
MOBILIZING STUDENT GROUPS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

DARCY J. CORBITT-HALL, BA



[@DarcyCorbitt](https://twitter.com/DarcyCorbitt)



[@DarcyCorbitt](https://www.facebook.com/DarcyCorbitt)

WEB

www.DarcyCorbitt.org

DARCYJEDACORBITT
ORGANIZATION



LIBERATED SPACE

A place where you are free to express yourself, ask questions, and not be judged for where you are in your journey.

OUTLINE FOR TODAY

- Roles In Social Change
- Creating Systemic Change
- Strategies for Social Change on College Campuses
- Practicing Strategic Communication
- Resources



ROLES IN SOCIAL CHANGE



ROLES IN SOCIAL CHANGE

- **Activists**
 - People who intentionally work toward social, cultural, or political change
 - Often involved in grassroots or community organizing
 - Most often outside the institution or organization they are attempting to change
- **Advocates**
 - People who actively speak on behalf of a marginalized group or group
 - Often involved in policy development or change and group education
 - Most often within the institution or organization they are attempting to change
- **Advocate-Activists or Activist-Advocates**
 - People primarily engaged in one role but do significant work in another

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ACTIVIST

- Articulate in some form of communication
 - Speaking
 - Writing
 - Art/performance
- Passionate about some aspect of social change
- Has some tangible goal for social change
- Actively involved in the community or issue they are fighting for
- Knows how to utilize their talents and the talents of the people on their team

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ADVOCATE

- All the characteristics of a good activist
- Has a position with an institution or organization which needs social change or fights for social change
- Good working relationship with those within the institution
- Is recognized by the community as a safe person to seek help from

ROLE OF ACTIVISTS AND ADVOCATES ON CAMPUSES

Activists

- Normally students*
- Are part of the institution but not an agent of it
- Work to organize other students to seek change

Advocates

- Normally faculty*
- Are part of the institution and have some formal position/responsibility within it
- Work to change policy, connecting students to administration, and educate institution

Activists
(Outside)

Advocates
(Inside)



CREATING SYSTEMIC CHANGE



I'M MAD BUT WHAT DO I DO?

- Passion:
 - A drive to change things to make them better
 - Energy and enthusiasm
- Direction:
 - Tangible goals for social change
 - Utilizing resources (e.g., people, funds) in a strategic way
- Passion + Direction = Sustainable Social Change
 - Passion alone effects temporary change
 - Direction alone effects temporary change
 - Combining this drive and energy with strategic work can lead to systemic change

CONTROLLING YOUR PASSION

- When something is personal/important to us we can get triggered when confronted with bigotry
- While its okay to feel angry, it can be strategically detrimental to show your anger
- Tips for reducing escalation:
 - Take a mental “step back”
 - Take ten deep breaths
 - Remember that most people have been conditioned to be biased against LGBTQ+ people
 - Remember that if you show compassion you will leave a better impression than if you get angry
 - The opposition often tries to trigger us because then they can disrupt our strategic communication and harm our message
 - Allow yourself to discontinue the interaction
 - When you are in private, you can release that anger...your anger is valid!

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- Words are incredibly powerful
- When working for social change it is important that the words we use in pursuit of that change are constructed in a careful, strategic way
- Components of strategic communication
 - Communicates a complex concept in a concise way
 - Is motivated by a long-term strategic goal
 - Has a specific outcome in mind
 - Is mindful of how the message will be received by hostile parties
- Things to keep in mind
 - Avoid hyperbole or other extreme language
 - If you can get someone to agree to a small thing they are more likely to agree to a bigger thing
 - Public communication should only be done by individuals who are good and strategic communication

OUR ASSUMPTION

- You are already passionate about social change
- You are not really sure how to turn that into systemic change



STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES



SIMPLE STRATEGIES

- Activism
 - Media and strategic communication
 - Protests and demonstrations
- Advocacy
 - Connecting students to resources
 - Working with administration
- Education
 - Public and classroom panels
 - Creative communication

MEDIA AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- Media is an excellent way to communicate, in perpetuity, your concerns and grievances
- You need to designate a couple people as your media contact
- These people need to be professional, vocally articulate, and calm under pressure
- Before you conduct the interview, ask the reporter what they want you to talk about
 - Do your research: have a few concise talking points
 - Think about what your opposition will say and address it
 - Avoid negative stereotypes if at all possible (but be yourself)
- Active social media accounts and private groups are another way to organize and inform your members and supporters
- Remember you are representing your community/cause not yourself

PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

- The goal of a protest or demonstration is to start a conversation, not change the world
- A protest is another form of strategic communication
- Things to do
 - Make sure you have a permit for the space you plan to demonstrate in (and make sure you have it with you)
 - Designate a media representative and 1-3 people to video record or live-stream the demonstration
 - Remain calm and non-violent
- Things to avoid
 - Never engage law enforcement or counter protestors
 - Do not use hyperbole in your protest messages

CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH RESOURCES

- Connecting students with resources changes the system by changing the expectation that things will not change for them
- Create and publish in a readily available place resource lists for students
 - Gender neutral bathrooms
 - Safe Zone faculty and staff
 - Campus and community LGBTQ+ organizations
 - Affirming Campus and community health and mental health
 - Any resource other students in your group have found affirming and helpful
- Vetting resources is helpful, but not always necessary
- Make sure you update the lists annually

WORKING WITH ADMINISTRATION

- Student movements are unsuccessful at creating sustained change if faculty and administration are not invested in that change
- Making connections with affirming faculty/administrators:
 - If you already have an LGBTQ+ group: your faculty advisor is your key ally and can connect you to other allies
 - If you do not have an LGBTQ+ group: Look at the Safe Zone list at your school (if it exists) or contact the head of diversity, inclusion, multicultural programs, etc.
 - Join student government
- You should ask your faculty/administrator ally how to become more involved in LGBTQ+ inclusion projects at your school
 - Getting on advisory boards can give you a voice in the decision-making process
 - Make it a habit to regularly update your highest-ranking faculty/administrative ally of current community concerns
 - If such projects do not exist, then you should ask them to help you start one

PUBLIC AND CLASSROOM PANELS

- Panels allow individuals to share their lived experiences
- Make LGBTQ+ issues personal and real
- Can be structured (e.g., pre-made questions) or open (e.g., based on questions from the audience)
 - Structured = more control, recommended for novice panelists
 - Open = risky, especially with “hot” audiences, not recommended for novice panelists
- Panels are another form of strategic communication
 - Keep responses concise: come up with a couple talking points for potential questions
 - Use your story effectively
 - Personal stories are key, but you need to be careful

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

- Use your creativity to educate others about LGBTQ+ issues
 - Writing a blog
 - Recording a video blog
 - Student/community radio program
 - Art/photography exhibit
 - Plays, spoken word, music
- By sharing your creativity you are fostering positive LGBTQ+ dialogs
- Creative communication is still strategic communication, but you can be more relaxed and express and represent yourself



PRACTICING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION



ACTIVITY

- In groups of 3-4 come up with a strategic answer to the following question which:
 - Communicates a complex concept in a concise way
 - Is motivated by a long-term strategic goal
 - Has a specific outcome in mind
 - Is mindful of how the message will be received by hostile parties
- Question: “I understand that some people think they are born in the wrong body, but if we don’t believe in that then why does it have to be stuffed down our throats.”

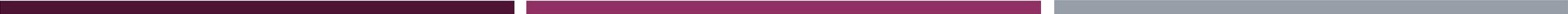


RESOURCES



RESOURCES

- Resources for GSAs
 - GSA Network: <https://gsanetwork.org/>
 - GLESEN: <http://www.glsen.org/students>
 - Transgender Student Educational Resources: <http://www.transstudent.org/>
- Resources for Higher Education
 - Consortium of Higher Education LGBTQ Resource Professionals: <http://www.lgbtcampus.org/>
- North Dakota Resources
 - Dakota OutRight Creating Safe Spaces Workshop: <http://dakotaoutright.org/css/>
 - Darcy Jeda Corbitt Organization Advocacy Workshops: <http://darcycorbitt.org/workshops>



© 2016 Darcy J. Corbitt-Hall

Use for Commercial Gain Without Authorization Prohibited

DARCYJEDACORBITT
ORGANIZATION