The Energy Justice Network's

Campus - Community Organizing Guide

Building Power for Lasting Change
in the Youth Movement for Clean Energy

Prepared for the Energy Action Coalition and the
Campus Climate Challenge, August 2007

ENERGY JUSTICE.net

"Helping communities protect themselves from polluting energy and waste technologies"

I. Introduction to Campus and Community Organizing

This guide is intended to convince you of the value of getting involved in community organizing efforts and provide you with the tools and information you need to get started. It's designed primarily as a supplement to other organizing trainings and guides though it's certainly useful on its own (we recommend the SEAC Organizing Guide and the RAN Activist Toolkit – seac.org/sog and ran.org/act). It is targeted primarily towards high school and college-aged youth.

We will take you through four sections in this guide: Four Great Ways to Help Communities, which is self-explanatory, The Work Ahead, where we describe the energy situation on the ground and what it's like to do community work, Overcoming Obstacles, to share additional resources and help you plan your course of action, and finally The Way Forward, a conclusion.

Why Organize?

"[Organizing] builds a permanent base of people power so that dominant financial and institutional power can be challenged and held accountable to values of greater social, environmental and economic justice, [and] it transforms individuals and communities, making them mutually respectful co-creators of public life rather than passive objects of decisions made by others." -Mike Miller, Organize Training Center

Since you are reading this guide, we assume that you care, that you have an active involvement or at least interest in your social/political/cultural/physical environment. We assume that you are at least vaguely familiar with the looming threat of global warming, the environmental and human rights atrocities associated with dirty energy industries like coal and nuclear, the sometimes unbelievable endurance of bad legislation, bad politicians, and bad systems, etc. And we assume that you want to change these things, today.

Well, you're not alone, but to achieve any of this, we have to get together and get *organized*. Even in this culture of the individual, people know the value of getting together to accomplish things. If you have the most compelling and truthful argument (i.e. burning fossil fuels is bad!), but nobody else believes or supports you, then you have nothing. **It is with good information and good organizing that we build people power, and with that power we can create significant and lasting social changes. In the end, the big goal is not simply to win win win, but to organize an informed, empowered, and mobilized citizenry for the long haul.**

Why Community Organizing?

Community organizing is the process of helping people recognize and cultivate their own power, in order to influence decisions that directly impact the community. Community organizing creates a

mutually empowering space for people to realize how to get what they want through their combined knowledge, experiences, and skills. This type of work requires reaching beyond the social bubble of your school and/or peer group, and often means learning to relate to people from communities you may not be familiar with. It could involve working with people from a different socio-economic status, different levels of formal education, different races/cultures, etc., and often means working with people who have long and deep community ties. While it *is* important to organize in your schools, with your friends, in your age range, etc., it is also valuable to venture beyond familiar and comfortable settings.

Community organizing is valuable because:

- *You're not a student forever.* Most of the organizing you do in life will be more like community organizing than campus organizing. This work will train you for the future.

- *Community organizing improves your skills.* Community organizing will increase your ability to connect with people and build powerful relationships, which can be useful in many fields, including on-campus organizing.

- *You are part of the community!* While we need to pay attention to and work with our "base" (students and youth), we are part of a local community and external world. Off-campus work also often more directly affects the world we're about to inherit.

- *There is a pressing need for support*. There are uphill struggles going on in countless different communities right now, and you can help make a difference. Community groups tend to have resources like knowledge, experience, and (sometimes) pooled finances, but often need more membership, youthful enthusiasm, money, and other resources that you could help provide.

- *You can reach a broader base.* Organizing outside of our usual social / political / cultural / physical environment has the potential to create broader and more lasting change, in the external world as well as in ourselves.

- *Diversity is good!* Quite simply, greater variety yields stronger results. Just like the earth's ecosystems, relationships and outcomes are enriched by – and require! – diversity and complexity, so don't be afraid to work with new and different folks.

- *This is where the most (and arguably the best) work gets done.* You wouldn't know it from TV ads, mailed solicitations, calendars or fancy websites, but grassroots community groups are where most of the environmental movement's action is. Most people are engaged at this level and their staying power and history usually exceeds students'. Compared to other larger environmental groups, they're less likely to have vested interests or to seek compromising outcomes.

A Responsibility to Directly Impacted Communities

As individuals, we consume and discard many things, often without even knowing it, and the communities harmed by this consumption are often invisible to us. As consumers, food comes in containers, paper comes in reams, clothes come on hangers and energy and water flow magically with the flick of a switch. Waste and recyclables go "away," as does the wastewater from our sinks, showers and

toilets. Few people can name the ecosystems and the communities that are poisoned by the consumption and waste that comes with all of these materials that flow through our lives. While some of these communities may be halfway around the world, others are surprisingly close by.

In confronting this, we must remember that the larger institutions we're part of (schools, towns, workplaces, places of worship, etc.) have far greater impacts than we do individually: a group of people pressuring their town to develop a conservation policy is far more significant than the same group of people saving energy in their own houses. This isn't to say that personal contributions aren't necessary, just that they are a step on a longer path. We all have a responsibility to the communities impacted by our consumption and – more importantly – the consumption of our schools and other institutions.

Your (school's) consumption reaches far and wide
EXTRACTION → PRODUCTION → CONSUMPTION → WASTE
- **Extraction** (chopping trees, mining resources, farming of agricultural products)
- **Production** (paper mills, coal plants, metal smelters, food processors)
- **Consumption** (malls, distributors, university purchasing departments)
- **Waste** (landfills, incinerators, recycling facilities, farmlands and mines where waste is dumped, the air, the rivers, the sewers, etc.)

Picking Your Issue is a Privilege

Youth and student activists can often *choose* which issues they'd like to be involved in. Many of us come from a position of privilege, while most community groups do not have this luxury. Small community groups also tend to have a hard time receiving foundation funding and support from larger groups that do have money. Because of these disparities, it's important that young people are accountable with their privileges and resources – we have a responsibility to contribute to the grassroots community sector. For more on this, see *Access to Resources* in Section III.

The Importance of Self-Interest

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I?
And if not now, when?" -Rabbi Hillel

Community groups do not form out of nothing, people need a reason to take the initiative to attend a meeting or go to an event. **The central motivating force that gets people involved is self-interest** – we are not saying that this is good or bad, but that this is just the way it is. As Dave Beckwith from the Center for Community Change says in his Community Organizing pamphlet, "people are motivated by their own self-interest," even though "many people are uncomfortable with self-interest." This is actually very good for groups, because folks that get involved have a very personal and lasting connection with the issues. If people actually have a stake in the outcomes, they are MUCH more likely
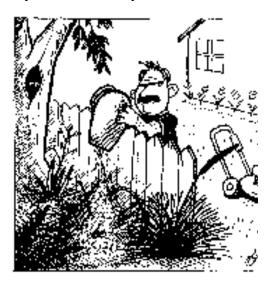
to get involved. To the extent that it's possible, a group's tactics should revolve around the concept of self-interest – recruitment, media, actions, everything. Community groups' environmental concerns often include their kids, community health (especially asthma and cancer), truck traffic, noise, odors, property values, taxes, jobs, water resources, and perhaps their local environment in general.

Of course, it is also important not to let one person's self-interest take over, especially if that limits other people's ability to work for their own self-interest. The longer goal of community organizing is to "develop a broader sense of self-interest…to teach people, through experience, that they can be effective in a larger and larger sphere."

Finally, an important note: **concerns about global warming are often overshadowed by more immediate concerns in communities**, even though you may think it's the most important issue. Communities operate within the frame of the issues that they perceive as most directly affecting them, which often does not involve global warming. In working with a community around a policy or facility, it's good to mention global warming as one point among other concerns, but focusing on it alone would ignore other important issues, and could easily annoy or offend people. As Saul Alinsky says in his classic book *Rules for Radicals*, "People only understand things in terms of their experience, which means you must get within their experience." This may present a great opportunity for you to expand your knowledge base and your ability to tie issues together effectively and accountably.

NIMBY vs. NIABY

Most community environmental groups form to protect themselves from some sort of impending (or existing) environmental harm. These groups are inherently "defensive" in nature (even the more pro-active ones are, in the end, often defending resources for their children's future). These groups are often branded as "NIMBY" (Not In My BackYard), a term used to criticize a group, as if there's some moral defect in wanting to protect your own "backyard."

Community groups sometimes use NIMBY rhetoric, often by asking corporate representatives why the facility isn't being proposed in *their* wealthy neighborhood. This can be useful in pointing out injustices – corporate representatives will sometimes stumble over questions like "when this is built, will you bring your family to live by the facility?" and "will you commit to buying my house if this is built?" Rhetorically, this is useful, however, the NIMBY position can backfire once it becomes clear that a group is only opposed to a project if it's proposed near *them*. If groups try to protect themselves at the expense of others ("put it in someone else's backyard"), it usually only helps ensure that the facility will end up in

a more vulnerable community – typically a low-income community and/or community of color.

For most policy and technology issues, there are already environmentally sound alternatives. In order to make the case for opposing something, it's important to know these solutions, so that a community group can take a principled "NIABY" (Not In *Anyone's* Backyard) stance. Once community activists from different communities get to meet each other, they can start to see this bigger picture, realizing that they're not the only targets and that many communities are facing similar threats. Through this sort of networking, NIMBY activists quickly become NIABY activists and get to work. Overall, these grassroots groups aren't simply pushing polluting industries from one community to another, they're following them and stopping them altogether. Look at the numbers and you'll see that the grassroots "one community at a time" organizing work is shaping entire energy industries. Between 60 and 90% of the proposed nuclear reactors, trash incinerators and natural gas power plants proposed since the 1970s were defeated primarily through the work of grassroots opposition groups.

II. Four Great Ways to Help Communities

This section will describe each of the four categories, and point you to more information on them. What you'll need to be effective at one will likely apply to the others as well.

- **1) Creating Policies that Protect Communities (pro-active work the smart way)**

Campaigns on energy/climate issues that demand some sort of policy change can lack the attention to detail that is needed to protect against unintended harmful impacts. Other than the obviously dirty options (like anything using coal, oil, natural gas, or nuclear), there are a lot of dirty technologies which have been greenwashed to seem sustainable, or at least preferable to mainstream options. When promoting policies, it's important that you think strategically and pay attention to details, from framing the issues to hammering out the details of implementation after you win. Otherwise, if your demands don't get specific beyond "climate neutrality" or purchasing "renewable" or "green" energy, there may be communities harmed in the process. Here are 5 common examples of potential loopholes:

Incineration – The most common way that "renewable" or "green" energy policies harm communities is through the inclusion of combustion technologies (they avoid the word "incineration" but often use the term "biomass" which means incineration of a variety of "organic" fuels). Some environmentalists pretend that "biomass" is clean, and that it only means things like burning grasses and trees (which isn't environmentally sound either). However, "biomass" usually means subsidizing the burning of toxic gases created by decaying waste in landfills, wood waste (which can be contaminated with a wide range of toxic chemicals), or even trash. These options are usually cheaper than wind energy (and currently always cheaper than solar), so if you let someone else decide how to buy "green" energy, they're likely to

fill up the mix with as much of this cheaper, dirty power as they can.

Biofuels – Many see ethanol and biodiesel as "renewable," even though they rely on unsustainable production systems. Ethanol is mostly from corn and biodiesel from soy, and both are mostly from genetically-engineered crops, use a tremendous amount of water and fertilizer, take a lot of fertile land, and rely on refineries, which can be very polluting. The nitrogen fertilizer used to grow these fuels is produced using large amounts of natural gas, which we're starting to run out of in North America. Consequently, a large portion of U.S. fertilizer production has gone overseas in recent years, chasing the gas supply. With 42% of these fertilizers now being imported, these "homegrown" biofuels are an increasingly foreign source of energy. Biodiesel from locally-produced waste vegetable oil (grease) can avoid these problems, though that market is often already nearing its limits. For documentation and more information on this, please see EnergyJustice.net/biodiesel/factsheet.pdf and EnergyJustice.net/ethanol/.

If you're going to push for investment in alternative fuels, it's best to jump directly to electric vehicles (EV) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV) (and power them with purchases of wind or solar powered-electricity). Using wind power, this can be cheaper than gasoline or even biodiesel. It also helps avoid continued reliance on combustion engines and ensures that your target doesn't turn around and support biotech soy refineries if the local veggie oil supply is insufficient. Also, many schools and towns have instituted great conservation and efficiency programs like free public transit for students and staff, free bike programs, increased bike lanes and pedestrian walkways, etc.

Nuclear power – Nukes aren't free of global warming emissions, and produce the dirtiest and most racist form of energy if you look at the entire nuclear fuel chain, from uranium mining to waste disposal. However, they're viewed as having no global warming emissions, so a "climate-neutral" policy could end up supporting an increased reliance on nuclear power. For more information on the dangers and injustices of nuclear power, please see NIRS.org or EnergyJustice.net/nuclear/.

Carbon sequestration – This is very unproven and risky. It involves pumping carbon dioxide underground or into water, with the hope that it'll stay there. Given that humans haven't figured out how to store solid nuclear waste for 50 years without serious leaks, it's dubious to expect that we can store trillions of tons of pressurized *gas* for hundreds of thousands of years. The process is very energy intensive, and experiments have shown leakage problems and the potential for major accidents (suffocating local populations with massive leaks). New science on carbon dioxide acidifying the oceans also raises the question of whether carbon "sequestration" will ultimately acidify groundwater sources. It's also worth nothing that no company has committed to installing a major sequestration facility, even though many are proposing facilities claimed to be "sequestration ready." For more information, see meic.org/energy/global_warming_pollution or a 2006 article called "*Important! Why Carbon Sequestration Won't Save Us.*"

Offsets and emissions trading – Many schools are looking to meet greenhouse gas reduction and "climate neutrality" demands with "offsets." These are purchased from various "green" marketers who usually have murky disclosure practices. Some involve supporting "reduced-impact" logging operations or paying oil and gas companies to fix leaky pipes they ought to fix anyway, or even supporting landfill companies or factory farms in the guise of promoting landfill gas burners or animal waste digesters as "green" energy (even though these systems compete with environmentally sound methods). All involve

avoiding the sources of pollution, and the consequences for those directly impacted.

The U.S. Department of Energy's "Voluntary Reporting of Greenhouse Gases" program even counts increased nuclear power generation, tire incineration, recycling of toxic coal ash into cement, and other environmentally harmful projects. Increased use of nuclear power is actually the largest category in that program. Even the Chicago Climate Exchange (which doesn't disclose projects on their website) apparently allows increased use of nuclear power, landfill gas burning and other polluting technologies. For more on offsets see CarbonTradeWatch.org or CheatNeutral.org.

From this sampling of examples, which certainly don't cover everything, you can see the value of tightening loose demands and weak definitions. If you want more info or aren't convinced about the problems with bioenergy technologies, nuclear power, offsets, etc., please contact us, as this guide would become a book if we tried to explain all of the harms of all of these methods, technologies and fuels.

The important lesson to take from this section is that **it's critical to figure out what you actually want to happen from any policy you promote** and to even get an idea where the money would flow (through which companies to which projects in which communities?). In order to be accountable to the communities that could be impacted by policies you promote, you need to fully explore the implications. If you're working on a campaign and are unsure what the impacts could be, get in touch with us – we've seen and evaluated many policies and can quickly identify loopholes you may not otherwise notice.

A Quick Note on Policy Demands

"Ask" is not a noun. We don't talk in the current movement jargon of "policy asks" when describing *demands*. As Frederick Douglass pointed out 150 years ago, "Power concedes nothing without a demand." **This framework is all about building power and being firm and assertive with that power.** Whether trying to get your school to spend money to buy wind power or working to stop a power utility from building a new nuclear reactor, you aren't likely to get very far with the "ask" approach. The first step of any campaign is "ask nicely and get denied" (in writing, if possible), because those in power (even your school administrators) aren't likely to respond favorably to a simple "ask." Demanding things doesn't mean being rude or applying pressure where it may not be deserved, but it's critical that we aren't shy about building power, being assertive, and continually cranking up the pressure.

- **2) Fighting Your School's Polluting Facilities**

Your school can be a polluter. This is especially true for colleges and universities – especially the large, research-based ones. Most college and university campuses have their own power plant (usually burning coal, oil, natural gas or some combination), some of the larger research institutions have animal

carcass incinerators (for animals killed by animal testing) or nuclear research reactors, and some have medical waste incinerators or even trash incinerators. High schools (mostly those in Illinois) can have their own trash incinerators as well.

These facilities will obviously affect the local campus environment, but are also responsible for polluting downwind communities, with some pollutants traveling hundreds of miles or more. As students, you *are* the most local community and if you don't take the lead on pressuring your schools to clean up or shut down these facilities, there's a good chance that no one else will.

Your School's Pollution Doesn't Need to be a Mystery

There are ways to research it – even if your school is private and you can't use public right-to-know laws on them. To learn more about how right-to-know laws apply to your school, see our 9-page "How To Figure Out Where Your School's Electricity Comes From" guide at EnergyJustice.net/campus.

The most effective way to figure out what polluting facilities your school has is to research your school at your state's environmental agency (often called the DEQ or DEP). Most school operations that have smokestacks, sewage discharges or other environmental impacts that require permits can be found in the files of the applicable regional office of your state agency. Even if your school is private, the information on permits, inspections, violations and related correspondence is public and you have a right to see it. You generally have to exercise this right by traveling to the regional office to look at the files on paper (and you have a right to copy them). Sometimes (in the case of nuclear facilities) the facilities will also be regulated by a federal agency (the Nuclear Regulatory Commission), which makes it less accessible (they only have 4 regional offices in the whole U.S.). For details on doing this research, see the Appendix on "Doing File Reviews at Your State Environmental Agency."

Students at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania found that the emissions from their campus coal plant were blowing right past some of the dorms and into the nearby community. They organized for several years around this and their campaign succeeded in getting the school to increase the height of the smokestack. It was a small but important step towards building power based on students' self-interests.

For research support and strategy development advice around campus pollution issues, contact the Energy Justice Network and other Energy Action Coalition members active in your area. We can walk you through the technical matters and help you develop a strong campaign with solid demands.

- **3) Solidarity with Impacted Communities Far From You**

There are a variety of reasons why long-distance solidarity work is really important – it can link you with some of the most desperate/unjust/under-resourced struggles in the world, expose you and your peers to new stories and realities, connect strategic angles to a campaign (does your school/town work with or invest in irresponsible companies?), confront a complex issue with a sophisticated and well-networked response, and provide an alternative to local work. Globalization has linked issues and struggles across the world, and working with groups far away from you can be an effective, educational, and empowering experience. Long-distance solidarity also helps prevent some possible downfalls of local work, where young people can be cumbersome because of high turnover and unusual schedules.

This category is very large as it includes regional, national and international campaigns designed to protect specific communities, no matter where they are in relation to you and your school. Most of the Examples of Campus-Community Collaboration Appendix involves long-distance solidarity. Since the number of possible campaign options is so much greater when you're not focused locally, it's necessary to have a process for picking a campaign. Here are some process ideas and criteria you can use to choose which campaign to take on:

- Do some research to figure out what communities are impacted by your school's operations. Where does your energy come from? (for help see: EnergyJustice.net/campus/) Where does your waste go? Where do various products used on your campus come from? Does your school have significant ties through investments, trustees or contracts to companies whose operations are harming communities? (see the Sustainable Endowments Institute, EndowmentInstitute.org, for info on how to get involved around investments; also see RAN.org or EnergyJustice.net/campus/investments.html for help researching investments).
- Figure out which regional or national campaigns are going on right now. If you need help, some good groups to contact are the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative, Global Exchange, the Indigenous Environmental Network, Mountain Justice Summer, the Rainforest Action Network, and us.
- Evaluate the campaigns based on the following criteria:
  - Is there a clear target than you can effectively pressure? If your school is connected to the problem, it may be a great opportunity to build and mobilize local student power.
  - Is the issue urgent? How dangerous is the threat (for the impacted community)? How vulnerable is the impacted community?
  - Is there adequate leadership in the community so that they can provide direction to your group, letting you know how you can best help? This is pretty important, and can provide a sense of continuity to your group.
  - Will the campaign get people's attention?
  - Is the campaign (or part of it) winnable within a time frame that works for you? Don't let this be the deciding factor though, as you could lend critical help to an issue that may not see victory until well after everyone in your group graduates.

- **4: Working with Community Groups Near You**

This is a great option, and there are almost always pressing local struggles to get involved in. Much of the information relevant to working with groups near you is spread throughout this guide – specifically, most of sections III and IV are relevant to this approach. Sorry if this is inconvenient, but there is simply too much to say on this topic. For help finding a group near you, see section III below.

III. The Work Ahead

What the Battlefront Looks Like

Our energy and waste systems are experiencing major changes due to rising demand and the economic and environmental consequences of global warming and the peak of oil, gas, and coal production. As energy prices rise with the impending scarcity of fossil fuels, both clean and dirty "alternatives" become more economically viable. Activist efforts to push progressive policies and fight dirty energy developments help shape the economics of energy and make it possible for clean alternatives like conservation, efficiency, wind and solar to compete. Every bike lane painted and every ethanol refinery stopped is a step towards making clean energy alternatives more of a reality.

BUT as of August 2007, at a time when wind power is the fastest growing energy technology, in the United States there are plans for **over 40 new nuclear reactors, 150+ new coal power plants, around 200-300 new ethanol biorefineries (most of which would be powered by mini-coal plants), 4 new oil refineries, about a dozen new coal-to-oil refineries, 45 new liquefied natural gas terminals, and many incinerators, landfills and dirty "alternative" fuels schemes** (like trash-to-ethanol) – not to mention energy extraction industries and the pipelines and power lines needed to maintain this centralized energy system. Moreover, according to a recent article entitled "Protect Your Efforts" by Architecture 2030, if "all high school and college campuses in the U.S. [went] carbon neutral…the CO_2 emissions from just four medium-sized coal-fired power plants each year would negate [the] entire effort." [*Editor's Note:* This figure looks to be off – it would probably take 40 medium coal plants, however the point still stands.]

Offense, Defense, and Compromise

You may have noticed that many of the things we've talked about so far are fights *against* things. In the environmental movement, there are groups "playing offense" (working to promote good things) and others "playing defense" (working to stop bad things). Our movement needs both sides to work together in order to be strong.

The interplay between offense and defense is critically important. When a dirty energy facility is developed, it's likely that the facility will last for 30-60 years. If we allow the current wave of proposed coal and nuclear power plants to be built, the prospects for wide-scale use of wind and solar will be fairly grim. If we allow the current wave of ethanol plants, coal-to-oil refineries and liquefied natural gas terminals to be built, the chances are small that we'll be able to move beyond the internal combustion engine and see electric cars come back. Targeting these dirty facilities creates a more favorable political and economic climate for a new energy economy based on conservation, efficiency, and wind and solar.

Because grassroots community activism is inherently local and the work is often defensive (working to *stop* bad things), compromise is rarely necessary. This is especially true when grassroots groups can avoid working at state or federal levels, where power is taken out of the people's hands, especially with the influence of corporate money at those levels. Grassroots activism (even when pushing for pro-active legislation) can result in passage of far cleaner, non-compromised laws when those laws are at the local level, where people have the most power. In fact, many state and federal laws get passed as a result of a critical mass of local or state laws being passed – the legal system tends to turn "patchwork" laws into weakened but standardized larger-level versions of laws, which companies often support – especially if it preempts (overrides) local laws, so that they don't have to comply with stricter standards.

> " I've spent many years helping Pennsylvania communities stop landfills and incinerators. Pennsylvania is the largest importer of trash in the U.S., with 93% of waste imports coming from NY and NJ. In recent years, a grassroots waste activist in NYC told me **the best thing Pennsylvanians can do to help make recycling work in NYC was to keep stopping landfills and incinerators**. The cheap out-of-state dumping made it difficult for recycling to succeed.
>
> *-Mike Ewall, Energy Justice-*

What Issues do Community Groups Work On?

Since energy and environmental issues affect people so directly, community groups continue to respond en masse. Grassroots community environmental groups work on a wide range of issues – people stand up for themselves when proposed policies or facilities threaten their health, viewshed, property values, etc. To give you a quick but very useful idea of what the scene looks like, here are some environmental issues that community groups are working on today:

DEFENSE

- Landfills, incinerators, and ash dumps
- Power plants (coal, nukes, natural gas…)
- Refineries (oil, ethanol…)
- Toxic waste cleanup
- Nuclear facilities (waste, processing, etc.)
- Roads/highways
- Power lines and pipelines
- Liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals
- Development/sprawl
- Logging
- Factory farms
- Chemical plants
- Water extraction
- Diesel idling (esp. urban areas)
- Related health issues, especially child asthma

OFFENSE

- Bike lanes and pedestrian areas
- Responsible food – organics, farmer's markets, community gardens, composting
- Conservation and efficiency policies
- Compact Fluorescent & LED light bulb swaps
- Public transit accessibility and funding
- Greenhouse gas reduction policies
- Auto efficiency standards
- Indigenous support
- Recycling and zero-waste
- US Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement / Sierra Club's Cool Cities campaign
- Green space – land trusts, easements

The battlefront consists of a bunch of threatening dirty energy proposals, a somewhat two-fronted grassroots approach, and great diversity. The important thing to recognize is that all of these groups are working within the same movement, building mass awareness and action around energy-related issues, and are increasingly doing it shoulder to shoulder. The precedent set by the Principles of Working Together (see Appendix), and more recently the 2007 US Social Forum, affirms the importance of this synergy, especially in sharing resources across historical privilege gaps.

Target: Vulnerable Communities

It's no secret that noxious industries tend to stay away from wealthy, white, and suburban communities. Several studies have shown that polluting industries target low-income communities and, most notably, communities of color. However, it's been rare that evidence of any sort of industry "game plan" comes to light. Two notorious cases showed that these trends are more than mere accident.

In 1991, a public relations firm (Epley Associates) was hired to assist in an effort to build a nuclear power plant waste dump in a community in North Carolina. They produced a 500 page "profile" of six counties, including details of local political and environmental leaders, and a draft of the report was leaked to the press. In their evaluation, they recommended which communities should be considered – they ruled out several towns described as "houses fairly wealthy" or "fairly affluent," yet recommended going after communities identified as "distressed," "very depressed area" or "residences of site minority-owned."

In 1984, Cerrell Associates did a more thorough evaluation of target communities for California's Waste Management Board. They reviewed many studies (mostly from the 1970s of the anti-nuclear movement). The Cerrell report identified how likely different communities are to resist a noxious facility, like the "waste-to-energy" trash incinerators that California was trying to build at the time. The report mentions that 43 major trash incinerators were planned for California at the time. Only 3 got built, and remain operating today – all in low-income / Latino communities.

Targeting "Cerrell" Communities

Demographic Characteristic	Least Likely to Resist	Most Likely to Resist	Indicator Strength
Region	Southern, Midwestern communities	Northeastern, Western, California	Strong
Community Location	Rural communities	Urban communities	Strong
Community Size	Small, usually under 25,000 population	Large, especially over 250,000 population	Strong
Economic Impact on Community (Perceived)	Open to promises of economic benefits	Don't care or benefits are minor	Strong
Distance from Facility	Geographically beyond aesthetic affect	Near the facility	Strong
Facility Employment	Employed or knew person employed by facility	No association	Strong
Age	Above middle age	Young and middle-aged	Strong
Educational Attainment	High school or less education	College-educated	Strong
Site Location	Facility placed on site of existing facility	New site	Strong
Political Ideology	Conservative / Free-Market orientation	Liberal / Welfare State orientation	Strong
Party	Republican	Democrat	Mild
Income	Low income	Middle and upper income	Mild
Religion	Catholics	Other	Mild
Personal Activism	Not involved in social issues	Activist	Mild
Age of Community	"Old-timer" residents of 20+ years	Residents of 5-20 years	Mild
Occupation	"Nature exploitive occupations" (farming, ranching, mining), Business or Technology-related	Professionals *	Mild

* The report noted, with regard to occupation: *"One occupational classification has consistently demonstrated itself as a strong indicator of opposition to the siting of noxious facilities, especially nuclear power plants – housewives."*

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ), a group that has organized with and served as an information clearinghouse for thousands of grassroots groups fighting waste and toxics issues in the U.S., says that almost every new group that has sought assistance from them matches the Cerrell profile.

Recipes for Winning and Losing

This guide is not designed to provide you with a significant amount of nuts-and-bolts day-to-day stuff for running campaigns, but we do want to share a couple community organizing recipes that you may not find in more general youth and student organizing guides. Obviously, there is a huge diversity of campaign strategies and outcomes, but we have seen some patterns over the years.

A Recipe for Losing – If you've watched Hollywood's idea of how to organize (i.e. *Erin Brockovich* or *A Civil Action*), you'd think that the best way for a group to win is to hire lawyers and let them fight the battle for you, but this is a perfect recipe for how groups lose! In fact, CHEJ used to sponsor workshops for grassroots community groups called "Winning Without Lawyers." A lawyer ran the workshop and made the compelling argument that groups should avoid using lawyers if at all possible.

Here's the recipe for how to lose. Many groups have tried this. Most have lost:

Step 1: Group forms around an issue. People get involved.
Step 2: Group decides they need to hire a lawyer (and/or other experts such as hydrogeologists, toxicologists, etc.) to work on permits, zoning, etc. Experts cost a lot of money, even at discounted charity rates.
Step 3: Group members start to assume they aren't needed much anymore, since the experts must fight the battle and they don't think of themselves as experts. Meeting involvement and attendance dwindles.
Step 4: Since it's legal to pollute, the battles revolve around narrow technical issues. The experts try many things and the fight lasts a long time. The group becomes little more than a fundraising operation for their experts, sometimes raising tens of thousands of dollars or more. The group is then surprised when the strategy fails because it was politically untenable or because of a technicality (or "wins" a minor change like more pollution controls on a proposed facility).

The point here is that **it's politics and economics, not science, that bring about community changes**. It's imperative that communities work on an accessible (i.e. local) political level. While using an expert can be a great tactic if used properly, making the fight technical and legal brings it out of the hands of the common people, and takes it to courtrooms, hearing boards, and other technical forums.

Two Recipes For Winning – Imagine the news article the day after you've won. What does it say? How did you win? There are a lot of ways to get to your goal, but we want to highlight two we have seen work for other communities. Also, it's worth noting that these "recipes" are often only as good as the local spices that are put in the mix, and the form the community gives to that recipe.

Winning Option #1: Target (often a government body) agrees with you   (Offense or Defense)

Both pro-active and defensive campaigns often require a lot of interaction with government bodies. The most local level of government is the easiest to influence, and you might be surprised how accessible they are compared to some other targets. Local governments are usually the ones responsible for building progressive energy policies (like with the Sierra Club's Cool Cities campaign) as well as protecting communities from polluting facilities, often by refusing changes in land use policy ("zoning").

You can win when a government body agrees with you and enacts a local law (often called an "ordinance") or even just passes a resolution. An ordinance has legal power and can set binding guidelines on air pollution, water use, special taxes, set-back distances, weight limits on roads, etc., and can be used flexibly and creatively. Also, sometimes just a resolution, which has no binding legal power, is enough to scare off an irresponsible company or attract a responsible one, encourage individual action, and/or put pressure on larger government bodies, especially if multiple local governments pass the same resolutions (like what has happened in some places with resolutions against the USA PATRIOT Act).

<u>Winning Option #2: Company gives up</u> (Defense)

Corporations are all about money, and making it as soon as possible. **You can stop a polluting policy or project if you cut off funding, significantly delay it, or increase the costs associated with it.** Delaying something usually increases costs (potentially stopping a project), especially in this age of peak oil and gas, declining coal reserves, and rising costs of construction materials. Considering the impact it can have, it is usually fairly easy to intervene in permit and policy processes by targeting corporate and/or government contributions. This can lead to significant setbacks for a dirty policy or facility, even an otherwise straightforward one.

When the funding is private, this means tracking down the investors and waging a campaign to target them. When the funding is public, this is easier to figure out, but may be harder to influence. When public funding is federal and significant, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is often required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which you can intervene and participate in like any other government process. This can have the effect of merely legitimizing a disempowering process, but can also be a very effective delaying tactic if used well. For more information about campaigns targeting corporations on financial grounds, contact us and/or the Rainforest Action Network.

IV. Overcoming Obstacles

How Do I Get Involved?

An Australian aboriginal woman once told a would-be supporter: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time...But if you have come because your liberation is bound with mine, then let us work together."

Your relationship with the community will depend on the attitude you go into it with. Step one is to figure out why you're doing this – before you reach out to a community group, figure out what your

own goals and intentions are. It's important to figure out how your own self-interest in the issue can contribute to the overall goals and interests of the group, in order to set the stage for a mutually empowering and liberating experience. However, you'll never finish discovering your self-interest, not to mention that your involvement may change it, so take this step seriously but don't get hung up on it.

Approaching a Community Group :: How do we find a group?

Not all areas have active grassroots environmental groups to link up with. Even when they do, it can be difficult to find them – they usually don't have advertising budgets and there's no simple one-stop directory of groups, so don't be bashful about calling around to various groups for referrals until you find what you're looking for. When calling a community activist, be clear about who you are and how you'd like to meet with them or their group to explore how you might work together. Don't be put off of they seem paranoid at first, if they don't know you yet. Some groups have good reason to besuspicious, given what they're up against. Also, the Internet is **not** the best way to find community groups (many don't even have websites). Here are the best ways you can locate groups in your area:

- Call us at Energy Justice and/or visit our mapping project: EnergyJustice.net/map. This website is designed so that you can locate existing and proposed dirty energy and waste facilities in your area and (ultimately) locate the groups fighting them.
- There are certain well-networked groups, often on specific issues or in certain geographic areas (or both). Some useful ones to check with are:
  - Center for Health, Environment and Justice – CHEJ.org 703-237-2249, has a large database of thousands of grassroots toxics activists around the U.S.
  - The Sierra Club – many groups, state and local SierraClub.org
  - The Orion Grassroots Network – OrionSociety.org
  - Idealist – great for internships and volunteer opportunities idealist.org
  - The Green Party – GP.org (EJN is not allowed to encourage you to support this political party; we are just suggesting that you use their networks)
- If they can't help, try well-connected and/or socially progressive local religious groups, any local progressive institutions, meeting boards of local food co-ops, librarians or even local news reporters who might cover an environmental or local government beat.
- Read the local newspaper (and search any online archives, if they have them). We often identify interest (even if there's no organized group yet) by noticing people quoted in news articles as opposing a facility or people who write letters-to-the-editor. You can use sites like anywho.com or whitepages.com to look up people who you find in news articles.

Finding Allies at Meetings

If you don't have any contacts in the community yet, you may be able to connect with a group (or with folks who would be interested in forming one) by attending meetings. In order for people to trust you to enough to give you their information, it's a good idea for you to verbalize your position. You don't need lots of technical stuff to say, just say a little about what your interest in the issue is. If you're at a government meeting, speak to the audience, not to the agency people in the front of the room, after

all...the audience is your real audience. There are a few types of meetings you can check out:

Community group meetings: Local group meetings are the best place to find folks. Try to establish contact and get permission unless it's been advertised as a public or "community" meeting.
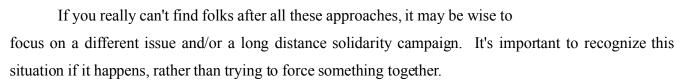
Government meetings: Local government meetings and especially state environmental agency meetings are good places to find people. See who speaks up and make sure to talk to them and trade contact info. Local government meetings are official meetings where zoning, land use and other decisions are made; state environmental agency "meetings" are effectively public relations events. For more on these meetings, see the Appendix on "The Control Game."

Government hearings: State environmental agencies will often hold hearings on the permits for proposed facilities, though hearings and meetings aren't always required. Hearings are very different than meetings. A hearing is officially on-the-record, where people can give testimony to the agency, but where question and answer isn't usually an option. Federal hearings are more rare, but in some cases where federal agencies have jurisdiction (like nuclear facilities or facilities with federal funding), there may be hearings of various sorts. At hearings, it's much more obvious where people stand if they speak.

Pay attention to who speaks up and copy down their names in case you can't catch them later. Afterwards, you should also be able to follow up with the agency and get a list of who signed in and testified. Later, you should be able to request transcripts as well (this may cost you money) if you don't have good notes on which speakers were the ones you want to get in touch with. You have the right to audio or videotape public meetings and hearings – and if you're able, you should do so.

Corporate meetings: Corporations often hold their own meetings to present their case to the public, but they learned that communities have this habit of asking pesky questions that all in the audience can hear, and getting rowdy at unacceptable or untrue answers. In response, corporations usually hold "open house" meetings, where the audience is broken into several small groups at tables or displays, thus preventing group cohesion. It can be tough to identify allies at this sort of meeting, so you'll need to mingle and speak with people and listen in on conversations to figure out who else shares your views. For more on these meetings, see the Appendix on "The Control Game."

If you really can't find folks after all these approaches, it may be wise to focus on a different issue and/or a long distance solidarity campaign. It's important to recognize this situation if it happens, rather than trying to force something together.

How/where do I do research?

You can waste a TON of time if you don't have good research guidance, but the possibilities are so vast that we can't provide it to you here. Use your school's resources or contact us or other Campus Climate Challenge groups and we'll put you on the right track. For help researching existing or proposed facilities, see the Appendix on File Reviews; for help researching your school's energy usage, see EnergyJustice.net/campus/; for general info on energy technologies, browse EnergyJustice.net.

Resources on Group Dynamics

Community groups are probably not much different from other groups you might be in. They generally consist of people who are directly affected by and/or interested in an issue, and who have an important stake in the outcome of the work. Often, those with more time are able to become more involved. Groups tend to meet in homes, churches, libraries, community centers or other public spaces, and meet weekly, monthly or as needed, depending on the pace of the struggle, which can change based on such things as permit/comment deadlines and public meetings or hearings.

However, community groups can be different than youth groups in a few ways, and not just in age range. While there are as many types of groups as there are people in them, decision-making structures are usually informal; it may not be a democracy, but more of a "do-ocracy" (those who do things make the decisions). People may speak casually and the meetings may not be well facilitated; consequently, people (especially men) may interrupt a lot. The Energy Action Coalition has taken steps to infuse an anti-oppression analysis into the youth environmental movement – if you are accustomed to such spaces, you might find yourself initially uncomfortable in some community groups.

Anti-Oppressive Work

Oppression exists in many forms and has the potential to (re)surface at any time, and fighting it requires everyone's active participation. It's important to be aware of and accountable about group dynamics, especially in a community group or coalition where many different parties may be involved and tensions can become multiplied. Campus-community organizing may stretch your boundaries, help you lean into discomfort, and think about oppression in new ways. Is it anti-oppressive to disregard a community group because some members seem self-interested, disorganized, homophobic, etc.? Is it anti-oppressive to work with them and ignore those issues? These are complex questions, but this doesn't have to be scary – in fact, it should feel good most of the time.

As you and your group prepare for and reflect on campus-community organizing, we want to provide you with some concrete exercises here to confront oppression, both internal and external. However, we want to warn against pushing this kind of work on community groups, especially if you're not well-integrated and respected in the group. This section is first and foremost about you and your campus group getting your own house in order. Also, this work should make your group more prepared for, and even likely to engage in, campus-community organizing efforts.

It might be useful to set aside time to check-in with yourself and with your campus and/or community group – **"Are we being anti-oppressive in this work? If so, how? If not, how, and why?"** If you're uncomfortable with

jargon like "anti-oppressive", you could say "is this work empowering us all and not hurting anybody?" Here are some other questions to help you answer that one (this isn't scary, and isn't an exercise in guilt – it's intended to help empower everyone and to help the group grow and become more honest and accountable):

- Who is in our group? Do we look like the constituency we claim to represent (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, neighborhood, etc.)? If not, how come?
- Why are we interested in the issue(s) we are? Could we change or reframe our current focus, to make the group more inclusive, forward-looking, and justice-oriented?
- Are we doing something that will negatively affect another community? How can we stop?
- Are we following the Principles of Environmental Justice? Do we have copies of documents like this on hand for people to see and use on a regular basis? (See Appendix for this & other resources)
- Are we getting at the root of problems, or are we just perpetuating oppressive systems?

Going through questions like these is an exercise your group can do to engage in anti-oppressive work (Chapters 3 and 8 of the SEAC Organizing Guide, "Structuring a Group" and "Developing an Analysis," are also very helpful). We recommend that you try and have a good facilitator for these kinds of exercises. Your group can read and discuss documents together like the Principles of Environmental Justice, the Principles of Working Together, Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack", Chris Crass' "Tools for White Guys who are Working for Social Change…and other people socialized in a society based on domination."

You can also go the next step and bring in an outside anti-oppression trainer/consultant, develop a caucus structure, form a reading group, or whatever else. If we cannot manage to be anti-oppressive in this work, then we will be more likely to alienate potential allies in the movement, and the world we are fighting for will similarly fail. Every group is different though – sometimes this would be amazing, and sometimes inappropriate. The point of this is for everyone to grow, so the process may require your imagination. For more anti-oppression resources, visit seac.org/resources/antioppression.

Relating and Interacting

Be open and honest with the people in the community group – it's the best way for you all to grow and to feel like partners. If you feel uncomfortable, don't hide it. Do **not** go in acting like you know more than they do, you might be shocked to find out how much you really don't know. Don't act like you know things you don't really know (some of what you've learned in school could be wrong in real-world situations – how technology works, how regulations are enforced, etc). It's just like anything else – the more engaged, humble, and genuine you are, the more trust you'll develop and work you'll get done together.
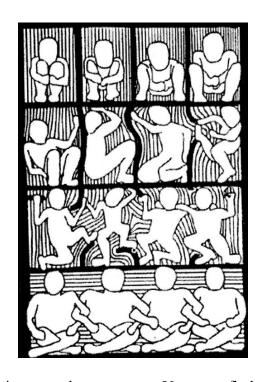
In trying to communicate with another group about issues you're mutually interested in, as mentioned in the section on self-interest, it's imperative to relate to people in terms that they are familiar

with. In motivating your peers to stop a tuition hike, you wouldn't tell them about how much it would cost the *school*, you'd tell them how much it would cost *them*. In the same way, you may not be able to motivate people with your own frame on issues – specifically, many people have learned to relate to global warming through penguins and polar bears, if they relate to it at all. It's also important to learn about situations and people – as Alinsky says in *Rules for Radicals*, "since people understand only in terms of their own experience, an organizer must have at least a cursory familiarity with their experience."

Also, you may not be a long-term resident of the community, and if you are, chances are the folks you're working with have been around longer. Since you may not have the same experience or stake in the situation, you might need to largely defer to community leadership. This doesn't mean that your ideas don't matter or that the community is always right, it's just a political and social reality of how groups function and work gets done.

Other Obstacles

Socio-Economic Status: Class separation can be complex. It involves access to education and computers and cars and numerous other social and economic indicators you may have or lack, whichever side of the divide you're on. Especially if you're privileged, be careful not to make assumptions about how much money or time community members might have to devote to the cause. The privilege of being in college in a poor community where few are college educated can also be a barrier, especially if you make the mistake of flaunting your education. Just like the rest of this section, the answer to these divides often lies in identifying your own self-interest, figuring out how it relates to the common cause, and letting people know where you're at.

Race: There are longstanding racial tensions in the environmental movement. You may find yourself on either end of a trust gap, which can be complicated. If this happens, try and give more than you take. People sometimes behave in silly ways when interacting with people from unfamiliar races, and you may even find yourself doing it – it's important to understand that these interactions are informed by an enormous history of institutional racism, racial segregation, etc. You should forgive yourself if you act silly, while continuing to do personal work on the issue. On the flipside, if somebody else is behaving inappropriately and you just can't deal with them, it's obviously not your duty to keep putting up with it.

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Age: Age discrimination cuts both ways. Adult community leaders may view students as unlikely to stick around, be responsible, or follow through with commitments (which can be true!). By the same token, be careful about making assumptions about the seniors in the group – some 70+ activists are politically radical, energetic, intellectually sharp and sometimes even computer-savvy, while some are just now getting involved in issues.

If you are concerned about older people not taking you seriously, it might be useful to see the situation through their eyes, and examine what your commitments really are. The reality of youth activism is that it is often relatively brief and unsustained – student groups often have near 100% turnover every couple of years! Choose how to engage in community issues with this in mind.

Campus/Community Divide: If the community you're hoping to work with is the same one that surrounds the school, you might find some resentment of the student population. This could be unfounded, but it could also be rooted in disrespectful or annoying behavior, or the school's role in gentrification, manipulation of rental housing markets, etc. Many college campuses have "town/gown problems" and sometimes try to isolate student populations from the rest of the community. They might use student service projects to garner good public relations, but that sort of relationship is usually hollow and doesn't really benefit the campus-community dynamic.

Distrust of Outsiders: If you come from another community, you're an outsider; this is stronger in rural communities, especially towards people from urban areas. However, one-on-one interactions are much easier to build trust around – the tendency to distrust outsiders will express itself more in the community at large, particularly in local news media, than it will in the community group you're working with (groups seeking help are generally pretty welcoming, if they know you're genuine). It's important to recognize this public impression, and let community members take the lead as appropriate in local events and media opportunities, to elevate their voices and avoid alienating the public or your campaign targets.

Culture (diet, dress, behavior…): Cultural differences, like your dietary preferences, the way you dress, your beliefs, etc., can be noticeable in group interactions. When it comes to dress and appearance, we recommend putting aside any easily changeable things you do to look "different." This dynamic is complex, but it's good to make an effort to avoid creating potential barriers. Consider whether the changes you can make by forming alliances with communities will make more of an impact than your social statements or personal style. Try to pursue topics with constructive potential and intent.

The real issue here is making a conscious choice between organizing in support and solidarity versus being a preacher and/or only working with people who already agree with you. You're on a two-way street and probably have more to learn than you have to give – that's how people grow! No matter who you are meeting, if you come from a different background and sense that the person is defensive to you or alienated from your behavior, hold off on grand philosophical conversations, ideological debates,

and resolution of bad dynamics until you get to know them. More guidance on this is available in the Principles of Working Together (Appendix) – Principle 4.C recommends "respect, cultural sensitivity, patience, time and a willingness to understand each other and a mutual sharing of knowledge."

Individual vs. group involvement

Hopefully, you have other students at your school who want to work with you on this, so that you're acting as a group. There are several benefits to working as a group:

- It's easier to get campus resources (room reservations for speakers, money for activities, etc.)
- When you leave, others stay involved and the community group keeps access to campus resources
- It's easier to follow through on commitments if there are more people to help out
- The campus-community relationship will be stronger if built by multiple people, creating their own sets of interpersonal relationships

While it may be most efficient to have a single student responsible for being the main point of contact, it's best to have 2-3 liaisons taking part in meetings between the campus group and the community group, so that if one person gets too busy, the others can be there when needed and will already be "up-to-speed." If you're the only one who develops a relationship with a community group, that's okay. Just be honest with yourself and the community group about your capacity.

A Note: Don't Study Them...Help Them!

Many students do papers on activism and community struggles, especially the more famous environmental racism cases. Studying people is okay as long as it's part of a process of being involved and providing real support. Otherwise, you're educating yourself at their *expense,* since it takes a group's time and resources to help you. If you do approach a community or even campus activism group about studying their work for a research project, there is a chance they will already have a mixed history with previous projects, so research is not an advisable way to begin a relationship with a group.

Experience, Knowledge, and Access to Resources

In addition to being new to the culture(s) of a group, you might also feel ill-equipped because of a lack of knowledge, experience, or resources at hand. That's okay, and it's to be expected in some cases. As above, the best thing to do here is to be **open and honest** about your capacity, so that the group can find a good way for you to contribute. On the flip side, sometimes groups are new and differently clueless; you can help by sharing some of the resources in this guide and/or by getting them in touch with EJN or other organizations so we can help them in ways you may not be able to.

Experience and Knowledge

Every group should have people with a variety of knowledge and experience levels. You've done things other people haven't, and know some things other people don't, even if it's just how to get people on your block interested in an issue or donate money, or how to get flyers approved for your school or community center, etc. Sometimes the freshest and least experienced people are the most valuable – if you don't feel like you know enough to get involved, ask someone to teach you, or ask someone if you can help them with what they're working on, or come up with something new that you *can* do, and propose it to the group. On the other hand, being educated does not mean that you have more relevant knowledge or experience than others. This is particularly true in community groups, where local knowledge and connections are priceless.

Access to Resources

College and university students generally have a lot of access to some resources (fancy databases in libraries, meeting spaces, copiers, etc.), but can lack others (cars, spending money, knowledge of surrounding area, etc.). This is a part of a longer discussion that we can only begin to cover here, but let's break this into a couple sections – high school and college.

High schoolers generally don't have to worry about paying rent, full-time jobs, or providing significant family support. However, they do have to go to school full-time, and focus on their own social and emotional development. Generally speaking, despite not having easy access to transportation or money, high schoolers have close ties to a community and enough access to resources to participate effectively in community organizations. There are tons of ways to get involved. Make a flyer with your (parent's/library) computer, attend meetings and events – if you can't get there easily, ask somebody in the group if they could pick you up on their way. Don't be afraid to ask, it's a great way to develop meaningful relationships. Plus, you're young! People expect you to need things, and enjoy helping you out. Public high schools are required to recognize students' free speech rights (e.g. flyering on school grounds), as long as it doesn't disrupt classes – check out the Student Press Law Center at splc.org.

Being in college often means you have things other folks don't, like access to copiers, student organization budgets, the ability to bring speakers to campus (and get them funds), easy access to campus media, access to doing class presentations through sympathetic professors, cultural access to the student body, etc. Take advantage of these things! Hook up a sweet speaking gig for someone from the group and get as much money as you can from the school – the grassroots will get more done with that money than any big name speaker, because the majority of the work is volunteer and they don't spend money on
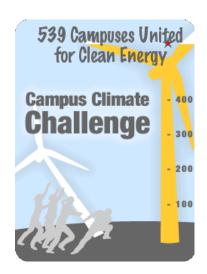
think tanks, boardroom furniture, and fancy media campaigns. Ask professors if you can talk about your group and your issues in class, they'll probably say yes. Reach out to your peers by flyering, tabling, or holding an activity on campus – especially if you're at a private school, odds are that non-students are not able to do this. Take advantage of your privilege, funnel it towards justice and a sustainable future.

V. The Way Forward

"Activism's for the time being. The real change will happen when more people start seeing the reality that inter-being is a state of existence that we are all deep in" ... "How can I be the most change that I can be? We all draw strength from one, and we are all strong. Be defeated no longer, and we make each other stronger."
– Willie Dodson, Farther Along

You are part of a massive, beautiful, passionate movement and it can feel great, and then other times you get to feel burned out – we all have our ups and our downs and our limits, and that's okay.   BUT, remember that the movement is about more than just this moment or this issue – **our goal should always be to build lasting people power**, so we can be better situated to confront the larger systems we're up against and the next issues that come down the line, and so on into the future. You can do this by challenging divisions and illegitimate authority, building democratic institutions and policy mechanisms, and working for social, economic, and environmental justice.   This type of broad social change can be achieved by mass mobilization of people's self-interest around many issues, including of course energy and climate change.

Also, in a very practical sense, *try not to abandon the community group* (or any group). A good organizer's mission is to make themselves obsolete, so make sure to help train someone to fill your shoes, and start doing it months before you leave. Turnover is a common way that community groups get burned, which prevents us from continuing to build on what people before us have accomplished.

Finally, the world is like a box of chocolates – it often has additives and chemicals, it suffers when it gets too hot, and it's full of neat surprises. Give it a shot and see what happens.

- - - The End - - -

VI. Appendix

Examples of Campus-Community Collaboration

Hydro-Quebec – In the 1990s, SEAC led an organized regional campaign against Hydro-Quebec's James Bay dam proposals. SEAC groups throughout the northeast played a critical role in stopping massive hydroelectric dams from being built in Quebec, where they would have flooded and destroyed Indigenous Inuit and Cree communities. With 150 chapters in New York State, SEAC's role in dogging New York governor Cuomo everywhere he went led to the state's withdrawal from $12 billion dollars in power contracts they were planning to sign, stopping the project.

Pennies of Promise – Marsh Fork Elementary School (in Coal River Valley, West Virginia), sits just 225 feet from a coal loading silo that releases chemical-laden coal dust, and 400 yards from a 385 foot tall leaking sludge dam with a nearly 3 billion gallon capacity. Independent studies have shown the school to be full of coal dust. The school children suffer from asthma and are at constant risk of being buried and killed instantly by coal sludge. In order to get the state to fund a relocation of the school, the Pennies of Promise campaign was started, to collect pennies and send them to West Virginia's governor. In one inspiring example, many bags of pennies (about $460 total) were donated by schoolchildren in New York City who heard about efforts to get a new school.

Mountain Justice – "For the miners. For the families. For the mountains." Mountain Justice Summer (MJS) is a regional organization in the mountaintop removal coal mining states of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, that was born from the energy of a Virginia Tech student group three years ago. MJS enlists young people for community organizing programs in the coalfields of Appalachia (all year long, despite the name). Youth and students spend time doing "listening projects" where they get coalfield community members to share their experiences, creating and strengthening relationships and knowledge. MJSers have protested coal companies and conferences, engaging in civil disobedience, and educating about the injustices of mountaintop removal mining and other coal industry operations.

In March of 2007, under the banner of Mountain Justice Spring Break, dozens of students, coalfield residents, and other activists organized a collective act of non-violent civil disobedience regarding the situation at Marsh Fork Elementary School (discussed above). Thirteen people were arrested during the demonstration, including 4 young people. Although the activists behaved in both a respectful and non-violent manner, some were dragged from the building with excessive force and others were man-handled. Among those arrested was Ed Wiley, who walked 455 miles from Charleston, WV to Washington, D.C. last summer to raise awareness about the situation about the school. Tremendous coverage of these events is available at ItsGettingHotInHere.org and YouTube.com – search for "mjsb." The Energy Action Coalition also organized a bi-national Mountain Justice Day of Action in support of Marsh Fork in January 2007.

Coal Power Plants – In fall 2006, the Energy Justice Network brought together students from schools in West Virginia and Ohio to Meigs County, Ohio. Meigs County is a rural southeastern Ohio community surrounded by four giant coal plants within a 10-mile radius. 3-5 new coal plants are proposed, along with a plan to relocate residents to mine under towns within the county. This is the highest concentration of proposed coal plants that we know of in the U.S. A few students joined staff people from the Energy Justice Network and the Student Environmental Action Coalition to help a local resident get started going door-to-door in her community. This led to the formation of a community group, the first to challenge the new wave of proposals in this coal-dominated, job-starved area.

Community Walk Do's and Don'ts

A "community walk" is where folks go door-to-door to collect information about people in a community. The purpose is twofold – first, it enables you to assess the general feelings of a community on a set of issues, and second, it's perhaps the best way to seek out potential community leadership. In a community walk, you want to do a LOT of listening, in fact many refer to this as a "listening project."

DO:
-KISS: Keep It Short and Simple
-Listen 80+% of the time
-Be friendly and confident
-Politely end the conversation if someone gets confrontational or just doesn't agree with you
-Wear good shoes and weather appropriate attire
-Bring water with you
-Consider bringing a small bag to carry materials
-Go in pairs and keep within eyesight of each other
-Put material on door handles if no one is home
-Be careful when invited into homes – be deliberate and use your own judgment
-Take good notes after each door, out of sight from the door, and put them in a spreadsheet afterward
-HAVE FUN!!!

DON'T:
-Be rude or disrespectful even if the other person is
-Try to convert people – the intention is to listen, not try to change people's minds
-Lie or try to wing it – if you can't answer a question, say so, but that someone will follow up with them
-Get discouraged! Giving a good impression gets the most from folks who want to help
-Wait to take notes – take notes after each door
-Have a culturally insensitive appearance, especially regarding body odor
-Go to unused doors or doors behind people's homes
-Open the only door/barrier between you and someone else
-Put material in mailboxes (it's illegal)
-Walk on people's lawns if they have sidewalks

Some Basic Organizing Tips and Tricks

The following are several truisms of grassroots community organizing that we have shared with new community activists, to put them on the right track:

- Get local government on your side as early as possible. Never give up on this point.
- Get local government to listen by restoring democracy with people power.
- Get the people power by exposing people to the truth with your own media.
- Get the truth through good research and networking.
- Contact us for help finding the information and contacts with other groups that you'll need.
- Corporations' strength is money. Our strength is people. Fight money power with people power.
- Use lawyers as a last resort.
- Keep the fight local, this keeps the forum where the people are, not in courtrooms or capitals.
- Polite people get poisoned. Angry people get organized!
- Unite friends, divide enemies.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

The Principles of Environmental Justice (EJ)

1) **Environmental Justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2) **Environmental Justice** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3) **Environmental Justice** mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

4) **Environmental Justice** calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

5) **Environmental Justice** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6) **Environmental Justice** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.

7) **Environmental Justice** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8) **Environmental Justice** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9) **Environmental Justice** protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.

10) **Environmental Justice** considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

11) **Environmental Justice** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

12) **Environmental Justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13) **Environmental Justice** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14) **Environmental Justice** opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15) **Environmental Justice** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16) **Environmental Justice** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17) **Environmental Justice** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

More info on Environmental Justice can be found online at ejnet.org/ej/.

Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held on October 24-27, 1991, in Washington DC, drafted and adopted 17 principles of Environmental Justice. Since then, The Principles have served as a defining document for the growing grassroots movement for environmental justice.

People of Color Environmental Justice "Principles of Working Together"

PREAMBLE – "WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational [, multiethnic] People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to ensure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives [and to support traditional cultural economics] which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and [, water, air,] land and the genocide of our peoples, to affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice."

October 27, 1991, First People of Color Leadership Summit

PRINICIPLE ONE: PURPOSE

1. A The Principles of Working Together uphold the Principles of Environmental Justice and to eradicate environmental racism in our communities.

1. B The Principles of Working Together require local and regional empowered partnerships, inclusive of all.

1. C The Principles of Working Together call for continued influence on public policy to protect and sustain Mother Earth and our communities and also honor past promises and make amends for past injustices.

PRINCIPLE TWO: CORE VALUES

2. A The Principles of Working Together commit us to working from the ground up, beginning with all grassroots workers, organizers and activists. We do not want to forget the struggle of the grassroots workers. This begins with all grassroots workers, organizers and activists.

2. B The Principles of Working Together recognize traditional knowledge and uphold the intellectual property rights of all peoples of color and Indigenous peoples.

2. C The Principles of Working Together reaffirm that as people of color we speak for ourselves. We have not chosen our struggle, we work together to overcome our common barriers, and resist our common foes.

2. D The Principles of Working Together bridge the gap among various levels of the movement through effective communication and strategic networking.

2. E The Principles of Working Together affirm the youth as full members in the environmental justice movement. As such, we commit resources to train and educate young people to sustain the groups and the movement into the future.

PRINCIPLE THREE: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

3. A The Principles of Working Together recognize that we need each other and we are stronger with each other. This Principle requires participation at every level without barriers and that the power of the movement is shared at every level.

3. B The Principles of Working Together require members to cooperate with harmony, respect and trust-it must be genuine and sustained relationship-building. This demands cultural and language sensitivity.

3. C The Principles of Working Together demand grassroots workers, organizers and activists set their own priorities when working with other professionals and institutions.

3. D The Principles of Working Together recognize that community organizations have expertise and knowledge. Community organizations should seek out opportunities to work in partnerships with academic institutions, other grassroots organizations and environmental justice lawyers to build capacity through the resources of these entities.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: ADDRESSING DIFFERENCES

4. A The Principles of Working Together require affirmation of the value in diversity and the rejection of any form of racism, discrimination and oppression. To support each other completely, we must learn about our different cultural and political

histories so that we can completely support each other in our movement inclusive of ages, classes, immigrants, indigenous peoples, undocumented workers, farm workers, genders, sexual orientations and education differences.

4. C The Principles of Working Together require respect, cultural sensitivity, patience, time and a willingness to understand each other and a mutual sharing of knowledge.

4. B The Principles of Working Together affirm the value in our diversity. If English is not the primary language, there must be effective translation for all participants.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: LEADERSHIP

5. A The Principles of Working Together demand shared power, community service, cooperation, open and honest communication.

5. B The Principles of Working Together demand that people from the outside should not come in and think that there is no leadership in the grassroots community. The people in the community should lead their own community and create legacy by teaching young people to be leaders.

5. C The Principles of Working Together demand that people from grassroots organizations should lead the environmental justice movement.

5. D The Principles of Working Together demand accountability to the people, responsibility to complete required work, maintain healthy partnerships with all groups.

PRINCIPLE SIX: PARTICIPATION

6. A The Principles of Working Together demand cultural sensitivity. This requires patience and time for each group to express their concerns and their concerns should be heard.

6. B The Principles of Working Together require a culturally appropriate process.

6. C The Principles of Working Together have a commitment to changing the process when the process is not meeting the needs of the people. The changes should be informed by the people's timely feedback and evaluation.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: RESOLVING CONFLICTS

7. A The Principles of Working Together encourage respectful discussion of our differences, willingness to understand, and the exploration of best possible solutions.

7. B The Principles of Working Together require that we learn and strengthen our cross-cultural communication skills so that we can develop effective and creative problem-solving skills. This Principle promotes respectful listening and dialogue.

7. C The Principles of Working Together affirm the value in learning strengthening mediation skills in diverse socio-economic and multicultural settings.
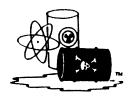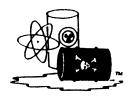
PRINCIPLE EIGHT: FUNDRAISING

8. A The Principles of Working Together recognize the need for expanding sustainable community based avenues for raising funds, such as building a donor base, membership dues, etc.

8. B The Principles of Working Together oppose funding from any organization impacting people of color and indigenous communities. In addition, the Principles oppose funding from any organization that is the current target of active boycotts, or other campaign activity generated by our allies.

8. C The Principles of Working Together encourage larger environmental justice organizations to help smaller, emerging environmental justice organizations gain access to funding resources. We encourage the sharing of funding resources and information with other organizations in need.

PRINCIPLE NINE: ACCOUNTABILITY

9. A The Principles of Working Together encourage all partners to abide by the shared agreements, including, but not limited to, oral and written agreements. Any changes or developments to agreements/actions need to be communicated to all who are affected and agreed upon.

9. B The Principles of Working Together encourage periodic evaluation and review of process to ensure accountability among all partners. Any violation of these agreements or any unprincipled actions that violate the EJ principles, either: : Must attempt to be resolved among the partners ; Will end the partnership if not resolved AND ; Will be raised to the larger EJ community

Adopted at the Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, October 26, 2002.

THE CONTROL GAME

By Environmental Information Network (EIN), Inc.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OR PUBLIC RELATIONS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

A REFERENCE GUIDE FOR RECOGNIZING POLITICAL/SOCIAL CONTROL TACTICS BY POWER BROKERS, LARGE CORPORATIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS, AND GOVERNMENT ENTITIES.

Tactic 1 -- Make it impossible for people to be involved: These typical control tactics set things up so that it's difficult and inconvenient for interested parties such as the affected public to participate.

Examples:

- Meetings are scheduled at inappropriate locations or times; i.e., during regular working hours, highway rush hours, dinner times, near Christmas-time or other holidays, or deliberately conflicting times with similar interest meetings.
- Strict meeting "guidelines" (like short time limits on questions/comments) and use of question cards discourages real dialogue and keeps attendees under control. Question cards allow those controlling the meeting to choose which questions to read. It lets them stack the deck with their own questions (while the identity of the questioner is kept secret from the audience, so you don't know if it's a "planted" question); and prevents the questioner from responding with follow-up questions or comments, which are often necessary to get complete answers or to point out faulty answers.

Variations:

- Schedule lengthy one-way presentations that will not allow give and take exchange. This precludes the public (including the press) from asking questions or clarifications.
- Conveners may insist that all questions be held until the end, by which time people are tired, some have gone home, the meeting area must be vacated, and the press has had to leave to meet deadlines.
- Allow the public limited time, and a limited number of questions that must pertain to their predetermined set of allowable topics; while the conveners drag out their answers, essentially filibustering away the rest of the time for the meeting -- and coincidentally time for open discussion of issues and answers that many attendees showed up for.
- Staff may be trained to be *nice*, while having been trained to *handle the public* by using subtle harassment or baiting techniques, which also discourages public involvement.
- The meeting moderator will sometimes hold the microphone when you ask a question, so that they have the power to pull it away when they want your question/comment to end. This lets them control whether you can ask follow-up questions.

These tactics are used to fulfill requirements for public outreach in order to legitimize the process. If attendance is sparse it will be blamed on public apathy, rather than a deliberate effort to exclude public participation. Reject this pretense for public involvement. **Short circuit this tactic by standing up as a group and announcing an immediate press conference that will give the press the *real story from the citizens* outside of the meeting room or across the street from the building**, then get up and leave as a group. If this is not immediately possible, let the conveners know that your group will hold its own meeting, protest, and/or press conference the next morning and will continue to inform the media of their non-cooperation on these issues.

If they're controlling the microphone, consider grabbing it away from them and taking control. In case people's questions go unanswered (or aren't answered completely), work to get the audience disciplined enough that they won't ask a new question

until the previous one is fully answered. In case you aren't given time to ask all of the questions you want to ask, bring your set of questions written down and distribute it ahead of time, so that others in the audience know which questions aren't being answered and can make sure the questions are asked.

Tactic 2 -- Divide and Conquer: This is a well-established tactic that effectively places similar interest groups at odds against each other, when they would otherwise be a formidable force for bureaucratic responsiveness and accountability. This tactic uses existing tensions and divisions between organizations. Name this tactic as soon as you recognize it to short circuit its effectiveness. Make sure that everyone understands what interests they share in common, and why it is in their best interest to continue to work together. A few favorite tactics are described below.

Examples:

- **Many separate tables or displays are used in large banquet or meeting rooms to break a meeting up into small discussion groups.** This effectively keeps valuable information that would otherwise be revealed in the general discussion from being heard by the larger group, which would have enhanced communal brainstorming and questioning of the process or problem at hand. These small group discussions may then be summarized and reported back to the larger group. Summarized discussions – even in the best intentioned groups – often don't represent many of the critical views raised in small groups. Sometimes, carefully-placed *shills* or committee members may serve as group leaders to control group feedback. This suppresses any controversial discussions that don't fit the convener's agenda, and inhibits networking or brainstorming on the issue.
- **Seating arranged in "*audience fashion*" delegates you to a passive role in these meetings.** Short-circuit this by playing *Musical Chairs.* Insist that the tables and/or chairs be moved (circle or horseshoe shape) so that everyone can be an active participant with the conveners or presenters. Put yourselves at the same level and/or table with the power brokers so there is no distance to allow them to feel comfortably in control (no shield). **Convert their agenda to your agenda.**
- **Public relations campaigns (blitzes) into the community** will seek out homeowners associations, service groups, schools, and so on, to present biased, incomplete, or misleading information to sidestep opposition to mold and win over public opinion about key issues.
- **Divide a large issue into many small ones.** This forces people and/or organizations to fight many small battles, dispersing their energies. Small groups working in isolation of each other may not be as effective as coordinating efforts to maximize through solid communication and networking. Insist on being able to discuss issues as a large group so everyone can hear and brainstorm collectively. If they refuse, have a pre-determined agreement with each other to get up and go to the next room, or gather outside to have your own meeting. Make them follow your lead. Have your press contacts alerted, and inform them you will be holding a press conference about their tactics in 10 minutes. Another tactic: take bright colored (visual) duct tape, split out 2" sections and pass it down the line. Have everyone put it over their mouths to symbolize being gagged by the meeting organizers.
- **Appoint a committee using key members of the public -- including appointees with views similar to the convener, funder, or directing agency** to maintain their control of the committee. Their involvement is then publicly highlighted -- whether or not they attend or participate. Their names will be used strategically (sometimes *in absentia*), or photos are used to imply consent, agreement, or consensus with the committee -- although they may object or disagree with the viewpoint or findings of the committee. Citizens (token) used in this manner may or may not be aware of their names or pictures being used to artificially lend credibility to the committee or findings in question. In some cases, they may be unaware that they are considered to be a member of the committee. A so-called "consensus process" may be used to give veto-power to those on a committee, so that industrial interests can prevent the committee from coming out with anything critical of their interests. Such "consensus" processes have come out with pro-industry reports even when the token environmental participants have refused to sign off on the reports (which should have blocked the consensus). These sorts of examples show that these bogus processes are intended only to protect industry interests, but not to empower community-minded views. Create your own "white paper" on the issue, hand it out at any meeting where they intend to publicly roll out their plan, and have people stand out front with picket signs stating what the flaws are.
- **Provide enough resources to cover only part of the problem.** This can include preparing only a few copies of handouts or important documents so that self-imposed constraints prevent them from being able to provide x, y, or z service -- while it is obvious that there is plenty of budgetary allowance for gratuities, amenities, or items that fulfill their bias or agenda.

Variations:

- Conduct private (behind closed-door or *impromptu*) meetings with civic groups, government, or public officials (i.e. city council, county commissioners, etc.) of similar political or philosophical leanings -- without informing citizens or organizations with opposing viewpoints of these meetings.
- Wrong information regarding time and location is provided -- too late to be corrected (*The scavenger hunt*). This ensures that their message will be presented without all sides of an issue being recognized or openly discussed. Sometimes, the meeting location is changed last-minute in the guise of ensuring that the meeting space will be large enough. Even worse, some public meetings will be held far from the location of the impacted community, making it very difficult for those most affected to participate.

Tactic 3 -- Pack the Meeting: The power brokers will encourage employees to attend x, y, or z meeting. They may also establish telephone trees (which we should be doing) to get employees and supporters to pack a meeting to simulate public support for their position on an issue, and to set the tone of the meeting.

Variation:

- Comment or question cards are used in place of a communal microphone for participants to go to, so everyone can hear and participate in the discussion. Their supporters will *stack the deck* of comment cards with time wasters, and may continue filling out more cards throughout the meeting to defuse opposition discussion (see tactic 1 -- filibustering).

Short circuit this by meeting with your neighbors, colleagues, or constituents for a pre-meeting conference to discuss opposition tactics and strategy that are barriers to getting your views aired. Come up with your own list of strategy and critical points, then divide them up among yourselves. Go to the meeting prepared with fact sheets, questions, and comments that support your views. Brainstorm with your colleagues, refine the information, then pass it around the neighborhood, or the target audience for and after the meeting. Call the tactics as you see them occur in the meeting to defuse them. Insist on a fair airing of the issues, within everyone's hearing.

Tactic 4 -- Economic Blackmail: When dealing with politically heated issues, especially "*company town*" polluters, the first threat may be that massive layoffs will occur if they have to: change a process, stop polluting, fix safety problems, clean up contamination, and so on. This is *a Red Herring* scare tactic that should be immediately brought to everyone's attention.

- In 1988, the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Facility (RFP) was faced with changes that included decommissioning, the contractor threatened massive layoffs. Economic developers and chambers of commerce predicted local devastation. To the contrary, the cleanup has been a huge economical boost for subcontractors and RFP personnel, who have nearly doubled the numbers of employees that were needed for full production and chemical recovery of plutonium pits for nuclear warheads.
- Retraining and educational programs have blossomed at local colleges. The people to watch are the developers, Chambers of Commerce, City Council members, and local or county economic development and planning commissions who will attempt to create new projects, while "*dumbing down the workforce*" by bringing in minimum wage workers for cleanup jobs, lay off union people, and funnel profits to special interest chums. *Stay united, call that tactic, and make them accountable.*

No one likes to be picketed, boycotted, or pictured negatively in the press – these tactics are relatively easy to implement.

Tactic 5 -- Give the appearance of action without doing anything: When faced with an obvious need for change, bureaucrats may try to give the appearance of taking action without actually doing anything. **These tactics may sound like this:**

- "We have decided to appoint an advisory, special, sub-committee, or commission to study or handle the problem. We want (or need) members of our group to *volunteer* assistance because we do not have money for staff."
- "Your knowledge, input, or time is so valuable (and so on), we would like you to help us with x, y, or z to work out solutions" (but they will fail to assimilate your information, suggestions, or concerns).
- "We would like to help you by doing x, y, or z for you" -- but the reciprocal help never appears (carrot on the stick).
- "We plan to issue a policy or statement regarding that problem next week, month, year..., so that everyone will know what to do in the future..." *Beware* of bureaucrats stealing your uncompensated time to tie you up, keeping you out of circulation in the community. Volunteerism can be abused, becoming a time quicksand.

Don't accept inconsequential actions, excuses, and "donothingitis". Set a reasonable amount of time for genuine action, and then tell everyone that you expect action by that date. Think twice before joining "study committees or advisory groups" that are not policy-changing bodies that have no real power to do anything about the issue or problem in question, are funded and directed by your adversary, or by those that represent the other side of your issue. There may not be an accurate record of what has happened from the beginning, during, or at the end of these efforts. Refusal to allow the recording of meetings, or have an accurate paper trail to document important meetings and proceedings is a serious red flag of cover-ups and problems. Participate in these meetings as an observer and go to collect information, but do not serve as a member if you don't want to be used to give legitimacy to their process. If you do participate in the process, make sure that they allow for a "minority report" to be issued on any decisions where your concerns might otherwise be ignored in any final product that the committee creates. Find out if any "committees" actually have any decision-making powers, or will make recommendations to those that do.

Tactic 6 -- <u>Give them a Red Herring, or Get them to Chase the Wrong Bunny:</u> This is an issue or information offered to belittle, patronize, or confound and derail your efforts. When a bureaucrat tries to change the subject from what you are concerned about to what they want you to focus on, they are using a "*Bait and Switch*" routine.

Examples:

- "I don't know what you're talking about; You don't know your facts; That issue is not important; Why are you interested in that issue?; You have not done enough research; You aren't an expert; Your issue is beside the point, irrational, emotional, or not practical; Why don't you check into, or work on x, y, or z, instead?"
- Engaging attendees in detailed explanations or debates that are intended to sidetrack the issue of concern, hoping that in the heat of debate, you will: Give up, get tired, go home, and forget the key issue.

Be aware of time wasters that will eat up meeting time, and are designed to wear you down. When confronted with this tactic, don't get side tracked. You don't have to be an expert to ask questions, ask for information, or to have concerns.

Write notes throughout the meeting -- this will help keep you on track. Stick to the issues you want to discuss, while making a special note to follow up, or address the other person's issue later, if they genuinely desire to do so.

Tactic 7 -- <u>Refuse to give out information, or make it impossible to get:</u> Bureaucrats plan that this tactic will discourage you, so that you will give up and go away. The *Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)* format may have to be invoked to get cooperation. You must know what information you need, what agency to request it from, and what to look for. The "*Key and Lock*" buzzwords and descriptions must be included, or the very information you seek may be withheld from you.

Examples:

- Bureaucracies protecting damaging information **may try to charge exorbitant fees for information to be *searched, copied, and sent* to you.** Request fee waivers based upon public interest needs and public right-to-know laws.
- The requester may be flooded with huge amounts of useless information that is out of order and out of date. This is called a *data dump* in legal circles. This is a common tactic used by legal rivals on cases to eat up valuable pre-trial discovery time. It takes a critical eye, speed reading, and some research or historical knowledge to be able to weed through the useless information to find what you want.

To deal with the system effectively, you need the facts. If you have the facts, the system has to deal with you more openly. Democracy depends on people having the information needed to allow meaningful input and interaction with the system. The refusal to give out information may sound like this:

- "We don't have that information; x, y, or z is not in today, and I'm not authorized to fulfill this request; We can only give out a summary (They decide what is meaningful, included, excluded, or redacted); Why do you think that's important?; Justify your interest, or legitimize your need; We don't think you need that information."

Recognize these tactical phrases meant to put you off the track of the information you need to level the playing field with your opponent, and don't accept lame excuses for non-performance or non-compliance.

The *Government in the Sunshine Act* legislation was passed by the U.S. Congress to discourage clandestine or private meetings of government bodies or officials for the purposes of excluding general public or interested parties. You can find links to several good resources on the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) at www.actionpa.org/activism/ (see links

at the bottom of the page). The last link is to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press' Open Government Guide, which provides details on state-level Open Records and Open Meetings Laws (which apply to state and local governments and public schools). Unless you're dealing with a federal facility, most environmental permitting will be at the state level. Know your rights.

You usually have the right to audio or videotape public meetings, as long as your recorder is visible and provided that you're not obstructing the functioning of the meeting. If you have the capability, always videotape public meetings. It keeps people more honest and ensures that you have a record of the meeting that you control (don't rely on the other side providing you copies of their own recordings).

At public meetings, be prepared with your own sign up sheets, since the other side will often have people sign in when entering the meeting, gathering their contact information so that they can follow up with their side of the story. People tend not to question who will get the sign-up sheets and what will be done with them. It's best to go prepared with your own and with clipboard (unless you can get your own table) and set yourself up so that people run into you before they get to any official welcome/sign-in tables run by your opposition. People will tend to sign just once… on the first sign-up sheet they encounter. Always ask for name, phone, email and address, in that order of importance. Make sure those who attend know who gets the signup sheets and what will be done with them. If you can get those running the meeting to commit to sharing the sign-up sheets with your organization, all the better. If it's a public meeting (sponsored by a governmental body), the sign-up sheets may be public documents that you can request later with right-to-know laws.

STRATEGIES TO SHORT CIRCUIT THE CONTROL GAME

- **AS SOON AS A TACTIC HAS BECOME APPARENT, LABEL IT:** When you name that tactic publicly, it loses its power. You can counter these tactics with a minimum of wasted effort by keeping the lines of communication open with your colleagues and other similar interest organizations.
- **BE OBSERVANT OF INTERACTIONS, TACTICS, AND WHO MAY BE CALLING THE SHOTS BEHIND THE SCENES:** Recognize that although individuals make up the bureaucracy, they should not be the targets of your efforts. Evaluate where strategic counter-tactics would be the most effective. Good mottoes to keep in mind. *Always go to the top, and the squeaky wheel gets fixed.*
- **DO NOT ALLOW BUREAUCRATIC FIGUREHEADS TO LABEL YOU** as a troublemaker, or as someone with emotional or personal problems (i.e.: "Psychiatrically" linked to a site or set of issues, don't have a life because you volunteer a lot of your time, are a paid staffer or knowledgeable citizen, so your opinion doesn't count, or don't have "x" number of constituents behind you.) to legitimize side stepping serious issues and/or your concerns. Be alert to the *evaluative patronizing concern look*. This is contrived to give the appearance of questioning your mental or emotional stability to elicit a reaction. Keep cool and don't give them the reaction they want from you. Any person might become dedicated to seeking solutions, and become angry or frustrated over the distancing treatment bureaucracies and corporations use to keep the public at arm's length over difficult issues.
- **MAKE YOUR ISSUE OR ADVERSARY AN OBJECT OF INTENSE STUDY:** Never stop questioning your previous conclusions about them. Get all the information you can and keep getting it. Put this information to productive and meaningful use, then network it around.
- **NEVER RELAX AFTER A VICTORY**, and don't underestimate the power of determination.
- **RENEW YOUR OWN OUTREACH REGULARLY** by having current concerns and information prepared and ready to distribute at every opportunity. Use their meetings for opportunities to pass out your own targeted information. Use several people to see that all attendees end up with copies of your information. Ask local copiers or businesses to help duplicate materials.

EIN – A think-tank involved in researching and analyzing hazardous waste and radiotoxic environmental information and issues in order to disseminate technical information for public education.

File Reviews at your State Environmental Agency

Here are the basics on reviewing files at your state environmental agency:

A "file review" is where you go to an agency's regional office and look at the records they have on a facility that the agency has dealt with.

This guide will lead you through the most likely steps, but it's not always easy to find what you need. Sometimes the relevant information is at the level of "land use" decisions, like zoning, which occur at local (not state) levels. Sometimes relevant information will be with federal agencies or other state agencies, including public health, OSHA, or even homeland security. State environmental agencies have files on operating facilities, proposed facilities (those for which permit applications have been submitted) and even on facilities that are closed or which may not be a "facility" (like toxic waste sites and such). You can find all sorts of useful information, such as:

• background on the corporation(s) involved
• details on their existing/proposed operations
• permitted emissions limits
• disputes between the company and the environmental agency
• information on related companies or other facilities where the facility's waste products go
• violations and fines

To review files, first find your agency here:
http://www.epa.gov/epahome/state.htm

If your state has more than one agency, usually one will be related to "conservation" or "natural resources" (these are the folks who sell off the rights to your state forests and other public lands). The agency that has files on polluting industries that you may be researching is usually the other one. Most state agencies have regional offices that do the actual work of reviewing pollution permit applications, giving out permits and doing inspections. The files you'll want to look up are usually in this regional office, not the main agency office in your state's capital.

Finding the agency's regional office might require some fishing around on their website. Look for anything labeled "agency locations" or "regional offices." You may need to first find "about," "contact us" or "site map" links to find this info. Here are some examples of regional office websites:

NY: http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/255.html
OH: http://www.epa.state.oh.us/new/directions.html

Arranging a File Review
Look up the regional office that covers the county where the existing or proposed facility is (or would be) located. The site should have phone numbers you can call plus directions to their regional offices. Call the main regional office number and ask for the "file room" or "records management" or just tell them that you'd "like to schedule a file review."

For each facility you want to examine, they'll want to know at least the facility name and the county that it's located in. Sometimes it's as easy as saying which facilities you want to look at and they'll give you a date when you can come in. Sometimes you may need to put a request in writing or jump through other hoops to get your appointment. If they ask you which files you'd like to see for the facility (or facilities) you're asking about, they're wanting to know if you want to limit your request to just a certain program area (like air, water, waste, etc.). Always ask for *all files* for the facility. It's all potentially interesting and sometimes paperwork will be misfiled in the wrong folder, anyway.

They may want to know the names of everyone who will be doing the file review. You don't have to tell them that you're with an organization (they'll probably ask what company you're with, since they're used to dealing with corporations). You can just say that you're a private citizen and that's okay.

Depending on how busy their office is, your appointment may be scheduled for 1-4 weeks away. It'll be during a work day. You may get a reservation for the entire day. It can sometimes take a whole workday to review a large set of files, so go in early and plan to spend at least a few hours there unless it's only one proposed facility and a very small file. If you expect to be reviewing large amounts of files, try to have 2-4 people doing the review.

Doing a File Review

Ask that any digital documents relating to the facility be made available for review and copying as well (and bring a flash drive or blank CD if you can, in case they let you copy files and want to charge you for CDs). There's a good chance that paper files you'll see will also be on their computers somewhere, especially if it's a document that looks computer-generated and written by staff.

Printed emails are also probably on their computers somewhere – in some states, your open records law will give you the right to electronic copies.

Before spending time and money copying them, ask if they have the documents on a computer anywhere in the agency. They may not be used to dealing with this sort of question and you need to grill them with questions, first establishing *whether* they exist on a computer at all. You might need to ask very specific questions like who created the document and how? Did they use a typewriter or a computer? Do they delete their computer files once they print them? These may seem like passive aggressive questions, but without poking at them with these sorts of inquiries, you may get the run-around. They may argue that as long as you have the paper version, you don't have a right to a digital copy. They may also argue that the digital copy was deleted or isn't technically a "public record" that you have a right to.

You may need to carefully review your state's open records law for details on this type of thing. Sometimes it's worth going above the heads of agency staff people and speaking to their lawyers. They know whether you have a right to something and pressing them will sometimes result in digital documents surfacing that aren't even in the paper files at all. See rcfp.org/ogg/ for details on your rights under your state's Open Records law.

They may give you something like 10 free copies, but after that, it can get expensive. If at all possible, bring a portable copier as they may charge a lot (10 cents/copy or more) for using their copier. It's cheaper to use your own. Ask in advance whether this is acceptable. It usually is.

In addition to going in to review files, you can call the regional office and speak to someone (probably in "air quality" or "waste management") to ask about the status of any permit applications relating to the facility. They can tell you if a permit is being considered or not and what stage in the process it's in.

What to look for:

• Look for anything referring to "Notices of Violation" (it might be referred to by an acronym like "NOV") and copy them.
• Read over correspondence files and anything that looks like back-and-forth between the company and the agency over permits or anything. Often a company will apply for a permit and get things wrong in their application and the "deficiencies" will be pointed out by the agency.

• There are often disputes and other juicy info you can find in correspondence files, which tend to be less technical than other documents you'll find.
• Copy the permit application (unless you can get a digital copy) and anything that provides any insight into environmental impacts (air emissions, waste products, fuel supply, infrastructure, water use, etc.).
• If it's an existing facility, look for inspection reports and copy anything that looks like it may indicate improper management of the facility or violations.
• Find out where their waste products go, if possible.
• Copy anything relating to the company's background and history.
• Copy introductory information that explains the basics of how their facility is supposed to work.
• Copy anything that gives insight into which other companies they deal with (get waste from, sell to, etc.) and which other communities are impacted by them.
• Copy anything marked confidential (you may not find this later, as they're supposed to be removed).
Don't spend too much time reading everything. If it looks remotely interesting, copy it and move on. Read the details later.

Confidentiality
The rules for this vary but in many places information is withheld just because a company designates it as "confidential." Also, the rules may specify that they have to tell you when they are withholding files, and give a reason. After a pass through the files, it's a good idea to ask if anything has been withheld as "confidential" or for some other reason. Some common reasons are "enforcement" or "criminal investigation" or "attorney-client work product." You probably won't be able to see these files, but just knowing they exist can be helpful.

Attitude

Agency staff can be really helpful. One of them may even slip you information if they have some sense that it won't lead back to them. It makes sense to try to gain their confidence – try and be nice, and if they do help you out let them know you don't consider them personally responsible for anything.

File reviews can be productive but also sometimes tricky – rules vary, and you can find unexpected things. If you come across something of interest or need help beyond what agency staff can provide, give us a call, and we can find someone who knows the issue and location well and/or just help you through the process ourselves.

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