

Technology and Advocacy: New Strategies for Organizing and Innovation

This panel will consider the ways that technology is being used to advance OSI priority areas through organizing, activism and social movements, and how technology opens up new opportunities to participate in our democracy. Panelists will use case studies from their organizations that spotlight how online organizing, as a complement to on-the-ground strategies, can shape public opinion on issues and advance agendas that may not have been elevated before. Examples will include innovative online engagement campaigns for immigration reform and against Guantanamo detentions; state based online efforts that integrate organizing and media strategies to build a more progressive issue environment; and people of color led online organizing to spotlight OSI priority issues like criminal justice, Katrina accountability, and confronting voter suppression.

Moderator: Sherrilyn Ifill

Panelists: Heidi Boisvert, Multimedia Manager, Breakthrough
Bobby Clark, Executive Director, ProgressNow
James Rucker, Executive Director, ColorofChange.org

Questions to frame the discussion:

What are some ways that grassroots organizations have successfully used technology to impact policy decisions on their issues? How does technology enable people to organize differently, and what are the pros and cons of online engagement?

What strategies keep people engaged beyond a particular online action or interactive experience? What models can be replicated? How can technology connect state and local efforts to national work and vice versa?

What can OSI do to help advance strategic alliances between groups that use technology and culture for social change and those that work in the often separate universe of social justice?

What are the challenges to funding this work? How do you measure the impact of online organizing and use of new media?

How can technology be used affirmatively to build support for an issue or opportunity rather than merely reactively in response to a crisis?

Panelist Biographies

Heidi J. Boisvert recently joined Breakthrough as their Multimedia Manager and oversees production of a wide range of new media including video games, video podcasts, and flash animations, to help raise awareness and transform attitudes to create broader support for human rights.

While an MFA student at Hunter College in the Integrated Media Arts program, Boisvert co-designed *ICED - I Can End Deportation*, the downloadable game created by Breakthrough to spark dialogue and create awareness of unfair U.S. immigration policies.

Prior to joining Breakthrough, she taught Digital Media & Media Studies at Hunter College and launched a free Digital Media Program for low-income youth, adults and parent/child teams at the Bronx River Art Center (BRAC).

After many years working as a freelance editor, shooter, and independent producer, Boisvert also has taught 3D Game Design, Documentary Video, and Photography at BRAC and the Newark School of Art; ENG shooting & editing at BCAT; and served as an educator and exhibition designer at the Museum of the Moving Image.

Bobby Clark launched the groundbreaking Internet effort for Howard Dean's presidential campaign in January of 2003 and helped grow an email network of 750,000 and raise more than \$50 Million in one year. Since 2004, Clark has served as a social media consultant for candidates and organizations throughout the country and abroad.

In 2005, Clark helped launch ProgressNow Colorado, a nationally acclaimed organization that has pioneered the use of social media to drive a progressive agenda at the state and local levels. Clark led the development of ProgressNow Colorado's innovative online hub for state-based progressive activism and rapid response media, working with Blue State Digital.

In 2006, Clark received a Golden Dot award from the Center for Politics, Democracy & The Internet for ProgressNow Colorado's cutting edge online campaigns and voter engagement in the 2006 election. ProgressNow's innovative work has been covered nationally in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *USA Today*.

Clark is now the Executive Director of ProgressNow's national network of state organizations, now with more than 1.2 million online activists in twelve states. He is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma and Vanderbilt Law School.

James Rucker is the Executive Director of ColorOfChange.org, an online citizens' lobby of over 85,000 dedicated to amplifying the political voice of Black America and forcing politicians to be more responsive to its needs. ColorOfChange.org was created in the aftermath of the failed government response to Katrina and has since taken up advocacy and electoral campaigns focused on a variety of issues.

Rucker is an American social entrepreneur who previously served as Director of Grassroots Mobilization for MoveOn.org Political Action and Moveon.org Civic Action and helped develop and execute fundraising, technology, and campaign strategies. Prior to joining MoveOn, Rucker worked in various roles in the software industry in Silicon Valley, including founding and leading Imana, Inc., an enterprise software company, in

San Francisco, as well as providing management coaching and technology consulting for other start-up ventures. Rucker is also passionate about school reform and issues of equity, and serves on the boards of two schools. He grew up in Seaside, California and has a BS in Symbolic Systems from Stanford University.