

Giving Them Something They Can Feel a training by Picture the Homeless

Sooner or later, grassroots groups have to reach outside of their own community to get support for something they're working on. They could be: ally organizations, politicians, faith leaders, well-connected individuals, journalists... but regardless of WHO we're talking to, the problem comes down to:

How do you convince someone to take action on a problem that they're not directly impacted by?
How do we get people to see that they ARE affected by a problem, even if they might not know it?

Let's go around the room and brainstorm as many possible ways to convince someone!

Identifying Potential Ally Communities

Let's brainstorm: if we are people working on each of the following issue areas, what are some potential allies or related issues we could reach out to? How could we find them? How would we approach them? What would we say?

Immigrant rights	Police brutality
Prison reform	Lack of housing
Universal healthcare	Community gardens
Public schools	Anti-war
Rights for gay & lesbian & transgender people	Veteran rights
Unemployment	Domestic violence
Drug policy	Racism

Core Principles of Moving Someone to Get Involved

Do your homework. Do research, online and in the newspapers and by talking to our friends, about the person/organization we're meeting with. Know who funds them, who works with them, who hates them. Read what they've written. Figure out where they stand on key issues—even ones that might not seem related.

Prove that what you're talking about is real. Bring facts, statistics, articles—anything we can use to document the problem we're talking about, to give strength to our argument and make them less likely to think we're making things up or exaggerating a minor problem.

Give it a human face. Facts and statistics are important, but they mean nothing unless they're balanced by a real person telling a real story that can really make them feel what we're saying. For example: if we're meeting with an elected official around disorderly conduct, we've got to show them that we've got the facts on our side. But even more important is for a member to talk about THEIR experiences with disorderly conduct, how unjust and horrible it was, how it impacted their life.

Make them see what you can do for them. Convincing someone that an issue is THE RIGHT THING TO DO is only half the battle; if we're going to get them to stand with us and take action, we also need to make them see that WE can be helpful to THEM. This is part of prep: identifying what we have to offer, and how it might be helpful to the ally or target we're meeting with. It's also important to ASK them,

Build on existing relationships. Who are we friends with, who our potential ally might respect? If we work closely with a faith community or organization that also works with our potential ally, mention that! If we have a lot of members who are part of their core constituency, mention that!

Function as a team. Everyone needs to step up and take on responsibility, and then FOLLOW THROUGH.