



HANDOUT: STEPS IN CAMPAIGNS

Every campaign is different. But based on experience, there are important steps that every campaign has to take. The group begins by framing their issue and then goes into the following stages, approximately in this order:

CAMPAIGN TERMINOLOGY

GOALS: What is it that we want to get?

TARGET: The person or entity that can give us what we want.

STRATEGY: The style in which, the plan, or way we'll get there.

TACTICS: The individual actions we take to implement the strategy to force the target to give us what we want (our goal).

AFFECTED COMMUNITIES: The people impacted by this issue.

ALLIES: The people who will be down to help.

(1) Investigate/gather information: Get the facts. Clear up any possible misunderstanding right at the start. If an injustice clearly has been done, be equally certain exactly who or what is to blame for it. The complexity of society today requires patient investigation to accurately determine responsibility for a particular injustice. The ability to explain facts rather than just relying on rhetoric will win support and prevent misunderstandings.

(2) Educate/Outreach: Keep campaign participants and supporters well-informed about the issues, and spread the word to the public. Education also requires facing issues of oppression and internalized oppression that may face the group. Tactics may include leaflets, street theater, training, informal street speaking, door-to-door personal visits, phone calls and press releases. Always stick to the facts, avoid exaggeration, be brief and show good will.

(3) Increase motivation and personal commitment for the struggle ahead: Prepare your group to commit itself to nonviolent action. This includes getting ready to face backlash or possible repression for some of the actions necessary to establish justice.

(4) Negotiate with target: Meet with opponents and put the case to them. A solution may be worked out at this point. It is possible that your opponents have a grievance which you didn't know about. Now is the time to find out. If no solution is possible, let your opponents know that you intend to stand firm to establish justice.

(5) Direct action: Engage in tactics to resist the unjust system. Some of these may be legal strategies while others may be outside of the law, such as the use of civil disobedience.

(6) Create new relationship with opponent which reflects the new power reality: King referred to this stage as "reconciliation" – not losing relationships because of nonviolent action but building stronger, more respectful relationships.

Handout derived from Dr. Martin Luther King's essay "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in Why We Can't Wait, New York: Penguin Books, 1963. Definitions based on School of Unity & Liberation's Political Education Workshop Manual. (www.schoolofunityandliberation.org)