

Reflection on CEI's 40th Anniversary Celebration - Ron Phillips

I want to thank the CEI board, staff, and especially Betsy and Keith for this honor at CEI's 40th anniversary celebration. A year and a half ago I left CEI. But being present at this 40th it seems like not only just yesterday did it all began in 1977, but also, how seamless to step in at our gathering, as if time stands still. So thank you for honoring my efforts over those many years.

In saying that however I do feel a bit – no, in fact, a lot – uncomfortable with this recognition. How can one easily appreciate such recognition when you know all the many, many individuals, from board to staff to foundations, religious institutions, legislators, bankers, state and government agencies, that were the building blocks of this organization? How can you appreciate the recognition when you know the Civil Rights movement - From *Civil Rights to Sustainable Solutions* – was the inspired and nurtured our CDC and later on – our CDFI.

All of these are high-sounding words still adds up to a reality of on-the-ground investments in sustainable enterprises, a buffer to larger and social and economic forces that surround us in our daily place and local community – and to a global solidarity with other like-minded groups and individuals also seeking to build hopeful opportunity while confronted with the devastating impact of racism, gender, inequality, and violence to both people and the environment.

The big picture of the context of our work as investment practitioners in economic opportunity – at the heart of the grassroots community development corporation and financial institution network in this country – and more so globally – is at least one piece of the encouraging building block for peace and justice – jobs, health care, affordable housing, education – access to opportunity.

So, how does one say thanks but to say thanks to the chairs of CEI's board; the various committees and their chairs; the management group throughout; the many staff who have driven CEI's three-legged model of investment, advising and policy; and the many who were part of the building blocks to create opportunities for people and places out of the economic mainstream? A simple thank you must suffice - and a special thanks to Betsy and Keith for taking over and remarkably not just working closely together for the enduring future of CEI, but also, to have weathered all that a 38 year tour of duty has left behind.