



Building & Organizing the Community

If your work involves improving communities, these two books are vital reading.

By Terrence Fernsler

The Community Economic Development Handbook: Strategies and Tools to Revitalize Your Neighborhood

By Mihailo Temali. 270 pages. Softcover. St. Paul: Fieldstone Alliance (www.fieldstonealliance.org), available for a discounted price at www.snpo.org.

There are two primary ways to improve neighborhoods. The first is to work with and pressure government and business for solutions. The second is to help communities solve their problems themselves. This book is about the latter.

Mihailo Temali focuses on strategies that make a neighborhood stronger, healthier, and more prosperous. His planning guide and worksheets will help community organizations develop a structure to their work.

Temali's well-thought-out appendices steer the reader to more information. He applies much of Si Kahn's and Saul Alinsky's work into his community economic development strategies. In fact, Temali may be the most important writer on the subject since their work was published. His writing is clear, and his work plan keeps community organizations focused on outcomes. This is a valuable workbook that every community organization and economic development organization, urban or rural, should have.

Stir It Up: Lessons In Community Organizing and Advocacy

By Rinku Sen. 279 pages. Softcover. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, www.josseybass.com.

This book is about improving communities by organizing and



advocating for change. Rinku Sen begins by recounting the recent history of community organizing in the U.S., from Saul Alinsky to the present day. She discusses how Alinsky's premises relate to the needs of out-groups and how the organizer's role has changed.

Sen believes it is important to develop campaigns based on progressive issues, not to simply react. Organizers must discern the problem and how oppressors frame it, then re-frame the issue to confront the problem's real cause. Sen explains the need for community organizing by pointing out the effect the conservative agenda has on women, people of color, the working poor, and the unemployed.

While not for every organization, this book is very important. The responsibility of protecting minorities' rights often falls to those of us in nonprofit organizations. To fulfill this charge, we must know how to organize, to design campaigns to correct wrongs, and to ground those campaigns in fact, common sense, and justice to counter the misrepresentations with which we are bombarded. ■

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