached

12.1 percent. Although the recent unemployment conditions have made people more empathic to

the struggles of the unemployed and underemployed, a growing gap persist in employment

opportunity (low wage vs. high wage) and family income levels. According to *State of Ethnic

Charlotte Data*, the black unemployment rate in Mecklenburg County for 2008 was 231.9% of

the white unemployment rate. The Economic Policy Institute's *State of Working America

2008/2009* reported that the 2000s were the first time on record that median family income failed

to surpass it prior peak (Mishel, Bernstein, & Shierholz, 2009). Still, people remain attracted to

Charlotte as a place of opportunity even in the face of potential unemployment or even

homelessness. One external participant pointed out that "Charlotte actually has citizens who are

homeless, actually has citizens or children who go to bed at night hungry. We have people,

women and children living in the streets, living in homeless shelters. It doesn't make sense [given all the wealth in Charlotte]." Jobs were the central topic at a community conversation held in March. Patrick Graham provided data on income disparity in Charlotte. This data indicated the median income of a white family in Charlotte was $66,000, almost twice that of the $37,000 median income for an African-American family.

The participant comments regarding the gap in economic status and economic opportunity in Charlotte are consistent with local university studies, city reports and foundation-funded research efforts. They demonstrate a strongly recognized area for improvement in the dynamics of the region.

Public education and the political divide. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) and public education serve as an almost perfect example of the fault lines of race, class and geography in this region and across the country. The CEO of an economic development group stressed this point most emphatically:

> There is validated research that clearly shows a disparity in the way we distribute education opportunities in this country. From an institutional perspective sometimes we ignore it. We have this elephant in the room that we ignore. Now we have got to create a system of equity within the system. CMS has got to be committed to every youngster having the same educational opportunity within a classroom environment.

He did not stand alone in these sentiments; other interviewees also felt that we ignore the underlying problems associated with the increase in racially identifiable schools within CMS. These schools have high numbers of poor students and it seems that we fail to provide the resources necessary to address the needs of children in these mostly inner city schools. One participant warns: "If we fail to pay attention then we're going to end up with some major problems somewhere down the line." Several of those interviewed felt that much of the rancor

was being driven by politicians who frame choices as either/or propositions. One person offered

this example:

> It has been interesting to me that black parents in the inner city and white parents in the suburbs have not come together to work for the greater good of all children and not just the children in their communities. Here's what's happening. There's just one pool of money and it's very limited, and you've got white parents in the suburbs saying we need that money to build additional schools because we don't have enough room. You have parents of color in the inner city saying, well our kids are going to these old dilapidated torn down schools with no resources. And the problem is that they're looking at it as it's either here or there. Now because they have framed it as either/or, nobody's getting what they want.

The level of on-going polarization that exists between communities was identified as another

Charlotte pressure point by both groups of interview participants. The battle lines between

competing interests are frequently on display at meetings of the City Council, County

Commissioners and especially the Board of Education. One participant with years of experience

in local government reflected:

> As long as that polarization exists it's going to really be hard to mobilize the resources, and I don't just mean financial resources but human resources and the political willpower to really begin to address some of these disparity issues. And I don't see the private sector stepping up and trying to solve some of these problems.

This topic represents one example of how when hearing a new observation that felt like it might

prove significant, I would raise them as considerations in subsequent interviews to see if there

was an affirmation or a differing point of view. A similar perspective was voiced in another

interview:

> It has always been amazing to me in this community that you have your politicians from either persuasion whose sense is that I am only accountable to my constituents or the ones who voted for me or the ones who are registered in the same way that I am registered and I have no responsibility to the other party or to those who don't vote for me.

As we searched for solutions regarding the political divide in later conversations, a participant

suggested that Charlotte might be reaching a turning point and in need of new political

coalitions. He stated,

> Harry, I think part of what has compounded the problems here in Charlotte is this
> polarization – of course we're seeing that polarization nationally and it's part of the
> political climate we all live in, but I think in particular in Charlotte, Mecklenburg it
> really plays itself out between the outlying parts of Mecklenburg County and the
> center city, kind of urban core of Mecklenburg County.

Given the strength of the tensions between these two directions - supporting growth in the

outlying areas on one hand and revitalization of the city's urban core on the other, we were

concerned that something had to give and that may well be those communities, families and

persons with the fewest resources to weather the storm. Writing about Charlotte's new Mayor in

February 2010, columnist Mary Curtis asked the following: "A different style has come to the

mayor's office. But does style equal substance when it comes to policies to alleviate the

disparities and lack of trust that - despite progress – still exist between races and communities in

Charlotte?" (Curtis, 2010, p. 1) In addition to elected officials, one might expect to see

leadership emerge from within the communities. But counter to this expectation, one participant

observed that it takes financial security to step out on a limb – "it is very hard to be about

grassroots leadership here." Another partner commented, "I think about the organization HELP

and how some people don't like it. I've actually heard people say that's not the kind of

organization we should have in Charlotte because it is driven by confrontation and that's not

something we do." Helping Empower Local People (HELP) is a multi-generational, multi-racial,

broad-based organizing network that focuses on local issues. It is an affiliate of the Industrial

Areas Foundation (IAF) that was founded by Saul Alinsky (www.charlottehelpiaf.org).

This theme of political discord and uneasiness was expressed by those outside of the Urban League and those within the agency. It was my observation that the participants saw the animosity as almost inevitable – a sign of the times – but not desirable. Participants saw it as more than divisive. They considered it to be destructive or at best ineffective.

Concerns for African-American youth. Given the disparities in educational outcomes and increased participation in gangs and drugs, the outlook for many black youth struck a distressing chord among all of the interviewees. The black men in both groups spoke most passionately to these concerns. Drawing on his experience in large urban communities, one person said:

> There are a lot of kids who just don't believe that education pays… They make a conscious decision to not participate in the mainstream of society, and that's all tied right into the family, the breakdown of the nucleus family and an environment where it doesn't matter which way you go. These kids are growing up in an environment where going to jail is no longer a negative. And that's no stigma. Just like there is no stigma associated with getting pregnant now as a teenager. It doesn't matter anymore.

One of the other participants considered the connection between poverty and responsibility as he looked at the issue of teenage pregnancy.

> I think if you're poor and your opportunities for providing support for a potential spouse and children are poor then there's a good possibility that you may not accept the personal responsibility that you have for taking care of that child. And that's not to say that it doesn't happen across all economic lines because it does, I'm just thinking that there's probably more propensity for it to happen if you're already poor. Again, that's connected with economics.

And yet another said, "We have too many situations where some young black males don't understand the importance of having a good education to the success of their future. For some reason they're not making that connection." The education argument can be hard to make when there are no immediate examples of education paying in a big way when compared to other

examples of success in the streets. A black suburban executive spoke in alarming tones about the need to turn the situation around by reaching at-risk children at an early age. He said,

> Some of these folks black and white in my socioeconomic environment really don't realize in some communities how bad it is, how dangerous it is and how totally disconnected these youngsters are from society, and they think it's only just a few. No, it's not just a few, and these are potentially good kids and these kids are not dummies but they have chosen and truly believe that the path of gang membership and crime affords them more reward than the mainstream.

During the course of these interviews, staff members invited me to attend the ULCC premier of *Young Lives on the Edge*, a documentary film on Charlotte's troubled youth. The film focused on the lives of four young persons and their challenges to find a way to turn around their lives. Making the film took six months and involved over 100 kids ages 13 – 23 in its filming. The idea for the project was conceived by Patrick Graham as a vehicle to give voice to these young men and women. The result was an anti-violence and substance abuse video and curriculum. The program has been picked up by CMS Parent University. The film and the panel discussion that followed provided a glimpse at how dire the circumstances are for many youth and demonstrated the need for multi-dimensional efforts to reach a population that it is easy to give up on.

The status and future outlook for the ULCC. The Urban League was founded in 1910 to focus on housing, jobs and employment opportunity (Thompson, 2010) and 100 years later the organization remains focused on those same things but while dealing with a much more complicated set of circumstances. Following the discussion about Charlotte, I turned our attention to the role of the Urban League of the Central Carolinas and the ways that the agency might address some of the previously expressed issues and concerns. In general, the participants felt positively about the National Urban League and by extension its Charlotte affiliate, the Urban League of Central Carolinas but felt the local agency had fallen into the background

during the last few years. They were hopeful that under the leadership of Patrick Graham it would renew its stake in the broader Charlotte community. Dr. Patrick Graham assumed leadership of the Urban League of Central Carolinas in September 2007 following an extended period of the agency operating without any permanent President/CEO. Since that time he has focused on fund development, strengthening old connections and building new partnerships, strategic planning and redefining the agency's role in the Charlotte community. The perspectives offered by the external and internal partners in this study highlight the importance of visibility for an organization that seeks to have the type of impact desired by the ULCC.

The Urban League of Central Carolinas has a proven record of working with at-risk young adults to get them connected to educational and career opportunities and to prepare them to succeed in those endeavors. One external participant who has worked with the agency made this observation:

> I think perhaps what impressed me the most were those times where they worked with a kid who just had no idea that they could have a successful future. And they got the kid to have a positive sense of self and some skills to go with that and those kids then had the opportunity to be successful if they chose to be.

But as enthusiastic as his remarks may have been, it seems that most were unaware of the accomplishments that the agency has been making since Graham has taken on the leadership of the ULCC. More often, the comments were along the lines of "I can just start off by saying in the five years I've been here I have not seen as active a role in part of the Urban League as perhaps I have in other communities." My colleagues also commented on the dynamics of the city's philanthropic community and the resulting impact of the agency having lost its CEO for a period of time. Another external partner, who was quite close to the agency's previous CEO and understands the League's history in Charlotte, sees it this way:

> I think the whole leadership thing was a huge part of taking away their credibility. And in Charlotte – I'm gonna say this and it's my assessment – is that if you give people an excuse to quit on you, they will. And I think the change in leadership was an excuse for people to quit on them, and I think people took advantage of them and they quit on them.

The necessity for building and maintaining institutional relationships was emphasized by another who described the challenges that Patrick must face this way," historically the Charlotte Urban League has not been looked upon as an organization that is on the forefront of change in this community and that Patrick is going to have to raise the visibility and quality of relationships maintained by the agency."

It became clear when I talked with staff members that their motivation and reward came from the work that they did on a day-to-day basis. When asked to reflect on the best part about working for the ULCC, some of the responses included: "The best part is being part of a larger movement – changing society"; "The best part is moving people to a different and positive level in their lives"; "It is a caring and concerned place to work"; and "I love working with the other staff and achieving our mission." Their enthusiasm is not diminished by the challenges that confront the organization. By their own observation, these challenges include: "We need more resources," "The worst part [of our work here] is our lack of resources to do what we are capable of doing," and "It would be nice to have more compensation and time to celebrate our successes." Another observation by a staff member dealt more with agency control and self-sufficiency: "The worst part is being hostage to funding agencies." This comment seemed closely related to the comment of an external partner who said that the agency cannot allow funding to dictate or water down its mission. Beyond the issue of funding, another concern expressed by staff members was that of board turnover and what they perceived was the board's lack of understanding of the agency mission. Board governance and community engagement

was also referred to by one of the interviewees outside the agency who works extensively across

the Charlotte nonprofit community and offered this point of view:

> I think that in Charlotte how your board is structured is a key part of how the people in the community view it. It's a little bit like the idea that we've all said, that this is a community that values and kind of brags about their community or board work or community service. And so if you don't have a board that is perceived as being effective, then I think you have a tougher time making it.

Even though recognizing diminished perceptions and other challenges facing the ULCC,

it was the overall consensus from these interviews that there were pressing needs in Charlotte-

Mecklenburg that were consistent with the mission and focus of the Urban League. These

partners encouraged the organization to step more fully into the fight to close disparities and

positively impact troubled communities.

My interview partners were uniformly enthusiastic about Patrick Graham's impact on the

organization. The Director of the Urban Research Center spoke encouragingly of Patrick's

leadership since joining the agency: "Just in the last year I can't tell you how many times

Patrick's name keeps coming up and I hear similar sentiments – he is the man for the job." The

staff members seemed to feel in accord with that observation. Four points regarding his

leadership style emerged from their comments:

1. Patrick's vision for the organization and his aggressive in pursuit of this vision.

2. Patrick's ability to bring new funding.

3. Patrick's willingness to listen to staff members.

4. Patrick's desire to grow the talents within his organization.

As I spoke with staff members and explored their expectations of leadership, what I heard was a

desire for a CEO to be someone who would not simply guide and lead the organization but

demonstrate a willingness to think out of the box. As might be expected, they felt the most

important responsibilities included: advocating for the agency, driving revenue creation, focusing on continuous improvement, and building relationships inside and outside of the organization. One person summed it up this way, "To lead, to listen and to advocate" while another stressed the importance of "keeping us linked closely with the National Urban League movement. Their observations regarding Dr. Graham's leadership resemble in some respects those of John Townsend in *Master Leaders* (Barna & Dallas, 2009), who stated,

> A healthy culture is one where people know they are around a leader who will lead, who will actually take the reins, create the vision, be ahead of the pack, make the hard decisions, care about the people, and protect the mission and the goals. The people know who the leader is. (p. 45)

Whenever I visited the agency, I felt the energy and enthusiasm that permeated the building as you walked from one floor to the next. It was there even when you knew that people had put in long hours to pull off an event or meet a deadline. The comments about the effect that Patrick's arrival had on the agency provided some indication of why this is the case. Comments relating to agency renewal included: "Patrick has given the organization new beginning. He is both aggressive and progressive in his approach"; We are moving forward and it's visible in new programs, new funding and new relationships"; "Patrick is the best thing that has happened to this agency – strong, dynamic, energetic, young and bright"; and "He has helped us view ourselves as more of a family and not just a number of different programs." Other comments spoke to his management style: "He is honest and accessible. He brings clarity to the organization (internal and external)"; "He is turning the agency around. He is good at uncovering hidden talents in his organization. He is a good leader but not a micro-manager"; and "He is very effective at translating the vision and mission down to our individual roles. There were also observations of his role as change agent: "We are alive again. He has a new youthful energy. He

allows people to grow in their roles"; "He is passionate about our mission. He is willing to take risks. He is positioning himself to get the right people on our board"; and "He has set the tone as a change agent. He is much more involved with all communities across Charlotte and the city movers and shakers. He is beginning to build board capacity." At the end of these conversations, I got a sense of a renewed confidence around the organization. There was an obvious desire on the part of staff members for the organization to rise to another level of performance and impact among Charlotte's nonprofit community. When considering the historical mission of the Urban League and today's environment, the staff members felt the mission remained relevant but they had to keep pace with a more complex set of problems, a more diverse population and a global economy.

Roles for the Urban League. When I asked the interviewees to imagine the Urban League of Central Carolinas as re-inventing itself and to consider what the organization should be doing given the Charlotte community as it exists today, the responses could be aligned around three themes and directions.

Advocating for low-wealth communities. One of the issues that was consistently presented in the interviews was the growing economic/class divide. There appeared to be a real desire to see those issues addressed in a broad-based fashion. One person described it in this way: "I think a task that they might undertake, although a tough one is to be the spokesperson or organization for a broader group of African American and low income populations." Others observed that there is an opportunity for collaboration with organizations in the Latino community. This advocacy role suggested by external partners is shared by staff members as well. Most (7) of the staff members I talked to wanted to see the agency move to a more visible role in community advocacy. They expressed viewpoints that included: "We must embrace our

new mission on a regional level and become a more vigorous community advocate," "We must engage throughout Charlotte at a grassroots level" and "I would like to see us be a change agent in Charlotte."

One alternative approach to advocacy that was suggested by an economic development professional was to serve as a thought leader for social enterprise – to serve as the central resource for African-Americans organizations and other disenfranchised groups seeking to bring innovative solutions to their communities. He observed:

> I think they can be a thought leader in helping other organizations understand what's going on in the community. We don't have a think tank, a social entrepreneur think tank. Why can't Patrick and the Urban League become that source of information on civic entrepreneurship?

Responding to diversity & forging strategic partnerships. While remaining true to its historical mission on improving the conditions of African-Americans in urban America, there was recognition that the growing diversity in Charlotte presented an opportunity for greater community impact. Eight of ten partners spoke to this issue. One woman stated: "Charlotte is more diverse than ever before. We must move more into the Latino community and also bridge gaps to other ethnic communities." In addition to serving more diverse communities, it is possible to expand the reach of services and impact through new collaborations with other agencies. A couple of specific recommendations were: "We can multiply our effect by enlisting more partners in our efforts and by building our alumni network of people that have come through our programs" and "I would like to see more training partnerships with businesses, universities, and other training programs."

Focus on self-sufficiency and capacity building. The refinement of the organization's mission to drive economic self-sufficiency is well received by all of the participants both internal

and external. One aspect of building economic equity that seemed important was the concept of entrepreneurial development. The anticipated benefits from such a course of action were increased community wealth and more job creation via small business expansion. Representative statements included: "We need an entrepreneurial focus in our approach and in our programming along with new methods for delivering education and training"; "I like our new direction and support more focus on entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency"; and "We need to be the premier agency for building up our youth in a holistic sense." However it was felt that in order to pursue these courses of action, it would be necessary for the league to build capacity and move toward greater financial independence. Staff members made the following suggestions: "I would like to see improvement of our technology utilization in all of our programs"; "Building the capacity of our staff will be a necessity"; and "We have become too attached to the United Way and certain corporations. We have to be a profit-making nonprofit organization and diversify our funding streams." The staff members feel good about working for ULCC and are committed to seeing the agency reclaim a position of significant influence and leadership in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Although, I did not get a sense from staff members of needing a "post-Obama" transformation of the agency.

Findings from Agency Documents and Materials

Upon completion of interviews, I reviewed documentation including board meeting minutes (monthly 2008 – present), press releases, annual reports (2006 – present), and audited financial statements (2006 – present), the Strategic Plan including Strategic Goals for the three-year period 2009 – 2011. Additional documentation reviewed also included: several agency grant and funding proposals; National Urban League *State of Black America* reports and the 2009 National Urban League Conference program. These findings revealed that the Urban League of

Central Carolinas (ULCC) envisions itself as becoming the premier change agent inspiring the community to attain socio-economic and educational inclusion for a global economy. Its aim is to restore lost dignity to the communities of the Charlotte region through education, training, and placement. Many of these communities are hindered by high rates of un/underemployment and low levels of educational attainment. Since 1978, ULCC has provided assistance to more than 27,000 households and over 81,000 individuals have been empowered by their services. More than 5,000 people have received financial literacy and life skills training in their programs and seminars. In the past year alone, over 2,000 youth received technology, leadership, and workforce skills through their programs. Their placement rate for adult workforce participants was eighty-five percent allowing parents to provide for and serve as examples for their children. The agency continues to build its programming in areas related to green technologies, broadband technologies and financial literacy to better match the emerging economic focus in the Charlotte region.

The financial documents reflect a trend of relatively flat annual revenues around $1.2 million with particular vulnerability to United Way funding and fluctuations in program fees. These have been offset, in part, by strength in government and private grants. Budget shortfalls have been cushioned by draws against financial reserves. The financial considerations resulted in the decisions at the end of 2009 to sell their headquarters and to reduce staffing levels.

Utilizing this supporting information, I worked in concert with the Urban League study team to review their current vision, mission, strategic goals and objectives. It was determined by the CEO that the goal for the Business Solutions Committee would be to develop a plan of action that could direct the implementation of their financial strategies in a manner that responded to the changing philanthropic landscape and prevailing economic conditions. The agency's

financial circumstances, along with funding cuts by Charlotte's major donors, and prevailing trends within the philanthropic community reinforced the agency's interest in considering more innovative financial strategies. The external and internal interviews made explicit the importance for the Urban League to assert a more powerful leadership role in the Charlotte community. With all of these considerations, I crafted the initial study plan based on my own experiences in organization planning and team facilitation combined with feedback from Patrick Graham regarding what he felt might prove to be a useful direction to take.

Stage Three - Roles and Responsibilities

The results of the earlier interviews coupled with the findings from agency documents illuminated two primary needs to be addressed by the planning team. These two areas were:

1. Long-term financial sustainability for the agency.

2. Developing education and training programs that prepare individuals and families to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

These targets areas are in line with the National Urban League's *The State of Black America 2010 // Jobs: Responding to the Crisis* report. As the organization marks its 100th year, the NUL launches its "I AM EMPOWERED" campaign. The campaign focuses on four aspirational goals for America to be achieved by 2025:

1. Every American child is ready for college, work and life.

2. Every American has access to jobs with a living wage and good benefits.

3. Every American lives in safe, decent, affordable, and energy-efficient housing on fair terms.

4. Every American has access to quality and affordable health care solutions.

(NUL, 2010, p. 9)

My primary role in this process was to inform the work of the Business Solutions Committee. This was achieved by bringing information and resources to the planning effort and secondarily to facilitate dialogue and discussion among team members. In this role, I informed the process by providing current practice information regarding (a) the prevailing philanthropic environment, (b) social enterprise models, (c) social change opportunities that may be addressed by the Urban League, and (d) competitive strengths of the Urban League. Parallel to this effort was the identification of programmatic (social change opportunity) areas for the Urban League of Central Carolinas. Due to their understanding of community needs and agency resources, this work fell predominately to Urban League team members.

A Reflective Pause—Reflections on early interviews and agency interactions: [1]

- My initial hopes and aspirations for this project are that it can prove to be a catalyst to the type of change that will restore the agency to a major leadership role in Charlotte. In spite of programmatic success, the agency seems to have fallen "off the radar" except by those who utilize its services.

- The interviews and market data indicate that there is still an important role for civil rights organizations to play in building an equitable society. Education and at-risk youth were often mentioned.

- The scheduling conflicts that made it difficult to form a team for this study may prove to be an on-going process issue. The underlying cause is not clear at this stage but it could impact the quality of our work.

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[1]The Reflective Pause is a device that I used to think about my progress on this study. Throughout the document, I have included Reflective Pauses drawn from my journals and notes to provide some insight into how I made sense of the data and generated ideas along the way of developing this dissertation.

- One of the things that seemed to emerge from these discussions, was an expectation that the Urban League's primary role was workforce development. I am somewhat concerned that agency staff did not envision a role for the organization that would take it to a more expansive and assertive role in the city. Nor that civil rights organizations might need transform themselves for the 21st Century.

- Patrick has an opportunity to expand his vision of shared leadership. It may be useful to discuss Raelin's (2003) *Creating Leaderful Organizations – How to bring out leadership in everyone with him*. Some of the practices (concurrent leadership, collective leadership, collaborative leadership & compassionate leadership) are evident in his style of leadership. It will be interesting to see if they are present on the board.

- Observation: staff seems to rely heavily on CEO for direction, innovation and creativity

Stage Four - Results of First Planning Session

The committee planning sessions represented the heart of the engagement. Team members participated in dialogue-based work sessions to meet the goals as set forth by the President /CEO who convened this ad hoc committee. In a meeting prior to the actual planning sessions, the Business Solutions Committee discussed and affirmed a goal statement that would guide its work.

Committee goal: To develop a strategy and implementation plan for agency financial sustainability consistent with our vision to be the premier change agent inspiring the community to attain socio-economic and educational inclusion in a global economy.

I introduced myself to committee members and discussed both my interests and my role in the planning process. I also indicated that my commitment to working with the Urban League would extend beyond the work on this dissertation. We spent some time discussing potential barriers and challenges to completing the task in a timely manner. The issues that seemed most significant at the time appeared to be: lack of knowledge about successful social enterprise models and the availability of some committee members who were not present for this initial meeting. It was decided that the most likely path to achieving our goal would be by utilizing two planning sessions where I would provide committee members with information and resources on agenda items prior to each session. Then based on this information, team members would share what they learned regarding the topics and engage in dialogue to examine how these topics related to the Urban League of Central Carolinas and any opportunities and challenges they may have presented.

Session framework. The general framework of these sessions was set forth in this way:

- 1st Planning Session: A discussion of the prevailing socio-economic conditions and their implications for nonprofits including funding models, new business requirements, community economic development, agency self-assessment, and successful social venture models. *Not to be focused on solution development but shared learning and dialogue.*

- 2nd Planning Session: A discussion of potential strategies and their requirements, new business demands and expectations for success, selection of priority strategies and action plan development. *Goal to come away with a plan of action.*

The data collection and analyses process for these planning sessions included having video and audio recordings made of the planning sessions. The audio recordings were transcribed and

reviewed for accuracy by the participants. I then examined the transcripts reviewed the videos to identify emergent themes and ideas. The recordings of the work sessions were turned over to the agency President.

Prior to the first planning session, team members were asked to comment in writing on the following points: best program opportunities, new revenue strategies, opinions on social ventures and the role of the Charlotte Urban League in community economic development (CED). As a whole, their comments indicated that:

- There was little attention given specifically to the agency's role in CED.

- The team did not have much understanding of the social venture movement or the possibilities for social venture impact on the business.

- The primary thinking seemed to be an interest in expanding workforce development training in the emerging technology areas now being focused upon in the region.

- There was a consensus on the importance of achieving broader diversification in funding.

The first session was conducted at the Urban League offices on March 6, 2010 (see Appendix E). The first conference was designed for participants to reflect on the data and information I provided concerning the shifting environment for nonprofit organizations and local socio-economic conditions, and to consider the agency's mission and vision in light of those topics. The session was attended by four of the seven committee members.

Following a review of our goals and objectives for the committee, we agreed that it would be important to speak candidly about the challenges confronting the organization and any questions that emerged about proposed strategies and business approaches that we might recommend. We also agreed that the more participation we could get from committee members

the better our outcomes were likely to be but getting alignment of everyone's schedule was a concern.

Significant areas of discussion.

The non-profit landscape. I moved forward with the agenda by reviewing the data on the nonprofit environment.   Our starting point was recognizing the independent sector as an economic engine approximating the 7th largest economy in the world with 9.4 million employees, $322 billion in wages and 4.7 million full-time volunteers. In spite of its size, it is being severely impacted by its ability to generate revenues. At the end of 2008, 52% percent of nonprofits were experiencing cuts in funding. We worked to address these four discussion questions:

1. Describe the structural changes you see in the philanthropic environment in Charlotte.

2. What do you expect to be the result of Mission Possible and related efforts?

3. What has been the League's experience?

4. Where do you see things going for the Urban League of Central Carolinas?

As we discussed these questions, team members indicated that the Charlotte experience matched national trends. For example, the ULCC saw their United Way funding reduced by 40% which was about twice what they expected. In an effort to continue to put people in a position to gain employment, the board made the decision to fund key programs from their financial reserves. Those committee members who were less familiar with the fund development community were surprised at the trend data regarding industry sources of funding. They felt that these trends highlighted the need for fund diversification and more aggressive marketing efforts. One of the aspects of local giving that stood out was that corporations and other major funders had shifted their giving more in the direction of basic necessities. The comment was made that

Charlotte is a very giving city but it is also very paternalistic in its giving. So, the challenge is

trying to engage them [funding community] in thinking about their giving as investing.

The conversation then turned to two major regional efforts to shore up financially

strapped nonprofits, Charlotte Mission Possible and The Catalyst Fund. Both of these efforts

were seen as paternalistic initiatives with assumptions about the basic efficiency or inefficiency

of the small to medium sized nonprofits in Charlotte. Considerable discussion dealt with this idea

that these very popular initiatives were grounded on the premise that corporate approaches to

management efficiency were the solutions to the problems faced by these organizations. Patrick

Graham pointed out that most of these agencies were already operating at base level capacity so

there was not a whole lot of lift to be achieved through collaboration or mergers because the

issue was not waste but capacity. Some perceptions about specific agencies were felt to be driven

by the way issues were framed in the media. A case in point was how differing news

organizations wrote about the decision of the League to sell its building which is located in

uptown. One viewed it as an example of business shortcomings and another cast it in the light of

an opportunity for the League to better serve its constituency from a community-based location

and facility.

The socio-economic landscape. Our next topic of conversation was to talk about the

socio-economic landscape of Charlotte in relation to national trends. The committee members

felt that the current *State of Ethnic Charlotte* initiative was positioned to bring these issues to the

forefront. More importantly, it was the spark for increasing the visibility for the League's Joe

Martin Institute as the advocacy arm of the agency. Members recognized that this report could go

on to become one of the League's signature products. I took this opportunity to alert the

committee to the potential for (a) a popular education strategy and (b) a social venture partnership with this product.

The conversation then shifted to what either of those paths might mean for the organization.

Mission, vision, and strategic goals. Team members revisited the vision, mission, and goals and reached a consensus that community empowerment was the essential core of what the agency was about. With this recognition, it was felt that the financial goals as currently defined were insufficient (perhaps too tactical) to support their mission and vision. At this point, I thought it important to have the participants speak in more specific terms rather than general concepts. The dialogue shifted to what community empowerment meant. We reached no definitive answer but determined that the critical elements were: having resources for an acceptable standard of living, being able to make decisions for one's family rather than having decisions imposed by others, entrepreneurship and having some level of influence over community economic development. At this turn in the conversation, I asked if committee members were aware of how economic development was pursued by the City. The committee members did not have any in-depth knowledge of those processes or what the various players did beyond the generally accepted role of the Charlotte Chamber. I agreed to bring forward information for our next planning session.

Social enterprise opportunity. Our discussion of social enterprises grew out of the following definition by The Institute for Social Entrepreneurs: Social enterprises directly confront social needs through their products and services rather than indirectly through socially responsible business practices such as corporate philanthropy, equitable wages and

environmentally friendly operations – or through the unrelated business activities mounted by nonprofits.

The team found itself in agreement with the two primary motives to pursue social enterprise strategies: (a) to increase the reach of the mission and (b) to create funding opportunities for the agency. However, the challenge was in understanding what this could look like for the organization. A considerable amount of time was allotted to discussing specific examples of what other organizations had accomplished and what stages they went through to reach their levels of success. Questions were raised back and forth around ULCC's grant-funded programs and whether those should be viewed as social enterprises. After review of the social enterprise best practices, we agreed that in order to qualify, there needed to be an explicit social enterprise strategy. In the case of the existing programs, we decided that although they represented earned-income they did not meet that standard. We concluded that in the current business model, we could not consider them social ventures.

The discussion moved to a current business venture that was before the board and the difficulties encountered in its pursuit. This topic demonstrated a source of tension among the organization leadership. On one side there was a sense of needing to get this done quickly and evaluate its potential as a strategy for the agency. On the other side was a need to have more thorough evaluation of alternative locations for the venture. And unfortunately, the result has been no movement and no decision. Some of this failure to move was attributed to some board members who failed to recognize that this needed to be a "working board" since no staff were available to carry out committee work. I shared with the team that the social venture literature and case examples demonstrated that organizational culture change was the most significant challenge confronting nonprofits who head down this path. More than any other topic that day,

organizational culture and culture change among the board dominated the discussion in terms of content and passion. The concerns were about how to move from a risk-averse culture of traditional funding strategies to one that mirrors the concept of self-sufficiency that they advance in their mission. I pointed out that organizational change requires a "burning platform" and constant communication to maintain its momentum. The following statement by a committee member sums up this passionate discussion: "So when I look at social enterprise, it really is going to be about how do you actually change the culture and make it work for you and then actually make sure you've got the right people on the bus in the right seats**."** Due to the length of time dedicated to this discussion of managing change, we were not able to explore the concept of leverageable assets at detailed level. We walked through examples of things to consider in evaluating whether the agency had some inherent business opportunities that might be exploited. We set a tentative date for the next planning session and everyone agreed to spend some time considering potential business opportunities that might be based upon the leverageable assets of the Urban League.

A Reflective Pause—Reflections Following First Planning Session:

- The content for the planning session was developed based upon the findings from external and internal interviews and discussions with critical friends. The impulse was to start a traditional strategic planning process but that work would be redundant unless spurred by team dialogue. Rather, the idea was to emphasize the nonprofit landscape and the trends toward social enterprise in order to reinforce the idea that traditional philanthropic relationships are no longer sufficient for a growing organization that seeks to bring about transformation to social problems.

- A couple of things proved discouraging: the ability to schedule work sessions in a timely manner and discovering that the organization's challenges were not limited to resource constraints. In my opinion, a sense of urgency and priority was missing. And that needed to be created by the organization leadership. It would be necessary to try and push the pace of the process.

- In *Governance As Leadership* (Chait, Ryan, & Taylor, 2005), the authors advocate for a reframing of the way nonprofit boards work. One of their points is the need to move away from strictly fiduciary duties and become involved in actually leading the organization in a visible and tangible way. I have a sense that some committee members hold a mental model of fiduciary responsibility and shy away from risk. This could prove problematic because the concept of social enterprise is based on risk taking and innovation.

Outcomes from meeting with CEO. I met with Patrick Graham following the first dialogue session, to discuss the following areas of concern**:**

1. Lack of full participation from members of the Business Solutions Committee.

2. His reaction to the Community Conversation – Can We Talk About Jobs, moderated by newly elected Mayor Anthony Foxx and Commissioner Jennifer Roberts. Patrick served as one of the panelists along with an economist from Wells Fargo Bank and a senior vice president of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce.

3. A lengthy discussion of the points raised in the internal and external interviews to identify potential opportunities to exercise his leadership.

We agreed that committee participation in this process was a concern but this problem was not limited to the Business Solutions Committee. The reality was that board members were

stretched fairly thin for a number of reasons – good and not so good. We would both work to make it easier for team members to participate in this process.

The community conversation actually represented an opportunity for the League to exercise some leadership on the issue of jobs. This included advocating for taking these town-hall types of discussions right to the persons most affected and listening to them. During this session, Patrick used personal stories of those individuals that had been helped by Urban League programs and presented outcome data that exemplified the types of results that could be achieved to help families through these difficult times. These examples reinforced his message that we need a broad range of agencies providing assistance and development services in concert with targeted economic development efforts if we are going to move people out of poverty. In light of the recent community conversation and the potential of the "State of Ethnic Charlotte" to drive civic engagement, I gave Patrick a copy of *We Make the Road by Walking – Myles Horton and Paulo Friere: Conversations on Education and Social Change* as a way to encourage the agency's role in popular education. This initiative of the Joe Martin Institute is critical to the League. It also provides a vehicle to serve as a community change agent.

Patrick and I spent a fair amount of time discussing the feedback from the external and internal interviews. We wrestled with the contradiction between the League's successful program outcomes and the perception that the Charlotte Urban League did not have a meaningful presence in the community at large. Patrick agreed that this perception represented a branding and awareness issue with some segments of the marketplace but did not get the whole picture. There were, indeed, those in Charlotte who were quite aware of the agency's work and impact. However, my question was, what about the perception among those who could influence essential resources and new partnerships? That is where the work needs to be.

In response to those questions that emerged from the first planning session and follow-up conversation with the CEO, I decided it would be helpful to gain a better understanding of Charlotte's economic development processes. Information interviews were conducted with: Thomas M. Flynn, CEcD, Director, Economic Development Office - City of Charlotte, Kenny McDonald, CEcD, former Executive Vice President, Charlotte Regional Partnership and Isaac Heard, AICP, Community Economic Development Consultant; Part-time Professor of Geography & Urban Planning, University North Carolina Charlotte.

A Reflective Pause—Reflections on Conversations with Patrick Graham:

- We both see the "State of Ethnic Charlotte" as a potentially transforming project. It provides a signature product, university-community partnerships and possibility to drive civic engagement on important policy matters.

- I believe it will be important for Patrick and one or two key board members to visit some of the best practice social enterprise organizations. This should highlight the need for entrepreneurial approach to be infused in the organization if they are serious about this type of business model.

- I will make a future note to ask Patrick about his President's Advisory Council and his thoughts about restructuring the board.

Findings from Economic Development Interviews

The purpose of my discussions with the economic development professionals was to gather information that would assist in helping the BSC to envision ways that the Urban League could fit into the region's prevailing economic development approaches. I entered these information interviews with an understanding that broadly speaking, economic development efforts seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for regions and

municipalities. The primary strategies are directed toward creating and retaining jobs and growing the tax base to support service delivery. Community economic development brings these strategies to bear on community-centered processes that focus on economic, social, and cultural well-being and sustainability. The Urban League's focus on economic self-sufficiency deals not only with the individual and family but also the community. As such, Blakely and Bradshaw (2002) offered a relevant perspective on the importance of local economic development:

> The central thesis of this book is that locally based economic development and employment generation is more likely to be successful if initiated at the community and local level than elsewhere……Solutions to community problems will not succeed if they are not targeted to specific groups and linked to the total regional economic system. (p. 25)

With this understanding, I developed these questions as the framework for my conversations with local economic development professionals:

1. Would you provide me with an overview of Charlotte's economic development approach (underlying philosophy, key strategies over time, major emphasis, policies and practices)

   - If you will, a *"Charlotte Economic Development 101"*

   - Underlying philosophy, major emphasis and responsible parties

   - Key strategies over time

   - Significant policies and practices

2. Does Charlotte's municipal approach seem to distinguish between "economic growth" and "economic development" in a meaningful way?

3. What types of things do you feel we do well in Charlotte and what areas of economic development must we improve?

4. The City recently reorganized to merge economic development and neighborhood services. What does the new department organizational structure mean for the citizens of Charlotte? What differences will they see?

5. Please tell me how you define community economic development?

6. What type of attention do you feel is paid to community economic development in Charlotte?

7. There are several urban centers that have pursued what they define as "an equity agenda." Do you feel Charlotte incorporates some of these policies and practices? Please describe.

The interviews with economic development professionals (Thomas Flynn, Kenny McDonald, and Isaac Heard) provided three distinct perspectives on how the City of Charlotte addresses economic development concerns. The viewpoints of these three resources are those of (a) an appointed city official, (b) a representative of corporate and municipal entities and (c) a consultant specializing in urban and community planning. Findings from these conversations were incorporated into the discussions of the second and third planning sessions to suggest opportunities and to identify services that were already being provided by existing resources within the region (i.e. potential partners).

I have grouped what I have learned from these conversations under the following topics of information: Charlotte Approaches to Economic Development, City of Charlotte Economic Development Focus, Community Economic Development Approaches, and How Might the Urban League and Other Community-Based Organizations Contribute to Economic Development in Charlotte?

Charlotte approaches to economic development. Charlotte's dominant economic development model is the "Business Attraction Model" which puts emphasis on bringing in job

creating businesses to expand the tax base. One participant described Charlotte's focus this way: "Here, in Charlotte, we're trying to get major headquarters and corporations to come here and set up operations or to grow from the ground up. We're trying to get people with applied technology skills. And we are attracting those people." Historically this economic development role has not been driven by the City but rather by business advocates like the Chamber of Commerce, the Charlotte Regional Partnership and similar entities. One participant stated, "The key economic development infrastructure [for Charlotte] was laid a long time ago not by the formal organizations but by the city fathers, if you will." This approach has generally proved successful to spur Charlotte's growth and expansion. Another participant observed: "We're [the Charlotte economic development community] fairly good at accommodating the growth. We've just begun to appreciate the need for paying attention to the development piece of it. The equity bit of development has not been as well understood and that's a political problem." In *Community Economics: Linking Theory and Practice*, the authors distinguish economic growth from economic development. Economic growth is about creating more jobs, more income, or more real estate projects. Economic development provides an enhanced capacity to act and transform communities. It is more focused on equity (Shaffer, Deller, & Marcouiller, 2004). One distinction that emerged in these conversations was that a community-focused approach would not stop at asking how many new buildings, or how many new jobs did an effort bring to an area. But it would ask, Did those new jobs do anything for the people and the situations that were already there? Did the people who were losing jobs, who were underemployed, would they be better off? Did the investments that were made by those businesses improve the communities that were already there or leave these old areas as they were?

City of Charlotte economic development focus. Charlotte's economic development strategies are driven by partnerships between the public and private sectors. The City's *FY2010 & 2011 Focus Area Plan* (http://edo.charmeck.org) states, "The City of Charlotte's long-term economic health is in large part driven by the City's ability to facilitate private sector job growth and investment through partnerships with agencies such as the Charlotte Chamber, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority and the Charlotte Regional Partnership." The strategies focus on growing and broadening into business sectors including: renewable energy, green industry, healthcare and high growth/high tech. The plans outline the following initiatives:

- Promote a healthy business climate.

- Ensure small businesses have opportunity to participate in informal City procurement.

- Enhance workforce development.

- Advance business corridor revitalization and redevelopment.

- Promote infill development/redevelopment in the Center City.

- Advocate business facilitation/business process improvements

In 2007, the City formerly adopted the Business Corridor Revitalization Strategy. The identified corridors were distressed areas selected based upon (1) opportunity to leverage existing public and private sector investment and (2) the likelihood of investment without assistance.

Community economic development approaches. The "Community Economic Development (CED)" model looks at the assets and requirements of specific communities and seeks to develop those communities for a better quality of life. Often referred to as an equity approach to economic development, CED is a targeted approach that is heavily influenced, if not driven, by community members with an empowerment goal. These approaches have been more

prevalent in regions of prolonged urban decline. Whitehead et al. (2005) describe CED as a process leading to:

- Ability of inner-city communities to significantly reduce their dependence upon outside the mainstream sources for jobs, credit and capital resources;

- New inner-city retail establishments that provide goods and services at fair market prices;

- Greater local control of institutions and resources vital to the community's socioeconomic well-being;

- The development of new institutions that attract and transfer wealth into, rather than out of, the inner city.

In recent years, Charlotte has adopted a corridor focus for community revitalization but it is also driven to attract private investment. The city's strategy is recognition that the forces of supply and demand are not always enough to bring about revitalization. One participant confirmed this when he stated: "Over the past 5 to 10 years there's been a realization that there is a public sector role when market forces fail and that role is to bring economic development to areas where the market alone will not bring it."

How might the urban league and other community-based organizations contribute to economic development in Charlotte? Our discussions indicate that the opportunity for the Urban League of Central Carolinas and other community-based organizations is to define ways they can address market failures, educate policy makers and facilitate resource allocation. If you take the position, as one participant did, that economic development is "the intentional effort to try to create wealth in your community for everybody" then we create more possibilities for involvement and civic participation. They went on to explain:

Sometimes creating wealth is not making everybody rich but may be moving someone from working at McDonald's to a call center. We don't often take that into account. We probably don't value those good jobs. We value the great jobs a lot but we need to really value the good jobs that make a healthy community. You don't have to be making a million dollars to be a contributing member of society.

It was suggested that the Urban League and similar community-based organizations (CBOs) might engage in the City's economic development efforts by:

- Assisting in defining ways to address market failures.

- Delivering workforce and small business development programs.

- Serving as a conduit and outreach mechanism regarding economic development programs available through the City and other government entities.

Another viewpoint that was expressed focused on encouraging youth to learn how our capitalist system works: "I think it would be important for the Urban League to bring people to speak to a younger population that doesn't hear about how the economic base of our city or state works." The Urban League could serve as a mechanism to bridge the gap between what the major economic development agencies are doing to recruit businesses and industries to the area and the people and communities that could support those enterprises.

A Reflective Pause—Reflections on Economic Development Interviews:

- In 2008, PolicyLink published *To Be Strong Again: Renewing the Promise in Smaller Industrial Cities,* which advanced an equitable development agenda. This course of action refers to "a range of policies and strategies that foster economic revitalization while simultaneously creating and expanding opportunity for everyone – particularly lower-income people, communities of color and other traditionally left behind by revitalization" (Fox & Axel-Lute, 2008, p. 14). I think the idea of advancing an equitable development agenda would be a big step for the ULCC to undertake but

they could start by using the disparity data that will emerge from the State of Ethnic Charlotte reports.

- I find Charlotte's development history is useful for understanding City's approach to civic engagement and philanthropy.

- Strategic Opportunity: It may prove useful to discuss economic development approaches in order to emphasize the leverage that the League may exercise through the Joe Martin Institute.

- It may be worth investigating a partnership with the City to serve as a conduit to direct small businesses to corridor revitalization resources.

Stage Four — Results of Second Planning Session

A second planning session held on March 15, 2010, featured a dialogue on "A Path to Social Entrepreneurship" (see Appendix F). The workshop was originally structured to achieve the following objectives:

- Entertain discussions surrounding potential strategies and their requirements, along with identification of new business demands and expectations for success

- Selection of priority strategies and action plan development, in order to achieve our goal to come away with a plan of action.

Because we were unable to complete the agenda from the first session, the agenda for the second session was amended to spend more time on case study examples of social enterprises (including franchises) and cause marketing partnerships. It was also important to raise awareness of the types of initiatives that could be used to create green collar jobs and businesses.

The final piece of the puzzle prior to action plan development was to revisit the discussion of leverageable assets. My underlying strategy for this planning session was to expand

the team's thinking in regards to the types of partnerships and ventures that the agency might decide to undertake. I wanted them to think beyond workforce readiness programs. It was also important that we examined some of the organizational development issues that could stand in the way of substantial progress. Once again, attendance for this meeting was problematic – five of seven persons participated but two were linked in by conference call.

Significant areas of discussion. I kicked off the second planning session by initiating discussion on several questions that I asked of committee members following the first planning session. These questions were necessary to raise potential pitfalls that might endanger any plan that came out the work of this committee. Highlights of this discussion follow.

Reflections on the agency's challenges in building long term champions. The significant point on this subject was that even when influential advocates made themselves available to the organization, for one reason or another they were not cultivated and utilized to their best advantage. One member observed, "I do not think historically we have defined a fund development model. Instead, we would go year –to-year with a new campaign without any continuity built in." That statement matched closely with the following comment by another team member, "There has been a lack of follow-through and no clear plan of action developed for a win." Another offered, "I think the failure to engage champions on a long term basis has been linked to champions 'changing seats' or moving on in this challenging economic environment." There was an acknowledgment that the League has also had some past reputation and credibility issues related to negative perceptions or questions about what the League really does or should be doing in the community. These shortcomings speak to needs in the areas of marketing communications, relationship management, long-term planning and execution.

What is the compelling business case for someone (individual or organization) to do so? Everyone was in alignment in response to this discussion point: "Our tagline says it: Education + Training + Placement = Dignity." One committee member simplified it this way, "The compelling business case for someone to support the league is, individuals can make a real tangible difference and an impact in the community through their efforts." The take-away that everyone could agree upon was that not enough people were aware of the results that the agency was able to achieve. Given the agency's relationship with local universities, it might be advantageous to commission on-going impact analyses. The data would then be available to support any number of things from grant writing to public relations.

Reaction to comments concerning the Charlotte Urban League. Patrick Graham reiterated his earlier observation on this point, "I think these comments are part of a fractured segment of our population that needs to be reached, but is not fully representative of our target group. Our audiences are two-fold:

- Those who receive our services included the unemployed, the underemployed, and other marginalized members of society (predominately African American but increasingly white).

- Those who support the movement including middle class African Americans, young professionals, and retired professionals."

The general consensus whether the committee members fully agreed with these remarks or not was that the observations suggested that the organization has a brand identity problem. Committee members remarked that "people don't know what we do" and "It means that the agency needs to make branding and public relations a priority." One team member emphasized, "We have to get the word out about what we do. We have to make it cool to support the League."

And another repeated a point of emphasis from the first planning session, "There is not much brand recognition and therefore limited support. If people don't know what you do they are not going to support you."

Participant reflections on previous dialogue session. Next, I invited team members to review and reflect on our first planning session. The first team member to speak up stressed her interests in creating new corporate partnerships as a vehicle to extend ULCC's workforce development services perhaps to include staffing and placement. She shared a copy of a recent newspaper article that announced the arrival of Siemens and their projections of adding 825 jobs in Charlotte and pointed out that these were energy sector jobs. The energy sector is one of the region's targeted industries for expansion. "Organizations in other cities have successfully forged partnerships in emerging industries and it paid off for them, and so I was thinking this may be the one for us." In joining this line of thought, another participant remarked,

> I think one of my big takeaways from the first session was just the corporate partnership concept. I don't think in the past I had really thought about it quite as broadly as the examples that you presented to us. So that, for me, was a big takeaway. I've always been just more focused on asking for the funds.

We spent a little more time exploring the ways that corporate partnerships could evolve beyond philanthropic giving into mutually beneficial arrangements. One member recalled the relationship between Timberland and City Year where eventually City Year was able to offer services based on their expertise in diversity facilitation and team building. Another participant envisioned: "If we're actually bringing something to the table that they see as a value-add then that creates sort of a financial independence for us. If we can duplicate it not just with one but other companies then we are onto something." This discussion on financial independence provided me with an opening to challenge the committee's goal of financial stability. I suggested

to the group that the term "stability" might be a conservative goal and a little limiting to the team's thinking. I asked the team to think in terms of financial sustainability which has more of a long-term connotation and is much more consistent with their vision of self-sufficiency. From a planning perspective, I hoped this would encourage the committee to think more broadly about their choices and alternatives. Whether or not this takes hold will be demonstrated as the agency goes forward toward plan implementation.

> ***Review of previous data and information.*** Once we moved into the discussion of corporate partnerships, the team felt it important to review again the "collaboration continuum" for partnerships – philanthropic stage (charitable giving), transactional stage (specific exchange activities i.e. licensing, sponsorships, etc.), and integrative stage (integration of mission focused collective action). It was difficult for us to picture what types of opportunities existed, if any, for truly integrative partnerships even with some of the existing long-term partners. This was not surprising since those relationships had not been developed along those lines. However, there was agreement there might be some transactional opportunities to be unearthed within some of the current arrangements.

There was enthusiastic discussion of the case study examples of social enterprise and cause marketing partnerships. We looked at the types of options that might be considered in our situation. This examination included a walk-through of the change management steps necessary to move in the direction of a social enterprise model. The opportunities that seemed to resonate most strongly with the team were business enterprise models: higher level education programs (technician certificate programs), retail franchise opportunities (Subway, Ben & Jerry's), IT services (web design, technology installation), and leasing of commercial space. It was much more difficult for the team to come up with cause marketing ideas that could work at the local

level although they readily recognized national efforts such as: Yoplait and Susan G. Komen for breast cancer, Home Depot and KaBoom's 1,000 playgrounds in 1,000 days, and Nike and Lance Armstrong Foundation – Live Strong bracelet. However, the enthusiasm for these pursuits was dampened by the prospect of the having to build the organizational infrastructure (staff and board) needed for success. The biggest hurdles were seen as manpower (someone on board with the appropriate experience and skill set), market research, a need for new board members with social enterprise experience and the ability of the board to act in a more entrepreneurial fashion. It was also pointed out that the organization needed board members that were willing and able to roll up their sleeves and work shoulder-to-shoulder with staff members when required.

A fair amount of time was spent discussing the opportunities associated with the Green Collar Economy including examples from *Green for All – Stories from the Green Collar Economy.* The identified opportunity areas were: Energy (energy efficiency, wind energy, solar energy), Food Production Systems (urban agriculture, micro-farming, etc.), Waste Management (processing recyclables, re-use centers, deconstruction, etc.), Water (green roofs, urban water recycling, home retrofit, etc.), and Mass Transit and related services. It was felt that one obvious area of impact might be training but also business ventures built around program graduates. The programs and structure of Sustainable South Bronx was acknowledged as a strong example of broad-based training and development efforts and as a model they might wish to replicate. The discussion turned to the region's pending ReVenture Park (renewable energy business park) initiative and noted that progress on this should be something to follow closely on the lookout for partnership opportunities.

Discussion of ULCC's leverageable assets. Community Wealth Ventures describes leverageable assets as those things that an organization has, does, or knows that may be seen as

valuable by other people or organizations. Because we failed to address this subject in any depth

at the previous session, I led the exploration by facilitating dialogue in response to specific

questions about organizational assets. Our results were summarized in this way.

Table 2.2: ULCC - Matrix of Leverageable Assets

Do we have specific expertise and skills that we can market?	*Is there an organization we could partner with to co-brand a product for a promotional sales effort?*
The group felt that its biggest strength was rooted in the expertise of its leadership team and staff members. The key areas of expertise were: our understanding of our customer's challenges and strengths; our 60 years of executive level experience in social sector; program design and project management and diversity management. Programmatic expertise in job skills development and employment preparation was considered a towering strength. It was suggested that the organization could potentially sell temporary staffing services or trained entry level employees for hire in the areas of current training programs.	There is a wide array of organizational partners that might be interested in some type of joint marketing efforts. These include: Cultural organizations (Afro-American Cultural Center, Pride-PEEP Program); professional sports organizations (Bobcats, Panthers, NASCAR); Other workforce development agencies, and advocacy groups for *Young Lives Documentary.*
Do we have tangible assets that could bring in income?	*Is there an audience that we could consistently deliver to the right partner for goods or services?*
The current uptown building location including computer labs, conference rooms and offices.	There are three constituent audiences that the ULCC can reach on a consistent basis: Low-Middle income African Americans, young African-American professionals, and partners (corporations, government agencies, other non profits).

Due to the length of the discussions on the above topics, we were unable to accomplish

the full agenda. The action plan development component had to carry over to another work

session.

Stage Four / Results of Third Planning Session

A third planning session was held on March 29, 2010 (See Appendix G). This session was necessary to sit down and work out a plan of action that would support the existing strategic plan. Due to some last minute schedule conflicts, there were only three committee members present.

I initiated this planning session with a review of the opportunities that had been raised as possibilities in the previous two sessions. I also reminded my colleagues of the issues and concerns that we had identified as potential impediments to social venture creation. For a short while, the other committee members expressed dismay at the failure of other board members to fulfill their commitments to the work of this committee. They felt that it had limited the scope of conversation and the generation of ideas and healthy debate during the process. I indicated that I would still solicit input from the other committee members so that they could contribute in whatever way would work for them.

Outcomes of planning session. I introduced a planning worksheet that I felt would allow us to focus on the organization mission and vision as the anchoring principles for all decisions. The worksheet was structured to elicit information and decisions in a way that would highlight strategic advantages and identify gaps in information or resources. The participants examined the worksheet and asked a few clarifying questions about some of the categories. I addressed their questions and we decided to move forward with the planning activities. Our first step was a reassessment of the financial goals and objectives set forth in the current strategic plan. We were in agreement that we wanted to expand our thinking from financial stability to financial sustainability to reflect a long-term orientation rather than improving current conditions. We also felt that the existing goals of incremental improvements in foundation and corporate giving and

the number of individual donors were necessary but insufficient for our purposes. A broader set of goals and objectives would be required to respond to the shifts taking place in the nonprofit sector. We felt strongly that an organizational change component needed to be included in our recommendations.

We established a goal statement of: *To Be Self-Sustaining within Five Years*. We felt this to be a reasonable expectation given the current economic forecast and the current resources of the agency. I then asked the team what we meant by self-sustaining. The ensuing conversation was another example of how during this study, committee members built upon the ideas of fellow team members. One person would offer a concept and another would probe that idea then offer additional insight. We decided that self-sufficiency would be characterized by the following attributes:

1. One-half (50%) of revenue from earned income.

2. Established long-term, strategic corporate partnerships in place.

3. Major resource influencers and decision-makers sitting on the Board as champions for the organization.

4. A diverse base of individual members and donors.

With our concept of success before us, we entered into discussion about the path to success. What strategies would put us on a path to accomplish our goal? After some debate along the traditional SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, we identified four areas that we believed critical to goal attainment. These were: brand identity & marketing, venture creation & earned income strategy, marketing partnerships and corporate alliances, and board development. As we considered these areas, I asked the team to try and define them as

strategic thrust and not in terms of organizational deficiencies. This proved a bit difficult to do because the temptation was to jump immediately to problems and solutions.

Strategy development. We arrived at a consensus on four enabling strategies directly related to the four critical areas. These strategies are:

1. Branding—Build a strong brand across the region. Move steadily from brand recognition to brand preference to brand loyalty for being a key factor in positive community change and empowerment.

2. Social Enterprise—Create, incubate and implement viable social enterprises as an important financial resource.

3. Cause Marketing—Define and cultivate corporate cause marketing efforts as a consistent part of the agency's marketing efforts.

4. Board Development—Create and implement a robust board development process that includes recruitment, resource development, public relations, succession planning and other elements necessary to assist in the achievement of the organization vision and mission.

With the enabling strategies in place, we worked to brainstorm information to complete other elements of the planning worksheet that would lead us to development of a specific set of recommended actions. These elements were: critical steps, necessary changes for success, anticipated challenges in getting there, allies we can enlist, available resources, required resources, what do we need to know and implementation tasks. We then developed a rough draft of our efforts to build out the planning worksheet. By the end of the meeting, we were clear on the priority areas and the enabling strategies. Due to the absence of some team members, I was asked if I would consolidate our results from the evening's work and solicit additional input from other team members. I agreed to do so and updated a master planning document within 24 hours of our meeting. I then disseminated the plan to all team members and requested their input within

two weeks. Unfortunately, it took much longer than two weeks to obtain input from other committee members. Ultimately, there were two members who failed to follow through on their commitments to their colleagues.

Action plans. Given the input from active team members, I developed a comprehensive action plan that included a proposed action plan and implementation steps. Generally speaking, the action plan includes:

- Development and implementation of a brand identity and public relations program in support of our branding enabling strategy.

- Visit a nationally-recognized best practice social enterprise and secure resources to pilot an earned-income effort in support of our social enterprise enabling strategy

- Establish criteria and recruit corporate partner for a cause-marketing campaign in support of our cause marketing enabling strategy..

- Engage consultant to design and facilitate a comprehensive board development process to support our board development enabling strategy.

The resulting financial strategy and supporting action plan was shared again with the Business Solutions Committee for final review and approved for further action as determined by the President and Board of Directors. The action plan and specific implementation steps are proprietary at this time for ULCC leadership and so are not presented here.

Table 5.3: Business Solutions Committee Planning Worksheet

Organization Vision: To be the premier change agent inspiring the community to attain socio-economic and educational inclusion in a global economy.			
Organization Mission: To empower the community to attain financial stability and social justice in a global economy through education, training and placement.			
Key Goal Statement: To be self-sustaining within five (5) years.			
What Will Success Look Like? 1. One-half (50%) of revenue from earned income. 2. Established long-term, strategic corporate partnerships in place. 3. Major resource influencers and decision-makers sitting on the Board as champions for the organization. A diverse base of individual members and donors.			
Enabling Strategy #1: Branding Build a strong brand across the region. Move steadily from brand recognition to brand preference to brand loyalty for being a key factor in positive community change and empowerment.	**Enabling Strategy #2: Social Enterprise** Create, incubate and implement viable social enterprises as an important financial resource.	**Enabling Strategy #3: Cause Marketing** Define and cultivate corporate cause marketing efforts as a consistent part of the agency's marketing efforts.	**Enabling Strategy #4: Board Development** Create and implement a robust board development process that includes recruitment, resource development, public relations, succession planning and other elements necessary to assist in the achievement of the organization vision and mission.
Critical Steps			
Necessary Changes for Success			
Anticipated Challenges in Getting There			
Allies We Can Enlist			
Available Resources			
Required Resources			
What Do We Need To Know			
Action Plan (tasks, persons responsible, time frame)			

A Reflective Pause—Reflections on Action Planning Session:

- Coming out of the third work session, it was necessary to have a process that would generate more data. I realized that attempting to schedule another team meeting

would prove too time consuming. It seemed more effective to consolidate action planning data and send it out for review by all team members.

- When team members were in the room the interaction was very productive. The challenge was getting participants to align their schedules. The board has some very talented members but are they the right members or is this the right board for them? I noticed in the board minutes that participation by some members was an issue and that the By-Laws requirements for participation would be implemented. In addition, a committee was formed to address the structure of board committees. One forthcoming recommendation was to recruit volunteers for committee work. But, there was an alternative viewpoint that board members needed to make this a priority if they accepted the responsibility to be a board member.

- One of my early assumptions about the "obviousness" of needing to embrace earned-income strategies had fallen by the wayside replaced by recognition that board development presented a more pressing concern. Looking back to *Governance As Leadership,* I can recognize several of the problems that the authors identify in nonprofit strategic planning efforts: Plans without traction, Plans without patterns, and the Pace of change.

- I decided to seek additional insight on the topic of board governance by talking to other nonprofit leaders, critical friends and others. This resulted in information that could enhance the action plans.

- It occurred to me that the board members seemed to want a predominantly oversight role in how they functioned in relation to the staff organization rather than a more collective approach to governance.

Follow-up Meetings with President/CEO and Treasurer

One of the challenges in conducting action research is that the researcher can hope for but cannot control the outcomes or directions that emerge through the successive cycles of inquiry and reflection. Herr and Anderson (2005) stated:

> Although most practitioners or communities hope that action research will solve pressing problems or improve their practice, what constitutes improvement or a solution is not self-evident… Action research takes place in settings that reflect a society characterized by conflicting values and unequal distribution of resources and power. (p. 4)

Upon approval of the planning document, I met one-on-one with agency CEO and Board Treasurer to discuss approaches for implementing the final plan given the prevailing resource constraints and conflicts among board members. The CEO and Board Treasure felt that the overall financial strategy and supporting action plan set forth a necessary direction and this was confirmed by the two most active of the remaining four committee members. Of particular interest were recommendations to augment staff resources with loaned executives, site visits to successful social enterprise organizations (Pioneer Human Services routinely shares its best practices), aggressive pursuit of partnerships for green economy programs, and implementing a pilot venture. Moreover, the issue of organizational culture change was seen as a business imperative. One committee member commented, "This is a good plan but we have to address some fundamental blocking and tackling first before we can really get into all of this." Finally, there was a recognition that stressing the mission in terms of community empowerment could prove to be a powerful catalyst. Such an approach could be linked to both, the National Urban League's "I AM EMPOWERED" campaign and the Urban League of Central Carolinas current "State of Ethnic Charlotte" initiative. Patrick was particularly receptive to a proposed strategic model and balanced scorecard that focused on community empowerment as the core mission.

A Reflective Pause—Reflections on Meetings with Wendy and Patrick:

The issues discussed in the concluding conversations with CEO and Treasurer was candid and open. They included but were not limited to:

- Although the process extended longer than I had hoped for and became frustrating due to inconsistent participation, the resulting plan is one that can be transformative. Committee members felt that the goal was achieved and confirmed the value of a social enterprise strategy by providing concrete organization examples from different markets utilizing different strategies.

- We noted that the process was characterized by: honesty, an interest in what was working for other organizations, and a willingness to build upon each other's questions and ideas.

- Discussions with team members confirmed that having clear examples of the breadth and diversity of options enabled them to see new possibilities for what the agency might undertake.

- This process also served to drive home and make explicit the need for: a transformation of organization and board culture and to improve branding and communications to the market at large. The pursuit of a social enterprise model or even earned-income strategies will require a move toward a culture of entrepreneurship.

- The organization faces a difficult dilemma – there is increasing demand for community transformation and insurgent, community-based leadership but they have limited resource capacity to meet the demand. Yet, they have a feel for what needs to

be done but have been unable to execute due to some structural problems and recognized areas for additional talents and skill sets across the organization.

Stage Five - Dissemination of Results

Consistent with community-based participatory research, reporting of the study results will be shaped by the needs and issues of the agency and its constituents. Upon completion of the Business Solutions Committee work sessions, the CEO is considering the timing and situation to best share the resulting goals, strategies and action steps with the full Board of Directors, agency staff and his President's Advisory Council. In addition, the State of Ethnic Charlotte Town Hall meetings offer an excellent venue for sharing these directions with the broader community.

Summary

Chapter V – Findings provides the story of the course of events that resulted in the Business Solutions Committee developing a detailed strategy and action plan that will enable the Urban League of Central Carolinas to pursue the transformation to a social enterprise model of operations. This narrative only covers one period of time in the organization's history under the current leadership of Patrick Graham, President/CEO. This chapter also provides reflections of the study participants, including myself, on the agency, the processes undertaken by this team and observations about the broader Charlotte region.

Chapter VI – Discussion and Recommendations will offer reflection on this action research effort in light of the experience and theoretical frameworks that informed the process. It will explore the connection between the findings of the dissertation and the linkages to the literature in Chapter II as well as literature that emerged for consideration during the course of the study process. This chapter will draw conclusions to the research questions, make

recommendations for the agency, and define implications for the field with respect to

opportunities for further research.

Chapter VI: Discussion and Recommendations

Summing Up

In February 2009, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) celebrated its 100th anniversary and found itself facing an identity crisis and defending its relevance. Two thousand ten represents the Centennial year of the National Urban League and it celebrated by launching the "I AM EMPOWERED" campaign reinforcing its commitment to empowering communities and changing lives. Today, these two iconic African-American civil rights organizations find themselves challenged to adapt to changing values, expectations, demographics and economic and political circumstances while remaining true to their founding principles. What leadership approaches and operational strategies should they undertake to in this post-civil rights era? What business or operational models must they utilize to achieve their mission? Specific to Charlotte, what conditions, expectations and requirements must the Urban League of Central Carolinas satisfy to reassert its leadership in Charlotte?

The above research questions are raised in Chapter I which provides a look at the societal changes that challenge the traditional roles of black civil rights organizations like the NAACP and the NUL. This study is based on the premise that a significant aspect of their challenge is to define, communicate and implement a strategy for an era when America is characterized by: an increasing wealth divide, significant shifts in population diversity, a retreat from affirmative action legislation, a growth in the divide between the black middle class and the black underclass, and a rise in the number of black elected officials at all levels. Chapter II draws from the literature on race relations to highlight our struggles to work across differences. It provides an overview on the history of civil rights organizations and offers perspectives on black leadership. The chapter concludes with a look at the potential of the green collar economy and

social enterprise to assist in community revitalization. Chapter III lays the framework for the study of the Urban League of Central Carolinas and its Business Solutions Committee in their work to develop a set of financial strategies and supporting action plans for the agency. Chapter IV and Chapter V discuss the findings that emerged during the course of this study.

This Chapter explores the connections between the findings of the dissertation and findings in literature across the disciplines of leadership, race relations, social enterprise, community economic development and nonprofit governance. I discuss the aspects of the findings and their implications for practice for this agency and other traditional civil rights organizations that must reassess their missions and strategies. Where appropriate, I identify linkages between the data presented in Chapter II and data that emerged in support of the team's planning process.

Several significant findings emerged in seeking to understand local external factors and the internal organizational factors that influence the work of the Urban League of Central Carolinas and the agency's chosen responses to these factors while they strive to carry out their mission. These findings along with the committee's recommended action plan speak to (1) A Necessary Role for the Urban League of Central Carolinas and trends in our socioeconomic and political environment; (2) The Question of Relevance for Civil Rights Organizations; and (3) Strategy, Leadership and the ULCC. Reflections on the findings are explored below.

A Necessary Role for the Urban League of Central Carolinas

It has been proclaimed by some and dismissed by others that we have arrived at a post-racial era in the history of the United States. And yet, the chords of race, ethnicity and religion are strung tightly across the political landscape at the national and local levels. They are played out in the allocation of community resources for education, healthcare and other social needs.

They are heard in the chorus of disparities in the quality of life enjoyed by different communities. Historically, black civil rights organizations have worked to secure African-Americans their fundamental rights, freedoms and privileges accorded to them by virtue of citizenship but denied by practice. In the decades since the passing of civil rights legislation, this work has expanded to include social and economic equality. As noted in Chapters I and II, many feel civil rights legislation and remedies are no longer necessary. This trend can be observed in the repeal of various affirmative action rulings and state referendums.

A casual look at the number of African-American city and county government officials, corporate executives and nonprofit executives might substantiate that this is a post-racial era or at least that race and ethnicity are no longer major impediments to success. But, any honest appraisal of the findings from this study regarding poverty, housing, employment, education, etc. suggest that this is not the case. Data compiled on Mecklenburg County for the ULCC's *State of Ethnic Charlotte* (Ledford, 2010) project offers several examples significant disparities:

- Black reliance on public transportation was 457.1% of white population reliance on public transportation in 2008 (i.e. based on primary means to work).

- The high school graduation rate (4-year cohort) for black students was 68.4% and for Hispanic students 71.0% of white population high school graduation rate (4-year cohort) in 2008-2009.

- The unemployment rates (male) for blacks and Hispanics were 281.6% and 125.9% respectively of white unemployment rate (male) in 2008.

- Hispanic median household income was 54.3% of white median household income and black median household income was 55.8% of white median household income in 2008.

Likewise, the comments and observations of participants indicate a keen awareness that Charlotte-Mecklenburg has some work to do around issues of race, ethnicity and working across differences. The contributors to *The Bubbling Cauldron: Race, Ethnicity and the Urban Crisis* (Smith & Feagin, 1995) have argued as unrealistic the notion that modernity, technological advancement and global markets would render our concepts of racial identity as no longer relevant. Rather they conceptualize racialization as a contested process of ordered social relations.

Charlotte has some wonderful examples of black leadership including the election of Harvey Gantt as Mayor in 1983 and more recently the election of Anthony Foxx as Mayor in 2009, the appointment of Carolyn Flowers as CEO of the Charlotte Area Transit System and appointment other officials in various high-level city and county positions. And yet, study participants stressed continuing problems of discrimination, poverty, and failing educational systems. It would be too simplistic to define these problems simply in terms of black, brown and white but it would be naïve not to notice which groups are shown by the local disparity indexes as being most adversely impacted.

In their essay, *Putting Race in Its Place*, Smith and Feagin (1995) observed: "Racial and ethnic differences, and hence patterns of racial and ethnic domination, conflict, and accommodation are socially produced through recurring group-level and institutional-group interactions that are changed over time by human practice" (p.4). Marable (2002) advanced a similar perspective when he wrote: "Race is historically and socially constructed, created (and recreated) by how people are perceived and treated in the normal actions of everyday life" (p. 22). Derrick Bell, lawyer, activist, writer and teacher concluded that "racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, p. 309).

Surely, his conclusions confront the idea of a post-racial society and suggest a truth that is much more difficult to accept.

A decade has passed since Ladner wrote *A New Civil Rights Agenda* (2000) commenting on the unfinished business of the civil rights movement. She advocated for a more fluid model of civil rights action to address persistent disparities and America's changing demographic profile. She envisioned a move toward combining community organizing and advocacy with the exercise of increased technical proficiency (development, housing, education, etc.) by community-based organizations. She suggested that the key would be developing the capacity to work through cross-cultural and cross-sector alliances to deal with complex problems. This returns us to the question of whether there remains a role for the black civil rights organization. During the course of this study, external partners and agency staff members alike have put forth suggestions encouraging the ULCC and similar organizations to take an active role in addressing these problems.

Recommendation: A community empowerment vision and brand. The Urban League of Central Carolina should build a strong community empowerment brand. It should embrace its focus on empowerment and community economic development in a much more explicit and powerful way. Currently the agency's programmatic thrusts (workforce development, education & youth development, etc.) capture the bulk of the attention of the public and of funders. Yet, in spite of the successes achieved by these initiatives, they react to symptoms of larger problems. One colleague compared this approach to competing on price. As long as you compete on price, your customers (funders in this case) have no enduring reason to stick with you. Kim's "Levels of Perspectives" framework (Kim, 1999), provides us an opportunity to reflect on the work of the agency in addressing Charlotte's disparities and divisions. This framework outlines levels of

perspective and accompanying modes of action in dealing with systemic problems. Beginning at the lowest level in the model, these levels and modes are:

- *Events/Reactive* – the occurrences (i.e. problems such as poor grades or failure to get a job) we encounter on a day-to-day basis and our reactions to them. Our responses such as training programs or tutors may be vital and important but are insufficient for long-term success.

- *Patterns/Adaptive* – the reoccurring trends (disparities) that emerge over time and our adaptations to make the best use of the current systems (economic development, healthcare, education, etc.) rather than trying to change the patterns.

- *Systemic Structures/Creative* – the ways that the parts of the systems are organized (practices, relationships, policies, etc.) that generate the patterns and events that we encounter on a day-to-day basis. It is at this level that most programmatic efforts and interventions take place.

- *Mental Models/Reflective* – Our mental models provide the lens through which we see the world. They are made up of our beliefs and assumptions about how the world works. They are the foundation for our systemic structures. This is the level where the work of changing our concepts of the prevailing systemic structures must take place. In discussing the reflective nature of action at this level, Kim stated: "Taking actions at the level of mental models is reflective, because it requires that we develop the ability to surface, suspend, and question our own assumptions about how the world works and what's most important" (Kim, 1999, p. 18). He indicates that changing mental models requires genuine reflection and clarity of vision.

- *Vision/Generative* – Our vision determines which set of assumptions and beliefs about the world we hold important as we pursue our goals. This vision must be compelling enough to overcome the challenge of changing our mental models and to create something new. Kim (1999) points out that our leverage increases as we move upward through the model but our focus and impact move from present to future. Yet, he reminds us that leverage can be exercised at every level.

This framework enables us to consider both the current brand identity and programmatic thrust of the agency and its initiatives. Based on the findings of this study, the agency is viewed by many as operating at the events and patterns level to provide youth development and workforce readiness programs.

The Urban League of Central Carolinas defines its vision as "To be the premier change agent inspiring the community to attain socioeconomic and educational inclusion in a global economy" and its mission as "To empower the community to attain financial stability and social justice in a global economy through education, training, and placement." Shaffer, Deller, and Marcouiller (2004) use the term empowerment to mean building on people's dignity, skills and participation to increase a community's capacity to pursue its own interest in a collective fashion. To empower is to give authority or power. Empowerment is central to the ULCC's mission and vision and consistent with Reid and Flora's (2002) observation that community development is about recognizing and serving the needs of the community and all its stakeholders. From the perspective of affecting change at the local level, it is useful to think in terms of community economic development (CED). "Though there are many variations, the core definitions of CED embrace efforts to develop housing, jobs, or business opportunities for low-income people, in which the leading role is played by nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations,

that are accountable to residentially defined communities" (Simon, 2001, p. 3). Green and

Haines (2002) used the broader term community development and described it as a planned

interdisciplinary approach that offers a holistic view of communities with the purpose of building

assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life. The Urban League

of Central Carolinas has a vision for itself as a change agent and leader in the Charlotte region.

Currently, it does not appear to have that degree of broad recognition or influence. One way to

advance that mission would be to build a brand that centers explicitly on community

empowerment and undertake modes of action that operate on the multiple levels outlined in the

"Levels of Perspective" framework.

The Question of Relevance for Civil Rights Organizations

The question of relevance has been raised increasingly with the very visible

advancements of African Americans in many spheres of endeavor. Alternatively, relevance has

been questioned in the context of the widening gap between the black middle and black lower

classes. So the arguments go on the one side that these organizations are no longer needed or on

the other side that they are no longer capable or willing to solve the economic and social

problems of the poor because they are beholden to funders and other powerful interest. Scholar

and activists, Dr. Ramona Edelin notes, that relevance today is determined by the ability to

generate revenue, provide utility and demonstrate capacity to advance a big idea. Local agencies

must find a way to systematically deal with problems "on the ground" and the root causes

associated with those problems (R.H. Edelin, personal communication, August 18, 2010).

The environment for nonprofits has shifted and Charlotte's recent initiatives such as

Mission Possible and the Community Catalyst Program emphasize the new economic realities

(i.e. reductions in giving, changing priorities, new accountabilities). Patrick Graham's 2009

commentary, *"Does Our Philanthropic Community Understand That Jobs and Education are Basic Needs Too?"* asserts that in these difficult economic times, the paternalistic focus on crisis- oriented services like shelter, clothing and food is short-sighted at best. A failure to recognize the value of empowering services – those services that provide individuals the tools to break away from generational poverty and dependency on social service programs – is a failure to invest in a better future for our communities. He suggests a holistic approach that integrates both of these strategies. But even if Charlotte's philanthropic community surrenders some of its paternalistic influence, the reality remains that this is a new era in philanthropy and competition for fewer dollars will be the way it is. Again, Kim's "Levels of Perspective" framework can prove helpful to understanding the economic reality for Charlotte nonprofits. In concert with Graham's assessment regarding the paternalistic nature of the Charlotte philanthropic community, then we can understand why operating at the "events" level would be safer for the nonprofits. Addressing clear and present crises allows the funder to reap the rewards of their generosity and keep the nonprofit in the business of solving recurring problems but not root causes. However, this approach to funding fails to take advantage of the leverage that can be achieved by funding and pursuing higher levels of action like systemic structures and mental models. For example, only recently has Charlotte moved to undertake nationally accepted practices in dealing with the homeless by providing them with homes and support systems rather than simply shelters and meals. If the ULCC is going to be the agent of change it defines in its vision then it will need the financial independence to act swiftly and pursue innovation. It cannot be limited to acting at the "events" level of social change and community empowerment.

On a national level, *The Quiet Crisis* (2009) reported that at the end of 2008, 52 percent of nonprofits were already experiencing cuts in funding and that 49 percent of those surveyed

saw cuts in the range of 10 – 20 percent and that 25 percent saw decreases of more than 20 percent. These trends are significant when we consider the scope of the nonprofit or independent sector. *The Quiet Crisis* found that nonprofits make up 11 percent of the American workforce approximating the 7th largest economy in the world with 9.4 million employees, $322 billion in wages and 4.7 million full-time volunteers. The authors found that not only are nonprofits facing significant increases in demand for services with fewer resources but as unemployment rises, more and more people are turning to this sector for jobs (Reed & Bridgeland, 2009). On the local level, the dynamics are essentially the same. Many nonprofit organizations find their survival in the hands of the philanthropic community and other funders. One interview partner expressed disappointment that the nonprofit community was not viewed as a sector of opportunity. She stated:

> Unfortunately the community of Charlotte has never really looked at the non-profit industry as an economic source of income for our city. The thinking is we're just out there asking for money but not understanding that we provide jobs, we buy goods, and we buy services.

By creating the means to empower Charlotte communities, the ULCC can claim a well-deserved position of leadership that is not limited to minority interests and concerns.

Recommendation: Pursuit of earned-income strategies. The Urban League of Central Carolinas should pursue earned-income strategies to insure financial sustainability and expand capacity and resources that will enable it to pursue a community empowerment mission. To do so would be consistent with national trends in social enterprise.

In the last few decades the social enterprise concept has taken on much greater popularity. However it is not a new phenomenon, it has precursors that date back to Jane Addams and Hull House or the formation of Goodwill Industries in the late 1800s. Bornstein and

Davis (2010) described the evolution of social entrepreneurship during the last decades of the twentieth century and trace its acceleration to the recognition that new institutions and new spheres of power were necessary to address the world's toughest problems. Social entrepreneurship has grown from focusing on the individual change agent, to focusing on organizational excellence and now to focusing on building platforms that can unleash the change-making potential of all persons. Social Enterprise of London (SEL), a regional organization which describes itself as a change agent and social enterprise, identifies three common characteristics of social enterprises:

- *Enterprise Orientation* – directly involved in producing goods and services to a market.

- *Social Aims* – have explicit social aims and hold themselves accountable to their members and wider community for their social, environmental and economic impact.

- *Social Ownership* – autonomous organization governed and owned by stakeholder groups or trustees (SEL, 2001, p 7).

To achieve more independence and organizational sustainability, nonprofit organizations (mostly social service providers) have turned to earned-income strategies and have discovered themselves to be quite adept at making the transition to a more business-oriented model. Yet, Bill Shore (2003) cautioned that "the field remains embryonic and, in some ways, unproven. There are as many failures as successes" (p. 9). He continued, "Most of all, the cultures of many nonprofits have not adapted to meet their ambition to create wealth" (p. 9). In *Migrating from Innovation to Entrepreneurship,* Jerr Boschee (2006) cites stories from successful enterprises to drive home the point that the single greatest obstacle that nonprofit organizations face in moving to sustainability and self-sufficiency is cultural transformation. Transforming the organization

brings into question how the organization considers some of its core beliefs and attitudes about decisions that include: benchmarks for success, attitudes toward profit, attitudes toward risks, market segmentation, decision-making processes, compensation, employee evaluation, crisis response and more. As the ULCC considers its movement forward, these questions and others will need to be addressed by the agency's leadership and board of directors.

Strategy, Leadership and the ULCC

From a practical standpoint, the goal of this action research effort was to define an action plan that would guide the Urban League of Central Carolinas in executing the financial goals of its strategic plan. That was accomplished. The result was a refinement of the strategic goal from financial stability to financial self-sustainability along with the definition of key enabling strategies and supporting action steps. But, the process was challenged continually by the lack of team member availability and scheduling conflicts. This is not a unique concern among under-resourced organizations with volunteer board members. But, the experience of this team highlights a couple of significant issues:

1. It cannot be assumed that the team's purpose (in this case financial strategy) alone will be important enough to motivate individual member commitment in the face of other interests. Leadership must find a way to elevate the personal commitment of fellow board members and/or staff members to those projects and special initiatives that have the potential to transform the organization.

2. Anyone can build a plan but nonprofit, community-based organizations require capital investment to execute their plans. *Governance as Leadership* (Chait et al., 2005) advocates that beyond money, board members can bring other important forms of capital. These are intellectual, reputational, political, and social capital. Moreover

they must do so purposefully, actively, and productively. During the course of this study, it seemed to me that board members preferred a predominantly fiduciary or strategic role in how they functioned in relation to the staff organization rather than a more collective and shared approach to governance. Chait et al. (2005) stated: "There must be a shared sense of the nature of the work and enough common knowledge to do the work together" (p. 143).

Johnson and Stanford (2002) indicate that black political organizations have served to bring about changes in the social, legal and political landscape and that they have done this despite ideological, structural, and political approaches that range from specifically promoting black interests to those advocating race-neutral solutions. The National Urban League employs a five point approach to provide economic empowerment, educational opportunities, and the guarantee of civil rights for African Americans. The organization seeks to build empowerment in the following areas: Education and Youth, Economic, Health & Quality of Life, Civic Engagement & Leadership, Civil Rights and Racial Justice. The NUL operates 25 national programs through its affiliates and has several signature programs that are built in alliances with public and private funders. The local affiliates pursue those programs that best align the national organization's strategies with local market circumstances. Patrick Graham has identified the following Urban League affiliates as best practice organizations: Los Angeles, California (fundraising), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (advocacy), Chicago, Illinois (entrepreneurship) and Broward County, Florida (operations). With the exception of the Broward County Urban League, these affiliates have long histories – Chicago and Philadelphia agencies were originated in 1917 and Los Angeles in 1921. Broward County is a contemporary of the Charlotte affiliate being formed in 1975 in response to the tensions surrounding forced school busing. These

agencies serve markets that are considerably larger and different than Charlotte in terms of their overall demographic dimensions, such as, population, racial makeup, educational attainment, per capita and median family income and poverty levels. On several of these indicators (educational attainment, poverty levels, per capita income), Charlotte appears to be in better standing than the other cities overall. However in each setting, there are significant disparities along racial lines and the affiliates have chosen to emphasize different strategies to address those concerns. Each of these benchmark affiliates is substantially larger than the ULCC ($1.4 million revenues/10 staff members). Their approximate revenues and staff size are: Los Angeles ($25 million revenues/300 staff members), Philadelphia ($48 million revenues/75 staff members), Chicago ($10 million revenues/65 staff members) and Broward County ($4 million revenues/60 staff members). The Charlotte affiliate has much work ahead if it hopes to have an impact comparable to that of these sister agencies.

The Urban League of Los Angeles (www.laul.org) was named 2008 NUL Affiliate of the Year and its CEO has been named among The Nonprofit Times Top 50 Nonprofit Leaders of Power and Influence. According to its website, the agency views its Board of Directors as one of its strongest assets. The agency has undertaken a comprehensive community change initiative called Neighborhoods@Work that is focused on a 70 block area for sustainable neighborhood revitalization and includes partnerships with local schools, community stakeholders and governmental entities. The agency has contracts to run four publically funded WorkSource Centers and 30 Head Start and state preschool facilities. In addition, the agency has numerous high-level financial partners.

The Urban League of Philadelphia (www.urbanleaguephila.org) is explicit in its mission to empower African Americans through information and communication. "Connect 360" is its

strategic plan to define services for individuals, community-based organizations, civic organizations, emerging businesses, corporations and policy makers. The agency promotes its focus on the ABCs – Advocacy Policy, Business & Talent Diversity, and Community & Economic Development. Philadelphia is one of the NUL's nine participants in its Entrepreneurship Center Program which enjoys a partnership with the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA). Under its Wealth and Economic Development programs, the League's Child Care Information Services program administers the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's subsidized childcare program for Northwest Philadelphia County. The League is also one of 30 endorsed housing agencies for the city. In addition, the "State of Black Philadelphia" report and "Empowerment Week" serve as a platform to connect with legislative, corporate and civic leaders.

In 2007, the CEO of the Chicago Urban League (www.thechicagourbanleague.org) declared that they were out of the service business and turned its primary focus to an economic development agenda. Through Project Next the League seeks to redefine civil rights imperatives by focusing on economic empowerment as the key driver of social change for African Americans. The Chicago affiliate has seven operational pillars: entrepreneurship, workforce diversity, workforce development, education, advocacy, real estate and human capital development. Like Philadelphia, the Chicago Urban League has one of the NUL's Entrepreneurship Centers with programs for small and emerging businesses as well as specialty programs for retail and construction. They also have a 9-month business accelerator program for high potential businesses that is conducted in alliance with the Kellogg School of Business at Northwestern University. The Chicago Urban League also appears to be the most balanced among the benchmark agencies in terms diversity of its revenue portfolio.

The Urban League of Broward County (www.ulbcfl.org) states that its fundamental objective is to enable those who are moving toward the mainstream to achieve economic self-reliance. The Broward County affiliate chooses to pursue three strategic areas: Youth & Education Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, and Health & Community Empowerment. Similar to many NUL affiliates, this agency gets most of its funding from government grants with a high level of attention going to youth-oriented services, economic services including Youthbuild, assistance for veterans of recent wars, home ownership counseling and various outreach efforts.

Each of these identified agencies, including the ULCC, adheres closely to the scope and emphasis of the National Urban League's core programs. The focus on workforce readiness, employment and jobs has always been central to the organization. The distinctions to be found among these affiliates are a result of scale, the extent of government contracting and the choice of primary strategy. The Los Angeles Urban League appears to be the most forward in its attack on comprehensive community change fueled by engaged leadership and strategic alliances. Chicago and Philadelphia appear to have undertaken the more innovative and progressive research and policy agendas.

To paraphrase Gandhi, the organization must be the change it wants to create in the world. If the Urban League of Central Carolinas wants to empower individuals and communities then it needs to pursue financial independence, innovative program development, and popular education as a tool to influence local policy making. All of these strategies require something other than the traditional nonprofit's paternalistic relationships among the Board, CEO and Staff.

Recommendation: Build capacity via engaged leadership and heightened strategic alliances. The Urban League of Central Carolinas has to be clear as to whether its mission is an

incremental change agenda (pragmatism) or an agenda focused on bringing about a significant

change in the status of African-Americans in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The

community empowerment path will require expanding both the internal capacity and resources of

the organization as well as its strategic alliances with corporate partners. In his study of two

large-scale community development corporations, Zdenek (1998) found that visionary and

charismatic leadership were not enough. He found that organizations striving to revitalize

distressed communities needed organization-centered capacity. By organization-centered

capacity, he referred to structure, leadership, human capacity, information technology, and

communications. In *Building Organizational Capacity*, Connolly (2004) defines a slightly

different but no less comprehensive model of capacity for nonprofits that implement earned-

income strategies. The model has six interdependent components: mission, vision and strategy;

governance and leadership; program delivery and impact; strategic relationships; resource

development; and internal operations and management. Each of these components interacts

continually with the external environment. The point being that the agency cannot pursue an

assertive leadership vision of social change without addressing these capacity issues at all levels

of the organization.

Expanded capacity will require new resources and to some degree greater independence

from what study participants described as Charlotte's paternalistic philanthropic community.

Like many, many nonprofit organizations, the ULCC faces what Bill Shore, Chairman,

Community Wealth Ventures describes as the compassion paradox – "being constantly torn

between compassionate instincts to serve immediate needs and the strategic imperative of

investing resources for longer-term solutions" (Shore, 2003, p. 10). To address these concerns,

many nonprofits are turning to strategic alliances with business partners, shared leadership models and their own earned-income strategies.

Austin (2000) characterizes cross-sector relationships as moving through three stages of interaction – the philanthropic stage, the transactional stage, and the integrative stage. The ULCC has long standing relationships with several corporate partners. It should work to move these alliances from the relatively low investments and expectations of the philanthropic stage through the mutually beneficial transaction-driven stage to the integrative stage where there are overlapping missions, values and collective action. At its highest level, integrative partnerships achieve some organizational integration.

Patrick Graham began his tenure at the ULCC by opening the strategic planning process to all of the agency's stakeholders. This example of shared leadership is consistent with the principles outlined by the authors of *Leadership in the Twenty-First Century* (Allen et al., 1998):

1. Promoting a collective leadership process

2. Structuring a leadership environment

3. Supporting relationships and interconnectedness

4. Fostering shared power

5. Practicing stewardship and service

6. Valuing diversity and inclusiveness

The participants in this study, both internal and external, spoke to the importance of leadership for this organization. They expressed what they perceived as a lapse in organizational and executive presence in the period that the agency went without a President/CEO and they expressed optimism about the leadership of Patrick Graham. Specifically, they spoke to his asserting a renewed energy and engagement of the agency across the city. They acknowledged

his willingness to invite collaboration in setting the direction for the agency and forging new partnerships to achieve its mission. Members of his staff appreciated his willingness to establish a vision, listen to staff members and encourage their personal growth and development. Conversations with Patrick reveal that he prefers a collaborative leadership model as demonstrated by their community-centered strategic planning process, the *State of Ethnic Charlotte* initiative and the *Young Lives* film project. He seems to appreciate pragmatism but not at the expense of the agency's primary clients. This commitment to unapologetically address the conditions within the black community would please those who criticize this new generation of African-American leaders as not having a visible black consciousness (Nelson, 2003).

This dissertation reflects the complexity of realigning an organization's mission and then investing the time, energy and resources to carry through on new goals and objectives. The Urban League of Central Carolinas initiated a community-centered strategic planning process during the first quarter of 2008. The strategic plan, goals and objectives were finalized and implemented in January 2009. The work of the Business Solutions Committee (to create an action plan for financial stability) began around January 2010 and extended for six months. This timeline alone demonstrates the ongoing nature of strategy development and execution. Interestingly, it was the participation issues that highlighted the pending challenges for effective plan implementation. As one team member observed, the Urban League of Central Carolinas now has a viable course of action but the board must deal with some "fundamental blocking and tackling" if we are going to pursue these recommendations in a meaningful way. Axelrod (1994) wrote that "the correlation between organizational effectiveness and governing board strength is difficult to quantify, but today there is strong empirical belief that a board can have a profound effect on the success of the organization it governs – if not its very survival" (as cited in Herman,

1994, p.134). The promise and potential of social enterprise strategies for the ULCC will mean little if the full weight and influence of the Board are not the foundation on which this commitment is built.

Governance as Leadership (Chait et al., 2005) defines three modes of governance that comprise governance as leadership. They are the fiduciary mode concerned with stewardship and accountability, the strategic mode where boards work in strategic partnership with management and the generative mode where boards are recognized as a source of leadership and collaborative thinking to meet problems and opportunities. The authors assert that all modes are necessary but find the generative mode requires more work and development within most organizations. They point out that one of the challenges of generative governance is that it requires rethinking – a new mental model - the organization as one characterized by three features: (1) Goals are often ambiguous and cannot be accepted as constants, (2) The future is uncertain and organizations are highly interdependent, and (3) Meaning matters, in other words, the meanings that leaders create are just as important as the strategies and plans they write. The authors suggested that the generative work of the board is framing the problematic situations that demand the organization's attention and engaging the collective mind of the board to assist in creating solutions to those problems and opportunities.

The Business Solution Committee's process to develop a set of recommendations for financial sustainability surfaced two conditions recognized as necessary for successful social enterprises. First, is the need to guide the organization toward a culture of entrepreneurship. Second, is the necessity to create a board and organization structure suited for venture creation. A small but telling example of why these conditions are important can be found in the League's recent stalled exploration of a pilot business venture. Bill Shore stated that community wealth

enterprises require courageous leadership because they inhabit a world of trial and error, experimentation and entrepreneurship (Shore, 2003). In short, the leadership of the organization must act and adapt and act again.

Implications for Practice (ULCC)

At the onset of this study, Dr. Patrick Graham, President/CEO expressed his belief that there were six requirements in order for the agency to achieve its vision as a leading voice for change in the region. These requirements were:

- Be seen as an agent of change to address the social and economic disparities that exist in the region

- Exert a leadership that reflects the needs, expectations and aspirations of the communities it seeks to serve

- Be seen as a voice of the African-American community

- Be recognized for its ability to mobilize its constituencies around target issues

- Be recognized for its ability to form partnerships that reach across boundaries in order to address common concerns

- Establish itself as a financially strong organization with a growing membership

The study suggests several ideas for enhancing both leadership role and social impact of the ULCC in broader Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the region. The BSC recommendations will move the ULCC along a path that is in sync with the region's economic development focus. Which is to prepare individuals, businesses, and organizations for community wealth creation. Some tactical areas of opportunity include:

1. *Transformational Purpose.* The entire agency needs to see its mission as community empowerment rather than a set of programs such as workforce development that are directed toward eliminating the symptoms of larger problems.

2. *Dedicated Venture Director*. The organization needs a dedicated person in charge of the business venture creation process and that process needs to be separate from other programs.

3. *Workforce and Enterprise Development.* The agency has successful workforce development programs in green IT and broadband technology and should build aggressively on those competencies in areas related to renewable energy, healthcare, biomedical research, and information technologies. Ultimately, with the goal to identify and pursue business ventures grounded in the human capital of program graduates. The work of Sustainable South Bronx offers one such model rooted in community revitalization and environmental justice. It should be noted that it was suggested in the economic development interviews that there was a need to forge closer relationships between the city's economic development community and community-based organizations.

4. *Cause-Related Marketing Partnerships*. CRM partnerships include a variety of approaches including licensing agreements, joint marketing campaigns, sponsorships and other activities that are mutually beneficial. In *The Ten Commandments of Cause-Related Marketing(2009)*, Kurt Aschermann, Chief Marketing Officer and Director Corporate Opportunities, Boys & Girls Club of America offered these words of advice: "To be successful you have to think creatively. In fact, think less about cause-marketing and

more about Partnering – becoming the partner of your corporate collaborator – and you will have more success" (p.1).

5. *Benchmark Successful Organizations*. Although the field of social enterprise is continually evolving there are some very well known success stories including: Community Wealth Ventures (the for-profit subsidiary of Share Our Strength), Greystone Bakeries, Rubicon Programs, Manchester Bidwell Corporation, and Pioneer Human Services. Community Wealth Ventures provides consulting services to nonprofits looking to become more self-sustaining. Pioneer Human Services, a Seattle-based nonprofit has an operating budget of nearly $60 million that is met through income earned from its ten enterprises. I contacted their consulting division during the course of this study and learned that they would be willing to set up a custom tour and executive briefing for Patrick and others who might want to see their operations first-hand.

6. *State of Ethnic Charlotte*. The ULCC's *State of Ethnic Charlotte* project is an ambitious collaborative effort to advocate for and connect those communities that are disconnected from the global economy. Its primary strategies are (1) to provide qualitative and quantitative data on disparities across the region, (2) to facilitate coalition building around policy areas of health, education, economics and social justice, and (3) to encourage and support grassroots mobilization. Rhoden (2006) stated that opportunities in our society are geographically dispersed or clustered and your location relative to this web of opportunity plays a definitive role in life potential and outcomes. The *State of Ethnic Charlotte* can be a force for correcting policies and practices that keep some groups disconnected from opportunity. As a product, the *State of Ethnic Charlotte* should be considered for appropriate cause-related marketing partnerships.

Implications for Practice in the Field (Study Contributions and Limitations)

This study will expand the limited literature on the role of traditional civil rights organizations and their responses to the changing societal landscape since the end of the civil rights era. It contributes to the growing body of literature on social entrepreneurship as a vehicle to address community economic development. Executives, professionals, and members of community-based organizations, their strategic partners and stakeholders can gain from efforts demonstrated in this study.

This study deals explicitly with the strategic challenges faced by the Urban League of Central Carolinas as it seeks to fulfill its mission in Charlotte, North Carolina and particularly as it seeks to consider earned-income strategies for financial stability. It is my hope that the outcomes may prove insightful to other community-based organizations; however, generalizations should not be made to all civil rights and community-based organizations. I have sought to clearly outline the Charlotte context as well as my central assumptions, values and biases including: the assumption that black civil rights organizations are still relevant and important; that race does matter, that African-American leadership cannot lose sight of the interests of the black community and that community economic development efforts must press the case for equitable investment. Ultimately, this action research study is in service to facilitating solutions that are useful to the Urban League of Central Carolina. Yet, it might prove helpful to similar organizations facing a similar set of circumstances to consider the following insights.

Areas for Further Research

This dissertation sought to examine the role and strategies of traditional African-American civil rights organizations in a "post-racial" era. My choice was to join one

organization as it sought to develop appropriate organizational and leadership strategies. The study suggests other issues which require further investigation:

A comparison of how similar organizations (NUL and NAACP affiliates) and their respective leaders have chosen to address the questions of relevance, mission, sustainability and leadership succession. An examination of more cases would broaden the understanding of these questions and responses. It would be valuable to investigate the link between the strategy formation process and organization outcomes. In addition, it would prove useful to define a set of "Best Practices" derived from the experiences of those who put those practices in place.

The literature reviewed in this study covered several domains yet did not offer much insight regarding the efforts of civil rights organizations in addressing economic and environmental justice issues. The focus of broadly defined local economic development efforts, as substantiated in this study, gives considerable attention to the globalization and relocation of businesses. Academic and popular literature discusses the impact of our global economy on local job markets. However, given the high unemployment rates in communities of color, it might prove useful to explore the extent to which these civil rights organizations attend to the global dimensions of issues such as community unemployment, small business development (import/export), and immigration with community revitalization. Such research would prove valuable in understanding the process of innovation in community-based organizations.

The recent literature on African-American leadership is directed primarily toward the political arena, followed by business leaders, intellectual leaders, and leaders within the faith-based and social change communities. A substantial amount of that literature is based in the biographical genre rather than leadership literature. Even with the renewed attention resulting from the election of President Barack Obama there has not been a wealth of interests (within the

leadership literature) in black leadership since the civil rights era. There are several niches under this broad topic to be explored in greater detail including: generational tensions and the evolution of black leadership where we see the emergence of a real need for grassroots leadership reminiscent of Ella Baker's focus on group-centered leadership, black leadership within the military, HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities), and community-based organizations among others.

Closing Thoughts

This action research experience was important to me because of the reverence I hold for iconic African-American civil rights organizations coupled with Patrick Graham's ambitious leadership agenda. These two factors alone created high expectations on my part for the Urban League of Central Carolinas. Unfortunately, our work fell short of my desires. To be fair in my appraisal, it is too early to judge the outcomes of our efforts and perhaps my hopes for a "reawakened civil rights champion in the region" were a bridge too far. Unrealistic in my expectations or not, I believe we have reached a crossroads in our society that pose new demands of African-American leaders and leaders of other minority communities – demands for extraordinary results capable of closing the fissures of our society. As action researchers, like teachers and community organizers, we must begin where we are with our inquiry partners not where we had hoped to be. Organizational readiness can be a challenge for the action researcher. One lesson here is a reminder that for any project-based effort, team development is a process and there must be alignment of purpose and team member commitment. We, action research practitioners, must pay as keen attention to process issues as we do to research methodology. In this regard, we must be honest regarding our personal capacity to intervene in the organization. Moreover, an emphasis on ensuring shared participation and flexibility in approaches must take

priority over strict timelines, logic model sequences and urgency on the part of the researcher if it comes at the expense of the needs of the community partner (Stoecker, 2005, Strand et al., 2003). I found it useful to reflect upon Heifetz' (1994) discussion of adaptive work. He pointed out that such work is often avoided because it is uncertain, uncomfortable and many times without answers. The approach he advocated is that responsibility for the solutions must be a shared enterprise and it must rest primarily with the stakeholders.

In *Enough,* Juan Williams (2006) found the nation's leading civil rights groups to be missing in action, locked into blaming the system (i.e. racism) for black poverty and blindly pursuing government funding as the solution to black America's problems. He advocated a brutally honest self-appraisal of black America's self-defeating behaviors and a return to self-determination, education and family values as the keys to turning things around. I accept that self-determination, education and family ties are necessary conditions but still find merit in Myrdal's (1944) assessment that we have yet to achieve the American ethos of liberty, equality, justice and fair opportunity for all. The modern African-American civil rights organization has to adjust its strategies to address equal rights, economic opportunity and social justice. They cannot afford to focus on one thing but must find ways to drive innovation in the pursuit of complex problems. The Urban League affiliates discussed in this study are far from being stuck on blaming the system although they are quite dependent upon government contracts, grants and corporate philanthropy. If civil rights organizations are to pursue community revitalization and empowerment then they must unburden themselves of funding strategies that are heavily dependent upon donations and grants. I think that social enterprise strategies rather than earned-income strategies deserve more investigation by these organizations while recognizing that they are not for every organization. But, whether the organization desires to create products and

services or to develop innovative partnerships it must have leverageable assets. In other words, it must have something of value that can generate sustainable revenue. So on the point of self-determination, Williams is correct. Self-determination and financial independence are tools that can be leveraged by our civil rights and community-based organizations to develop human capital, exercise social capital, and unleash intellectual capital in pursuit of the American ideal.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: External Interview Participants

Men Tchaas Ari - Director Emergency Financial Assistance / Crisis Assistance Ministry

Ronnie Bryant, CEcD, FM, HLM – President & CEO / Charlotte Regional Partnership

 Libby Cable – Director and Facilitator / The Lee Institute

Vi Lyles – Director and Facilitator / The Lee Institute

Jeffery "Jeff" Michael – Director Urban Institute; Director Renaissance Computing Institute / University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Angeles Ortega Moore – Sr. Partnership Specialist / U.S. Census Bureau

William "Bill" McCoy – Retired Director, UNCC Urban Institute; Community Volunteer / Past

Chair, Grier Heights Economic Foundation; Chair Housing Task Force, Council of Aging

Willie Ratchford – Executive Director / Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations

Committee – The City of Charlotte

Appendix B: Staff Participants – Urban League of Central Carolinas

Carol Bates, Job Developer

Eugene Buccelli, Senior Vice President Operations

Sheila Funderburke, Senior Vice President Workforce Development Programs

Julia Harris, Counselor/Advocate

Takisha Jones, Administrative Assistant & Receptionist

Nannie Long, Vice President Finance and Administration

Diane McClinton, Program Director

Shannon McKnight, Executive Assistant to the President

Michael Peterson, Counselor/Advocate

Johnny Worthy, Life Skills Instructor & Work Ethics Coordinator

Appendix C: Economic Development Professionals (Information interviews)

Isaac Heard, AICP: Community Economic Development Consultant; Part-time Professor of Geography & Urban Planning, University North Carolina Charlotte.

Thomas M. Flynn, CEcD: Director, Economic Development Office - City of Charlotte

Kenny McDonald, CEcD.: Executive Vice President, Charlotte Regional Partnership

Appendix D: Business Solutions Committee – Urban League of Central Carolinas

Patrick Graham, Ph.D. - President & CEO

Sheila Funderburke - Senior Vice President Workforce Development Programs

Raphael Sebastian - Vice Chair ULCC Board of Directors, Director H.R. Operations, Coca Cola Bottling Co. Consolidated

Wendy Taylor - Treasurer, ULCC Board of Directors, V.P. Internal Audit, Goodrich Corporations

Steve Boehm, Member ULCC Board of Directors, Executive V.P. First Data Corporation

Eric Watson, Member ULCC Board of Directors, V.P. Talent Acquisition & Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Harry Alston, Jr. - Asst. Professor Business Administration, Livingstone College

Appendix E: Workshop Agenda—March 6, 2010

Workshop / Saturday, March 6, 2010
Urban League of Central Carolinas
740 West Fifth Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

Dialogue Agenda
9:00 am - Noon

- Purpose & Roles

- The Non-Profit Landscape

- The Socio-Economic Landscape

- Discussion of Mission and Vision

- 2009 Strategic Planning Goals – Increase Financial Stability

- Social Enterprise Opportunities
  - Motivations
  - Types/Approaches
  - Examples

- Understanding Leverageable Assets

- Assignments & Next Steps

Appendix F: Workshop Agenda—March 15, 2010

Urban League of Central Carolinas
740 West Fifth Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

Dialogue Agenda: Path to Social Entrepreneurship
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

6:00 – 6:20	Participant reflections on previous work session
	Review of social enterprise models and range of approaches
6:20 – 6:45	Overview of community economic development
	Overview of cause marketing examples
	Overview of green economy opportunity areas
6:45 – 7:15	Discussion of ULCC's leverageable assets
7:15 – 7:50	Revisit goals for financial sustainability
	Development of action planning worksheets
7:50 – 8:00	Determine next steps

Appendix G: Workshop Agenda—March 29, 2010

Urban League of Central Carolinas
740 West Fifth Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

Dialogue Agenda: <u>Action Worksheet Development</u>

6:00 pm. – 8:00 pm.

6:00 – 7:50   Complete development of action planning worksheets

7:50 – 8:00   Determine next steps

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