

Session 2: Why Organize?

Session Objectives

- To discuss the concept of organizing.
- To discuss institutional change and root causes.

Workshops

- Movement Cranium 45 minutes
- Institutional Change 30 minutes
- Babies in the River 30 minutes
- Evaluation 15 minutes

- Total Time 02 hours

Description

This fun game gets participants moving, develops friendships and teaches some basics about the history of the social justice movement. This popular exercise was adapted into script format by Eli Il Yong Lee.

Objectives

1. To teach relevant movement history.
2. To “break the ice” at the start of a training.

Time

30-45 minutes

Participants

Unlimited

Materials

- Index Clue Cards
- Butcher Paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Pens

Steps

- Group people randomly into teams so that there are 4-5 people on each team. Give each group several sheets of butcher paper and pens.
- The facilitator will show each of the clues, printed on index cards, to one artist per team. Upon saying, “Go,” each team will compete to guess the clue through either humming/whistling, drawing or charades. After each round, add the commentary about each clue.
- The first team to reach 7 points wins.

Movement Cranium Clues

Make an index card for each Category/Clue/Commentary. Mix up the cards, and read them!

Category: Draw

Cranium Clue	Commentary
The Mission	Where PODER is based.
Grapes	Cesar Chavez was the founder of the United Farm Workers. He worked tirelessly for the rights of Mexican and Asian farm workers to improve wages, safety conditions and dignity. He launched the famous grape boycott, the most successful boycott in US history.
Factory	There has been a lot of work done in both our communities to create better working conditions and better pay at factories in the Bay Area. Factories have also been a target of the environmental justice movement to stop the polluting of where we live, work, play, pray and go to school.
Asian Immigrant Women Advocats	An organization in the Bay Area that organized Asian garment workers against clothing manufacturer Jessie McClintock.
Mississippi	Mississippi in the early 1960's was the battleground of the Civil Rights Movement. Young African Americans were at the forefront of the fight, organized in a student and youth group called the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, or SNCC. SNCC was the cutting edge of the Civil Rights Movement, creating the space for the Voting Rights Act of 1964.
Roots	We talk a lot about "grassroots" because we are from this area, we care about this area, and we have a long history in this area. Also, if things are going to change, we need to figure out what the "root" of the problem is and not get distracted by surface appearances.
Egg Drop Soup	
Chicken Taco	
Eviction	Approximately 2,000 families have been evicted from their homes in the Mission. PODER is organizing to ensure that families can continue to live, work and play in the Mission area.

Category: Hum or Whistle

Happy Birthday To You	
Itsy Bitsy Spider	
Pop Song 1	Think of a current popular song.
Pop Song 2	Think of a current popular song.

Category: Charades

Protest	Protesting is one way to raise awareness about an issue and educate members. Different types of protests include marches, demonstrations, sit-ins and hunger strikes.
Celebrate	After we win victories, it's important to celebrate!
Pollution	Our work is called "environmental justice" because a lot of what we do is to try to stop pollution that damages communities of color.
Rat	There are a lot of rats in Chinatown and Mission buildings. In 1988, CPA organized a campaign against slumlords to address this and other tenant problems.
Cell Phone	

Description

This workshop teaches the concept of institutional change and examines relations of power in our society. This exercise was developed by Eli Il Yong Lee while at the SAGE Council.

Objectives

1. To understand social justice through the lens of institutional change.
2. To discuss where power resides in our society.
3. To examine the need for concrete issue wins and organizational development.

Time

30 minutes

Participants

Unlimited

Materials

- Butcher Paper
- Markers
- Tape

Steps

- *What are the institutions in our society?*

Write up the brainstormed answers in random places on a large sheet of butcher paper.
Examples: the government, the military, banks, corporations, community organizations, churches, unions, etc. Make sure “community organizations” are on the list.
- *How would you rank these institutions in terms of power?*

Work with the group to re-write the institutions on another sheet of butcher paper in a single column with the most powerful institution at the top, and the least powerful on the bottom.
- *Are the institutions ranked right?*

Make necessary adjustments. Often, people will put “government” at the top. It is useful to raise the point that corporations should be above government because they drive governmental policy.

- *What does “institutional change” mean?*
 - *Institutional change means, very simply, changing the rankings of institutional power.*
 - *Community Organizing works to put community organizations at the top of the list and corporations at the bottom.*

- Draw the “boat in the ocean” on another sheet of butcher paper.
Our organization is like a boat in the ocean with a hole in it. We need to stay afloat to fix the boat, and fix the boat to stay afloat.

- *What does that statement mean to you?*

- Make a chart with two columns on another piece of butcher paper. On the left, write “Problem” and on the right, write “Strong Organization.”
Let’s brainstorm problems in our community that affect our health and survival.
 Write their responses down.
 - Examples: pollution, crime, racism.

- *How do we address the root causes of these problems?*
One way is to build strong organizations.

- *Let’s brainstorm things that make an organization strong.*
 Examples: lots of members, money, community support, dedicated leaders, etc.

- *Here’s how we see the boat in the ocean. Fixing the boat to stay afloat means that we have to fix our organizations and make them strong. Staying afloat to fix the boat means that we have to solve the problems in our community. The boat in the ocean means that we have to do two very important things at the same time - we need to make our organizations stronger, and at the same time, we need to solve problems like tobacco use, housing and pollution.*

- Refer to the Institutional Change ranking picture:
When we solve problems, we move our organization one notch up the ladder. And when we make our organizations strong, we make sure that we don’t ever slip down but we keep moving up.

Description

This active workshop defines “organizing” and distinguishes it from service and advocacy work. This exercise was developed by Eli Il Yong Lee while at the SAGE Council.

Objectives

1. To define “organizing.”
2. To examine the differences between organizing, service and advocacy.

Time

30 minutes

Participants

Unlimited

Materials

- Large room
- What is Organizing Handout

Steps

- Ask for two volunteers and place them in the middle of the room.
You are two bathers who are taking a bath in the middle of a large river. You are totally alone and far away from civilization.
- Ask for 15 more volunteers and bring this group to one end of the room.
You all are helpless babies and soon, you will all be floating down the river towards the bathers. You should cry and flap your arms around and call loudly for help.
- Describe the situation to the remaining participants:
The 2 volunteers in the middle are bathers who are totally alone. The sides of the room are the banks of the river. The opposite end of the room from the babies is a huge waterfall going down 1000 feet. Soon, babies will start floating down the river. Let's see what the bathers do.
- Release 1 baby to float down the river. Watch what the bathers do.
- Release 4 babies down the river. Watch what the bathers do.
- Release 10 babies down the river. Watch what the bathers do.

- Gather all the participants back together. Ask the following questions:
 - What happened when the first baby came down?*
 - What happened when 4 babies came down?*
 - What happened when 10 babies came down?*
 - What would happen if 100 babies came down the river?*
- *We use this exercise to talk about community organizing, social service and advocacy. Someone who provides social services like a soup kitchen feeding the homeless would try to do what the bathers did – they would try to save each baby, knowing that there are some babies they will never get to. An advocate, like someone who goes to the State Capitol to lobby for homelessness issue, would run off to the nearest town, and begin urging elected officials to stop this problem of babies being in the river some how.*
- *Who knows what the organizer would do? The community organizer, like the people at PODER and CPA, is the person who eventually runs upstream and finds out who's putting the babies in the river. The organizer gets to the root of the problem, and then takes steps to solve that problem.*

Compiled by Laurie Weahkee, Petroglyph Monument Protection Coalition and YouthAction

Spirituality is the highest form of political consciousness.

- **Haudenosaunee message to the Western World, Geneva, Switzerland, 1997**

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967**

The struggles for justice must include young people if we are serious about change.

- **Laurie Weahkee, Petroglyph Monument Protection Coalition**

“Community Organizing” refers to organizing that is:

- *Geographic-Specific.*
- *Identifies as its Primary Constituency some set of residents and/or community institutions.*
- *Utilizes Issue Campaigns to address specific problems and/or conditions.*
- *Consciously and systematically develops grassroots, local leaders.*
- *Seeks to Alter Power Relationships to the benefit of the primary constituency.*
- *Builds sustained, ongoing, independent organizations.*

- **Environmental and Economic Justice Project**

Organizing is people working together to get things done...Through organizing, people begin to rediscover themselves. They find out who they are, where they came from, their background, their history, their roots, their culture. They rediscover the things in their family, their gender, their ethnic or language group, their race that give them strength. They rediscover their own history of struggle and resistance.

- **Si Kahn, A Guide for Grassroots Leaders**

Time is short and the problems are profound; courage, imagination and sustained commitment are essential. Business as usual will not do; radical change in our ideas and attitudes is overdue.

- **Forum on the Global Environment, Moscow, USSR**