Acknowledgements

The CCESL Community Organizing Handbook has evolved over the years with input, ideas, and feedback from many individuals. We would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of the following individuals to the three editions:

**4th Edition (2019):** Cara DiEnno, Kathleen Ferrick, Katie Vega, Katie Kleinhesselink, Alexandra Schweigert


Copyright © 2014 University of Denver (Colorado Seminary). All rights reserved. The University of Denver is an equal opportunity affirmative action institution.
# Contents

## About us

1

## How to Use this Handbook

2

## Core Concepts & Terms

2

### Community Organizing

5

- Community Organizing Overview
  
6

- Community Organizing: THE CCESL Graphic
  
7

- What makes Community Organizing Different?
  
8

### Relationship Building

9

- Building Relationships In Community Organizing
  
10

- Privilege, Oppression and Identity (POI)
  
11

- Self-Interest Assessment
  
13

- One-to-One Relational Interviews
  
15

- Agitation
  
16

- Collective Self-Interest
  
18

- House Meetings
  
19

### Issue Selection

21

- Identifying Problems & Selecting Issues
  
22

- The World As It Is, The World As It Should Be
  
23

### Issue Research

24

- Researching the Issue
  
24

- Root Causes
  
26

- Power
  
27

### Taking Action

29

- Strategy & Tactics
  
29

- Public Action
  
31

### Reflection & Evaluation

33

- Critical Reflection
  
33

- Evaluation & Assessment
  
36

- Celebration & Closure
  
37

### Community Organizer Spotlights

38

- Introduction to the Spotlights
  
39

---

4th Edition

CCESL Community Organizing Handbook
Resources .............................................................................................................................................................................. 55
Making it Public: Opportunities to Share Your Community-organizing Knowledge and Skills .......................................................... 56
Funding your Work ............................................................................................................................................................................. 58
Learn more About Community Organizing ..................................................................................................................................... 59
Works Cited ..................................................................................................................................................................................... 61
The Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship & Learning (CCESL)

About Us

The Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship & Learning embraces the vision, values and mission of the University of Denver (DU).

In turn, **CCESL’s vision** is a university collaborating with communities to improve lives.

**CCESL’s mission** is to activate university and community potential through partnership.

**CCESL values** collaboration for the public good characterized by mutual benefit, fierce optimism, tenacity, rigor, democratic participation, and inclusion.

Our Approach:
Whether training students, offering faculty development programs or accomplishing our work with communities, CCESL’s work is grounded in principles of community-engaged scholarship and teaching as well as in the community organizing model.

Community Organizing:
Community organizing has a rich history in American social movements and is about people working together for systemic social change. Community organizing focuses on developing collective self-interests by working with others and taking action on **issues** the **community** cares about through true **democracy**, in which the **power** is **with** the people. Our organizing model is not only about the short-term mobilization of protests or rallies (although these can be important and effective). Rather, it is about achieving long-term change through building powerful, **public relationships**, influencing and negotiating with government, corporations and institutions; achieving direct representation; and holding decision-makers **accountable** to the people through public actions.

About this Handbook:
The CCESL staff have written this Community Organizing Handbook for use in trainings, civic engagement programs and courses. This handbook can be used as a tool to develop public skills, and as a guide to organizing people for change. To access a copy of this handbook electronically, please visit [www.du.edu/ccesl](http://www.du.edu/ccesl). We provide this tool as a public resource; if you have questions or would like to distribute this handbook, please contact us at:

2050 E. Evans Ave Ste 22  
Denver, CO 80208  
303.871.3706  
ccesl@du.edu  
[www.du.edu/ccesl](http://www.du.edu/ccesl)
How to Use this Handbook

This community organizing handbook is intended to serve as a guide to the processes and practices of organizing. Each concept included in this handbook is a piece of the larger process of community organizing. However, the concepts have been created so they may also stand alone when needed for teaching purposes. Each concept description includes what the concept is, why it matters in community organizing, and how to put it into practice. While we have included the community organizing concepts in the section for the phase which they are most often used, many concepts and tools are relevant in multiple phases of the community organizing process. Please refer to the graphic at the start of each section, which provides a visual overview of the phases, concepts, and tools used by community organizers to implement public work projects.

Core Concepts & Terms

CCESL’s Core Concepts¹ are a defining feature of community-engaged work. These core concepts help us to translate our theoretical and abstract values into public action. By wrestling with difficult concepts such as these, we become better community leaders and public agents for change. This is a working list of core concepts as they relate to community organizing and are not intended as a final and comprehensive list. We will adapt and grow these concepts as they evolve in community organizing discourse.

- **Agitation** is the art of challenging a person to be true to their self and to act on their self-interest. It is about taking the time to challenge someone through love and concern for another and done in the context of a relationship. Agitation does not include directing anger at someone or attacking a person who is vulnerable.

- **Accountability** is being responsible to those with whom you work. In a community, one is accountable to other community members for commitments, promises, and actions.

- **Celebration and Closure** ensure that we recognize the successes and progress of our public work projects and acknowledge our efforts. They are a vital part of the organizing process.

- **Community** is often defined by geographic location, but it can also be something more abstract such as a process, interaction, feeling, structure or other. Individuals with the same or similar cultural backgrounds may identify as a community. As organizers, it is important to allow participants to define and describe community in their own terms. Community can range from a neighborhood to a sense of global humanity.

- **Community membership** is about every member of a community being responsible and accountable for what happens in their community and the community being responsible to the individuals within it.

- **Critical Reflection** is an essential component of community engagement, volunteerism and public work. Critical reflection is the active and careful consideration of beliefs and knowledge gained through experience. It involves the interpretations of events in such a way that challenges our beliefs, connects the experience to our worldview, works to develop our civic skills and helps us find relevance in our work.

- **Democracy** is the governance or work of the people through deliberative and collaborative conversation and action. It requires active participation of community members to be successful.

- **Diversity** is essential to effectively address public problems. We must learn to listen, appreciate, and find common ground to work with others who are different, but who are affected by the same public issues and problems.
• **Evaluation and Assessment** are used to review and understand a program, event, or project in a critical way. These two tools are used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the *structure* of a program, while also used to determine the growth and learning of participants.

• **Healing Justice** is a term used in social justice movements that refers to an evolving political framework shaped by economic, racial and disability justice that re-centers the role of healing inside liberation. It seeks to transform, intervene and respond to generational trauma and violence in movements, communities and lives. And to regenerate traditions of liberatory and resiliency practices that have been lost or stolen. Healing justice work is deeply rooted in communities of color. For more information about this framework, please visit https://www.healingjustice.org/

• **House meetings** are a guided, small-group discussion that allow people to get to know one another’s self-interest deeply. One form of a house meeting is an *issues caucus* - a meeting where members can champion the problem and/or issue they would like the group to focus on by making a passionate public presentation. Through house meetings, groups can discover collective interests from which they can launch their issue/topic selection process.

• **Identity** describes how we each use categories, labels, and experiences to define and identify ourselves. We each exist at the intersection of many identities, which may include gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, race, nationality, ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, body size/shape, learning style, parental status, etc. Our identities – static and fluid – influence how we develop relationships and interact with others.

• **One-to-Ones** are strategic meetings used to discover another person’s self-interest, motivations, and visions and how they intersect with your own.

• **Politics** is the process of negotiation involving power and public decision-making (e.g. bargaining, thinking strategically, etc.) by ordinary people in their communities.

• **Power** is the ability to act; the ability to influence people, institutions, or processes. One can increase their power by building relationships with other people and organizing around common interests and goals.

• **Power Maps** are visual representations of power in your community that include the people and organizations with both institutional and relational power.

• **Privilege and Oppression** are derived from societal power structures and are systemic. Privilege is unearned, something you are born into, or with, that grants you access to resources and other advantages. Oppression is unjust, unwarranted and unrelated to a person’s actions. Oppression results in denial or limited access to resources and other advantages.

• **Problems & Issues** lie at the heart of organizing. **Problems** are broad areas of concern that need to be broken down into actionable issues. **Issues** are bite-sized action-oriented and feasible solutions that address those larger problems.

• **Public Relationships** are comprised of people operating with a collective interest to create public projects and to participate in public work. Participating in one-to-ones aid in developing public relationships that can serve in the development of effective public action projects.

• **Public Work/Action** is the work of ordinary people, who together, solve public problems and create public, tangible products in communities. By “public” we mean people coming together to develop common interests.

• **Reciprocity** is the extent to which common or mutually beneficial goals and interests are pursued. Reciprocity is determined by intention, commitment, and exchanges of supports and services.

• **Research** in community organizing, takes multiple forms: traditional, experiential and relational. Traditional research includes collecting information from books, journal articles, credible internet sites and more. Experiential research is the collection of information through direct methods like analyzing photos, making
observations, conducting surveys, etc. Relational research is conducted through meetings between two or more people including one-to-ones, house meetings, focus groups, interviews, storytelling and more.

- **Root Causes** are the social or institutional systems that reinforce the problems we see manifesting in our communities. Root causes are discovered by using the 5 Whys Technique, successively asking “why” problems and issues occur at least five times.

- **Self-Interest** is about the self among others; it is what makes a particular person or group connected to an issue, topic or problem. Self-interest can be understood as the intersection between your core values and our shared democratic values, equality, justice, freedom, dedication to the common good, etc. Self-interest motivates individuals to act. **Collective self-interest** is the intersection of two or more people’s individual self-interest.

- **Social Justice** is both a process and a goal; it is a commitment to a socially just world and the committed actions to make that world a reality. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs which includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure... Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader world in which we live.

- **Strategy** is an idea, a conceptualization of how the goal could be achieved. A **tactic** is an action you take to execute the strategy, they are the tools you use to achieve your goals.

- **Tension** is the space between what we experience in the world and how we would like the world to be more just. It is a place of transformation where we feel anger and discomfort before we are motivated toward action.

- **Values** are the morals that guide you and how you engage with the world (they may be from family or your religious institution or from friends or others). **Core values** are what you are willing to fight for and to become unpopular for. Core values are often derived from the intersection of three concepts: our identities, our values and learning about, witnessing or experiencing violations of these values and/or identities.

- **World As It Is, World As It Should Be**. To understand “the world as it is” means that you comprehend the current state of an issue and the power dynamics involved, and therefore you can creatively problem solve issues as you move toward “the world as it should be.”
Community Organizing
Community Organizing Overview

Community organizers value people of diverse backgrounds, identities, and values coming together to learn together and from one another. Community organizers believe that the most pressing social problems can only be addressed by involving a diverse set of people because most social problems are incredibly complex. CCESL strongly encourages those engaging in the organizing process to do so in a safe and challenging learning environment.

Community organizing is about building a stronger and more responsive democracy. Democracy provides the freedom to be directly involved in creating change in communities and nations. In democratic societies, people have power and community organizing is rooted in this power. As community members become involved in a democratic society, they exercise power and develop into the leaders that create tangible change in their own communities. Community organizing is fundamentally rooted in democratic values and exercising the power that comes from this when we use our rights as members of a community to create the change that we wish to see in our communities.

The iron rule of community organizing is never do for others what they can do for themselves. Community organizing is about developing the extraordinary capacities of ordinary people to lead their communities into action. Organizers never assume they know what is best for a community, but instead value the knowledge and wisdom that comes from lived experience, thus we may participate with a community but we never do things for a community. The latter may lead to further disempowerment and oppression. To create positive social change with communities, organizers engage in the following phases of the community organizing process:

1. **Relationship Building:** In the relationship building phase, organizers facilitate and strengthen relationships in communities. Organizing relationships are built on understanding our own and the community’s privilege, oppression and identity (POI) and self-interest. This is done through techniques such as one-to-ones and house meetings. We may also agitate those we have relationships with to hold them accountable to their values. Organizers also work to identify the collective self-interest of the group.

2. **Issue Selection:** This phase is about identifying a problem within the community that leads to injustice and selecting a bite-size portion of it, or issue, to work on together. Organizers focus their work in the world as it is while working toward creating the world as it should be. Organizers build on the self-interest and strengths of community members to select issues.

3. **Issue Research:** Researching the issue includes collecting information, including traditional, experiential and relational, about the issue the community has chosen. There is also a focus on identifying the root causes of the chosen issue, and determining the power, systems and structures related to the selected issue by developing a power map.

4. **Taking Action:** The public action phase is when organizers develop and implement a plan through the development of a strategy and associated tactics for creating change in the community based on the relationships built and the information gathered in the research phase.

5. **Reflection & Evaluation:** During reflection and evaluation, the community critically reflects on its progress and assesses ways to improve strategies and plans for future actions. To ensure closure, organizers plan a celebration to recognize progress and accomplishments.
Community Organizing: THE CCESL Graphic

The image below visually illustrates CCESL’s approach to the community organizing process. It includes the five phases of community organizing and the concepts and techniques often utilized during each phase. While we have included the community organizing concepts and techniques beneath the phase in which they are most often used, many of these are relevant in multiple phases of the community organizing process. In addition, although the phases are often listed in numerical order, this graphic highlights the fact that these may not always be utilized sequentially. For example, the relationship building phase of community organizing often occurs simultaneously with other phases. Please refer to the graphic at the start of each section, which provides a visual overview of the phases, concepts, and tools primarily used in that phase.
What makes Community Organizing Different?

Community organizing is about achieving long-term change through building powerful, public relationships, influencing and negotiating with government, corporations and institutions; achieving direct representation; and holding decision-makers accountable to the people through public actions.

Other types of public action include advocacy, mobilizing, protesting, activism and providing service. Although each of these is valuable and may play a role in community organizing, the focus in organizing is on building long-term capacity within a community. Community organizing is rooted in the core values that motivate communities to create change and the power of community members in democratic societies.

Community organizing differs because there is a focus on long-term capacity, core values, self-interest and creating enduring change. Advocates often address issues on behalf of marginalized groups, whereas organizers provide the venue for communities to speak for themselves. Mobilizing is a part of community organizing yet organizing is much more and may or may not include mobilizing because it is about building long-term capacity. Activism, in comparison, focuses on issues while organizers focuses on values that drive interest in creating change. In addition, providing services is important, but often they only address immediate needs in the short-term while organizing focuses on understanding root causes. In understanding how community organizing differs from other forms of public action, it is important to consider what the motivation for creating change is, who is involved in the plans and what the long-term goals are.

Key Illustration – Comparison of Community Organizing
Community organizers approach an issue differently than other forms of public action. As an example, let’s say a community is experiencing a lack of affordable housing for residents that need it, which is resulting in a housing crisis in that community. Here is how different public actions may approach the issue:

Advocacy: Outside organizers might be involved in lobbying for more affordable housing, creating awareness of the issue, and educating the public about it yet stakeholders may or may not be involved.

Mobilizing: Mobilizing could include having community meetings with stakeholders about the lack of housing. The focus of these meetings would be on the current issue: lack of affordable housing.

Protesting: Protest include public demonstrations in the streets of the community about the housing crisis.

Activism: Activism could include things such as public awareness campaigns to draw attention to the housing issue and hopefully instigate a social or policy change to increase affordable housing options.

Providing Service: Providing service could include individuals helping to secure temporary housing for those that need it in places such as shelters.

Community Organizing: In comparison, community organizing would not only address the current issue but also take a look at the root cause of the housing crisis. For example, the lack of affordable housing could exist in response to discriminatory zoning laws – not only would community organizers address the housing crisis, they would also look at challenging these laws to get at the root cause of the issue. This is done by involving stakeholders in addressing how this violates their
Relationship Building
Building Relationships In Community Organizing

What is Relationship Building?
In organizing, relationships are based on shared values and interests, rather than issues. Relationships are built by sharing our stories with one another, exploring the intersection of our interests, exchanging resources and cultivating a collective commitment to act. Organizers value people of diverse backgrounds, identities and values coming together to learn together and from one another and believe that the most pressing social problems can only be addressed by involving a diverse set of people because most social problems are complex and involve many different groups of people.

Why Does Relationship Building Matter in Community Organizing?
Community organizers believe that building relationships is the best way to develop community partnerships and to do substantive public work. Authentic relationships are the glue in organizing, through them, we can build our community, develop leaders and build our collective power to create lasting change. Relationships lead to real commitment and accountability.

Putting It Into Practice:
Working with other people requires that we reflect on who we are and learn about and understand other people. In organizing, we value a deep understanding of self as well as an understanding of those with whom we work.

- Self: It is important to be clear on who you are, and who you are in relation to others. Areas to consider about yourself are:
  - Identities
  - Privilege and oppression
  - Values and beliefs
  - Self-interest

- Others: It is important to learn about others, and not make assumptions or judgments as to who they are, what they believe or what they want. You should learn about the same areas in others as those you would examine in yourself. In addition, you want to understand the similarities, differences and diversity between yourself and others.

We value the vast diversity that makes up communities. Some aspects of diversity include socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, religion and belief systems, political beliefs and opinion, ability, gender and sexual orientation, culture and language, mental health and age.
Privilege, Oppression and Identity (POI)

What is Identity?
We each exist at the intersection of many identities, which may include gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, race, nationality, ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, body size/shape, education, learning style, parental status, etc. It is just as important for us to take the time to understand our identities and how the world views us as it is to understand others. Our identities (both static and those that we choose to change or mold) influence how we develop relationships and interact with others.

Understanding Privilege & Oppression:
All of us experience privilege and oppression as part of our formed identity living in society with others. Privilege and oppression are derived from societal power structures and are systemic. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines privilege as “a right or immunity granted as an advantage or favor to some and not others.” Privilege is often referred to as unearned, something you are born into or with, that grants you access to resources and other advantages through unconscious or conscious attitudes and behaviors. Oppression is unjust, meaning that it is unwarranted and unrelated to a person’s actions. “The root of the word ‘oppression’ is the element ‘press.’ The press of the crowd; pressed into military service; to press a pair of pants; printing press; press the button. Presses are used to mold things or flatten them or reduce them in bulk, sometimes to reduce them by squeezing out the gasses or liquids in them. Something pressed is caught between or among forces and barriers which are so related to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict or prevent motion or mobility. Mold. Immobilize. Reduce.”

While oppression may not be experienced by every individual of a particular identity, the larger system of oppression still exists. Individuals in different environments will experience oppression in a variety of ways.

Why POI Matters in Community Organizing?
As we dive into community-engaged work, it is crucial to acknowledge and explore how privilege is part of our individual identities. How we experience privilege and oppression may change depending on the community we are in. However, larger societal and systemic privileges and oppressions are always at play; we may just experience them differently depending on the community we are with at the time.

It is important to acknowledge and explore how privilege and oppression are part of our individual identities, as well as, our collective identities when working in a group. After understanding your own “POI” it is important to explore the “POI” of the community you are working with and reflect on how you will work together across difference and diversity.

Understand that there may also be tension present as privilege and oppression are explored. Tension is a place of
transformation in which feelings of anger and discomfort may be present. These emotions are important in exploring “POI” and understanding how these are a part of our individual and collective identities. Eradicating oppression ultimately requires struggle against all its forms, and that building coalitions among diverse people offers the most promising strategies for challenging oppression systemically.  

**Putting It Into Practice:**
The following questions will help you critically reflect on your personal, group and community POI:

- Which one of your identities are you most aware of on a daily basis?
- Are there times when you either highlight or mute one of your identities (some example situations: job interview, meeting your partner’s family, teaching/being a student, within your social group, at church, interactions in which you are the minority)?
- Are there identities that you cannot disguise/hide?
- Are there consequences to muting one of your identities?
- What privilege/oppression do I experience in my life because of my identity? Do these privileges/oppression change when I change environments? How or Why?
- How do POI play in to how I interact with the community with which I am working?
- How can I use my new understanding of POI to critically reflect on my relationships with others?
- Does my POI affect how we understand, research and take action on social justice issues in the community?
**SELF-INTEREST ASSESSMENT**

**What is Self-Interest?**
Self-interest is about “the self among others.” Distinct lines are drawn between self-interest, selfishness and selflessness. As a concept, it sits between selflessness (the denial of the self) and selfishness (greedy, stingy conceit). It’s a concept that is connected to self-preservation. Self-interest can be understood as the intersection between your core values and our shared democratic values, equality, justice, freedom, dedication to the common good, etc. It is important to understand what underpins our core values. Core values are often derived from the intersection of three concepts: our identities, our values and learning about, witnessing or experiencing violations of these values and/or identities. Core values alone however are not the same thing as our self-interest. Our self-interest manifests when we enact our core values in public ways, when we work with others to create change.

**Why Does Self-Interest Matters in Community Organizing?**
Understanding our self-interest ensures that we know where our motivation to act derives from, what underpins our desire to work for change. It will help you answer the question of why, why are you motivated to work in the community? To engage with others? Additionally, if you can tap into your own self-interest you can more effectively work with others by identifying the intersection of their self-interest with your own, thereby creating constructive space to work with each other. Without an understanding of who you are, what you believe in and what you are willing to become unpopular for, it’s impossible to create relationships with others and to make it through the thickets of public life. Without that deep understanding of what motivates us, it becomes that much easier to walk away, or get burned out.
Putting It Into Practice:
Look at the diagram above and jot your answers on a sheet of paper. It does not matter where you start. You may have a well-developed sense of what you want to fight for, but may need to understand the underpinnings of such a motivation. Or maybe you're not yet sure what you are passionate about and thinking about the three circles will help you focus in on what is most important to you. Here are some ideas for each space in the diagram to prompt your thinking:

- **Identities**: What identities are central to your being? Define your experience in the world and how the world treats you?
- **Values**: What ethics or morals guide you and how you engage with the world? (they may be from family or your religious institution or from friends or others)
- **Violations of Values and/or Identities**: What direct experiences (to yourself, to someone you know/love) or what episodes have you learned about that rouse you to act?
- **Core Values**: What are you willing to fight for? To become unpopular for?

Keep in mind that our core values and self-interest are very complex, this activity is meant to help you understand just a few facets of your experiences, identities and values that move you to act.
One-to-One Relational Interviews

What is a One-to-One?
One-to-ones are strategic meetings used to figure out another person’s self-interest, ideas, motivations and visions and to identify where they intersect with your own. A one-to-one is an intentional meeting used to develop relationships with another through an understanding of her/his stories, interests, and values. “[A one-to-one is] one organized spirit going after another person’s spirit for connection, confrontation and exchange of talent and energy.” One-to-ones are an art that requires curiosity, a genuine interest in others, and an emphasis on focused, probing (though not prying) questions aimed at understand the roots of another.

Why Do One-to-Ones Matter in Community Organizing?
One-to-ones are a critical step in community organizing as people are able to establish rapport and begin to build the foundations of a public relationship. Furthermore, you are able to determine a person or peoples’ self-interest in a one-to-one. As you ask “what” and “why” questions, answers provided by the person with whom you are conversing may shed some light onto their hopes and vision for the future and issues they care about and what pressures they may face, as well as what their values and interests may be. One-to-Ones are the initial step in creating a shared vision and commitment to act.

Putting It Into Practice:
Begin with courage and curiosity; believe that everyone, even those whom you believe have different values from your own, are interesting, and that you can learn something from them. One-to-ones necessitate active listening, a skill that requires the listener to focus on the answers provided by the other person and to ask detailed follow-up questions. In this capacity, you are working to understand how and why this person has a particular self-interest and how your interests can intersect with theirs.

Take 20-30 minutes and sit with someone face-to-face in a location with few distractions and where you will not be interrupted and begin to work through some general questions, followed by detailed follow-up questions like:

- What is important to you and why? What motivates you?
- What makes you get out of bed in the morning?
- What would you call a life well lived?
- Who are your heroes and heroines?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness?; When have you felt most weak?
- What do you like most about the community you live in?
- Would you change your community in any way?
- What makes you hopeful?; What makes you angry?
- What are you passionate about? Curious about?
- Have you volunteered in the past? If so, for whom?
- What is your definition of success?

It is helpful to close the meeting with a specific next step. This might be another meeting, collecting names of other people in their network, or inviting the person to a follow up event. After leaving the meeting it is a good idea to write down main ideas that you have heard from the other person to remember. Write about what you learned, the issues the person cares about, what their self-interest is and anything you learned about their networks or values.
**AGITATION**

**What is Agitation?**
Agitation is the art of challenging a person to be true to their self and to act on their *self-interest*. It is about taking the time to question an individual through love and concern for another. Agitation is not to direct anger at a person, attack someone who is vulnerable, or publicly ridicule anyone. It should be done in a safe space and in the context of a *relationship*. Agitation is not about exercising *power* over another person nor is it about assuming you know what is best for them or what drives their beliefs. You should only agitate those with whom you would be comfortable agitating you.

**Why Does Agitation Matter in Community Organizing?**
We agitate those with whom we have relationships with to help them become better civic and community leaders by calling them to be *accountable* for their beliefs and *values*. In many cases, this is about delving deeper into someone’s self-interest *with* them.

**Putting It Into Practice:**
Only agitate someone who may be ready to deeply *reflect* on their self-interest and apply it in their life; someone who is in a place where they will grow and learn from the agitation. Agitation is only done in the context of a relationship out of love, concern, and respect for someone. Never agitate someone you are angry with. When agitating, you must have a relationship built upon trust before beginning this process. Understand that individuals may have strong emotional reactions to agitation because the focus is often on their self-interest and challenging them to act upon their deeply held values. During the act of agitating, *tension* may often be felt. Tension is a place of transformation where we feel anger and discomfort before we are motivated toward action. Given that agitation often evokes strong emotional responses, it can be a process in which tension and transformation occur. For these reasons, it is critical that mutual trust and consideration exists in the context of the relationship before agitation takes place.

Before agitating it is important to consider, although not assume, the following about the person and their self-interest:
- Where is the person in their understanding of an issue currently?
- Where is it possible that the person has room for growth and development in their understanding of an issue? Does the person have a vision or goal of where to contribute their energy?
- What could be getting in the way of the person working toward their vision?

*How do we agitate?*
- Ask pointed questions. Simply asking “why?” often challenges a person to think deeply about something they may have never before questioned.
- Dig deep and push the person to move beyond excuses to think critically.
- Maintain focus on how the other person can be their best self, not how they can be better for you. Do not be condescending or criticize the other person.
- Always make sure the other person is safe. Understand that you may be triggering new ideas and thoughts that are built upon deeply held values and self-interest.
- Be respectful and empathetic when using agitation so you do not damage the relationship you may have with this person.

*What tools and listening skills can be helpful in agitation*?
• **Open ended questions**: Open questions often begin with could, would, can, who, what, when, where, or why. In contrast, closed questions often start with do, is, or are. When we use open questions, it encourages conversation and gives power to those we are engaging with to answer in ways they are comfortable.

• **Active listening skills**: When we actively listen, we must participate fully in the conversation although the focus is placed on the speaker. Active listening requires that we make sure we are really hearing someone speak by using their own words to summarize and check in with them for understanding. Always ensure that you are hearing what they are wanting to convey to you and pay attention to changes in thoughts and feelings throughout the conversation.

• **Use of understanding, respect and empathy**: Utilizing understanding, respect, and empathy allows us to begin to experience the world of the speaker while also recognizing that the other individual remains separate from us. When we connect using these tools, we convey full attention to what is being shared and encourage an individual to continue to share their story with us.

• **Meeting someone where they are at**: When agitating, you may be triggering emotions for another person, which is why it is important to be done in the context of a trusting relationship. Use your understanding of, and connection with, that person to infer where they may be at in exploring their self-interest and always be considerate of this process.

• **Motivation that is rooted in the best interest of the other person, not your own curiosity**: When we agitate, the focus is on delving deeper into someone’s self-interest without assuming we know what is best for them or where they “should” be. Maintain motivation that has their best interest in mind rather than your own curiosity or agenda.
Collective Self-Interest

What is Collective Self-Interest?
Relationships are the life blood of community organizing actions. It is easier to bond around values and self-interest, rather than agreeing to a specific issue and course of action. Issue selection should come after we’ve developed relationships and come to understand others. Collective self-interest is how we work to understand the interests of a group. It is the intersection of the self-interest of two or more individuals. We can build our relationships by listening to each other’s stories, exploring our interests and committing to working together. We commit to sharing and exchanging resources and expertise. One-to-ones, as described earlier, can be used as a tool to discover collective self-interest. House meetings are also useful tools, and will be described later on.

Why Does Collective Self-Interest Matter in Community Organizing?
Finding the intersection of multiple people’s self-interest leads to compromise and negotiation, where the work of the group is more important than any one individual getting their way. When we negotiate in this way, we build stronger relationships, can identify leaders, and build community and power from the resources of that community. Once we have clarity on the collective self-interest of our group or community, we can move forward in identifying a topic/problem and issue(s) we would like to address collectively, Finding a group’s collective self-interest develops the intentional relationships necessary to motivate and sustain action.

Putting It Into Practice:
There are several ways to work to understand collective self-interest. One-to-Ones, as described earlier, and House Meetings (described below), are two techniques that can be used to discover collective self-interest.

Key Illustration – Collective Self-Interest:
**House Meetings**

**What is a House Meeting?**
A house meeting is a guided, small-group discussion held in an informal *safer space*, in which people get to know one another deeply through discussion of their interests, *values* and ideas for action. House meetings should be held in a non-discriminatory location. When considering non-discriminatory locations, one should consider accessibility, inclusiveness, convenience, ease and comfort of access, etc. The key is in setting up the ground rules and respecting the safer space of the gathering of people you have established.

**Why Do House Meetings Matter in Community Organizing?**
House meetings can be used as a tool to arrive at the collective self-interest of a group. They may also be used to facilitate the development and implementation of a public action. The house meeting is used to shift focus and perspective towards what a community can do to address certain *topics/problems* and *issues* of concern and discuss how to reach a collective vision.

**Putting It Into Practice:**

*Facilitator’s Role*
The facilitator has the most important role in the house meeting. The facilitator has to know what they want and why the group is there. They set the tone and should not be there to participate or drive an agenda but to guide the participants in identifying their individual and collective self-interests through:

- Supporting, encouraging and promoting conversation by asking open-ended questions.
- Probing participants to dig deeper on issues they bring up.
- Moving the conversation forward. Don’t let it get stuck in a negative complaining session.

Always be sure you are moving towards an outcome in the house meeting. The conversation should be about identifying issues and establishing a plan to move forward. Understand that during house meetings, *tension* may also arise. Tension is the space between what we experience in the world and how we would like it to be more just, causing many individuals to feel anger and discomfort before being motivated to action. Because a house meeting is a place where people get to know one another deeply, it is important for facilitators to understand the role that tension may play and they must be willing to allow individuals to explore this while continuing to move the meeting in a forward direction.

*House Meeting Outline*

- **Topic:** Center the discussion around a particular topic that has been identified by the group as a community concern.
- **Ask follow-up Questions:** Ex: Why is it important to you? How does this issue affect you and your family? How has it impacted you to get you to be in this room? Why do you care about this issue?
- **If there is not a clearly identified issue that has brought everyone there, then it is up to the facilitator to ask questions that can help the group focus on an issue.** What matters to you? Why are you here? What are you hopeful about? What are you angry about, etc.?
- **Action Steps:** Always end a house meeting by outlining next steps and action steps. What can we do together to take action? This can be a brainstorm of the possibilities for action to make change on the identified issues.
- **What are our next steps?** Assign responsibilities. Everyone needs to leave with a homework assignment. This accomplishes two things: makes people feel invested in the issue and helps you accomplish your goal
- **Accountability:** A successful house meeting is one where everyone follows through on the group-identified next steps. That means that as a facilitator you need to build a community that will hold each other accountable.
At the next meeting make sure to follow-up on responsibilities that were distributed at the previous meeting. Once people know that the task they've taken on is important, meaning that someone is waiting for the results, they will be active participants.
Issue Selection

**Phase Selection**
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Problem
  - Issue
  - World As-It-Is, World As It Should Be
  - Issue Criteria

**Issue Building**
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Hearing, Oppression & Cleansing
  - Self- Assertion & Collective Self-Interest
  - Agitation
  - One-on-One
  - Initiation

**Issue Reflection & Evaluation**
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Critical Reflection Before, During & After
  - Evaluation & Assessment
  - Celebration & Closure

**Issue Research**
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Traditional and Non-Traditional Research
  - Data Sources
  - Benefit Validation
  - Power Mapping

**Issue Taking Action**
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Strategy & Tactics
  - Accountability
  - Public Action

**Building & Mobilizing Power**
- Working with Communities
  - Social Justice Orientation
  - Long Term Common
  - Grassroots Power
  - Community Development, Leadership
IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS & SELECTING ISSUES

What are Community Organizing Problems & Issues?
Organizing is about winning issues and creating sustainable change. Community organizers recognize that many social injustices are immense problems. Problems are broad areas of concern. When developing a public action, it is important to break such problems down into actionable issues. Issues are bite-sized action-oriented and feasible solutions that address those larger problems. As a collective, we must decide what kind of vision we want to work toward. When selecting problems and issues it is helpful to keep in mind that “some people have the luxury of choosing the problems on which they work; for others the problem chooses them and can’t be avoided no matter how long or difficult the effort (e.g. an oil spill, racial discrimination, gender bias, etc.)”

Some examples of the variety of social justice issues facing communities include civil and human rights, inclusivity and diversity, poverty and homelessness, affordable housing, economic justice, labor issues, environment, sustainability, healthcare, community building, safety, families, youth and seniors, public schools and equality in education.

Why Does Selecting Issues Matter in Community Organizing?
Problems are often too large to tackle without breaking them down into smaller pieces, it is therefore important to separate these larger areas of concern into specific and winnable issues. Organizers often refer to this as “cutting the issue” – identifying a relatively short-term action that resonates with and builds the power of the people. It is helpful to start small and work continually toward larger and larger change.

Putting It Into Practice:
There are many methods organizers can use to arrive at the issue a group wishes to develop a public action around. One-to-ones and House Meetings, as described earlier, are both useful methods in working toward issue selection. Initial ideas can be generated using the “World As It Is, World As It Should Be” technique described on the next page. If there are multiple problems and issues that groups are discussing, an issues caucus can also be a useful democratic tool to aid in decision-making. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a caucus as “a group of people who meet to discuss a particular issue or to work together for a shared, usually political goal.” During an issues caucus, members can champion the problem and/or issue they would like the group to focus on by making a passionate public presentation. Each person or group is given the same amount of time to present. The group can then engage in dialogue, narrow down the list of problems and/or issues, and ultimately come to consensus or take a vote to decide upon the problem and issue to move forward with.
**The World As It Is, The World As It Should Be**

**What is the World As It Is, The World As It Should Be?**
To understand “the world as it is” means that you comprehend the current state of an *issue* and the *power* dynamics involved, and therefore you can creatively problem solve issues as you move toward “the world as it should be.” Understanding the “world as it should be” requires imagination, creativity and a solid understanding of your *values* and beliefs. The “world as it should be” is founded in a sense of justice and formed by the collective values of a society.

**Why Does an Understanding of the World As It Is Matter in Community Organizing?**
Being an effective community organizer means understanding and operating in the “world as it is” while working toward “the world as it should be.” Many of those interested in social change desire so much to live in the “world as it should be”, that they ignore reality. The problem with this approach is that you cannot effectively create change if you do not truly understand the system as it exists. This knowledge is crucial for us to better understand the significant changes needed in order to realize “the world as it should be.” While we may not be able to change everything immediately, there are smaller steps we can make in order to get us closer to our visions of liberation and *social justice*.

**Putting It Into Practice:**
This activity serves as a good warm-up to get a group thinking about the *problems* and/or *issues* they see in their communities, the injustices they feel deeply about and helps prime the group to discover where their interests overlap.

The facilitator asks participants to identify something in their world that makes them angry or that they want to see changed. As they identify a range of social problems (that might include homelessness, racial profiling, a cultural lack of respect for youth and others), the facilitator writes these problems on the board under a column titled, “The World As It Is.” Along the way, the facilitator asks each participant what, specifically, they are doing to resolve these problems that they have identified.

With some of the participants, it is helpful to ask them what they would like to do about the problem, although most are initially unable to articulate concrete ideas. When they finish listing the public, social problems or issues they care about, the facilitator draws another column titled, “The World As It Should Be,” asks participants to think about how they can move from the first to the second column.

**Taking It To The Real World:**
Asking participants what they are doing to address the problems they see will raise the tension in the room, because very few people are doing anything about these larger problems they can so passionately identify. This tension is what can motivate people.

The facilitator should challenge participants to commit themselves to take *public action* to move from the “World As It Is” to “The World As It Should Be.”
Issue Research
RESEARCHING THE ISSUE

What is Issue Research?
When someone says research, many people go straight to books, journals and the internet; however, in organizing, we value both traditional research, but also finding information from the community. It’s about going out into the neighborhood and collecting information about the issue. It is important to value multiple ways of knowing, not just academic knowledge, but also the knowledge gleaned through everyday lived experiences.

Types of Research:

• Traditional research includes collecting information from books, journal articles, credible internet sites and other validated methods.

• Experiential research is the collection of information through direct methods. These methods include collecting and analyzing photos, making observations, collecting information through a survey and more.

• Relational research is conducted through meetings between two or more people. Methods include one-to-ones, house meetings, focus groups, interviews, storytelling, and more.

Why Does Issue Research Matter in Community Organizing?
It can be a time-intensive process to collect local knowledge, but it is vital to the success of any change initiative to understand the perspective and wisdom of those most directly impacted by the issue. Research helps us understand the root causes and scope of the problem or issue, the power structures and stakeholders impacted by the problem or issue, as well as informs the development of our action plans.

Putting It Into Practice:
When developing a research plan, be sure to include traditional, experiential and relational forms of research. Once the group has determined the most appropriate methods of information gathering and collected the information, summarize the findings. These findings should then be shared with the group, examples include reports or presentations. The information should be used to inform and guide the development of the action plan.
**Root Causes**

**What are Root Causes?**
Root causes are the social or institutional systems that reinforce the *problems* that we see manifesting in our communities. To understand the root cause(s) of the problem we are addressing, it is helpful to dig deep and successively ask “why” something occurs. Often times there are several root causes for a problem, or a chain of root causes that have grown from one another.

**Why Do Root Causes Matter in Community Organizing?**
Root causes are useful to really understand how the problem came to be, not just the surface or the ‘here and now’ of the problem. By identifying and addressing root causes we can create lasting, systemic change; rather than addressing the surface level symptoms of the problem which only offers a temporary “band aid” solution. By addressing root causes we move from a community that reacts to problems, to a community that prevents and solves problems before they escalate.

**Putting It Into Practice:**
We identify root causes to community problems by doing *research* and critically learning about *issues*. A conceptual way to understand this process is the “5 Whys” technique, which is simply asking the question “Why?” successively five or more times to get at the deeper causes of each answer given. This process should be repeated and asked of various people and stakeholders to understand what a community believes are the root causes to a problem they are facing. The conceptual objective is to keep questioning why each thing happens, instead of assuming that the first cause which comes to mind is the root cause.

---

**Key Illustration – Root Causes**

**Issue**
- High rates of youth malnutrition in urban schools throughout Denver

**Why is this happening?**
- Student diets predominantly consist of processed and packaged foods, high in sugar and saturated fats

**Why?**
- Schools and families do not have access to fresh produce and meats, 12% of Colorado families are considered food insecure.

**Why?**
- Grocery stores consisting of fresh produce and meats are not accessible, transportation and cost are two barriers to accessing fresh and healthy foods.

**Why?**
- Food deserts in both rural and urban, low-income communities prevent families from improving nutrition as healthy, unprocessed foods are both inaccessible and unaffordable
Power

What is Power?
Organizers define power in the most traditional sense, where power is ‘the ability to act; the ability to influence people, institutions or processes.’ Essentially, power is the ability to produce an effect. This definition is a bit different than the way many people often think of power (money, authority, etc.). In organizing, the focus is on building relational power while also understanding dominant power as it relates to our problem and issue. Relational power is built through social influence and the collective power of people coming together to work with one another. Relational power can increase and bring people up together whereas dominant power is a zero-sum game where power is used over others in a one directional way. For organizers, it’s not about asking for power, but building it by becoming aware of the power we have as a group and determining how best to use it. In a democracy, there are four primary sources of power: position, organized money, organized people and organized media.

Why Does Power Matter?
Creating change requires an understanding of power. We must understand the power dynamics at play surrounding our chosen problem and issues in our specific context. In order to create change, we must be aware of power in two ways. First, we work to build our relational power by developing our collective through organizing others. Giving people a sense of their own power, as is built through relationships, is just as important as working on the issue. Second, we must balance the relationship of power between those in a position to support our change initiative and those that might oppose it. This requires a clear understanding of all of the stakeholders involved in our issue and their power to influence decisions, people etc. We can work to create this balance by understanding the resources we have that they may need. We create the change we want by organizing the resources we already have.

Putting It Into Practice:
When we use power to create the change we seek, we can think of using it in one of three ways:

1. Deprive the other side of something they want
2. Give the other side something they want
3. Elect someone who will support your issue

As community members in a democracy, we have several distinct types of power:

1. Political/Legislative Power - Getting something passed by an elected body
2. Consumer Power - The ability to conduct a boycott, boycott, etc.
3. Legal/Regulatory Power - The ability to win in court or in a regulatory process
4. Strike/Disruptive Power

Key Illustration - Power: Power is the ability to act; the ability to influence people, institutions, or processes.
Example: Quebec Student Movement
Also known as the Quebec Student Movement, le printemps érable showed the power of students when over 175,000 Quebec students marched through the streets, organized province-wide strikes, and built alliances amongst student organizations, sending a strong message to the provincial government that increasing student fees by 75% over the span of 5 years was unacceptable; students worried it would inherently limit access to higher education, and increase the debt of those already attending these institutions. With students boycotting university classes and participating in protests over the span of months and one provincial election later, the newly elected PQ government cancelled the tuition hike on their first day in office.
Power Mapping

**What Is a Power Map?**
A power map is a visual representation of the power in your community. A power map includes people and organizations with both institutional and relational power, including organizers of other movements, coalitions, etc. Power maps are great tools for inventorying your public relationships, expanding your network to achieve *public work* and strategically targeting power brokers to accomplish tangible public work.

**Why Does a Power Map Matter in Community Organizing?**
Use a power map to make strategic choices about who you should approach to do one-to-one relational meetings. You should map as many people related to your *issue* or organizing goals as possible. Then use those connections to expand your power map to include new connections and sources of power and resources.

**Putting It Into Practice:**
Start with your issue or organizing goal in the middle of your paper. Begin to branch out with the connections closest to you in your personal or professional life. Include their contact information when possible for future reference. Now add people and organizations you know of who are involved in, impacted by or otherwise interested in your issue. Use arrows to denote the direction of each person/organization’s influence on the issue in the center as well as their influence on each of the other people you identified. You can provide additional detail to your power map by also marking these influence in the following ways:

- Denoting the strength of the person/organization’s influence by arrow style:
  - Strong influence: solid line
  - Moderate influence: dashed line
  - Weak influence: dotted line
- Denoting the support or opposition by arrow color:
  - Supporters or champions: black
  - Those in opposition or in need of convincing: red
  - Those who hold no strong opinion, or for those whose opinion you do not know: green

Remember, your map will evolve and change as you perform more one-to-one relational meetings with the people on your power map. Expand your power map to include the new powerful public relationships you have made in the community even considering organizers of different but aligned topic/problem focuses. Also add new directions for things you learn and new approaches you hope to pursue that you hadn’t thought of initially. Power mapping is also a good group exercise to create a sense of group connection.

Power maps are a great resource as you move forward in your organizing goals and for any future work you pursue in the community.
Taking Action

Relationship Building
- Manager, Support, Training
- Self-Counsel Bureaus Self-Interests
- Agendas
- Case-Note
- Team Meetings

Issue Selection
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Problem
  - Issue
  - Made As Little World
  - As It Should Be
  - Issues Causes

Issue Research
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Traditional, Experimental
  - Educational Research
  - Surveys
  - 5 W's, 1 H
  - Power, Mapping

Reflection & Evaluation
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Critical Reflection Before
    - Daring & Action
  - Evaluation & Assessment
  - Celebration & Closure

Taking Action
- Concepts & Techniques
  - Strategy, Tactics
  - Accountability
  - Public Action
Strategy & Tactics

What are Strategy & Tactics?
Once we’ve built the necessary relationships, selected an issue, conducted research and come to understand the power and resources surrounding our change initiative, we must decide how we will act. This requires strategic thinking and the selection of appropriate tactics. A strategy is an idea, a conceptualization of how the goal could be achieved. The strategy focuses on the entire forest rather than any individual tree. A good strategy defines your actions and keeps you from getting distracted on the wrong tactics. Strategy is about turning the resources you have into the power you need to win the change you want in light of the given constraints and opportunities. A tactic is an action you take to execute the strategy, they are the tools you use to achieve your goals. Tactics are the specific activities carried out at specific times and in specific ways. Strategy and tactics are derived from Greek words rooted in war. An example from this history may therefore be helpful, where the goal is to win the war, the strategy might be to divide and conquer and the tactics might include spies gathering intelligence, soldiers engaging in hand-to-hand combat, securing the airport, etc.

Why do Strategy & Tactics Matter in Community Organizing?
To create the change we seek and ensure success, we must develop the capacity for good strategy and good tactics. Once we have a very clear understanding of the problem and our issue, we can develop the strategy and tactics we will use to implement our public action. It is important to take the time to identify exactly how we want to address the problem and what issue or solution we are working to implement to create change. A clear strategy and tactics allow you to stay focused, keep your eye on the prize, and to clearly communicate with others when they join your group or are considering joining your movement. People need clarity about exactly how you are going to work for change. Successful change initiatives are about both pursuing big, world-changing ideas AND executing the details with tact. It is therefore important to have both a vision for the change you seek, but also attention to the particulars required of each tactic selected.

Putting It Into Practice
Engaging in effective collective work and moving a significant number of people into coordinated action requires detailed thinking, planning for contingencies, building accountability and support, and hosting trainings to develop the skills of participants when necessary. A good strategy will deploy several tactics in coordination. Here are some steps to work through when developing your strategy and tactics:

• What are your goals for this work?
• What strategy (think big picture) will help you achieve these goals?
• Brainstorm a list of tactics, allow yourself to be broad and don’t shoot down any idea. For ideas, you can review Gene Sharp’s list of 198 Methods of Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion.
• Once you have a list, identify which best match your strategy and thus goal. Keep in mind that the best tactics are rooted in the culture and experience of the community and reflect the community’s values and self-interest.
• Once you’ve identified tactics, set clear, measurable goals for each such as number of petitions signed, voters contacted, media coverage received, volunteers trained, attendees, etc.

Taking It To The Real World:
Strategy without tactics is like all talk with no action. Tactics without a clear strategy is analogous to “Ready . . . Fire . . . Aim!”
Public Action

What is Public Action?
Public action is an important step in moving an issue into the public arena and getting others involved in a solution. Public actions should include and speak to stakeholders from all sides of the issue. Public Action does not follow strategy but rather occurs in tandem with it. This happens because your strategy and thus the tactics you employ to take public action should be rooted in the actual resources you have mobilized. An understanding of power is also important when deciding upon a public action. In general, community organizing actions have one of two emphases: collaborative action focused on building a community’s power or creating actions to challenge power being exerted over a community.13

Why does Public Action Matter in Community Organizing?
The heart and soul of community organizing is taking public action to create lasting community change. The goals of a public action vary depending on each event, but generally public actions aim to do one or more of the following:

- Hold public officials accountable to their constituencies and promises;
- Educate the public about an issue;
- Find others who are passionate about the issue and create momentum around the issue.
- Foster and facilitate spaces for community healing

Putting It Into Practice
Public action comes in many forms and can be tailored to each group of people, issue or goal. Think creatively about your public action and how you can speak to all your stakeholders through a diversity of presentation methods (drama, testimonies, video, songs, etc.). Here is a list of principles to inform your public action and guide your critical thinking about social change:

1. Ensure community members most impacted by the issue you are addressing are in leadership and decision-making positions. If they are not, how can you work with community leaders to ensure they have a voice in the process?
2. Understand that trust with the community must be continuously cultivated. Relationships are just as important during this phase of organizing than at any other.
3. Acknowledge past harms and/or history that has impacted the community and fostered the conditions impacting it today. Also seek to understand how the community has thrived and exhibited resilience. Does your public action account for the strengths and wisdom that already exist within the community?

Key Illustration: Public Action
As part of DU Puksta Scholar Cynthia Rodriguez’ work to secure higher education access for undocumented students, she has created a spreadsheet listing scholarships open to undocumented students. She has posted this spreadsheet online as well as shared the document at ‘Keeping the Dream Alive’ events to educate high school students, teachers, and counselors on this issue: http://goo.gl/VCl0XM.

Through Public Achievement (PA), DU students partnered with a social worker at Denver South High School in their efforts to address teen homelessness. They designed a closet space – “Rebel Closet” – where students in need were able to safely receive items such as clothing, shoes, and hygiene products. PA students educated the community about this issue and the newly available resource through a weekly school update broadcast.
4. You must ensure the public action is accessible to the community most impacted. Consider language interpretation, accessibility for community members with disabilities, cost of participation, availability of free on-site childcare, proximity to public transportation, etc.

5. Ensure all people impacted by the issue are included across identity, e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, race & ethnicity, nationality, age, religious affiliation, body size/shape, learning style, parental status, etc. It is crucial that your public action leaves no one in the community behind. What could you do or change to make your public action more inclusive?

6. Work to address the root causes of an issue through your public action. Does your public action build collective power or is it focused solely on relieving a symptom of the larger problem?

7. Foster and facilitate spaces for communities to heal from harm, injustice, oppression, etc. in ways they have selected for themselves.
Reflection & Evaluation

- Relationship building
  - Concept & techniques
    - Reflection, discussion, planning
    - Self-discovery
    - Personal and collective reflection

- Issue selection
  - Concept & techniques
    - Problem
    - Issue
    - As it is
    - As it should be
    - Issues & causes

- Issue research
  - Concept & techniques
    - Traditional research
    - Participatory research
    - Other methods

- Reflection & evaluation
  - Concept & techniques
    - Critical reflection before, during, after
    - Evaluation & assessment
    - Celebration & closure

- Taking action
  - Concept & techniques
    - Strategy & tactics
    - Accountability
    - Public action

---

CCESL Community Organizing Handbook | 33
Critical Reflection

What is Critical Reflection?
Critical reflection is an essential part of community engagement, volunteerism, and public work. As Campus Compact explains, structured reflection is used to refer to a thoughtfully constructed process that challenges and guides participants in examining critical issues related to their service projects, connects their service experience to their ongoing learning, enhances the development of civic skills and values, and assists those involved in public work to find personal relevance in their service.¹

Why does Critical Reflection matter in Community Organizing?
Engaging in critical reflection provides opportunities for people to analyze their thoughts and experiences, to challenge their assumptions, to find their motivations for this work, and to connect with others and their ideas. Critical reflection can be done individually or within groups, but it is always done intentionally. In addition to providing insight about the organizing process, it also encourages personal growth and can provide an open space where people can share and exchange their thoughts and ideas with one another.

Putting It Into Practice
Organizers must be thoughtful about how they implement reflection opportunities. Some important goals of reflection include the following: what did you learn, what does it mean to you, how has it impacted you, and how will this affect your future actions? Critical reflection before, during, and after community engagement should address different forms of learning including: academic, personal, community, and emotional knowledge. Guiding questions and examples of reflection are provided below.

Reflecting Before:
1. Why are you here today? What brings you to this service/organization/issue?
2. What do you hope to learn today? About yourself? About the issue? About the community?
3. How are you feeling about the work you will be doing today?
4. What concerns, worries or fears do you have?
5. What are you excited about or looking forward to?
6. What skills, ideas, connections, or interests do you have that you can apply to your work today?

Reflecting During and After:
1. What feelings do you have about the work you did today?
2. What did you learn today? About yourself? About the issue? About the community?
3. What would you like to know more about after/because of this experience?
4. What experiences from today do you find yourself thinking about? Why do you think they stick with you?
5. What did you learn or experience that made you surprised/sad/mad/upset? Why?
6. What did you learn or experience that made you excited/happy/energized? Why?
7. How would you like to apply your experiences today in the future? Academically? Personally? In the community?
8. How have your perceptions changed because of this experience?

Examples of Reflection Techniques
Reflection can be conducted using a wide variety of techniques that each respond to varying learning styles. It is helpful to consider that there are oral, written, and artistic means of reflection as well as different techniques may be more or less applicable between individual, small group, and large group settings. These techniques can include the following.
• **CAT** \(^{14}\): Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are tools for collecting feedback on learning experiences. Many CATs are short reflective exercises aimed at improving learning. Examples of CATs are included below.
  - Minute paper\(^{15}\): This is a short exercise in which you ask people to spend one to two minutes writing in response to a guiding question (i.e. what is the most important thing you have learned in this project?)
  - One Sentence Summary\(^{16}\): As a group, answer the questions “Who, does what to whom, when, where, how and why?” about a given topic (i.e. the issue they have chosen to work on) and create a single long sentence.

• **Artistic Expression**: Provide tools such as paint, modeling, clay, pen, paper, or instruments and direct participants to reflect on their experience through utilization of the various tools. Have people share their reflections with others in creative manners.

• **Journaling**: Have participants write about their experiences. This could be free form, prompted, structured journals with specific questions, team journals in which each member contributes an entry, or critical incident journal entries centered around a specific incident and how it was handled.

• **Letter to Self**: Have those involved in the community organizing process write a letter to themselves about their expectations and goals prior to or during the service project. Return the letters after the project (how long after depends on your service) and direct participants to reflect on their changes in views.

• **One-to-One Relational Interviews**: Break members of the community organizing group into pairs and have them conduct one-to-one interviews with each other about their experiences. Discuss as a large group and summarize each pair’s learning.
Evaluation & Assessment

What is Evaluation and Assessment?
Assessment and evaluation are used to review and understand a program, event, project or process in a critical way. They are used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the structure of a program, but also used to determine the growth and learning of participants. Unlike reflection, evaluation is used as a means of measuring participants’ growth. Similar to reflection, however, assessments are also completed periodically throughout the process to ensure that all successes, as well as shortcomings, are known and addressed.

Why are Evaluation and Assessment Important in Community Organizing?
Evaluations and assessments are critical in community organizing. In order to ensure that the public work being carried out is positively impacting the communities seeking change, monitoring, evaluating, and assessing the success of such work is integral. Through evaluation and assessment, organizations can improve structural components of public action that may be failing to address the issues at hand. It also allows organizations to see where they are successful and how they can continue to meet their desired objectives.

Putting It into Practice
When evaluating and assessing a program, tools should:
- Be public (discussion) and private (writings or surveys) varying in length
- Be framed around the established learning outcomes
- Take into consideration different learning styles
- Incorporate feedback from all stakeholders

A few methods that you can use to evaluate and assess include:
- Plus/Delta public evaluation: Ask participants to discuss aspects that they liked (plus) and then discuss aspects that they would change (delta), and conclude with tangible ways of effecting that change.
- Focus groups: Take a sample of 6-8 participants and ask them specific questions relating to learning outcomes and their experiences.
- Writings and reflective essays about tangible impacts made, shifts in identity of self and other, and approaches aiming to address continued inequalities
- Photo documentation
- Partnership debrief, questions might include:
  o Summary of partnership goals/agreements and whether the above outcomes and goals were met
  o What were the strengths of your partnership?
  o What could be improved for future partnerships between your organization and DU programs/students?
  o What was the greatest product of the partnership?
  o Sustainability Plan – how will you continue or transition the efforts of this partnership?
Celebration & Closure

What is Celebration and Closure?
Celebration and closure are vital to the community organizing process. They ensure that we recognize the successes of our public work projects and acknowledge our efforts. Celebration aims to highlight the accomplishments of individuals and groups participating in public work, and to recognize the impact of social action projects on communities. Closure is essential so that individuals have the chance to find relevance and meaning in their work.

Why Do Celebration and Closure Matter in Community Organizing?
Community organizing can be challenging and strenuous. It requires consistent perseverance amidst adversity; community change requires investment, both mentally and physically, and can become overwhelming. Celebration reminds us of the relevance and meaning of our work and provides us the opportunity to reward ourselves for our achievements. A sense of closure allows us to move on to the next campaign or project.

Putting It Into Practice:
Celebration and closure can be done in a variety of ways. It is important to design a celebration to reflect the local culture and ensure accessibility to all stakeholders. The kinds of celebrations communities and individuals can participate in include, but are not limited to:

- Celebration Event: Invite all stakeholders to an event that highlights the accomplishments of a public work project. Hold the event in a location significant to the community and enjoy local foods. The event could focus on remarks from stakeholders, posters detailing how the community organizing process was used, or photos/video from different steps of the project.

- Media Coverage: Contact local media outlets (e.g., newspapers, blogs, radio shows) to encourage them to feature the story and successes of the public work project. Include photos, interviews with stakeholders, and specific numbers that document the impact of the project.

- Display Case: Construct a display in a public building (e.g., library, city hall, school) that walks viewers through the process of the public work project. Include tangible items that are significant to the project (e.g. items of clothing, posters, memorabilia) as well as photos and videos, charts illustrating impact, reflections from stakeholders, and documents that capture the essence of the project.

- Multi-media Presentation: Create a presentation (e.g., brief video, photo book, website) that stakeholders may interact with. This may also be shared with community organizers in other communities. Include sound, photos, stakeholder quotes, or video footage from the project.
Community Organizer Spotlights
INTRODUCTION TO THE SPOTLIGHTS

There are others who have come before us and were presented with challenges and injustices. Community organizing has a rich history in social movements including abolition, suffrage, labor rights, the environmental movement, anti-apartheid and many many more. The individuals involved made the choice to stand up and fight. “But organizing takes struggle, sacrifice and craft. The craft of organizing starts when people choose to exercise leadership, to take the risk required.”17

A world like ours, unjust and faulted, requires people who inspire others to work for change; people who work to engage others in the work of empowering themselves. We need game-changers. Game-changers are the kind of people who introduce new energy and direction to a cause; they stimulate others to act, view, and think differently. Cue community organizers. Community organizers call community members, who are directly involved in and/or affected by an injustice, into action to address injustices in their communities.

This section of the handbook tells the story of several community organizers. Included are short biographies for some inspiring changemakers of the past and present. Included in this list are previous invited workshop facilitators for CCESL’s annual Community Organizing Institute. The spotlights are provided in chronological order.
Community Organizer Spotlight

Mary Harris “Mother” Jones (1830-1930)

“There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things in life.” – IWW Preamble

Community Organizing Work:
Mary Harris “Mother” Jones spent over 50 years fighting the “blatant economic and social inequalities” she observed all around her, from Chicago to her home in Tennessee and across the nation. She organized strikes, worked for and with workers for better conditions and wages, organized and held educational meetings, raised funds for Mexican revolutionaries in the US, and led protests and marches, opposing strikebreakers, child labor and social injustices. In addition to her role as an organizer for industrial workers across America, Mother Jones led public actions and campaigns for the wives and children of miners and industrial workers, garment workers, and streetcar workers.

Mother Jones was a leader in the labor movement in industrial areas across the nation. Most notably, she organized miners, gaining herself the nickname, the “Miners’ Angel.” In her tenure as an organizer, Jones worked for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), founded the Social Democratic Party, lectured for the Socialist Party of America, and later returned to the UMWA as international organizer for the union.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Jones’ family played a large role in her focus on organizing and agitation. Her grandfather and father were Irish Freedom Fighters in her youngest years and when her family was forced to immigrate to the United States, she did not forget this family history. When she married George E Jones, a member of the Iron Molders’ Union in Tennessee, she gained a new perspective on the lives of industrial workers’ families and later passed these lessons on to other women: “That is, the wife must care for what the husband cares for if he is to remain resolute.”

After her family died in a yellow fever epidemic, Jones returned to Chicago, where she lost everything in the Great Chicago Fire. Mother Jones’ passion to decrease the inequity between owner and employee ignited as she organized across the nation for miners and laborers following her experiences as the wife of an industrial worker, and as a seamstress for the wealthy. Because of her ability to engage, inspire, and organize coal miners across the nation, Mother Jones was said to be “the indomitable, fearless, orator for the cause of union solidarity in the face of the most violent and severe forms of union busting that industrialists and their political allies could muster”.

Contribution to the Community:
Jones affected the growth and implementation of workers’ rights, labor regulations, wage controls (ie. minimum wages), and child labor laws in America. The 1914 Ludlow massacre in Colorado, in which the Colorado National Guard killed 20 people in a violent attack on strikers, strongly affected Jones. After the incident, Jones convinced the government to bring the union and the owners to come to a truce and create grievance committees at every mine, most of which still exist today.

References:
- Photo from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Harris_Jones
Community Organizer Spotlight

Jane Addams (1860-1935)

“The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.” -Addams

Community Organizing Work:
It has been argued that Jane Addams was one of our nation’s first social workers. She brought together idealistic young adults and immigrants to better their communal lives. In 1889, she founded Hull House, a social settlement for immigrants and the poor in urban Chicago. The aim was to improve quality of life by offering “art, drama and music as well as public baths, baby care, job training, and classes in English and in citizenship.” Besides these social aims, Addams worked to open the doors to American democracy for everyone, giving immigrants and the poor access to their political voice and rights.

Addams was also a strong anti-war advocate, supporting anarchists and immigrants throughout WWI. She assisted in the creation of a Women’s Peace Party, which was dedicated to mediation and diplomacy for the conflict. This political action brought much suspicion about her loyalties and patriotism. She also worked with NAACP, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and the Juvenile Court Committee.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
As a member of the first generation of college women, Jane Addams felt a strong need to balance her “family claim” with her “social claim,” juggling both service and duty. Her role models included her father, a strong figure in Addams’s life. As a proponent of social change and equal rights, her father spurred her passion for international peace and social justice, fields she pursued through prolific writing and social action.

Her political convictions of equality for all Americans and power as responsibility drove her to find a public arena to serve people and use her skills and education. She published throughout her life after the founding of Hull House. What she learned from the people she served, she then used to press for reforms in labor, housing, public sanitation, political corruption, public education, and juvenile judicial systems. Most of all, Hull House allowed Addams to reconcile her duties to her family and her duty to serve society.

Contribution to the Community:
Jane Addams was one of the first to argue for the inclusion of the poor into the public sphere. Adult night school and continuing education courses offered by universities across America are a result of Addams’s Settlement House movement. Public recreation spaces, Boys and Girls Clubs, and the juvenile court systems are all direct descendants of Addams’s work. In addition, Jane Addams was the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

References:
- Photo from http://promfih.com/ulrich-salchow.html
Community Organizer Spotlight

Myles Horton (1905-1990)

"The only accurate charge I ever had made against me was the time I got arrested [at a mine strike] in 1934. They said I was 'getting information and going back and teaching it.' That's exactly what I was doing." - Horton

Community Organizing Work:
Myles Horton co-founded the Highlander Folk School, now the Highlander Research and Education Center, in 1932, in Grundy County, TN. Highlander’s original mission was to educate “rural and industrial leaders for a new social order.” Horton was a leader in the southern progressive labor movement supporting strikes, assisting in organizing movements and training labor union leadership. Eventually Highlander Folk School expanded its programs to labor education with participants from 11 states, and created a residential education program designed as a base for building a labor movement that was “broad-based, racially integrated, and politically active.” Horton contributed a process of workshops where people could share their experiences and expertise.

Highlander Folk School programs later expanded to the civil rights movement, citizenship schools, fighting racism and segregation, practicing cross-racial education, and organizing Appalachian communities against deep-rooted poverty, environmental destruction, and corporate control of local resources. Over the past 35 years, the major focus has been on developing local leadership and supporting local communities in the global context.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Born in Savannah, TN, Myles Horton was the child of two former teachers who lost their jobs when requirements for teachers were increased, and neither could meet the new educational requirements. To support their family both worked in factories, farms, and other odd jobs. Though no longer teachers, both his parents continued to organize community classes to share knowledge with their neighbors.

At fifteen Horton had to leave home to attend high school and supported himself by working in factories. When he was 22, he was shocked by the effects of racism on his own friendships when he was forbidden to take Chinese and black friends along with him into public places. After numerous experiences with social and labor movements in New York, Chicago and Denmark, Horton started to develop his ideas for the creation of Highlander Folk School as a way to address the needs and improve the lives of the people in his home state of Tennessee.

Contribution to the Community:
Highland Folk School, and the Citizenship Schools that came out of it, were training grounds for many of the key players in the civil rights movement. Men and women like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Pete Seeger and other leaders were trained at Highlander. Horton led the way in creating integrated programs and spaces in the United States. The current Highlander Research and Education Center still works with Appalachian communities to support local business and fight negative aspects of globalization, support environmentally conscious business practices, and fight for justice for Latinos and youth.

References:
- Photo retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/bud1929/4341244572/
Community Organizer Spotlight

Saul Alinsky (1909-1972)

“Always remember the first rule of power tactics: Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have” - Alinsky

Community Organizing Work:
Saul Alinsky could be called the pioneer of “community organizing” as we now know it. Alinsky worked with the poor residents of Chicago’s stockyards to organize people for the rights and job security they didn’t have. He “envisioned an ‘organization of organizations,’ comprised of all sectors of the community - youth committees, small businesses, labor unions and, most influential of all, the Catholic Church.”

In 1939 Alinsky opened the first meeting of the Back-of-the-Yards council, bringing together the union, the community and the Catholic Church in the first organization of the entire community. In 1940, he founded the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), which would serve as an overarching organization under which future campaigns for the community could find safer space. Some of the public actions included pickets, strikes, protests and civil rights struggles. Through numerous public actions and political maneuvers Alinsky’s methods of organizing brought the disenfranchised into the democratic process.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Alinsky was born and raised in the Jewish ghetto of Chicago and near the age of 30 earned his graduate degree in criminology. His first professional research assignment was to find the causes of juvenile crime in the stockyards neighborhood of Chicago. What he quickly realized was that the crime was linked to poverty and to feelings of powerlessness in the youth of these communities.

Having grown up in Chicago and witnessed the suffering of the Great Depression, Alinsky felt a deep connection to the poverty and lack of power these poor residents were experiencing. His mother had taught him that individuals had a responsibility to each other and for justice, and he lived this lesson by showing others how to organize and fight back together against the collective injustices they experienced. In addition, he got to the root causes of the problems facing him as a criminologist, that feelings of powerlessness lead to crime.

Contribution to the Community:
Alinsky’s IAF has not only thrived, but has expanded to urban areas around the country, training disenfranchised Americans to reengage in their communities for change. While the IAF provides a broad power base to address specific local issues, common efforts include low-income housing, living wages, education, and safe communities. Examples of IAF successes include 2,100 low-income housing units recently built in East Brooklyn, increased public education funding in Dallas, and 5,000 public sector jobs created by the governor of Maryland. Alinsky’s community organizing model provides a pathway for anyone to initiate change in their communities by organizing together.

References:
- Photo retrieved from http://media.npr.org/assets/img/2012/01/30/alinsky1_custom-8a9ea438d165a0155936a23183086406c5b1806e.jpg
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER SPOTLIGHT

Dolores Huerta (1930-present)

“This is a terrific opportunity for young people to learn what the democratic process is about, the way that bills are passed. I explained this whole procedure to the students.”

Huerta

Community Organizing Work:
Dolores Huerta has worked to organize farm laborers for better working conditions, increased wages, higher standards of living, and basic rights. She has supported women’s rights campaigns, bilingual driver’s exams, and education for all.

As co-founder and first vice president emeritus of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO (UFW), Huerta institutionalized her values for those around her. She spent her time organizing boycotts, strikes, and other public actions in favor of the farm workers. In addition, she worked to support California and federal legislation in favor of marginalized women, children and farm laborers.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Born in Dawson, New Mexico, Huerta’s parents divorced when she was three years old; her mother, Alicia Chavez, raised Dolores and her four siblings in the farm worker community of central San Joaquin Valley of Stockton, California. Her mother, a businesswoman, owned a restaurant and 70-room hotel where she often allowed farm worker families to stay for free. Huerta’s interactions with the farm worker families gave her the perspective she needed to internalize labor and rights issues. Her father, a miner in New Mexico, was an activist for labor rights and later championed fair labor in the New Mexican legislature. He also served as an inspiration for Huerta’s work with farm laborers.

A significant event in Huerta’s life was when she was beaten by police in a peaceful protest in San Francisco. She sustained numerous broken bones, internal injuries, and required emergency surgery to remove her spleen. After her recovery she won a large settlement from the city and became a champion for the movement to change San Francisco’s crowd-control and officer discipline policies.

Contribution to the Community:
Dolores Huerta led some of the most important movements in the current labor rights arena, creating collaborations between workers and agricultural firms, raising minimum wages and working conditions for farm laborers, and changing legislation to reflect the rights of the workers. Specific campaign successes include the right for all Spanish-speakers in California to take their driver’s exam in Spanish, the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA) passed by the Californian state legislature which is the first law to recognize the collective bargaining rights of farm workers in California, and the changing of crowd control and police discipline policies in San Francisco.

References:
- Photo retrieved from http://www.greenfield-sanders.com/node/1397?size=_original
Community Organizer Spotlight

Cesar Chavez (1927-1993)

*The love for justice that is in us is not only the best part of our being but it is also the most true to our nature.*

Community Organizing Work:

A Mexican American, Chavez became the best known Latino American civil rights activist who was strongly promoted by the American labor movement. His public-relations approach to unionism and aggressive but nonviolent tactics made the farm workers' struggle a moral cause with nationwide support and inspired workers around the nation in a call to action to improve their own status and rights by forming unions of their own. Chavez worked in the fields until 1952, when he became an organizer for the Community Service Organization (CSO), a Latino civil rights group. Chavez urged Mexican Americans to register and vote, and he traveled throughout California and made speeches in support of workers' rights. He later became CSO's national director in 1958. In 1962, Chavez left the CSO and co-founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) with Dolores Huerta. It was later called the United Farm Workers (UFW) and aimed to improve the rights of farm workers across the nation.

Personal History and Self-Interest:

Cesar Chavez was born in Yuma, Arizona in 1927. His Mexican-American parents lost their family owned grocery store, ranch, and home due to the Great Depression and resorted to working in the fields of California to make a living. The entire family would pick crops year round to make ends meet. When Chavez was in 7th grade he ended his formal education and quit school to become a migrant farm worker so that his mother would no longer have to work in the fields. It was because of his experiences as a migrant field worker that Chavez was able to form meaningful relationships and mobilize communities of migrant farm workers to improve their rights.

Contribution to the Community:

Cesar Chavez has become an icon for organized labor and leftist politics, symbolizing support for workers and for Hispanic empowerment based on grass roots organizing. He organized UFW members in a multitude of strikes and boycotts with the aim of winning higher wages for farm workers. One of the most impactful campaigns Chavez organized was the Salad Bowl strike, the largest farm worker strike in US history, which won increased wages for farmers working for grape and lettuce growers. Furthermore, UFW also pushed and won the passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act, which allowed farm workers to participate in collective bargaining. Chavez also led fasts to bolster attention for and to promote issues of personal significance. Cesar Chavez inspired the development of farm workers unions across the nation which often led to improved conditions for these populations.

References:

- Photo retrieved from [http://www.biography.com/people/cesar-chavez-9245781](http://www.biography.com/people/cesar-chavez-9245781)
Community Organizer Spotlight

Ernesto Cortes (1943-present)

“The question is, are we going to be a 21st century city with shared prosperity, or a Third World city with an elite group on top and the majority at poverty or near poverty wages?” – Cortes about Los Angeles

Community Organizing Work:
Moving away from issue-based organizing, Ernesto Cortes believed that people needed to be organized around values such as justice, dignity, family and hope. You could say Cortes’ “issue” is training people to be their own leaders, to take public action in their communities around their values, which then define community issues. Cortes started organizing in the 1960s, and he eventually became the southwest regional director for the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a position he held for over thirty years. Cortes has worked with communities across the southwestern United States organizing ordinary people to be more powerful in their communities and to participate in public life and democracy on levels that matter to them.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Cortes is a Texas native and a graduate of Texas A&M University where he studied English and Economics. He left A&M to organize workers’ strikes, but found he had little clout against large corporations who hired strikebreakers. When he got tired of fighting losing battles, he decided to go to Chicago, where he studied with Ed Chambers and attended the Alinsky Institute. He learned about IAF and their methods of community organizing.

"In this country, we no longer have politics," Cortés said. “There are auctions at which people bid for the office of the presidency. The politics that we talk about is the politics of the Greeks -- the politics of negotiation and deliberation and struggle, in which people engage in confrontation and compromise. My goal is to reclaim that political tradition." Public participation, local leaders standing up for their values, and the reinstitution of a democracy is what Cortes looks for and cultivates when he organizes.

Contribution to the Community:
Cortes coordinates regional and national leadership trainings for grassroots leaders. His work is to develop community organizations with a focus on three components: access to political power, relationship building, and social justice initiatives. He has assisted communities in winning water and sewage facility improvements, infrastructure upgrades, election campaigns, and access to affordable housing. A specific example of his organizing success was the reclamation of $100 million in public funds to directly benefit lower-income areas of the community he was working with. Cortes still organizes communities across the southwest, currently spending much of his time in LA.

In a recent classroom visit, when asked whether he believed his methods could create change nationwide, Cortes explained, “We hope that within five years, we’ll have 25 schools that will have been touched by our efforts -- places where the culture has changed, where teachers are excited, and where students are excited. We hope that we’ll make progress on health-care issues and workers’ rights. Right now, we’re just trying to recruit and develop, to get the organizers, leaders, and institutions that we need to pull off that kind of massive change. And I think that we can do that.”

References:
- Photo from www.harvardsquarelibrary.org
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER SPOTLIGHT

President Barack Obama (1961-present)

“The arc of the moral universe may bend towards justice, but it doesn’t bend on its own.”

Community Organizing Work:
President Obama began his community organizing roots in Chicago in the 1980s as the director for the Developing Communities Project. In this role he was able to organize neighborhoods on the Southside of Chicago to demand increased job opportunities and access to higher education. His experience as an organizer sparked Obama’s interest in acquiring his law degree to organize people on a larger scale, especially as he moved into political office beginning in 1996.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Obama proclaims that he became interested in community organizing because he was inspired by the Civil Rights movement but was obviously a decade too late to join the cause and wanted to find another way to be an active and powerful citizen. Hired on as a lead organizer for the Developing Communities Project in the Roseland neighborhood of Chicago, it was the hope that being a man of color, Obama would more strongly engage the community to organize for jobs that had previously been lost because of steel mill and other industrial closers.

Obama has spoken to the fact that he believes power is a component of community organizing that is critical in gaining any headway when combating social injustices. It is within this realm of power that Obama was guided to study law and policy at Harvard Law School. He felt that power in policy-making and law-making had the potential to effect social change on a larger level, a level he pursued when running for political office.

Contribution to the Community:
Two years after graduating college, Obama was hired in Chicago as the director of the Developing Communities Project, a church-based community organization on Chicago’s South Side. He worked there as a community organizer from June 1985 to May 1988 helping to set up a job training program, a college preparatory tutoring program, and a tenants’ rights organization in Altgeld Gardens. Obama also worked as a consultant and instructor for the Gamaliel Foundation, a community organizing institute.

Beyond his days of organizing in Chicago, Barack Obama now lives and works as the President of the United States. He has the capacity to organize and mobilize populations behind issues, to spark conversations, and furthermore, to instill a call to action on a grand scale. Though he no longer operates as a local organizer for neighborhoods like Roseland in Chicago, he practices community organizing within the political sphere, challenging systems of inequitable power and resources at a national level.

References:
Community Organizer Spotlight

Rami Nashashibi
CCESL Community Organizing Institute Facilitator 2011

“Connecting the disconnected sectors of communities ready to mobilize.”

Community Organizing Work:
Rami Nashashibi has served as the Executive Director of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) since its incorporation as a nonprofit in January 1997. He has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Chicago. Rami has lectured across the United States, Europe, and Asia on a range of topics related to American Muslim identity, community activism and social justice issues, and is a recipient of several prestigious community service and organizing honors: “10 Young Muslim Visionaries Shaping Islam in America”, one of the city’s Top Ten Chicago Global Visionaries, one of the “500 Most Influential Muslims in the World”, and in 2011, the White House named him a “Champion of Change”.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Rami Nashashibi, originally came to Islam as a convert. Born in Jordan, he says he had a largely secular upbringing as the child of a diplomat father and a Palestinian mother who grew up in Chicago. In 1990, he moved to Chicago as a student at a time when the city was in transition. It was here that Nashashibi found himself drawn to social activism. Ever since Rami obtained his PhD in Sociology from the University of Chicago, he has worked in community organizing.

Rami believes in the process of critical engagement in community organizing which he defines as a long-term commitment to shape, deeply inform and/or passionately contest the often disparate policies and conditions that govern our lives or sustain profound inequalities in the world. He stresses the critical importance of pushing inclusive platforms when mobilizing communities to fight off the notion that any one issue is “black”, “Latino”, or “Muslim”. He asserts that though it may be easier to intellectually engage populations around such an idea, it is more difficult to build a broad base of community leaders that are ready to sacrifice politically for issues directly affecting the community. In order to engage the more apprehensive or resistant community leaders, Rami often pursues avenues of agitation and conversation to involve dissenters and to effectively organize entire communities regardless of color or status.

Contribution to the Community:
Acting as executive director for IMAN, Rami has facilitated in a multitude of successful campaigns throughout Chicago to improve the livelihoods of low-income populations of color. Some of the current campaigns include “Muslim Run: A Campaign for Health, Wellness, and Healing”, as well as a multitude of youth programs spread throughout Chicago.

References:
- Photo retrieved from http://www.onbeing.org/program/rami-nashashibis-american-dream/5011
Community Organizer Spotlight

Lisa Sass Zaragoza
CCESL Community Organizing Institute Facilitator 2012
“In theory, the difference between theory and practice is small. In practice, the difference between theory and practice is large.”

Community Organizing Work:
Lisa Sass Zaragoza has worked in the educational arena in rural and urban settings as a youth worker, teacher, community organizer, school administrator and consultant. Her past work as a union organizer with migrant farmworkers, student home placement coordinator for US students studying abroad in Guatemala and former director of the U-Migrant Project guide inform her current work as the Programs and Outreach Coordinator, Department of Chicano and Latino Studies, University of Minnesota.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Lisa Sass Zaragoza steadfastly believes in both the theory and practice of community organizing. She is passionate about connecting Latino university students to their communities in ways that are both responsible and effective. She views community organizing as a balance of both the idealistic and the experience components of the practice. She hopes that in engaging students, faculty, and the administration of universities in discourse and action surrounding community/service-based learning, that we might support a world in which we all understand our social standing and social capital, work with our privilege towards and for respectful and responsible community-university partnerships.

References:
- L. Zaragoza, personal communication, September 2012.
Community Organizer Spotlight

Jesús Torres
CCESL Community Organizing Institute Facilitator 2013

“Don’t just help: organize!”

Community Organizing Work:
Jesús Torres, a native of Mexico, moved to Minnesota in 2001 where he was introduced to the world of social justice and social change. Jesús received his community organizing training from the leading trainer in Minnesota, the Organizing Apprenticeship Project. Jesús served as a community organizer with Centro Campesino from 2003-2012, where he worked on issues related to immigrant rights, worker’s rights, and education. He holds an undergraduate degree in sociology and is currently attending law school.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Throughout the years, Jesus has honed his skills as an organizer to promote more equitable systems of resources for migrant communities, in particular, with the aim of improving opportunity for jobs, access to higher education, and voter registration. He strongly believes that organizing, rather than just participating in activism or protest, is a tangible way of effecting social change in communities throughout Minnesota and beyond. He follows the ideology that perceived power is an effective tool in mobilizing populations and combating social injustices experienced by migrant communities.

Contribution to the Community:
Jesús has been involved in community organizing for years now. In 2004, Jesús cofounded United Workers of the North. Within this capacity, he facilitated in organizing community-led demands for a community kitchen, the end of a crew-leader system, and for a company in Owatonna, Hastings to cover all costs for the development of a daycare facility for migrant worker families living and working there. Furthermore, Jesus sits on and participates in boards and committees all directing funding and development strategies towards organizers in communities throughout Minnesota. Jesús continues to pursue righting social injustices as he pursues an advanced degree in the realm of law and policy at St. Thomas University.

References:
- J. Torres, personal communication, September 2013
Community Organizer Spotlight

Blanca Trejo
CCESL Community Organizing Institute Facilitator 2014

“That is how I understand – through experience – many of the struggles our young people face while trying to reach their dreams.”

Community Organizing Work:
Since 2003, Blanca has been leading community and youth organizing with Together Colorado, United We DREAM, and the PICO National Network. She believes in the power of young people to influence public policy and improve the communities they come from. She is a passionate Latina driven by faith in the power of the people to create the promised community, grounded in the belief that those who are directly impacted by the pain must be a part of developing solutions. She is inspired by the unbound potential of youth, and determined to open doors of access to higher education for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status or socioeconomic status.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Blanca Trejo is a first-generation American and first-generation college student from a single parent household. She is a Denver native and graduate of West High School. As a sophomore, she attended a talk by a community organizer who sparked a passion in her. She has been an advocate for Colorado ASSET (legislation to allow undocumented students to pay in state college tuition) and immigrant rights since she was 15. As a Boettcher and Gates Scholar, she triple-majored, earning her BA in Spanish and Political Science as well as a BSBA in International Business from the University of Denver in 2010. She is also a proud sister of Pi Lambda Chi Latina Sorority Inc. and a Comadre of the Epsilon Chapter at the University of Denver, the first Latina sorority on campus.

Contribution to the Community:
Blanca is the co-founder, along with her husband, of a local Colorado non-profit called INSPiRE, whose mission is to ignite, train, and invest in youth to become Change Agents in their schools, families, and communities. Her advocacy for immigrant rights paid off in 2013 with the passage of Colorado ASSET (SB13-033). Additionally, she shares her passion for youth empowerment through volunteering for organizations such as College Summit, as well as presenting to high school students of color across the metro area about the importance of continuing their education at post-secondary institutions.

References:
- http://www.coloradoinspires.org/team.html
- HTTP://UNITEDWEDREAM.ORG/BLANCA-TREJO/
Community Organizer Spotlight

Angela Cobián
CCESL Community Organizing Institute Facilitator 2015 & 2017

“I am doing this out of a deep love for my community. I’m acting directly out of my experience.”

Community Organizing Work:
Angela Cobián’s organizing work began in a public school in Northeast Denver as a Community Organizer for Together Colorado. She co-leads Together Colorado’s work in education and also leads base-building efforts in Latino Catholic parishes in the Denver-metro area.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Angela is a first-generation Mexican-American feminist from the west side of Denver. Angela graduated from Colorado College with a Bachelors in Political Science and Minor in Spanish in 2011. She was a Pi Gamma Mu Honor Society graduate, as well as the recipient of the Fred Sondermann Award in Political Science. She earned her Masters in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Colorado-Denver. In 2013, she was awarded a Fullbright shcholarship to teach at the National Pedagogical University in Mexico City. A Teach for America alum, Cobián was profoundly influenced by the time she spent teaching, stating “there is a sense of triumph that you get through teaching that I have not found anywhere else.”

Contribution to the Community:
Following graduation from Colorado College, Angela Cobián returned to her hometown of Denver to teach second and third grade in Denver Public Schools are part of the Teach for American program. Later, during her tenure at the National Pedagogical University in Mexico City, she consulted on student-led social change initiatives with Enseña por Mexico. Cobián is a member (and former Trustee) of the Colorado College Alumni Association, founding Board-member and Communications Director for New Leaders Council-Denver, and a selection-committee member for the Non Profit Internship Program at the Denver Foundation.

References:
- A Cobián, personal communication, September 2015
- https://www.coloradocollege.edu/basics/aftercc/recent-grads/angela-cobian/
- https://issuu.com/coloradocommunitymedia/docs/dh0810
Community Organizer Spotlight

Justin Valas
CCESL Community Organizing Institute Facilitator 2016

Community Organizing Work:
Justin Valas currently serves as the Health Policy Advocate for the Asian Pacific Development Center (APDC). APDC works to advance the well-being of Asian American Pacific Islander communities of Colorado by providing culturally appropriate and integrated behavioral, medical and related services. Justin works in and across communities to build community power, advance health and racial equity, and promote policy changes to benefit Asian, Pacific Islander, immigrant, and refugee communities across Colorado. Prior to his role with APDC, Justin worked at the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition where he helped to support the creation of community-driven, pro-immigrant policies and prevent anti-immigrant policies from becoming law. Before moving back home to Colorado, he organized alongside undocumented youth as a member of the NC DREAM Team.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Justin Valas is an Asian American activist and organizer from Denver. He graduated from Knox College with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Black Studies. His degree focused on the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa with a senior research project in comparative dictatorships of Malawi and Zimbabwe. He also has a passion for Asian American history and community. Justin has years of community organizing and public policy expertise in areas of racial justice, immigrant rights, health equity, and economic justice. He has worked on repealing Colorado’s “Show Me Your Papers” law, passing Colorado ASSET, and a number of other state and local policies. Justin is also an avid hip hop head, comic book nerd, photographer, and public policy wonk.

Contribution to the Community:
Justin has dedicated his professional work to community empowerment and social change. He has invested time in increasing awareness of Asian American history, activating Asian Americans in organizing for change and solidarity, and creating space in his professional spaces for Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and other communities. He has been invited to present on these issues at numerous workshops and classes for conferences, schools, and organizations. Professionally, his work has centered on issues of economic justice, health equity, racial justice, and immigrant rights. He has worked on public policy issues at local, state, and federal levels and sought to ensure that those directly impacted by public policy are active and engaged participants in creating change.

References:

- [https://www.linkedin.com/in/justin-valas-95ab473/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/justin-valas-95ab473/)
- [http://coloradoimmigrant.org/about/](http://coloradoimmigrant.org/about/)
Community Organizer Spotlight

Regan Byrd
CCESL Community Organizing Institute Facilitator 2018

Community Organizing Work:
Regan is an award-winning community activist and non-profit professional with over 11 years of experience in grassroots and social justice non-profit organizations, formerly working for The Arc of Jefferson County, 9to5 Colorado: National Association of Working Women, and Hunger Free Colorado. Regan Byrd is currently the Data and Systems Manager at The Bell Policy Center, a progressive research and advocacy organization focused on economic mobility, working in operations, HR, IT, and financial management. She has served as the co-chair of the board of directors for 9to5 Colorado for 7 years and treasurer of the board of directors for Colorado People’s Alliance for 1.5 years. Regan is also a former commissioner on the Aurora Humans Rights Commission, and former board member for the youth mentorship non-profit “YESS Institute”. She is a graduate of the Transit Alliance’s Citizen Academy and Emerge Colorado, a training program for women running for office. She is a recent graduate of the Denver Metro Chamber’s “Impact Denver” leadership class of Spring 2018.

Personal History and Self-Interest:
Regan has a deep commitment to social justice, institutional systems change, and collective liberation. She believes this is best done through self-reflexivity, strong allyship, knowledge cultivation, intentional inclusivity, coalition building, and dismantling systems of oppression.

Regan Byrd is an alumni of the University of Denver’s undergraduate program, with dual B.A. degrees in Public Policy and Sociology, and minors in Gender and Women’s Studies, and English. Regan has been named a “Woman to Watch” by the Denver League of Women Voters, and is the winner of the 2015 Lilly Ledbetter award from 9to5 Colorado.

Contribution to the Community:
Regan is also a recognized anti-oppression activist, speaker, and trainer. She has trained various organizations on anti-oppression and allyship, including the Colorado Women’s Bar Association, the Colorado Mid-Wives Association, the Sierra Club, and Denver Public Schools. Regan has served as the morning keynote speaker for the DU Women’s Conference in 2017, the DU Allyship Summit in 2018, and was a trainer at the 2018 HerDU conference. She participated in various expert panels on topics ranging from critical race theory, the history of police, and housing justice.
Resources
Making it Public: Opportunities to Share Your Community-Organizing Knowledge and Skills

Sharing what you have learned from your experiences working with communities is a critical skill for any community organizer. Not sure where to start with sharing your community-engaged work? Here are a few ideas for making your work public:

- **I. Blog or web portfolio**: Create a web presence through a blog or portfolio of your work

- **II. Group discussions**: Find other individuals to meet with to discuss your work. These discussions could take many different forms (e.g., informal get-togethers with friends, house meetings, organized dialogues, a club, reading group, or Meetup group, etc.)

- **III. Presentations**: Present your work to others in various school and educational settings, reading groups, and/or professional conferences
  - **Elementary school, high school, or college courses**: Ask teachers or professors who teach about social justice processes and community organizing if you might be able to do a class presentation or mini “guest lecture” on a topic related to your community organizing experiences.
    - Examples of DU courses to look into: CCESL’s Spectator to Citizen course sequence, Living & Learning Community classes, and Pioneer Leadership Classes.
  - **Reading groups**: Various departments on college campuses, especially sociology, social work, and international relations, have regular reading groups in which speakers are invited to talk. Talk to professors you know in a department of interest and see if they might need a speaker.
  - **Professional conferences and trainings**: Present your work in the form of a poster, talk, or panel of individuals at a professional conference or training. Here’s a list of organizations that you might consider applying to give a poster or talk to at their annual conferences:
    - Colorado Women’s College events ([http://womenscollege.du.edu/community-events/] (http://womenscollege.du.edu/community-events/))
    - Regularly updated lists of upcoming conferences/ trainings @:
      - Association for Community Organizing and Social Administration (ACOSA) ([http://www.acosa.org/joomla/](http://www.acosa.org/joomla/))
      - The Midwest Academy ([http://www.midwestacademy.com/] (http://www.midwestacademy.com/)) - leading national training institute for the progressive movement for social justice
      - Training for Change ([http://www.trainingforchange.org/] (http://www.trainingforchange.org/))

- **IV. Publications**: Write articles about your work for campus and community newsletters and/or publications, professional or scholarly journals
  - **Campus publications**
- CCESL’s Public Good Newsletter
- The Clarion (http://duclarion.com/) – DU’s newspaper
- Expressions e-Newsletter – monthly e-newsletter produced by DU Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences (AHSS)
- Contact DU media relations team to explore always-changing outlets: (http://www.du.edu/marcomm/media-relations/)

  - **Local Denver publications**
    - Washington Park Profile (http://www.washparkprofile.com)
    - 5280 Magazine (http://www.5280.com)

  - **Publish short pieces or share your work on websites or group listserves:**
    - Comm-org: Online “Conference” for Community Organizing (UW-Madison) (http://comm-org.wisc.edu/)
    - Idealist.org: Online site for the nonprofit, Idealist, where one can exchange ideas and/or resources. (http://www.idealista.org/)

  - **Professional/scholarly journals**
    - Academic Exchange Quarterly (http://rapidintellect.com/AEQweb/rufen1.htm)
    - Issues in Political Economy (http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/ipe/)
    - Social Science Research Network (http://www.ssrn.com)
Funding your Work

Funding for community organizing work is available from a variety of foundations and government organizations. These sources change on a regular basis, so you will need to do your own research to find grant opportunities when you are starting your work.

We have listed (below) some good websites for starting your search for funding opportunities:

1. Pivot (http://pivot.cos.com/) - Database, updated daily, with funding opportunities across a wide range of disciplines


3. Foundation Center (http://foundationcenter.org/) - Find information about private sources of philanthropy across the United States.
LEARN more About COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

If you would like to know more about community organizing, below are some additional resources.

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b1038268~S3

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b2104026~S3

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b3648387~S3

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b2786220~S3

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b5786510~S3

Ganz, M. (2002). What is Organizing?. *Social Policy, 33*(1), 16-17.

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b2710968~S3

Hoose, P. M. (1993). *It’s our world, too!: Stories of young people who are making a difference* (First edition.). Joy Street Books / Little, Brown and Co..


DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b4412501~S3


Routledge.
DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b5872255~S3
DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b3950261~S3

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b6113869~S3

DU permalink: http://bianca.penlib.du.edu/record=b3357934~S3
WORKS CITED


4 http://www.suffolk.edu/campuslife/27883.php


13 Ibid, pg. 83.


16 Ibid, pg. 183.