*This is a slightly changed version of an in-class activity written by Amy Alsup to accompany the class reading “Community Organizing and Social Change” by Randy Stoecker (Contexts, Winter 2009). The original full assignment and the facilitator instructions are available at* [*https://thesocietypages.org/teaching/2010/05/13/community-organizing-and-social-change/*](https://thesocietypages.org/teaching/2010/05/13/community-organizing-and-social-change/)*.*

*I adapted it changing the location to New York City, where most of my students lived. It made connecting the assignment to students’ experiences easier: we could have a short conversation before the game about NYC neighborhoods where the described situation could take place. Another change to the original assignment was the variety of roles for the participants of the game: the original version took the point of view of the community organizer, but I let the students decide whether they wanted to represent the views of different groups within the neighborhood (its more and less affluent parts) at the “community board meeting.” It helped us flesh out the perspectives of different stakeholders before identifying the shared interests of these stakeholders and coming up with a common strategy.*

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**Case Study: Community Organizing & Social Change**

**Directions:** *Read the scenario below and answer the questions with your group members.*

**Scenario:**

You live in a large urban neighborhood in New York City that is strongly stratified by class. The houses on the Southern side of your neighborhood are quite dilapidated, crime is rampant, vital businesses and jobs are scarce, and the neighborhood is in need of revitalization. Most people in this section of the neighborhood make a median income below the poverty line. The Northern side of the neighborhood is more affluent. There are numerous businesses within walking distance, crime has generally remained minimal, and there is a Neighborhood Watch program in place.

*Notes on the scenario:*

*This section introduces the two parts of the neighborhood and gives an opportunity to discuss urban inequality, different groups of residents, their positions, and political tools available to them.*

*Students can think about their own neighborhoods and urban experiences. The facilitator can specifically prompt them to reflect on these issues by talking about the neighborhoods where students live or visit.*

*For the social movements or urban change classes, one could concentrate on discussing what students know about their local political infrastructures and whether they or they family members are involved with them.*

Recently, the local news media has exposed an upsurge in crime in the entire neighborhood. A housing crisis is occurring, drug use in the community is extensive and progressively visible, and the school district is in shambles after dropout rates have surged and teacher retention has dwindled. Community members on both the Northern and Southern ends of the neighborhood have increasingly expressed concern about the state of their community. There is a neighborhood organization in place; but all regular members are upper-middle class, and most neighborhood projects and initiatives focus on beautifying the Northern section of the neighborhood.

Community members from the Southern part have recently expressed anger and frustration about their lack of status in community operations. Local government representatives are deliberating on whether or not to install a community policing program in the community or to explore other options. The housing crisis is becoming a wide-scale dilemma, now affecting the middle class and not simply impoverished community members. All families are concerned about the poor resources in their schools and the lack of quality educators. The existing neighborhood group now realizes that they have a crucial role in rallying ALL community members to address the various problems facing the community, and they must come up with some solutions before the upcoming community meeting.

*Before asking the students to fill in the worksheet, it is essential to discuss the issues emerging from the scenario together. I used the worksheet to help students prepare for the “community board meeting,” and then we had a debate, simulating what could have happened at a meeting of a diverse group of local stakeholders.*

**Worksheet: Community Organizing & Social Change**

(1) List the social problems in the order in which you will address them. (There are 10 spaces, but if you identify more or less than this, feel free to add or subtract spaces).

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Why did you decide to address social problems in this particular order? Explain your rationale for choosing the first social problem. Why does is this problem top priority? Why is the last concern you listed a lower priority?

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(3) Create slogans to generate support for your cause. List the slogans you use in the space below.

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(4) Why did you choose these slogans? Do they appeal to emotions, humor, or moral shocks?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(5) What strategies and tactics will you use to spread your message? Will your tactics center on protest, direct action, education, garnering media attention, etc.— or a combination of these activities? Did your group choose strategies and tactics within or outside of societal norms and institutionalized means? Were tactics legal or illegal?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(6) List your affiliates and opponents. With which organizations, community groups, social movements, and politicians will you align? Which groups will you oppose? Name movement resources (ie: networks, affiliated organizations, money sources, and advocates) from which you will draw.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_