



# YOUTH ACTIVIST TOOLKIT



**Rights.**  
**Respect.**  
**Responsibility.**

 **Advocates  
for Youth**  
Rights. Respect. Responsibility.

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This guide was created by Advocates for Youth and Level Forward, and is inspired by the film AMERICAN WOMAN.

**Advocates for Youth** partners with youth leaders, adult allies, and youth-serving organizations to advocate for policies and champion programs that recognize young people's rights to honest sexual health information; accessible, confidential, and affordable sexual health services; and the resources and opportunities necessary to create sexual health equity for all youth.

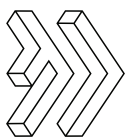
<https://advocatesforyouth.org>

**Level Forward** develops, produces and finances entertainment with Oscar, Emmy and Tony-winning producers, working to extend the influence and opportunity of creative excellence and support new voices. We take great responsibility for our work, using film, television, digital and live media to address inequality through story-driven, impact-minded properties.

<https://www.levelforward.co/>

**AMERICAN WOMAN** is a film that raises questions about power: who has it and who doesn't, and how best to change that. It challenges us to question the ways people wield power, grapples with the choices presented to both the powerful and the marginalized. The story's center is a young pacifist whose violent activism has sent her on the run from the law, and who is wrestling with her choices as she joins a cohort of young radicals and their kidnapped convert. This adventure in identity and transformation is adapted from Susan Choi's novel, inspired by the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst, and is the directing debut of Emmy-nominated filmmaker Semi Chellas.

AMERICAN WOMAN is a Gun Neutral film. For each gun that appears on screen, a \$150 donation has been allocated to non-profits working to reduce the number of illegal firearms, invest in youth programming and invest in research that can help provide a deeper understanding of gun violence in media. <https://www.levelforward.co/gunneutral>



LEVEL  
FORWARD



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# PART 1: GETTING STARTED

**Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."**

**- Margaret Mead**

Young people are leading the movement for change. They are marching in the streets for equal rights. They're walking out of classrooms for climate change. They're standing up for people killed by guns. They are ending stigma around abortion. And they're rewriting the script that tells us how to think, behave, and treat one another.

**In other words, young people are organizing.**

This guide is designed for youth activists that want to organize for change. It contains tips and tools gathered from youth activists working on issues such as reproductive justice, gun violence, climate change, racial inequity, conflict resolution, and so much more.

The goal of the Youth Activist Toolkit is to walk you through some basic steps an organizer can take to develop a strategy, build collective power, and use that power to create meaningful, lasting change. It also addresses important topics like practicing self-care or resolving group conflict on your path toward victory.

There are many ways to create change and this guide does not cover all of them. As a youth activist, we hope you invent new ways to organize. Please share your tips and tools online with us and other youth organizers at #YouthActivistToolkit so we can continue building this resource.

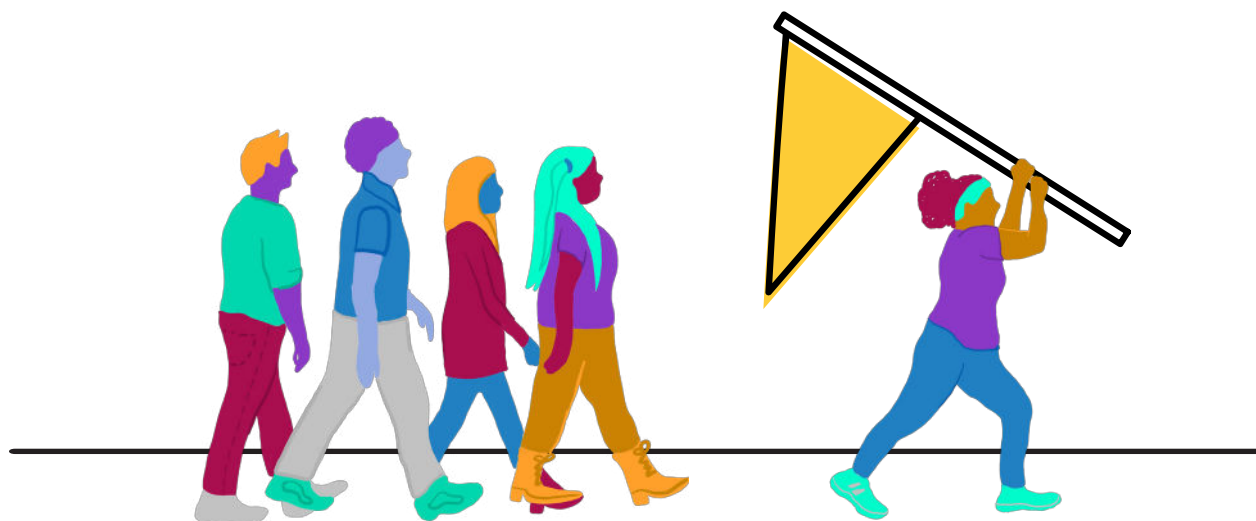
The work you are doing is important. We want you to be successful and supported in organizing for the change you want in the world. It is our hope that this guide will inspire you to feel your power and use it to create a more just and equitable world for young people.

Sincerely,

Renée Gasch and Julia Reticker-Flynn, writers  
Clarissa Brooks, Sydney Kesler, Madelynn Bovasso, and Nimrat Brar  
contributing writers and advisors



# 1.1 WHAT IS ORGANIZING?



**Organizing is the process of building power as a group and using this power to create positive change in people's lives.**

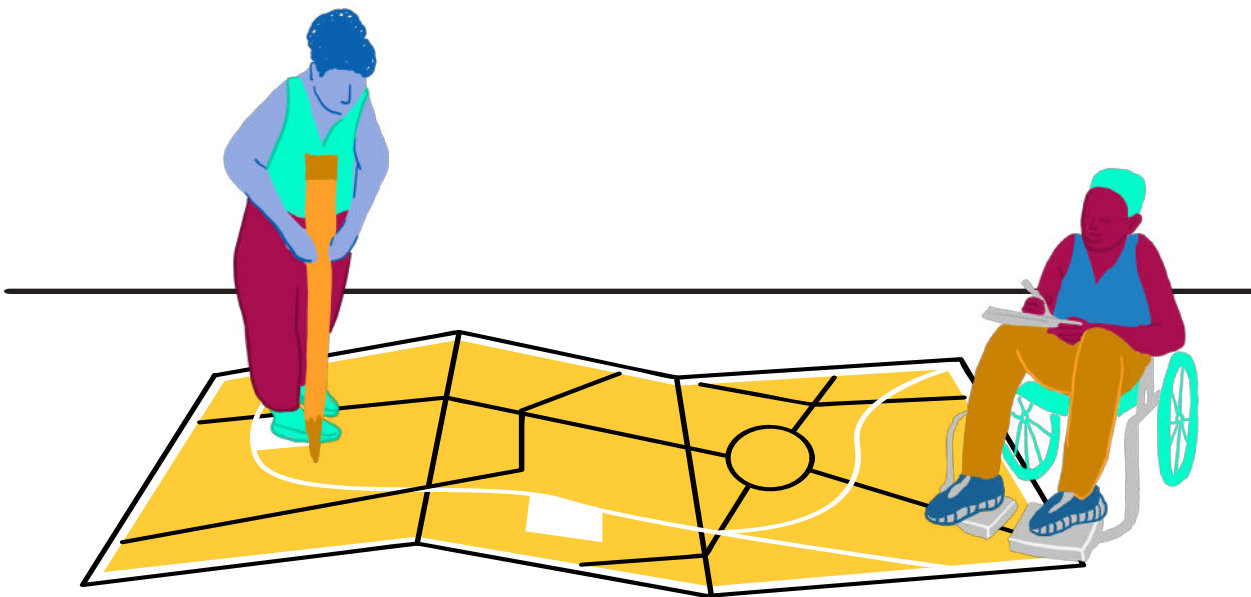
Organizing has everything to do with power and shifting relationships of power. Power is the ability to control our circumstances and make things happen outside of ourselves. People can exercise power by making decisions for themselves and influencing others in their circles. Not everyone has equal access to the positions of power where decisions are made, however. Throughout history, entire groups of people have been left out—or marginalized—from those circles and spaces where meaningful decisions are made. Over time, these decisions are reinforced by the systems built up around them, making them part of our reality long after individual decision makers have departed.

Activists can challenge the power imbalances in our society through organizing. **Organizing is the process of building power as a group and using this power to create positive change in people's lives.** As an individual, it is difficult to accumulate the amount of influence needed to change the systems of power that govern people's lives. As a group, however, we can multiply our own influence with the influence of others to shift power relations and create change.

Sometimes we think that if our cause is right, we will be able to win easily without building power. We might think that if decision makers just understood the problem then they would act. Unfortunately, in most cases, even if we are right, and those in power know about the issue, they still don't act. This is because they are being pressured by others not to act, such as donors who want school funds to be allocated to sports programs instead of a student health center.

Most campaigns will require you to be more than right. You will find that you must build power in order to put pressure on those who can make decisions. Organizing is about figuring out what resources you need in order to win change. This could mean you need the votes of members of your student council; chatter on social media; the allegiance of a person with power; or it could mean building crowd support to disrupt business as usual with direct action (such as a protest). Your role as an activist is to figure out what you want to change and how to make it happen.

## 1.2 IDENTIFYING THE CHANGE YOU WANT



**A vision is a clear idea of the world you want to create.**

A first step in identifying the change you want is to develop a shared vision with your group about the world you want to create. Your vision should be based on a set of core values that define your group and what you are fighting for. For example, Advocates for Youth envisions a society that views sexuality as normal and healthy and treats young people with respect. Reinforcing this vision are three core values: rights, respect, and responsibility.

Don't be afraid to be ambitious when it comes to the change you envision for the world. When it comes to planning your campaign, however, your group will want to focus on only a few aspects at a time in order to keep your message clear and actions targeted.

**Here are some questions to help your group think about what to tackle first:**

### 1. What problems are you most angry about?

Feeling an injustice deeply—often through anger—is a powerful motivator. It can keep you going through the ups and downs of organizing work. Often activists themselves have experienced an injustice, and organizing with others is part of their healing process.

### 2. Do other people share your anger and frustration?

Your goal in building power is to recruit supporters to your campaign, so you want to focus on a problem that causes widespread anger and frustration. The more

people that are directly affected by the problem or that share your concern, the more people you will be able to motivate to take action.

### 3. Can you think of a concrete, feasible solution for this problem?

The ability to clearly name your solution and convince people that it is feasible will help you greatly in recruiting supporters to your campaign. For example, sometimes students say that they are really angry about patriarchy, but a clear winnable solution to patriarchy is hard to name. Instead, if we identify sexual violence is a problem on campus, then we can identify solutions such as demanding improvements to the sexual assault policy on campus, or requiring consent training for all incoming students.

### 4. Will this solution have a lasting impact on people's lives? Does it create structural or cultural change?

You want people to benefit from the change you create long after your campaign ends. That requires addressing

change on structural and cultural levels. Structural change involves altering the policies and procedures that help to keep the problem in place. Cultural change happens when there is a shift in popular opinion about the problem.

Structural and cultural change are linked—when public opinion shifts, people tend to reshape policies in response. When policies shift, culture often shifts with it. For example, LGBTQ activists worked for years to get more portrayals of gay couples in mainstream film and television as a way to promote greater acceptance of gay marriage (cultural change). They also worked to pass marriage equality laws state by state (structural change). By the time the U.S. Supreme Court ruled marriage equality legal in 2015, the majority of Americans already agreed that “love is love” and supported the decision, helping to strengthen the law against the minority who oppose it.

## ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH VISION

Advocates for Youth envisions a society that views sexuality as normal and healthy and treats young people with respect. The core values of Rights. Respect. Responsibility.® (3Rs) animate this vision:

### RIGHTS

Youth have the inalienable right to accurate and complete sexual health information, confidential reproductive and sexual health services, and a secure stake in the future.

### RESPECT

Youth deserve respect. Valuing young people means involving them in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies that affect their health and well-being.

### RESPONSIBILITY

Society has the responsibility to provide young people with the tools they need to safeguard their sexual health, and young people have the responsibility to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.

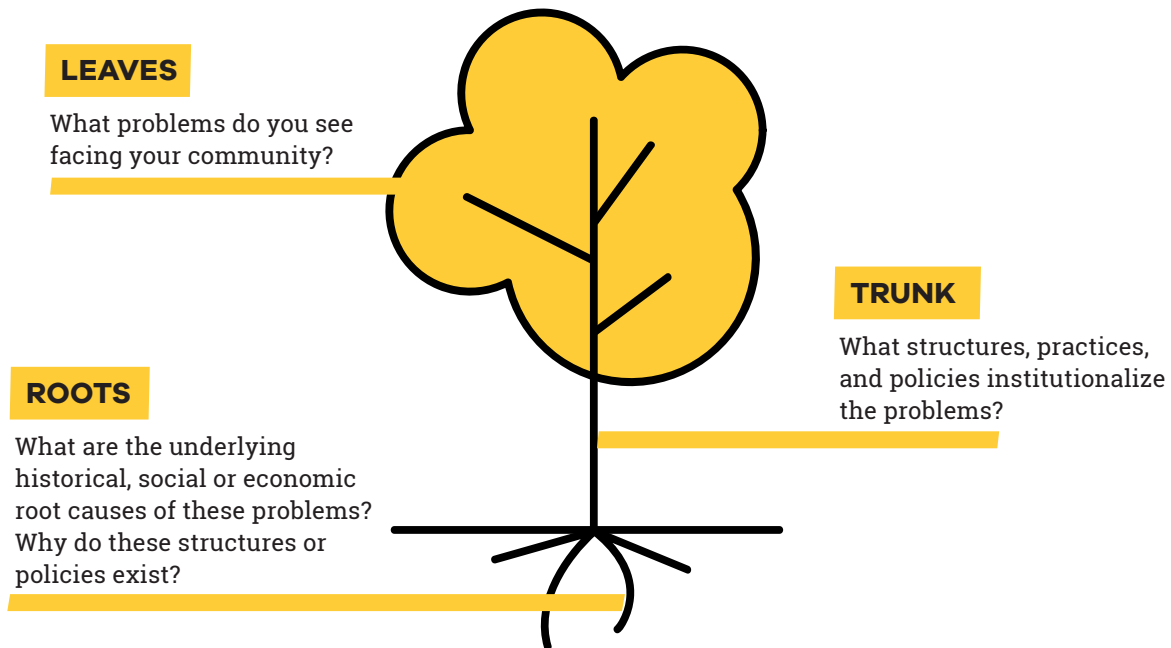
At times, Advocates' vision and the sexual health and rights of young people are threatened.

#### For example, in instances of:

- Violence and discrimination based on race, sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- High rates of STIs and HIV
- Legal and economic barriers to safe abortion care
- Lack of access to condoms and contraception
- High rates of sexual assault
- Barriers to getting the information and resources needed to make informed decisions about sexual and reproductive health



## 1.3 ROOT CAUSE TREE TOOL



The Root Cause Tree is a tool your group can use to better understand a problem and its underlying causes. If you want to create lasting change, it is important that you address more than the symptoms (leaves) of the problem. You will want to look at the factors that hold your problem up (trunk) and connect it to deep histories of injustice (roots).

### Complete the tree by filling out the different levels of the problem:

#### Leaves.

The concerns you hear from people affected by the problem. These are the visible and tangible parts of the problem that negatively impact people's lives and prevents them from being able to control their own circumstances. For example, violence or hatred directed toward LGBTQ students sparking feelings of isolation and marginalization of LGBTQ students.

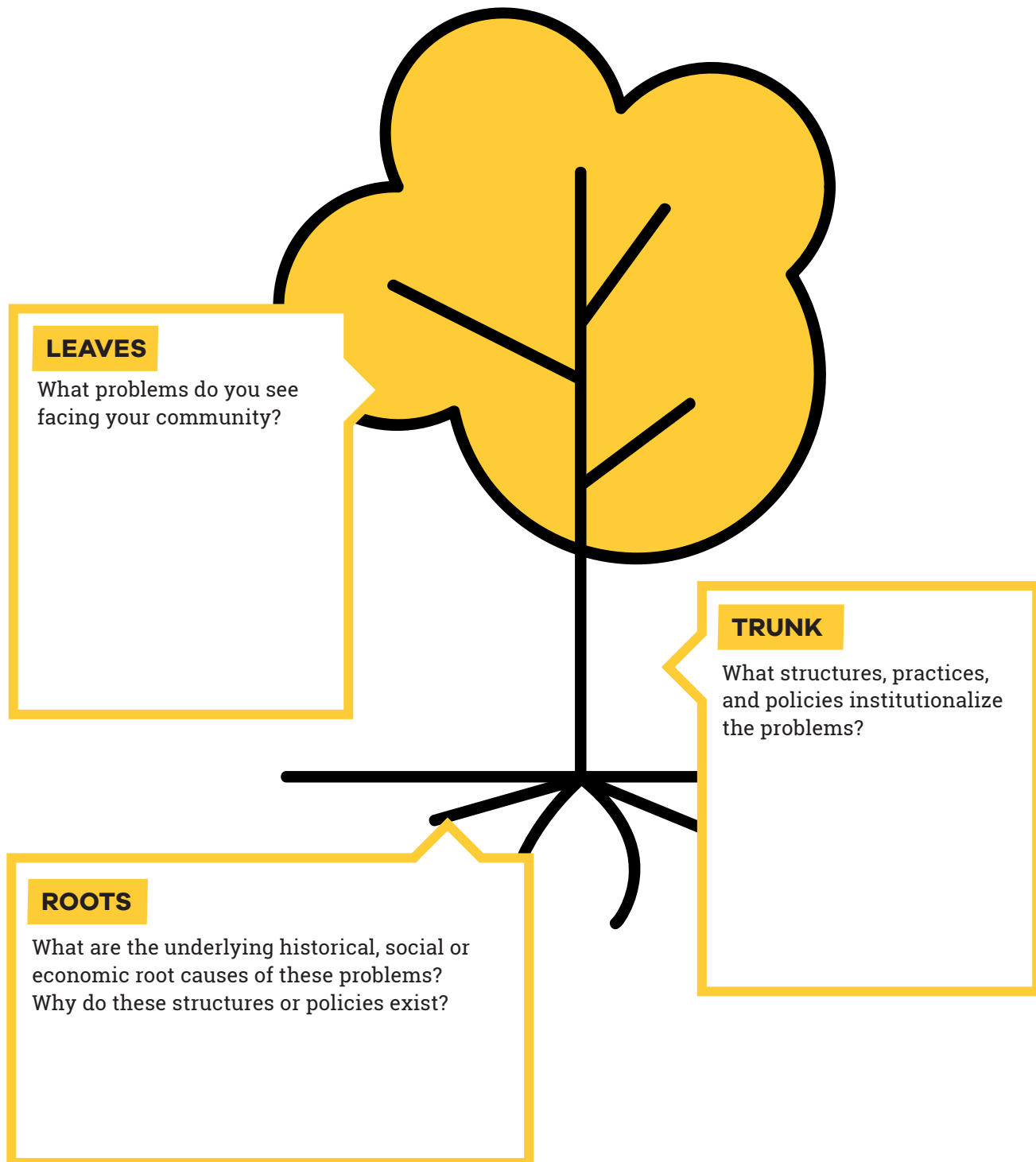
#### Trunk.

The structural and cultural factors that create an environment that supports the problem. Think about the policies or practices that keep your problem in place, or how people perceive the problem. For example, your campus does not have an LGBTQ Resource Center on campus. Meanwhile, homophobia and ignorance of LGBTQ issues on campus is widespread.

#### Roots.

The historical, social, and economic factors from which the problem grew. Some examples of root causes are sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, ableism, or ageism. Your organizing efforts should be focused on challenging the structural and cultural factors listed under the trunk. If you only address the leaves, you will create band-aid solutions, and it is difficult to address the roots because they have been firmly entrenched over the course of generations. Cutting off a problem at the trunk is your best opportunity to create meaningful, lasting change.

# ROOT CAUSE TREE TOOL



\*This original Blueprint for Social Justice, from which the 'Root Cause/Problem Tree' is modeled, was developed by the Movement Strategy Center [MSC] for Young People For. This work is a remixed and updated version of the Blueprint for Social Justice Workbook & Curriculum licensed in 2009 to Movement Strategy Center, under the Creative Commons "Attribution-Non-Commercial-ShareAlike 2.5" License.

## 1.4 DETERMINING YOUR DEMANDS

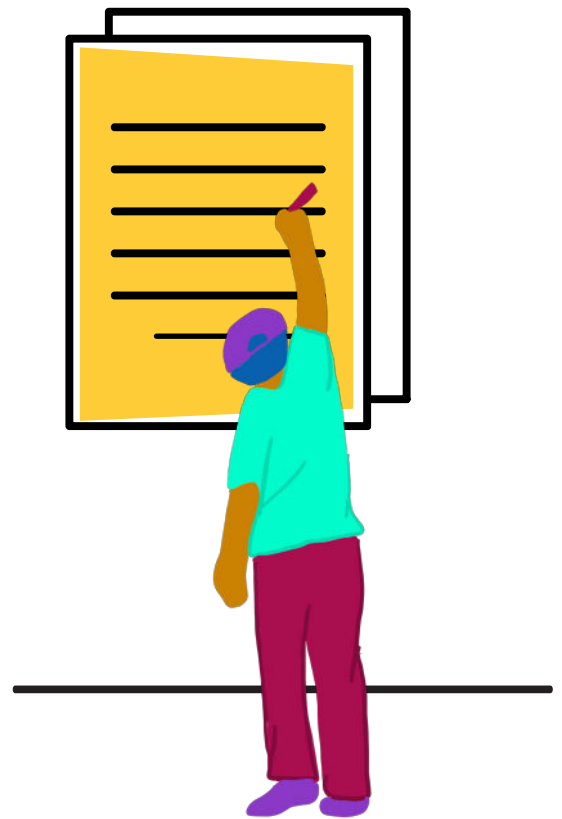
Now that you have analyzed the problem, you are ready to name your solution. Organizers often refer to their solutions as demands. A demand is a specific policy change or action that you seek to win from a decision maker.

Your demands should address the structural and cultural factors of the problem--the trunk in the Root Cause Tree Tool in section 1.3. An example of demands to address violence or homophobia directed toward the LGBTQ community could be to demand your University create an LGBTQ resource center to support LGBTQ students and educate the larger community on LGBTQ rights. You could also require that your campus' orientation week include education about the LGBTQ community, homophobia and transphobia, and the importance of creating an inclusive campus climate.

When discussing demands, it is important to think about all of the people affected by the problem, otherwise known as constituents. You want to make sure that all the constituent groups who are negatively affected by the problem have a voice early on in the process of organizing. Typically, the issues that people choose to organize around are those that directly impact their lives. In that case, the activist is also one of the constituents. If you are not directly affected by the issue, you would be in the role of an ally. As an ally, it is especially important to make sure the voices of constituents are prioritized in your organizing work.

**One way to ensure you create strong demands for your campaign is to make them S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely).**

- **Specific.** It is important that your demands are as specific as possible so that you are in control of defining success. For example, if you demand that your student health center provides free HIV testing, the school could meet your demands by providing free testing one time a year. A more specific demand could be that the student health center should provide free HIV testing twice a week—once before and once during school hours. Creating specific demands requires that you do some research to understand how to best meet the needs of your community, but it ensures you have the most control of defining how the success of your campaign will be implemented.



**A demand is a specific policy change or action that you seek to win from a decision maker.**

- **Measurable.** It is important that you establish concrete criteria for measuring progress to attaining each demand. Setting measurable benchmarks will help you stay on track and be able to clearly articulate how you are moving toward achieving your demands.
- **Attainable.** Is your demand something someone can actually agree to? For example, demanding an end to sexual violence in your community is an important vision but not a concrete demand. No one can be held accountable for taking action. Instead a more attainable and specific demand would be to demand your principal take action by implementing and enforcing a specific sexual assault policy, or mandating all students and staff go through sexual assault and consent training. While it is true that neither of those demands alone will end all sexual violence in your community, they are attainable and measurable actions for which someone can be held accountable.
- **Realistic.** A demand must be something you are both willing and able to work toward. This does not mean you should think small. In fact, more people are often willing to work towards demands that are harder but will have a greater impact on your community.
- **Timely.** Your demands should be grounded within a timeframe. One of the best tactics of decision makers to avoid your demands is to delay them. Instead of rejecting your demands, most decision makers will attempt to calm you by saying they need time to consider, ideally long enough that you stop caring and move on. Therefore, it is extremely important that you state your demands are met by a certain date. This creates a sense of urgency that is crucial for winning.

Creating S.M.A.R.T demands forces organizers to cut the issue in a way that they can design a tangible and winnable campaign. Sometimes this might feel like you are minimizing the problem and not addressing the entire issue. While this is true in some respects, because one campaign cannot erase the deep rooted historical injustices and oppressions demonstrated in the problem tree, creating S.M.A.R.T. demands will set your campaign up for a tangible success that can win real change in people's lives and move your community one step closer to addressing the underlying injustices.

### ACTIVIST STORY

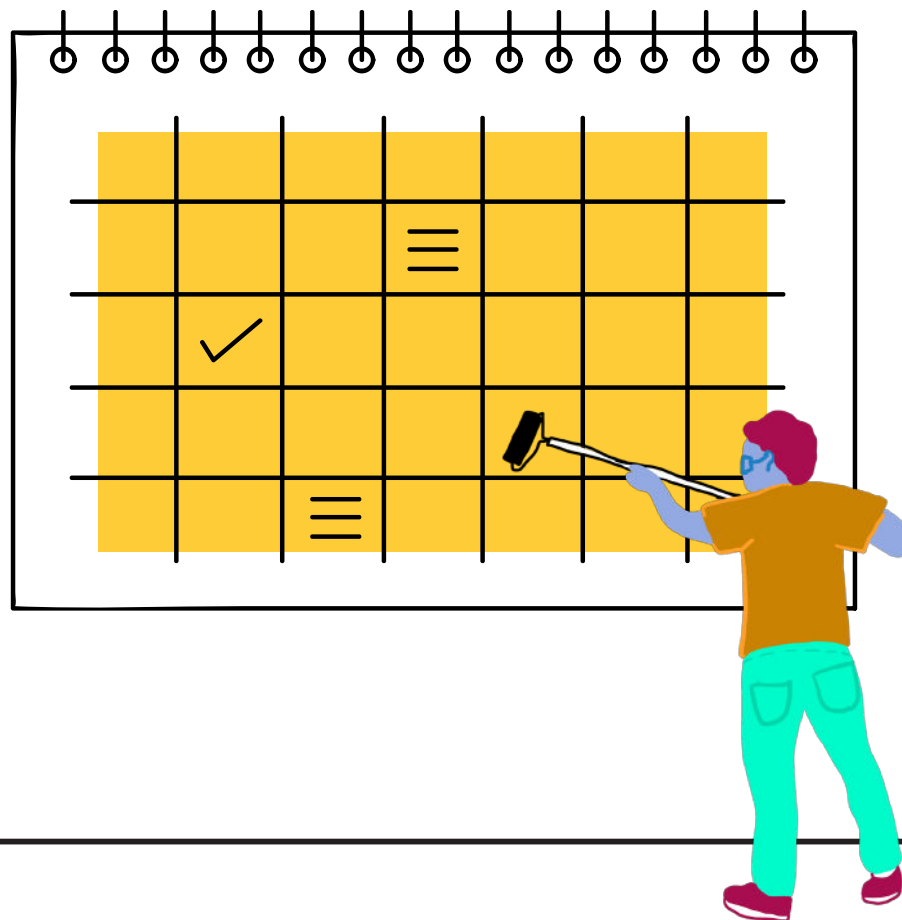


Meet De'Janae, an organizer and survivor of gun violence. She created a poster for March For Our Lives 2018 in collaboration with artist Kate DeCiccio and Amplifier. Watch her story at

<https://amplifier.org/campaigns/march-for-our-lives/>

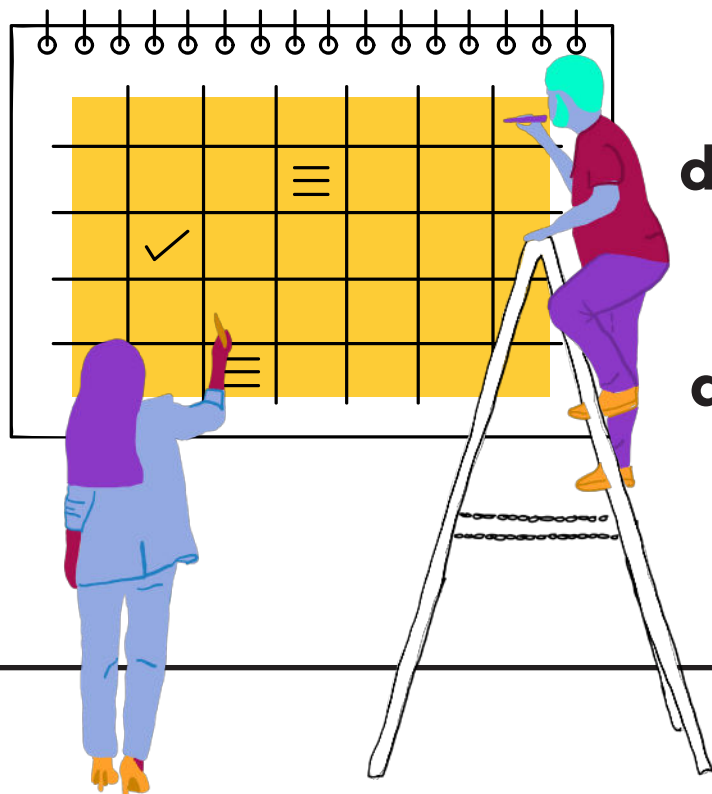
## PART 2: CREATING A STRATEGY

In Part 1, you identified the problem you want to change and the solutions for how to change it. In Part 2, you'll think about how you're going to get your demands met. The following sections will walk you through the process of identifying key players in your campaign and mapping everyone's power to help you determine your campaign strategy.





## 2.1 WHAT IS A STRATEGY?



**A strategy can be defined as the method of building enough power to influence a decision maker to give you what you want.**

A strategy is an essential part of organizing because it helps you understand how each step you take will move you closer to winning your demands. A strategy can be defined as the method of building enough power to influence a decision maker to give you what you want.

A strategy is different from a plan because it involves power and relationships. For example, if your group is putting on a social event, you don't need a strategy. You just need a plan to execute the event. However, if you want your school to change its non-discrimination policy to be inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity, then you will need a strategy because you will need collective power to influence a decision maker.

A tool that can help you design an effective strategy is this strategy chart created by Midwest Academy. The chart asks questions that you need to answer in order to plan how to win your campaign. The chart has five columns.

Each column addresses one aspect of organizing and allows you to think concretely about what you need to do. Thus far, you have identified your demands and are ready to fill out the first column of the chart. The subsequent chapters will help you to complete the strategy chart by defining targets and key players, providing tips on how to build your power, and by offering suggestions on using your power through employing various tactics.

# STRATEGY CHART

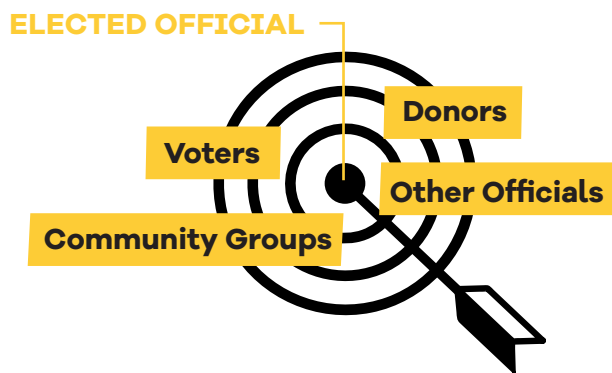
Demands	Targets	Current Resources	Potential Supporters	Tactics
<p><b>Demands are specific measurable things we want to WIN!</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List the demands of your campaign?</li> <li>What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward reaching your overall campaign demands?</li> </ol> <p><b>How will the campaign:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Win concrete improvements in people's lives?</li> <li>Give people a sense of their own power?</li> <li>Alter the relations of power?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Primary target:</b> The person who has the power to give you what you want. (The decision maker) A target is always a person, never an institution.</p> <p><b>Understanding your target:</b> What opposing pressure does your target face to not give you what you want?</p> <p><b>Secondary target:</b> The person(s) that have power over your target? What power do you have over the secondary target?</p>	<p><b>What we have:</b> List the resources that your organization brings to the campaign. Include: skills of group members, connections to student and community organizations, funding.</p> <p><b>What we need:</b> List the specific things you need to do to develop the campaign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand leadership of group</li> <li>Build membership base</li> <li>Develop media plan</li> <li>Develop campaign strategy</li> <li>Develop media/messaging campaign</li> <li>Develop fundraising plan etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who cares about this issue enough to join or help us?</b> Who has the skills that you need to win the campaign?</p> <p><b>How will you reach out to potential supporters?</b> (for instance: table on campus, hold membership meetings, host social events, present at other club meetings, canvass the dorms, talk to professors, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Tactics are actions taken to move your target to give you what you want (your demands).</b></p> <p><b>Tactics must:</b> Demonstrate your power while simultaneously build your power. Be within the comfort zone of your group, but outside the comfort zone of your target. Be directed toward your primary or secondary target Moves you closer to reaching your demands.</p> <p><b>Example of tactics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Petitions</li> <li>Public Hearings</li> <li>Negotiations</li> <li>Rallies</li> <li>Marches</li> <li>Sit ins</li> <li>Strikes</li> </ul>

# STRATEGY CHART

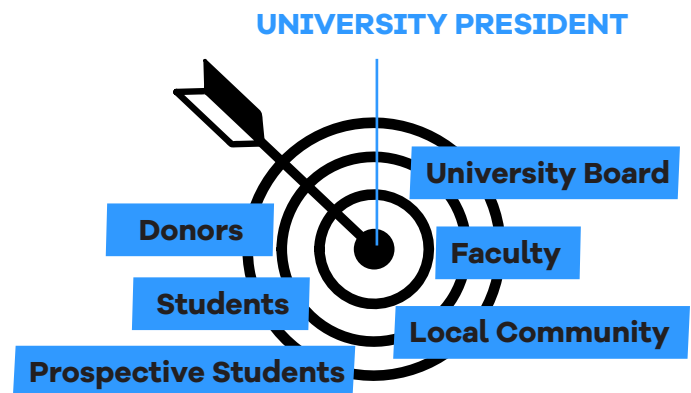
Demands	Targets	Current Resources	Potential Supporters	Tactics
Demands are specific measurable things we want to WIN!	Primary target:	What we have:	Who cares about this issue enough to join or help us?	Tactics are actions taken to move your target to give you what you want (your demands).
	Understanding your target:	What we need:	How will you reach out to potential supporters?	
	Secondary target:			

## 2.2 POWER ANALYSIS

The key players in your campaign are the people who can help you get what you want. Constituents are the people directly affected by the problem, and allies are their supporters. These are the people that will help you build power to apply pressure to a target. A target is a decision maker with the power to give you what you want. A secondary target is someone who has the power to influence the decision maker.



The target, represented by the bullseye, is the decision maker who can meet your demands. The groups listed in the rings of the target represent people who can influence the target's decision. These groups are potential secondary targets. Your campaign may need a secondary target or someone with influence over the decision maker.



Supporters are constituents and allies that can help you apply pressure to your target.

- A **target** is the person or people who can give you what you want—the decision maker. Sometimes it will take a little investigative research to determine who has the power to make decisions about your issue. It is important that the target is a person or a small group of people, not an institution (like a college or university). Individuals are far easier to move than any institution. Institutions, such as a University, will have fixed policies and ways of making decisions that will resist input from external sources such as you. Nevertheless, institutions are made up of people, who can be influenced to change their decision, thus shifting the policy or practice of the entire institution. Your target is not your enemy. Rather they are the ones that you want to direct your organizing efforts toward in order to move them to make the change you want.

Painting them as an enemy will not necessarily help you win your campaign. Winning will require that your target agree to your demands, which is more likely if they can also look like they won in the end. In other words, if you win, your target doesn't need to lose.

- A **secondary target** may be necessary for your campaign. A secondary target is a person who has influence over the target. You may find that you'll have more success pressuring the secondary target to influence the primary target. For example, there might be a teacher at your school that is more responsive to the needs of the students and could convince your target, the principal, to meet your demands. Other secondary targets could include a major donor, a local elected official that supports your efforts, or a respected religious leader in your community.

- **Constituents** are the people negatively affected by the problem you are trying to solve. These are your core group of people. Constituents have the most to win if change is achieved, and it is important to gather input from as many constituent groups as possible when creating your strategy. Identify trusted leaders from various constituent groups to help shape and lead the campaign. The broader and more diverse your leadership team, the more skills and resources you'll have to draw on for your campaign.
- **Allies** are the people and organizations that will support constituents and their cause. Examples include other student groups, community organizations and leaders, bloggers, religious leaders, politicians—anyone who can help you build and use power. Those that have influence over your target make for great allies. Unexpected allies are particularly helpful because they can open the minds of potential supporters and show how the entire community—not just the core constituents—will benefit from the campaign. For example, the Catholic nuns who came out in support of birth control coverage under health care law were unlikely allies in the fight for access to birth control since historically the religious leaders had opposed contraceptive access.

## ACTIVIST STORY



**Nyiesha:**  
**Groundswell**



**Afro Blue by Nyiesha Mallett**

Nyiesha believes in the power of art and its ability to bring communities together. Frustrated by climate change and the threat it poses to her community, Nyiesha decided to channel her feelings through art and muraling at Groundswell. Groundswell is a New York City based organization that brings together youth, artists, and community organizations to use art as a tool for social change, for a more just and equitable world. As a Groundswell youth artist, she is learning outreach tactics that help communities vocalize local problems and use art as a means of expression. She is currently educating and organizing youth around the connection between climate change and social injustice faced by people of color every day. In early 2019, she completed her first mural project and continues to develop new ways to engage youth around issues of intersectionality and climate change.

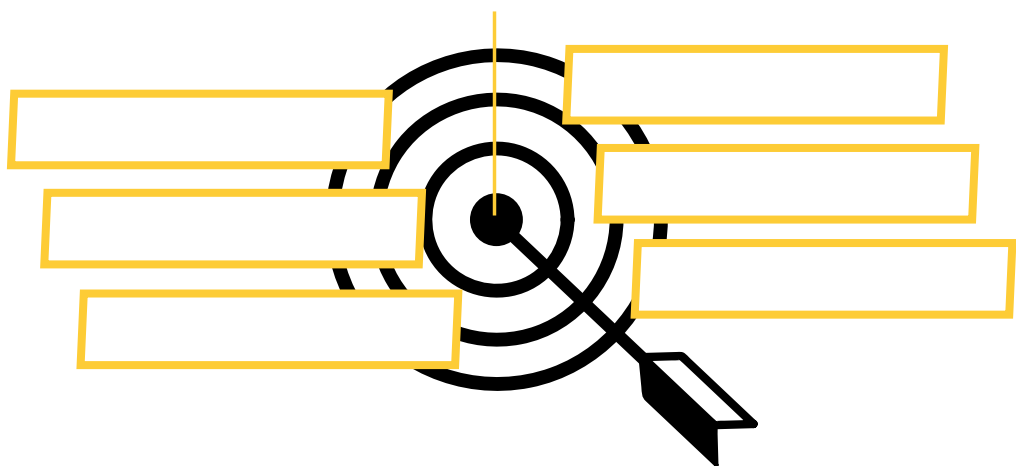
To learn more about Groundswell visit <https://www.groundswell.nyc>.



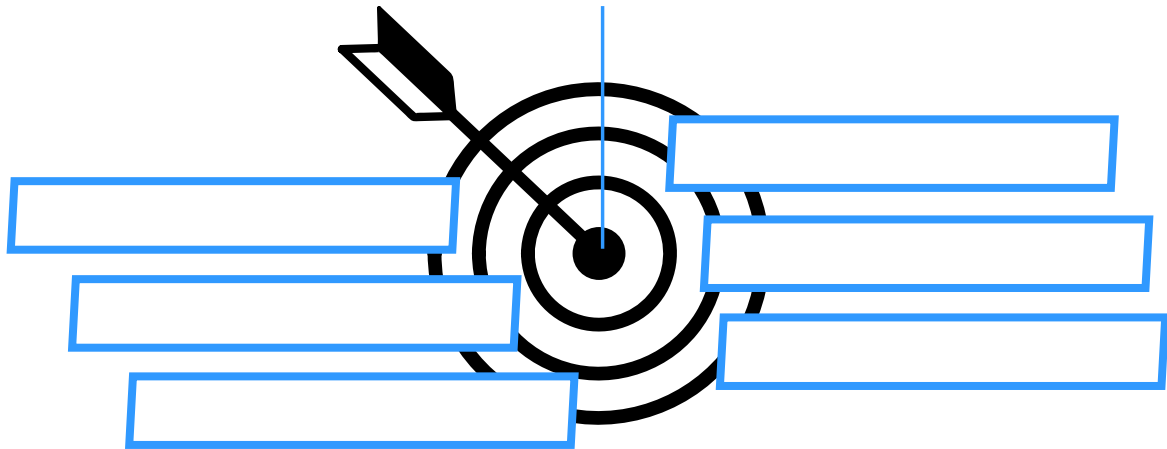
# POWER ANALYSIS

Write in some of the people or groups of people that influence your base.

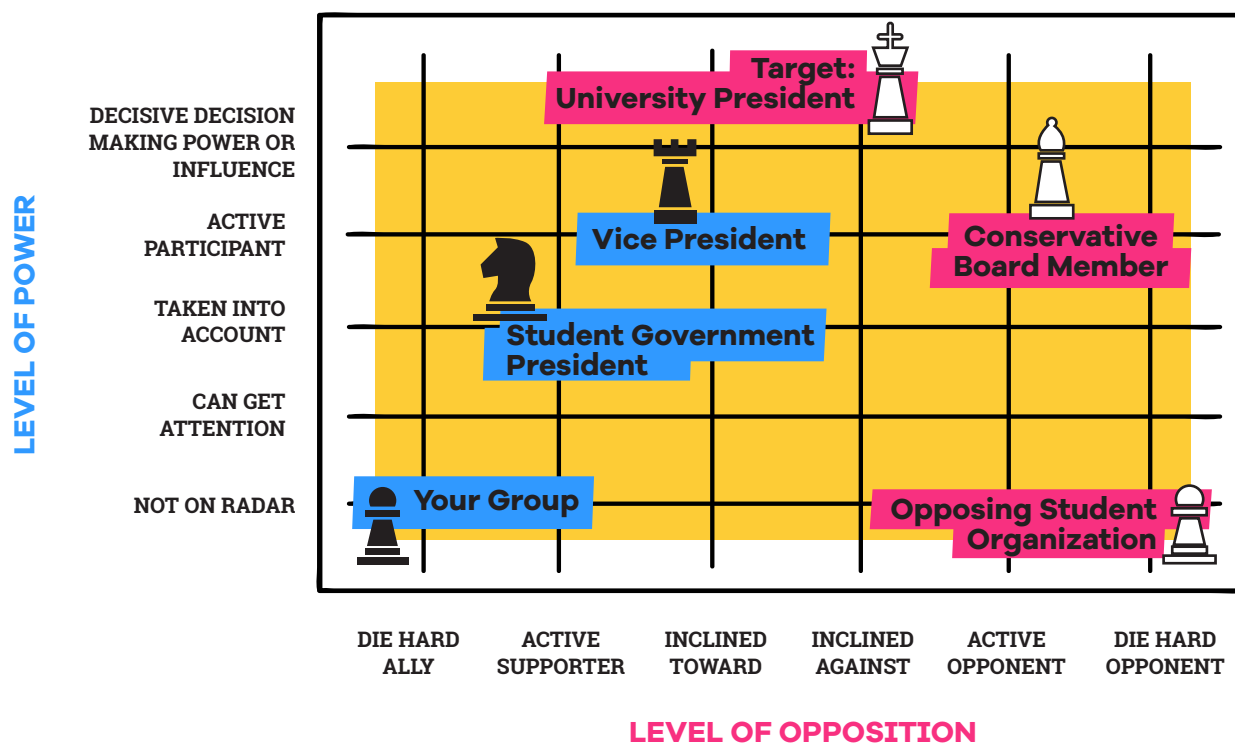
## PRIMARY TARGET



## SECONDARY TARGET



## 2.4 POWER MAP



Now that you know the key players, your next step is to assess their power and the level of support for your demands. A helpful tool to use is a power map. By mapping where people currently stand, you will be able to craft a strategy of moving key players to being more supportive of your demands.

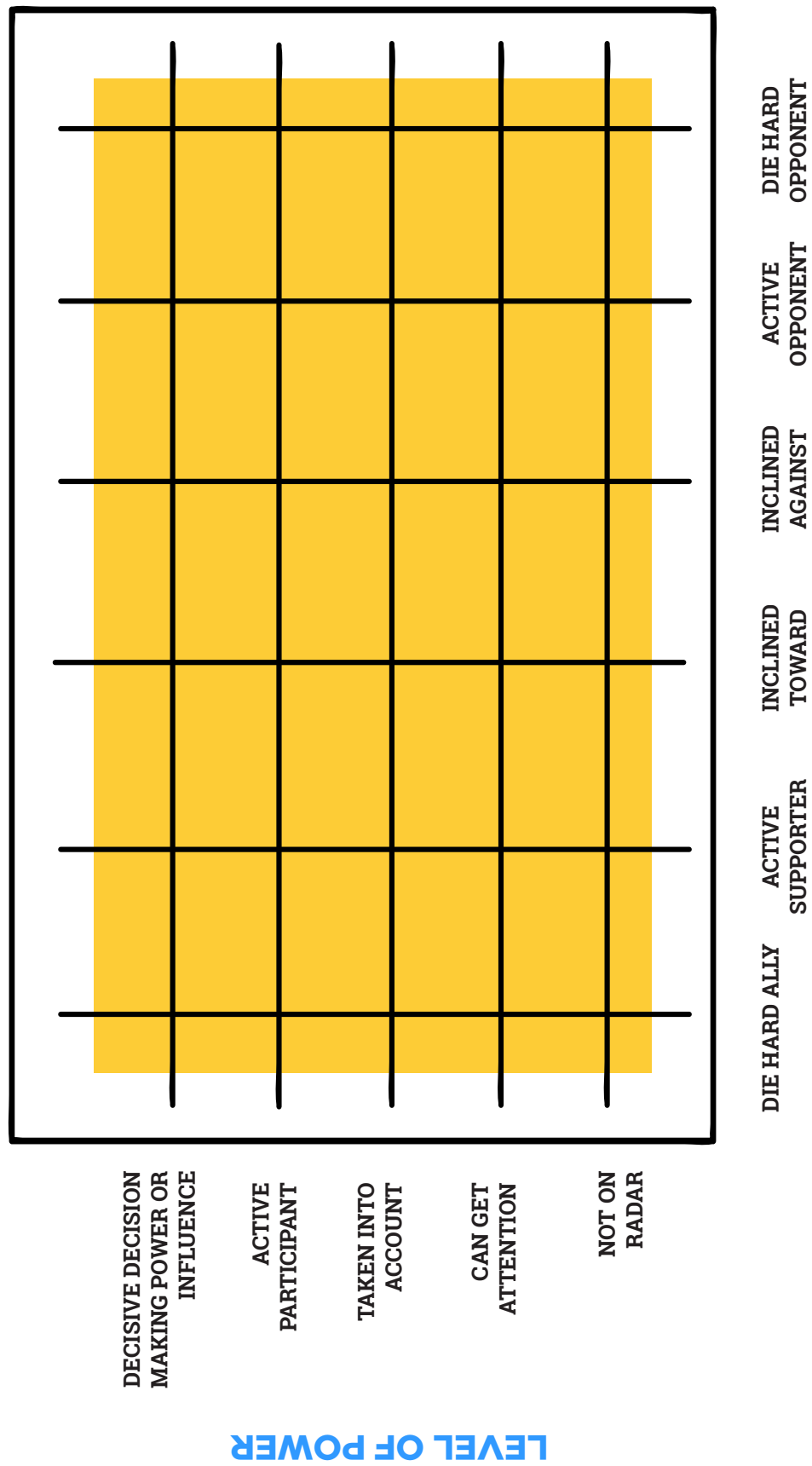
Here's how this map works: For each key player, you will rate their level of support for your demands on the horizontal axis and their level of decision making power on the vertical axis. For example, if your campaign were to advocate for free HIV testing on campus, your scenario might look similar to the map above. The University President has the ultimate decision making power, which ranks her high on the y-axis, and she might stand in the middle in terms of her agreement

with offering free HIV testing, plotting her in the middle on the x-axis. On the other hand, the vice president (a good secondary target) has less decision making power so she lands a little lower on the y-axis, but is more in agreement with your cause and thus is plotted further to the left on the x-axis.

Once you have mapped the key players, you will want to use this map to develop your campaign strategy. It is important to note that this map is not stagnant. In fact your goal is to shift the map by building the power of your group and influencing key players to move toward supporting your demands. Pro Tip: You can even revisit your power map throughout your campaign to assess how your actions are moving key players and adjust your tactics accordingly.

# POWER MAP

For each key player, you will rate their level of support for your demands on the horizontal axis and their level of decision making power on the vertical axis.



# PART 3: CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE

In Part 2, you identified the key players for your campaign, where they fall on the power map, and how they talk about the issue. In Part 3, you'll think about how to best communicate your campaign with your key players. The more media dominates people's lives, the more important it is to consider how will craft your campaign messaging. You want to develop a message that will break through the noise of everyday media and reach the key people you are trying to activate with your campaign.

## 3.1 WHAT IS MESSAGING?



**A message is a **core idea** you want people to remember and repeat about your campaign.**

The messages you use to communicate your campaign can go a long way in helping you get what you want. A message is a core idea you want people to remember and repeat about your campaign. The more people remember and repeat your messages, the more potential you have to influence public opinion, create cultural change, and get the attention of your target. The words, phrases, stories, and images you use to communicate your campaign should all connect back to your core messages.

**Here are some principles of effective messaging:**

**Tailor your message to your target audience.**

Your target audiences are the key players that can be convinced to support your cause. It's important to tailor your messages to them, not the people or groups who are already strongly opposed—they will likely not be convinced regardless of what you say. Different target audiences will respond to different messages depending on their

perspective. It's a good idea to develop 3-5 key messages for your campaign that you can have ready to use in different situations. For example, in a campaign about mass incarceration, you may have one message about the high financial costs of incarceration that you use when talking to politicians and another message about the high social costs that you use when talking to families in affected communities.

### Focus on shared values between you and the listener.

Think about a core value that you established for your campaign that you share with your target audience. If you can connect your issue to a belief that someone already holds, then you are much more likely to convince them that your cause is just. For example, "everyone deserves an equal opportunity to succeed" is a commonly held value. Dante Barry from Million Hoodies Movement for Justice likes to ask: "What makes you feel safe?" By asking people to think about the shared value of safety, he helps people understand why many young people of color do not feel safe in communities where police violence and gun violence is high. Watch his video here: [https://youtu.be/\\_-X-l8VQ3Qc](https://youtu.be/_-X-l8VQ3Qc).

### Connect stories to the broader context.

You want the listener to see how your problem is far-reaching, not a one-off story. This will help people understand how problems are connected to power. For example, activists from Parkland, Florida connected their personal stories about surviving a shooting at their high school to the stories of different forms of gun violence in all types of places and communities across the U.S. Illustrating this broader context helps explain why they demand sweeping gun law reforms rather than only school safety measures.

### Point audiences toward positive solutions.

Here is where you can help people understand your vision and your demands. Even though most campaigns start out by opposing something, it's important that people know what you are fighting for. For example, when tribes and allies gathered at Standing Rock to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline, they united under the banner: "Water is Life." This phrase represents a core value of the movement and a vision for people to recognize the sacredness of water. It communicated what they were fighting for (water) alongside what they were fighting against (the pipeline), and their message inspired thousands to join them.

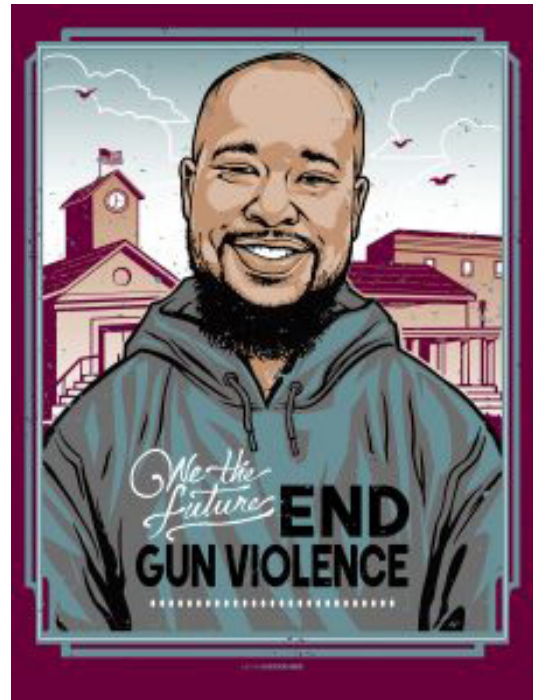
### Use statistics, sparingly.

Statistics are a great way to help people understand the bigger picture about your issue. Too many statistics, however, can be hard for people to remember and repeat. It's a good idea to use only a few key statistics in your campaign, and

to help make them memorable by communicating them in creative ways. For example, Women's March Youth Empower week of action asked young people to flood social media and communities with art and displays representing the number 47, which is the number of young people killed by guns in America every day. Be sure you check the source of your statistics to see if they are credible. In this example, the number 47 comes from research published by the Brady Campaign, a bipartisan gun reform organization widely respected by political leaders.

### Piggy-back on pop culture.

Pop-culture references in your messaging can help people remember your campaign. Things like hit songs, movies, viral videos, holidays, anniversaries, or awareness months can inspire you to think of clever messaging that will get people's attention and entice them to share it with others. For example, using Valentine's Day to demand action on reducing teen dating violence.



**PAUL S. JOHN,**  
**Million Hoodies Movement for Justice**

Artwork by Munk One featuring Paul S. John and Million Hoodies Movement for Justice for Amplifier's We The Future Campaign.



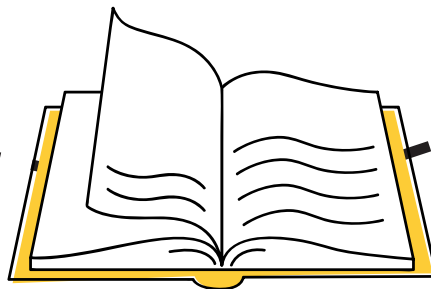
## 3.2 STORYTELLING



### BEGINNING

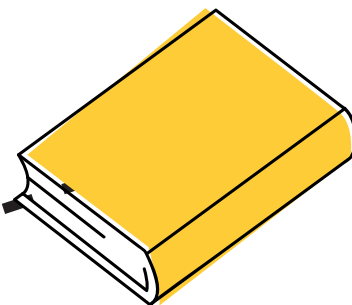
Introduce your protagonist (central person or people).

**What are their hopes and dreams?**



### MIDDLE

Talk about a struggle or obstacle your protagonist encountered. **How were they affected by the problem your campaign addresses?**



### END

Explain the outcome or aftermath of the struggle. **How was your protagonist changed?**

Storytelling is an effective way to share information about your campaign. People tend to connect with stories on a deeper, more personal level than facts or statistics. The more deeply they feel an issue, the more likely people will want to take action. Stories are particularly important when trying to create cultural change--the stories we hear in movies, television, books, and from friends have a great deal of influence over how we view ourselves and others.

All stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end--called the "story arc." They typically include a protagonist (central person or people), a struggle, and an outcome.

#### Beginning.

Set up your story by introducing a protagonist that personalizes the problem. You can help people relate to the protagonist by talking about what they were like before they encountered the problem. For example, if your protagonist is a student killed by gun violence, talk about what their hopes and dreams were before they died.

#### Middle.

Present the struggle or obstacle that your protagonist encounters. This is where you can talk about the problem you are trying to overcome with your campaign. In the story about gun violence, talk about what happened the day your protagonist was killed. Try to relate the struggle directly to the demands from your campaign. For example, if your demand is to strengthen background checks on gun purchases, you might want to talk about how the shooter obtained the gun.

#### End.

Explain the outcome or aftermath of the struggle. How was the protagonist affected? How was the community around them affected? Was the issue resolved? Was justice served? Why or why not? These are all questions that the listener will want you to answer. As the storyteller, it's your role to provide some resolution and help the listener draw a conclusion from your story. Your conclusion will ideally lead them to how they can take action to address the problem.

When storytelling for social justice, it is important that you connect personal stories to the broader problem that you are trying to change. You do not want people to write off your story to chance (they were in the wrong place at the wrong time) or with personal blame (they should have been more safe). Instead, you want your listeners to think about how your issue is the problem. And, if the problem were solved, how a different person in the same situation might experience a different outcome.

Your story does not always have to be about a problem. For example, you can tell a story about a triumph your group achieved through organizing. A helpful group exercise developed by Professor Marshall Ganz, a former United Farmworker Organizer, is to ask each member to develop three stories that they can use when talking to others about your campaign: The story of self. The story of us. The story of now.

### The story of self.

Why did you choose to get involved in the campaign and how has it changed you?

### The story of us.

How did your group get started and what have you been able to achieve together?

### The story of now.

What about this moment makes it the right time to take action on your issue?

### You should always get consent before sharing someone's story.

If you are telling a real-life story about a constituent in your group or in the community, it is essential that you ask their consent before sharing with others. You should inform them of how you plan to repeat their story and who and how many people might see it.

## ACTIVIST STORY



### ANDREA AND SAWYER: Shine MSD

Andrea Peña and Sawyer Garrity were in drama class when a gunman opened fire in their high school in Parkland, Florida. Seventeen people were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that day and millions more were traumatized to see yet another school shooting in the U.S.

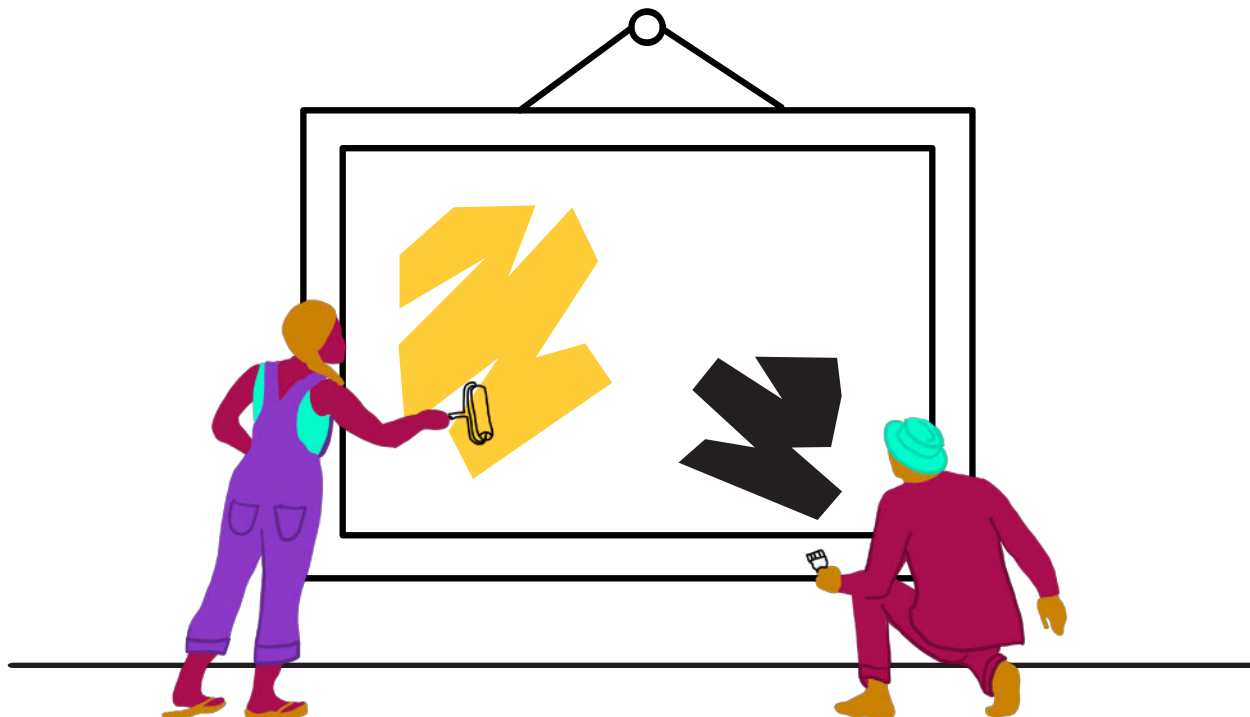
Andrea and Sawyer turned immediately to music for healing. In the days following the shooting, feeling lost and unsure of what to do, Sawyer asked Andrea if she wanted to write a song. Andrea texted her a voice memo with a few piano chords and Sawyer responded with lyrics. Then they met up in person to finish the song they called, "Shine." The song's slow and dark beginning transforms into a resonant and hopeful chorus by the song's end—a message to survivors that pain will heal.

The duo shared "Shine" with their drama teacher, who was with them the day of the shooting. She shared it with others, and from there, the song took on a life of its own. Before long, they were performing it live on national television as part of a town hall on gun violence and creating a music video featuring fellow drama students. "I definitely did not realize how much meaning the song had until we performed the song a few times and saw the impact it had on the community," Andrea said.

The song's notoriety helped them raise funds to host a free art therapy camp for Stoneman Douglas students. Their vision is to continue the camp in Parkland, and expand it to other communities affected by gun violence.

Watch the music video here: <https://youtu.be/7-6s8obkaGY>

## 3.3 ART + ACTIVISM



**Art is a powerful way to communicate your message and create cultural change.**

Creating art for your campaign is a powerful way to communicate your message and inspire cultural change. Most media is driven by audio visuals. If you can create beautiful posters, music, or performance you can help to appeal to media makers and curators who are looking for interesting content to share.

Art can be transformative for both the audience and the artist. For audiences, art can appeal to the listener or viewer on a sensory level helping them to understand the issue in a new way. For artists, the creative process can help heal hurt or channel rage around an issue in a way that promotes healing.

Like stories, using art is particularly important when you are working to create cultural change because it helps to generate meaning in our society.

It is important to be thoughtful about the creative process when making art. Similar to the organizing process, you want to make sure to prioritize the voices of the people directly impacted by what the artwork is representing. Make the creative process collaborative by gathering input from diverse constituents up front, asking for feedback throughout, and getting approval once its finished. If people feel misrepresented by your campaign's artwork, it will not be helpful in your goal of building power.

**Types of art used in activism include:**

- Illustration and design used on social media, leaflets, banners, postcards, stickers, posters, etc. wheatpasted on walls or projected on buildings
- Infographics, memes, or animated gifs used on social media or online
- Large scale murals made with paint or chalk
- Photography used on social media, in gallery exhibits, or in publications
- Zines (DIY magazines) printed and distributed
- Filmmaking used on social media, web sites, or at screening events
- Music, song, and spoken word performed live at events, recorded for social media, or played on local radio
- Chants, cheers, or call and response used at in-person actions and events
- Theater, performance, skits, and comedy sketches acted out in public spaces, at theaters, or for online video
- Dance and music videos performed live or recorded for social media
- Comic strips or graphic novels drawn and distributed
- Origami or other paper art used to create sculptures or displays
- Culinary skills used to communicate a message through food or drink
- Hair, such as clipper designs, and makeup or face paint
- Fashion and costume performed at a live event or photographed for online

**ACTIVIST STORY****AMPLIFIER**

When people took to the streets at the first Women's March in 2017, many carried artwork created by Amplifier. The iconic We The People poster became symbols for the movement and helped ignite a national dialogue about American identity and values after the divisive presidential campaign of 2016.

Amplifier is a nonprofit design lab that builds art and media experiments to amplify the most important movements of our times. They design and distribute art that engages people in the creation of a more just, inclusive and sustainable future. Since 2015, they've worked with more than 300 renowned artists, distributed over a million pieces of art and sent free artwork to hundreds of thousands of students across the United States.

Amplifier's follow-up public art campaign, We the Future, featured throughout this guide, amplifies the voices of 10 young leaders who are building organizations and movements across the country. These young leaders are drafting and passing new legislation, mobilizing the youth vote, and leading efforts on criminal justice reform, immigration rights, gun violence prevention, disability justice, queer and trans rights, literacy, intersectional women's rights, and climate justice.

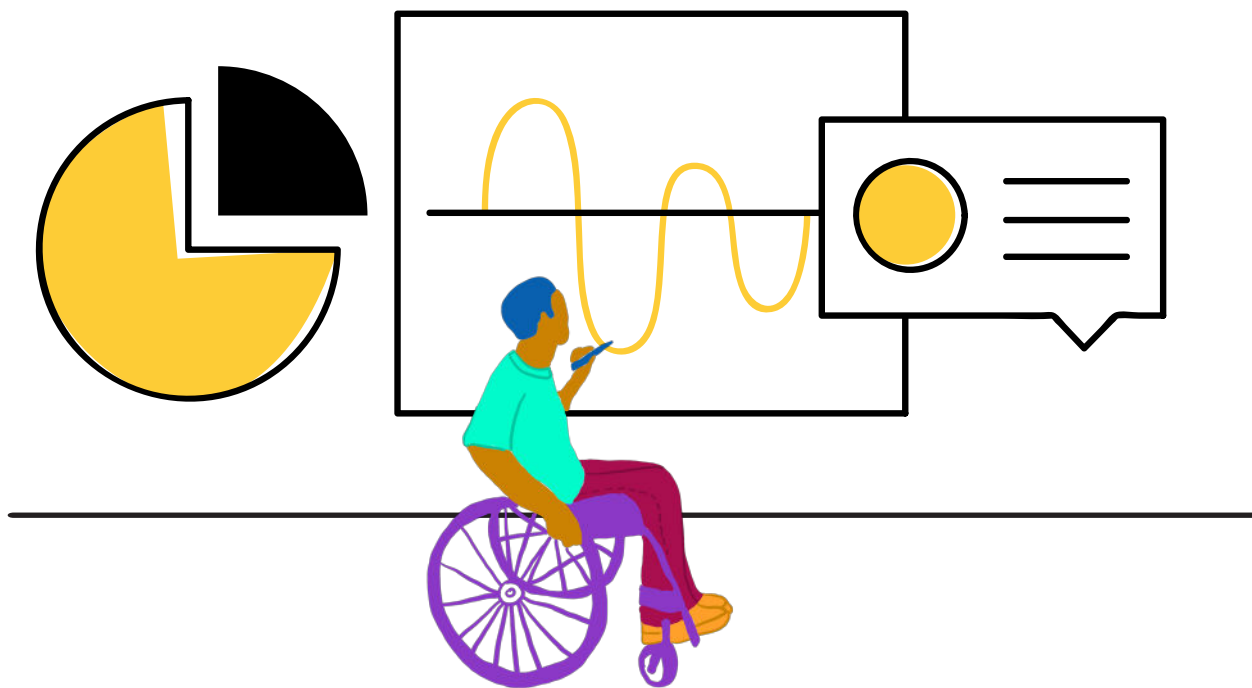
In partnership with artists Shepard Fairey, Kate Deciccio, Rommy Torrico and Munk One, the We the Future series can help you engage other young people in dialogue, inspire them to take action, and reshape the national narrative.

Download free art to use in your campaigns at <https://amplifier.org/#downloads> or ask your teachers to sign up for the free teaching resources here:

<https://amplifier.org/call-for-educators/>



## 3.4 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS



**The goal of a narrative power analysis is to understand the ideas behind the positions that people take on your issue.**

A narrative can be defined as the story people tell about your issue. The ideas, words, phrases, and images that make up the narrative can have a lot of influence on the way key players think and feel about the issue.

The goal of a narrative power analysis is to understand the ideas behind the positions that key players take on your issue. Because the stories we tell each other greatly influence public opinion, understanding the narrative can help you develop a strategy that will address cultural change.

**Here are a few questions to ask when doing a narrative power analysis:**

- **Who is talking about your issue? Who isn't?**

Review the journalism outlets for your school or community to see if your issue is being covered in the media. Check websites, press releases, or manuals for institutions that your target leads as well as ones that constituents or allies might create.



- **Is your target talking about the issue? If so, how often and in what context?**

This investigation will help you understand the priority that your target is giving your issue. For example, when Sunrise Movement activists looked at the political conversation about climate change and saw a lack of discussion from lawmakers and presidential candidates, they staged a sit-in at Congress to demand more urgency on the issue.

- **What words, phrases, and images do people use to talk about the issue?**

The words, phrases, and images key players use to discuss an issue contribute to the way people think about that issue. Look to see if there is a pattern in the way that people talk about the issue. Pay special attention to how constituents (those affected by the issue) talk about the issue in comparison to your target. Do they differ? What about opposing groups—what words, phrases, and images do they use to try to influence the narrative? For example, when immigrant rights activists analyzed the immigration narrative, they found the term “illegal alien” repeated endlessly in the media and by politicians. In response, they asserted that “No Human is Illegal” and created a campaign to pressure media outlets to “Drop the I-Word” from being used by their publications.

- **Whose stories are missing from the mainstream narrative on your issue?**

Often times, the people who are most affected by an issue are the ones most excluded from the mainstream narrative. This is how power works. If people are marginalized, people’s voices are too. Meanwhile, the people who have the most power are the ones that have more access to major news outlets and media. The more you can change the narrative, the more potential you have to change the power relations. For example, the Power Shift Network recognized that young people and people of color are routinely excluded from news articles on climate change—even though they are the ones that will be most affected by the issue. So they created a Speaker’s Bureau of young climate activists prepared to speak to the press and at events about the issue.

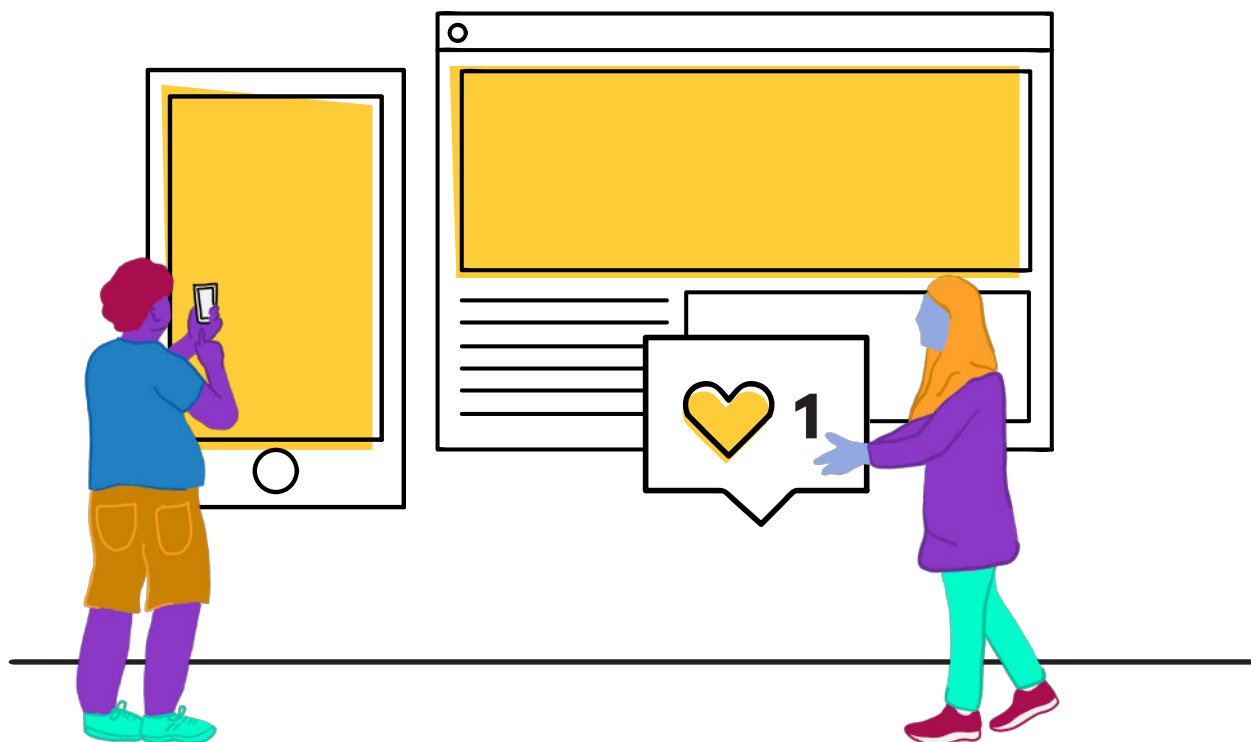
In general, you want your target to adopt the narrative that constituents and allies use to talk about an issue, and reject the one that opposing groups use. Understanding the narrative will help you create a strategy for communicating to key players about your issue.



**XIUHTEZCATL,  
Earth Guardians**

Artwork by Shepard Fairey featuring Xiuhtezcatl Martinez and Earth Guardians for Amplifier’s We The Future Campaign. @AmplifierArt

## 3.5 USING SOCIAL MEDIA



**Social media is a tool that makes sharing your message through large networks of people relatively easy.**

Social media is a tool that makes sharing your message through large networks of people relatively easy. It can also be used to build pressure on your targets, and force them to act if they think social media chatter is hurting their image.

You can use social media like Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat to tell your story, recruit supporters, build event attendance, show support for ally organizations, and get the attention of your target. Social media is also a way to engage people who may not be able to participate in your actions in-person.

Instead of asking supporters to simply post on social media, it's a good idea to have a plan for what to post, and instructions for supporters on when and how to post. The easiest way to do this is to send emails with sample post language, and a link to where they can download graphics and images. Remember that multiple individuals posting (even if it's the same thing) can be more effective than everyone sharing a single post.

## Here are some social media ideas that can attract attention to your campaign:

- **Post interesting images** —art, photographs, memes, etc.—that will attract a lot of shares and/or likes from constituents and allies. Include timely, funny, or inspiring captions for added engagement. Tools like Canva.com or Adobe Spark are free and low-cost options for creating images. When your posts receive a lot of comments and likes, that's how you know you've got an issue that's resonating. Reach out to those people who interacted with your content and ask them to come to your next meeting or activity.
- **Create videos** by asking supporters to share their stories on camera. You can also livestream events and actions on Facebook and Instagram, or live post on their stories feature, Snapchat, and Twitter, or invite experts to talk about the issue on a video conference call on sites like Google Hangout. Tools like Apple iMovie or YouTube Editor are low-cost options for video editing.
- **Share news and conversation starters** on sites like Twitter and Facebook as a way to spark dialogue about your issue and make widely visible comments from your supporters. Lively conversation helps your social media pages receive high engagement and boost your overall visibility online.
- **Document your actions with photos and videos** of your supporters at work on your campaign. For example, post photos of supporters out in the community collecting petition signatures, or livestream a rally that you've organized to demonstrate your power. Ask supporters to tag themselves in photos and videos on sites whenever possible to help expand the reach online.
- **Ask influencers to endorse your campaign.** Ask influencers (people or organizations with large social media followings or notoriety in the community) to help champion your message by officially endorsing your demands. Celebrities, politicians, admired teachers, athletes, internet personalities, student groups, faith-based groups, and unions are all examples of people that may have large followings in your community. Even a student leader who people trust could be considered a local influencer. Followers will likely trust the endorsement of your influencer and help spread your message.
- **Make your campaign more accessible to people who may not be able to attend in-person actions and events.** Members with disabilities or illness can use social media to participate in your campaign virtually. For example, the Disability March was a way for people to participate in the Women's March virtually by posting pictures and videos online on the day of the march. For videos that you create and post on social media, include captions or transcripts whenever possible for people with different hearing abilities.
- **Organize an online day of action.** There's no better way to raise awareness for your campaign than flooding everyone's timelines with content about it. Organize your supporters to take specific online actions throughout the day (e.g. share this news story in the morning, post a picture of yourself doing X at noon, post a status explaining why this is important at 6, etc.) to demonstrate the support your issue has. Consider if tagging your target would be helpful, and if so organize supporters to post about your target, carefully being sure to tag them appropriately so their notifications are filled with messages about your campaign. To make your day of action most effective, you'll need a large number of people ready to participate—[see Part 4: Building Collective Power for more on this.](#)

### WELLNESS CHECK

When it comes to self-care, it's a good idea to take social media breaks throughout the organizing process. This will allow you to check-in with yourself and your friends and family without the distraction of online comments. Have leaders in your group take turns managing your social media pages so that people can schedule time to log-off.

Social media can be incredibly helpful in circulating your message. It also has its pitfalls. Here are some things to consider when using social media for advocacy work:

- **Beware of the trolls.**

Social media is a place where trolls and cyberbullies hang out. If they lurk around your campaign, it can be demoralizing for your group. It's a good idea to be prepared with how to deal with them if they pop up. On most sites, you can block trolls from posting on your page if you choose. Or you can simply ignore them or engage them in a way that helps you build your power (such as using their nasty comments to appeal to your constituents about why your work is necessary).

- **Be mindful of member privacy.**

What you put out online can be hard to delete. Social media sites have privacy settings that allow you to increase or decrease your exposure online. However, hackers can be savvy in breaking through security and increasingly activists are raising concerns about how social media companies use data. It is helpful to talk with your group to assess views on using social media for social justice.

- **Don't get addicted.**

Social media can be addictive. It's important to remember that creating meaningful change requires more than posting on social media. Organizing requires building relationships with people in real life. You will not win your campaign because of social media, but you can't win without it.

### ACTIVIST STORY



**OFELIA:**  
Texas Freedom Network,  
1 in 3 Campaign

Ofelia Alonso is a Texas organizer currently working as a Field Coordinator for the Texas Freedom Network. While in college, she organized with the 1 in 3 Campaign to spread awareness about abortion access in Texas and destigmatize the abortion process. This past summer, she worked tirelessly to expose the Crisis Pregnancy Centers in her area.

Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPC) are clinics that pose as abortion providers and attempt to coerce pregnant people into not receiving an abortion. They are dangerous and misleading and take individuals who are looking for proper medical counseling and manipulate them.

Ofelia used digital media and traditional media to expose a CPC in her area. For digital media, her group created videos and

graphics with relatable content. She says the most important thing is to use language that is appropriate to your target audience.

For traditional media, she found that producing content in Spanish is helpful since she lives in an area with a lot of Spanish speakers. Ofelia's efforts to close down the CPC were so effective that the local news became involved and helped to uncover where the CPC's funding is coming from.

The targeted CPC closed down due to their campaign and has stayed closed, which Ofelia considers one of her biggest wins.

Learn more about the Texas Freedom Network at <https://tfn.org/>. Learn more about the 1 in 3 Campaign at <http://www.1in3campaign.org/>.

# PART 4: BUILDING COLLECTIVE POWER

In Parts 2 and 3, you developed a strategy, some core messages, and some media tools. Part 4 is all about how to take your campaign to the masses by reaching out to potential supporters. The more supporters you can attract to your campaign, the more collective power you can build in order to apply pressure to your target.

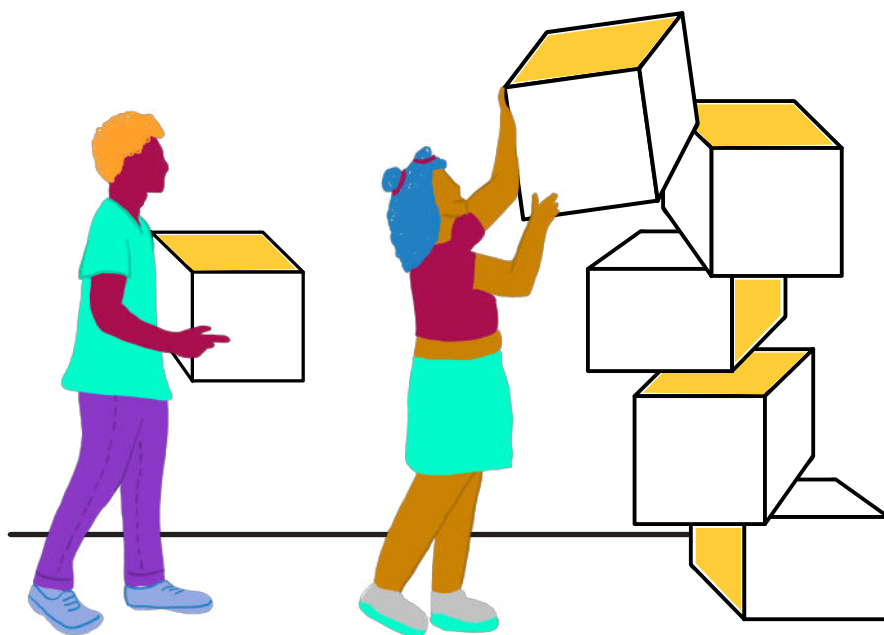


**LYDIA X.Z. BROWN,**  
Bazelon Center

Artwork by Kate Deciccio featuring Lydia X.Z. Brown and the Bazelon Center for Amplifier's We The Future Campaign. @AmplifierArt



## 4.1 WHAT IS COLLECTIVE POWER?



**Collective power is the power that a group has by working together with a shared interest in achieving a goal.**

Building collective power is critical to your campaign because individuals can wield more power when they work together. Collective power is the power that a group has by working together with a shared interest in achieving a goal.

This process of engaging others, often referred to as base building, includes: conducting outreach, building relationships with new members, providing opportunities for members to get more involved, and developing members into leaders.

One helpful way to think of this process is to break down your base into three categories: **Leaders, Members, and Supporters.**

### **Leaders.**

People in the group who are deeply committed to the success of the goals of the group. They play a key role in planning events or campaigns, making group decisions, recruiting new members, and training new leaders.

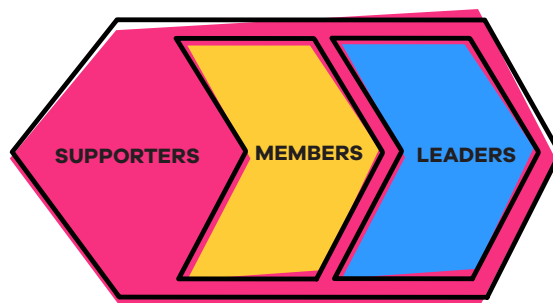
### **Members.**

People who are active in the group in a more limited way. They attend events and occasionally attend meetings but don't take leadership roles. They are passionate about the issue but have less time to commit to the organization.

### **Supporters.**

People who occasionally attend events or have signed up for your email list. This is a key group to keep in touch with via email or phone when you need to turn out larger numbers for a campaign.

Your goal is to increase your base of supporters while simultaneously moving supporters to be members and members to be leaders. This is the process of base building. Another way to think about this is that you are trying to build a base that is both wide and deep: wide in the sense that you reach as many people as you can and deep in the sense that you build strong leaders within the group.

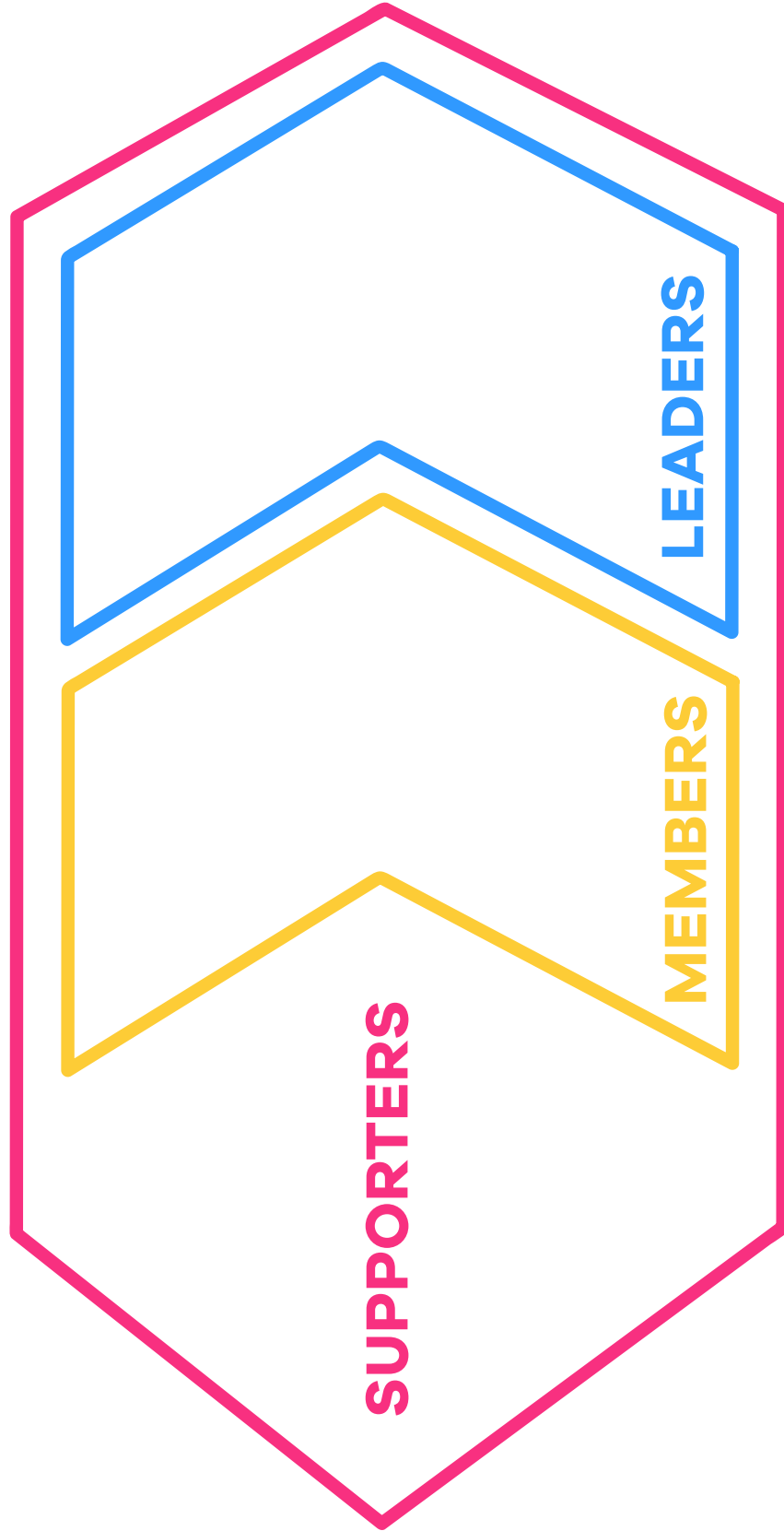




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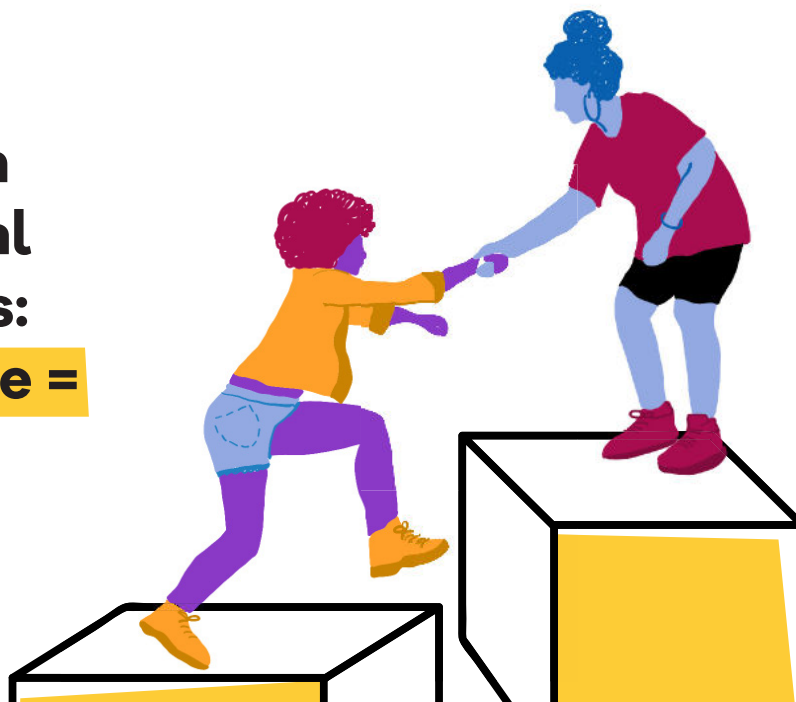
# BUILDING POWER

As a means of envisioning your own base, fill in the circular diagram with the names of your leaders, members and supporters. On the outside of your diagram, you will want to think of new individuals and groups you could reach out to bring in new supporters and widen your base. Simultaneously, you will want to circle the names of some of your members who you identify as potential leaders.



## 4.2 RECRUITING SUPPORTERS

Your pitch  
to potential  
supporters:  
**Anger + Hope =  
Action**



When potential supporters are your target audience, it is effective to use messages that will guide listeners through the emotions you felt when you started the campaign. Anger combined with hope are powerful motivators to encourage people to take action.

**Anger** is the first emotion you want to evoke. You can do this by showing how your values are being threatened. For example, “Every student deserves to feel safe on campus. Yet LGBTQ students are far more likely to experience violence on campus than straight students.”

**Hope** is the second emotion you want to evoke. You want people to believe that change is possible in order for them to get involved. You also want to take the energy away from the problem and focus it on a solution. You can do this by explaining your demands and how they will address the problem. For example: “We need an LGBTQ center where staff members can coordinate anti-violence trainings for all incoming students and where LGBTQ students have a place to go where they feel safe on campus.”

**Action.** Once you have illustrated your solution, you want to make sure the other person knows they can make a difference by taking action. Your goal at the end of every interaction is for people to take action right then. You could ask them to sign a petition in support of your demands or attend an upcoming event or action. It is important to get an email address and other contact information from the person when they make a commitment so you can follow up with them.

Once you have developed your pitch, you want to think through some ways you can reach out to new people. Here are some general tips for outreach:

- **Build relationships with people by finding out what they care about.**

What issues are they passionate about? What would they like to see changed in your community? Many organizers can get so focused on their message that they forget to listen to find out what other people want. The more you know about them, the more you can understand how to plug them into the work you are already doing or get ideas on how to expand your impact.

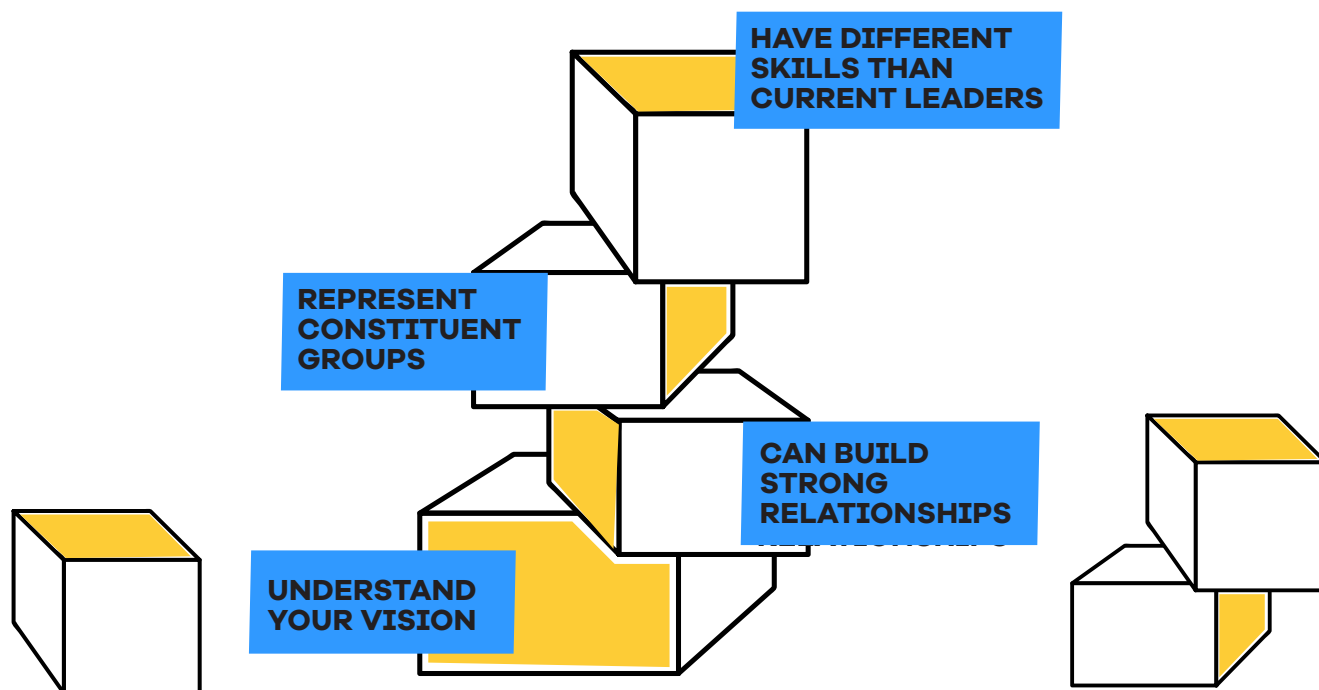
- **Ask people!**  
People won't join your campaign unless you ask them to. People can always say no if they need to prioritize other things, but if you don't ask, they can't say yes.
- **Recruit new people to an activity not to a meeting.**  
You want people to first engage by doing the work they believe in, not by talking about it.
- **Make outreach activities accessible for people with different abilities.**  
Make sure your event and meeting spaces are wheelchair accessible and make accommodations for people with different hearing or vision abilities whenever possible.
- **Don't forget to follow up.**  
Make sure to call or email new supporters and thank them for participating or taking action. Invite them to your next event.
- **Have fun!**  
Choose fun and creative tactics to outreach to new supporters. The more you are having fun, the more people will want to join you.

### Here are some popular outreach ideas:

Table in your community. Set up a table in a high-traffic area on campus or in your community, such as outside the cafeteria, student union, library, local coffee shop, or sporting event, to hand out leaflets and information about your campaign. You can pass out information about upcoming events or ask people to sign a petition indicating they support your demand. Collecting contact information is essential in making sure you can follow up with potential supporters. Tip: bring candy, condoms, buttons or other items you can give away to attract people to stop at your table.

- **New member meetings.**  
Hold regularly to welcome new people into your group and share with them introductory information, such as the vision for the campaign, key messages, and ways for people to support what you're doing. Invite new members to commit to doing something at the meeting in order to keep them engaged in the group.
- **Public announcements.**  
Ask your teachers if you can announce upcoming events or actions before class. Short announcements at another group's meeting, on any student-run podcasts, or on the school's radio station are also ideas.
- **Partner with other groups.**  
Find reasons to work with other organizations that appeal to activists. They may be looking to get involved in additional organizations like yours.
- **Social events.**  
Host dinners, open houses, dance parties, or sporting events to welcome people into the group and build relationships with each other. Advertising the event on social media and in campus calendars, newsletters and newspapers will get your name, as well as your event, out to the public.
- **Canvas (knocking on doors in your community).**  
Create leaflets about upcoming actions or events and go door-to-door to share them with neighbors. On your leaflets, make sure to list where they can find your campaign online. If no one is home, leave behind your leaflet for people to reach out.
- **Social media.**  
Some sites allow you to join interest groups online where you can post events or articles or email a list of people that have subscribed to information. Ask around your group of supporters for the groups and list serves they follow. Also reach out to people who like and comment on your social media posts to invite them to events.
- **Emails.**  
Ask for people's email addresses when you collect contact information and send them regular emails with upcoming events and actions. Sites like MailChimp allow you to design and send mass emails for free.
- **Text or phone banks.**  
Ask for people's cell phone numbers when you collect contact information. Text or call them before an event or action to invite them to participate. People are most likely to see a text than other forms of communication.

## 4.3 DEVELOPING LEADERS



As supporters come into your campaign, you want to identify and develop leaders among them that can help you plan events and actions so that you can build even more power. To do this, you want to think about what types of leaders and skill sets you need for your campaign.

**Here are some qualities to look for in leaders:**

- 1. Understand your vision.** Leaders will have demonstrated that they know and support the change you're trying to achieve and the steps required to win.
- 2. Can build strong relationships.** Leaders should be able to work with others and help resolve conflicts within the group when they occur. (See Part 6: Sustaining the Movement for more information.)
- 3. Represent the people and interests of your constituent groups.** You want to make sure constituents who are most affected by the problem are part of the decision-making team in your group. When

you are trying to shift power relations in the world, it is important to make sure you first shift power relations in your own group by creating an environment where people that are traditionally marginalized in society have decision making power in your movement.

### **4. Have different skills than current leaders.**

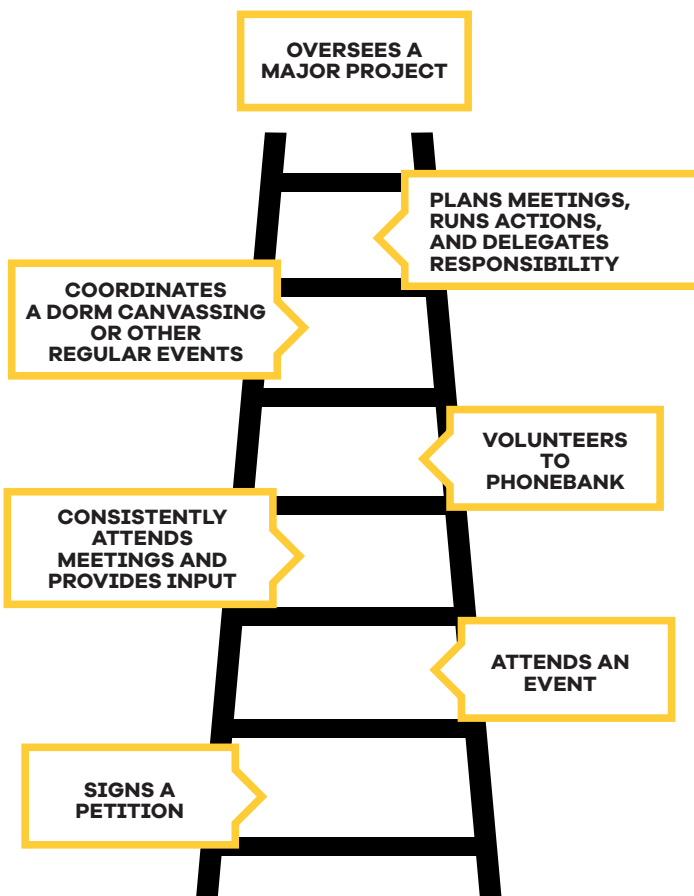
A diverse skill set among leaders will help your group do more. Some may be into planning events. Others may want to lead art activities. Others may be great at taking photos for social media. Rather than having one or two leaders directing all the projects, try having five or ten leaders that can each manage a small piece of your campaign.

There may be other skills that you are looking for from your leaders that will help your group reach its core goals. As a group, you will want to continue to develop this list as your campaign progresses.

## 4.4 LADDER OF ENGAGEMENT TOOL

As you bring in new supporters, you want to encourage them to continually get more involved with your campaign. You want them to climb your “ladder of engagement.”

The Ladder of Engagement tool allows you to plot out the process for turning supporters into members and members into leaders. Each rung on the ladder represents an opportunity to participate in the campaign. People at the low end of the ladder typically start out with easy things like sharing a social media post or attending an event. As they climb up the ladder, they may take on more responsibility, like volunteering to collect petition signatures or contributing a piece of art. The more people you can get to climb your ladder, the more power you will build.



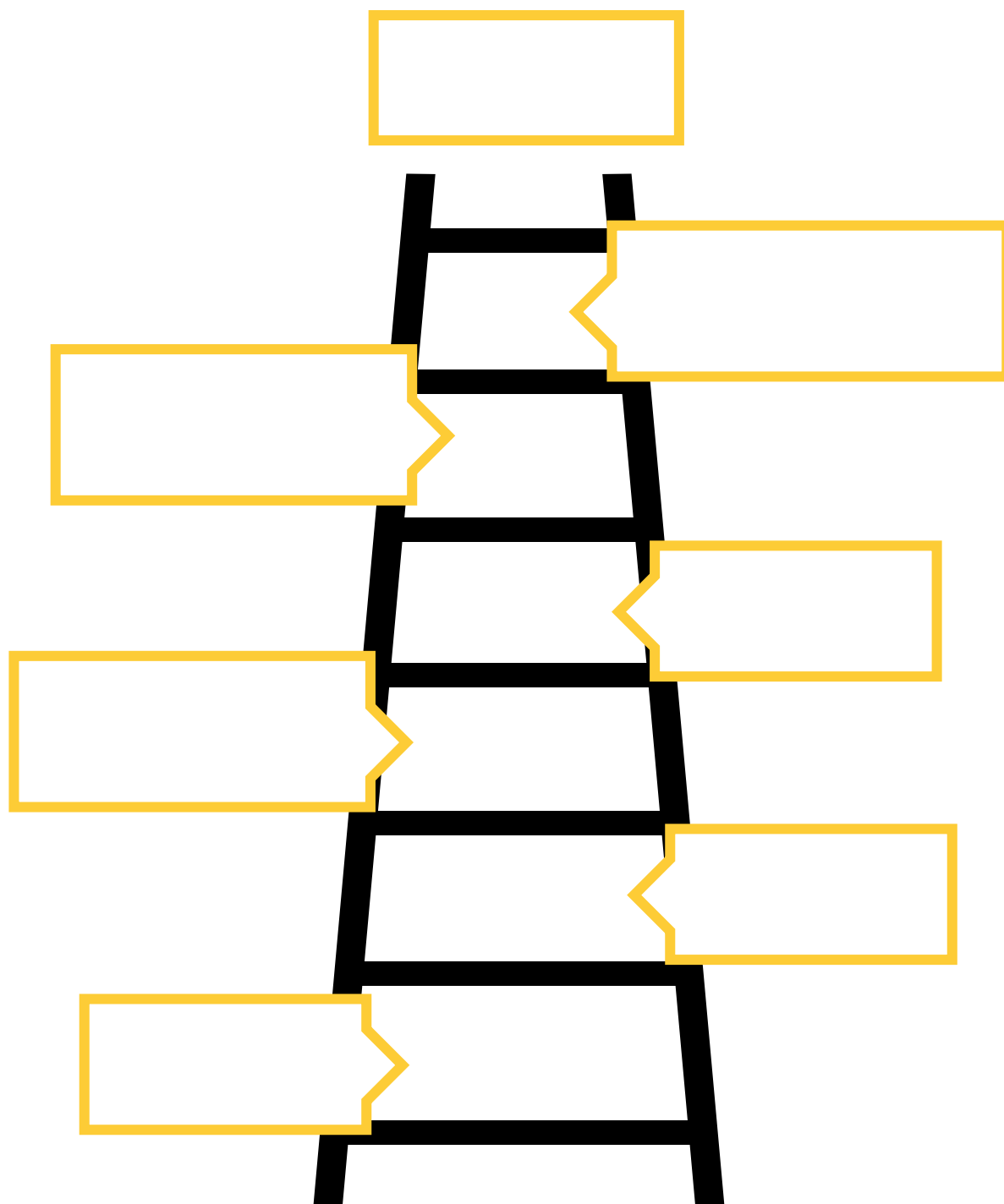
**Here are some ways to move supporters up the ladder of engagement:**

- **One-on-one conversations.** Sitting down for a personal conversation is a great way to learn about what motivates someone to stay involved. Talk to them about the things they’ve enjoyed working on and offer ideas and support for how they could get more involved in upcoming activities planned for your campaign. Schedule regular one-on-one conversations with people you want to become leaders in your group.
- **Shared ownership of projects.** When you pair an emerging leader with a current leader on each project, new leaders gain experience so that they can take over the project in the future. This is especially important in youth organizing because often times young leaders will graduate from school or move out of a community. When that happens, their experience leaves too. It is essential to continuously build new leaders so the work you care about continues after you go.
- **Leadership retreats.** These are a great way to strengthen relationships among current and emerging leaders. They also serve as a time to dive deeper into the strategy of the campaign. This opportunity will help new leaders develop a better understanding of how to create strategies, and increase their investment in the success of the campaign.

Building power by attracting new supporters and developing leaders is a continuous cycle throughout the life of a campaign.

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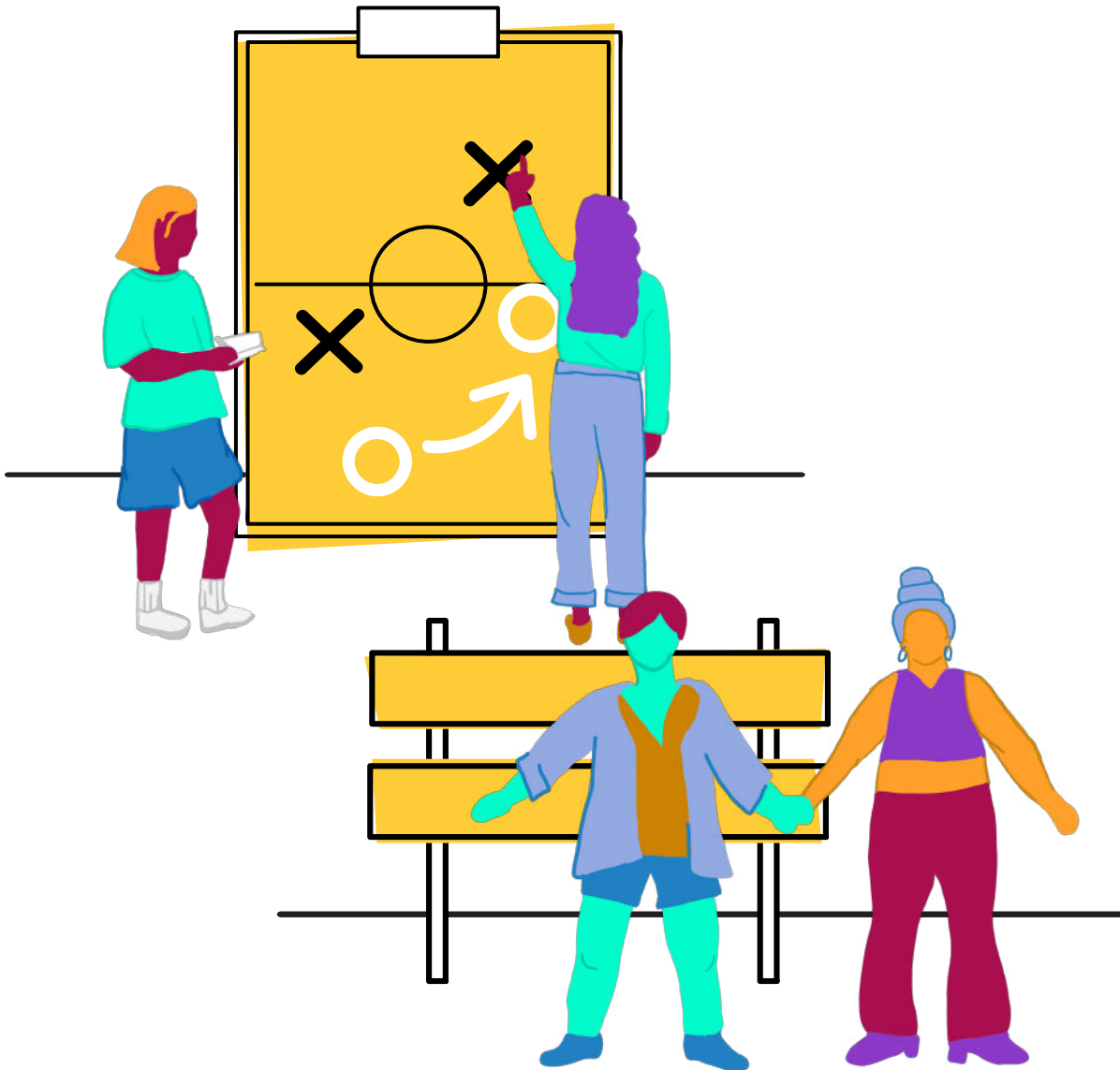
# LADDER OF ENGAGEMENT



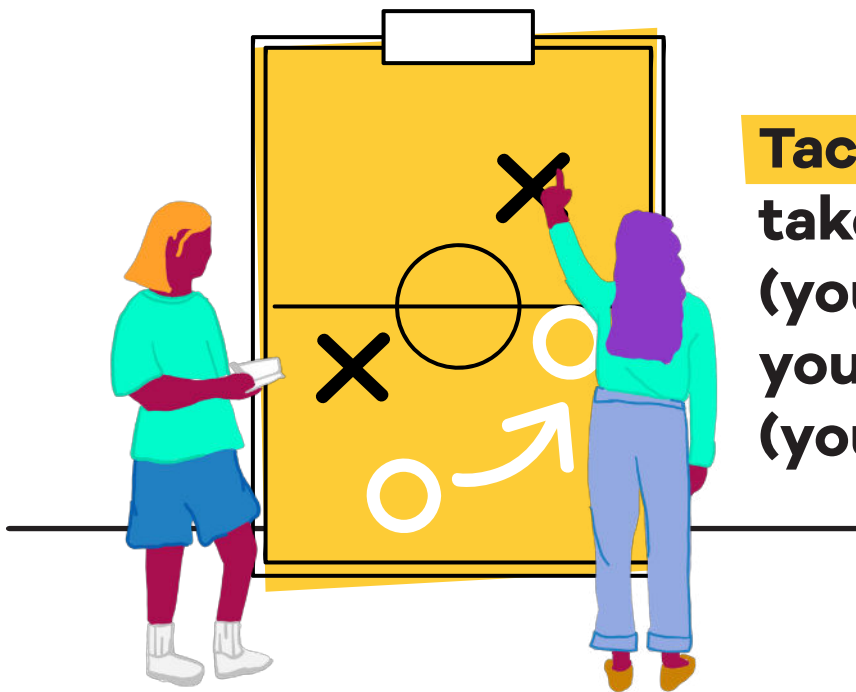


# PART 5: USING YOUR POWER

In Part 4, you learned some ways to attract supporters and encourage them to become leaders in your group. Part 5 is all about using your collective power to plan actions that will apply pressure to your target. These are called tactics.



## 5.1 WHAT IS A TACTIC?



**Tactics are actions taken to get someone (your target) to give you what you want (your demands).**

Tactics are actions taken to get someone (your target) to give you what you want (your demands). Each tactic should fit within your overall strategy to reach your end goal. There are a variety of tactics that you can choose from—your goal is to determine which tactics to use and when in order to get your group what it wants.

**Here are some basic guidelines for selecting tactics:**

- 1. They should show support for your demands.** Your list of demands should be the core part of any tactic. Without them, you're less likely to create lasting change for the community. For example, if a hate crime occurs on campus, you could set up a vigil condemning the violence. This is important step to
- 2. They should be focused on your primary or secondary target.** The focus of the action should be on asking your target to do something. In the case above, it could be directed towards the president of the University who has the power to agree to add anti-bias trainings to student orientation.

show care for the harmed and afraid, but condemning the violence alone does not necessarily mean that the University will take action to eliminate hate crimes on campus. This action could be improved if participants of the vigil spoke out about what is necessary to end hate-crimes on campus and demanded that the University include anti-bias trainings for all incoming students. This refocuses the energy of the action from the problem toward a solution.

### 3. They should demonstrate your power, while simultaneously building your power.

Each action you plan is also an outreach opportunity. For example, if you hold a rally in the center of campus, you will show your collective power to your target, and also to others walking nearby. Pass out leaflets at your actions so new people can connect with you. Building power at each action will allow you to continually escalate your tactics and apply more pressure on your target to win your campaign.

### 4. They should be outside the comfort zone of your target and within the comfort zone of your group.

Tactics work best when your target is unfamiliar with your action and does not know how to respond. If there has been a long history of sit-ins on your campus, then it is likely that your University has

developed an action plan to respond to a sit-in. However, they might be less familiar with a group of students interrupting a board of directors meeting. They will be forced to act immediately without diligent planning, which may allow you to make more headway on your demands. At the same time you want to pick tactics that members of your group feel confident with and committed to—this will help them be more successful. For example, if you anticipate that police will be called in response to your action, some people in your group may feel unsafe due to past experience with officers. Everyone should be fully aware of what might happen at an action, and be given opportunities to opt-out at different points or all together.

## ACTIVIST STORY



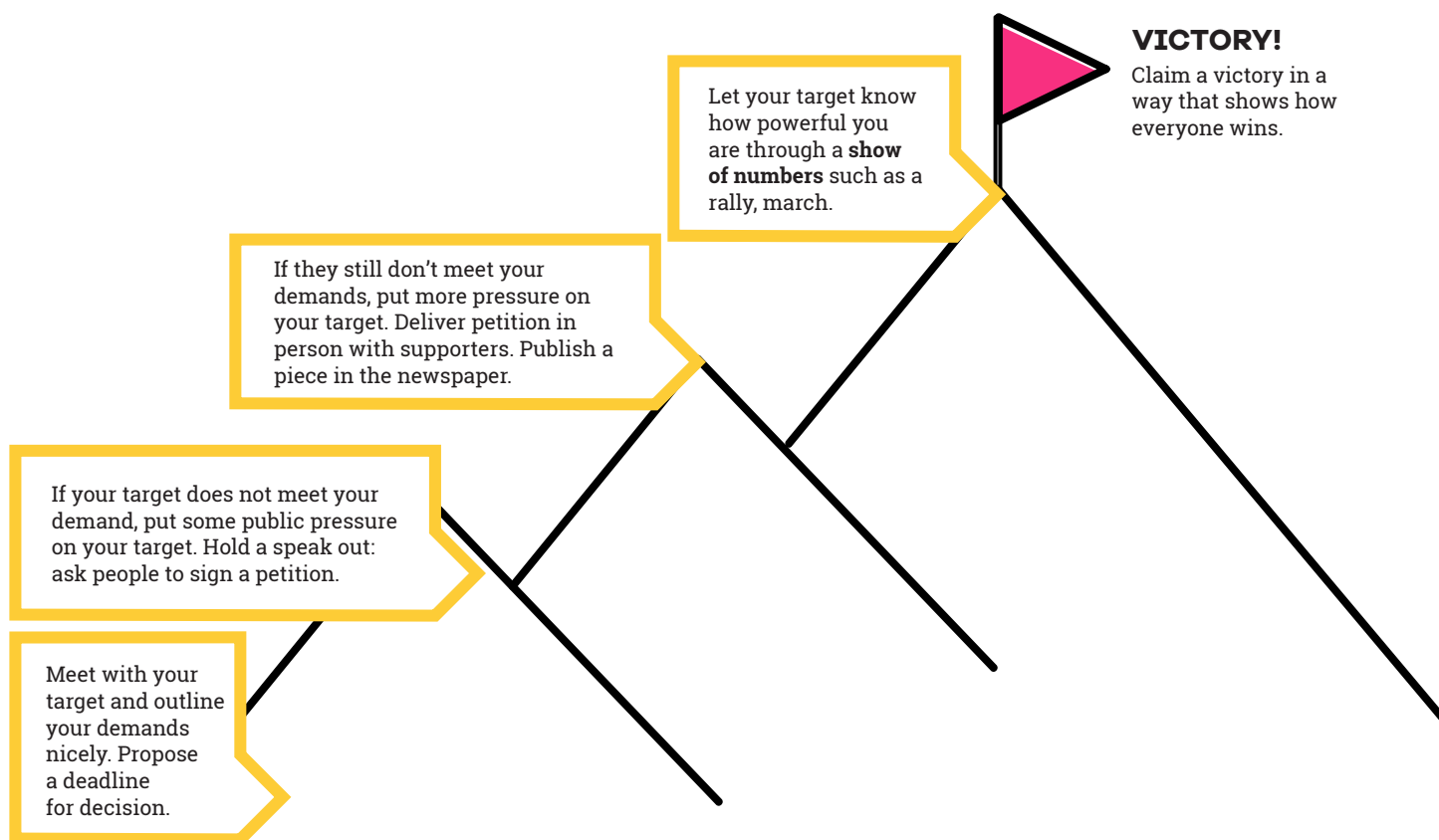
**SEAN:**  
Power Shift Network

Sean Estelle's organizing philosophy was born from a commitment made to a group of student activists at University of California - San Diego. It was there, working on the Occupy Movement, Students for Justice for Palestine, and a fossil fuel divestment campaign with the Student Sustainability Collective that Sean received a valuable piece of advice: "Organizing is about studying political education, putting it into practice, and then going back and studying more," they said. "Having this cycle helps people understand what it means to make a lifelong commitment to political organizing."

Sean started working for the Power Shift Network just as it was going through a cycle of renewal. At that time, it was known as the Energy Action Coalition, made up of about 15 groups working on a handful of environmental campaigns. After a year of collecting input from youth leaders, staff restructured the organization into a decentralized network of more than 80 youth-led, grassroots environmental organizations. The benefit, Sean explained, is that rather than having a few leaders at the top managing a few big campaigns, you can have a lot of people simultaneously launching smaller campaigns across the country that all align around a common vision.

Now, Power Shift Network's primary role is supporting and training youth leaders in building collective power to be more effective advocates for climate, clean energy, and social justice. It convenes regular gatherings, acts as a fiscal sponsor, helps train youth to run for office and take leadership in campaigns, and coordinates a speaker bureau of young environmental justice and climate activists ready to share their stories in the media.

## 5.2 PRINCIPLE OF ESCALATION



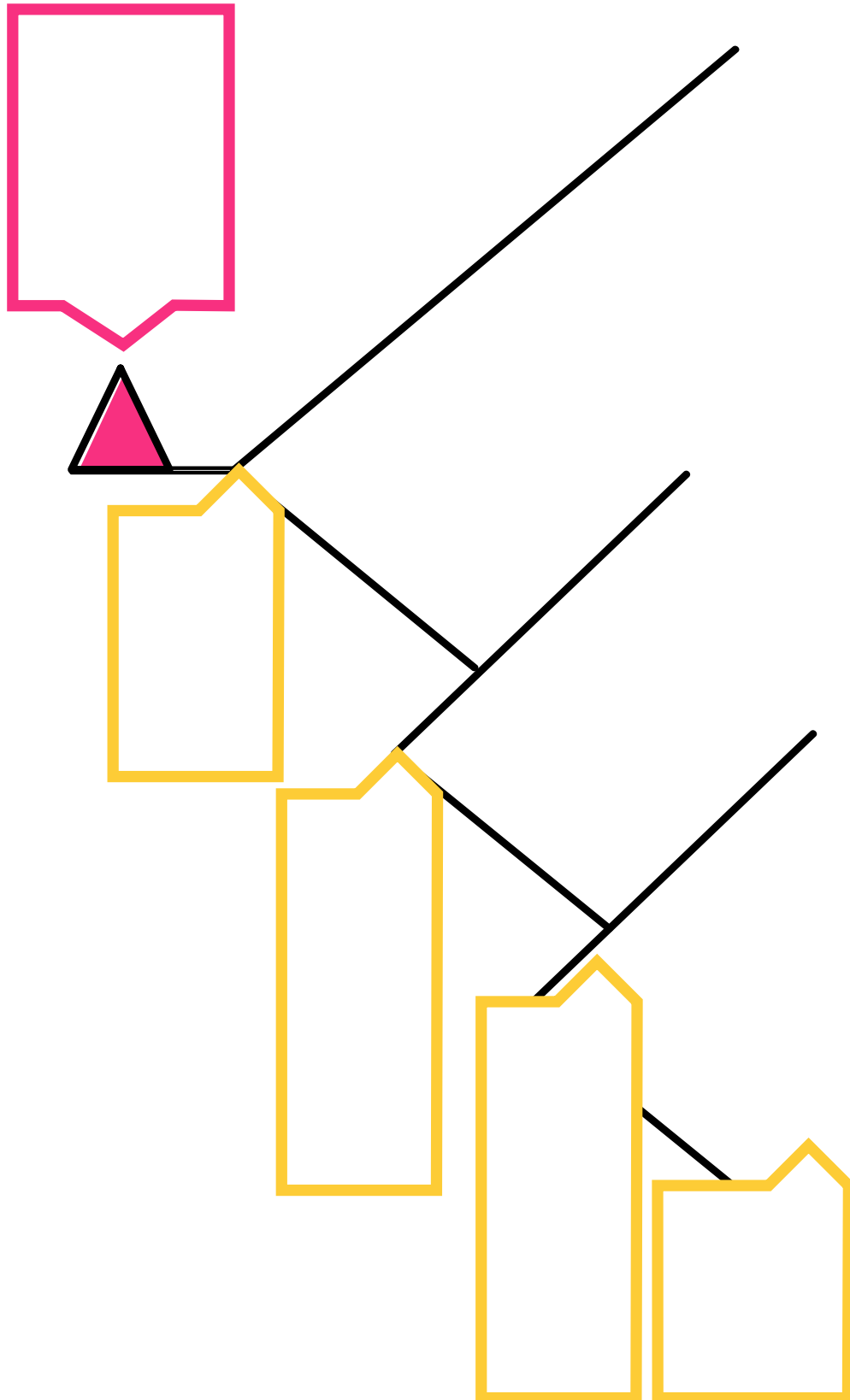
In a campaign, each tactic generally builds on the previous tactic to apply additional pressure on your target in a relatively short period of time. This is called escalation.

Escalation of tactics is important because you want to show your target that you are continually building power and increasing the size and intensity of your actions. For example, if you were to start with a sit-in and it fails to convince your target to meet your demands, delivering a paper petition next will likely not move your target either—it may even convey to them that your base is weakening. Few campaigns are won overnight. It's important to remember that your target will likely not meet your demands after your first or even your second action. If you plan for this, it can help keep the momentum growing and minimize feelings of discouragement among your supporters. After each tactic, regroup with your members and reflect on what went well, what could be improved, and what tactic to try next to keep the pressure on your target.

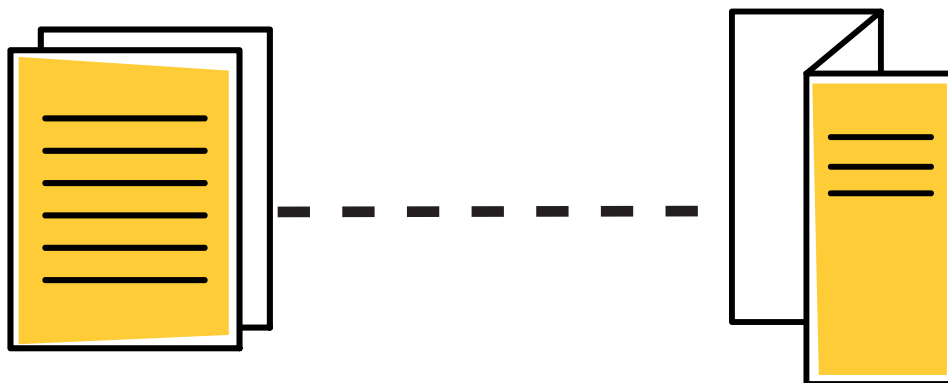
### WELLNESS CHECK

It is important to incorporate self-care and group wellness into your organizing work from the very beginning. Social justice organizing is emotional work, and discussions about injustice can bring up a lot of feelings—especially for those that have experienced injustice directly. As you are getting started with your campaign, ask your group to help you make a list of self-care and wellness resources in your community. For example, school counselors, health clinics, crisis lines, faith centers, or free meditation or yoga classes. (See [Part 6: Sustaining the Movement for more ideas.](#)) Ideally, you and others in the group will view your work as part of the healing process.

# PRINCIPLE OF ESCALATION



## 5.3 POPULAR TACTICS



### 1. Using petitions to demonstrate support for your campaign.

A petition usually lists your demands followed by space for supporters to sign and write their contact information. When people sign the petition, they are indicating that they support your demands. The goal is to collect a lot of signatures and deliver them to your target so they can see wide support. Petitions also help you recruit supporters—each person you ask for a signature is someone you can share your messaging with and invite to future events. Here are some petition gathering tips:

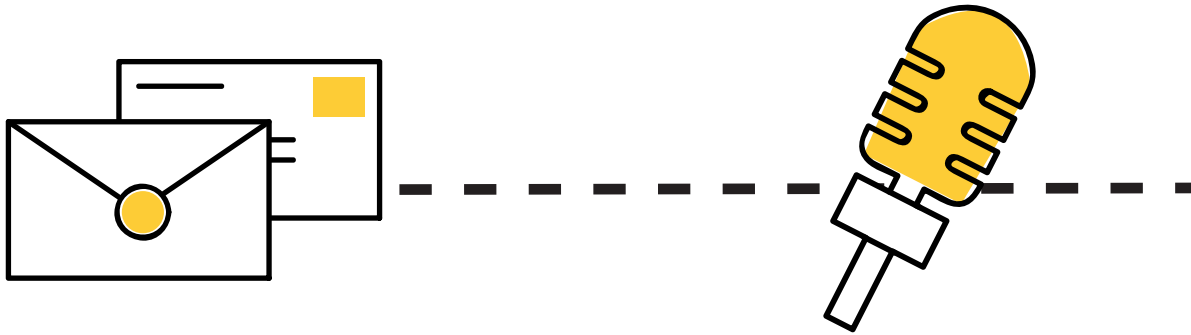
- Set a goal for the number of signatures you want to obtain and a date that you will deliver the petitions to your target.
- Create a paper petition for collecting signatures in person as well as an online version on sites like Amplify, Credo, MoveOn, or Google docs.
- For paper petitions, identify high-traffic areas such as a student union, a public event, or outside of the library where you can talk to people and ask them to sign.
- For the online petition, use email, websites, and social media to share it widely. Ask your base and your allies to share it with their networks as well.
- When you deliver your petition to your target, make sure it is seen—host a press event or livestream the delivery on your social media page.

### 2. Creating banners, displays, and leaflets to communicate your demands to a larger audience.

Making your demands visible in a high-traffic area is a good way to attract attention to your campaign. Banners and signs should align with the key messages of the campaign and communicate your demands in a straightforward way. Displays can be more abstract. For example, activists arranged 7,000 pairs of kids' shoes on the lawn of the Capitol building in 2018 to illustrate how many children had died since the Sandy Hook school shooting six years earlier. Here are some tips for displays and banners:

- Find a strategic location to install banners and displays where a lot of people will see, photograph, and discuss it with others.
- Make sure to check to see if any permits are required to put up your display.
- Notify the press of the display by sending a media advisory or calling up the editorial desk.
- Connect onlookers directly to your campaign by collecting petition signatures and/or distributing leaflets with your social media handles and hashtags.
- Arrange for a supporter to capture photos, video, or a livestream of the action and people's response to it. Share the responses on social media.





### 3. Submitting letters to the editor, op-eds, and op-docs to local media.

Media outlets usually have some way for readers to submit content in their own words. They may publish a letter to the editor, which is a short (usually 300 words or less) response to a newspaper article, or an op-ed, which is an opinion piece that is generally longer and allows the writer to cover a topic that the newspaper hasn't covered enough. A few media outlets are starting to publish op-docs, which are short documentaries that present a point of view. Here are some tips to writing effective submissions:

- Research the media outlet's submission guidelines and follow them closely.
- Review a few previously published pieces to see what has been approved in the past and what the media outlet is saying about your issue.
- Use your storytelling skills to write or create an emotionally compelling piece that incorporates your key messages. Personal "human-interest" stories about how people are affected by an issue are particularly appealing to press.
- Share any articles or video that comes out of press events widely.

### 4. Sending out media advisories and hosting press events.

Campus and community newspapers, local television and radio stations, or prominent bloggers are all examples of press that may help you communicate your message to a larger audience. Any gathering, such as a town hall, vigil, or march, where your power is visible is an opportunity for a press event. Here are some tips on how to appeal to the press:

- Create a media list with contact information for journalists and editors at local media outlets that cover your issue.
- When you organize a public action, send out an advisory to media a few days in advance by emailing a short, one-page summary of the what, why, when, and where of the action. If special guests will be present, make sure to include their name and organization.
- When you're planning your event, think about how you can create great photo opportunities for the press. Appealing visuals can get you on the front page of your local media outlets.
- Designate spokespeople to make statements to press at your event. Use your key messages and storytelling skills to communicate your demands.
- Share any articles or video that comes out of press events widely.
- Get to know the journalists that report on your issue and reach out to be a source of information and interviews for them.

## 5. Organize a collective action on social media.

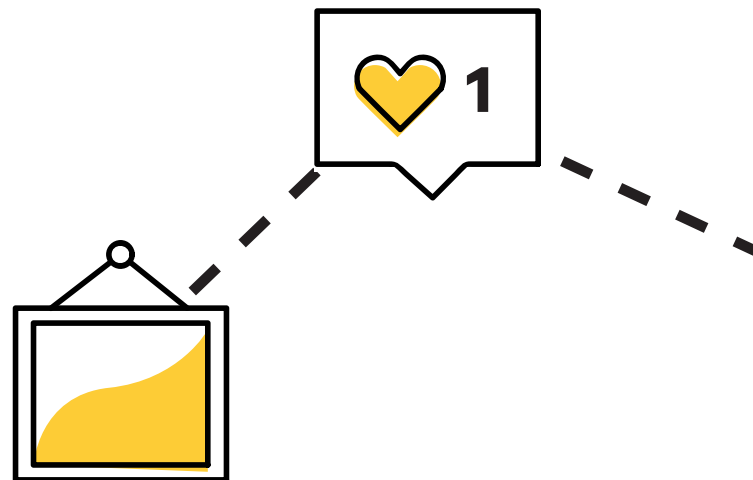
Examples include altering profile pictures on social media or asking people to post a hashtag on a designated day or time. Sites like Facebook allow you to create frames for users to add to their profile pictures. Social media has the added benefit of being able to track how many people viewed a piece of content. For example, if your target sees your campaign hashtag trending on social media or a video getting lots of views, it demonstrates your power to get publicity for your demands. Here are some tips for organizing collective action on social media:

- Designate a day and time at least two weeks in advance to plan the action.
- Get influencers and ally organizations on board with the plan.
- Create an easy set of instructions on how people can participate and provide as much ready-to-use language or graphics as possible.
- When it's time to participate, publicize the call to action widely.
- Consider asking supporters to tag your target in their posts.
- Do a recap of how many people participated in the action and take screen grabs from supporters (with their permission) to document the action.

## 6. Host a letter or postcard writing event.

Gather group members to write personal letters or postcards to your target about why they support your demands. When the stack of letters arrives at your target's office, they will be hard to miss. Elected officials will often write back with a statement on the issue, which will help you determine where they stand. Tips for hosting a letter writing event include:

- Provide materials for writing the letters along with your key messages and storytelling advice to help people know what to write.
- Take responsibility for mailing the letters to make sure they get sent. You can ask everyone to donate a few stamps to cover the cost of postage or bundle the letters together and send in one large envelope.



## 7. Take creative action using art.

Use the art you have created for your campaign to communicate your message to a larger audience. These actions help to generate publicity, reach new supporters, and get the attention of your target. Additionally, humor or satire can be a particularly effective way to bring attention to a problem you are addressing—make sure to test your material out on people in advance of a public performance to make sure the message you're trying to convey comes across clearly. (See section 3.3 Creating Art for more ideas.)

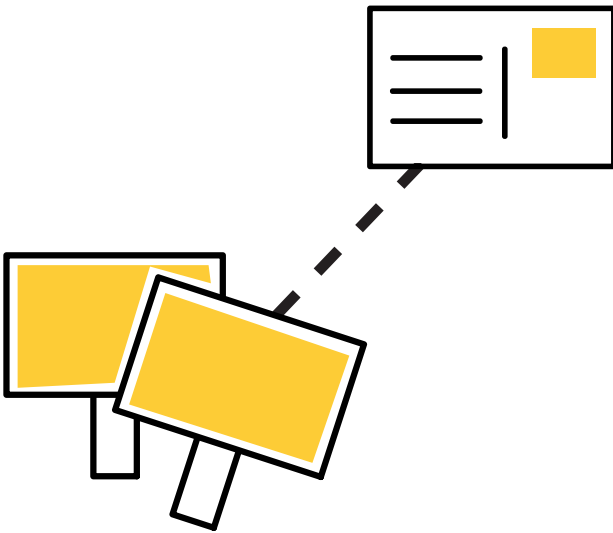
## 8. Stage a withdrawal or renunciation.

Publically refusing to participate in an event is a powerful display of discontent. For example, walking out or turning your backs to a speaker during a major event sends a clear message that you disagree without disrupting the event. If this action is done to your target in front of a large number of people, people will take notice.

- Make sure to record your renunciation and post it on social media with your demands to help communicate to a larger audience.

## 9. Organize a boycott or divestment campaign.

Withdrawing financial support is a powerful way to communicate your demands and disrupt the system that keeps your problem in place. At colleges and universities, this can be especially powerful if alumni refuse to donate



until the university meets its demands. Boycotts and divestment campaigns are most effective when you can convince a large amount of people to participate so that the profits of the target or target's organization are affected. If the organization is so large that it is hard to make big dent in profits, the tactic will still help to communicate the problem to a larger audience and generate negative publicity for your target.

## 10. Host a march or rally to demonstrate your power.

Bringing a lot of people together to voice their support for your demands will send a powerful message to your target. A march moves from one location to another, while a rally generally takes place in one specific location. Both marches and rallies create a public venue for voicing your demands, provide great photo opportunities, and energize and attract supporters. Five people with signs are enough to draw attention; 500 people with signs and chants will really make an impact.

- Choose a location that supporters can easily get to, and where your presence will be felt—such as outside your Senator's district office or on a campus mall.
- Check in early with the local police to see if you need a permit to hold the event. If so, get the permit and closely follow the regulations regarding bull horns, picket signs/posters, unobstructed space for pedestrians, not interfering with traffic, etc.

- Before the action, make sure that you and your supporters have a clear understanding about what you want to achieve with the action.
- Gather supporters to make posters and picket signs. Think of the visuals you want for press photographs or social media.
- Prepare sheets with at least a few chants that reinforce your message. Identify chant leaders and be ready to hand the sheets out to supporters.
- Make leaflets with your demands, social media handles and hashtags, and upcoming events to hand out so people know how to stay involved.
- Notify the media about your event, and prepare someone to be the official media contact and/or the spokesperson. Make sure press can easily find them.
- Ask four to five speakers to deliver a short speech and recommend a topic for each to address. Also choose someone to emcee the event to keep the program on message and on time. Keep the action to about an hour.
- Define the end of the action. Always have something that people at the action can do right then. Ask them to volunteer to circulate petitions, coordinate phone-banking, or even sign a postcard.
- Follow-up with organizations and members who attended and showed visible support for your issue. Remember to thank organizations for participating.
- Let your target know about your action and how many people showed up, signed petitions, and/or got involved.

## 11. Lobbying elected officials to influence local, state, or federal policy.

Lobbying means meeting with an elected official in person to ask them to support your demands. If you are organizing to change law or policy, lobbying is a key tactic. It's relatively easy to visit elected officials—they are required to have public contact information and usually offices in districts they represent. If you live in the elected official's district, you are one of the constituents they represent. Even if you are not a constituent, you can still meet with them. Call their offices to talk to a staff person about scheduling a meeting when your elected official is in their district office. Once you have arranged a meeting, keep these tips in mind:

- Research the policy maker's position on your issue. You can find this information through voting records, speeches, newspaper articles, debates, and from other organizations that work in related areas.
- Bring a small group of spokespeople and allies from partner organizations to the meeting with you to show that you represent a coalition of people.
- Prepare your messages with other group members prior to the meeting. Stay focused and remember to use your storytelling skills discussed in section 3.2 Storytelling of this guide.
- Start the meeting out by thanking the elected official for taking the time to meet with you. Opening with gratitude can help keep their mind open to your demands.
- If you are a constituent, mention it—even if you can't yet vote. If you have anything else in common, such as a mutual acquaintance or you attended the same school, mention it no matter how insignificant it may seem. It can help the elected official remember you and your message.
- Consider yourself an information source. Policy makers have limited time and staff to devote to any one issue. They can't be as informed on all the issues as they would like to be. You can fill the information gap.
- Think about what the opposition is telling the elected official and provide clarification and rebuttal to opposing views.
- Tell the truth and don't be afraid to admit you don't know something. Giving false or misleading information will result in your losing credibility. If you don't know something, don't make it up. Explain that you do not know the answer and offer to get the information. Be sure to get back to the policy maker promptly with the information you promised.
- Be specific in your demands. If you want a vote, information, answers to a question, a signature on a petition – whatever it is – make sure you say so directly. Make sure you get a response – yes or no – to your request.
- Send a thank you note immediately following a meeting. Also, find out if the policy maker did what he/she promised. Send a letter in which you restate your position, thank her/him for the supportive action taken, or ask an explanation for unsupportive action.

## 12. Hold a voter registration drive.

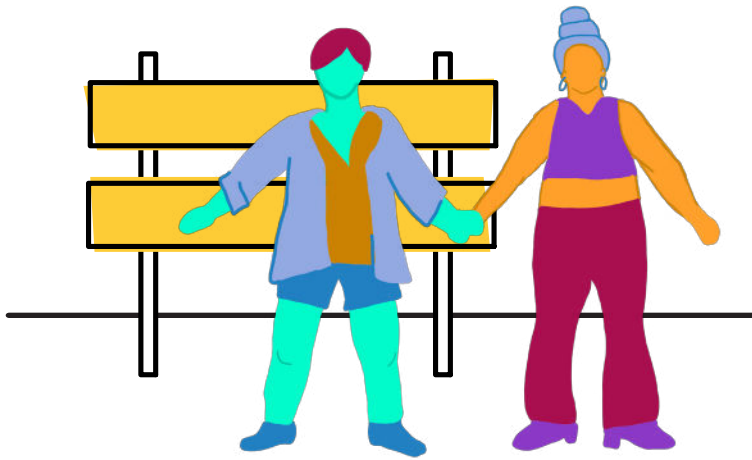
A voter must be registered with their state at their current address in order to cast their vote on election day. If your target is an elected official, you can get their attention by registering people who support your cause to vote. Often times, elected officials do not pay attention to the needs of young people because they think they do not vote. Even if you are not old enough to vote yourself, you can convince other young people 18 and older to vote for issues you care about. If you can show that you are registering large numbers of new, young voters, elected officials will be more likely to take your demands seriously because they want to win the votes of your supporters in their next election. Here are some tips:

- Each state has different voter registration rules. Look up the rules on your state's Election Commission website and make sure to follow them carefully so that every new registration counts. Sites like [Vote.org](http://Vote.org) and [RocktheVote.org](http://RocktheVote.org) have helpful tools that make it easy to register yourself or others.
- Get familiar with voting rules in your state so you can help educate registered voters on how to vote, for example, where they can find their polling location, what they need to bring to the polls (such as an ID card), or how to find out what's on their ballots.
- Keep track of how many people you register and share it with your supporters and target. The more people you can show you've registered, the more your target will take notice.

### WELLNESS CHECK

When hosting actions, it is important to make sure to think about your the well-being of participants. For example, if you are hosting a march on a hot day, you would want to make sure plenty of water is available for participants and identify shaded areas where people can rest if needed. It's a good idea to designate wellness leaders that have first aid materials and take responsibility for checking in with people. If there will be police at your event, you can also designate police liaisons for people who may prefer not to interact with law enforcement. Ask your members what they will need to feel safe and well at the action and work together to meet member needs.

## 5.4 NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

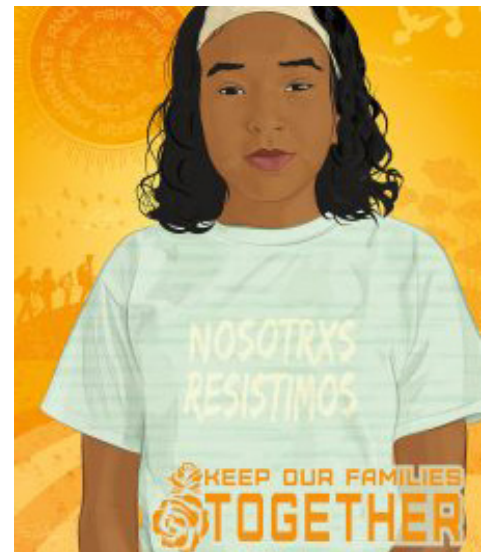


**Non-violent intervention tactics are intended to **disrupt** the daily operations of your target's organization.**

If you have exhausted your list of tactics and your target still has not met your demands, you may want to consider using non-violent intervention. Non-violent intervention tactics are intended to disrupt the daily operations of your target's organization. These are high pressure level tactics and should only be used later in your campaign if necessary—after you have escalated through other tactics.

Two popular forms of non-violent intervention include sit-ins and overloading administrative systems:

- **Conduct a sit-in.** To hold a sit-in, people occupy a space by seating themselves in a strategic location (like in a street to block it, in the president's or admissions office of a university, etc.) where they can disrupt the daily routine and force their target to deal with them. Participants will usually remain seated until their demands are met or they are forcibly removed and/or arrested. Some schools will try to wait you out, while others will arrest you immediately. There is also some risk that the school will use violent tactics to remove you like using pepper spray, which happened at the University of California-Davis. Schools often do not like to arrest students or use force because, if captured by the media, this can create negative publicity and can encourage more people to stand in solidarity with the students and join your fight. Thus, it is important to have a media strategy in place. Here are some tips for hosting sit-ins:



**LEAH THE ACTIVIST,  
Families Belong Together**

Artwork by Rommy Torrico featuring Leah and Families Belong Together for Amplifier's We The Future Campaign.  
@AmplifierArt



- Make sure everyone is aware of the goals and risks of the action and have the opportunity to opt-out if they are not comfortable.
- Think about the photo opportunities you'd like to generate from the event and build art for the event.
- Think about the audio you'd like media to capture from the event and arrange for speakers, spokespeople, and any music or chants you'd like to include.
- Send a media advisory prior to the sit-in so you can have media there to capture your actions as well as the actions of school officials.
- Assign students to videotape, photograph, live tweet and write about the action. It is important that your messaging, not the school's, dominates the press coverage of the action.
- Don't forget wellness considerations like water or food for participants, and designate someone to be a police liaison or care taker for those that need special accommodations.

### • **Overloading of administrative systems.**

Another way to disrupt daily operations through nonviolent action is to flood email, phone or fax systems of your target. The goal of this action is to make it impossible for your target to ignore your demands by literally disrupting their means of communication and workflow. This can be done by getting high volumes of people over a scheduled period of time to call the office of your target and flood the phone lines. You can also shut down email systems if you get the correct email address of your target. You must make sure people are sending them from different domains and use a variety of subject lines, to ensure they are not easily blocked by your target. The challenge with this action is that it is harder to fully shut down systems for an extended period of time. The upside is you often have a lower risk of arrest.

Here are many more non-violent intervention tactics you can consider. This list was compiled by Gene Sharp from the Albert Einstein Institution:

## ACTIVIST STORY

### MARCELA: Sunrise Movement

While a student at the University of Florida, Marcela Mulholland wore a sign to class one day that read "Climate Change is Real." A teacher took notice and connected Marcela to the Sunrise Movement.

The group made headlines in 2019 when it staged a sit-in at the office of Nancy Pelosi, soon-to-be Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Their demand: For Pelosi to support a resolution that would establish a House Select Committee on a Green New Deal—a plan to get the U.S. to 100% clean energy by 2030.

Marcela was among the Sunrise youth that chose to be arrested at the sit-in. She and 100 other youth arrived in Washington, D.C. a few days earlier to prepare for the action. They started with an art build to make signs and materials for the sit-in. Then they outlined their strategy, designated spokespeople to talk to press, and discussed the details in two separate groups—those that would risk arrest and those that would not.



On the day of the action, members arrived at Pelosi's office united in song, a common element of Sunrise actions. As the press snapped pictures, each activist delivered a personal letter inside a manila folder with the question scrawled on the outside: What is your plan? They all stayed until Capitol Police began giving warnings; then only those that were willing to risk arrest stayed.

The Sunrise Movement did not win their specific demands from the sit-in, but the press attention sparked a dramatic shift in the conversation about climate change. Everyone from activists to presidential candidates began talking about a Green New Deal.



# 198 METHODS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION

From gene sharp, albert einstein institution [www.aeinstien.org](http://www.aeinstien.org)

## Formal Statements

1. Public Speeches
2. Letters of opposition or support
3. Declarations by organizations and institutions
4. Signed public statements
5. Declarations of indictment and intention
6. Group or mass petitions

## Communications with a Wider Audience

7. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
8. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
9. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
10. Newspapers and journals
11. Records, radio, and television
12. Skywriting and earthwriting

## Group Representations

13. Deputations
14. Mock awards
15. Group lobbying
16. Picketing
17. Mock elections

## Symbolic Public Acts

18. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
19. Wearing of symbols
20. Prayer and worship
21. Delivering symbolic objects
22. Protest disrobings
23. Destruction of own property
24. Symbolic lights
25. Displays of portraits
26. Paint as protest
27. New signs and names
28. Symbolic sounds
29. Symbolic reclamations
30. Rude gestures

## Pressures on Individuals

31. "Haunting" officials
32. Taunting officials
33. Fraternalization
34. Vigils

## Drama and Music

35. Humorous skits and pranks
36. Performances of plays and music
37. Singing

## Processions

38. Marches
39. Parades
40. Religious processions
41. Pilgrimages
42. Motorcades

## Honoring the Dead

43. Political mourning
44. Mock funerals
45. Demonstrative funerals
46. Homage at burial places

## Public Assemblies

47. Assemblies of protest or support
48. Protest meetings
49. Camouflaged meetings of protest
50. Teach-ins

## Withdrawal and Renunciation

51. Walk-outs
52. Silence
53. Renouncing honors
54. Turning one's back

## SOCIAL NONCOOPERATION

### Ostracism of Persons

55. Social boycott
56. Selective social boycott
57. Lysistratic nonaction
58. Excommunication
59. Interdict

### Noncooperation with Social Events, Customs, and Institutions

60. Suspension of social and sports activities
61. Boycott of social affairs
62. Student strike
63. Social disobedience
64. Withdrawal from social institutions

### Withdrawal from the Social System

65. Stay-at-home
66. Total personal noncooperation
67. "Flight" of workers
68. Sanctuary
69. Collective disappearance
70. Protest emigration (hijrat)

## ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS

### Actions by Consumers

71. Consumers' boycott
72. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods
73. Policy of austerity
74. Rent withholding
75. Refusal to rent
76. National consumers' boycott
77. International consumers' boycott

### Action by Workers and Producers

78. Workmen's boycott
79. Producers' boycott

### Action by Middlemen

80. Suppliers' and handlers' boycott

### Action by Owners and Management

81. Traders' boycott
82. Refusal to let or sell property
83. Lockout
84. Refusal of industrial assistance
85. Merchants' "general strike"

### Action by Holders of Financial Resources

86. Withdrawal of bank deposits
87. Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments
88. Refusal to pay debts or interest
89. Severance of funds and credit
90. Revenue refusal
91. Refusal of a government's money

### Action by Governments

92. Domestic embargo
93. Blacklisting of traders
94. International sellers' embargo
95. International buyers' embargo
96. International trade embargo

## **ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: THE STRIKE**

### **Symbolic Strikes**

- 97. Protest strike
- 98. Quickie walkout (lightning strike)

### **Agricultural Strikes**

- 99. Peasant strike
- 100. Farm Workers' strike

### **Strikes by Special Groups**

- 101. Refusal of impressed labor
- 102. Prisoners' strike
- 103. Craft strike
- 104. Professional strike

### **Ordinary Industrial Strikes**

- 105. Establishment strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 107. Sympathetic strike

### **Restricted Strikes**

- 108. Detailed strike
- 109. Bumper strike
- 110. Slowdown strike
- 111. Working-to-rule strike
- 112. Reporting "sick" (sick-in)
- 113. Strike by resignation
- 114. Limited strike
- 115. Selective strike

### **Multi-Industry Strikes**

- 116. Generalized strike
- 117. General strike

### **Combination of Strikes and Economic Closures**

- 118. Hartal
- 119. Economic shutdown

## **POLITICAL NONCOOPERATION**

### **Rejection of Authority**

- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance

### **Citizens' Noncooperation with Government**

- 123. Boycott of legislative bodies
- 124. Boycott of elections
- 125. Boycott of government employment and positions
- 126. Boycott of government depts., agencies, and other bodies
- 127. Withdrawal from government educational institutions

- 128. Boycott of government-supported organizations
- 129. Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents
- 130. Removal of own signs and placemarks
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 132. Refusal to dissolve existing institutions

### **Citizens' Alternatives to Obedience**

- 133. Reluctant and slow compliance
- 134. Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision
- 135. Popular nonobedience
- 136. Disguised disobedience
- 137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse
- 138. Sitdown
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws

### **Action by Government Personnel**

- 142. Selective refusal of assistance by government aides
- 143. Blocking of lines of command and information
- 144. Stalling and obstruction
- 145. General administrative noncooperation
- 146. Judicial noncooperation
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
- 148. Mutiny

### **Domestic Governmental Action**

- 149. Quasi-legal evasions and delays
- 150. Noncooperation by constituent governmental units

### **International Governmental Action**

- 151. Changes in diplomatic and other representations
- 152. Delay and cancellation of diplomatic events
- 153. Withholding of diplomatic recognition
- 154. Severance of diplomatic relations
- 155. Withdrawal from international organizations
- 156. Refusal of membership in international bodies
- 157. Expulsion from international organizations

## **NONVIOLENT INTERVENTION**

### **Psychological Intervention**

- 158. Self-exposure to the elements
- 159. The fast
- 160. Fast of moral pressure
- 161. Reverse trial
- 162. Nonviolent harassment

### **Physical Intervention**

- 163. Sit-in
- 164. Stand-in
- 165. Ride-in
- 166. Wade-in
- 167. Mill-in
- 168. Pray-in
- 169. Nonviolent raids
- 170. Nonviolent air raids
- 171. Nonviolent invasion
- 172. Nonviolent interjection
- 173. Nonviolent obstruction
- 174. Nonviolent occupation

### **Social Intervention**

- 175. Establishing new social patterns
- 176. Overloading of facilities
- 177. Stall-in
- 178. Speak-in
- 179. Guerrilla theater
- 180. Alternative social institutions
- 181. Alternative communication system

### **Economic Intervention**

- 182. Reverse strike
- 183. Stay-in strike
- 184. Nonviolent land seizure
- 185. Defiance of blockades
- 186. Politically motivated counterfeiting
- 187. Preclusive purchasing
- 188. Seizure of assets
- 189. Dumping
- 190. Selective patronage
- 191. Alternative markets
- 192. Alternative transportation systems
- 193. Alternative economic institutions

### **Political Intervention**

- 194. Overloading of administrative systems
- 195. Disclosing identities of secret agents
- 196. Seeking imprisonment
- 197. Civil disobedience of "neutral" laws
- 198. Work-on without collaboration
- 199. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

## PART 6: SUSTAINING YOUR MOVEMENT

It's hard to predict how long it will take to win a campaign. Some campaigns may require a lot of tactics over a long period of time to ultimately win and create lasting change. It is important that you think about how you will sustain your movement through the ups and downs of a campaign so people stay dedicated to your cause. Part 6 will offer some tips on how to take care of yourself and others while you're fighting for change. Organizing depends on your commitment to stick with the cause longer than your target continues to resist your efforts.



## 6.1 WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Organizing for social justice can demand a lot of time, energy, and emotion from activists. It's important that you and others in your group take care of yourselves. Your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being matters—because you matter and your activism matters.

Practicing self-care can help activists build resilience, which means the ability to bounce back when tough things happen. Resilience will help you sustain your movement when the problem you are working on feels daunting. Resilience is especially important for activists of color, LGBTQ activists, and others regularly exposed to violence against their communities.

Self-care means different things to different people depending on their cultural background, interests, and abilities. Examples of self-care practices include: meditation, prayer, art therapy, counseling, journaling, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, dance, physical activity, water therapy, socializing, entertainment, or being with nature or animals. The goal is to find what works for you.

Throughout this guide, you will find wellness checks as reminders to be thinking about care from the beginning of the organizing process. Often times, activists wait until they are already feeling sick, exhausted, or on-edge to think about self-care. It's more effective to prevent it from happening in the first place.

### Here are some things to consider when approaching self-care:

- **Know your own limits and establish strong boundaries.** Part of building power is asking people to get progressively more involved in your campaign. That means people will be asking you to do a lot of things. Only you will know your limits on how much time, energy, money, etc. is sustainable for you. Pay attention to your stress levels, be clear about what you can and cannot do, and encourage others to do the same.
- **Recognize the emotional toll and create a list of healing resources** for members to try. Activists typically work on issues that cause harm and



**Self-care is an important part of organizing because it helps you build resilience to sustain your movement.**

suffering in the world. That means being an organizer often involves hearing and discussing distressing stories. Some activists may be drawn to your campaign because they themselves have experienced a trauma (distressing experience) related to your issue. It is a good idea to identify ways you and others in your group can feel supported. Examples could include: adding warnings on the top of social media posts that have violent content in them; arranging for mental health counselors to be at events to support trauma survivors; or making a list of crisis lines people can call if they are feeling overwhelmed with emotion.

- **Take breaks from news and social media.** As activists, it's important to stay informed about your issue. But that doesn't mean you have to be reading the news every hour of the day or commenting in every debate you see on social media. Schedule times when you

put your phone down, check-out from the conversation, and check-in with yourself, friends, and family.

- **Express gratitude.** When working on social justice issues, organizers become very focused on what's wrong with the world. Making a conscious effort to think about the things that you are grateful for can help lift you up when problems pull you down. Individuals can do this by keeping a gratitude journal. As a group, you can invite people to give shout-outs to each other at meetings or formally thank people with recognition on social media or awards at events. When people feel appreciated, they typically want to stick around.
- **Find reasons to celebrate throughout your campaign.** Fighting a problem does not need to be depressing. In fact, having fun and feeling joy can be an act of resistance, for example, in the way that Pride festivals celebrate LGBTQ people and culture. Things like holiday meals or dance parties can be forms of self-care.
- **Bring up self-care regularly in your group.** Typically, self-care is seen as something you do outside of organizing work in your free-time. By making a point to talk about self-care regularly in your group, you will let people know that it is as important to your organizing work as planning tactics or recruiting supporters. You could designate leaders in your group to be part of a wellness team and create wellness resources based on your group's needs, for example like the United We Dream Mental Health Toolkit, which recommends supportive practices for immigrants living in fear of deportation.
- **Schedule time off.** When activists are trying to solve big problems, it can feel like we are never doing enough. That can make it hard to take time off from organizing because there is always something more to do. But breaks are important. They help people catch up on personal items, spend time with friends and family, and rest and restore. Schedule time off, stick to it, and respect others' space when they take time off.
- **Eat, sleep, and drink lots of water.** Your body needs some basic things to function. It may sound obvious, but when you're busy building power, it's easy to miss meals or skip sleep. If you're not getting the basic things your body needs, it can mess with everything else in your life. Lack of water in particular can catch up with people quickly. If you're planning an action or meeting, designate someone to be in charge of making sure people have access to water.

## ACTIVIST STORY



### D'ATRA: BYP100

"Self care is a topic that sounds easy but is something I struggle with everyday," says D'atra Jackson, newly named Co-Director of Black Youth Project 100. BYP100 is a member-based organization of Black youth activists organizing to create justice and freedom for all Black people. BYP100 has been at the forefront of building group healing. It created the Healing and Safety Council, which supports members in effectively dealing with conflict resolution and harm in real ways.

Self-care is different for everyone. As a leader of an organization that does a lot of direct action work, D'atra considers it vital to find time for herself and unpack her own traumas via therapy and meditation. D'atra has been an organizer for nearly 10 years, born in Philly and was activated to organize while a student at Florida International University during the death of Trayvon Martin.

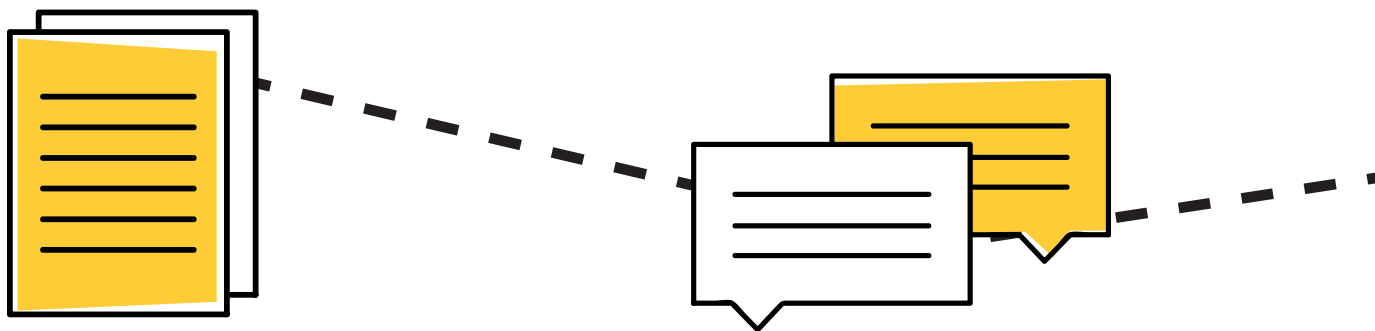
"When we talk about self-care in regards to organizing we really mean community accountability," D'atra says. She wants young folks joining movements to know that checking in with the folks you're in community with is important to make sure you don't burn out. "Building capacity is about people power but it's also about self-preservation. We can't do this work by ourselves. We have to lean on each other."

D'atra co-founded the Durham BYP100 chapter and being named the new co-director alongside Janae Bonsu means a new era of work for the organization. "As I grow in this work, I'm less interested in bubble baths and aesthetics and more in what will bring me peace and joy and most times that means reading, journaling, and being in silence with myself more than ever."

Photo credit: <https://byp100.org/new-co-directors-byp100/>



## 6.2 DEALING WITH GROUP CONFLICT



When you bring people together to work on complex problems, you should anticipate there to be disagreements and conflict within your group. It is helpful to make a plan with other leaders from your group on how to deal with conflict when it happens. Having an agreed upon process ready will help you work through conflict in a way that makes your members and group stronger.

### Here are some tools for group conflict resolution:

- **Create a community agreement.**

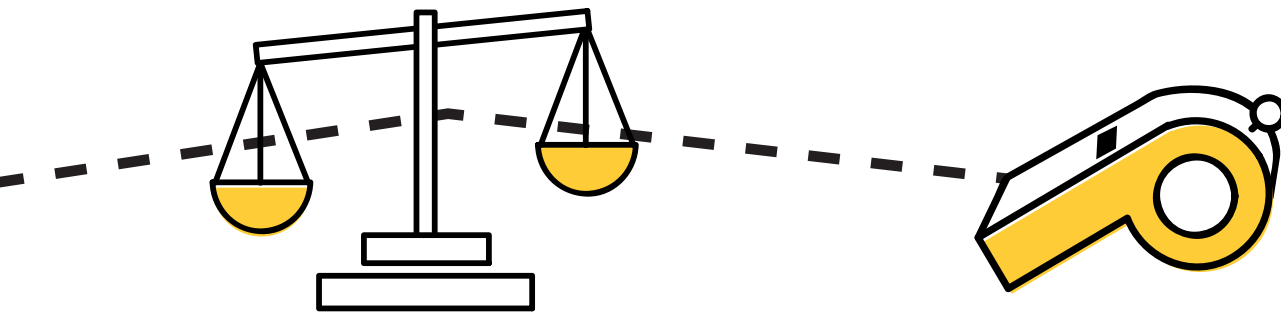
Be proactive by creating a community agreement where members discuss and decide together some basic principles for how they want to be treated within the group. Having a conversation about how people want to be treated is an important exercise for members to say out loud their personal boundaries and to hear the boundaries of others. To create a community agreement, Ife Williams and Chris Roberts of BYP100 Healing and Safety Council recommend the following exercise:

- Have members sit in a circle. Ask them to spend five minutes reflecting on the following prompts. Participants can write or draw their answers if they'd like.
  - Safety within our group looks like...
  - Validation within our group looks like...
  - Trust within our group looks like...
  - Accountability within our group looks like...
  - Affirmation within our group looks like...

- Come back together as a group and ask members to share as much as they feel comfortable from their responses. Have a note-taker documenting the topics that come up in the group. An example: "Safety within our group looks like people identifying their pronouns at the beginning of a meeting."
- Based on the discussion, draft an agreement that members agree addresses their needs to feel safe, validated, trustful, accountable, and affirmed within your group.
- Write up the agreement and ask new and existing members to sign on.

- **Use non-violent communication.**

When a conflict does occur, it often comes from a breakdown in communication. Non-violent communication is a tool developed to help people talk about conflict in a constructive way. The goal is to help people express how they are feeling without criticizing or blaming others, and to help people listen to others without hearing criticism or blame. This allows people in conflict to feel more open to resolution. Non-violent communication includes four parts: observation, feeling, need, and request. The speaker goes through all four parts, while the other person involved in the conflict listens. It can be helpful for the listener to repeat back what they have heard the speaker say. The listener then takes a turn being the speaker. Here's how it works:



- **Observation.** The speaker states something they observe related to the conflict. For example, “When I hear you say \_\_\_\_\_” or “When I see you doing \_\_\_\_\_”
- **Feeling.** The speaker states something they feel related to the observation. “I feel \_\_\_\_\_.”
- **Need.** The speaker states a need related to the feeling. “I need to feel \_\_\_\_\_.”
- **Request.** The speaker makes a clear request of what the other can do to help meet this need. “Would you be willing to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- **Full example:** “When I hear you speak over me when I’m talking, I feel disrespected. I need to feel respect. Would you be willing to wait to speak until I finish my thought?”
- **Try a restorative justice circle.**  
Restorative justice is a tool to use in response to a wrongdoing that has happened in your group, for example a theft, fight, or inappropriate behavior. It can be an alternative to notifying the police if your members do not feel comfortable doing that. Restorative justice involves bringing together the wrongdoer and the person or people harmed by the wrong. The goal is to focus on the needs of those who have been harmed, rather than focusing on punishing the wrongdoer (which is how most justice systems work). The aim is not necessarily for those wronged to find forgiveness, although that might be an outcome. Rather, the goal is to make sure

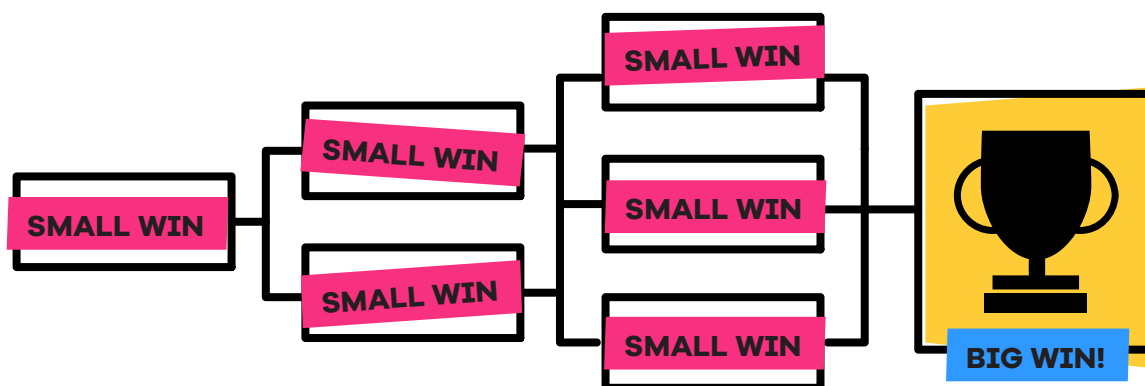
people know how the wrongdoing has affected people in the group and discuss ways you can collectively respond. Non-violent communication can be used as a framework for these group discussions. It’s important that everyone goes into the process knowing the goals. If the person accused of wrongdoing doesn’t want to participate in a restorative justice circle, you may want to consider asking the person to leave the group to ensure the well-being of others.

- **Work with a mediator.**

A mediator’s role is to be a neutral person that helps others talk through the conflict. Sometimes the leaders in the group aren’t the best people to be mediators—they may have a close friendship with someone involved and not be able to keep a neutral opinion. In this case, find a mediator from outside your group, such as a trusted teacher, advisor, or mentor, to help members come to a resolution.



## 6.3 PRINCIPLE OF PROGRESS



**WINTER BREEANNE,**  
**Women's March Youth Empower**

Artwork by Shepard Fairey featuring Winter Breeanne and Women's March Youth Empower for Amplifier's We The Future Campaign. @AmplifierArt

When it is taking a long time to win your demands, you will want to think of a few smaller, short-term wins that will help your group build momentum. If your supporters feel like they are making progress towards your demands, they are more likely to stick around and continue organizing. This is known as the “progress principle,” developed by researcher Teresa Amabile.

For example, if your demand is for your state to pass an anti-discrimination law that provides legal protections to trans people, you may want to focus on passing a few ordinances at the city level to build the confidence of the group. It will likely be quicker and easier to convince a smaller city council to pass your ordinance than to win the support of a majority of your state legislature.

It's important that you pick small wins that you are confident you can achieve and won't take up a lot of your resources. Achieving small wins will help you get the attention of supporters and build power to keep pushing for your big win. They can also help lessen the disappointment of a setback because you can remind people of what you've accomplished so far and why they should maintain hope.

## 6.4 WINNING



**When you achieve a win, you want to keep your group active to make sure **your target follows through on their promise.****

There is no such thing as losing when it comes to activism. If you experience a setback in your campaign, such as a vote that didn't go your way or your target denies your demands again, you should regroup with your members and see if your strategy needs revising. You should not give up. The only time you should consider compromising with your target is if your base is weakening and you cannot continue to build power.

When you achieve a win, the work doesn't necessarily stop there. You want to keep your members active in your group through the implementation of your demands to make sure your target follows through on their promise. You also want to see how you can use your win to push for even more change.

### WELLNESS CHECK

A great way to practice self-care is to express gratitude—either as individual reflection or as a group activity. When working on social justice issues, organizers become very focused on what's wrong with the world. Making a conscious effort to think about the things that are beautiful and inspiring within the struggle will help you replenish when feeling depleted. Individuals can do this by keeping a gratitude journal. As a collective, you can invite people to give shout-outs to others in your group at meetings or formally thank people with recognition or awards.

## Here are some tips for when you win your campaign:

- **Don't rub your victory in your opponents' faces.**  
Talk about your victory in terms of how your entire community will benefit from this change. There need not be any losers in the fight for social justice.
- **Celebrate your big win.**  
You have worked very hard. Take time to acknowledge what you have accomplished.
- **Document your victory.**  
Send out a media advisory to your press list and publish the win on social media so everyone knows that your target agreed to meet your demands. This is key to making sure your target follows through. It is also helpful to document your entire campaign so you can pass along your strategies, successes, and challenges to future organizers.
- **Create an oversight team.**  
Select leaders from your group to oversee the implementation of your demands. If your target starts to slip and the demands are not being implemented, you need someone ready to alert others and re-apply pressure.
- **Set your next goal.**  
One of the best results of a campaign is not only the demand being met, but the fact that you have built a dedicated community of folks who are not only passionate but know how to win campaigns. This is a great moment to keep people engaged and start to outline the next set of demands you will work towards.



### **BRIA AND JASMINE: Women's Water**

Both Bria Brown and Jasmine Settles started writing poetry from a young age. For Bria, poetry was an outlet. For Jasmine, it was connected to spirituality and church.

After sharing poems with each other that highlight the complexity of water, the two decided to collaborate on the production of *Women's Water: The Emergence of Drought, Flood, and Dance*. Jasmine and Bria use the choreographed poetry performance to amplify water need and presence in

### ACTIVIST STORY

a way that expands across multiple disciplines and stimulates the senses.

*Women's Water* explains how water is both spiritual with connections to Africa, libations, and ancestors being brought across the waters. It also examines the injustice of water being a luxury not afforded to Black and Indigenous people of color, such as in Flint, Michigan and in South Memphis, Tennessee.

In their own words, Jasmine and Bria's activism was born from a combination of divine order and timing, the audacity to do the work, and an understanding that Black and Indigenous people of color, their ancestors, had done this before them. Activism, as explained by the two, is an obligation to speak and spark through art while "pushing to reimagine."

While *Women's Water* is a beautiful production, it is not without its difficulties. The two struggled with financing the production, working multiple jobs, being students, and taking care of themselves. They relied on their self-created tribe of supporters to continue showing up for the work and to take space when needed.

Jasmine and Bria envision a world where Black and Indigenous people of color, "drink more water and learn how to swim versus floating"—a metaphor for being fulfilled in life and thriving even though these systems are set-up for Black and Indigenous people of color to barely survive.

# PART 7: RESOURCES

## 7.1 TOOLS

**"A Social Justice Communications Toolkit"**  
by the Opportunity Agenda

<https://toolkit.opportunityagenda.org/>

**"Blueprints for Social Justice"**  
by Young People For (YP4)

<http://youngpeoplefor.org/blueprints/>

**"Freedom Forecast"**  
by Black Youth Project 100

<https://byp100.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Freedom-Forecast-8-4-18.pdf>

**"Healing Justice Podcast"**  
by Kate Werning

<https://healingjustice.podbean.com/>

**"Mental Health Toolkit"**  
by United We Dream

<https://unitedwedream.org/2017/10/mental-health-toolkit/>

**Amplifier Art**

Free artwork downloads <https://amplifier.org/#downloads>

**"Youth Toolkit"**  
by Women's March Youth Empower

<http://www.youthempower.com/toolkit-103502.html>

**Resources for Students**  
by National Coalition Against Censorship

<https://ncac.org/resources-for-students>

**"Storytelling and Social Change:  
A Strategy Guide"**  
by Working Narratives

<https://workingnarratives.org/story-guide/>

**Toolkits from Funders Collaborative on  
Youth Organizing**

<https://fcyo.org/resources/type/toolkit>

**"Healing Justice Toolkit"**  
by Black Lives Matter

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/resource/healing-justice-toolkit/>

**"Live Respect On Campus Toolkit"**  
by A Call to Men

<http://www.acalltomen.org/campus-pledge>

## 7.2 ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to Advocates for Youth, there are many organizations that can help you find out more about issues you care about and how to get involved. Here is a list to get you started:

**BLACK YOUTH PROJECT 100** - An organization of 18-35 year old activists and organizers creating freedom and justice for all Black people. <https://byp100.org/>

**CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH** - For all Native American youth to lead full and healthy lives, to have equal access to opportunity, and to draw strength from their culture and inspire one another. <http://www.cnay.org>

**DO SOMETHING** - Goal of motivating young people to make positive change both online and offline through campaigns that make an impact. <https://www.dosomething.org>

**EARTH GUARDIANS** - Inspires, galvanizes, and trains diverse youth to be effective leaders in the climate, environment and social justice movement. <https://www.earthguardians.org/>

**GLSEN** - Creates safe and affirming schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. <https://www.glsen.org/>

**GSA NETWORK** - Trains Trans and queer youth to use their collective voice and power to change the narrative about their lives and experiences. <https://gsanetwork.org/>

**MARCH FOR OUR LIVES** - Founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas students and alumni, coming together to end gun violence. <https://marchforourlives.com/start-a-chapter/>

**MILLION HOODIES MOVEMENT** - A human rights organization dedicated to ending gun violence and reimagining safety and justice for all communities. <https://www.millionhoodies.net>

**NATIONAL LGBTQ TASK FORCE** - Advances full freedom, justice and equality for LGBTQ people. <http://www.thetaskforce.org/>

**PARTNERS FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES** - An organization that builds skills and abilities of young people with disabilities, and increase the inclusivity of workplaces, organizations, and communities <https://www.pyd.org/>

**PEACE JAM** - An international organization whose mission is "to create young leaders committed to positive change in themselves, their communities, and the world through. <http://www.peacejam.org/>

**POWER SHIFT NETWORK** - Mobilizes the collective power of young people to mitigate climate change and create a just, clean energy future and resilient, thriving communities for all. <https://powershift.org/>

**SHINE MSD** - Harnesses the power of artistic expression to inspire hope and unity in the aftermath of tragedy. <https://shinemsd.org/>

**SUNRISE MOVEMENT** - A youth led movement to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/>

**UNITED WE DREAM** - The largest immigrant youth-led community, empower people to develop their leadership and organizing skills to fight for justice and dignity for immigrants. <https://unitedwedream.org/>

**WE ARE NATIVE** - An Organization by Native Youth, for Native Youth. <https://www.wernative.org/>

**WOMEN'S MARCH YOUTH EMPOWER** - The youth voice of the Women's March Network, aligned with the Women's March Unity Principles. <http://www.youthempower.com/>

**YOUTH FIRST INITIATIVE** - A national campaign to end youth incarceration and invest in community based support, service and opportunities for youth. <http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org/>

**ZERO HOUR** - Centers the voices of diverse youth in the conversation around climate and environmental justice. <http://thisiszerohour.org/>