

Student Activist Workbook

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ABOUT US

Common Cause is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to create open, honest and accountable government that serves the public interest; promote equal rights, opportunity and representation for all; and empower all people to make their voices heard in the political process. We have _____ state chapters, and our national office is located in _____.

Our program areas are _____

_____.

1. **Ethics and Accountability:** Common Cause serves as the people’s watchdog on government and special interests. We focus on reigning in abuses of power and holding public officials (including the president) accountable when they ignore democratic norms, values and the rule of law.
2. **Money and Influence:** Common Cause works to limit the influence of big money in our political process so that our leaders are accountable to We the People, not wealthy special interests.
3. **Gerrymandering and Representation:** Common Cause works to stop gerrymandering and advances reforms that ensure that the people pick their politicians (not the other way around). We focus on ensuring that everyone has real representation and is counted equally in our democracy.
4. **Voting and Elections:** Common Cause works to ensure that every eligible voter can register to vote and successfully cast a ballot. We focus on modernizing our elections by making them more accessible and democratic while also ensuring that our voting systems are secure from foreign and domestic threats.
5. **Media and Democracy:** Common Cause works to advance a fair and independent media, as well as restoring net neutrality to ensure an open internet for all.
6. **Constitution, Courts and Other Democracy Issues:** Common Cause works to create a strong democracy that protects everyone’s constitutional rights and ensures that our courts are fair and independent.

The **Student Action Alliance** was started in North Carolina as the HBCU Student Action Alliance during the 2014 academic year. The campus organizing program now exists in three additional states: _____

_____. The growth of the campus organizing program led to the name change in 2019. The mission of the Student Action Alliance is to build the next generation of democracy leaders through advancing their advocacy and leadership skills. We want to equip them with the tools they need to _____ on their campus, in their community and beyond. We work to expand their network and move them up the ladder of engagement to either boost their career or volunteer trajectory.

We have a long-term vision of building a democracy that works for everyone. To do that, we can't just organize to pass a bill in one legislative session, but we have to keep organizing and engaging the public. You will need to balance short-term and long-term goals of who we reach through our organizing.



LEADERSHIP

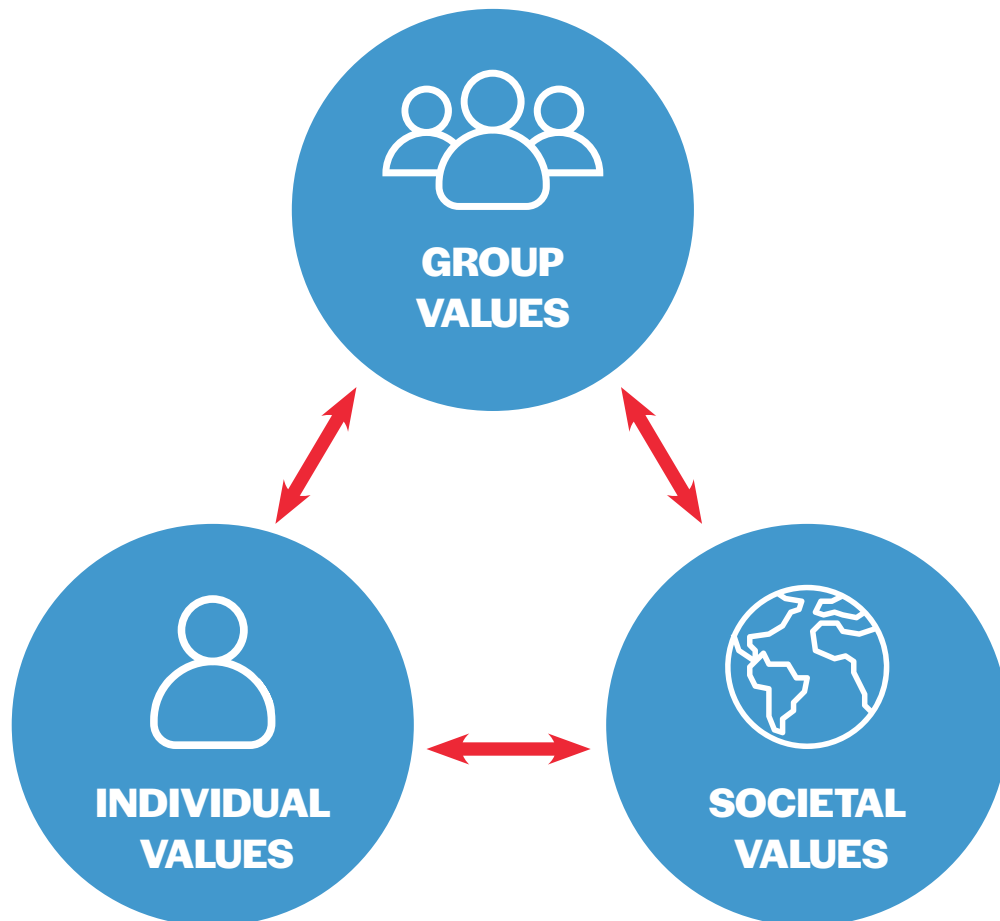
What is your personal definition of leadership?

The Social Change Model (SCM)

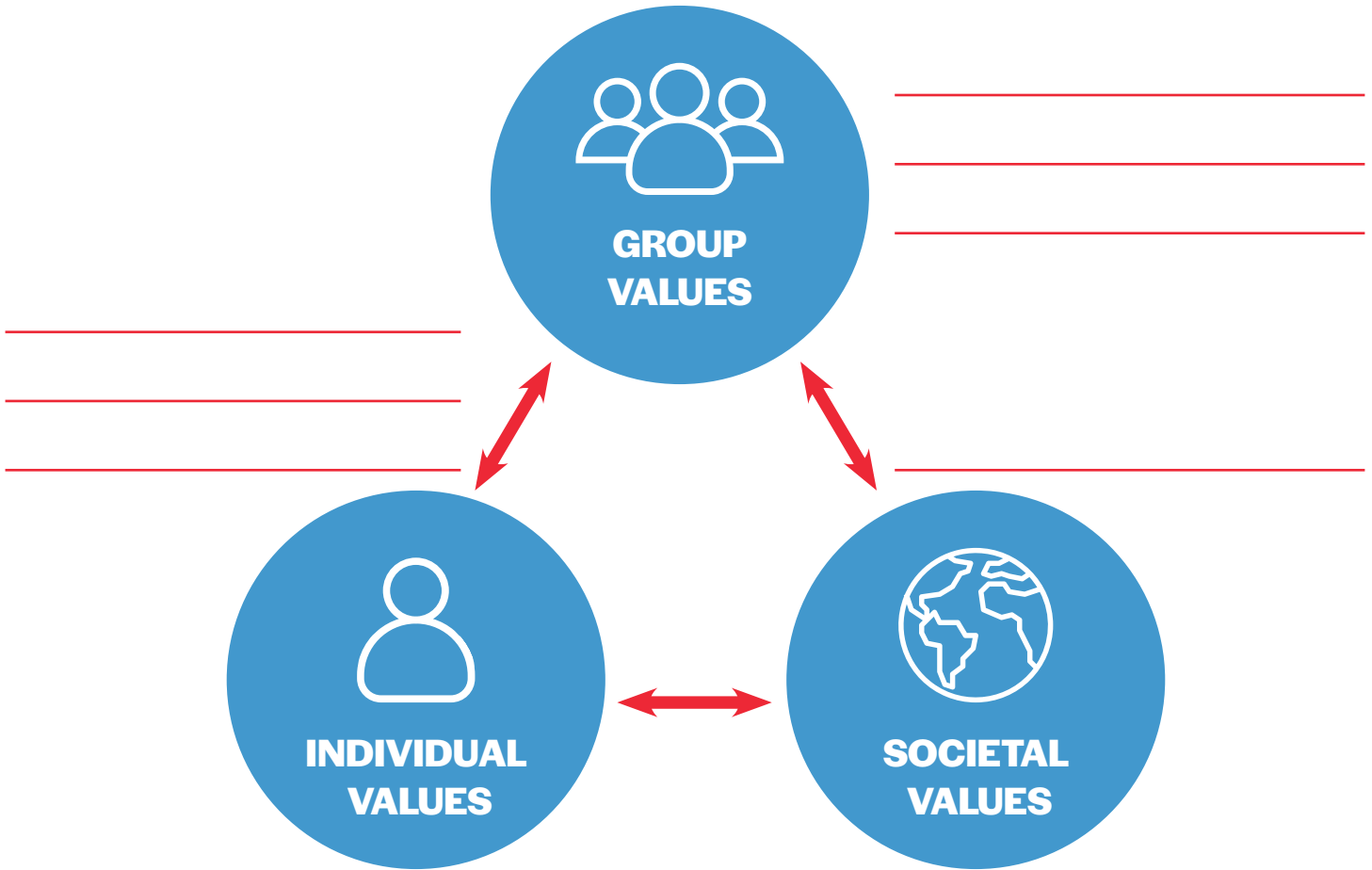
The SCM of leadership development approaches leadership from a purposeful, values driven and collaborative process that does not require titles or positions. This approach to leadership allows for anyone interested in working in a collaborative fashion toward shared goals to make a difference.

This collaborative process means that groups must have trust and requires that group members act in ways that are consistent with their own beliefs and values, as well as the group's goals. The team that developed the model concluded that eight values are necessary to have trust, common goals and true collaboration.

The SCM consists of seven critical values that are arranged in three different perspectives.



The 7 C's Explained



Leadership Reflections

What is the difference between “leader” and “leadership”?

Relational Leadership Model

The Relational Leadership Model asserts that leadership is a relational and ethical process of people attempting to accomplish positive change. This model is composed of five elements: (1) purposeful, (2) inclusive, (3) empowering, (4) ethical, and (5) process orientated.

PURPOSEFUL	
INCLUSIVE	
EMPOWERING	
ETHICAL	
PROCESS	

Leadership Reflections

How do we use the Social Change and Relational Leadership Models when we engage our campuses/communities as organizers?

Goal Ideation

Directions: Using the following frames as a guide, brainstorm 20 possible goals that you could achieve in the next year.

Career

Personal life

Spirituality and religion

Family

Personal relationships

Social life

Community

Health and wellness

Finances

Learning and professional development

Stop, Start and Keep

Sometimes it also helps to think about goals by considering your past and current actions, behaviors and relationships. Do you have any predictable actions, behaviors, thoughts or patterns that you'd like to stop, start or keep? Take a few minutes to sketch or write them in a list below.

STOP What are the current actions, behaviors, thoughts or patterns that you want to stop?	START What are the current actions, behaviors, thoughts or patterns that you want to start?	KEEP What are the current actions, behaviors, thoughts or patterns that you want to keep?

Defining Your Values

Values are your principles and what you believe is important in life. You can think about this in terms of personal or professional.

Circle all the values that are most relevant to you right now.

Acceptance	Curiosity	Innovation	Power
Accountability	Daring	Inspiration	Preparedness
Achievement	Decisiveness	Intelligence	Prestige
Adventure	Dedication	Intuition	Proactivity
Advocacy	Dependability	Joy	Punctuality
Ambition	Diversity	Justice	Recognition
Appreciation	Empathy	Kindness	Relationships
Attractiveness	Encouragement	Knowledge	Reliability
Authenticity	Enthusiasm	Leadership	Resilience
Autonomy	Excellence	Learning	Resourcefulness
Balance	Expressiveness	Love	Responsibility
Being the best	Fairness	Loyalty	Responsiveness
Benevolence	Family	Making an impact	Security
Boldness	Flexibility	Mindfulness	Self-control
Brilliance	Freedom	Optimism	Selflessness
Calmness	Fun	Open-mindedness	Simplicity
Caring	Generosity	Originality	Stability
Challenge	Grace	Passion	Success
Charity	Gratitude	Performance	Teamwork
Cheerfulness	Growth	Professionalism	Thoughtfulness
Cleverness	Flexibility	Quality	Traditionalism
Community	Happiness	Recognition	Trustworthiness
Commitment	Health	Risk taking	Truth
Compassion	Honesty	Safety	Understanding
Cooperation	Humility	Security	Uniqueness
Collaboration	Humor	Service	Usefulness
Consistency	Inclusiveness	Spirituality	Versatility
Contribution	Independence	Stability	Wealth
Creativity	Individuality	Peace	Well-being
Credibility	Influence	Playfulness	Wisdom

Of the values you circled, star the five that feel most relevant to you and write them below.

My top five values right now:

Reflection on values: How do these values show up in your life?

INTRO TO ORGANIZING

In this manual, we will use the word organizing to describe the full scope of activities that incorporate people power into our campaigns. There are many different models of organizing, and we highlight additional resources on organizing at the end of this guide. In general, all organizing involves gathering people together and working toward a common goal. We will use the word activist to describe the people we are organizing, even if this is their first “action.”

Our organizing strategy works to build power to hold decision-makers accountable and creates positive relationships between and among supporters. We aspire to “organize organizers”—where our activists have the skills and resources to lead winning campaigns.

What does community organizing mean to you?

Ask a friend what community organizing means to them?

Intersectionality

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”

Source: “Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, “More than Two Decades Later”

How do our issues connect?

What are three to five issues you see in your community?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What populations are directly affected by the issues you listed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How are these issues connected?

What Are We Trying to Do?

Common Cause’s approach to shift power and pass reforms that strengthen democracy is built for the long term.

Mobilizing: We mobilize to show decision-makers the breadth and depth of support for an issue and/or a particular reform. This provides political pressure—constituents telling their representatives what they want them to do implies that they will vote based on what the lawmaker does on this issue.

Organizing: We organize to build volunteer and membership leadership throughout the campaign, leaving our base of support stronger at the end of every campaign (win, lose or draw). By investing in educating, training and providing leadership opportunities for our members or potential members, we set ourselves up for more victories in the future.

Place the words in this box with the with the correct definition:

- Direct Service
- Administrative
- Corporate
- Legislative
- Ballot Measure Campaigns

- _____: Passing or defeating bills in the state legislature
- _____: Working with state executives and state agencies (for example, organizing to get the secretary of state to implement automatic voter registration)
- _____: Putting pressure on corporations
- _____: Engaging voters to support or oppose policies on the ballot
- _____: Providing hands-on assistance, often in combination with other projects (e.g., election protection)

BUILDING A CAMPAIGN

Most campaign plans are iterative. They start with some assumptions (a hypothesis of what it will take to win) but change frequently with input from key stakeholders. You can request input from stakeholders, such as your peers, students at other campuses, faculty, staff, administrators and community organizations. These groups, along with others, can help provide feedback on your campaign plan, which can be very valuable at the start and throughout your campaign.

When you start your campaign, you should first think about the goal you're trying to achieve. It's important to make sure that your goal is SMART, **specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound**. Using the following chart, think of a campaign goal and write it in the rectangle labeled specific. Then complete the following rectangles based on that goal.

<p>SPECIFIC What do you want to accomplish?</p>	
<p>MEASURABLE How will you know when you have accomplished your goal?</p>	
<p>ATTAINABLE Is it realistic and attainable?</p>	
<p>RELEVANT Is this goal worth working hard for? Explain.</p>	
<p>TIME BOUND By when will the goal be accomplished?</p>	

Campaign Plan Checklist

- Who are the **decision makers** who can help or hinder you in achieving your goals?
- Use your **powermap** to think about what individuals and organizations have significant influence on your primary target decision maker(s).
- Identify **participating partner organizations** and others who will work on the campaign.
- What concrete deliverables do you foresee for this year?
 - What **method of communication** are you using to reach the public?
 - Op-eds/letters to the editor
 - Earned media
 - Social media
 - Website
 - What are you **communicating**?
 - Reports
 - Personal stories (activists, impacted people, etc)
 - Reflections on news
 - Updates from campaign
 - Petitions
 - Messages to lawmakers
 - Phone calls
 - Letters to the editor
 - What **grassroots outreach** do you need to do to build up your power and put pressure on targets?
 - Public education
 - Leadership development
 - Grassroots lobbying
 - Text banks/phone banks
 - Public pressure
 - What is the '**elevator pitch**,' consistent with the Common Cause brand narrative, that connects the goals to immediate actions that individuals can take?
 - Introduction in five words.
 - Problem you are addressing.
 - Solution you want to pass or prevent.
 - Urgency of why we need to move quickly.
 - Action that people can take to get involved.

- What is the budget and how are you going to **fundraise**?
 - Think about the highest level of expenses and make a budget.
 - What money do you currently have?
 - What are possibilities to pay for your campaign?
 - How can you build fundraising into your campaign?
- What **other** things are you going to do?
 - Lobbying
 - Research
 - Litigation
 - Events
 - Ballot measure

What **digital outreach** do you need to do to engage Common Cause members and pressure targets?

Phases of a Campaign

We've divided this section into four phases of a campaign:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

A good campaign should not only achieve the goals (e.g., change a policy) but also build the organization—for example, end with more volunteer leaders, have your existing leaders better trained and more committed or acquire more financial resources to take on additional fights.

Phase 1: Power and Power Mapping

“Targets are not opponents! In the heat of a campaign, particularly at a point where our target is pushing back against our efforts, it can be tempting to think of the person as an opponent. Avoid the temptation! The outcome of your campaign is dependent on getting the target to ‘yes,’ and if your campaign is set in opposition to the target, you’re making that ‘yes’ much more difficult to achieve.”

Source: Sierra Club Movement Organizing Manual

What Is Power?

During campaign planning, you are making a strategy to win—a game plan for what it will take to achieve your goals. Part of that strategy is a power map: a way of specifying the lay of the land. Writing down your power map helps you determine what your strategy is, tells you what questions you need answered and helps you explain the strategy to volunteers and other leaders.

Define power from your perspective:

Here are some things to think about:

- Our power and our ability to leverage it are the most potent tools we have.
- People follow those who align with their thoughts and ideals.
- To be effective, we have to first understand where, again for our purposes, power derives: community organizing, electoral politics and public policy.

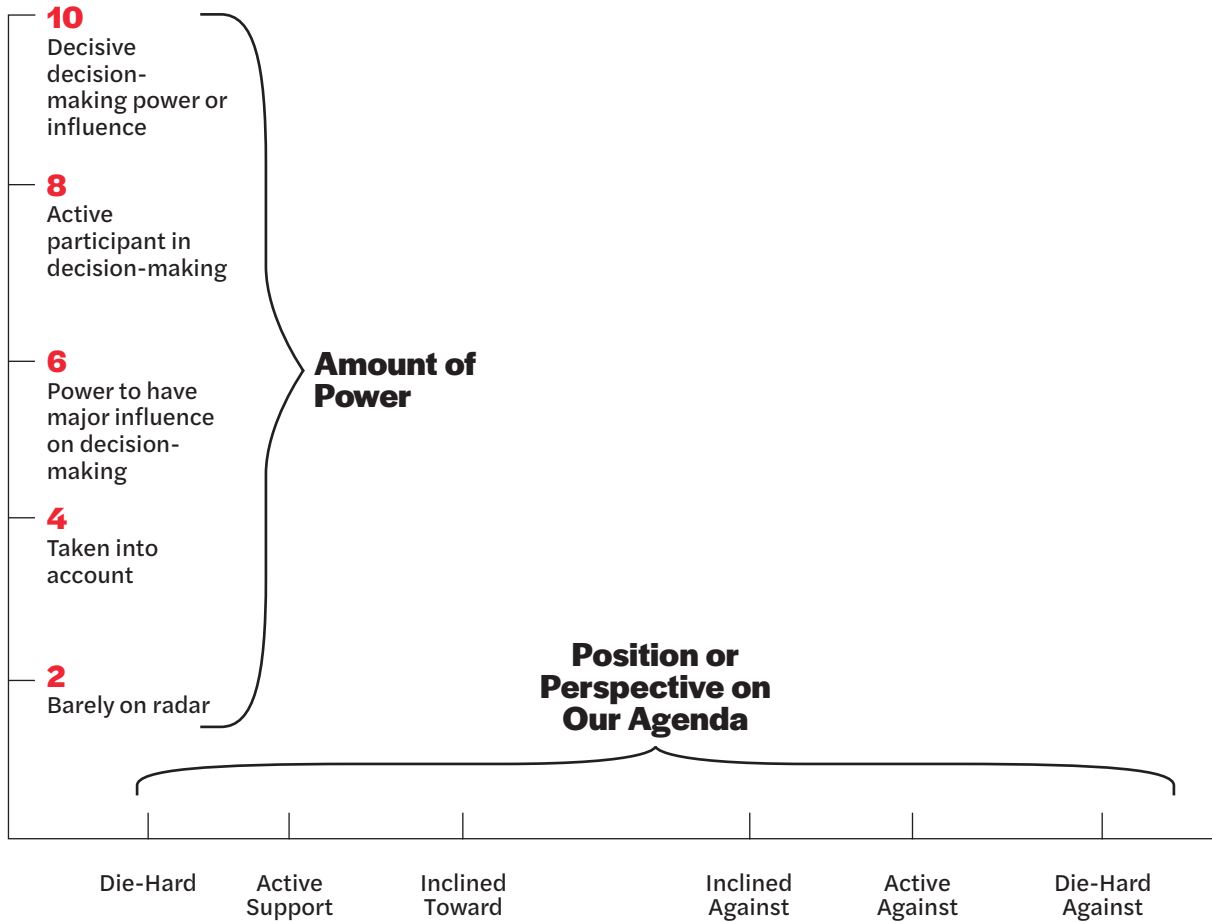


Power Mapping: Knowing the leaders in your community and who has influence are important when designing your power map. Fill out the following chart:

Who is your city mayor?	
Who are your city council members?	
Who is your state representative?	
Who is your state senator?	
Who is your U.S. representative?	
Who is your U.S. senator?	
Who is your campus SGA president?	
Who is your campus president/ chancellor?	

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POWER MAP



Source: *Power Mapping* By: Frederik Groce, Storm Ventures

Use this blank page to sketch out your power map!

Phase 2: Building Support

Entering the Community

We use the phrase “entering the community” to help us think through how to approach working on a campaign with a particular goal in the context of an existing community—or communities—with their own campaigns, issues, challenges and opportunities. By entering a community with intentionality and humility, you can build authentic relationships while being honest about your specific goals and strategies.

With your plan and power map, you now have a theory of where you need to build support and power.

- Who is in the community?
- What networks do you need to engage?
- Who else should be involved and help evaluate who needs to be “at the table” on this campaign?
- What political, historical, geographic and/or constituency tensions will factor into the campaign?
- What makes community members and community groups interested in the campaign’s success?

Initial Recruitment

Build your network of volunteers, activists and leaders. In most campaigns, when you look at your campaign plan, it is clear that you cannot do everything by yourself, so expanding your team is important in the beginning. Initial recruitment activities are often very good first actions for new volunteers and can quickly multiply the number of volunteers on your campaign.

What grassroots skills could you use to recruit volunteers for your campaign?

Many campaigns host a **kickoff meeting** a month into their workplan . This is a way to bring your top volunteers and community members together with other leaders and potential volunteers. Planning and running a kickoff meeting are great volunteer opportunities. A kickoff meeting often includes education about the issue (often from an expert or key stakeholder), details on the campaign and strategies on how we will win (from the organizer or a volunteer) and breakout groups to plan key parts of the campaign (grassroots recruitment, social media outreach, business sign-on letter recruitment, etc.)



In your kickoff meeting, incorporate a collective activity that exerts grassroots power (like everyone taking a photo/video petition). Make a strong ask and get a commitment from everyone in your group for what their next steps will be, such as a voter registration shift, two hours of petitioning or giving a class presentation.

Phase 3: Campaigning and Leadership Development

Campaigning

Your plan has strategies and tactics that you think will help you win. Mobilize your volunteers (and recruit new activists) to participate in the activities in your campaign plan. These could be everything from a petition delivery to a lobby day to a press conference or an educational public forum.

- Space out your campaign actions so that you have time to continue to do one-on-ones and build relationships.
- Identify tactics and time lines to engage new people and pressure your targets.

Leadership Development

Developing leaders helps you build the capacity you need to win your campaign.

- Use the steps of leadership development found in this guide.
- Run a train-the-trainers program so that your top leaders can start doing trainings instead of you (e.g., running phone banks or tabling or event logistics).

- Recruit leaders to lead key parts of the campaign, such as media efforts, recruitment drives, social media, digital campaigning.
- Train them, support them and hold them accountable for their goals and commitments.

Never Stop Recruiting

You need to keep growing your team and developing leaders.

- As new leaders come onto the team, ask them to run recruitment efforts.
- Hold consistent campaign meetings to invite new folks to join and take action.
- Identify potential leaders and hold one-on-one meetings to recruit them to take more action and ownership of the campaign.

Phase 4: Milestones

Achieving a visionary goal may take years. Campaigns need to estimate and project how progress will be made, step-by-step, to reach short- and medium-term milestones. Celebrate achieving key milestones with your volunteers. Review your plan frequently and adjust your campaign strategy based on what is working. A good mid-campaign milestone is to bring together coalition partners, volunteers and others in a meeting to discuss successes and areas for improvement in the campaign thus far.



COMMUNICATION BASICS

Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)

Tips for Writing an Op-Ed

An op-ed is an essay intended for publication opposite the editorial page of a newspaper.

- Try to tie your op-ed to a news hook.
- Make it personal and tell a story.
- As a general rule, make one strong point and back it up with three to four supporting arguments.
- Avoid jargon and use accessible language. Wherever possible, use metaphors, analogies and stories to connect to your audience and make your point more persuasive.
- Keep it short! Typically, the limit is 500–700 words for an op-ed.
- Open with a strong, tight, clear paragraph. You can be creative and use a question, quote or anecdote to hook readers. If the reader only reads two paragraphs, they should get your essential point. Make sure you tie the end of the article to the beginning.
- Name names. In political communications, the aim is to declare who is responsible and why they should do the right thing. This does not need to be adversarial, but it cannot be vague or understated.
- Use examples to help keep readers engaged and to back up your argument.

Where to Start When Writing an Op-Ed

Here are five questions that your op-ed should answer.

1. What is the source of credibility and how do you establish it?

2. How do you build an evidence-based, value-driven argument?

3. What is the difference between being right and being effective?

4. What is the bigger picture, and how do you and your ideas fit into it?

5. Do you understand your knowledge and experience in terms of their value to others?

Sample Op-Ed: The Muted Voice of Millions

February 4, 2020/De’Quan Isom, Common Cause Democracy Wire

Not a day goes by when I am not reminded of the great crisis facing many of our communities. Be it the extremes of poverty, a lack of access to resources from good textbooks to loans with non-predatory interest rates—a sense of hopelessness in cities void of healthy food options, and a safe environment to raise children.

For millions among us, the desire to pull up one’s boots and march onward like a “good” American doesn’t quite match the reality that *“We have no boots to pull on.”* Even the desire to reach out for help to local governments and non-profit agencies is met with its own set of roadblocks, wherein the voices of millions can go on for decades without ever being heard, even at the ballot box, due to an extensive and intentional campaign to mute them.

Growing up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, I watched daily as my mother worked at Forsyth Medical Center to provide the best care possible to those entrusted to her care as a CNA. She worked most nights of the week, meaning that my siblings and I were left to my grandparents into the late hours of each night. She would pick us up from their home and take us to ours, a temporary abode in one of the apartment complexes throughout the city.

Her dream was not just to provide a better life for her children, but to give us an example to live up to and one day surpass. She taught us to never give up on our dreams, even when we could not see how they’d be made reality; to hold onto our faith amid chaos, and to work hard—passionately—at everything that we do. When she fell, and we experienced a few years of homelessness, we watched as she acted with grace under pressure and somehow made ways when there were none.

Her story is an American story, and one that is told too often when hardworking people are relegated into second-class citizenship even as the nation experiences record economic growth. I came to the realization over the course of my life that not all people have access to this growth, and not for a lack of trying.

My arrival at Shaw University as a freshman in 2016 was one that revealed to me that the struggle my family faced was not a micro-level event, but something felt by all types of people in every corner of this nation. It could not be made any clearer than my witness at Shaw from my freshman year up to the present, attending an HBCU located at the heart of an historically African-American community in downtown Raleigh.

By the very nature of Shaw's urban existence, the journey from one side of campus to another forces you to leave off of campus, into the neighborhood and onto another section of Shaw's campus. In the fall of 2016, that journey was different from the one I see today, where I encountered a community that reflected the institution it supported.

Since that time, properties which had suffered the strain of time and a lack of resources, were purchased at near dirt-low prices, renovated and sold at prices far in excess to anything affordable by the community's historic inhabitants. This created an ironic atmosphere to be learning in—where my professors spoke of Gentrification in Urban Politics as theory, but the reality of that phenomenon was occurring before my eyes.

Even as I wondered what would happen to the impoverished forced out of their homes, not just by the market which made owning their homes next to impossible, but by the policies of the state and local governments, there was a battle going on over redistricting in the NC General Assembly and the courts.

Historically, the parallels between redistricting practices and city zoning have not been in exclusion of each other, but worked in tandem as a combined force to attack and disenfranchise the poor—especially the descendants of slaves. If this was a practice well documented in the public record, and the research of social scientists to have occurred in the early 20th century, I think it not strange to see the same occurring today.

The practice of gentrification is as sinister yet “American as apple pie” as Bishop William Barber famously decrees. When we displace hardworking Americans, and remove their right to vote, we have reinforced a caste system that relegates the poor into poverty for generations—and the advantaged into a life of privilege.

Gentrification, to me, is not just an issue of economics or social malpractice, but one which calls to the forefront a great debate in America which has yet to occur. A debate over whether we truly have a heart for the poor, rejected, and marginalized in the hopes of giving them access to our American Dream? Or have we given ourselves willingly over to our worst instincts? Are we to see in this era, a return to red-lining reinforced by not just partisan or racist gerrymanders, but economic/class gerrymanders?

The cries of millions must be heard.

Sample Press Advisory

For immediate release.

Contact: Bryan Warner, Common Cause NC, at 919-599-7541 or bwarn@commoncause.org

ADVISORY: Lawmakers, advocates to call for increased funding for North Carolina's historically black colleges and universities

WHAT: Press conference calling for increased funding for North Carolina's historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The press conference will focus on S640 (NC A&T State University/Ag. Funds) and S667 (UNC HBCU Funding Parity/ NC A&T Doc. Programs).

WHEN: Wednesday, May 15 at noon

WHERE: Legislative press conference room, NC Legislative Building (16 W. Jones St, Raleigh)

WHO: NC Legislative Black Caucus, Common Cause NC, HBCU Alumni Leadership Roundtable and HBCU Green Fund

WHY NOW: HBCUs play a vital role in North Carolina's higher education and our state's economy. It is crucial that lawmakers support these colleges and universities through adequate funding that allows these schools and their students to thrive. Lawmakers and advocates at the press conference will call for passage of legislation this session to increase funding for HBCUs in North Carolina.

###



DATES TO REMEMBER

Constitution Day: September 17, 2020

National Voter Registration Day: September 22, 2020

Last Day to Register: _____

Last Day to Request Absentee or Mail Ballot: _____

National Voter Education Week: October 5-9, 2020

Early Vote: _____

National Vote Early Day: October 24, 2020

General Election Day: November 3, 2020

Last Day to Return Absentee Ballot (Vote by Mail): _____

NOTES
