

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZING 101

What is Leadership?

Leadership is taking responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty. The strength of a movement grows out of its commitment to develop leadership.

What is Organizing?

Organizing is a form of leadership that enables a constituency to turn its resources into the power to make change based on the recruitment, training, and development of leadership. In short, organizing is about equipping people (constituency) with the power (story and strategy) to make change (real outcomes).

PEOPLE: Organizing a constituency

A constituency is a group of people who are “standing together” to assert their own goals. Organizing is not only about solving problems. It is about the people with the problem mobilizing their own resources to solve it . . . and keep it solved. ***Who are our people?***

POWER: What is it, where does it come from, how does it work?

Rev. Martin Luther King described power as the “ability to achieve purpose.” Power is not a thing, quality, or trait – it is the influence created by the relationship between interests and resources. Power can be “power with” or “power over.” Our power comes from people like you, who organize resources into the power we need to create change. So organizing is not only a commitment to identify more leaders, but also a commitment to engage those leaders in a particular type of fight. Organizing power begins with commitment by the first person that wants to make it happen. The work of organizers begins with their acceptance of the responsibility to challenge others to do the same. ***Where does our power come from?***

CHANGE: What kind of change can organizing make?

Change is specific, concrete, and significant. It requires focus on a goal that will make a real difference that we can see. It is not about “creating awareness”, having a meaningful conversation, or giving a great speech. It is about specifying a clearly visible goal and explaining why achieving that goal can make a real difference in meeting the challenge that your constituency has to face. ***What kind of change are we trying to make?***

Source: Originally adapted from the works of Marshall Ganz of Harvard University.