

THE GOOD GREEN MEME: MODELS OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT FROM THE STREETS OF NEW YORK CITY

Session Participants

Miquela Craytor
Executive Director, Sustainable South Bronx

Bomee Jung
Founding Director, GreenHomeNYC

Gita Nandan (Moderator)
Principal, Thread Collective

Jennie Nevin
Founder, Green Spaces / Green Leaders

Description

Coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, the term “meme” refers to an idea, value, or pattern of behavior that is passed from one person to another by non-genetic means. At this historic moment of change, the task at hand for environmental advocates is to propagate the “green meme” -- ideas, values, and patterns of behavior that define sustainability -- to new audiences and to make them aware of their potential as change agents. What unorthodox models of advocacy and communication are being used to promote the “green meme” in New York City? This session examines the tools and approaches for reaching diverse audiences employed by three environmental organizations, with an eye to learning how each approach allowed the organizations to identify, energize, and support citizen engagement in communities not typically targeted for green messaging.

The three models presented will draw from the programs and experience of GreenHomeNYC, a non-profit that promotes green building through volunteerism; Sustainable South Bronx, an organization dedicated to Environmental Justice through innovative, economically sustainable projects that are informed by community needs; and Green Spaces, a company that offers shared office space for green entrepreneurs. GreenHomeNYC’s volunteer-run programs nurture nascent interest in green building by providing actionable knowledge to professionals seeking to green their careers and personal environments. Sustainable South Bronx’s programs engage South Bronx youth in service-learning programs that provide green-collar job training and foster community-based responsibility for the built environment. Green Spaces promotes the intermingling of ideas that lead to new innovation by providing the physical conditions conducive exchange of ideas by eco-entrepreneurs.

Each case study will outline:

- How the organization identified the unconventional audience to be supported
- What desires/conditions endemic to the target audience informed the organization’s choice of communication tools and engagement strategies
- How tools (such as LEED) developed for sustainability pros are used to support the target audience
- How the strategies that evolved in response to these audiences, both successes and instructive failures, can enrich the green builder’s professional practice.

Proposed Session Agenda:

1. Introduction: Topic & Speakers (10 min)
2. Approaches (30 min):
 1. From brown to green: Volunteerism, peer-learning, and transitioning careers
 2. Supporting Innovation through collaborative work environments
 3. Working with the next generation: Service-learning & environmental justice
3. Moderated Discussion: How can we reach new audiences fast enough to make a difference within 4-8 years? (25 min)
4. Audience Q&A (25 min)

Learning Objectives & Questions

- What specific tools facilitate lean & green citizen engagement/education programming?
- How does new communication technology enable new forms of place-based engagement?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for reaching -- and activating -- new audiences for sustainability messaging

About the Presenters

Miquela Craytor is the Executive Director of Sustainable South Bronx, an organization that offers Environmental Justice Solutions through innovative, economically sustainable projects that are informed by community needs. Prior to taking the reins from SSBx founder Majora Carter, Miquela served as the Deputy Director. In her current role, she provides the vision and leadership for the agency as it navigates matters ranging from controversial government subsidized mega-projects to SSBx's own proposed Eco-Industrial center for the South Bronx. Prior to working at SSBx, Miquela served as Senior Planner of Economic Development at Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation. She received her Masters with Honors in City and Regional Planning from Pratt Institute.

Bomee Jung co-founded GreenHomeNYC, a nonprofit environmental education organization that promotes green building through volunteerism, in 2003 and serves on its board of directors. She is currently the Program Director for Green Communities in the New York office of Enterprise Community Partners, a national leader in working to embed environmental criteria and capacity into affordable housing. In this role, Bomee manages the design, delivery, and assessment of Enterprise's initiatives to improve the energy and environmental performance of affordable housing in New York. She received a Master in City Planning degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Gita Nandan is co-founder of thread collective, an award winning multidisciplinary design firm based in New York, whose projects include architecture, and landscape focusing on sustainable design. Through the South Bank international design competition, the firm was recently awarded the contract for the design of a sustainable town and museum in South Africa. Gita is a registered architect in New York and New Jersey, and is a LEED Accredited Professional. In addition, Gita currently teaches at the Art Institute and Pratt Institute, where she brings sustainable issues to the core of her studio courses.

Jennie Nevin is the Founder of Green Spaces, a work space that brings together eco-entrepreneurs in a collaborative environment to launch their businesses. Green Spaces has also launched New York's first Green Business Competition which awards the winning eco-company with over \$30000 in prizes including investment funds and work space. Jennie is also the co-founder of Green Leaders, one of the first green educational networking groups in NYC, and a founding member of NYC Wildflower Week. Jennie has an MBA and started her career in the Private Banking and Investment Group of Merrill Lynch.