



## Contesting Community: The Limits and Potential of Local Organizing

By Professor James DeFilippis, Professor Robert Fisher, Professor Eric Shragge

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What do community organizations and organizers do, and what should they do? For the past thirty years politicians, academics, advocates, and activists have heralded community as a site and strategy for social change. In contrast, *Contesting Community* paints a more critical picture of community work which, according to the authors--in both theory and practice--has amounted to less than the sum of its parts. Their comparative study of efforts in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada describes and analyzes the limits and potential of this work.

Covering dozens of groups, including ACORN, Brooklyn's Fifth Avenue Committee, and the Immigrant Workers Centre in Montreal, and discussing alternative models, this book is at once historical and contemporary, global and local. *Contesting Community* addresses one of the vital issues of our day--the role and meaning of community in people's lives and in the larger political economy.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"This book offers the most incisive, compelling treatment of community organizing that I have seen. As a study of the strategic challenges of community-based action, it is not only authoritative but also highly original in its combination of sure-handed historical grasp, careful intellectual critique, and practical engagement with important community efforts taking place on the ground."

(William Sites *School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago*)

"This book could not be more timely. DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge give us a seriously analytical yet readable discussion of the possibilities and limits of locally based organizing. A major contribution to the ongoing debates about community and social movement organizing."

(Frances Fox Piven *author of Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America*)

"*Contesting Community* is a valuable asset for political radicals interested in examining the possibilities and pitfalls of local organizing. The authors manage an effective critique of actually existing community organizing, while also plotting out a path to build an alternative practice."

(*Counterpunch* 2010-09-08)

"*Contesting Community* is an excellent historical analysis of the evolution of community practice. This book is valuable reading for scholars, graduate students and practitioners in sociology, social work, public administration, public health or political science."

(*Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 2011-11-01)

"an engaging and provocative critique of the evolution of neoliberalism and its impact on communities and community organizing."

(*New Labor Forum*)

"*Contesting Community* is a refreshing and important book which looks at the current state of community organizing in America, Canada, and the United Kingdom from a critical perspective. It should be required reading for scholars and students interested in community work, community sociology and social change, and communitarianism as a theory."

(*Contemporary Sociology* 1999-01-01)

"*Contesting Community* calls for a 'wider, larger-scale, and longer-term movement for social change'. Community organizing as a process of movement-building is a process of learning in struggle. This book is a contribution to that learning."

(*Shelterforce Magazine* 2011-04-21)

"This is a timely and potentially significant book that goes a long way toward bringing up to date the literature on community organizing and community development."

(*Journal of Planning Education and Research* 2012-06-01)

### From the Inside Flap

What do community organizations and organizers do, and what should they do? "Contesting Community" addresses one of the vital issues of our day-the role and meaning of community in people's lives and in the larger political economy.

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### About the Author

JAMES DeFILIPPIS is an associate professor in the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. He is the author of *Unmaking Goliath*, named Best Book in Urban Politics by the American Political Science Association.

ROBERT FISHER is a professor at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. He is the author of several books on community organizing.

ERIC SHRAGGE teaches in the School of Community and Public Affairs, Concordia University, Montreal and is the author and editor of several works on community organizing and development.

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**Clara Brownfield:**

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