

## **Campus Guide to Mobilizing for Action on Africa:**

### ***Why Mobilize on Campus?***

Young people, and students in particular, play a critical role in every social movement. Colleges and universities are important institutions in the communities in which they are located. When organized, students have the power to substantively change their universities and their communities, and they can collectively impact U.S. policy on the national and international level. In order to be successful at effecting better U.S. policies toward Africa, there is a need for new voices, new ideas, and new energy that can be found in student organizers both on the front lines taking action, and behind the scenes setting priorities and developing winning strategies.

### ***Who's Got the Power?***

Students have the most power on campus. They pay tuition, they outnumber administrators and faculty, they have the ability to impact new enrollment. Consequently, students can play a major role in changing policies, not only on their campus or in the community of which it is a part, but also on the national and international level.

### ***Activism = Education***

Student organizing is as much a part of the educational experience as attending a class or symposium. We must always approach student organizing as a way to provide opportunities to broaden intellectual, cultural, and social awareness.

### ***Getting Started***

It is very easy to find students—they're on campus! However, different types of schools are organized in different ways. For example, commuter colleges usually have a less developed network of student organizations than most resident campuses, and students attending schools in major metropolitan areas may be organized as much off-campus as on.

On most campuses there is a network of student organizations that are key outreach targets for Africa Action campaigns:

- Political (student government, groups focusing on political/social justice issues, political action groups, etc)
- Social (fraternities/sororities, arts-focused groups, etc)
- Identity Community (women's organizations, African Student Associations, Black Student Unions, etc)
- Academic (African Studies Associations, Political Science Associations, groups affiliated with specific departments or faculty, etc)

If you are new on campus and don't know your way around as much, there are several key places on every campus that should prove helpful in finding student organizations.

- ✓ Student Activities Center—This is a university office that keeps a listing of registered student organizations, contact information, and office locations.
- ✓ University Website—Sometimes you can find information on student organizations in the "prospective student" section of university websites.

- ✓ Student Center—Almost every university has a Student Center. The offices of student organizations are usually housed there, meetings and events are regularly held there, and most importantly you can always find students there.

***Join An Organization!***

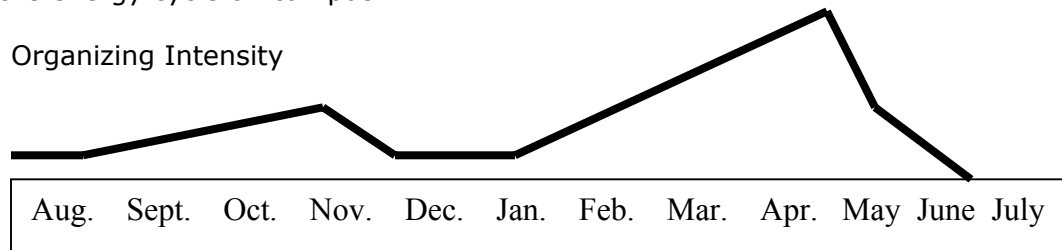
By joining an organization, it is easier to mobilize and activate an already existing base of people. Organizations also provide the structure necessary to mount effective campaigns. If the organization you join is not already affiliated with the Africa Action Student Network, pitch it to them! Inform them of the benefits of being a member and remind them that Africa Action provides:

- ✓ Targeted action alerts on our primary campaign issues.
- ✓ Student Network Updates with news, Africa Action’s campaign updates, alerts, and tips and tools for effective activism.
- ✓ Activist tools: fact sheets, action ideas, posters, stickers, film festival kit, etc.
- ✓ Event organizing resources including background materials and speakers suggestions.
- ✓ An opportunity to connect with other students across the country.
- ✓ Listings of events or meetings of interest near you on our Campus Action Calendar
- ✓ A direct link from your website to Africa Action’s Online Action Center with automatic actions and updates.

***Watching the Calendar***

Plan your activities with the academic calendar in mind. This calendar governs the lives of most students, especially those you may be interested in recruiting. It is imperative to know when classes begin, when finals week takes place, and the timing of fall, winter, and spring breaks.

Know the energy cycle on campus:



Due to finals, vacations, and other factors, the cycle for campus organizing is usually similar to the one produced above, with **late spring** being a prime time for large scale campaigning.

## How to Win Friends and Influence U.S. Africa Policy

Even the most experienced organizers find it difficult to organize a group by themselves. For this reason, it is important that you find someone with whom to work. First, think about the close friends that you have. Are any of them interested in politics, activism, or social justice? If so, they're probably a good place to start. If you don't have any close friends who are interested, think about any other groups of which you're a part. Maybe you belong to a social justice club or a multicultural group. Religious, cultural, social justice, environmental, political, service, and feminist groups are often a good place to look. And don't forget about the classes you're taking. Is there anyone who has spoken in class about African issues, activism, or social justice?

When you find someone, talk to them in person or give them a call (i.e. don't just email). If you don't already know the person, make sure you introduce yourself. Give a brief explanation of why you're approaching that person ("I know that you're really interested in social justice and I've just gotten involved with this great organization that's working for political, social and economic justice in Africa. It seems right up your alley and I'd love to tell you about it. Do you think we could chat sometime?").

When you meet with this person to talk, you want to tell them about Africa Action and our primary campaigns, but you also want to give them the chance to talk about their interests. You can, and should, explain what Africa Action is, but be sure to include information about the specific things that draw you to the movement. Don't feel like you have to explain the whole system right away. Let the other person talk too. Have a conversation. You're not delivering a lecture.

Assuming that goes well, either set up another meeting or continue talking about what to do next or who else to recruit. If the person doesn't want to or can't get involved, see if they know anyone else who might be interested. Call this new person or one of the others you thought about earlier. You'll find someone!

A few easy tips for getting other people involved and organized:

1. **MAKE FRIENDS.** There are other people like you in your community. How did you get involved—where did your interest come from? Where are others coming from? The key to recruiting organizing partners is listening. What do people need in order to become active? Explain who you are and your affiliation with Africa Action. Once you've got a hook, follow up—get commitments (however big or small) from people, immediately. Make people feel like they are needed from the start.
2. **CREATE INCLUSIVE SPACE.** The organizing atmosphere of your group must be inviting. Have regular meetings—same times, same places & make sure they're convenient to different constituencies (i.e. people who work, people who are involved in other groups). Most importantly, keep the atmosphere alive, open, and congenial.
3. **MAKE YOUR WORK EXCITING!** Advertise with gusto, and advertise to a wide audience. Design enticing flyers, posters, newspaper ads, articles, or letters—talk to people often, make recruitment a part of every conversation you have.

4. **GATHER RESOURCES.** What do you need to do your work? Building excitement among a group of people is one piece; building the capacity to use that energy is the other. Brainstorm your needs—from raising money to developing skills programs & training. Recognize what different folks offer to the group and make a plan to meet your organization’s needs.
5. **GIVE PEOPLE A REASON TO COME...** Be inviting & make it exciting.
6. **...AND A REASON TO COME BACK.** Get commitments! Loyalty and energy around an organizing campaign come from feeling like you’re part of something bigger than yourself. The best way to give people that feeling is by giving them a piece of the action. Everyone has strengths and/or resources to offer in building the organization. Encourage these contributions! Grow the organization—and the movement—together!

<b>Recruitment Principles</b>	<b>Steps Toward Successful Recruitment</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appeal to People’s Self-Interest</li> <li>2. Maintain Ongoing Activities</li> <li>3. Recruit to an Activity and Not a Meeting</li> <li>4. Have an Entry-Level Program for New People</li> <li>5. Make Accommodations to Support Special Needs of individuals</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be Prepared</li> <li>2. Legitimize Yourself</li> <li>3. Listen</li> <li>4. Agitate</li> <li>5. Get a Commitment</li> <li>6. Follow Up</li> </ol>

## **DOs and DON'Ts For Working With Students Groups**

**DO** contact student organizations at the beginning of your campaign. Make sure you give them time to help.

**DO** identify and articulate students' self-interest in the campaign. (Will involvement support their current campaigns, bring campus notoriety to their group, provide a venue to build stronger relationships with the community, educate their members, etc?)

**DO** pay attention to the school schedule. College students are in class eight months of the year. Those eight months are filled with holidays and final and midterm exams.

**DO** go to the university or college website and look for student groups that focus on social and economic issues. Another good place to gather information is to call the student activities office. They usually have a list of all student groups.

**DO** contact the leadership of the student organizations. Keep in mind that many student organizations do not have presidents or executives in the traditional way. A lot of student-run organizations make decisions based on a group consensus. Speak with the leadership listed as the primary contact and ask to attend a meeting.

**DO** facilitate discussions with student groups. Offer suggestions on how they can help but also let them come up with ideas of their own. Students are extremely creative and will often be able to think of something that never crossed your mind.

**DO** bring community allies to meet with students.

**DO** treat student organizations as an ally if you are a member of another organization. The relationship should be mutual. If you want them to come to an event make sure you try to go to one of theirs.

**DON'T** forget to explain what the campaign is and why it's important. Most students don't have a vast knowledge of African affairs, even well known events and figures (e.g. anti-apartheid movement) may only be met with a surface understanding.

**DON'T** assume they know or can make the connections between their issues and Africa Action's campaigns. You have to have enough information about the group to help foster these connections.

**DON'T** get into political or ideological debates with student groups, especially early on in the relationship.

**DON'T** forget that student groups' leadership turns over rapidly as students graduate. It is important to recruit younger students in order to guarantee the continuity of the campaign.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON STUDENT ACTIVISM

### **CampusActivism.org**

[<http://www.campusactivism.org/>]

*This interactive website has tools for progressive student and youth activists.*

### **History of Student Activism**

[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student\\_activism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_activism)]

A Brief history of worldwide student activism according to Wikipedia (the free online encyclopedia), complete with some recommended reading.

### **Speak Out - Institute for Democratic Education and Culture**

[<http://www.speakoutnow.org/index.html>]

*Speak Out promotes progressive voices on campuses and in communities and works with some 200 speakers and artists who represent the breadth of social movements.*

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### **Action For Change**

[<http://www.actionforchange.org/getinformed/history.html>]

Excellent resource with a detailed timeline of student activism as well as an extensive list of recommended reading on practically any topic related to student or youth activism.

### **Red House Books Catalog of Campus Protest Reading**

[<http://www.redhousebooks.com/catalogs/campusProtest.htm>]

### **Campus Organizing Guide from the Center for Campus Organizing [pdf]**

[<http://www.campusactivism.org/uploads/orgguide.pdf>]

### **Top 10 Activist Campuses,**

[[http://www.motherjones.com/news/outfront/2004/09/08\\_401.html](http://www.motherjones.com/news/outfront/2004/09/08_401.html)]

Mother Jones magazine annual list of the Top 10 Activist Campuses of the year.

### **Jay's Student Activism Links**

[<http://www.neravt.com/left/directory/subjects/student.htm>]

Who's Jay? Who knows. This site has an extensive list of links to student activist websites.

### **TransAfrica Forum Youth & Student Network**

[<http://www.transafricaforum.org/student.html>]

Africa Action's allied organization TransAfrica Forum's Youth and Student Network aims to further the development of progressive Black/African student activists and organizations and to advance activism on issues facing the African World.

### **History of Africa's Student Movements**

[<http://www.aasu.org.gh/student%20movement.htm>]

A brief history of the role of African youth and students in the liberation struggles on the continent, from the All Africa Student Union.