

# **Grassroots Organizations and Health Care Reform**

by

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The original of the complete project is on file  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This project report examines a current campaign for US health coverage reform, Health Care for America Now (HCAN), as part of the work of an existing progressive community organization. It describes and critiques the framing of health care reform within this movement in historical terms and in definitions of access to health care. It examines the ways in which the everyday practices of the campaign are shaped by questions of governmental/civil society scales, by institutional scales, and by the ambivalent professionalization of community organizing. This project involved an internship at a local community organization, observation, informal and formal interviews with volunteers and staff of the community organization and other activists and organizations working on the Health Care for America Now campaign. The report suggests that while the HCAN campaign is attempting to find new strategies within a social movement, it is nonetheless constrained by the existing structures of political governance and progressive activism. Relying on contracts with existing community organizations, this campaign is subject in any particular location to the established connections, practices and ambivalent positions within those organizations. Within a community organization, activists may find their critiques of existing power structures and attention to critical intent difficult to implement in the face of resource constraints and negotiations of scale. They may be strongly critical of particular definitions of movement success, commonsense concepts of mediation, and professionalized hierarchies that mimic bureaucratic structures, but in day to day practice draw on all of these elements in ways that reinforce existing power relationships to make their particular organization function.