

## Meeting with Allies a training by Picture the Homeless

There are a lot of organizations in New York City. As a homeless-led grassroots group, we have a huge base of potential allies: faith leaders, service providers, other grassroots groups, and bigger non-profits working on similar issues.

*A meeting with an ally is considered an **ACTION**.* When we go into a meeting with an ally organization, we have a goal. We have something concrete that we want to get out of it. Will they endorse our legislation? Will they join us at an upcoming action? Will they send a speaker and do turnout for an event we're organizing?

### How to Have A Successful Meeting

**SET Up.** Members should have all logistical questions answered before the next internal campaign meeting, so that you can invite others to participate. Where and when will the meeting be? How many people will you be meeting with? Organizers and trainees should never attend these meetings by themselves. *EVERY PICTURE THE HOMELESS ACTIVITY IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT!!*

**PREP Up.** As with any important event, you need to hold a prep meeting first. At the prep, you should:

- state the goal of the ally meeting
- establish clear roles among all PTH participants;
- create an agenda for the ally meeting, even if it's an informal one;
- what materials you should bring

**FOLLOW Up.** Debrief afterwards, and make sure you address individual performances—who messed up, who did great! Send a thank-you note to the folks you met with, but include a list of what commitments were made and what the timeline looks like.

*It's important to understand where the other side is coming from. Lots of times, the people you meet with might not be able to answer your questions or honor your demands. They might need to consult with the Executive Director, or the Board of Directors, or the co-chair of a specific committee. So be understanding, but make sure that you (1) find out WHAT THE PROCESS IS, and (2) set a clear timeline for when we can expect a response to our request.*

### A Meeting with an Ally Organization is **NOT**:

- A chance for you to make new friends
- A chance for you to get your personal situation taken care of

- A chance for you to show how smart you are
- A chance for you to just sit there and let other members do all the work

## Commonly-Made Mistakes

There are a handful of traps that we often fall into when we get to an ally meeting. In prep, we should make sure that we prepare for these scenarios:

**Get Off Track.** Yeah, the system is bad. If we wanted to just talk about how f\*cked up everything is, the meeting would never end. An ally meeting is not the place to just talk forever about how bad things are—it's about finding common ground and identifying the best way that our two organizations can work to CHANGE THINGS.

**Diverge from the Agenda.** If we don't walk in the door with very clear goals, and a very orderly way to get to each goal, we're wasting our own time. This means STICKING TO THE AGENDA. If they want to discuss other things, make sure you keep coming back to the agenda.

**Not leave the meeting with clear next steps.** Will they do what we asked? If they asked us to do something, have we written it down and established a timeline for next contact?

## Fictional Role Play: Homeless Helpers Inc

Homeless Helpers Inc is a huge not-for-profit that provides services to homeless people. They are frequently very critical of the city's homeless policies, but they are also very conservative in their tactics and hesitant to challenge the Mayor in a major way, and some of our members have had bad experiences with them. We want them to join us in a protest at One Police Plaza, to demand that the NYPD stop busting homeless street vendors.

*One person plays the representative from Homeless Helpers. You agree with the goals of the action, but you are nervous about doing something that might jeopardize your city funding, and you are trying to commit to as little as possible. Two people play the representatives from Picture the Homeless. You feel that having Homeless Helpers at the protest will make the press pay attention, so you want them to come. **You have five minutes.***

## Fictional Role Play: Righteous Anger

Righteous Anger is a well-respected grassroots group that organizes tenants in Bed-Stuy to fight against gentrification. They do really interesting in-your-face direct action, including lots of civil disobedience, but they've never been supportive of our work. We are working on a new piece of legislation and we want their support. *Two people play the representatives from Picture the Homeless. The representative from Righteous Anger talks a good talk, but they don't seem likely to do much. **You have five minutes.***