CAMPAIGNS & COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
[3 - 4 HOURS]

OVERVIEW
This section explores more in depth what community organizing is and how it differs from other forms of social change. It breaks down some of the key components of organizing and campaigns.

GOALS
• To orient folks to and demystify what campaigns and community organizing are (and what they are not)
• To examine some key examples, concepts, and terms
• To describe different types of social change

TIME NEEDED
3-4 hours, or break it up into multiple sessions

MATERIALS NEEDED
Flip charts, tape, markers, campaign scenarios, writing tools for participants, Elements of a Campaign handout (p. 104)

READINGS/RESOURCES
• Points of Intervention framework
• Why Campaigns from SONG
• How We Make Change is Changing, Parts 1 & 2
• Playbook for Progressives by Eric Mann
• Movement Action Plan by Bill Moyer
• Tools for Radical Democracy by Joan Mineri and Paul Gestos
• SNCC Digital Gateway
• Everything Worthwhile is Done with Other People, an interview with Mariame Kaba

FRAMING
We are living and working for change during a period of great turmoil, cynicism, and possibility. In this next session, we will unpack some of the different ways that we can (and people do) push for social change. Political work can and does happen in a variety of forms; in order to reshape power structures and fundamentally transform our society (politically, socially, and economically), we believe in the power of organizations and grassroots organizing.

Optional Discussion of Bill Moyer’s Movement Action Plan:
Why is being a part of a movement important? What are our associations with this word since it’s also been co-opted and commodified? What movements have we been shaped by individually? What movements is our work rooted in? Where do we want to strengthen this?
DIFFERENT FORMS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

This is a chart many folks have been using for years to illustrate different approaches to social change work. We explore this content not to shame or condescend to different forms of social change, but rather to get clearer and more precise about how groups are - or are not - contending for power. It also helps us determine how we can relate to each other across different approaches to bring about the biggest impact, and/or work to do no harm. We know these distinctions are sometimes overstated or less simple out in the world; for example, some community organizations may also include service in their outreach model (such as the Dream Defenders’ Books and Breakfast program modeled on the works of the Black Panthers, or Southerners On New Ground’s work bailing black caregivers out of jail). Still, the broad categories are useful to explore and important to understand.

Create an empty chart, then go through and fill it out together. It is good for you as the facilitator to have prepared some relevant examples by filling out this chart beforehand on your own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>GOAL/OUTCOME</th>
<th>WHAT’S THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY</th>
<th>DOES THIS ADDRESS ROOT CAUSE OF HARM OR OPPRESSION?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE</td>
<td>Resources to alleviate suffering, legal resources, food, clothes</td>
<td>Provide for people’s basic needs</td>
<td>Depends - often helping is considered ‘charity’</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. RED CROSS, FOOD PANTRY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVOCACY</td>
<td>Events, lobbying, call senators, petitions, etc.</td>
<td>Small group usually asking electors to do the right thing</td>
<td>Speaks on behalf of a community, not necessarily as a part of it</td>
<td>NOT USUALLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. ACLU, HRC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>Increase consciousness</td>
<td>“IF PEOPLE GOT THEIR MINDS RIGHT…”</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>NOT NECESSARILY, UNLESS PAIRED WITH ACTION…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. STUDY GROUP, BILLBOARDS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOBILIZING</td>
<td>Connection! Link to movement! Show of strength</td>
<td>Show of force will change the rules</td>
<td>Varies (especially in social media era, spontaneous)</td>
<td>NOT WITHOUT MOMENTUM, FOLLOW-UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. VIGILS, MARCHES, RALLIES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECT ACTION/COMMUNITY ORGANIZING</td>
<td>Ability to be experts in own lives &amp; shape solutions to problems</td>
<td>Directly affected people working together to challenge power</td>
<td>Should be of, by, and for the communities - using direct action to expose crisis and tie decision-makers’ hands</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTORAL</td>
<td>Get people elected to governance roles that share your values</td>
<td>Winning elections through voting (majority rule)</td>
<td>Depends, but generally asking them to take action in the form of voting or getting others to vote</td>
<td>CHANGES THOSE IN POWER BUT NOT NECESSARILY POWER RELATIONSHIPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGAL</td>
<td>Protect vulnerable people through the courts/justice system</td>
<td>Trying to stop ‘bad laws’ aka Muslim ban, mass discrimination of Truman people, etc., through litigation, class action, etc.</td>
<td>Usually lawyers, legal groups go “find” directly-affected communities and ask them to be plaintiffs. Often incredibly slow.</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE BEST OF OUR ORGANIZING TRADITIONS
KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Organizations are made up of people and are a fundamental building block of movement.
- One organization, community of people, or campaign cannot bring about liberation.
- We are part of a movement.
- Movements are made up of mobilizing, organizing, direct service, labor, media, civil society, and individual activists.
- You can do direct service and have revolutionary politics individually!
- Organizing is the method that is working to disrupt and confront the root causes of oppression with those impacted by that oppression or injustice, which is why it’s so hard and so important.
- People are our power, which is why if our organizations are not growing, they are dying.
- We must change the rules (laws) and transform the institutions that govern our lives so they work for the many not the few.

NITTY GRITTY: CAMPAIGNS AND ORGANIZING

Throughout this curriculum, we have been talking about power: Power Over, Power With, and Power from Within. In our groups, we work to grow our individual and collective power and bring that to bear on the systems, institutions, and policies that harm us. We have also been talking about different forms of social change. Now we are going to focus in on campaigns as one crucial tool and vehicle for us to express our politics and vision.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING IS:

- People building a base that has the shared vision to act together to build power, challenge power, and change power relationships and communities. This is important because the power to make change lies in the hands of the people that those changes affect most directly.
- Sustained fights (beginning, middle, end) to win concrete policy and institutional change on issues that impact your constituency.

CAMPAIGNS ARE:

- Time bound, specific efforts to accomplish a set of goals, which is why there can be education or electoral campaigns.
- Within your campaign, your strategy is your roadmap for how you are going to accomplish your goals, and the tactics are individual steps it will take to win! You can’t run a 12-month campaign to end white supremacy. Defeating white supremacy requires a lot of different campaigns taking on different parts of the system (for example, changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day in New Mexico, plus getting cops out of schools, plus the Green New Deal, plus lots more). For a campaign, cut it down into a smaller chunk with a target.
WORKSHOPPING CAMPAIGN EXAMPLES

Have participants read the following example out loud to the full group:

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WEEKEND

Labor movement organizers worked for many years to create the concept of the ‘weekend’: two days of rest after 5 days of work, totaling a 40-hour workweek. According to Dean Baker, “the 40-hour workweek became the standard in 1937 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This bill, which also put in place a federal minimum wage, required a premium of 50 percent of pay for any hours that an employer required in excess of 40 hours a week. Unions had pressed for similar rules for decades, but it took the power of a militant labor movement, coupled with a sympathetic president and Congress to finally make the 40-hour workweek a standard across the country.”

FRAMING

• This win is so important because it shows how an idea had to be born and spread before it could be won.
• Because of this important campaign, even those of us who work weekends understand the idea that workers should be entitled to a weekend. Campaigns change the nature of how people understand power.
• This is an example of a campaign that profoundly impacts women, who have always done the vast majority of domestic work, both inside and outside their own homes. Weekends allow a little bit more breathing room to accomplish domestic work, and, when possible, to take a few moments of rest for oneself.

Discussion:
Ask the full group: What is a campaign that matters to you? Alternatively, prepare a scenario that is topically or locally relevant. For example, as a result of local organizing in 2019, the Kansas City City Council passed an ordinance making all public transportation free.
• What was the demand?
• Who was the target?
• What impact did this campaign have on culture and policy?

ELEMENTS OF A CAMPAIGN

This activity explores the concepts in the chart on page 101, Elements of a Campaign. Write up each element and its definition on large paper. Invite someone in the group to read one, and then have everyone find a partner to discuss the concept for a specified length of time. Popcorn out reflections, then read the next definition and have everyone find a new discussion partner. Repeat until complete. Save time for group conversation, if needed.

“Great Campaigns are like great love affairs: suddenly, you have time you didn’t know you had - to have pizza, have sex, to take slow walks. Time moves differently, and you are swept up in it all. The same is true of great campaigns.” - Ai-jen Poo
VISION: Campaigns, at their core, are about the willingness to get specific and concrete and move into action as we contest for power and justice. This requires vision about what we want, how we want to get it, and how getting it will help us build towards the town, county, city, state, country, and world we want. Every campaign organizer must be able to articulate why a campaign fits into this broader vision.

DEMANDS: The demand of a campaign is simply what you want. Your demand should be well researched and well understood by your organizing group. All organizers must be able to answer why this is the demand, what it is, and what compromises on the demand your group would and would not accept as a “win.”

INNOVATION: We are in a time when the nature of successful campaigns is changing. This is in large part due to the evolution of the digital sphere, and how URL and IRL (in real life) organizing interact. Additionally, technology has changed (and continues to change) how we interact with each other. Thus, some campaign tactics that worked before no longer do, and new options are emerging. Successful campaigns in this time will understand the need to be curious, keep learning, keep experimenting, and innovate.

ESCALATION AND DE-ESCALATION: Just like in direct actions, an understanding of escalation and de-escalation is required for any confrontation with power. Escalating simply means “turning the heat up” on a target or situation, or being willing to ethically make a situation more conflictual, tense, or uncomfortable between your organizing group, your targets, and secondary targets. De-escalation means being willing to turn the heat down and calm a situation. This is difficult once we have escalated, and our adrenaline is high. Most organizers are better at escalation or de-escalation with targets, but a strong organizer can do both as needed.

TARGETS: A target is a person who has the power to give you what you want (i.e., meet your demands), and to whom you address your demands. It is helpful to conceptualize this person as your opponent, not your enemy. This is because there are many ways to get a target to do what you want them to do. Some require placating, and some require firm confrontation. Your group does not want to be so locked into negative feelings around a target that it will be hard to change tactics if you need to. For example, you might start a campaign that targets your mayor by appealing to their self-interest or stroking their ego. If this does not get you what you want, you will need to escalate your tactics. That could mean publicly calling out the mayor on what they have or have not done around your demand. At that point, the mayor might be ready to give you what you want and so you will have to be ready to be genuinely friendly again (de-escalate) in order to win your campaign. Secondary targets are those around a target who influence them (this could be a co-worker, a spouse, a sponsor or funder, etc.).

TIME-BOUND: Part of why campaigns can be so powerful (altering both material conditions and changing lives) is because they have a timeline. A campaign might be one week or one year, but it must have some time frame to keep up momentum. Long campaigns (five years or more) require different planning and execution than shorter ones.

EXPECT BACKLASH/CULTURE CHANGE AND POLICY CHANGE: One way we can work to secure our wins or advances is by making sure we are prepared to see through the implementation of a win, and/or to weather the backlash that can come from local, state, or county governments who do not want rights and access expanded for marginalized communities.
LEARNING FROM OUR EXPERIENCES
Mix and match the following exercises depending on the needs of group. Reflect together on the campaign experience in the room. Consider a deeper dive with discussion questions about how campaigns fall flat, then discuss aspirational demands for your context or run scenarios for practice.

What is our personal experience with campaigns?
If you are in a red state or rural area, it’s important to highlight that a lot of the materials and models of campaigns come from the coasts or blue states. In many ways, those of us navigating campaigns in red states are dealing with hugely different conditions; we have different laws, different services, different opposition and backlash, and a different safety net. A lot of us in red states have also been burned by campaigns (both issue campaigns and electoral campaigns) coming in from national organizations without relationships, humility, or a commitment to long-term investment in our places and people.

Where do you imagine (or know from experience) we often fall flat with campaigns?
- When we can’t decide what to focus on
- When we get stuck in research mode
- When we forget about implementation
- When we win … and then are totally unprepared for the backlash that meets us
- When we allow in-fighting to destroy our groups before we even start our campaigns
- When we hold on too tightly to our plans … even as the terrain is changing

How might we put this into practice, here and now?
In small groups, look back at the 3 I’s exercise to consider rules or dominant beliefs that are harming your community, or do that exercise again with a specific local lens. Then consider:
- What’s an aspirational demand you have for your local community?
- Who is the target? Who can give it to you?
- What’s your vision this demand is tied to?

Campaign Scenario:
Using the following campaign scenario, have small groups make an outreach and escalation plan, including three thoughtful outreach and retention activities and three thoughtful escalation plans. You can make up other details that will make this most useful to your group. Give people 45 minutes with a 5-minute report-back.

Your coalition is mid-way through a campaign for universal pre-K at the county level. This will ensure that all young people in the county ages 3 and up have full-time, age-appropriate childcare until they go to kindergarten. The target or decision-maker for this campaign is the county commission. There is organized opposition (fiscal conservatives, the local charter school, and racists).