Add PDC to Change the World

Though there are millions of professionally run programs the reality is that there are over 6 *billion* people struggling in and around poverty. Funding and other constraints will never allow us to 'program' people out of poverty and close the gap in wealth and social standing. The change process needs to be developed and led by the people themselves and be mutually beneficial to peers if it is to grow and be self-sustaining. History has demonstrated this process, whether it is people raising a barn together or the building of the all-Black townships after slavery. This natural process is coming to be known as "*Peer-driven Change*".

 We all intuitively know that our strongest influencers are family and friends -- our social networks -- whether we are rich or poor. The people that surround us play a huge role in shaping and sustaining our future. When a society recognizes the best in any community and supports its growth from within, positive social change grows, sustains, and spreads naturally.

Sadly, too often those positive self-defined efforts in low-income neighborhoods are not encouraged or even recognized. Instead, the communities are generally seen as lacking and in need of outside interventions. But the stereotypes of helplessness are wrong. Hidden are everyday people taking steps forward and helping one another, hindered by the negative perceptions of their capabilities.

What behavioral research on groups has shown is that positive efforts and positive role models are everywhere. I saw these positive deviant efforts growing up in tough neighborhoods with my mother and sister. But those seeking to help do not avail themselves of that naturally occurring force for social change.

Now that is changing. A collaborative of funders and organizations is introducing *peer-driven change* as a way for change to sustain and spread naturally. This collaborative is launching the *Center for Peer-drive Change*. The Center will allow organizations and their constituents to

connect and work together as peers. A new technology platform allows everyone to share, to resource, and to spread the positive role models from community to community, peer to peer, across the globe.

PDC surfaces those positive influencers, or bright spots, in communities. It then transfers the responsibility and resources to the participants to lead and help each other whether a nonprofit is involved or not. That is the beauty. Change can spread naturally, informally, if encouraged.

Demonstrations all over the world are leading to significant change that sustains because the residents share and grow their self-defined solutions with the collective support of others. The Center is building a community of everyday people who lead their own change and work together as peers to improve their own communities.

Sponsoring agencies do not lead but instead act more as catalysts and facilitators. PDC takes individual efforts and makes them community assets as people share and grow their collective strength. Impact thus becomes self-generating and sustaining.

A growing number of funders and service providers are now adding the PDC approach as an option for the clients their programs serve. You can do the same and be able to track progress on the long term.

> "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."
> - Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Community Independence Initiative, CII, along with its partners are working with other sponsoring agencies to catalyze this new emerging field for social change. This is all augmented by our online Mutuality Platform where every low-income participant has their own place online and can track their progress, connect with others, and gain direct investments from supporters and diaspora. Participants can stay on the platform as long as they want by sharing data about what works as well as by helping others. In Liberia, all the enrolled participants continue to stay active since the project started in 2020. Thus, the platform helps recognize and grow self-defined change which can be tracked on the long term.