



Take Action & Changing Lives in minority communities: Building Grassroots Democracy in Minority Communities

Great Lakes Consortium

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This book is published as part of our current “Building Grassroots Democracy in Minority Communities” grant with success stories connected to this grant. This publication also includes the results of our previous grant “Citizen’s Legislative Advocacy in Minority Communities”, both supported by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Fellows Division. Our overall goal was on these grants to provide a professional development opportunity for up-and-coming and mid-level professionals from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia to gain knowledge of U.S. practices in citizen participation and advocacy, engaging, minorities, and marginalized populations in civil society and politics, collaborating with community leaders to inform changes in legislation that make a difference in minority communities (incl. Roma, disabled, homeless, immigrant, LGBT) and build grassroots democracy. These goals were accomplished through two-way exchanges. U.S. mentors from the U.S. internship hosting organizations also were selected to travel for a reciprocal visit overseas. They had an opportunity to share professional expertise and gain a deeper understanding of the societies, cultures and the people of other countries in Europe. This citizen civic exchange promoted mutual understanding, created long-term professional ties not only between the U.S. and the European participants but also among the participants within Europe and within their own country, because most of them did not meet before this exchange. These programs also strengthened the capacity of our European partners and the European Networks. As documented in this book we accomplished our program goals as we were able “to teach democracy in minority communities” by exposing participants to diverse community organizing methods to engage citizens as active participants in solving problems in their communities. Altogether, this program impacted more than 5000 people in Europe and 3000 in the U.S. This people-to-people exchange created long-term linkages between the U.S. and Europe, within the European fellows, and enhanced the collaboration between GLC and its U.S. and overseas collaborating partners. We are continuing to work together on involving more people, providing more training, sharing effective methods and success stories to change lives and help communities to flourish.



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