

# Responsible Civic and Community Engagement

You want to do something, but what?

How can you achieve the best outcomes for impacting an issue you care about?

## R ESPECT THAT THERE ARE MULTIPLE SIDES

- Everyone is entitled to voice a narrative and opinion
- Listen to others without necessarily trying to change minds or reach agreement
- Put yourself in others' shoes so that you can more readily understand their perspectives
- Give people a chance to explain why they may be reacting as they are

## E DUCATE YOURSELF

- Consult several sources of media to get facts and analyses
- Consider the reliability of sources and evidence in assessing the facts
- Learn the context and history of a situation or issue— things do not happen in a vacuum
- Talk with people directly involved rather than rely exclusively on third party sources
- Explore how relationships of power work and can be shifted
- Dialogue with others and ask questions

## A SK HOW YOU CAN BE MOST USEFUL

- Build relationships to share or shift resources
- If you are not a member of an impacted community, make sure you are taking direction from the community
- Don't rely on good intentions - just because you want to help, does not mean that your help is needed
- Know the agenda and/or demands of those with whom you are advocating
- Be nimble and explore tactics that meet changing needs and priorities
- Find out if there are existing efforts or organizations you can support rather than creating something new
- Identify your particular skill set and how it matches the needs of the community

## C HOOSE YOUR STRATEGY

Organizing for social change can take many different forms. For example:

- **Dialogue:** Start conversations within your own community and social networks
- **Formal Statements:** Draft articles, group petitions or Facebook pages, public speeches
- **Symbolic Public Acts:** Create displays, mock ceremonies, new signs or names
- **Withdrawal:** Engage in walk-outs, turn one's back, boycotts, collective disappearance
- **Physical Action:** Participate in non-violent processions or protests
- **Political Action:** Contact legislators and policymakers, initiate legislation, vote
- **Service:** Find volunteer opportunities through [www.stivolunteer.org/wustl](http://www.stivolunteer.org/wustl)

## T HINK BEFORE YOU ACT

- Think about your long-term vision and goals and how your actions may impact that trajectory
- Consider the numerous potential consequences (e.g., social, legal, political, employment, education) of your actions and be ready to face them
- Decide on what you might be willing to compromise and what might be a deal breaker
- Refrain from saying or writing something on the internet or elsewhere that may be harmful or regrettable

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*Sources:*

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