



Grassroots Organizing 101

Fridays for Future USA
January 18, 2020



Agenda

- Welcome
- Introduction to Organizing
 - Case study: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott
 - Why Organize the Grassroots?
- Defining Organizing
- The Organizer's Toolbox
- Organizing and the Climate Movement
- Acknowledgements and Additional Resources



Welcome!

- Name
- Preferred pronouns
- Location
- Involvement with FFF (or other climate groups)
- Experience level with grassroots organizing

...and anything else you'd like to share!

Introduction to Organizing

Think back to what you know about the
American Civil Rights Movement.

What was the story you were taught about Rosa Parks and her refusal to vacate her bus seat?



Rosa Parks: The Mainstream Story

-
-
- Rosa Parks was an ordinary hardworking and respectable black woman from Montgomery, Alabama
-



Rosa Parks: The More Complete Story

Parks was active in the Montgomery NAACP since 1943

She trained at the famous Highlander Folk School in summer 1955 (before her famous December

Mentored by organizer Septima Clark (referred to as the “Mother of the Movement” by MLK, Jr.)



Rosa Parks: The More Complete Story

Parks' act of civil disobedience, though certainly courageous and bold, was not the first of its kind

The bus boycott lasted for more than a year—nearly 400 days of hundreds consistently boycotting; came about only because of significant work empowering the grassroots



The Rosa Parks Story

- The popular narrative,: the personal bravery and spontaneous emotions of anger
- The more complete story: a sophisticated strategy, train activists, and meticulously work to engage the grassroots: **organization**
- “Young people think Rosa Parks just sat down on a bus and ended segregation, but that wasn't the case at all”. - Claudette Colvin



Why Organize the Grassroots around CC ?

- The vast majority—more potential people power for change!
- Hold the “tree tops” or “grasstops” accountable
- Organizing the grassroots builds a truly democratic movement
- The grassroots are the victims and beneficiaries of slowing climate change

Defining Organizing



Defining Organizing

- Bringing people together to do things
- Organizing is leadership that enables people to turn the resources they have into the power they need to make the change they want.
- Create democratic, sustainable/self-sustaining community power

Defining Organizing



Organizing as defined by Marshall Ganz (right; left is César Chávez)

- Organizers identify, recruit and develop leaders
- Organizers build community around (local) leadership
- Organizers bring people together, challenging them to act on behalf of their shared values and interests

A basic perspective

It does not matter who is in power, what does is the grass roots. Another perspective: lead locally...



How do we build a grass roots structure

Basic practices

Defining Organizing (More Concretely)



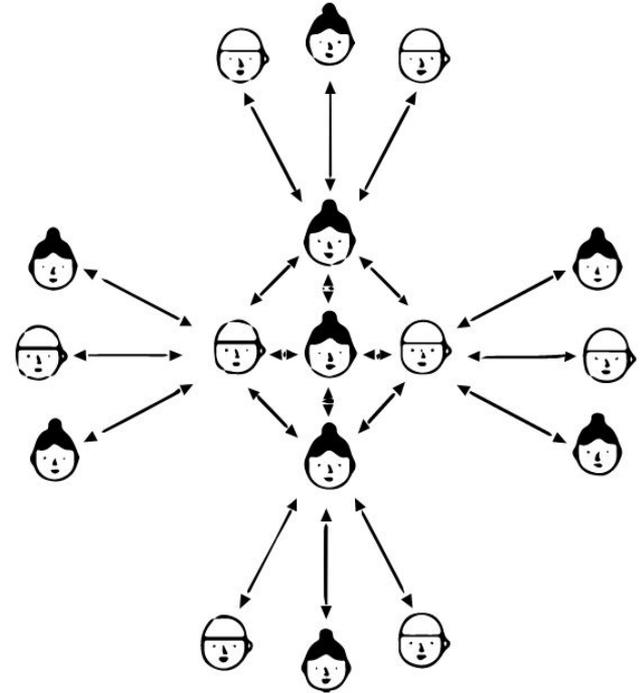
Overall, practices of the snowflake model

- Recruit and engage volunteers
- Storytelling
- Building relationships
- Building partnerships with other organizations
- Mobilizing relationships to strategize and take action
- Trainings, coaching, and mentorship

Remember: If you are a community organizer, the ultimate goal is to “organize yourself out of a job”!

The Snowflake Model

- Building a true grassroots movement with structure requires:
 - Distributing the leadership
 - Distributing the responsibility
 - Developing leaders
 - Building a web of trusting interpersonal relationships



The Organizer's Toolbox, four tools of
many



I. Storytelling and the Public Narrative

Storytelling connects us with people by communicating our values and emotions

Public Narrative framework: “Through public narrative, social movement leaders – and participants – can move to action by mobilizing sources of motivation, constructing new shared individual and collective identities, and finding the courage to act.” - Marshall Ganz



I. Storytelling

- Three components of the Public Narrative:
 - Story of Self: a personal narrative communicating why we do what we do and our personal values (main character = the individual activist)
 - Story of Us: a narrative about a particularly impactful past experience in the community, a challenge the community faces, etc. that conveys shared community values (main character = community we're trying to call to action)
 - Story of Now: a narrative conveying the (bad) future that could come to be without urgent action and the (good) future that we could build instead
- Finally, follow up with a **hard ask** - now that your listener knows all these things, what should they do next?!

II. Building relationships and the 1:1



Build strong relationships of trust

Create a personal connection (that will then compel people to go to a strike when it's raining, help with a boring task, etc. when you later ask)

We get involved in activism because we cared, but we stay in movements in part because the people we like are there with us - so make new friends!

Three points on building relationships, first 1 on 1, events, digital organizing



A. The First 1:1

You will have many informal conversations with the people you work with, but it's good to schedule a more structured 1:1 when someone new first joins





B. Holding Events to build relationships

Events are a great way to 1) recruit new people and 2) generate awareness among a broader public.

Above all, connect with people!



C. Digital Outreach to build relationships

Digital organizing is a great way to support real life organizing:

It should not replace on-the-ground field work, but supplement it

Zoom and ActionNetwork



III. Structuring the team or group

Four basic functions:



III. Structuring the team or group

Four basic functions:

A. Volunteer coordinating



III. Structuring the team or group

Four basic functions:

- A. Volunteer coordinating**
- B. Events coordinating**



III. Structuring the team or group

Four basic functions:

- A. Volunteer coordinating**
- B. Events coordinating**
- C. Team coordinating, sometimes erroneously called team leading.**



III. Structuring the team or group

Four basic functions:

- A. Volunteer coordinating**
- B. Events coordinating**
- C. Team coordinating, sometimes erroneously called team leading.**
- D. Data coordinating**



IV. Setting your strategy and acting

Who sets the groups strategy, or policy, or goals?

Organizing and the Climate Movement

Organizing and the Climate Movement



- How? In FFF and other climate movement groups, we use our local groups to bring together folks and set the policy, strategy, course
 - Decisions start at the bottom, not at the top
 - Empower the local community members around us, provide them with the direction and training to make decisions, and let them take the initiative



Our Movement's Broader Goals

- Give local and national groups the autonomy to determine their own broader goals
- That being said, many FFF groups share common global goals, including that:
 - Governments listen to the scientific community
 - Governments secure a pathway to less than 1.5°C increase in global temp
 - The public is exposed to the problem of greenhouse gas emissions
 - Governments declare a climate emergency

So, our task:

Engage as many people as possible to activate the power of the grassroots in fighting for our broader goals around slowing climate change!

Acknowledgements and Additional Resources



Acknowledgements

We based much of the content in this training off of [an organizer's handbook](#) produced by Marshall Ganz, the Leading Change Network, and the New Organizing Institute. We are deeply grateful for the work of these people and organizations, and their dedication to making their expertise public.



Additional Resources

In addition to the guidebook listed in the previous slide (highly recommend as a resource!), read about the work of the most famous community organizers, including **César Chávez**, **Saul Alinsky**, **Ella Baker**, and even **Barack Obama** (who was a community organizer in Chicago for several years right after college).

You can draw lots of inspiration from their lives and the strategies they employed!