



Social Youth Entrepreneurship: The Potential for Youth and Community Transformation

Melvin Delgado

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Youth policies in the United States-especially for economically and socially disadvantaged children-are often characterized as fragmented, inadequate, antiquated, misguided, and, at worst, negligent or even harmful. The primary systems mandated to serve youth often coexist as if in parallel universes, often at odds with each other regarding goals, priorities, and resources. To address these deep-seated problems and propose a dynamic alternative, Delgado applies extensive field research and insights from economics, urban studies, social work, and psychology, to introduce a new paradigm, social youth entrepreneurship. This approach to youth and community development integrates education, work experience, and counseling to create economic opportunities and prepare today's youth for tomorrow's challenges.

A popular dictum states that our children are our future. Nevertheless, youth policies in the United States-especially for economically and socially disadvantaged children-are often characterized as fragmented, inadequate, antiquated, misguided, and, at worst, negligent or even harmful. The primary systems mandated to serve youth often coexist as if in parallel universes, often at odds with each other regarding goals, priorities, and resources. To address these deep-seated problems and propose a dynamic alternative, Delgado applies insights from a variety of fields, including economics, urban studies, social work, and psychology, to introduce a new paradigm, social youth entrepreneurship.

Drawing from extensive field research, and showcasing the experiences of several innovative programs, including Food from the Hood in Los Angeles and Young Aspirations/Young Artists in New Orleans, Delgado outlines an approach to youth and community development that integrates education, work experience, and counseling. The positive results include motivating young people to sharpen their analytical and interpersonal skills, inspiring them to contribute to their communities, and preparing them to become productive members of the workforce. Meanwhile, Delgado offers practical recommendations for educators, community leaders, local businesses, and policymakers alike to support such programs.

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