



got green? Environment, Equity, Opportunity

Got Green's 2010-2011 Organizing Report



www.gotgreen.org



Letter from Director Michael Woo

When we formed Got Green in 2008, talk about climate change, global warming and saving the planet was all around us. One message really resonated with me: get on board with the new, green economy or get left behind. I remembered back to 1971 when as a young, unemployed father, opportunities just kept passing me by. I joined the United Construction Workers Association (UCWA) – a group of predominantly African American workers led by Tyree Scott who used the power of organizing to combat racial injustice. And the UCWA literally saved me.



In the legacy of social justice groups like the UCWA I helped found Got Green to make sure that our low income communities and communities of color could get out in front of the green economy. I also wanted to help identify and support a new generation of grassroots leaders. Expectations were high – we were going to be at the forefront of the green revolution, delivering new opportunities to our communities.

Then the recession began, and the job losses, foreclosures and economic despair hit our communities of color the hardest; the stakes increased, and Got Green ramped up our organizing.

We collected thousands of petitions demanding that federal stimulus dollars get used to train and employ low income workers of color. We launched our region's first community-labor partnership to train weatherization workers. We door knocked Rainier Valley's apartment buildings to encourage families to demand energy efficiency upgrades in their buildings. And we surveyed hundreds of women of color and immigrant women about their green priorities and challenges. Got Green gave voice to communities of color and low income communities in the green movement – and demanded that no one gets left behind.

In 2011 leaders in our new Women in the Green Economy Project inspired us to adopt a 4-point framework for the benefits of the burgeoning green economy that we want to see our communities gain equal access to: good green jobs; healthy, affordable food; energy efficient and healthy homes; and quality public transportation.

As you read this organizing report I encourage you to think about Got Green's triple bottom line of Environment, Equity and Opportunity, and what that means for you, your family and your community. At Got Green we believe that our communities of color and low income communities already are the most green among us - with lower energy consumption and greater use of public transportation. Won't you join with us to make sure that we take our rightful place at the front of this green movement, and build a society that is capable of sustaining us all?

Michael Woo



Organizing for a Green Solution to Unemployment in Communities of Color

When the Green Jobs Act was passed by Congress in 2007, and then later funded through the 2009 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), dozens of training programs were established to help address job shortages in low income communities and meet the need in green industries – like energy efficient building construction, renewable electric power, and home weatherization – for skilled workers.

After gathering more than 2,000 petitions calling for ARRA (federal stimulus) dollars to land in communities of color, Got Green won a green jobs training grant for Southeast Seattle and White Center. In 2010 we partnered with the Laborers International Union of North America to develop our region’s only union-certified, neighborhood-based Weatherization Installer Technician training. By March, 2011 our training program had graduated 27 low income workers, providing them with the skills to enter the home weatherization sector.

Got Green then worked to secure three hiring agreements with City of Seattle weatherization programs that put our graduates at the front of the line for jobs. What we could not have predicted was the slow start in the home weatherization industry. The on-going recession made homeowners fearful of taking out new loans for home improvements. And while Got Green worked hard to connect graduates to diverse job opportunities (20 graduates landed jobs in green or social justice sectors), one year after training less than half had found jobs in weatherization.

Meanwhile the unemployment rate was holding steady. African American workers were out of work at a rate double that of white workers. Instead of wringing our hands over the weatherization industry short comings, Got Green rolled up its sleeves, and began knocking on doors, reaching out to

unemployed workers of color and women workers, giving voice to community demands for jobs, and strategizing about how to win some relief.

The birth of the South Seattle Jobs Committee gave Got Green a new focus on the “built green” construction industry, as well as public transit construction projects, that together could provide hundreds of job opportunities for low income communities of color.

When abolitionist Frederick Douglas said, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress;” he didn’t stop there. He went on to say that “those who profess to favor freedom, but deprecate agitation are those who want crops without plowing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning.”

Got Green holds fast to our vision that this new, green economy must uplift our communities by providing equity and opportunity while healing our planet. Yet we know it’s going to take more organizing and maybe a little thunder and lightning before we get there.



Ed Mayer: "It's our job to make sure no one is left behind"

"The Recession hit me hard," said Ed Mayer, who worked steadily as a journey level construction worker out of the Laborers Union Local 440 before the economy tanked. Living much of his adult life in the Puget Sound, Ed reaches out to young people about the importance of being active in their community and fighting for social justice.

During his unemployment Ed did whatever he could to stay busy and give back – mentoring youth at Seattle Vocational Institute, participating in community rallies, and educating himself about green jobs.

Yet despite his optimism, skills, union membership and work experience, opportunities just kept passing him by. "At a certain point, I got tired of seeing companies come into my community, take my taxpaying dollars, and not include people who look like me or live in the community like I do."



Ed's perception of racial inequity during the recession is backed up by hard data. According to Washington Kids Count, the 2010 unemployment rate in Washington State was 21% for African American workers, vs. 10% for white workers.

Inspired by stories like Ed's, Got Green teamed up with Working Washington's Fight for A Fair Economy Campaign last April to knock on doors from the Central District to Skyway and talk with low income families about the economy.

On the heels of the door knocks, Got Green and Working Washington organized dozens of unemployed workers of color and women workers from South Seattle and beyond into an action-oriented committee dedicated to following the dollars on big construction projects and agitating for jobs.

After just a few meetings in the summer of 2011, the South Seattle Jobs Committee quickly targeted the Rainier Beach Community Center (RBCC) for immediate action. While the new community center is being built green, Jobs Committee members were appalled to learn that there is no requirement for the contractor to hire locally. Through pickets, press conferences, and a community petition drive the committee is turning up the heat on the Mayor's office to make good on his promise of good jobs for Southeast residents.

While keeping pressure on the RBCC project in the short term, the South Seattle Jobs Committee has set its sights on a campaign to have broader impact in the future: A city-wide policy to require local, targeted hiring on construction projects – benefitting both the planet (less gas to get to work) and communities of color hardest hit in this economy.

Ed's vision will help steer the South Seattle Jobs Committee into 2012 and beyond, "Green jobs are our future and it's important because it's another way out of poverty for people in our community... it's our job to make sure no one is left behind."

Got Green Organizing Highlights

May 2008
Michael Woo, a long-time organizer and community leader, gathers young adults to attend a talk by Van Jones, pioneer in the Green Collar jobs movement.

Summer 2008
With the help of a Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Matching Fund Grant, Got Green is launched as a summer youth project, "Introducing Green to Our Communities."

SEPTEMBER 2008
Got Green organizes the White Center Energy Festival and puts an army of volunteers on the streets to distribute CFL's to 1500 working class homes.



January-March 2009
Got Green and partners lead 9-week pilot project for City of Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment, providing training and jobs to more than a dozen workers of color; installing over 5000 CFL light bulbs, 400 water-saving showerheads.

May 2009
Got Green delivers its first 700 pledge cards to the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development.

April 2009
Got Green launches multi-lingual pledge card drive to ensure the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds reach low-income communities of color. By end of 2009, over 2,000 pledge cards are collected.

October 2010
Got Green leads multi-lingual door knocking and reaches over 900 low income households in White Center, Boulevard Park & Burien with promo materials for its 2nd Community Green Jobs Forum.

October 2010
After winning Department of Neighborhoods and Neighbor-to-Neighbor Fund grants, Got Green hires an organizer to lead its new Women in the Green Economy Project.

September 2010
Got Green hosts Emerald Cities Seattle's founding gathering and our weatherization graduates welcome the Emerald Cities Collaborative national Executive Director to Southeast Seattle.

August 2010
Got Green organizes its 1st Community Green Jobs Forum attended by 90 racially diverse job seekers, and 40 volunteers.

July 2010
13 out of 14 participants in Got Green's 1st GreenLight Weatherization training graduate and receive certification from LIUNA as weatherization installer technicians.

*"In every movement, women of color are always left behind. And I'm tired of it, I want this to be a place where we can be on the front end of a movement – the green economy – for a change."
Tammy Nguyen*

January 2011
50 attend launch of the Women in the Green Economy Project; volunteers go to SE Seattle grocery stores to survey low income women and women of color about priorities for the green economy.

*"We, communities of color, often tune out anything we hear about 'green' because we see it as elitist, but it really is about our family and community."
Ramata Diébaté*

March 2011
Got Green and LIUNA graduate a second class of 14 low income workers, trained in Rainier Beach at Emerald City Bible Fellowship/ Urban Impact's property.

March 2011
Got Green hosts a press conference at the training site and asks the City to honor its promise to put graduates to work weatherizing Southeast Seattle homes.



April 2011
The Women in the Green Economy Project concludes its face to face survey of 210 low income women, women of color and immigrant women on the green economy.

April 2011
Got Green joins the Fight for a Fair Economy Campaign. FFE sends training graduates door knocking in SE Seattle to inform low income families about the recession and energize them to fight for jobs not cuts.



October 2009
9 Got Green members graduate from The Laborers Union's (LIUNA's) first Weatherization Installer Technician training in Kingston, WA.

November 2009
Got Green, Puget Sound SAGE and LIUNA negotiate with Seattle's Office of Housing to require weatherization contractors to hire disadvantaged workers, including Got Green's trained members.

December 2009
Got Green debuts its original hip hop video, Do You Got Green?



"This training provides me an opportunity to learn a new trade, get employed and give back to the community. I can teach them how to save money while at the same time keeping their homes and kids healthy."
Curtis McCraney



June 2010
Got Green secures a contract to provide job training and community outreach under a federal stimulus funded Pathways Out of Poverty green jobs training grant.

May 2010
Director Michael Woo negotiates on behalf of communities of color and wins priority hiring for Got Green/LIUNA training graduates on Seattle's Community Power Works home weatherization program.

January 2010
A Paul G Allen Family Foundation grant provides Got Green with the capacity to open its first office in Southeast Seattle and hire a small, but mighty, staff.

March 2010
Got Green's St. Patrick's Day Kick-Off event draws 200.

June 2010
Got Green secures a location for its first neighborhood based weatherization job training program at the site of the future Unity Village low income housing project in White Center.

"Our communities don't know about energy efficiency, saving money, and being in the green movement because no one has knocked on their doors, no one has outreached to them."
David Bridges

May 2011
15 women from the survey return for a lively community roundtable; planting the seeds for Got Green's Access to Healthy Foods campaign.

May-June 2011
Got Green canvasses 20 Southeast Seattle apartment buildings and engages 100 working class families about utility bills, home weatherization, environmental health issues in their buildings.

June 2011
Got Green and Working Washington host a meeting of unemployed workers that evolves into the South Seattle Jobs Committee; a grassroots group organizing for jobs in green construction for workers of color and women.



September 2011
Got Green mobilizes 125 people to Rainier Beach event to unveil the Women in the Green Economy: Voices from Southeast Seattle report. The report wins broad media coverage and community support.

"If you think of it all in context, it's kind of crazy. Instead of them (Chase Bank) paying taxes to serve the poor, they're getting paid to take money from the poorest people."
Sage Wilson

December 2011
Michael Woo, Got Green's director, is awarded Defender of Green Causes by International Examiner's Readers Choice Awards



November 2011
Got Green leads a community action on the MLK Chase Bank branch to demand Chase give back 10% of their Washington State EBT card contract to save the Farmer's Market Nutrition program.



Putting Women's Voices Front and Center in the Green Economy

“This project represents a voice that doesn’t get lifted up; it represents a perspective that needs to get heard,” said Got Green board member Theresa Fujiwara at the launch of the new Women in the Green Economy Project last January.

Lillie Brinker, expanded on this idea when she said *“It’s time for low income women and women of color to have our voices up front and center in the green movement.”* As she looked out at the diverse gathering of Southeast Seattle residents and supporters gathered for the launch she added, *“We begin here.”*

And begin they did! By the end of April Got Green organizer Tammy Nguyen and three dozen volunteers had completed 210 face-to-face surveys with women outside of grocery stores, in community health clinics, at a transitional housing site, a public transit center and around kitchen tables across our community. Women were asked about their needs, priorities and to share their ideas for how the green movement and green economy could shift to include them and their families.

82% of the survey participants were women of color, more than three quarters live in households earning less than \$50,000 per year, and more than one third were surveyed in a language other than English – Spanish, Somali or Vietnamese.

Participating women were asked to rank, or prioritize, four areas of the green economy. Nearly 40% chose Access to Healthy Foods as their top priority. Food was followed by Green Home (23%), a category which included cost savings from energy efficiency as well as indoor, environmental health. Green Jobs came in third, at 20%; and Public Transportation was prioritized at 17%. Women were united in their reason for prioritizing Access to Healthy Foods and Green Home: concern for their family’s health.

Through the survey, three community roundtables, the “Green Women, Healthy Voices” report release event, and petition drives calling for more affordable, accessible healthy food options in Southeast Seattle, the project engaged over 700 people. Widespread media coverage of the Women in the Green Economy Project: Voices from Southeast Seattle report put Got Green’s emerging access to healthy foods campaign on the map.



In October, the grassroots “Food Access Team” – new volunteer leaders recruited through surveys and targeted neighborhood outreach – began organizing around some broad demands: Put more healthy food dollars into low income families’ pockets and increase physical access to healthy food.

Team member Violet Lavatai sums up their vision, *“Can’t we reverse things so that the fresh fruits and vegetables become dirt cheap and instead we’ll say, ‘Man I can’t afford that package of Top Ramen; but this bag of apples only cost me a buck!’ That’s the world I want to see.”*

Low Income and Women of Color’s Priorities:

#1 = Access to healthy foods 40%

#2 = Green Homes 23%

#3 = Green Jobs 20%

#4 = Public Transportation 17%



Ramata Diébaté: “Thinking about how green really affects our families changed my whole mind frame”

In 2011 Ramata Diébaté, a 2007 graduate of the University of Washington, discovered Got Green’s Women in Green Economy Project and quickly became involved:

“I was breastfeeding my 18 month old and I was very aware of what types of nutrients I was putting into my body, but with two small children, financing a healthier lifestyle was a concern for our family. I decided to be involved in order to help other women and families that might be experiencing the same challenges.”

Ramata’s continuing involvement with Got Green has inspired her to do social justice work. She is currently involved with the King County Parent Advocacy Committee and works at the King County Superior Court for their Parent-to-Parent program.

Looking forward to the next phase of the Women in Green Economy project, Ramata describes the immediate need for changing the status of the food desert in the Skyway neighborhood.

“Now we are going to embark on the Skyway food desert. This is going to be very interesting. Wal-Mart is going to try to use the food desert status of Skyway as an advantage to get in, because the federal agriculture program defines food desert as a low-income community that has a low access to a supermarket. A supermarket which makes more than 2 million dollars a year is the one that’s going to change the status of a food desert, because they’re able to provide all the food groups, which small stores are not able to provide. But we think it’s different, because if we had fruit & vegetable stands within walking distance the residents would have easy access to at least the fresh food.”

Reflecting the feelings of many women, Ramata adds:

“I used to tune out the idea of ‘green.’ It’s because I always felt everything that was marketed as green and organic was overpriced; it felt like a ploy. So I always tuned out that message. But once I really started thinking about green in our community and how green really affects our families, it changed my whole mind frame. It’s because of Got Green that I sat down and really thought about it.

Community organizations like Got Green are important. A lot of people in America cycle through poverty. People go through ups and downs. There are families that just don’t know where to go, because they’re not used to needing help. But if you help people now, they’ll be more productive later on. I want more families to get involved and to show different faces of who people are and of our circumstances. Most people are not on their downward spiral. It’s mostly helping people back up to where they need to be. “



Women in Green’s 2011 Community Engagement Index

Families engaged through outreach.... 700



Face-to-Face surveys completed.... 210



Media articles garnered.... 11



Paper mache turkeys delivered to Chase bank.... 1



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The Seattle Foundation
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Several photos in this report are by Inye Wokoma/Ijo Arts Media Group - at least the really good ones are...

Got Green is a grassroots organizing group – led by people of color, and based in Southeast Seattle – that works to ensure that the benefits of the green movement and green economy –green jobs, access to healthy food, energy efficient and healthy homes, and public transit – reach low income communities and communities of color.

We do this by cultivating leaders of all ages to educate, advocate, organize and build coalitions.



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