

# TOOLS FOR A POPULIST UPRISING

Ready to collaborate across Red and Blue? Here are some ways to get started.

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## HOW TO CROSS THE DIVIDE

**Before you talk, listen.** Attend community gatherings. Get to know the people you want to reach and listen to their hopes and fears.

**Discuss things that connect you,** like being a parent or dealing with high gas prices, to build trust before bringing up issues that might spark disagreement.

**Highlight others' points of view.** For example, talk about how an Afghan villager feels about us attacking their country.

**Avoid attacks** on politicians or others who hold different views, and the United States.

**Focus on why the issues matter** to you. Speak from your heart and experience.

**Avoid jargon-filled language.** Ask yourself if you come across as friendly or as a know-it-all.

**Avoid emphasizing problems.** Suggest actions people can take, and talk about examples of success.

Source: article by Doug Orbaker

## HOW TO GET MEDIA ATTENTION

**Find a newsworthy angle** on your event or cause. Human interest, controversy, civil disobedience, superlatives (first, biggest) help.

**Create a short press release.** Make it accessible and factual, with contact information.

**Find journalists** who cover issues related to your own.

**Develop a 30-second pitch** for your story. Don't lie or exaggerate—build a reputation for accuracy.

**Highlight previous coverage** of your issue when pitching your story.

**Identify knowledgeable** and articulate spokespeople. An unexpected spokesperson (a veteran for peace or a doctor for single-payer health care) can be especially interesting to a journalist.

**Don't give up** if a journalist isn't interested. Correct them if they get the story wrong, and thank those who cover it well.

## HOW TO BUILD A COALITION

**Identify a goal** that is widely shared, for example, increased support for education. Avoid taking positions on unrelated issues; learn to respectfully "agree to disagree" on topics not essential to your purpose.

**Research potential allies** who share your concerns, including religious, political, civic, and neighborhood groups.

## HOW TO BUILD TRUST

**Offer reciprocal liberty.** Each of us relies on society's commitment to freedom to assure our own liberty. I'll respect your liberty if you'll respect mine.

**Remember that diversity** includes diversity you don't like. Treat your opposition with fairness and respect, as potential allies rather than as certain enemies.

**Bust a few stereotypes,** and start thinking about somebody else's problems. You'll make new friends and change others' view of you. Gays against pension cutbacks, women for drug reform, blacks for small business, whatever.

**Use short-term, easier wins** to build momentum for the difficult issues that may take years to get.

**Describe a future** worth fighting for. Optimism is deeply ingrained in American culture. We need to point out what's wrong without simultaneously casting a pall over others' vision of the future.

Source: Sam Smith at prorev.com

**Explore participants' interest** and concerns about collaborating, and explore ways to address both.

**Structure decision making** so that power is shared among coalition members and timely action is possible.

**Clarify your plan.** Set short-term and long-term goals. Choose among strategy options: large, public campaigns, behind-the-scenes lobbying, popular education, etc.

**Encourage coalition partners** to reach out to their own network of friends and allies to widen support.

## HOW TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION

*Direct action can bring people together while raising awareness. Here, for example, is a model developed by City Life/Vida Urbana for protesting foreclosures:*

**Seek advice** from an organization that provides legal advice and support for those facing foreclosure.

**Canvass the neighborhood** to find support. Tell the story of the family involved, and explain how a foreclosure harms the community.

**Warn the bank** that a protest is planned. Send out press releases.

**Gather neighbors,** family, friends, faith groups, and organization members at the house for the scheduled foreclosure. Hold signs and use a megaphone to tell the story of the homeowner.

**If successful** in thwarting the foreclosure, use the extra time to negotiate with the lender.

Source: City Life/Vida Urbana

## HOW TO ORGANIZE ONLINE

### E-MAIL LISTS

To keep members of your group informed, set up a listserve (find them at riseup.net or Google). Listserves allow people to subscribe, unsubscribe, and share files easily.

### WRITE EFFECTIVE E-MAILS

- Get the reader's attention with an interesting hook.

- Make the text straightforward, not wordy, and break it up with bullet points and short paragraphs.

- Include everything the reader needs to take action and ask recipients to forward the e-mail.

- Limit e-mails to once every couple of weeks, except during a campaign climax.

### HOW TO BLOG

Post short, confident pieces on a single subject. Update frequently, and reference your e-mails, along with information on how to subscribe to your e-mail list. Free blogging sites include: [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com), [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com), and [www.sixapart.com/typepad](http://www.sixapart.com/typepad).

### OTHER USES OF NEW MEDIA

Share photos on Flickr or videos on YouTube. You can link to these shared images from your website, blog, or e-mails.

Read more about **How to Break Through the Red/Blue Divide in the Fall 2008 issue of YES! Magazine, Purple America.**

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