

TAKE 10

Workbook

spirit in action

CHANGING THE WAY WE DO CHANGE



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How to Use This Workbook



Because we want to make this accessible to you, we have tried to provide many ways to read and use this workbook. Look for icons as shown at left that suggest a “deeper dive” into the subject matter. The bullhorn illustrates a call to action—something we always do at the end of a training. At Spirit in Action, storytelling is an important way to illuminate our teachings. You will find stories from Linda Stout throughout this workbook with a purple tinted background. There are spaces for you to write freely, indicated by the pencil icon, and charts you can fill out. We pose questions for you to think about and include quotes from people who inspire us! We hope you will be inspired too.

TAKE 10 Introduction to Organizing

In this TAKE 10 workbook, we share strategies for strengthening your own organizing work around issues that affect your community. From goals to messaging to avoiding burn-out, we discuss the challenges you face, and support you to find leaders and volunteers and win on the issues they care about most. The exercises are designed to help you think more deeply about your organizing and how to build leadership with an engaged and committed group of volunteers. As you will see, it can all start with ten people at a time.

The TAKE 10 model of organizing began in the 1990s in rural North Carolina, where I founded the Piedmont Peace Project (PPP). Ten people at a time, we registered, educated and got out the vote from a few hundred people in the first year to a total of 44,000 within five years.

In year one, PPP went from 1.5 staff people working in one county that turned out a few hundred people to the polls to 10 staff people who worked in a whole congressional district five years later. Each year we identified people to be volunteers and trained as leaders to join our effort around issues the community identified. Year one, a volunteer's job was to register, educate and get 10 new people to the polls. In year two they were trained how to get 100 people out to vote. By training their *10 people* and others on how to get at least *10 more people* out, they had *100 engaged voters*.

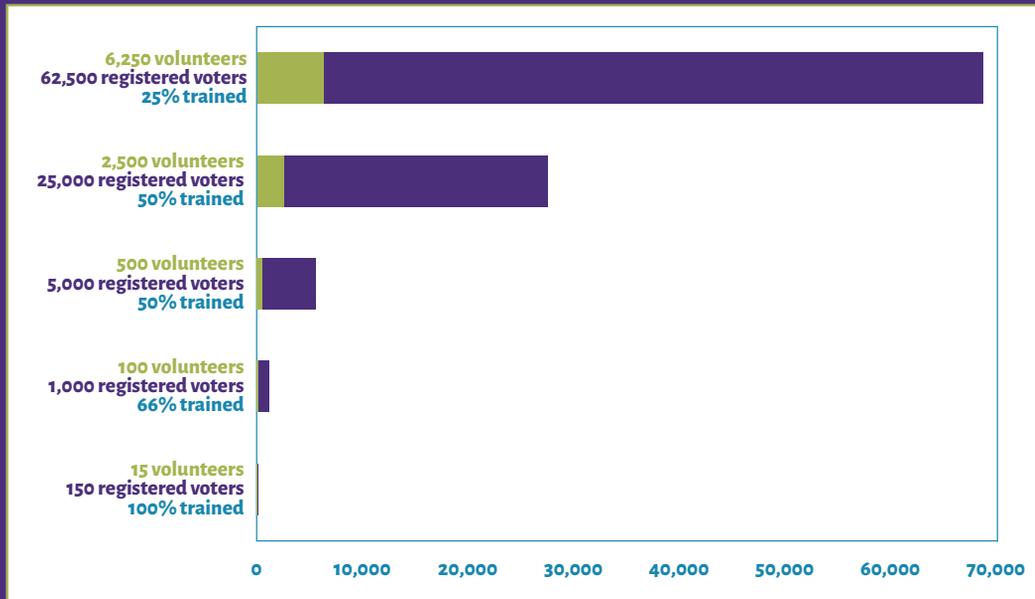
Strong and Sustained Growth

We continued to grow this TAKE 10 model exponentially, mostly organizing people of color to go to the polls on Election Day. This work was incorporated into all parts of our organizing, helping folks learn about issues affecting low-income and poor people. We needed to give them equal access in the democratic process, so voters must also feel confident in their knowledge of the issues and the solutions that will be affected by their decisions.

Combining organizing and popular education, we changed the voting record of our congressman from zero percent to 83 percent on peace issues and up to 98 percent on social justice issues.

PPP went on to impact the congressional and statewide elections and changed elected officials' voting record. It became one of the largest multiracial groups in the state, building grassroots power by winning at the voting booth as well as holding officials accountable. We also began to elect people of color to local offices for the first time. White supremacists who had controlled their county and town offices were unseated. PPP literally became a threat by building power in numbers. More than 40,000 people going to the polls was much more effective than the massive dollars spent by those who said they represented us.

Voter Registration—5-year campaign



Impact and Influence

During four decades, we worked with other groups to do the same sort of relational organizing—what we call “**really listening**”—and the formal name “TAKE 10” was born. Within a short time, like at PPP, groups have found they can expand enormously. The best part of this type of organizing is how it develops leadership, grows a volunteer base and keeps people engaged year-round. You don’t have to reinvent the organizing wheel every election or start from scratch, as many national Get-Out-the-Vote models do.

TAKE 10 relies on teaching people how to be leaders, recruit volunteers, educate voters and develop the deep listening skills and personal contacts that keep people motivated and energized over the long haul. From North Carolina to Maine to South Africa, the TAKE 10 model continues to be used nationally as well as internationally.

It’s really very simple, what it takes to win. It takes people, bringing in more people, building up their knowledge of the issues that affect their lives, organizing and then taking action, 10 people at a time.

Peace, Power and Love,

Linda Stout
Founder and Executive Director
Spirit in Action

1. Planning with SMART Goals

If you can't imagine a better world, you can't create one. If you can imagine a better world, we have to vision collectively. This happens when a group of people, through a guided meditation around a theme, envision a future together. As I show in my book, **Collective Visioning**, it is the essential first step of any effort to make change. It helps people move from being stuck in problems to creating solutions. Both expert research and my own experience show that organizations and societies do not flourish without a collective, positive vision of the future.

Why are we talking about SMART Goals?

When I first started organizing, we would set lots of goals as part of our planning but didn't always have a way of making sure they could all get done, or even if they were realistic. We often felt disappointed when we didn't meet all our goals. Then I discovered SMART goals.

We began to use it as part of our workplans that we would develop for every project. I have seen SMART Goals presented in many different forms and many ways. But over the years, we made it as simple and as related to our work as possible. I recommend using these as a way to make sure your plans are **strategic, realistic** and **possible** for your organization to achieve.

Dreaming and visioning are great, but without a plan they often don't come to fruition as quickly or successfully. After visioning and prioritizing your program and organizational goals, use this way of setting goals to make sure they are effective. This helps you be accountable to your plan, get specific and have a way of evaluating your work.

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

1. How do your individual organizational goals contribute to statewide or collective group goals?
2. How are they improving the broader Get-Out-the-Vote /Voter Registration landscape?

SMART Goals are: Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound

Once you understand how to do the goals, then you can fill out the workplan for each of your organizational goals. Groups that have followed this plan have been amazed at what they were able to accomplish.

S Strategic	M Measurable	A Achievable	R Relevant	T Time-bound
State what you will do • Be specific and clear • Use action words (who? what? where?)	Provide a way to evaluate • Figure out how you will measure your goal • Use number targets (how much? how many?)	Within your ability or your organization's ability • Possible to accomplish in timeframe	Makes sense within your life • Is it realistic? • Improves your organization or group (does it match other needs and efforts?)	State when you will get it done • Be specific on date or timeframe (when? —create some milestones.)

I also use this plan for my personal goals and have found it incredibly useful in achieving things more than I ever thought possible. When we started Spirit in Action in 2000, we had Circles where we offered people a way to vision for themselves and then asked them to create a plan. Several people told stories of accomplishing their goal. One woman in our Circles, Phyllis Labanowski, had a dream about going to art school and created her personal plan. Now she uses her art to work for social justice.

<p>What are the tasks to accomplish the goal you listed? <i>(List each task on a separate line.)</i></p>	<p>How will you accomplish each task? What will you do to make it happen?</p>
<p>GOAL #1</p>	
<p>GOAL #2</p>	
<p>GOAL #3</p>	
<p>GOAL #4</p>	

<p>Who will take the lead on each task? Who else will help?</p>	<p>What resources do you need to make this happen (i.e. trainings, people, research, money)?</p>	<p>How will you get these resources? What will you do if you don't have all of them?</p>



Make your TAKE 10 Get-Out-the-Vote plan work for you!

Here are some questions you should ask in thinking about your plan:

1. How many folks are you going to reach out to for volunteering and training?
2. Multiply this by 10 to get the number of folks you hope to get registered to vote and to the polls on Election Day.
3. How many people do you want to get out to vote (for example, your 100 newly registered folks plus others in your targeted community)?

Action Steps



1. I will identify 10 volunteers and partnering organizations.
2. I will send a check-in email to at least 100 people on our mailing list and identify 10 volunteers.
3. I will identify and contact 10 presidents of a fraternity or sorority.
4. I will identify and contact beauty parlors and barber shops to recruit volunteers.

RESOURCES

Use this link to print out a TAKE 10 Get-Out-the-Vote form:

bit.ly/3sd21ha

GOTV/VR Planning

Name: _____

Goal: _____

What are the tasks to accomplish your goal listed above? (list each one below)	How will you accomplish these tasks? What will you do to make it happen?	Who will take the lead on each task? Who else will help?	What resource do you need to make this happen? (Trainings, People Research? Money etc.)	How will you get these resources and what will you do if you don't have all of them?

2. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

The secret ingredient of the TAKE 10 process is the volunteers. In order to grow to scale and reach multiple voters, volunteer leaders are key. The first year, volunteers are taught to register people to vote and to get the new voters and others to the polls for the election. But keeping these volunteers engaged and participating in ongoing training is critical to building 10 times the number of people in the next election cycle. In the following year, your 10 volunteers will learn how to teach their 10 voters to do what they did in the past election. They will learn training and leadership skills.

Volunteer recruitment and retention is a critical tool for building power to win on issues affecting our communities. Here, we will show you how you can build organizational membership, recruit and empower leaders, and thus empower your community.

A Place for Everyone

I remember when we had a large meeting of community members at Piedmont Peace Project. We asked who was willing to volunteer for Voter Registration/Get-Out-the-Vote. Some people didn't raise their hands so we asked them what they wanted to do. Some offered to cook food, do child care, drive people to the polls or help out in various ways.

One very timid woman, Ethel Brown, raised her hand last, and said she was willing to do yard work and help clean our office. We welcomed her and thanked her profusely for being our "beautification officer." But we also encouraged her to attend one of our first trainings. After the first year, she agreed that she could ask 10 people to register to vote and make sure they went to the polls.

At a celebration after the election, she and all volunteers were thanked publicly and given a certificate of accomplishment. The following year, she stepped into a leadership role and agreed to train her folks to do the same thing she had. She went on to become a Block Captain.

She later told me that she never had imagined herself as a leader or someone who could ever speak to others like she had found herself able to do. (It reminded me of myself. I also thought I could never become a leader, let alone a trainer or an organizer.) By welcoming and honoring her first small step, she was able to find her voice, and become a wonderful volunteer trainer for us.

I can tell many, many stories like this. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing someone on this journey.

Why is retention so important?

Many Voter Registration/Get-Out-the-Vote efforts start with a campaign for a particular issue or slate of people running. Once the campaign is won or lost, the volunteers go home and that's the end of it. But, if you keep them engaged through celebration and ongoing training, they are able to involve more people the next campaign. Next time, you're not starting from scratch!

As the number of volunteers grew at Piedmont Peace Project, and the numbers of voters grew too, PPP was able to raise more money and hire more staff, making this model viable. Funders love to support an organization that is growing and winning.

Among other things, retention of volunteers means:

- Stopping high turnover in your organization.
- Not starting each new campaign from scratch.
- More people taking on leadership roles within your organization.
- Creating more long-term investment in your organization.
- Building capacity so you can win real changes.
- Volunteers being connected to your organization and not just an issue, campaign or individual organizer.
- Multiple people having historical knowledge of your organization and/or campaigns.
- Your organization continuing to grow and become more powerful.

Action Steps

Consider these questions and add this to your workplan:



1. How do you recruit?
2. How do we see these volunteers as potential leaders?
3. Who is your audience to recruit volunteers from?

One year we made six-foot report cards of the voting records on the issues most people cared about of two senators running for office. Because we showed both, we stayed within our non-profit educational status, but people could make their own choices by seeing how the men or women had and would vote.

More Ideas!

People in TAKE 10 trainings recruited from primarily people of color communities, like:

- Churches (we would have someone we knew in the church make an announcement and hand out volunteer recruitment cards, see Resources below)
- Beauty parlors and barber shops
- Outside stores where people shop
- Putting flyers in food bags being handed out
- Farmers' markets
- Sororities and fraternities
- Friends, family and neighbors
- Young people — between ages 6–17

What!? Young people??? Yes. Recruiting young people to go door-to-door for Get-Out-the-Vote made for some of the most powerful turnout folks were able to do. Imagine a six-year-old coming to your door and saying, “I’m too young to vote, but would you please vote for my future?” Then they would hand out information on “How to Vote” and where to call for rides to the polls. Young people usually went out over the weekend before an election.

RESOURCES



By mail.
 Complete Ballot Request Form online or go to www.voterviv.com.
 Send it by mail, email, or fax to the North Carolina State Board of Elections.
 Attach your ballot to your address label.
 Put your ballot in the envelope and return it to the address on your ballot and have it mailed to you.
 Turn your ballot back to the address on your ballot in time for them to count it on Election Day.

Or, in person.
 Go to the County Board of Elections. If you are a registered voter, you have the right to vote if you are not currently on probation or parole and have not been convicted of a felony, you are not currently on probation or parole, and you have completed your probation or parole. You may need extra documents, just ask for them.
 You can register to vote if you will be 18 on or before election day in November.

We the People
 working together

54 Cheshire Drive • Black Mountain, NC 28711
www.workingtogether.us
 ©2016 Spirit in Action

THIS is the will of the people!
Make your voice heard!
VOTE
BECOME A TAKE 10 Volunteer

10 things I will do to build power within my community:

- Attend the TAKE 10 workshop.
- Reach out to 10 people I know:
 - In my family
 - From a local organization
 - Belonging to my church
 - Around the neighborhood
- Hand out materials on:
 - How to vote
 - Our issues
- Talk to people about the issues that impact our community.
- Help my 10 people to vote early or create a plan to vote on Election Day.
- Make sure they have the information they need for voting (sample ballot, voter guide, ID if required).
- Contact my 10 people the week before the election if they have not voted.
 - One week before (October 25)
 - The weekend before Election Day (October 30–November 1)
 - The morning of Election Day
- Help people get rides to the polls if they need them.
- Celebrate by attending the volunteer party after election!
- Attend TAKE 10 training on next steps to keep the momentum going!

Questions? Call our hotline: 617-221-5354

Spirit in Action
 CHANGING THE WAY WE DO CHANCE

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 spiritinaction.net
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TAKE 10 recruitment postcard

YES
— I will TAKE 10 people to vote on Election Day!

10 things I pledge:

- Attend the TAKE 10 workshop.
- Reach out to and organize 10 people.
- Hand out materials about our issues and voting.
- Talk to people about the issues that impact our community.
- Help my 10 people to vote early or create a plan to vote on Election Day.
- Make sure they have the information they need for voting (sample ballot, voter guide, ID if required).
- Contact my 10 people the week before the election if they have not voted.
- Help people get rides to the polls if they need them.
- Celebrate by attending the volunteer party after election!
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Questions? Call us

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TAKE 10 pledge card



Some Best Practices for Volunteer Recruitment

Practice deep relationship building

- 1.** If people think they don't have the knowledge or expertise to do something like this, make sure you tell them we all started that way, and that there will be a training to help them know what to do. Reassure them that anyone is able to do this.
- 2.** Invite volunteers to actively participate. Let people know they can come in at any level. If they don't want to do voter registration, ask if they want to do something else, like childcare, or provide food, or drive people on Election Day.
- 3.** Work closely together on important decision-making. If people can be part of even small decisions, it allows them to feel ownership in the organization.
- 4.** Do one-on-one check-ins with volunteers. When the group becomes larger than 10, find another volunteer who is enthusiastic to check in with others.

Build the work together

- 1.** Ask people who have been a volunteer to help think about what to do in the celebration event at the end of the campaign. Ask if they will tell their first experience of volunteering to inspire a new group of volunteers.
- 2.** Provide ongoing opportunities to learn something new. This is easy as there are things to learn about people running for office, how to do the next step of Get-Out-the-Vote or how to recruit young people.
- 3.** Track volunteer engagement via a database. It's so important to know what each volunteer is doing, committing to and accomplishing. It is the only way to be on top of keeping people involved and to keep them coming back.
- 4.** Engage in political education together. So many people don't understand what offices they are voting for entail. It's important for people to learn what the issues are and why it's so important to be working on elections.

Always have fun!

Turn on the music and dance at the end, or have a game with prizes. Always have a fun element to every training and gathering. You can even ask volunteers to come up with ideas!

3. Popular Education

Have you attended a meeting or training where you felt like you didn't know enough or your input felt invalid? How did this make you feel?

In this exercise, we center and value participant experiences and show how you can use popular education methods to work on issues with folks in your community, starting from what you already know.

It's Not Me

When I first started organizing in rural Piedmont North Carolina, I had some bad experiences going to organizing trainings and feeling “stupid” because I didn't know the college-educated words, terms or theories used. I decided then I should organize poor people who talked like I did.

From the beginning, I told everyone we could all be teachers based on our own experience. I would speak with Dan Petegorsky, from Peace Development Fund, who was brilliant on federal issues and bills going before Congress. He would break them down and explain them so I could understand them. Then I would translate that into our way of speaking for our folks. Together, we would figure out how the information fit into our lives and the actions we would take.

I never knew that what I was doing was called “popular education” until others got interested in our successes, what we were doing and how we were organizing, especially at the federal level. People would ask, have you read Paulo Freire's book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*? I said no, and eventually received a copy of the book by the Brazilian educator. I tried to read it, but it was written in heavy, academic language. So I gave up and put it aside. Many years later, after becoming the director of Peace Development Fund, my staff and I read it as a study group. I finally understood what he was saying: “The purpose of education is to liberate human potential and, thus, is much more than a teacher simply depositing information into the mind of a learner.”

This is often a difficult philosophy to understand, but as low-income folks, we naturally gravitated toward this way of learning and working to empower everyone's voice. We brought our own lived experiences to the work and with new information, figured out how to use it and make connections that made sense for our lives.

Values of popular education

- Everyone is an expert.
- We're all experts of our experiences.
- Everyone has something valuable to add.

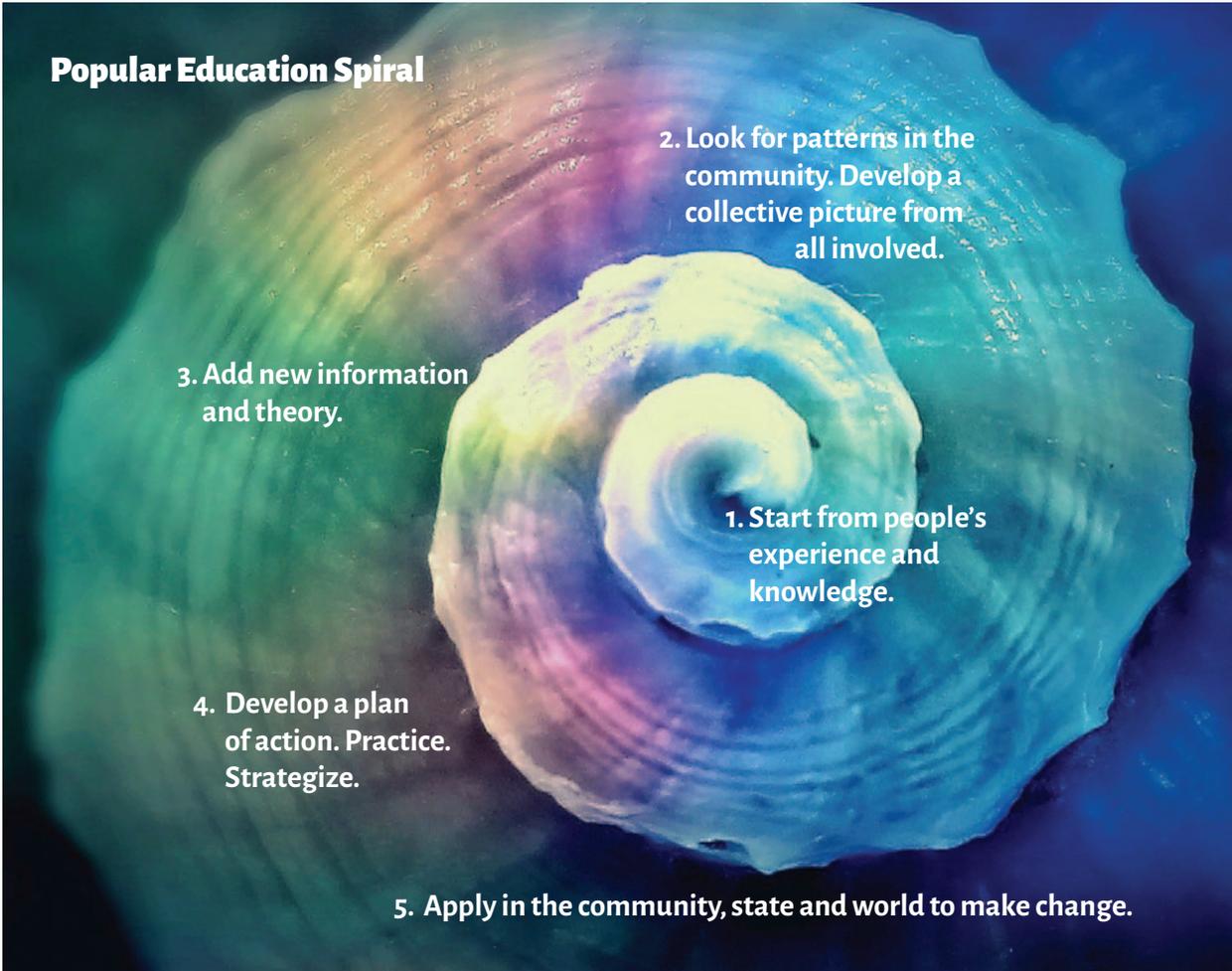
Information into Action

Many of our members served in the military or were part of the National Guard. When we learned more about the federal budget and how much money was spent on the military, they understood the wastefulness and ridiculousness of having the ability to destroy the world many times over with nuclear weapons. Because Fort Bragg was in our district, and another company in our district made carriers for MX missiles, many people had first-hand knowledge of that wastefulness. I remember one in particular, a woman who knew from her enlisted son how much was spent on a toilet seat — more than \$600 dollars!* Another of our members who lived in a substandard trailer noted, “The military spends more on housing the MX missiles than on housing for people.”

As a result of these insights and the facts, our folks made a wooden military missile that we carried to the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. for a press conference. People testified about living in housing that was below standard, without running water. Then the eight-foot missile (that was like a transformer toy) was folded down into a cute little house, with flowers in front and tiny windows. The photos from the press conference were carried in many national newspapers and our congressman changed his vote from supporting MX missiles.

I, as the organizer, would never have come up with these ideas. It was the folks in our group who used their own knowledge and experiences to unleash incredible creativity. We might not have had college educations, but people were more brilliant and creative when they were empowered to believe they were as smart as anyone else.

Popular Education Spiral

- 
1. Start from people's experience and knowledge.
 2. Look for patterns in the community. Develop a collective picture from all involved.
 3. Add new information and theory.
 4. Develop a plan of action. Practice. Strategize.
 5. Apply in the community, state and world to make change.

* www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-07-30-vw-18804-story.html



One More Outcome

One surprising thing PPP learned was that their “simple” materials were often more attractive to middle-class, educated folks. The anti-nuclear Freeze Campaign at the time began finding that PPP’s easy-to-read brochures, explaining how the military spent tax dollars and linking it to people’s needs, attracted more eyeballs than the more complex materials Freeze had been using.

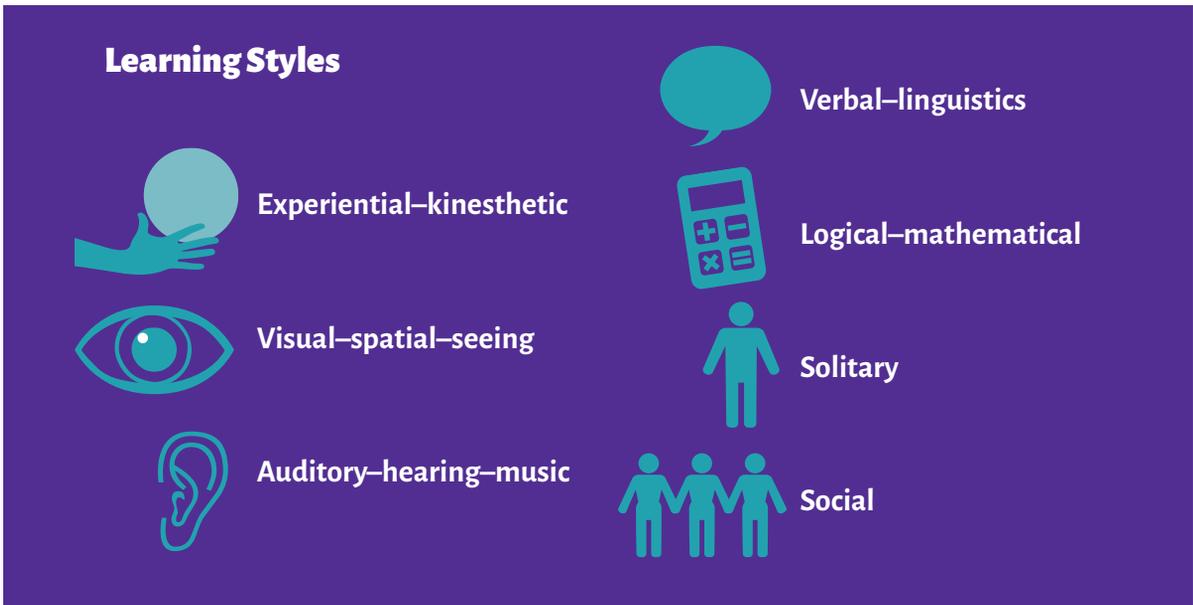
For this reason, we teach new leaders how to use popular education in their organizing. It works because:

1. We are all teachers and learners.
2. The organizer may give new information to a group, but leaves it to the group to interpret and figure out how to take action around it.
3. We empower everyone to speak and take part. Though many people don’t contribute in the beginning, after a few trainings, and being encouraged and asked each time to speak, they do begin to take part, and eventually move into leadership.
4. College-educated, middle-class and wealthy people often have to unlearn how they’ve been taught to teach and re-learn in order to use popular education methods.

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

Throughout this exercise we’re starting with your experience:

1. Where or how did you do this?
2. How can you use your experiences in workshops to come up with your own workshop planning lessons?
3. In trying to teach your volunteers the TAKE 10 model, what are some of their experiences from which you can draw?



Learning Styles and Preferences

Preferences for how people receive information lead them to learn in different ways. Often, we’re most comfortable teaching how we, ourselves, learn. More often, people teach by talking, the way most of us were taught in school. The consensus among scholars, however, is that people do not have just one learning style. Depending on the subject matter, they may have multiple learning styles at play!*

As a leader, you want to be able to work with people in the many ways people learn. Think about how you try to learn a new thing. Do you learn by listening? By writing things down? By doing? By asking questions? Or another way? Or by some combination of any of these?

Examples of Learning Activities

Activity	Learning Style
Provide them with an overview of training	Verbal
Role playing and practicing	Experiential/Social
Building the energy	Social
PowerPoint/flowchart to show how it works	Visual
Journaling	Solitary
Showing charts	Mathematical

* poorvucenter.yale.edu/LearningStylesMyth

Action Steps



1.

Think about various learning styles within your group. How do you change what you say to address them (or come up with solutions for them)?

2.

You could:

- Ask questions (answering verbally).
- Present it in writing (share screen); let people read first (visual).
- Let them practice with each other in small groups (experiential).
- Learn from each other (social, various learning styles used).
- Share materials (visual).

3.

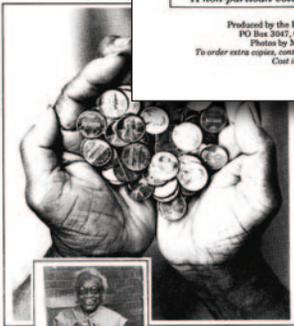
Are there patterns of preferred learning styles within your group? Is it different for numbers or ideas?

RESOURCES

Easy to read brochures and fact sheets from Piedmont Peace Project.



"Our government spends only 7¢ of every tax dollar on health care . . ."



"They spend 57¢ on the military and weapons."

"We can change the way our government spends our tax money."

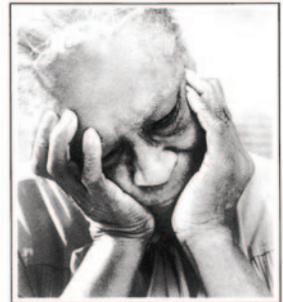


Register and vote.

For rides, call:

A non-partisan voter participation project.

Produced by the Piedmont Peace Project
PO Box 2047, Concord, NC 28025
Photos by Michelle Handler
To order extra copies, contact the Piedmont Peace Project.
Cost is \$18/copy.



"It takes my whole social security check just to buy my medicine."

4. Volunteer Training

We've all been to many, many trainings. Some we liked and some we discarded. Some we wanted to change and make our own. There are many lessons we can take from our experience to use in our own workshop planning.

How Will You Train?

In my career, I have facilitated hundreds of trainings and workshops throughout the world, specifically designed to create positive movement and change within individuals, organizations, communities and schools. I try to design trainings that help us realize what we can do now, in the current political environment. I want people to listen and respond to the realities of issues they face, and gain the skills and tools they need for a constantly changing society.

But trainings have also showed me that I do not have all the answers, and that it is a collaboration between the folks in the room and me. However you choose to train, it requires you to be willing to improvise and find new pathways that you haven't used before to reach new people.

Some time ago, I was asked to lead a workshop for media communicators at the last minute. As I drove to the gathering, I wondered why I had ever agreed. I had no idea what I was going to do with these experienced communicators.

I arrived in a panic, but then I saw a garden filled with river stones. I gathered a bunch of stones in my shirt, intending to return them all at the end of the workshop.

When the group came into my workshop, I asked them each to pick three stones and to think of three stepping stones, or life events, that brought them to the work they were doing for justice. Then people went into small groups of four, with 15 minutes each to tell their stories.

Afterwards, many people talked about how powerful it was for them to hear each other and to tell their own stories. One woman asked if she could take the stones home with her to tell these stories to her husband of 30 years and her family. She had never shared her formidable, life-changing events with them.

Telling each other our stories is one of the most powerful things we can do to organize deeply and profoundly. It reinforces the importance of our work in a way that people can connect to and understand.

And just for the record, I did return the stones to the garden at the end of the workshop, though minus several stones people took back home with them!

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

Think back to trainings you have attended.

1.

What did you like?

2.

What did you wish you could have changed?

3.

What lessons can you take from this for your own workshop planning?

You might want to refer back to the prior training on Popular Education and your thoughts about learning styles in this workbook.

Intentional Openings

Whether you are training in-person or virtually, always take the time to begin with an opening. You may feel rushed to get something accomplished and want to get to the heart of the matter, but slow down! Just like first impressions, the quality of the opening can set the tone for the entire gathering. By welcoming and acknowledging everyone, it allows each person to be fully present.

Sometimes, we ask people to do an introduction (if people don't know each other) and check-in, so that they can bring their full selves to the meeting. You may have to limit the check-in to a sentence or word unless you have lots of time. For example, after saying their name, pronoun and organization, we have asked people to give a "weather forecast," one word about how they are feeling. We've heard back: sunny, partly cloudy, tornado, stormy and occasionally, thunder and lightning.

Build Trust and Your Team

We do this by telling stories (like using the stepping stones), talking about something that inspires us, or having them share something that has been a highlight for them over the past week. Depending on how much time you have, or if you do more than one workshop, you can begin to help people feel safe with each other and depend on each other for help. Many of our folks teamed up to train with someone else in the group.

Check in with volunteers regularly, usually weekly. Make sure they understand what they are doing or ask if they have any questions. It is important to keep a record of each volunteer with phone numbers, addresses, best times to call, text or email. Always note what they have volunteered to do and when. Make sure volunteers get to meet staff and leaders of your organization. This often happens at celebrations (see the later chapter, "Celebration: Final Thoughts.")

Materials and Information

Volunteers need the resources to recruit others, like Voter Registration postcards and pledge cards, how to vote flyers and other information. If you're not doing Voter Registration and Get-Out-the-Vote and therefore not using the pledge card, then have something else that describes what you are asking volunteers to do. Provide a job description that is presented in an interesting way (see "deeper dive" for this chapter).

Homework and Evaluation

End each training with homework, often a commitment from each person of what they will do that week. Finally, ask people to describe one hope or takeaway from the session. Every so often, we ask for an evaluation of our monthly trainings. We invite people to tell us what they like about our training and what they would improve. Sometimes this is done verbally or on a Zoom call, but we also like to hand out (or provide a link to) a questionnaire that people can fill out anonymously.

Action Steps



1.

Think about when you start a training, what is the first thing you would do with your group?

—Openings (poems, prayers, meditations, songs)

—Introductions that begin with a question

2.

Journal (write freely) for a few moments then describe three ways you would start a training.



Questions to Help You Evaluate Your Trainings

1. What did you like about the training?
2. What would you want improved about the training?
3. How did the trainer do? What could be improved with her training style?
4. How did the technology (if you're using video conferencing) work for you? How could it be improved?
5. What would you tell another co-worker about this training and why (or why not) they should participate?



Ideas for What to Include in a Job Description

As you write your own job descriptions, put yourself in the place of a volunteer and ask what you'd like to know. Below are some items to consider:

1. **Mission.** Volunteers want to know your mission. State the basic idea of your work in one memorable sentence like: "Saving Life on Earth" (Center for Biological Diversity).
 2. **Project or position.** Describe the goal of the volunteer project or role and explain how it contributes to your mission.
 3. **Benefits that volunteers will receive.** Include learn new skills, make new friends, have fun while making a difference.
 4. **Tasks.** Describe exactly what you want the volunteer to do. List specific tasks.
 5. **Skills wanted.** Include both "hard" skills, such as writing or making phone calls, and "soft" skills that would be nice to have, such as good communication.
 6. **Setting.** Describe where the volunteer will work: outdoors, your main office, an off-site location, door-to-door in the community.
 7. **Schedule and commitment.** Answer common questions: How long will this job last? How many hours per week? Can I determine my own hours? Is the job more time-intensive during certain months of the year, such as Election Day? Are date-specific events or project deadlines part of the job?
 8. **Training and supervision.** Describe the extent of on-the-job instruction, either formal or informal, and who will supervise them.
 9. **Screening.** Describe up front any required background checks or screening tests for volunteers (for those working with children or government grants).
- Be creative!** Make a flyer with a logo, showing pictures of volunteers working, gatherings or celebrations to promote your volunteer jobs.

5. Crafting Your Message

When people open their door and you simply say, “I’m here to register you to vote,” you often get the door closed in your face. Almost no one does that if you say, “We’re here to talk to you about your community and hear about your concerns.”

Your message has to come from what people in the community care about. There is a simple way to find out the answer to this. Ask!

Go door-to-door and ask people what they like about their community and also, what changes they would like to see. When people are listened to rather than told something, they are much more engaged. Next ask people to come to a meeting to talk about their concerns. That is where you get people to agree on two or three messages. We often worked with people to do research, like on budgets or voting records, and then come up with solutions. This is when you talk about the importance of voting and how it can be a force for change. From there, the people help you develop a message.

The Power of Asking

When it came to Voter Registration and Get-Out-the-Vote, we realized at Piedmont Peace Project that most of the folks in our community didn't feel as if they had power or that voting made any difference for them. They understood they were poor and so nothing changed for them, no matter who was in office.

We had to help people overcome their despair and understand what voting could do. We began to include voter registration as part of everything we wanted to accomplish.

If we were talking about our children and education, we talked about the importance of electing a school board who reflected our wishes. When we talked about Head Start programs, we helped people understand the barriers, in this case, the county commissioners controlling the budget.

Even though Head Start was funded through the federal government, the county had to pay for a location. People from the community asked the county to spend \$20,000 on an abandoned church to turn into a Head Start center. The answer was always that there was not enough money in the budget.

We asked community people to examine this budget. They learned that this county spent \$10 million on building a new football stadium at the white, middle-class high school. It spent \$1 million annually for flowers at the entrance to town during golf tournaments. When we asked why the county wouldn't spend a mere \$20,000 on a place for Head Start, one elderly man leaned back in his chair and said, “Well, I guess they wouldn't have enough caddies or wait staff.” After that, the community challenged the county commissioners. We held a press conference pointing out the flowers and football stadium, and received the money for Head Start.

We began to develop simple flyers that highlighted people's needs for housing, food, medication, education, child care and more, and then identified budget items, both local and federally. We

said you can change this by voting. People began to realize that without exercising the voting power they held, no one would listen. The more people we registered to vote, the more politicians began to come to their community and campaign. The candidates had to listen to people who were much more informed about issues than they were used to hearing!

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

- 1.** Why is it important to vote?
- 2.** How does it make a difference? Can you give an example?
- 3.** Why is it important for messages to come from the group or community?
- 4.** Why does it make a difference if it's in their voices and uses pictures of local people?
- 5.** How does building power through voting make a difference?

Effective Issue-Based Messaging

Think about your family. Make a list of their names, ages, race, class and if they have voted before. Do the same for your organization or your broader community.

First name	Last name	Age	Race	Class	Voted before (Yes/No)	Likely to vote this time? (Yes/No)	Why or why not?

Notice if the answers for each group of people are the same or not. Are there any trends or patterns? What different messages might we use for the different groups?

Being Sensitive to Difference and Circumstances

While there are different ways of saying this in different communities, if people in our communities said, “I can’t see very much,” it most often meant they couldn’t read. We would say, “That’s fine. Would you be willing to make sure the pictures tell the story?” and they would agree. By involving everyone in the process, and using pictures of folks in the community, they became our biggest advocates distributing the materials and asking people to vote. They were invested and understood the materials deeply.

Even though people registered, often they wouldn’t go out to vote. Again, sometimes this was because of a feeling of not having power, but we also learned that people were often “afraid” of the process — for different reasons.

Some people couldn’t read and were ashamed to say so. We always made sure people knew they could have someone with them to help them, a family member, or even someone in the organization if they wanted.

Other people are just afraid, and for good reason. In recent elections, we saw trucks with Confederate flags, filled with white supremacists, often toting automatic weapons at polling places. This is another reason to encourage people to do mail-in ballots or vote early at the election office. Find out where the safest places are and be willing to drive folks there.

Some people were afraid of the process, so with others in the community, we developed a “how to vote” brochure. It walked local folks through a “mock” voting process that was tailored for every county: who to call for a ride, what you would be asked, identification you might need, dates to vote, early voting and how to do mail-in ballots.

Words and Meanings

Language and what words people use are very important. One year I was working with a local college class. They were going out into the community, listening to people to determine what needed to go in the how to vote brochure. When we got to the last step of writing the brochure, the class disagreed about whether you “feed” the ballot into the machine or “insert” the ballot into the machine. I realized, being from the community myself, probably neither of those words were correct. If you “feed” something into a machine that means the machine eats it!

I asked the students to go back out, show people a dollar bill, and ask them what they had to do with the dollar to get a Coke out of a vending machine. People in the community all answered, “You put the dollar into the machine!” So, we wrote, “Put your ballot into the machine.”

This sounds like a minor change, but how people understand things and local terminology is critically important.

Action Steps



1.

Make a list of issues that affect your community.

2.

Choose an issue.

3.

Create a mock-up of a new, issue-based message. It could be a flyer (printed and/or digital), meme, a billboard or a public service announcement for a radio show or podcast.

4.

Can you adapt the message for other mediums (print, TV, radio, social media)?

Messaging: Why register, why vote

For registration

- Issues people in the community care about
- Issues your organization is working on

For voting

- Tell an inspirational story
- Special messages for young people
- Special messages for other constituencies

RESOURCES

Speak Out!

Swannanoa Community Gathering



October 5th
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Grovemont Square

Join Us for Ice Cream, Friends,
Neighbors, and Community Fun!

We want to know...

What do you really love about Swannanoa?
What do you want to see change in Swannanoa?
Do you want to get to know your neighbors better?
Do you want to get involved in the community?
Do you have any ideas for improving our community?

Come to our event, and share your thoughts
with us! Visit www.workingtogether.us for more
info.

Thank you for participating!



We the People: Working Together is a local effort in Swannanoa, North Carolina that seeks to build community by listening to folks just like you and your neighbors. We the People is dedicated to fairness, justice, and community empowerment.

Your voice has the power to benefit your family and improve your community.

We believe that with genuine conversations, we can work together to build power and benefit everyone.

There are no wrong answers!
We want to hear what you think.

For more info: www.workingtogether.us



Dear Friends,

In collaboration with Warren Wilson students, We the People: Working Together has interviewed more than 100 Swannanoa residents about our community, our hopes and concerns.

Here are some of the **top issues** to work on that community members have expressed:

- Revitalization of downtown Swannanoa
- Poor public transportation, bad roads and few sidewalks
- Better medical care
- Improved public education
- Lack of voter registration and education
- Not enough parks or community events
- Rising drug use
- Few trash and recycling options, resulting in litter

Be a part of the decision-making process around issues that affect your lives. Tell us what you like about Swannanoa and what you would like to improve. Share your vision for the future of this valley and tell us your ideas for solutions to these community concerns.

Thank you for joining us in this work by making your voice heard. People like you are our greatest hope for the future!

Linda Stout
Linda Stout
We the People Project Director

For more info: 828-357-5566 or workingtogether@spiritinaction.net.

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT?



ELECTION DAY
Depending on your city:
October 5, 2021 or
November 2, 2021

No matter what you care about, **YOUR ISSUES** are on the ballot in 2021.

VOTE EARLY
The 3 weeks leading up to Election Day in your city.
Check: demnc.co/votelocal

REMEMBER:

Your Local Elected Officials touch your everyday lives more than federal representatives. Engaging at all levels of our democracy can help break the tangle of oppressive practices and policies.

Races that will be on the ballot in 2021:

MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL

Oversee the general administration of day-to-day city operations, including police & fire departments, arts & parks, local taxes, economic development, water & sewer management, and zoning. They hire the City Manager and prepare the annual budget.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Set the school system budget and decide who runs your schools, where your kids go to school, how big classes are, and even what textbooks are used.

LOCAL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SUPERVISORS

Establish local conservation priorities and work with landowners on soil preservation, flood prevention, and protecting clean water.

PRO-TIP: The more you know about the races on your ballot – the less you leave blank.

Take your time, mark your choices in EVERY race in your area, and encourage others to do the same. Learn more about what's on your ballot at demnc.co/yourballot

POLICE TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY IS ON THE BALLOT.

Mayors normally pick the city or town's police chief to manage law enforcement, and City Councils or County Commissioners fund that law enforcement. Our safety is at stake this year.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS ON THE BALLOT.

City Councils have the power to approve funding to create or maintain affordable housing communities and zone the city to allow for more of these communities to be built. Mayors have the power to issue executive orders that could be used to pause residential evictions due to COVID.

SAFETY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS ON THE BALLOT.

School Boards in every district have the power to enact COVID safety measures like mask mandates and social distancing.

ONE PERSON can determine the outcome of an election. In 2019, **ONE VOTE** made the difference in **39 CITY ELECTIONS** here in NC!

DEMOCRACY NC

Find your ballot, check your registration, and see your voting precinct at demnc.co/lookup. Problems or questions? Call 888-OUR-VOTE. Democracy North Carolina is not affiliated with any candidate or party.

General information on elections,
Democracy NC "What's on the Ballot?"
Download: bit.ly/3q2aXmT

6. Trainings, Games and TAKE 10 Bingo

At the start of every training, we always do an opening that is meaningful, so that everyone is present and ready to participate. Usually, we do a closing that involves people saying something positive they are taking away or giving an appreciation of the group. Sometimes, when we sense a group is losing energy or is down, we head into fun and games. Don't forget to allow room for spontaneity and play!

Fun Goes with Self-care

I've discussed making TAKE 10 trainings enjoyable. At times we use games as a learning tool and as a way to have fun. In some cases, games motivate people to do more or have new ideas. TAKE 10 Bingo is one of those games. I had seen Bingo games used in other ways in social justice work, so decided we should make one for our TAKE 10 trainings.

It was something people had a set time to work on, two months in our case. But depending on your group, it could be immediate, or a week, or even longer than a month. Each line had three action items, and included one fun and easy thing as well as one self-care element. It inspired people to take action and to think about fun and self-care at the same time.

For people who completed a line up, down or diagonally, they were awarded a \$100 gift card. Make the gift appropriate to what your organization can do, but make it worthwhile to encourage people do to the activity as well.

Action Steps



1.

Use our example on the next page or create your own. It could be answering questions about trainings you have done, city and state government, or a particular issue.

2.

Notice that there were fun things interspersed with action items from previous trainings. The introduction to a "gratitude jar" for example, came from a self-care workshop. It is a jar or box filled with a reminder every day of what you're grateful for.

3.

Have Fun and Go BINGO!

TAKE 10: GOTV

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Get 10 Volunteer Cards filled out.	Post Voter Registration/ Get-Out-the-Vote volunteer opportunities on social media.	Stop to smell the flowers!	Train volunteers on TAKE 10 model –Session 1.	Read Chapter 2 <i>Collective Visioning</i> .
Do an activity you did as a child that would make you laugh.	Take a relaxing walk in nature (without a cell phone).	Get 3 people to fill out an online voter registration form.	Use an exercise from <i>Collective Visioning</i> in a training with volunteers.	Write thank yous to at least 3 TAKE 10 volunteers.
Read Chapter 5 of <i>Bridging the Class Divide</i> .	Familiarize yourself with your local county/city elections.	THANK YOURSELF!	Do something creative for your self-care.	Ask at least 3 young people (age 6–14) to volunteer for Get-Out-the-Vote (Saturday before Election Day).
Get your group to watch video on Wilmington, North Carolina massacre and discuss.	Train volunteers on TAKE 10 model –Session 2.	Talk to your election board about how many polling places your communities will have.	Commit to sending weekly alerts to volunteers.	Create a gratitude jar (or journal).
Ask 3 people what changes they want to see in their communities.	Play some music, sing a song and dance.	Call 3 people and ask them to become a TAKE 10 volunteer.	Make list of volunteers with email/ mailing addresses for later.	Complete the TAKE 10 GOTV Workshop #4.

7. Dealing With Challenges

Change and growth are usually uncomfortable. But afterwards, in looking back, we are glad that they happened. It takes courage to break ranks with the dominant culture and take action. It takes courage to reclaim our voices and our power. Our horizons widen when we discover a totally different way of viewing something.

Facing Difficult Times with Courage

In our work, we face many kinds of challenges. But we never talk about challenges without looking for solutions.

We asked participants in one of our TAKE 10 trainings to name challenges they experienced. As you can guess, there were many, from providing safe sites, to fears and intimidation in the Latinx community, to individual leaders being targeted by white supremacists, to funders making demands that pull people away from meeting the needs of their organization.

Our participants explained that they not only felt unsafe from external players, but they found internal opposition from their communities. People were scared to come out to vote where white supremacists were strong. “The opposition would show up before we would,” they told us, “and take places we planned on using. They put up signs. They spread out and crowded us out.”

Members of the Latinx community worried about undocumented family members and neighbors. Citizens didn’t know where to go to vote in some counties, because the information was not in Spanish too. ICE seemed to lurk around every corner, and no one trusted the sheriff’s office.

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has his foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”

—Bishop Desmond Tutu

Some funders provided stipends to pay volunteers during the election. This was great, but when the outside money dried up, people didn't want to return to being volunteers for an organization where they could no longer get paid.

As we looked for solutions to some of these issues, we found that:

- Intimidation is one we need to take especially seriously. One of the things we are doing now is talking with state and national groups about how to provide protection against white supremacist attacks and intimidation.
- We also plan to educate funders and ask them to work more closely with grassroots groups to determine what they really need. Funders must be engaged in providing protection against intimidation and in understanding and being sensitive to volunteer issues.
- Educate volunteers in advance about opportunities for payment in busy election years vs. doing program work with the organization for the betterment of their communities for no payment.
- Provide more bilingual information to Latinx communities, and provide it earlier in Spanish.

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

- 1.** How's your heart?
- 2.** How's your mind?
- 3.** Are they aligned?

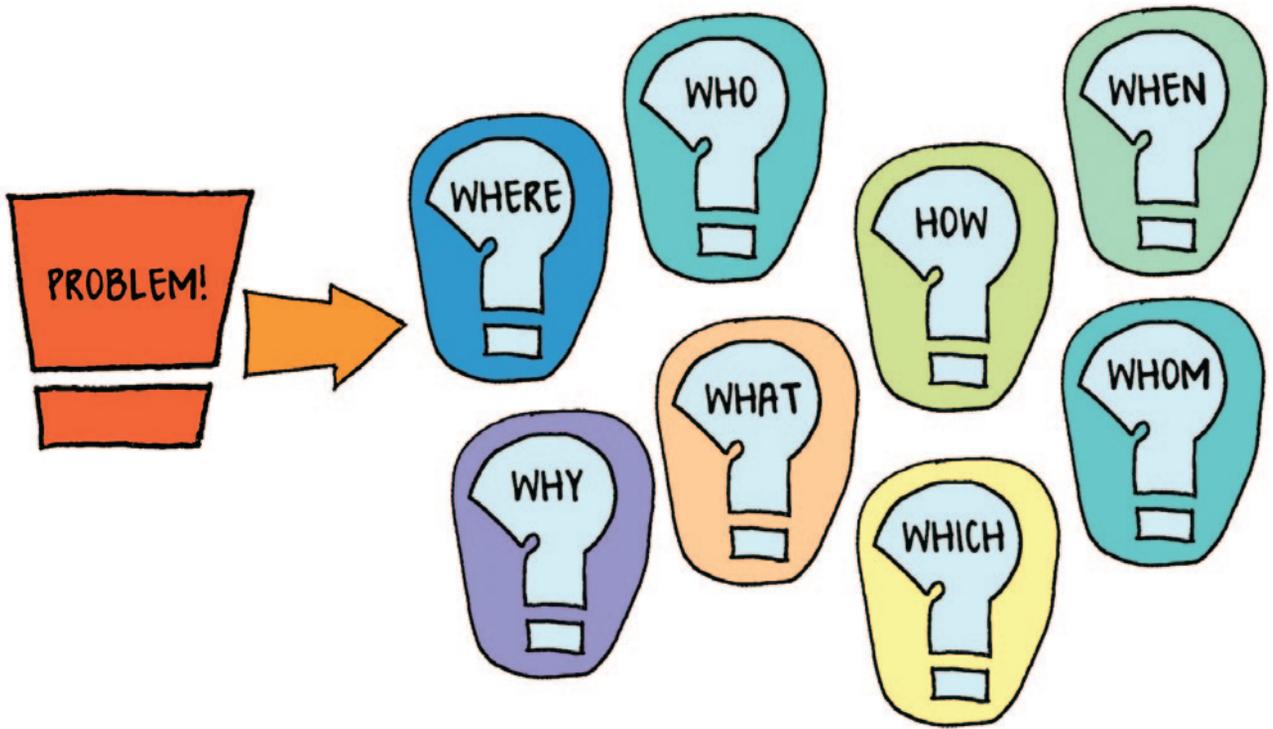
Chart your own Challenges

Brainstorm solutions using this chart.

1. What's a challenge you're facing in your work?
2. What would it look like if you were entirely successful in overcoming this challenge?
3. Are you calling on other people in your community to help you problem solve?
4. How involved are your TAKE 10 volunteers in these conversations?
5. What is the roadmap to that solution?

Challenges	Solutions
1.	What would success look like? 1. 2. 3.
2.	What do I need to do next? 1. 2. 3.
3.	When will I do it? 1. 2. 3.

People who can help me



Courtesy of CC/MIT creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Action Steps



1.

Identify a person or ally with power to help you, if needed.

2.

If no one springs to mind, how will you go about finding someone?

8. Avoiding Stereotypes

When communities are at their best, they draw on the strength of their diversity. We all bring different life experiences, ways of being and thinking, and expertise to the group. Honoring our differences in the service of our shared vision allows us to broaden trust and respect for each other while learning to more deeply understand the world around us.

Biases and Assumptions

When I first entered the world of organizing, I often felt left out or ignorant, and put down. This, I believed, was because I grew up poor and had no college education. Often, I didn't feel I was smart and most of all, I never thought I could be a leader. Even today, after being an executive director of organizations for 38 years and teaching at several colleges, I can still find myself feeling "stupid" by the way some people talk or assumptions they make about who I am based on my background.

Taking advantage of what each generation has to offer while incorporating all of our experiences, energy and leadership is the way we combat the simplistic thinking of stereotypes. We can unite the lessons from the past with the power of the present and our dreams of the future.

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

It's important to have youth-led, youth-focused and intergenerational relationships so that all voices are heard.

1. What are some stereotypes of the opposite generation that you hold in regards to work ethic and organizing?
— If younger person, talk about elders.
— If elder, talk about young people.

2. Has that been your actual experience?

3. Why or why not?

What is a stereotype?

- A preconceived idea that attaches particular characteristics to and generalizes about all members of a group.
- An exaggerated image of a person or group, allowing for little variation or individual differences, a caricature.
- Simplistic, binary beliefs about what characterizes a certain group of people.

How Binary Stereotypes Make a Complex World Too Simple

Voter	Non-voter
Old	Young
White	People of Color or Indigenous people
Involved	Not involved
Citizen	Undocumented
Teacher	Student
Progressive	Conservative
Reader	Illiterate
Poor or low-income	Middle-class or wealthy
Not formally educated (no high school degree, or possibly high school with no college)	College education

Strength in Our Diversity

This Stepping into the Circle exercise is a powerful tool for people to begin to see each other and think about stereotypes they may hold. It only takes a few minutes and often is very meaningful for those who participate. We always called out the most oppressed category, like low-income, people of color, youth. We even did it on a Zoom call, where people raised their hands.

Create a list of *excluded* identities that you know your participants possess:

1. Ethnic identities (for example Black, Native American, Latinx)
2. Socioeconomic class (for example, low-income, working-class)
3. Sexual orientation and gender identities (for example, LGBTQ)
4. Mental, emotional, social and physical identities (for example, physically disabled, mentally ill)
5. Age (for example, over 65, under 20)
6. Religious or spiritual identities (for example, Muslim, Jewish)
7. Native language (for example, Spanish, Arabic)
8. Citizenship (for example, immigrant)

Ask people to “step into the circle” (or raise their hands on video conferencing) when a particular group is named with which they choose to identify. Identification is voluntary. Ask people to step into the circle to identify, pause and look around at who is in the circle with you and who is not. Stay at least 10 seconds in the circle. This is done in silence. Then the facilitator will ask people to step back out again.

Name one excluded identity at a time. Before moving on to the next category on your list, ask if you have left anyone out.

Questions for the group to consider:

1. What surprised you most?
2. How often did you step into the circle? How did that make you feel?
3. What did you observe about the group as a whole?
4. Do you have any new feelings or changed ideas about your own identity?
5. Are there any questions about identity that you are taking away from this experience? What?
6. How does the diversity of excluded identities present strengthen us?

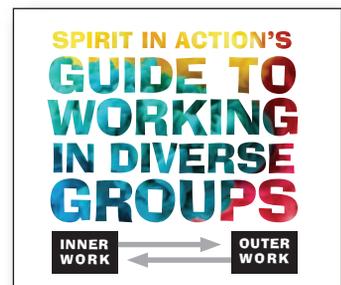
Action Steps



1. Commit to these best practices in your work to strengthen diversity and avoid stereotypes.
 - Honesty: aim for open communication; think about how you show up; be in relationship with others.
 - Honor that we are all experts of our own experiences.
 - Plan that a process can be messy — aim to be comfortable in an uncomfortable place.
 - Make it a learning opportunity for all.
 - Honor history and traditions of the group and organizing. Recognize that change is inevitable.
 - Share foods from each culture.
 - Share your stories and experiences.
 - Have patience, show caring.
 - Practice positive redirection of disparaging statements. Help people understand unintentional misstatements.
 - Make sure that young people feel supported.

RESOURCES

Spirit in Action's *Guide to Working in Diverse Groups*
Download at bit.ly/3F5Ck5w



9. Becoming a Better Leader

How do we embrace the challenges that we face today as well as tomorrow's promises?

To do this we must lead with hope and optimism, and with a collective vision.

We are all leaders although some may be playing many different roles. Some lead in the front, some within, and some lead while following. But unless we are leading in the way that is grounded in our values and leads by the example of what we are trying to build, we aren't able to create the change we want.

Thoughtful action avoids polarization. It is how we can connect more deeply and broadly across a wide spectrum of issues and concerns, building vibrant social movements that are greater than the sum of their parts.

Embracing What We Can Do and What Seems Hard

So many people have gone through Spirit in Action trainings who felt they didn't have a voice, power or the ability to be a leader. I think especially of young people, some only in junior high, as well as college students. There were two VISTA volunteers who attended one of our leadership trainings. They told me, "We can't take this stuff back and use it right now with our volunteers — they are too angry and polarized."

We showed them they needed to do just that, and coached them how to lead with their next sessions with volunteers, getting the VISTA volunteers to tell their stories first, and moving through the steps of visioning into action. They reported back that it worked! It totally shifted the dynamics within their group.

This is building power and leadership that enables people to participate in national, state and local elections. Get-Out-the-Vote and Voter Registration programs become part of a group's long-term work. In effect, Get-Out-the-Vote and Voter Registration is part of the "toolbox" that organizations use to do their work, regardless of their focus. Leaders can bring this attention to all aspects of their work.

Leading with hope, optimism and vision helps us create a different culture in the way we do our work that is sustainable, supportive and achievable. What I have learned from training people in leadership is that real change begins with me — with you. Until we can embrace our own visions, our own ability to work from a visionary and relationship-based place, we can't teach others. And to be successful we might have to change the way we lead.

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

1.

What are your strengths and qualities as a leader?

2.

What would you like to strengthen and improve in your leadership?

One of the Tools in the Toolbox

Start by drawing a big circle and dividing it into many sections (like a pie). Ask people what they think are qualities and strengths of good leaders. Then ask them to name all these things and write them into the sections. When we look at all of them and ask who holds all these skills, no one ever raises their hands!

Then we asked what are the **attributes of a good leader**?

These were some of their answers:

- Recognizes the leadership in other people and gives them the space to lead
- Is able to speak to elected leaders and in public
- Good listener
- Not afraid of supporting your ideas, your growth and sharing power
- Knowledgeable about the issue
- Listens to your ideas and makes your feel included
- Brings out the best in others
- Draws out the skills and abilities of everyone in the organization
- A good leader must also be a good follower — takes feedback and listens to other folks
- Compassionate
- Able to fundraise and talk to donors
- Guides people in the direction they need to go in
- Willing to share information with other people
- A thinker, has vision, sees people in places where they can serve the best
- Is reflective — having that mind of what went well, what didn't go well and the ability to adjust
- Gives praise when needed and corrects you as well
- Challenges you and allows for mistakes
- As you deal with mistakes, finds ways to empower you and build from that
- Learns from others — is willing to accept others' knowledge and be taught



Then we go to each piece of the pie and ask, who can do this part? As we fill out several names, a picture begins to emerge — we have most or all of the leadership skills we need within the group.

After that, we identify if there are any attributes for which we need training. We also ask who would like to work with a leadership group to learn those leadership skills. This allows us to decide what kind of leadership trainings we need, but most of all empowers everyone to see how they can be a leader.

Action Steps



1.

Put this pie exercise into your toolbox!

Here are some of the most important leadership qualities.
With these abilities, you can learn any of the other skills.

Read more here: bit.ly/3Ehdiz3



RESOURCES

Abrams, Stacey. (2018). *Minority Leader: How to Lead from the Outside and Make Real Change*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

10. Community Safety

We are living through a time when community safety is being reimagined and redefined before our eyes. As Black Lives Matters states, “If there’s one thing we know is true, it’s that we keep us safe — not the police, not the authorities.” We need to do what we’ve always done — look out for each other and care for each other — and do it at the polls.

Strength in Numbers

I have many stories of people who came to help us at Piedmont Peace Project when we were under duress during an election. At one point, a prominent minister, William Sloane Coffin, organized a busload of people from Washington, D.C. to come provide protection as an outside presence. He also brought the national press. Reverend Coffin slept right in front of the front door of my mother’s and my trailer.

For another important presidential election in Asheville, we needed a big influx of volunteers to come and help us. We called a national hotline and within an hour, a busload of volunteers from South Carolina arrived.

It’s important to think “out of the box” when it comes to finding people who have sheer numbers or clout to get attention. Often a group of ministers can provide this, or maybe you can think of others who might come to your area. Even a group from a city, like Raleigh or Durham, may have prepared their people and voted early so they can come to help your county. Having outside press is always useful.

Be ready for potential issues that may come up, such as:

- Intimidation.
- White supremacists gathered in trucks with guns.
- People being told they are not on the registration list. Have them ask to fill out a provisional ballot and then report it to the hotline.
- Lines that are too long.



Are the Voter Lines Getting Too Long?

You can:

1. Try to provide childcare and games to keep children busy. Set up an art table or a place young people can do homework while their parents are waiting to vote.
2. Find people in line who will start people singing while waiting.
3. Provide food, water, a phone and supplies that people can pick up or use before getting in line. Due to new laws in some states like North Carolina, we cannot pass out water or snacks to the lines, but we can have them available for people to pick up at the safety tents that you erect at polling places.
4. Have folding chairs for elderly or disabled people.
5. Make sure people have a postcard showing what to do if they have a problem voting.
6. Have a digital expert on call in case computers (with lists) get hacked.
7. Encourage as many people as possible to vote early.

Questions for you as you work on this exercise:

1. What are all the scenarios you can envision, things that might go wrong?
2. What will you do to be prepared?
3. How will you make sure your volunteers — at the polls or working in the field — feel supported on Election Day?

Community Safety Strategies

Use this chart to brainstorm what you and your group would do.

Situation	Possible Ideas	What I Would Do
Help people in nursing homes to vote	Provide mail-in ballots or rides, folding chairs for long lines.	
Timeline for voting changes mid-stream	Early education on absentee ballots	
Security situation	Try to de-escalate. (Don't call police officers unless it's an absolute emergency.)	
Confusing directions or unfamiliar polling site	Mobile signs showing where to go, where safety tent is and who to call for problems.	
Anticipated threats	Let other people know what you are doing. People can use phones outside of polling places to document with pictures and video.	
Safety in numbers	Always have a buddy with you. Never go alone. Write emergency phone numbers on your body that cannot be erased.	

Dealing with Misinformation: It's a tactic that seeks to break us apart

I recall that in the late '80s, the Piedmont Peace Project held a press conference announcing that we planned to sue the state of North Carolina for illegally denying us access to register voters on public property. The next day the state attorney released a false statement saying the state had not denied us this access and was considering a countersuit against the PPP for filing what he called a frivolous lawsuit.

The local newspaper supported him and published a vicious attack on PPP, even though we had given them proof of the true story: copies of letters from the state attorney denying our right to register voters. The paper refused to print a retraction or to write the truth.

Immediately, our members felt disempowered. Some were prepared to give up. Many even believed the newspaper reports and thought that they had somehow been duped.

We held an emergency meeting to bring everyone together and to talk about how they were feeling. We then asked people to think of a time that the newspaper had made false statements. With this newspaper, there were many! All of a sudden, the energy shifted as people began to pour out their stories of the paper's false accusations, insults, and the newspaper's fear and hatred around labor and civil rights organizing.

Our win had threatened the powerful.

We discussed with our members why we were a threat to those in power. People realized that we had been successful in unseating some local politicians who were known members of the KKK. For the first time, our community had elected people of color.

Getting Back to Our Vision and Plan

We organized to get the real message out through churches and community groups. Standing together, we were able to turn this potential catastrophe around and celebrate a powerful victory against the state. In the end, the newspaper had to tell the real story.

By now we know that Facebook, Twitter and even TikTok, as well as dark web sites, can be rife with misinformation. Let's take a deep breath and recommit to our collective vision of the world we want to live in while we continue to do the hard and necessary work to get the right story out there. If you are going to the Board of Elections meetings, you can determine who to trust for information on voting. You will also hear what issues are raised. Monitor your social media sites to make sure you are giving the correct information all the time.

This is to say, we cannot give up now.

Action Steps



- 1.** Create a postcard to give people telling them who to call or to report to for problems.
- 2.** Be sure to include information like names and phone numbers.
- 3.** Set up safety tables and tents where people can get snacks, water and advice.
- 4.** Stay positive and vigilant.



Prepare your toolkit for Election Day. It could include more than snacks, water and flyers. Include the skills your volunteers need, like:

- De-escalation skills
 - Legal hotline numbers
 - A network of people on standby (lawyers, problem solvers, food delivery)
 - People to help with anxiety when polls close before those in line have voted
- Then make sure you have these folks on board.

Your Ideas for your Community's Safety



A series of horizontal blue lines for writing, starting from the top of the page and extending down to the 'RESOURCES' section.

RESOURCES

- Postcards and flyers to tell people who to call or how to report problems: Asheboro Voter Guide, p. 4 — bit.ly/31VNBax
- Democracy NC “Fair Maps” — bit.ly/30xdqNg

11. Self-Care

As social justice activists and religious leaders, we are all caretakers in our work.

We take care of the community, our members, our family and probably others.

This exercise will enable you to better understand how to practice self-care during times of potential burn-out, uncertainty and suffering.

Refresh and Recharge

It is so important to focus on self-care. I remember that at the age 27, I was working so much that I was close to burn-out but felt I couldn't stop. I took a weekend to myself, going away to a little cabin in the woods. One morning, I sat by a small creek with my feet dangling in. I remembered how much water rejuvenated me.

I grew up without running water. We had to walk a long way to draw water out of a well and we didn't have water to take actual baths in a tub. I decided my practice should be to take a luxurious bath every day. I've done that for the last 40 years and find that some of my best ideas comes during that time of day!



Courtesy of Laura Heartlines

To my fellow swimmers:

There is a river now flowing very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who are afraid.

They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel as if they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly.

Know the river has its destination.

The elders say that we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open and our heads above the water; and I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate.

At this time in history we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over:

Gather yourselves! Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary.

All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.

—A message from the Hopi Elders

Action Steps



1. Relax, call some friends.
2. Be positive.
3. Check-in on neighbors.
4. Eat fresh vegetables.
5. Learn breathing techniques.
6. Exercise: create your own program or walk with a friend.
7. Use essential oils or candles.
8. Pay attention to your own body.
9. Use your calendar to schedule breaks.
10. Stick to a shut down time: a time you are not being bothered or taking calls.
11. Celebrate with others.
12. Take a quick walk after lunch or in the middle of your work day.

RESOURCES

Solomon, Akiba, & Rankin, Kenrya (2019). *How we fight white supremacy: A field guide to Black resistance*. New York: Nation Books, Bold Type Books.

Celebration: Final Thoughts

At every point during our work, we tried to find ways to celebrate and honor our volunteers.

Celebrations do not always have to be big events. At Piedmont Peace Project, every Friday at 3 p.m. we stopped our work, put out snacks and beverages, and invited people who were just getting off work at the textile mills to come join us. We sang (we even formed our own gospel choir), played music and danced, and always celebrated one of the volunteers.

At the end of every election, we held a celebration dinner. All the volunteers who had worked with us received a certificate to honor their accomplishments. People gave testimonials about what they had learned through their experiences.

I can't emphasize enough how much celebrations keep volunteers engaged and excited about the work. It also helps build friendships and a sense of safety that other people know and care about you.

If someone was sick or had a family member sick or who died, we would always put a care basket together. We sent food, and the staff and volunteers would make sure they and/or the family were visited and comforted.

Often, we planned community celebrations—a fish fry, an ice cream social—with a fun local band providing music. There were activities for the children. The whole community would be invited, but someone always sat at a table at the entrance to make sure anyone who needed to could register to vote!

Make sure you always include fun in every meeting and activity. You can end with a song and dance. Or ask people to do a round of appreciations. Ask for just one thing they are taking away for the week. Then celebrate what you hear.

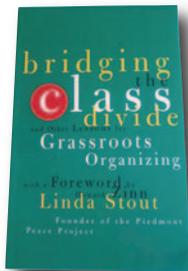
Make joy a part of everything you do.

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not lead single-issue lives.

Our struggles are particular, but we are not alone.

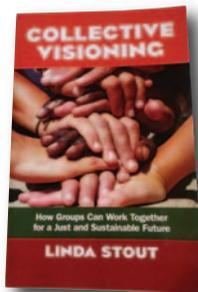
What we must do is commit ourselves to some future that can include each other and to work toward that future with the particular strengths of our individual identities.”

—Audre Lorde



Books by Linda Stout

Stout, Linda (1996). *Bridging the class divide*. Boston: Beacon Press.



Stout, Linda (2011). *Collective visioning: How groups can work together for a just and sustainable future*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

spirit in action
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