

BEN COKELET

Graduate School of Arts and Science

Master of Arts, May 2010

Concentration: International Business and Politics



After 12 years as a global union organizer and researcher in the United States and Latin America, Ben Cokelet founded the Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER) in 2008. PODER is a corporate accountability firm whose mission is to strengthen democracy and development in Latin America. Tired of corruption and illegality thwarting the efforts of workers and communities to shine a light on impunity, Ben started PODER to empower civil society organizations with information, strategic know-how, and capacity-building services to engage companies and hold them accountable for corporate malfeasance. Together with these groups,

PODER builds in the missing checks and balances to ensure accountability in Latin America. In 2009, Ben and the team of PODER won the \$100,000 Stewart Satter Family Prize in the NYU Stern Business School Social Venture Competition.

In 2002 Ben moved to Mexico to work with the Solidarity Center, where he honed his skills at collecting and analyzing business intelligence, communicating his findings, and holding corporations accountable. He has coordinated corporate accountability campaigns and research projects in countries like Mexico, Peru, and the Dominican Republic, affecting meaningful change with uncooperative companies. Currently he brings these skills and experiences to PODER.

Ben's career is predicated upon a passion for social justice. He has acted on this passion in various ways: starting a youth group in Seattle; founding a coalition to unionize service workers in college; volunteering in West Africa, Eastern Europe, Northern Ireland, and South America as a human rights advocate and development worker; organizing low-wage employees in Washington State to win health care; and leading international campaigns on behalf of Mexican laborers making poverty-level wages working at multinational corporations. However, the commitment he is most proud of is one that continues to define his life's work: promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships that bring together both extremes of the wealth gap to ensure socio-economic equality.

BEN COKELET

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

**Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER) Mexico City, Mexico and New York, NY
Founder and Executive Director, 2008 – Present**

- Founded corporate accountability firm whose mission is to strengthen democracy and development in Latin America
- Empowers civil society organizations with information, strategic know-how, and capacity-building services to engage companies and hold them accountable for corporate malfeasance

**Solidarity Center, AFL-CIO, Mexico City, Mexico
Global Union Organizer and Researcher, 2003 – 2007**

- Spearheaded corporate accountability campaigns and research projects, affecting meaningful change with uncooperative companies
- Coordinated international solidarity among AFL-CIO affiliates, international partner organizations, and Mexican unions and NGOs
- Trained and supervised bi-national, geographically-dispersed staff

**United Food & Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Local 1001/ 21, Seattle, WA
Organizer, 2000 – 2002**

- Organized over 2,000 non-represented workers, including the largest election victory in Washington State in two decades
- Coordinated successful labor rights actions, researched corporations, and managed local and statewide media campaigns

**Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 6, Seattle, WA
Organizer, Sept. 1998 – May 1999**

- Coordinated health care workers in multi-union struggle to represent 1,000 workers at 45 locations
- Planned regional health care organizing conference

**Missouri Progressive Vote Coalition (Pro-Vote), St. Louis, MO
United Farm Workers/AFL-CIO Campus Organizer, Aug. 1997 – July 1998**

- Coordinated Support Strawberry Workers campaign among Missouri college campuses and community organizations
- Fundraised for community and student organizations

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

**Universidad Iberoamericana 90.9 FM, Mexico City, Mexico
“Scratchamama” hip-hop radio DJ, 2007 – 2008**

**U.S. Citizens for Obama, Mexico City, Mexico
Co-chair, 2007 – 2008**

**STRACC Service Workers Union, Mexico City, Mexico
Research and Fundraising Consultant, 2006 – 2008**

Labor 2004, AFL-CIO & SEIU, Portland, OR

Lead organizer, Key Voter Canvass, 2004

Seattle Colombia Committee, Seattle, WA
President , 2001 – 2002

Witness for Peace, Bogotá, Colombia
Delegate, 2001

Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos, La Habana, Cuba
English teacher, 1999

Pat Finucane Centre for Human Rights & Social Change, Derry, North Ireland
Media analysis intern, 1999

Hague Appeal for Peace, Hague, Netherlands
Invited speaker, 1999

Student Labor Action Coalition, Washington University, St. Louis, MO
Founder, organizer, 1997 – 1998

Progressive Action Coalition, Washington University, St. Louis, MO
President , 1997 – 1998

Operation Crossroads, Ghana, West Africa
Voluntary development worker, 1997

Green Corps, Missoula, MT
Environmental organizing internship, 1997

Illinois New Party, Chicago, IL
Democracy Winter Intern, 1997

Missouri Progressive Vote Coalition (Pro-Vote), St. Louis, MO
Political Intern, 1996

Union summer, AFL-CIO, Seattle, WA
Intern, 1996

EDUCATION

New York University, Graduate School of Arts and Science, New York, NY
Candidate for Master's in Politics, May 2010
Concentration: International business & International politics

Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO
Bachelor of Arts, August 1998
Majors: Political Science, African & African American Studies

University of Montana, Missoula, MT

Academic semester exchange program, Spring 1997

DISTINCTIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

- \$100,000 Stewart Satter Family Prize in NYU Stern Social Venture Competition, Spring 2009
- Selected Paper, NYU Alexander Hamilton Center for Political Economy, Spring 2009
- Winning Paper, Seton Hall University Whitehead Colloquium's Global Almanac, Spring 2009
- Advisory Board Member, Engage As You Are, LLC. 2009-Present
- Advisory Board Member, Project on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ProDESC), 2005-Present
- NYU Reynolds Graduate Fellowship in Social Entrepreneurship, 2008
- College Honors, Washington University, 1998
- Dean's List, Washington University, 1997 and 1998
- Jobs With Justice Youth of the Year, Seattle, 1995
- Youth Leader of Promise, Seattle, 1995

LANGUAGES

- Fluent in Spanish