



Anti-Racist Community Engagement
Digital Companion

<https://compact.org/anti-racist-ce>

Working Against Racism Through Cross-Institutional Communities of
Practice

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Presentation: Organizing Against Racism in Higher Education
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Organizing Against Racism in Higher Education

By John Reiff

--With thanks to Marshall Ganz and
Mary Hannah Henderson

An organizer works from a purpose statement— what is yours?

- I am organizing **WHOM** to do **WHAT**?
- I am organizing _____ at my institution to oppose racism by _____.
- I am organizing **WHOM** to do **WHAT--HOW**?

Some Examples

- I am organizing faculty, staff, and senior administrators at my institution to create and participate in an anti-racist dialogue series.
- I am organizing department members and leadership to recognize and reward DEI work in the RPT (Retention, Promotion and Tenure) decision processes.
- I am organizing department faculty to be intentional in creating anti-racist curricula and teaching approaches.

Let's practice using an organizing lens in a short one-to-one to start thinking like an organizer

Form a Purpose Statement. Identify a *concrete* change at your institution that would move it in an anti-racist direction and that you would be willing to work on. Who would *have* to be involved to make this change happen?

“I am organizing **whom** to do **what**.”

Post your statement here: [\[link\]](#)

What do we need to know to organize the people of our campus?

“In democratic countries, knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others.”

–Alexis de Tocqueville

What are some of the key elements in the “knowledge of how to combine”?

- Relationships
 - Motivation
 - Strategy
- Campaigns
- Leadership

Relationships

Organizers develop new relationships out of old ones—sometimes by linking one person to another and sometimes by linking whole networks of people together. Relationships grow out of:

- exchanges of **interests** and **resources** (you have to figure out what they are),
- discovery of shared **values**,
- the **commitment** to sustain them (you have to ask for it), and
- the creation of a **shared story** (you have to make it together).
- **One-to-ones are a key tool for an organizer.**

Motivation

Organizers deepen people's understanding of who they are, what they want, and why they want it—their **values**. Organizers engage people in articulating a call to action as a shared story of the challenges they must face, the choices they must make, and the hope that can inspire the courage to make these choices now—a **story of self, us, and now**.

Strategy

Organizers engage people in deliberating about how they can turn what they have (**resources**) into what they need (**power**) to get what they want (their **interests**). People are co-creating **strategy**. Power is the influence our resources can have on the interests of others who hold resources that can influence our interests. Organizing often requires using our resources to mobilize power interdependently *with* others. This also requires us to map the pre-existing patterns of power in our system, so we can leverage or circumvent those patterns.

Action (Campaigns)

- Organizers work through campaigns. Campaigns are highly energized, intensely focused, concentrated streams of activity with specific goals and deadlines. People are recruited, programs launched, battles fought, and organizations built through campaigns.

CAMPAIGNS



Leadership

Organizers identify, recruit and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community.

Where is the leadership for the changes you wish to create? Or how can you catalyze and nurture it?

Using an organizing lens: Relationships

Step 2: Develop relationships. Among the people who would *have* to be involved to make the change happen, identify 3-5 individuals you could arrange to talk to in one-to-ones. What might you tell them, and what might you ask them? How might you use the Story of Self, Story of Us, and Story of Now? Think about how you might guide the conversation through self-disclosure, questions, and listening: do their **interests** in opposing racism align with yours in this proposed project, and what **resources** might they bring to it? Do their interests take them in other directions you care about, and what resources might you contribute to move toward their interests? To what extent do you share common **values**? Are they willing to **commit to continuing this conversation** to figure out how you can work together against racism?