

Community Leadership Workshop

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING?²

Overview

An interactive overview of different approaches to community change

Purpose

To help participants understand the purpose and process of community organizing and other change strategies

Time Required

45 minutes

Materials

Nine volunteer actors, large signs (identifying the name of each character, the church, and the city), tape, paragraph for Narrator (Handout 1), five sets of description papers (Handout 2), markers and butcher paper for five groups

Preparation

Complete the script that the Narrator will read (Handout 1). Fill in the blanks by naming the city, church, vacation spot, and pastor. (NOTE: You may wish to use semifictional names that will still have meaning for participants, like “San ColoredCisco.”) Once you have completed the narrative, make a copy for the Narrator and prepare large signs that clearly show the name of each character, the church, and the city. Write out the three questions for small-group work on a piece of butcher paper. Make five copies.

² This workshop was created and piloted by YUCA, a YLDI partner organization (see Appendix 3, Contact Information).

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
<p>Step 1: Role Play</p>	<p>5 min</p>	<p>Volunteers will act out what happened as the Narrator reads the script given in Handout 1.</p>	<p>Nine volunteers to act out the following parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Narrator ★ Elected official ★ The church ★ Businessperson ★ People in church (2) ★ Pastor ★ Local radio deejay ★ Ku Klux Klan member. <p>If your group is not that big, use stuffed animals or chairs for some roles, but the Klan member should be a real person.</p> <p>Sign that says St. _____ Church</p> <p>Signs that label each character.</p> <p>Sign that says _____ (fictional city name)</p>

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
Step 2: Small Groups	10 min	<p>Divide participants into 5 groups. Give each group one of the description papers shown in Handout 2. Explain to the participants, “This is all your group can do, given the resources you have and the decisions your board and staff have made. These are your limitations. In your groups, tell us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ What is the problem? ★ Why does your organization think the problem exists? ★ Based on what you can do, what is your organization’s response? <p>“Write the answers to questions 1–3 on your group’s butcher paper and prepare a 2-minute skit showing your organization’s response to the situation.”</p>	<p>Markers and butcher paper for each group</p> <p>Description papers for each group (see Handout 2)</p> <p>Butcher paper sheets with questions 1–3 written on it and posted on the wall</p>
Step 3: Presentations	10 min	<p>Tell the participants, “We will call up one group at a time. Briefly describe your group. Tell us your answers to Questions 1 and 2. Then, when we yell ACTION, act out your response (Question 3). When we yell FREEZE, stop. Then tape your butcher paper to the wall—we’ll use them later.”</p>	Tape
Step 4: Discussion	20 min	<p>Ask the participants to come together in a circle to review the notes from the small groups.</p> <p>Explain, “First, we will define some terms (see Handout 3). To identify the different methods of working for change, we’ll use what you did in the skits.</p> <p>“Group 1 was the drop-in shelter. How would you describe the type of work Group 1 did in the community? [Answer: Service.] So, one type of work is service. Service is an approach to change that meets immediate needs.</p>	Handout 3

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
		<p>“Group 2 was people who speak to City Council and the media. How would you describe the type of work Group 2 did in the community? [Answer: Advocacy.] So another type of work is advocacy. Advocacy is an approach to change that is characterized by someone speaking or working on behalf of others.”</p> <p>Continue through the terms using the definitions in Handout 3.</p>	

HANDOUT 1: SCRIPT FOR NARRATOR

What is community organizing?

Volunteers will act out what happened as the Narrator reads the following scenario.

Narrator: There is a low-income community of color, _____.

Last Sunday, St. _____ Church there burned. Inside the church, residents were gathering to go on a big trip to _____, so they had all their clothing and many of their personal belongings with them. Many of these things were burned. In addition to the main part of the church, a child care room burned.

The pastor of the church, Reverend _____, led people to the school nearby to escape the fire. This was the fifth church burned in the community in five months.

After each fire, the local radio station receives an anonymous call from people claiming to be members of the Klan, saying that they did the burning.

Narrator: FREEZE!

Actors should stay onstage for the small-group role plays.

HANDOUT 2: DESCRIPTION PAPERS

What is community organizing?

Description Paper 1:

There is a low-income community of color, _____. Last Sunday, St. _____ Church there burned. Inside the church, residents were gathering to go on a big trip to _____, so they had all their clothing and many of their personal belongings with them. Many of these things were burned. In addition to the main part of the church, a child care room burned. The pastor of the church, Reverend _____, led people to the school nearby to escape the fire. This was the fifth church burned in the community in five months. After each fire, the local radio station receives an anonymous call from people claiming to be members of the Klan, saying that they did the burning. **Your group provides food, shelter, blankets, toys, and clothing to people who need them. You have a 24-hour drop-in center. Sometimes you go into the community and pass things out.**

Description Paper 2:

There is a low-income community of color, _____. Last Sunday, St. _____ Church there burned. Inside the church, residents were gathering to go on a big trip to _____, so they had all their clothing and many of their personal belongings with them. Many of these things were burned. In addition to the main part of the church, a child care room burned. The pastor of the church, Reverend _____, led people to the school nearby to escape the fire. This was the fifth church burned in the community in five months. After each fire, the local radio station receives an anonymous call from people claiming to be members of the Klan, saying that they did the burning. **Your group speaks out to the City Council and the media about issues affecting the community. You always go and represent people who you believe cannot speak for themselves. Thus, you speak on their behalf.**

Description Paper 3:

There is a low-income community of color, _____. Last Sunday, St. _____ Church there burned. Inside the church, residents were gathering to go on a big trip to _____, so they had all their clothing and many of their personal belongings with them. Many of these things were burned. In addition to the main part of the church, a child care room burned. The pastor of the church, Reverend _____, led people to the school nearby to escape the fire. This was the fifth church burned in the community in five months. After each fire, the local radio station receives an anonymous call from people claiming to be members of the Klan, saying that they did the burning. **Your group tries to get businesses to support your community. You negotiate with local and big businesses to invest more in the community and support community activities. In the past, you got businesses to partner with churches to sponsor child care for kids in the neighborhood.**

Description Paper 4:

There is a low-income community of color, _____. Last Sunday, St. _____ Church there burned. Inside the church, residents were gathering to go on a big trip to _____, so they had all their clothing and many of their personal belongings with them. Many of these things were burned. In addition to the main part of the church, a child care room burned. The pastor of the church, Reverend _____, led people to the school nearby to escape the fire. This was the fifth church burned in the community in five months. After each fire, the local radio station receives an anonymous call from people claiming to be members of the Klan, saying that they did the burning. **At every election, your group runs a campaign for a candidate that you believe represents the community well. Last time, your group supported Reverend _____ for the City Council. However, Pastor _____ lost by two votes.**

Description Paper 5:

There is a low-income community of color, _____. Last Sunday, St. _____ Church there burned. Inside the church, residents were gathering to go on a big trip to _____, so they had all their clothing and many of their personal belongings with them. Many of these things were burned. In addition to the main part of the church, a child care room burned. The pastor of the church, Reverend _____, led people to the school nearby to escape the fire. This was the fifth church burned in the community in five months. After each fire, the local radio station receives an anonymous call from people claiming to be members of the Klan, saying that they did the burning. **Last year, your group organized community residents to oppose a Klan rally/block party in your community. Many people turned out for the rally. You have been watching the pattern of churches being burned and notice similar things. You did research and found out for certain that the Klan is behind the church burnings.**

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING? HANDOUT 3: DEFINITIONS

Service: An approach to change that meets immediate needs. For example, if a person is hungry, you give him or her food. If a church burns, you collect money or canned food for the people affected. Shelters are another example of this type of work.

Advocacy: An approach to change characterized by someone speaking or working for or on behalf of others. For example, Amnesty International works for the rights of prisoners. They work in the community because prisoners cannot. If Amnesty International talks to the president about releasing a prisoner, it is advocating for the rights of that prisoner.

Economic Development: An approach to change in which the economic base of a community is built. For example, in East Palo Alto, a group called EPA CANDO works to help local businesses partner with each other to become stronger so they can compete with big businesses. The economic development approach says, “Let’s take care of our own.” Another example is Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE) in Los Angeles; it has a young women’s cooperative for local business owners.

Electoral: An approach to change that works to improve the laws in our system by getting people elected to office who respond to the needs of the people. For example, youth mobilized in California to defeat Proposition 21 which would have altered the California juvenile justice system to allow young people to be tried and held with adult offenders. They did a lot of work getting people registered to vote and turning out the vote on Election Day.

Organizing: An approach to change that addresses the system itself. It usually combines a long-term strategy with short-term goals, and it attempts to change the system at its roots. For example, Youth Organizing Communities in California uses organizing to push for schools, not jails, and a true education that teaches young people about their roots.

In our communities, these approaches to social change often overlap. For example, the Black Panther Party not only organized against the police but also ran free breakfast programs for children who weren’t getting proper food. AIWA organizes against sweatshop conditions and leads English and “know your rights” classes for the immigrant women they work with. Actions may look the same but their analysis could be different. The work changes with the situation according to the identification of a problem and the analysis of why it exists.