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An Experience Interning with Second Sunday of Atlanta Inc

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An Experience

Interning with Second Sunday of Atlanta Inc

Internships provide a unique opportunity for future practitioners in a field to gain practical experience, establish future contacts, synthesize theoretical concepts and real world experiences and to acquire marketable skills to enhance future employment prospects. Additionally, internships provide students with the opportunity to hone public administrative skills, understand professional behavior expectations and recognize the complexities of human motivation and behavior in the organizational setting.

For some however, internship opportunities provide something more personal. In choosing an internship site, it was my goal to work for an organization that actively sought to bring about social change in the pursuit of more expansive civil rights for gay Americans. Moreover, my interest in the development of support networks to assist young and impressionable gay youth as they navigate through a hostile political and cultural terrain, guided me towards a number of not for profit organizations in Georgia. After an exhaustive search, I came upon an organization that has been on the frontline of change in the city of Atlanta in actively seeking to transform the lives of black gay men in metro Atlanta.

Since its inception in 1992, Second Sunday of Atlanta has served as the premier organization for black gay men. As an organization whose mission is to empower, educate, and embrace black gay men in all their diversity, this organization has carved a unique place in Atlanta's cultural, social and political history. As one of the few organizations focused on serving the needs of black gay men specifically, Second Sunday

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of Atlanta is in a unique position to radically transform and influence the way black gay men in the city of Atlanta see themselves and their place in the city. With so few organizations focused on meeting the needs of black gay men, the task Second Sunday of Atlanta is charged with is immense. In addition to an overwhelming HIV/AIDS rate, issues ranging from sexually transmitted diseases, job discrimination, homelessness, internalized homophobia, homophobic violence, religious persecution, and self esteem have plagued individuals within the community. Not to shy away from a challenge, the leaders of Second Sunday of Atlanta have made it their mission to attempt to change the state of black gay men in the city through a variety of innovative and provocative means.

However, Second Sunday of Atlanta began with a simpler goal. Second Sunday of Atlanta began in 1992 as an informal discussion group. With a diversity of ages, sexual identities and income levels, the organization was developed to validate and celebrate black gay men in all of their various incarnations. The first meeting was held at the home of Maurice O'Brien Franklin at the Ralph McGill Place Apartments in Atlanta, Georgia. In this space, a group of likeminded individuals gathered to discuss issues related to black gay men. With no formal structure, this gathering of friends and acquaintances began as a way of providing a safe space for dialogue between men detailing their experiences and thoughts. The concept was not unique. In fact, the discussion group was developed after the leaders witnessed a similar format when visiting Washington D.C. in the early 1990s. However, the organizers began developing ways to make the discussion group in Atlanta unique and different. The co-founders, Maurice O'Brien Franklin and Stacy Grayson, decided to spearhead monthly discussion group meetings and potluck dinners with the goal of fostering a greater connectedness

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with black gay men in their immediate circle. Month after month the discussion group met at the homes of various members and saw increases every week as word of the group circulated within the community. Within a short amount of time the attendance at the group's monthly meetings expanded exponentially. Every Second Sunday brought a new topic and the opportunity for the group to explore issues germane to the black gay community and fellowship at the same time.

As friends told other friends, word that there was an organization geared towards addressing the needs of black gay men through dialogue and fellowship showed a void that needed to be filled. Over the next two and a half years the organization expanded. As attendance increased, so did the understanding that a mechanism needed to be put in place to divide responsibilities amongst the group. With that came the development of steering committees that were intended to guide how the organization would attract more members and a governing document to assure allegiance to the organizations mission.

Disappointingly however, despite the strong start, the organization in its original form faltered. Despite initially having tremendous success as evidenced through an increase in membership, which forced the organization abandon home meeting places for spaces such as Atlanta City Hall, the organization was plagued by a variety of issues. In addition to the evolution of leadership which saw organizing members departing as they explored other occupational endeavors, the organization also found it difficult to find meeting places as the needs of the organization expanded and membership increased. Moreover, the costs incurred by some members in purchasing meeting places and food were unsustainable and forced certain activities to cease. Consequently, the first incarnation of Second Sunday of Atlanta died.

Interestingly however, the organization was resurrected a number of times in the ensuing years. Although the organization never gained the footing that allowed it to prosper as it did in the early 1990s, the organization did meet in an attempt to rebirth what was started originally, but never garnered the same energy as the initial formation.

All of that changed however with the death of a local community activist named J. Lawrence Warren. When Atlanta lost one of its most influential young community organizers in 2007, members of the community felt there was a need to gather and discuss the feelings of individuals affected by the death. Warren, who headed a number of youth oriented discussion groups in metro Atlanta, was undoubtedly influenced by Second Sunday of Atlanta and recognized the importance of safe and open dialogue among black gay men in the city. In honor of his commitment to organizing based on the Second Sunday format, Khalid Kamau called a meeting together on the second Sunday of June 2007 to talk about Warren and also to reorganize Second Sunday of Atlanta. Thus the organization made a comeback.

It is in this form that I joined Second Sunday of Atlanta as an intern. Since the rebirth in 2007, the organization went through the incorporation process, focused on gaining 501 © 3 status, transitioned to a Board of Directors to champion the organizations mission, and delved into expanding the organization beyond the discussion group format to a service oriented organization. Although the reorganization began with Khalid Kamau, the organization is now headed by Lamont Evans. With the belief in the importance of facilitating a fundamental transformation of all communities in which black gay men work, live and play, Second Sunday of Atlanta has once again found a footing that is successfully meeting the needs of community members in Atlanta.

Nevertheless, even in the organizations current state it is experiencing a number of problems that could potentially lead to the organization falling into a dormant state yet again. As the organization has transitioned from an informal organizational structure to one that is formal, it has been met with a number of challenges. It was my hope in interning for this organization that I would have the opportunity to highlight and temporarily assist in rectifying some of those challenges. In the following internship report, in detailing the activities and projects that I was fortunate enough to be a part of, I will show how my efforts have contributed to providing assistance to the organization's mission and goals. I will also highlight some of the organizational challenges that are plaguing Second Sunday of Atlanta and the positive aspects of the organization that have led to its staying power despite environmental changes, leadership shifts and funding difficulties.

Duties and Responsibilities

Second Sunday of Atlanta gave me tremendous latitude in my duties and responsibilities as an intern. Due to the fact that the organization has never had an intern before, and had not contemplated the possibility, it was clear from the beginning that this internship experience would be a test run for the organization. When I initially met with Lamont Evans to discuss the possibilities of an internship, he asked me about what I wanted to receive personally and professionally from my internship experience. In that initial conversation I discussed wanting the opportunity to network, understand more fully the plight of black gay men in Atlanta, and assist the organization in meeting its

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organizational goals. I discussed doing a research paper to present to the organization's members detailing some of the particular issues affecting black gay men in the city, creating a strategic plan, and developing quantitative and qualitative research instruments to assist in the data gathering process. My goals were ambitious and would build upon my experience doing research with the Center for Family Research at the University of Georgia. Moreover, it would allow me to explore my interest in statistics which initially led me to Kennesaw through the master's program in applied statistics. After much consultation, Mr. Evans agreed and we discussed the ways to ensure that I was successful in reaching my goals in the process.

However my experience was demonstrably different than the one I expected. Despite the planning and consensus between myself and the chairman, my goals shifted quite radically at the beginning of my internship. After going to the first Board of Directors meeting, it was clear that there were more immediate needs that needed to be addressed. The organization had no marketing strategy, was preparing to re-launch a website that was in the midst of being changed, was struggling with the updating of the organizations social networking sites, was in dire need of funding, and was having personality conflicts within the Board of Directors that threatened the health of the organization as a whole. It was during that meeting that I decided to radically depart from my intended goals for the internship. In order to be the most useful I determined that my skills could be used for a number of other activities. Therefore, in coordination with the organization's chairman, I decided to assist in a very different way.

First, I volunteered to organize and update the organizations social networking sites. Recognizing the importance of social networking sites to getting information out

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quickly to a massive number of people, I thought it would be important that the organization maximize its efforts in that domain. Second, I elected to take the lead in the organizations celebration of 100 of Atlanta's most influential black gay men. Next, I decided to have a couple of small events to help facilitate cohesiveness with the organizations members and leadership. And lastly, I set to assist in organizing an event entitled "An Evening Under the Stars" which was billed as the organizations summer fundraiser. Though substantially different than the initial activities that I proposed to do, the chairman and I decided that a readjustment in the proposed activities would be beneficial to the organization and to my personal goals as well. The following report details exactly what I contributed to the various projects as I shifted from my intended goals to the one's that guided my internship experience. Whether successful or not, each project was informative and provided much needed experiences in various facets of not for profit management.

The 100 Project

The most important project that the organization allowed me to be a part of was the execution of their September 2, 2009 yearly recognition event. The 100 Project, which was inspired by Time's most influential list released earlier this year, is being pegged as a seminal event that is long overdue for black gay men in the city. The 100 Project is an effort by the organization to honor black gay men whose courage and tenacity has opened doors and provided opportunities for black gay men in Atlanta. For this event the organization chose 100 self identified black gay men to honor for their

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work in the gay community. To be a part of the list, the recipients provide a biographical statement and headshot that appears on the organizations website to allow the community to get to know the achievements of the individuals.

Then, videos are created with me and the chairman of Second Sunday asking the individual about their achievements, future goals, obstacles and setbacks. This video will accompany the headshot and the biography on the Internet for members of the organization and the outside community to become more familiar with leaders and trendsetters in the community. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity to spearhead this event with the chairman of the board and accepted the invitation gladly.

In accepting the invitation to spearhead this event I was given the task of soliciting donors, organizing guest lists, creating press releases, developing form letters, and brainstorming event themes and programs, Most importantly, I have had an opportunity to experience first hand how special events are organized in not for profit organizations. In addition to assisting the chairman in creating a budget for the organization, I was given the opportunity to be a part of the selection process. Additionally, I was given the opportunity to develop the definition of what was considered influential. The organizations chairman and I sat and brainstormed how to ensure that our definition included a varied group of community members and honored the commitment of many in building up black gay men in the city. Through that definition we decided that the organization would honor black gay men whose ideas, discoveries, actions, talents, and commitments have the power to shape and transform who and what we are as black gay men.

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In our quest to find the most varied and qualified of nominees in our community we chose to honor ten men in ten different categories. The categories included 1) Activists 2) Artists and Entertainers 3) Ballroom Community 4) Business Community 5) Club/Social Scene 6) Faith Based Organizations 7) General 8) Government 9) Not for Profit Organizations 10) Online Presence.

Based on the categories that the chairman and I created, I was charged with creating descriptions of what qualifies individuals to be influential in those categories. Those descriptions appear on the organizations website and form the basis for how black gay men will be honored for the commitment to their community. With my tasks varying from ordering materials for the event to beginning the promotional efforts for the event, I have seen first hand how important and time consuming special events are for not for profit organizations as they attempt to garner money for their causes while highlighting the organizations mission and goals. With almost two months to go before the organizations' gala, I will continue to play a central role in ensuring that this event is successful.

Social Networking Sites

One of the other key responsibilities the organizations Board of Directors recommended for me to delve into was the marketing and promotion of the organization. Recognizing the growing impact of social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace and Twitter, the Board of Directors wanted to expand their internet presence in order to

raise capital to ensure organizational growth, potentially increase membership, and ensure broader participation in the organizations community events.

Although the organization was using the social networking sites, there was a consensus that the mediums were not being used effectively. Without the necessary manpower to maintain constant and appropriate communication and the expertise on the intricacies of the various sites, it was clear that it was important to have somebody serve in that capacity in order to meet organizational goals. Consequently, I was given the opportunity to further develop their sites and ensure that constant communication was being made with the organization's members.

From the outset my experience with the social networking sites was minimal. Although I had cursory experience with Myspace and Facebook, I was completely unaware of Twitter. Therefore, I had a bit of learning to do about the intricacies of the three mediums. Nevertheless, my experience was positive. I provided daily updates to members about issues affecting the gay community, provided quotes of famous gay and lesbian activists to serve as daily inspiration, and set up electronic invitations to events. Although the task seemed uninteresting to me but necessary at the beginning, its utility to my personal goals for the internship became clear very quickly.

Through my interactions on the networking sites I was able to meet and interact with a wide variety of people and also became a part of their lives as I read and responded to their status updates. Status updates provided the user with the opportunity to tell those that are friends or followers what they are doing or thinking at any given time. By reading and responding to the updates provided by the organizations members, I became interested and linked to them in a very different way. Although much of the

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information is trivial (i.e. what people are watching or listening to on their ipods), I found that having the opportunity to connect and respond to people in this medium allowed me to feel more included in the organization, despite my internship status, and more knowledgeable about the organizations members. In essence, the people changed from simply being members of the organization that I saw a couple of times a month to being people I had some sort of association to by our similar interest in random things that would allow us to connect and become more open when seeing each other in the organizations space.

Participating in administering these sites also allowed me to understand the power of social networking sites to achieving organizational goals. Since one of the goals of Second Sunday of Atlanta was to increase membership and raise funds, it was clear that the organization needed a way to reach out to people in mass. Social networking sites did just that. Within seconds of updating a social site people were able to keep up to date about events and activities that they then invited others in their network to be a part of. Moreover, a call to action in requesting funds or presence at a particular function proved to be better than e-mail because it allowed people to informally receive information and disseminate it to other individuals.

Although I understood the importance of social networking sites to organizations, working in that area firsthand gave me a greater appreciation for the power of the sites. When I anecdotally heard people had received invites from people that I invited and told them to pass it along, I saw rather quickly that getting information out on an organization through these mediums could be very effective in increasing membership and participation in special events and activities.

Blog

In addition to administering the social networking sites during the day, I was also tasked with creating a blog for the organization. Blogs are a type of website that provides readers with regular entries detailing community events, providing commentary, highlighting important news stories, or streaming video. The blog I was charged with maintaining focused on news germane to the African American gay community. With issues ranging from the increase of HIV/AIDS in Atlanta to highlighting the actions of political leaders in order to keep them accountable for their actions, the blog served as a place where readers could get the most up to date information on the things affecting the black gay community as a whole. Importantly for me however, was the opportunity it gave me to become more aware of the issues affecting the black gay community and writing about it in an interesting way. I spent many hours reviewing newspapers across the country to find information that I felt was important to include on the blog for black gay men to consume. From areas ranging from politics to entertainment, the blog was intended to provide a forum for black gay men to discuss the issues affecting their community in a safe space with likeminded men. Fortunately, the blog has been successful. Each day I have had the opportunity to add a number of entries and facilitate a conversation among the members that is supportive and informative for black gay men in the city. Naturally, this kind of medium is a direct extension of what the organization did on second Sunday. The blog allows the organization to continue discussions that were begun in our discussion group meetings while exploring topics that could arise prior

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to our meeting. Having the opportunity to guide these discussions has been quite fulfilling. In addition to being given the opportunity to discern areas of interest within the community, the blog has also afforded me the opportunity to recognize how to manage difficult conversations in an online capacity.

Networking

One of the key reasons I chose Second Sunday of Atlanta was because of the key connections within the black gay community that I could make as a result of my participation. As with many internships, networking is a key aspect of the experience. Not simply to create contacts for potential future employment, but also to socialize with leaders and activists within the community that can provide the tools to ensure the organizations success.

Fortunately, due to the reputation of Second Sunday of Atlanta to black gay men in the city, the opportunity to network with men who understood or heard about the activities of the organization was beneficial. As we begin to complete many projects that will require the support of various community members and organizations, it is vital that networking be a key component in achieving the organization's mission. Through this internship, I have had the opportunity to network with many prominent members of the black gay community while addressing community concerns. For instance, in response to recent violence upon members of the gay community that has garnered media attention in the last two months, I have seen firsthand the organization's grassroots response and have been instrumental in disseminating information and meeting with people to address these

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issues. Without the opportunity to network in the initial months of my internship, the ability to gather information and support to ensure that investigations were occurring in response to the violence, the organizations efforts could have been stifled. The power of networking became quite evident as a result.

Newsletter

Prior to joining Second Sunday of Atlanta, the organization had an annual retreat on Saturday March 21, 2009. At the retreat, the organization created a strategic plan, discussed organizational expectations and highlighted events and activities they wanted to develop for the next two years. As the chairman and I reviewed the strategic plan, I discussed my interest in fulfilling one of the priorities identified by the organization. One of the main objectives for the organization was the creation of a quarterly newsletter. Due to my experience creating newsletters for public schools in the past, I eagerly volunteered for the task.

Although the organization wanted the newsletter to appear quarterly, I asked the chairman if it was possible to do a monthly newsletter. In it, I proposed a chairman's note, calendar of events, description of the next month's discussion topic, a debriefing on the previous month's topic, and any important news information. Additionally, I proposed reducing the size of the newsletter 75% to one page. After careful consideration, the chairman allowed me to pursue the venture as I described it. Consequently, in addition to the other tasks I was performing for the organization, I began creating the newsletter.

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I suggested that the newsletter be sent electronically after the Second Sunday meeting and that we include members in the development of the newsletter in future issues. The newsletter was designed to have two functions. First, I wanted to ensure that those individuals that were not a part of the numerous networking sites had a way to receive organizational updates on key events and activities. Secondly, I wanted to provide a means for those not involved in the organization to see the events and activities being developed for the organization. Due to the response to the newsletters that were distributed, conceptually the newsletters were successful and will remain a source of information for members after I depart as the intern. Not only have they been successful for the organization, they have also been beneficial to me personally. Through the creation of the newsletters, I was able to practice my writing skills. Additionally, I learned how to more successfully develop newsletters. Despite my departure as the intern, I have requested the opportunity to continue in this capacity upon leaving my post.

Special Activities

One of the other organizational expectations that were devised during their retreat was to create stronger bonds among the board members and participate in activities to better the community. In that spirit, I spearheaded two special activities for the organization. The first activity was a visit to the America I AM exhibit at the Atlanta Civic Center.

The exhibit, which traces the indelible mark that African Americans have had on American history, was an event that was organized to provide a foundation for the

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members in understanding the long history of African Americans. Moreover, the event was organized to spark a discussion on the ways in which black gay men have been excluded from the historical record. As African Americans continue their attempt to ensure that the historical record honors their sacrifice, accomplishments and commitment to this country, it is also important for black gay men to do the same.

Unfortunately, too often the achievements of black gay men are not recognized in the historical account of our country. In fact, for those black gay men who have received recognition, sexuality is many times removed from the record. This excursion, which I organized to spark a conversation on ways that we can ensure that our history as black gay men is represented in the overall history of the country, will serve as a conversation piece to place that notion in the consciousness of the organizations membership.

Another special event that I organized was a clothing drive. During one of our organization's discussion group meetings, a young man discussed his difficulty in battling homelessness when we had a personal conversation after the event. In the conversation he discussed not having enough clothes or food. Additionally, he discussed the trajectory that led him towards homelessness. In response to this young man's needs, I set up a clothing drive. Each Second Sunday the organization's members bring clothes for a specific not for profit organization assisting black gay men or men dealing with HIV/AIDS. Additionally, I volunteered to pick up clothing during the day from people's homes or offices in order to ensure that the opportunity to donate was as easy as possible. Due to those efforts, the organization has donated a tremendous number of clothing items to those black gay men in the community who are experiencing homelessness or simply struggling financially. This effort will be continued throughout

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the year and serves as an example of how small actions from an organization can have positive effects for the community as a whole.

Discussion

Second Sunday of Atlanta is defined by its discussion groups. Each Second Sunday, the organization meets to discuss an identified topic that is affecting the black gay community. The conversations are in depth and comprehensive. Most importantly, the conversations challenge black gay men to identify and explore the ways racism and homophobia affect our community, determine ways to strengthen community bonds, and ways to ensure a healthy self image. I was a part of two of those discussions 1) A Church Experience: Homophobia in the Black Church and 2) The HIV/AIDS Crisis in Black Gay Atlanta. In attendance were individuals from varied backgrounds. There were students, community activists, researchers and other professionals who brought their expertise to a conversation brainstorming ways to combat a number of community issues related to the topic. My participation however was limited. As the intern I was charged with greeting people at the door, setting up the space, purchasing and distributing the food and ensuring new members were signed up on certain social networking sites. Additionally, I took pictures for the organizations website and managed the order in which participants spoke during the conversation.

However, I did have the opportunity to experience the discussion group format that the organization is most famous for. I witnessed firsthand the mutual respect and friendship that the setting provided. Moreover, I saw the extent to which individuals

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were challenged and provided intricate analysis of complicated phenomenon's within black gay culture. Although I did not participate actively in the conversations, the information that I received was significant. From various community leaders and activists, I was able to gain a greater understanding of black gay men and the challenges affecting the community. Moreover, along with analysis, I was able to see the ways in which this format mobilized members to action.

The reputation of Second Sunday of Atlanta has always been rooted in the ability of its members to have conversations that moved people to action. I saw that firsthand through my experience. From disseminating information to contacting leaders and representatives in the community produce change, it was clear that the organization's mobilization effort was centered on developing a strategy and fleshing out kinks through conversation. In my role as intern, I was charged with assisting in that mobilization. From disseminating information following the meetings and provided contact information to community leaders; to extending conversations to other mediums and assisting activists with research information to move the community to action, I was crucial to the mobilization effort. This undoubtedly was useful to my understanding of the role of not for profits in advocacy. I was able to witness the ways in which this organization mobilized people and kept them interested in the process thereafter through social networks, e-mails, newsletters, and calls to action. Invaluable information for future practitioners in the field.

Organizational Challenges/Strategic Plan

As my experience with Second Sunday of Atlanta progressed, I was able to get an understanding of some of the organizations challenges that may impede the progress of the organization in the future. In conversations with the organization's chairman, I discussed some of my feelings about the organization based on the knowledge I have gained through my coursework and experience with other not for profit organizations. Interestingly, many of the challenges that I observed were issues that the chairman was cognizant of. Together, we brainstormed ways to meet those challenges and discussed how they were affecting the organization at this time. In an effort to put these challenges in context, I have created a strategic plan and assessed the internal and external challenges affecting the organization. For Second Sunday to continue making strides in radically transforming the lives of black gay men, it is necessary for them to focus on certain issues to ensure success.

In order to accomplish this goal, it is important that there is an accurate assessment of the internal and external challenges facing the organization. In order to make this assessment, a series of interviews were conducted with the organization's volunteers and board members. Additionally, conversations with community leaders informed this assessment. By looking at both the successes and the areas where Second Sunday of Atlanta has been less successful over the course of its tenure, Second Sunday of Atlanta can more adequately meet the demands of its members. This assessment's function is two fold. First, it was created in an effort to ensure accountability and fidelity to the organization's mission and values. Second, it will serve as a guidepost to ensure the organizations success in future endeavors.

Like most organizations, Second Sunday of Atlanta has specific aspects of its organization that must be rectified in order to meet the growing demands placed on the organization by the outside community. Although the organization has been successful in transitioning from an informal to a formal structure, remaining visible in the community, serving as an informant to citizens unaware of the issues surrounding the black gay male community, and providing a holistic approach to understanding black gay male empowerment, there are necessary changes that must be made as the organization expands.

In addition to fine tuning these areas to meet greater demand, it is also imperative that the organization address the more recent needs of the organization. In addition to organizational changes, new funding sources, board strife, and volunteer malaise, it is vital that the organization set specific plans that ensure that outreach is made to disadvantaged groups, that the mission of the organization remains at the forefront of board decisions, and that the information dissemination process expands more adequately beyond the informed black gay men in the organization. By looking specifically at these issues and making necessary organizational modifications described on these assessments, Second Sunday of Atlanta will potentially be on its way to more fully achieving its organizational mission in transforming the lives of black gay men in the city of Atlanta.

External Organizational Challenges

Second Sunday of Atlanta has a number of external challenges that significantly affects the organizations success within the city. Of course the most significant challenge

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facing Second Sunday of Atlanta is the difficulty in expanding its outreach. This particular challenge cannot be underestimated. As Second Sunday attempts to garner community support for initiatives supported generally by the black gay male community, it is vital that other community leaders are sympathetic to the communities needs. Second Sunday must do more outreach to communities of faith, the gay community as a whole, and women sympathetic to the cause.

Additionally, problems maintaining a strong volunteer base must be addressed. Second Sunday of Atlanta, which is a grassroots organization, has built its reputation with the help of volunteers that have sacrificially assisted the organization in pursuit of a progressive agenda. However, volunteer morale has decreased substantially due to internal challenges with leadership and questions over the direction of the organization that has not been discussed. In order for Second Sunday to remain a viable player within the community, it is necessary for the volunteers to function in a stable and supportive environment, which is not presently the case. Any assessment aimed at improving the way Second Sunday functions must address sustaining and supporting volunteerism within the organization in the near future.

Lastly, funding issues must be addressed. Like most not for profits, getting funds to support the organizations mission is a task. Second Sunday is no different. In order for the organization to be successful there must be a concerted effort to diversify funding avenues through creative fundraising ventures and expanded grant seeking. Strategically, it would be advantageous for Second Sunday to focus the bulk of its energy towards fund

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accumulation in an effort to ensure that the expanding organization is able to meet the community's demand in the near future.

Internal Organizational Challenges

Internally, Second Sunday of Atlanta is also facing some difficult challenges. Two of the most crucial is leadership instability and the ability of the organizations leadership to plan and organize the organizations future. There needs to be an attempt at strategically looking at the organization for accountability purposes and make necessary changes that will push the organization in a positive direction.

Additionally, Second Sunday of Atlanta must reduce board strife. Due to personality conflicts and questions regarding the direction of the organization, the board has become quite divided. Efforts must be made to reduce this strife in order for the organization to be productive. Moreover, a long look at the quality of services provided by the organization must be addressed for the organization to make positive moves on behalf of black gay men in the city.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Goal # 1 - Financial Support

Among the many challenges that are arising within the organization, there are a few that require immediate attention by the organizations leadership. First, it is necessary for the organization to address the difficulty in finding a source of funding for its varied endeavors. Although the organization has prided itself on being an organization that was

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created and funded by black gay men, as the organization expands, it is crucial that other avenues of funding be explored. One of the ways that the organization can do this successfully is to expand its services in terms of HIV/AIDS support and outreach. As the numbers of African Americans with HIV/AIDS increases rapidly, the availability of funds to combat the spread of the disease has increased exponentially.

By creating programs that are designed to meet the needs of black gay men who are struggling emotionally with disease, the organization can increase its potential in receiving funding. Moreover, the organization must create a fundraising committee. Despite the myriad of committees presently functioning within the organization, fundraising is nonexistent. If the organization creates a committee dedicated to raising funds it will show the importance of the endeavor to the membership and surely increase the availability of funds as the committee performs its designated tasks.

Moreover, there is an immediate need for the creation of a grant writing team. With the number of members who are working in the not for profit field and function primarily as grant writers, it would be advantageous for the organization to organize a team that will work specifically on grant writing. Despite the time consuming nature of the process, if a team were set up with divided tasks, the organization would benefit greatly from the funds received through the process.

Strategic Goal # 2 – Leadership Stability

Next, it is vitally important that Second Sunday of Atlanta addresses the difficulty in maintaining individuals in leadership positions and the organizations board strife that has

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contributed to frequent shifts in leadership. As stated at the exposition of this report, the organization was restarted in 2007 by Khalid Kamau after the death of a local community activist. Unfortunately, Kamau departed after a year in pursuit of other occupational endeavors. Consequently the current chairman took the reigns. Although familiar, capable, and excited about their ability to transform the organization, this marks another change in leadership change for the organization that has seen endless leadership shifts. These constant shifts have been problematic for a couple of reasons.

First, due to constant and abrupt shifts in power among the organizations leadership, the community's impression of the organization is that of instability. One of the biggest challenges for Second Sunday of Atlanta is getting over perceptions of instability that have come as a result of publicly aired battles between the board and leadership in the past along with simple leadership changes that are commonplace in not for profit organizations. Also, constant leadership changes have made it difficult for the organization to build relationships that ensure constant funding flow and community connections are maintained. To change this dynamic, it is important that the leadership agree to a minimum of three years of service to combat these concerns. Only when Second Sunday is seen as a stable organization will the community rally around funding and supporting the organization fully in its organizational endeavors. Providing leadership stability will do just that.

Strategic Goal # 3- Board Changes

Plus, there is a divide within the organizations board that has persisted for years. The organization, divided by right and left wing factions that feel that certain issues need to

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be addressed before others, has proven to be a big problem for the organization. Due to the large amount of issues affecting black gay men in the city; it is difficult to assess where to begin. Therefore, the varying views within the organizations board has proven difficult to quell and turnover has increased and infighting as proliferated. Until such issues are resolved, the organization will have tremendous difficulty meeting the needs of the organization in the near future.

Therefore there needs to be a board overhaul. In order to remove the entrenched infighting and to start anew, it is necessary for the organization to make board changes, in line with the organizations bylaws, to produce change. If the organizations membership is willing to participate in the replacement, this change will immensely benefit the organization in the near future. There should be an interview process that is implemented to ensure that board members have a clear understanding of their role and the organizations mission. Moreover, the board members should have an expanded tenure of three years to ensure that the organization is able to remain stable and prosper in the years to come.

Strategic Goal # 4 - Expand Volunteerism and Change Volunteer Perception

Next, many of the issues that need to be addressed within the community are being hindered by the lack of black gay men willing to push for certain measures for fear of the repercussions. Homophobia, which many have stated is particularly overt in the south, has many affects. Some of those affects have severe repercussions for organizations focused on addressing the needs of black gay men. There is a lack of volunteerism for fear of being viewed as a black gay man and the refusal of many community members to

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actively support the organization's activities and events that is particularly harmful to the community for fear of being labeled. And most interestingly, a lack of community leaders that will participate in an organization focused on the needs black gay men for fear of being targeted by homophobic employers or community members. Second Sunday of Atlanta must work actively to change this perception. Although this sort of grassroots political activity may be difficult, it is necessary. And Second Sunday of Atlanta must work actively to educate volunteers and the community in order to sustain a strong base of volunteers that can push a progressive agenda. Without volunteers, Second Sunday of Atlanta will struggle immensely. It is important that volunteers know that they can operate safely as a volunteer while recognizing that progressive change requires sacrifice which is necessary for the movement. Until Second Sunday of Atlanta has a volunteer base that is strong and willing to go to the most dangerous neighborhoods pushing a progressive agenda, the organization will only be semi-successful. By creating a volunteer training program geared towards emotionally training volunteers to push progressive agendas throughout the city, the organization will benefit greatly.

Strategic Goal # 5 –Grassroots Project Expansion

As with many organizations, fidelity to the organizations mission is derailed for numerous reasons. In the case of Second Sunday, the fact that the organizations mission was so broad has contributed to the organization not being successful in meeting its goals. However, as the organization grows, its ability to achieve its mission has greatly increased, yet certain areas have been neglected. One of those areas has to do with reaching out to ordinary citizens to inform them of the issues affecting the black gay

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community and placing that in a context to where they fill a connection to assisting in removing the systematic oppression present in state policies, laws, and procedures.

The way to get back on track in achieving this goal is through a grassroots project expansion. Second Sunday of Atlanta must utilize volunteers to write position papers, write opinion pieces for major newspapers, create broader networking opportunities, and actively ensure that progressives are registered voters in Atlanta through more frequent voter drives. Many of the activities presently on Second Sunday's agenda have focused exclusively on discussions and special events and have neglected grassroots efforts. However, there is a fundamental flaw in that approach. By not focusing on changing the minds of Atlanta citizens by informing them of discriminatory practices throughout the city or ensuring that an increase in progressive voters are at the polls to support specific candidates and initiatives, Second Sunday of Atlanta is failing to fulfill its mission. The organization must focus more on education in primary and elementary schools, churches, and door to door flyering which has been successful with other organizations dealing with oppressed minorities, in order to ensure that citizens are informed and can combat legislative action that is not friendly to the black gay community

Strategic Goal # 6 - Strategic Plan Task Force Creation

Second Sunday of Atlanta has never created a thorough strategic plan. In fact, only recently has the organization begun the process of creating a strategic plan aimed at ensuring accountability towards the organizations mission and fidelity to the organizations principles. The final step in this strategic plan is the creation of a strategic plan task force that would convene every two years. Due to changes in the political

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landscape and rapid changes in technology that may make current initiatives and plans outdated, it is important for certain members of the organization to convene in order to plan the organizations future. Therefore, a strategic task force needs to be created that is composed of community leaders outside the organization, internal leaders and volunteers that will present a plan for success that is presented to the organization's members. This way, the organization is constantly evaluating programs, receiving community input, and holding themselves accountable to previous plans in order to ensure success. Strategic plans should not be sporadic plans that arise during crisis or organization change, but frequent assessments that ensure that the organization is moving in a positive direction that is supported by the community.

In conclusion, Second Sunday has recognized the need for radical change and has taken a brief hiatus in order to regroup with a new strategic plan. With completely new leadership, board strife, funding challenges, and a community that is resistant to support due to potential reprisal, the organization made a courageous move by convening to restructure the organization to ensure that it meets the demands of the community. Hopefully, this strategic plan can assist the organization in recognizing potential strengths and weaknesses that can ensure that the noble mission of the organization is successfully met. By making adjustments in the major areas discussed in this plan, Second Sunday of Atlanta will be on its way to drastically reshaping Atlanta's political, social and cultural milieu towards black gay men and improving the lives of black gay men in the community for the better.

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As I continue this experience at Second Sunday despite the end of my internship, I realize that it has been very beneficial to my development as a potential not for profit manager. I have garnered contacts for the future, learned the intricacies of marketing and event planning, and have also become more knowledgeable about organizational structure, rules, and procedures. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to participate in board discussions, receive extensive assistance from the chairman, participate in the development of social networking sites, and be a part of a community of black gay men that are affirming and supportive.

I am hopeful that I will become further enriched and continue my growth in understanding not for profit management and functioning as my participation in this organization grows. But most importantly, I look forward to being a part of an organization whose mission of empowering and educating black gay men is so closely in line with my future interests. Having the opportunity to be a part of a collective of black gay men focused on the social change is a privilege. Recognizing the extensive work that needs to be done, I know for sure that this internship has provided me with the tools necessary to successfully work towards social change for black gay men. Whether my not for profit work leads me towards advocating for black gay men specifically or not, I know that the social justice and advocacy message that has been articulated by this organization will be one that I will personally take one in the future.