



Mainstream Organizing: Engaging Hearts & Minds

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Greetings!

Many of us have heard of the Progressives' *House Meetings* as part of *Organizing for America*, but probably had no idea how this aspect has been a key secret weapon of their campaign to win elections and influence policy. In contrast to the information sharing and transactional Conservative meetings, Progressive *House Meetings* engage the hearts and minds of attendees, foster stronger commitments to action, and are used to grow the Progressive network.

Harvard's Marshall Ganz was the [mastermind behind this organizing technique](#), elements of which are summarized in his [Fall 2009 Ganz Organizing class notes](#). Ganz has been a key advisor to the Progressive campaigns since prior to the 2008 Presidential election. He is not only responsible for the *transformational* messaging in the campaigns, but, with House Meetings, created the largest ground game ever amassed for an election in 2012. Marshall Ganz is also behind the [New Organizing Institute](#) focused on training organizers. *TheVoicesOfAmerica.org* reverse-engineered Marshall Ganz's *House Meeting* approach and shares with you below how it might be transposed to grow and mobilize the Conservative movement.

In an unprecedented development for a President who should



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represent all Americans, *Organizing for America*, which was instrumental in getting the President elected, has now been transformed into [Organizing for Action, a non-profit 501c4 advocacy group to advance the President's agenda](#). The First Lady made this announcement in a [video message to supporters, calling the move "the next phase in our movement for change"](#). Needless to say, *House Meetings* will continue to be an integral part of this movement. If Conservatives don't adopt similar effective methods to grow their Conservative networks and obtain commitments to action, we will lose the America we have known!

Neighborhood Meetings

Engage Hearts & Minds and Gain

Commitments

The most effective approach for individuals to protect their freedoms, their values, and children's futures against an increasingly Progressive government, media, and educational establishment is through *Neighborhood Meetings*. This gathering of like-minded neighbors will allow an affirmation of their shared beliefs, assure that everyone is aware of impending threats to these beliefs, and allow for a discussion of possible actions.

Commitments to action are secured by engaging the hearts and minds of attendees and through the existing relationships. History has shown us that citizens may have enlisted in fights because of their ideals, but have prevailed because of loyalty to the people beside them and a commitment to those they love. It is these loved ones who have to live with the consequences of their actions or non-actions.

Network Growth through Neighborhood Meetings

Network growth of like-minded concerned citizens occurs because attendees are asked to sponsor their own *Neighborhood Meetings* with invitations going out to a new network of like-minded neighbors. As appropriate, this expanded network of like-minded citizens can stay connected through social-media or through collaborative network capabilities. In essence, this network growth model is similar to the Tupperware, cosmetics, or jewelry party model.

The power of this network effect is best demonstrated by Harvard Professor Ganz in his course notes, where he cites that in the *1987 Pelosi for Congress* campaign in San Francisco, six organizers held eighty-seven "*House Meetings*", attended by six hundred people in just three weeks. From these, they were able to recruit one hundred ten leaders needed for the Get-Out-The-Vote

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From Harvard's Ganz Organizing Notes, Fall 2009

Organizers learn the craft of the one on one meetings and house meetings, for example, to lay the foundation for local organization, rooted in commitments people made to each other, not simply to an idea, task, or issue.

One and one meetings are intended to initiate ongoing working relationships, not simply get a signature, a donation, or a pledge of support.

Successful one on one meetings can lead to house meetings, to which a "host" invites a network of acquaintances to attend - some of whom agree to hold their own meetings, thus activating networks that weave their way through every community.

Organizers identify, recruit, and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community.

Organizers challenge people to act on behalf of

effort for the entire congressional district.

Mainstream Neighborhood Meeting Agenda

Based on research, in order to engage the hearts and minds of participants in a mainstream *Neighborhood Meeting* and secure relationship-based commitments to action, it is best to follow the following meeting agenda:

- **Introductions** - Discuss how hard work, risk taking, values/principles, and freedom of choice have all played a role in influencing your decisions over time that led to your current predicament in life. Present it as a "story" of your life, since stories, instead of just facts, more effectively convey the involved emotions. It allows others to better identify with what you have experienced and accomplished. Discuss your vision and ambitions for the future and how these might be impeded by economic, political, or social obstacles that might be of concern to you. Learning each other's "stories" is an important step in forming, developing, and maintaining relationships.
- **Common Threads** - Affirm the many commonalities among the group of how hard work, risk taking, values/principles, and freedom of choice have played a major role in all of your lives. Reflect on how this is consistent with the historical American experience which our parents and grandparents experienced. Contrast the American experience to those in other countries and other civilizations throughout history. The affirmation of a "shared" future, based on a "shared" past, converts a transactional exchange of ideas into relationships!
- **Threats** - Share with each other current events with an emphasis on systemic threats to your vision and ambitions of the future for you and your children. Discuss how these threats affect your common emphasis on hard work, risk taking, values/principles, and freedom of choice. Reflect on how the biased, elite, Progressive media, educational establishment, and "social justice" religious make you feel as if you are in the minority with your concerns, despite being in the vast majority of the citizenry of the United States. Further reflect on how you, despite being part of the majority, are made to feel powerless by these cultural elites against these societal forces. Discuss how they cite "fairness" as a cause, when it is you and your neighbors who are not being treated fairly by Progressive government through unfair taxation, burdensome regulations, and intrusion into every dimension of your private life and freedoms. Conclude, though, by affirming hope based on the fact that your combined actions can

shared values and interests.

Organizers develop the relationships, understanding, and action that enable people to gain new understanding of their interests, new resources, and new capacity to use these resources on behalf of their interests.

One result is new networks of relationship wide and deep enough to provide a foundation for a new community in action. ...and how a community can turn the resources it has into the power it needs to get what it wants.

Organizers develop new relationships out of old ones - sometimes by linking one person to another and sometimes by linking whole networks of people together.

Organizers engage people in interpreting why they should act to change their world - their motivation-and how they can act to change it -their strategy.

Organizers motivate action by deepening people's understanding of who they are, what they want, and why they want it. Mobilizing feelings of hope, anger, self-worth, solidarity, and urgency, they challenge feelings of fear, apathy, self-doubt, isolation, and inertia that inhibit action.

Organizers challenge people to take the responsibility to act. Empowerment for a person begins with taking responsibility. Empowerment for an

transform the present into a desired future based on the successful "American Experience" past.

- **Actions** - Discuss potential actions your Neighborhood Group could pursue to make a difference, either individually or in collaboration with other Neighborhood Groups. Note that the *Neighborhood Meeting*, through its "story-telling" and discussions, engages the heart and mind of attendees and will lead to actions to overcome uncertainties and self-doubt. It is important to recognize that the emphasis on relationships, especially among neighbors, is a key building block to gaining citizenry power through actions in a civic society. To start, focus on local initiatives such as how to impact your: a) neighborhood religious communities, b) School Board of Education, Superintendent, or teachers, and c) local media outlets such as your local newspaper or community news. All of these are discussed in separate tabs under the [Activism Tab](#) on our *TheVoicesOfAmerica.org* website.

organization begins with commitment, the responsibility its members take for it. Responsibility begins with choosing to act. Organizers challenge people to understand, as well as to commit, to act, and to learn how to act effectively.

Relationship building is central to the craft of organizing because it is within relationships that we develop new understanding of our interests and new resources to act on those interests.

In our recent interactions with [Homemakers for America](#), we became aware of an initiative, similar to *Neighborhood Meetings*, now being rolled out nationally to their membership. It is called the [Cottage Meeting](#) and is simply an opportunity to gather friends and neighbors in a home, library, or community center to share a message of liberty. [Homemakers for America](#) has even created a *Cottage Meeting Resource Manual*. They have test-marketed this concept with much success. Consequently, this is an excellent, early success example for adopting the *Neighborhood Meeting* concept for liberty-loving Conservatives.

Please share this newsletter broadly with your relatives, friends, neighbors, organization, and associates. We must ensure that all like-minded liberty-oriented individuals and organizations are aware of the best practices for [Neighborhood Activism](#) and [Neighborhood / Precinct Organizing](#). To facilitate sharing, just click on the [Facebook, Twitter, etc. icons](#) on our home page.

In liberty,
[The Voices Of America](#)

[Peter H. Wolf](#) & [Warren A. Edstrom](#)

TheVoicesOfAmerica.org provides *Neighborhood Activism & Neighborhood/ Precinct Organizing* best-practices training to all liberty-oriented individuals and organizations nationally. The website is the only comprehensive *Neighborhood Activism & Neighborhood/ Precinct Organizing* training website on the internet and is the top Google search result for "*precinct organizing*". Our [newsletter currently reaches like-minded individuals and leaders in over forty-eight states](#).

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