

Good Guys IRL: Organizing for Non-Organizers in the Face of Trump

Intro

Hi. My name is Sarah Turbow. I'm a professional organizer (community / political, not one's bookshelves, though: I like that, too). I just relocated to the Bay Area from New York City. I have a Medium publication about organizing and other things called [Good Guys at the Barricades](https://medium.com/good-guys-at-the-barricades).

Very many people right now are feeling despair and heartbreak and confusion. Everyone is scrambling. Literally everything we care about is coming under attack, and we have just a few months to pull ourselves together before Trump moves into 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. We need everyone. Everyone. Even / especially those who are inexperienced in organizing, activism, or even politics. We have no idea what is going to come down the pike - we need to build an infrastructure of organizers throughout all of our institutions and communities, to be able to act and react for whatever comes our way.

This doc can be used as a training or discussion guide for non-organizers, to begin to think about their unique contribution in this moment. We did an in-person training in SF, and will be doing one in New York - and maybe others to come! But I wanted to make sure that this could be replicated elsewhere and be helpful for as many people as possible.

If you feel like you have no idea what to do other than donate, volunteer, or march (all of which are important!) this doc is for you.

Thanks x a million for those who have contributed to this idea. In particular, my colleague & friend Catie Stewart.

On the name -

This summer, it seemed the world was completely falling apart. #AltonSterling and #PhilandoCastile and Dallas and Nice and Istanbul and Orlando and Brexit and Trump, so much Donald Trump. And so I texted my father, and asked him, "does 2016 feel better or worse than 1968?" 1968. The year in which, among many other things, Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated.

He wrote, worse.

When I asked why, he said "because back then, there was a feeling that the good guys were at the barricades."

We're coming for those barricades.

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Good Guys IRL - The Long Training Version

Recommended time: 3 hours

A note on setup:

- Materials may include: a flipchart / whiteboard + markers, post-it notes, name tags, snacks!
- Recommend that you have two sheets of paper up that people can write on throughout:
 - A "Bike Rack" - ideas for future discussion or for future sessions
 - Things people should know about - a space to write up opportunities, resources, events, people, etc. that folks can take pictures of to be connected to later on.

I. Pair & Shares

- Break up everyone into groups of two - preferably with someone they don't know well - and ask them to do a pair-and-share about how they're feeling, post-election. The rules are as follows: one person talks for five minutes, and the other person just listens - they do not ask questions or respond. And then they switch.

II. Welcome & Framing

- Thank everyone for coming! This is a good time to say a little bit about yourself and why you wanted to run this training or discussion.
- **Pro-tip:** If there's a story that is really speaking to you in this moment, share it!
- The reason we did the pair & shares first is because everyone has a lot of thoughts & feelings in this moment - and it's important to get those emotions out before going into action mode. That said, the remainder of this session will be fairly action-oriented. It's time for us to get up off the mat.
- Recognize the different identities, backgrounds, and experiences of everyone in the room, and the need to be thoughtful and respectful about where folks are coming from. The hope is that coming out of this session, everyone will leave with a sense of their own power + contribution in this moment, regardless of background and experience.
- Go over the goals of this session:
 1. To give people some tools / initial thinking about their unique contribution & how to leverage it in this moment
 2. Get folks connected to other people & opportunities in their community
 3. Build some community across backgrounds and contexts
 4. NOT to have all the answers. Surprise! No one does...

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- It's very hard to tell in this moment exactly what will happen with this Administration. But we have every reason to prepare for the worst. We have two months to get organized across our communities, institutions, workplaces, etc. to be able to react to whatever comes our way before Trump takes office.
- If useful, it may be useful to read / tell / discuss [this story](#), inspired by *And the Band Played On* by Randy Shilts as an illustration of why building power, even if we're not entirely sure what we need to build it for, is important now.

III. Introductions & Community Agreements

- If you have a small enough group, go around and ask people to say their names, where they live, where they work, and three communities they feel a part of (can be as broad or as narrow as is useful). They may also want to add their gender pronouns (examples: He/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs).
- Ask folks to suggest some "community agreements" i.e. some discussion guidelines.
- **Pro-tip:** If suggestions are vague ("keep in mind that there are a lot of identities in the room") gently push folks to make a specific, actionable suggestion that the group can hold each other accountable to ("use 'I' statements, instead of speaking on behalf of others")

IV. Introduction to Strategy / Haves, Needs, and Wants

- Introduce a definition of **strategy**: Turning what you **have** into what you **need** to get what you **want**
- This definition of strategy is a useful framework for figuring out how to get started. The remainder of this session will be to walk through our individual and collective **haves**, **needs**, and **wants**, and the beginning of some ideas about how to turn **haves into need**.

V. Wants

- We always start with **wants**. What is it that we're trying to move towards?
- To get clear on that for each person, break folks out into pairs and discuss the question: *What is a thing that you feel (the most) scared or worried about in a Trump presidency? Why?* Give people a good long time to talk.
- Get some report-backs or discuss in the larger group: what are the things that are most freaking people out, and why? Really try to dig in about the personal experiences /

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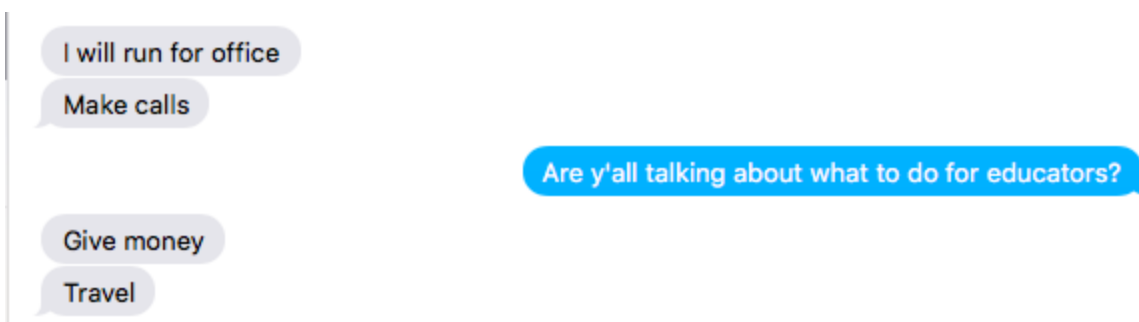
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background that is driving people. For example: A person worried about the repeal of Obamacare, because they are a medical practitioner who works with underserved populations.

- **Pro tip:** either before breaking out, or immediately afterwards, have a good model ready to demonstrate that issues that we have real, personal reasons for caring about are going to be the ones that keep us going, moving forward. Prep an attendee to share a story, or prepare one yourself.
- Make the point: it's important for each of us to really think about the things that we have a personal stake in or feel strongly about. It is very likely that the going is going to get very tough - how will you make sure that you hold yourself accountable to acting?
- Ask everyone to turn their fear / worry into a positive **want** for themselves. For example: If someone is concerned that the right to marry will be threatened, their **want** may be to preserve the right to marry.

VI. Haves & Unique Contribution

- The next thing we think about is the things that we have. We all have a unique contribution to make in this moment.
- A framing story (sub your own!): I was talking with my friend Sam, who is a student at the at Harvard Graduate School of Education. He is a brilliant teacher, has some significant experience as an administrator, and hopes to stay in education for his career. He has taught in schools in a few charter networks in New York and New Haven, and through Teach for America in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Here is our text message exchange the day after the election:



Right now, we often see ourselves as pitching in as interchangeable people with any other person, and not thinking so much yet about our unique contribution and the networks we're connected to. Teachers and educators are going to be so important on

so many fronts! How could he begin to organize his networks to act on any number of issues?

- Along those lines, break out into groups of three around the following questions:
 - *Who are you individually?* Your financial resources, your identity, which gives you access to certain communities and resources, or your skill set, Etc. For example - I am a white woman, which gives me access to communities of white women.
 - *What communities are you a part of?* Your workplace, religious community, university, hometown, etc. For example - I am a member of the Jewish community.
 - *Where do these communities have power?* For example - when we did this in the Bay Area we talked how tech companies might be particularly powerful in this new political landscape.
- Get report-backs and discuss some of the **haves** that are in the room.

VII. Needs

- Generally, what we **need** is some kind of infrastructure or power. In this case power means simply “the ability to act,” in a value neutral way - it can be used for good, or for ill. Power generally comes in two forms: organized people, and organized money.
- Often folks will mention groups of people / communities that they are a part of in haves. These folks may often be *disorganized*, that is, not ready and willing to take action together. It's useful to push people to think about their **need** as *organized* people. For example: you may have access to a lot of your co-workers, but they're not prepared to do anything together. You may **need** them to be organized to push your company to do something.
- Going back to the story from *And the Band Played On*, it's important for us to realize that we will need organized folks across all of our institutions and communities, in order to react to whatever comes down the pike.

VIII. Turning what we Have into what we Need

- For the remainder of the session, want to talk about how to turn what we **have**, into what we **need**, to get what we **want**. This may be different for each person!
- May be useful to think about a few different buckets of things. All of these are valuable! And you may want to choose different ones from different categories. These are examples! If they don't agree with your politics, choose other ones!

Showing Up vs. Examples - Showing up for communities that are not your own, i.e. attending a Black Lives Matter protest. - Plugging into an already existing organization or program - Fundraising for the ACLU - Calling your Senator re: Steve Bannon	Organizing your People Examples - Having one-on-one conversations with other white folks about the importance of anti-racism work. - Organizing members of the Jewish community to push Jewish institutions to speak out against Steve Bannon - Organizing a group of students to push your university to become a sanctuary campus
Services vs. Examples - Volunteering at Planned Parenthood - Signing up to walk home at night with a Muslim neighbor - Volunteering pro bono legal services to help trans folks with name changes	Base Building Examples - Organizing teachers at your school to make a plan for if DACA is repealed. - Organizing a group at your job to push the company to ensure family leave policies if governmental ones are repealed
Defensive vs. Examples - Committing to register if Muslims are required to do so. - Going to a bystander intervention training - Gathering a group of women who will buy a stockpile of Plan B together	Offensive Examples - Getting involved in down-ballot Democratic races now - Working to make Keith Ellison DNC chair - Building statewide organizing infrastructure to push forward state-based environmental policies

- Here are some other things to consider:
 - If you are “helping” other communities, you better freaking ask them what they need.
 - Lean into discomfort - some of the organizing you may want to do might involve some uncomfortable conversations! You need to have them.
 - Start small and build momentum - gather a group of folks to take a very accessible action together, and build from there.
 - Always get solid commitments from people - have them write it down, if you can.
 - What motivates the individuals / communities you are a part of? Find out! Ask! What works for one community might not be right for another.
 - One-on-one conversations are *always, always* the best tool to bring someone into longer term, significant action - you need to find out where they are coming from, what motivates them. What is their **want?**

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- Allow people to go into breakouts to begin to brainstorm some initial actions they may want to organize their people to take. If there are some similar communities in the room, those folks can work together, otherwise, useful to mix! How will people *turn what they have into what they need to get what they want?*
- Get some report-backs and discuss in the group.
- A really important point to make: a *not* useful thing to do here is to reinvent the wheel entirely. There are a lot of existing efforts - do your research to see if you can organize with or plug into an effort and/or bring it to your community. One concern is that if we are attacking problems in a totally undirected or piecemeal way, we also have the potential to be weak.

IX. Commitments

- The last step is commitments! Pass around post-it notes. Ask folks to write their commitment for a next step - it can be big or small - on both post-its. They should keep one, and they should give you the other one (make sure their name is written on it). If the group is small, it's good to say them out-loud.
- Encourage people to make a commitment to have one-on-ones and/or to host a house party of 10 folks (3 of whom they might not know so well) with a similar discussion to this one.

X. Wrap Up & Feedback

- Ask folks to write things on the Bike Rack and Opportunities sheets described above
- If people can stay, ask them to stick around to give some feedback.
- **Pro-tip:** one way of doing this is through pluses (concrete things that went well and should be replicated) and deltas (things that could change for next time - push for specific suggestions!)

After the fact:

- Figure out a way to hold folks accountable to their commitments
- Put people in relationship with one another
- Consider holding other meetings in the future
- Have some one-on-ones with folks you didn't know so well who came - or even the ones you did know!
- Make a Facebook group or email listserv to bounce ideas off of each other / take action together

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Good Guys IRL - The Worksheet / Discussion Guide

If you don't have enough time / don't feel prepared to run the long training, use the worksheet / guide on the next two pages to moderate a discussion, or use it to think through some things on your own. You can also use this as a worksheet in the longer training.

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The purpose of this worksheet is to get each person to think about their unique contribution in the face of Trump. We don't know what the Trump administration will ultimately look like - but we do know that we need a wide and deep base of people across workplaces, communities, and institutions ready to act offensively and defensively on any number of fronts. How can you use the things you already have to be ready to act whatever comes down the pike?

A framework for thinking about strategy is: Turning what you HAVE into what you NEED to get what you WANT.

1. What do you WANT?

What is a thing that you feel (the most) scared or worried about in a Trump presidency? Why? Try to dig into the personal experiences, relationships, or situation you're in that may make that thing feel the most urgent or important.

Turn that worry on its head so it becomes a positive thing that you want. i.e. if you are worried about access to abortion, your want may be protecting access to abortion.

2. What do you HAVE?

Who are you individually? Can be your skill set, your financial resources, your identity, (which gives you access to certain communities and resources), etc. For example - I am a white woman, which gives me access to white folks.

What communities are you a part of? Your workplace, religious community, university, hometown, etc.

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Where do these communities have power? For example - when we did this in the Bay Area we talked how tech companies might be particularly powerful in this new political landscape.

3. What do you NEED?

Frequently, needs are simply organized pockets of those same communities you identified above. *What would it look like for that community be willing and able to act together to get the thing that you want?*

4. Turning what you HAVE into what you NEED

What are some tools and tactics you may want to utilize to turn what you have into what you need? For example - consider what it might look like to show up for other communities together, to plug into existing opportunities, to organize a group of folks who are committed to taking action on a minute's notice together, or to push the institutions or workplaces you're a part of to play a more active role in the issue you're concerned about.

5. Make a Commitment

Make a commitment to yourself & share it with someone else or make it public. What is a first step you can take to make this happen? Start small and build momentum Two good ideas: (1) commit to a number of one-on-one conversations with members of your chosen community to take action together. (2) Commit to pulling together a group of folks at your house to do a similar exercise to this one.

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