

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE U.S. PROGRAMS BOARD
OF THE OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
December 3, 2008

A meeting of the U.S. Programs Board (the "Board") of the Open Society Institute ("OSI") was held at the Open Society Institute in New York, NY on December 3, 2008, at 10:00 a.m. There were present the Chairman of the Board, George Soros, together with fellow Board members Leon Botstein, Geoffrey Canada, Joan Dunlop, Cecilia Muñoz, Jonathan Soros, Bryan Stevenson, and Ethan Zuckerman. Sherrilyn Ifill joined the meeting by phone.

Attending the meeting by invitation were OSI staff members Maija Arbolino, Ann Beeson, Ricardo A. Castro, Nancy Chang, Shawn Dove, Karynn Fish, Solomon Greene, Tom Hilbink, Erlin Ibreck, Laleh Ispahani, Raquiba LaBrie, Lori McGlinchey, Diana Morris, Kay Murray, Leonard Noisette, Stewart Paperin, Maria Teresa Rojas, Laura Silber, Susan Tucker, Bill Vandenberg, and Nancy Youman. Also attending by invitation were Maria Echaveste, Zack Exley, Angela Glover Blackwell, Robert Greenstein, Eli Il Yong Lee, Karen Narasaki, Andrea Soros Colombel, and Michael Vachon.

Ann Beeson served as Chair of the meeting at the request of George Soros.

Ms. Beeson welcomed the Board and guests to the meeting. The minutes of the U.S. Programs Board meeting of September 10-11, 2008, were offered for approval. Upon a motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the Board approved the minutes.

Ms. Beeson announced that Cecilia Muñoz had been named Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House and that she would step down from the U.S. Programs Board.

Mr. Soros noted that the transition to a new administration in Washington could constitute a moment of great opportunity to bring about positive change in the country, and that he wanted the U.S. Programs Board to reflect on what OSI's strategy ought to be moving forward.

Cecilia Muñoz introduced the first discussion about how new strategies for field building, mobilizing key constituencies and local engagement can advance OSI's work. Ms. Muñoz noted that in addition to this being a moment of great opportunity, it was also a moment of tremendous challenge that would require bold and vigorous activism on a widespread scale to achieve policy change on issues of importance to low income and communities of color. Ms. Muñoz introduced the three panelists: Zack Exley, Co-Director of the New Organizing Institute; Maria Echaveste, Senior Fellow at the Chief Justice Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity at Boalt Hall, U.C. Berkeley; and Eli Il Yong Lee, Executive Director of the Center for Civic Policy.

Zack Exley described the community organizing model used by the Obama campaign for its field organizing operations. He said that over 10,000 people worked as staff organizers for the campaign, and that a high proportion of those were young people and people of color who were encouraged to empower campaign volunteers to take on leadership roles. He said that now that

the election is over, the challenge is how to continue to empower and mobilize this deep pool of diverse and talented organizers to work on issues of concern to OSI.

Maria Echaveste talked about the importance of building strong relationships between national groups and grassroots groups. She pointed out the need to simultaneously strengthen and deepen the policy apparatus of regional groups and to build up a corps of “door knockers” who will demand accountability and sustain a high level of civic engagement. She discussed the need to build a strong presence outside of Washington, D.C., in order to create an appropriate balance between competing interests, for example, civil liberties and national security.

Eli Il Yong Lee described the post-election political landscape at the state level. He noted that it was important to discard the myth that the 2008 election signaled a wholesale shift towards a more progressive political landscape. He said that it was important that the progressive movement learn to communicate to the American public rather than just working to mobilize voters. He cautioned that there is a need to transform the dysfunctional progressive nonprofit sector so that it becomes more streamlined, disciplined, bold and experimental. He said that leadership development and organizational development is often overlooked but that these are critical to the nonprofit sector’s success.

Mr. Soros said that he hoped that the community organizing efforts built for the election could continue to be effective post-election and that he was interested in thinking about how to use this momentum for the climate issue. He said that field organizing around an election requires a great deal of money and effort and has a specific objective and outcome that can be measured in voter turnout. He said that OSI should find a balance between being a progressive foundation and being an open society foundation. He said that OSI should be part of the progressive movement but should push for an open society agenda to be included in the progressive agenda. For example, OSI should make sure that criminal justice, drug policy reform, immigration reform all be part of the progressive agenda.

The Board discussion ranged over several topics including the role of the progressive religious movement in the presidential campaign; what OSI’s vision should be and how OSI can help set an agenda moving forward; the tension between tactical and visionary approaches to social change; how to acknowledge the cultural dynamics of nonprofit organizations; the impact of the financial crisis on a progressive agenda; the importance of connecting policy reform efforts to grassroots organizations and mobilizing people around the concept of service; the challenges of moving from a mode of mobilizing people with a common agenda using multiple tactics, to a governing mode of mobilizing people with multiple agendas using multiple tactics.

After a break for lunch, Bryan Stevenson opened the second panel discussion on the challenges we will face in advancing an open society agenda in the U.S. in a new political and economic environment. Mr. Stevenson introduced the three panelists: Robert Greenstein from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; Karen Narasaki of the Asian American Justice Center; and Angela Glover Blackwell of Policy Link.

Mr. Greenstein discussed the impact of the current recession on state budgets and said that the huge state budget cuts will exacerbate the impact of the recession on the poor. He said

that there is always increased poverty during a recession, but that the safety net for unemployed people is weaker now than in prior recessions. He pointed out that the economic recovery package should focus on helping low and moderate income families since they tend to have to spend almost every dollar that they earn. Mr. Greenstein pointed out that within a few years there will be pressure on the Obama administration to reduce the deficit. He said that the progressive community should begin preparing now so that it would have an effective voice in how the deficit reductions would be implemented.

Karen Narasaki talked about the Obama campaign's interest in continuing to use an organizing model as they govern. She discussed the importance of collecting data related to racial and gender inequities and the need to link this information to a communications strategy so that the public can be more fully informed. She said that during the Bush administration, the infrastructure to collect data on disparities in most sectors was dismantled. She said that it was important to increase the capacity of the progressive community to address tax policy and health policy and to make connections with a racial justice agenda.

Angela Glover Blackwell noted the importance of investing in communities and the impact of location on people's opportunities related to schools, the environment, jobs, public transportation, broadband access, etc. She said that it was critical to bring an equity lens to discussions about the economic recovery package. She talked about the importance of local and state level work to the national debate.

The Board discussed the need to connect issues of racial equity to the economic recovery package; the impact of the economic crisis at the state level; the importance of supporting leadership development in multiple sectors; the merits and drawbacks of using the term "progressive" and the tension between political expediency and promoting an ambitious vision for change.

Ms. Beeson turned to the next item on the agenda, a discussion of how to pursue an open society agenda in the current political environment. She explained that OSI had been participating in discussions with a group of organizations including the ACLU, the Center for American Progress, the Sierra Club, SEIU, the Leadership Conference for Civil Rights Education Fund, and the National Council of La Raza. These organizations had come together to discuss opportunities to take advantage of the momentum created by the election and how to mobilize people around a set of policies related to health care, education, and energy. Ms. Beeson said that the concept is encouraging but that the details were still very hazy and that the discussions were ongoing. Mr. Soros said there would be a meeting with several foundation leaders in January and that it was important for OSI to advocate for the inclusion of civil liberties, criminal justice, and immigration reform in this effort.

The Board talked about the importance of taking advantage of opportunities to change the way organizations working on open society issues work together and build more effective relationships, especially among grassroots and Washington, D.C., based policy groups. The Board also observed that over the course of the presidential election, the idea of listening became important and that it continued to be important to create listening opportunities so that the progressive movement would remain in touch with the interests of citizens and not become

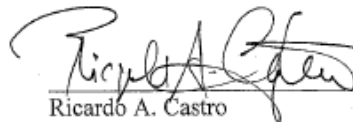
insular and isolated. Board members talked about the importance of using OSI's role as a foundation to diversify the voices that have influence in public policy debates. Board members noted that there was an important opportunity to help push radical reform related to the issues OSI most cares about. Board members also cautioned that in times of economic scarcity, there are more temptations for people to play on old fears.

Ms. Beeson turned to the final agenda item: a discussion of the grant recommendation of \$6.5 million for the Bard Prison Initiative. U.S. Programs grants in excess of \$2 million require approval from the full U.S. Programs Board. Because of his affiliation with Bard College, Leon Botstein recused himself from the discussion and left the room. Susan Tucker explained that this grant would help establish a national institute to promote the restoration of higher education in U.S. prisons through seeding and developing, in ten states, college programs that replicate the Bard Prison Initiative and conducting strategic research, public education and policy advocacy. The proposal seeks up to \$6,500,000 over five years for the initiative; \$5,000,000 for replication, research, public education, and advocacy; and \$1,500,000 for strategic planning and sustainability development. The \$5 million is contingent on Bard Prison Initiative meeting a 3:1 matching requirement, to be reviewed annually. The Board raised several questions related to the feasibility of replicating this initiative, the cost of service per student, and fundraising obligations of the other schools that will become involved. After the discussion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the grant. Mr. Botstein remained outside of the room when the Board voted to approve the grant.

Ms. Beeson closed the meeting and thanked the Board, staff, and guests.

There being no further business before the OSI Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Dated: As of December 3, 2008


Ricardo A. Castro
General Counsel and Secretary