

THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

POLITICAL EDUCATION & ORGANIZING THROUGH HOUSE MEETINGS

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SUZANNE PHARR

WOMEN'S PROJECT

1994

POLITICAL EDUCATION & ORGANIZING THROUGH HOUSE MEETINGS

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POLITICAL EDUCATION & ORGANIZING THROUGH HOUSE MEETINGS

Purpose of House Meetings

- Providing political education to small groups of people, with adequate time for discussion, helps to build a base of people who share a progressive analysis and perspective; to identify and build relationships; to build a mailing list for communication; to do fundraising; to develop volunteers and new leaders.

In campaigns, most people are accustomed to house parties, not house meetings. The house party has the more specific goal of fundraising, along with some education. The first goal of the house meeting is to provide education and build relationships.

Inviting Participants (10-14 days before the meeting)

- Invite 6-10 people who have shown concern about progressive issues to an hour and a half hour meeting in your home. Keep the numbers small so that everyone can be an integral part of the meeting. However, a dozen or so calls may have to be made in order to get 10 who say yes. Be wide-ranging in invitations: invite neighbors, friends, co-workers, people who provide you services, family, people you get to know in the many facets of your life. Invite those whose thinking is close to your own and those who haven't necessarily thought about the issue. Their concern may be about a single issue or many; what is critical is that they have some concern for social justice. Think about a particular mix of people that will lend itself to building relationships.

- Explain that the purpose of the meeting will be to learn about the threat to our communities by the religious Right and to develop ways to work to strengthen our communities. For example, you might say, "I've become concerned about some of the negative things I see happening in this community—censorship, anti-gay & lesbian organizing, negative attitudes toward immigrants—and I want to get a small group of people together to talk about some of these issues. I wonder if you share any of these concerns and would be interested in coming to a meeting at my house?"

- Assure them that the meeting will begin promptly and end on time. Do not violate this agreement: it gives people confidence about the use of their time and about your seriousness.

- You may have to invite 20 people to get 8-10. Don't stop until you get 10 who say yes. A maybe should be considered a no until you do a second call and get a yes.

- Make reminder calls ("hope you can make it") 1-2 days before the meeting.

The Meeting

- Greet all as they enter and make sure everyone is introduced and made welcome. This is essential.
- Provide something to eat and drink if you wish, but keep it simple enough not to interfere with the meeting's content and timeline. Food is not essential, but it helps to build a sense of connection and community.
- Briefly introduce yourself and your organization. Use handouts (brochures, one-page descriptions) to supplement. Ask participants to introduce themselves briefly by talking about what concerns motivated them to come to this meeting.
- Pass around a sign-up sheet to get a mailing list. Ask for name, address, zip, phone, fax, and electronic mail information.

Presentation of the Issues 20-30 minutes

Use the following to develop your presentation—in your own words and style. It is not necessary to use all of the examples. Choose two or three that are most relevant to your community. Ask participants to hold their questions to the second half of the meeting which will be devoted to discussion.

Message

We are living in a time of social, cultural, economic and political conflict in which many values are shifting and being redefined. It is a time of upheaval and change and fear of loss. Much of the conflict centers around what we believe the US. should be—a pluralistic (many ethnicities, religions, cultures), democratic society that finds a place and resources for everyone—or what the Right envisions— a more mono-cultural, authoritarian society that puts tight limits on people's participation . Should we have a society that uses its resources for the common good or a two-tiered society with increased economic stratification and poverty. It is a conflict between the politics of inclusion and sharing and the politics of exclusion and selfishness.

At stake is the historical dream of this country and the values we have held on to in the ongoing struggle to try to make that dream real: that this country is open, providing a place where people can come in search of freedom, where people can find a place to be who they are and to live peacefully, where people can be equal partners with each other in the creation of family, community and government, where people have hope and resources to meet their basic needs.

We are living in a time of danger. Because of decisions made by corporate leaders in response to increased global economic competition, our standard of living has been in decline for 20 years. Structural changes in the economy, such as automation, "downsizing," and sending our plants overseas where "underdeveloped" countries provide cheap labor, have accelerated the economic crisis in the U. S. in the past decade. Economic and social problems, coupled with a sense that a flawed government is failing the average citizen, make people seek answers in easy but aggressive right-wing populist solutions. People's fears make them susceptible to rightwing propaganda that tells them there are not enough civil rights and resources to go around. It could become the majority "will of the people," unchecked by democratic processes, that literally kills minority voices and rights. **Economic hard times make people particularly susceptible to authoritarian leadership that scapegoats minority groups as the cause of social and economic problems.** Worldwide, due to similar economic stresses and attendant cultural displacement, it is a time when regressive populism could slip into fascism.

It is a time when we must all be particularly vigilant that justice is evenhanded, that all rights are equally protected, that there is equal access to educational and employment opportunity for everyone, and that we are careful to recognize and work on the complex causes of our social and economic unrest. Avoiding emotional, unexamined nationalism, we need to see ourselves as world citizens, and act as responsible stewards of the honored trust to develop and protect democracy and civil liberties. **We must caretake and expand the moral ground of justice and equal participation in democracy.**

Who the Right Is

The Right has a long history in this country, stronger in some periods of time, less visible in others. It is usually visible and active after people's victories in their efforts to achieve equality. For instance, the Right was particularly active after the abolition of slavery, creating the racial discrimination and segregation of Jim Crow laws and the terrorism of the Klan to create a climate of fear. After successful growth of labor unions and the battles of World War II, the Right organized virulently around anti-Communism and was particularly visible in the McCarthy and House un-American Activities Committee hearings. More recently, we have seen the Right grow in strength since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, organizing around economic and social issues that limit access to democratic processes and the workplace. **Race, gender, and economic class have been central issues.**

The Right consists of groups that range from conservative, free-market capitalists to white supremacist neo-Nazis. It is not monolithic but a confederacy of loosely related groups, individuals, and organizations, some of which work in coalition with each other, some of which simply work toward similar goals, and some of which oppose each other. The Right is supported by numerous institutions: policy think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, legal arms such as the Rutherford Institute, and media outlets such as the Christian Broadcasting Network.

The religious Right emerged as a contemporary phenomenon around 1972, at the same time that conservative strategists were also shaping racist backlash to the Civil Rights movement, especially affirmative action and busing. The religious Right would focus its energy on issues of sexuality and gender (i.e., homosexuality, abortion, feminism) rather than directly on race. The religious Right also opened up an attack on a public school system struggling to meet the challenges of racial integration through campaigns against "secular humanism" and in favor of prayer in the schools and "school choice." The religious Right generated a network of private religious schools, many of them all-white. Both thrusts—the overtly racist Right and the religious Right—began to provide scapegoats for the national malaise at a time of declining standard of living and a tax base eroded by government giveaways to Fortune 500 companies in the form of massive tax breaks. The vehement Cold War anti-communism propagated by the religious Right also mitigated against clear discussion of the redistribution of resources in the 1970s and 1980s towards the wealthiest people in this society.

Because their views are highly visible through their own outlets and coverage by the corporate media and because they have launched successful grassroots organizing, **the religious Right is the Right's most visible face.** In this time of social and economic crisis, they build a wide support base of people by appealing to their fears. They then lead them to support social and political exclusion of those different from themselves through mobilizing to change institutions and government to limit who gets to be full working partners in the every day life of this country, with full access to food, clothing, shelter, safety, and health.

Some of their dominant organizations and leaders are the Christian Coalition (Pat Robertson), Focus on the Family (James Dobson), Traditional Values Coalition (Lou Sheldon), American Family Association (Donald Wildmon), Concerned Women for America (Beverly LeHaye), Eagle Forum (Phyllis Schlafly), and Operation Rescue (Randall Terry). On the local level, there are organizations that are affiliated with these

national groups. For instance, in Oregon, their primary organization is the Oregon Citizen's Alliance (Lon Mabon) which has developed groups in Washington and Idaho in a strategy for dominance in the Northwest.

(The house meeting leader should research the local community and add local religious Right and white supremacist groups here.)

Their Goals

Generally, the religious Right is attempting to replace democracy with theocracy, merging church and state so that authoritarian leaders enforce a fundamentalist vision in this country's public and private life. This vision, developed from a narrow and literal interpretation of the Bible, is of one white God who gives authority directly to man to have power and dominion over the earth, its people, and its material resources.

This system requires a rigid hierarchy in which white men dominate women, people of color, and nature. Consequently, any strides toward autonomy and independence and full participation in society threaten this hierarchy. Therefore the religious Right works to dismantle the gains of the Civil Rights movement for people of color and women, tries to prevent lesbians and gay men from achieving equality, and opposes efforts to protect the environment. Its work is done in the name of morality, law and order, and free market capitalism.

Their Targets

In the past decade, the religious Right has vigorously opposed reproductive rights, teaching evolution or multi-culturalism or sex education, school-based clinics, HIV education, gay and lesbian equality, welfare, parental leave, tax increases for public funding of entitlements and social services, environmental protection, battered women's shelters, the Equal Rights Amendment, affirmative action, pay equity for women, immigrants, union organizing.

They have supported creationism, home schooling, school vouchers, censorship of books and the arts, fathers' rights, laws limiting protection for victims of abuse, privatization of social programs, severe immigration laws, right to work laws, English only laws, and laws requiring tax increases be limited and submitted to the public vote for approval.

In all that they oppose or support, it is people of color, women, children, lesbians and gay men, poor people, and the environment that will suffer if they succeed in their goals. In the end, it is all of us.

Their Strategies

The Right hopes to accomplish its anti-democratic goals through casting a wide net of governmental, corporate, legislative, and social strategies that destroy the possibility of equal participation in this country's public and economic life. One must always remember that **misinformation** is a primary tactic in all that they do.

(In this section, the house meeting leader should present a local example for each category discussed.)

Some examples:

- **Taxation.** This is perhaps the core issue. Throughout the country there are anti-taxation measures on the ballot. Generally, these measures reduce existing taxes, put a cap on future taxes, and require that all tax increases be put to the public vote, requiring a two-thirds majority to approve them.

Because elections are generally won today by the amount of media groups can purchase, and since anti-tax proposals have the financial backing of major corporations, massive media campaigns effectively sway the general public which is frightened by the current economic conditions. This issue has enabled the Right to bring together a very politically diverse group of people and introduce them to a piece of their anti-Democratic agenda.

Result: there are inadequate public funds to pay for basic services such as police, fire departments, schools, libraries, social programs. These services are eliminated or become privatized and fall into the control of corporate America or religious institutions. In California, the premier tax revolt initiative, Proposition 13, which imposed tax limits has led to near disaster in state and local services. For instance, in Merced County, officials announced in November 1993 that to save \$1.4 million a year, all 19 of its public libraries would have to close in 1994. (Richard Reeves, *Money*, Jan. 1994, p. 93) If public institutions are privatized, then they cannot be held accountable to the general population for their policies and practices.

The elimination of taxes for public services is perhaps the most devastating of all the strategies because lack of funds causes the basic infrastructure of the country to crumble, leaving services (when available) only for those who can purchase them. This destruction of the financial infrastructure sets the course for scapegoating welfare recipients and immigrants as primary causes of our economic problems. Voting by a 2/3 majority on every tax and fee increase basically ensures defeat and hamstring government in fulfilling its duties to the general population. It is the anti-taxation movement that can render government incapable of functioning.

- **Lesbians and Gay Men.** The issue of homosexuality has been the Right's best fundraiser for their organizations and their best vehicle for changing the country's thinking about civil rights. For several years, homosexuality has been a flashpoint of the religious Right's organizing as they have mounted an extraordinary campaign of distortion to play on the public's economic and social fears. Naming and demonizing lesbians and gay men as disease-carrying, sexual predators whose purpose is to destroy families, they oppose through legislative and ballot initiatives the enhancement and enforcement of civil rights protections. The Right constructs its argument around an incorrect and misleading analysis of civil rights, stating that lesbians and gay men must be prevented from gaining "minority status" (no such category), affirmative action (a program, not a civil right) and quotas (never enacted).

Result: As are immigrants and welfare recipients, lesbians and gay men are scapegoated as the cause of social and economic problems. A primary purpose of the attack against lesbians and gay men is to get the public to think of all civil rights as "special rights" that "majority" people have the power to bestow on deserving or underserving minorities. By muddling the definition of civil rights (to be protections one is given based on deserving behavior that will then supposedly give a person immediate preference and gain in the job market) and linking these rights to deserving behavior of minorities which must be approved by public vote, the Right has thrown fundamental rights on the public auction block. Rather than remaining the cornerstone of democracy,

these rights for everyone now become turned over to media-driven, fear-based campaigns that are won by those who have the most money and are able best to sway public opinion. In the end, any group that is stereotyped as having bad behavior (such as immigrants and welfare recipients)—crime, drug use, welfare abuse, teenage pregnancy, etc—can have its rights eliminated by current public sentiment taken to the voting booth.

- **Welfare reform.** Well before Clinton vowed to "end welfare as we know it," there was a movement to punish the poor by eliminating welfare. Under the guise of "reform," there are efforts to limit benefits to two years, require fingerprinting of recipients, require identification of the father of children, force teenage girls to live with their mothers, require workfare, limit number of eligible children to two per family, and reward employers rather than recipients for employment.

Result: Welfare recipients, portrayed usually as people of color, are being scapegoated as a primary cause of economic and social problems in the U.S. As poor people they also become targeted as a major cause of social problems as the general public is led to think they engage in criminal activity such as theft, drugs, homicide, alcohol, and welfare fraud. They are depicted as people who are on the take and unwilling to work. The reduction of support for those whom capitalism requires to be unemployed leads to increased homelessness, infant mortality, unserved health problems, violence against women (who lack the support to leave their homes), etc., as well as the moral bankruptcy of the American people who lose the values of living in caring community.

- **Immigrants.** There is growing opposition to both illegal immigrants and to the number of documented immigrants who are people of color coming in through the western and southern borders of the U.S. They are falsely targeted as a threat to American jobs, as a drain on social services, and as a cause of overpopulation and criminal activity.

Result: As people grow more distressed over economic and social problems, immigrants become scapegoated as the cause of these problems. Scapegoating leads to discrimination and ultimately violence. Racism keeps the focus on immigrants who are people of color, not the large numbers of white European immigrants, and this leads to an increased consensus that our social and economic problems are racial problems. Because it is impossible to determine who is and is not an immigrant among people of color, then all people of color are gradually considered to be problems. However, keeping up the rhetoric of "illegal immigrants" as opposed to American-born people of color serves to divide racially marginalized groups against one another.

- **Public schools.** There is an attack on public schools from both within and without. From without, there are extremely costly lawsuits, reduced tax revenues, corporate privatization where corporations manage schools, and efforts to get voters to approve vouchers for private schools. From within, there are takeovers of school boards, censorship, struggles to control the curriculum, and attacks against teachers which establish them as the central problem in public education.

Carol Glaser reports in Sojourner (Dec. 1993, p. 15) on Bob Simonds' promise to the 130,000 members and 1210 chapters of Citizens for Excellence in Education, a religious Right organization: "We can take complete control of all local school boards. This would allow us to determine all local policy: select good textbooks, good curriculum programs, superintendents, and principals. Our time has come!" His proof of his movement is the claim that CEE followers won 3,200 school board seats in 1992.

Result: Public schools are first controlled by fundamentalists, then ultimately destroyed and replaced by private schools operated by religious organizations or corporations that are not held to any standard of equal participation or curriculum along lines of race, gender or class. Because our ideas of gaining equality in participation in democratic institutions, the workplace, and public life are built on a foundation of equal access to education, the destruction of public schools means that education is limited to only those who can purchase it.

- **Books, Libraries, the Arts.** From the local level to the national, there is a massive drive for censorship through local citizens demanding removal of "offensive" books and materials, lawsuits, and government defunding of libraries, the arts, public radio and television. A recent example is the Traditional Values Coalition objecting to a short story by Alice Walker, stating that it led children to question marriage and belief in God. Without any hearing, school officials removed the book.

Result: Freedom of ideas and expression is destroyed, particularly the expression of those ideas that differ from those in power. The dissenting or minority voice, which is essential to democracy, is extinguished. Without differences and choices, critical thinking cannot survive. Nor can freedom.

- **Environment.** For the last two decades, leaders of this country's major corporations have united to attack and co-opt the environmental movement. More recently, they have provided major funding for anti-environmental groups such as the Wise Use Movement and for the election of anti-environmental candidates. An example of their goals is their desire to create a national mining system that would allow mineral and energy production on all public lands, including wilderness and national parks.

Result: The major corporations become gradually deregulated and the economy reprivatized so that for capital gain, they can exploit the environment and labor in any way they choose. Privatization reduces the avenues people have for redress. Currently, three out of five African-Americans and Latinos live in communities that have illegal or abandoned toxic dump sites, according to a study by the UCC Commission for Racial Justice. Native Americans are under siege by major corporations seeking new sites for dumping toxic wastes. Public lands such as national parks are being opened up for commercial use. In the name of economic growth, the environment becomes a landscape of disease and death for all of us.

- **Reproductive Rights.** For over 20 years the Religious right has been vigorously opposing women's right to control our bodies. They have fought women's right to choose through legislation, terrorization of clinic workers, doctors, clients, major ad campaigns, boycotts, the courts, and murder.

Result: Abortion becomes an option only for those wealthy enough to purchase it and for those who are forced to subject themselves to frequently unsafe alternative measures. Reproductive rights are a core issue: if one does not have ownership of one's own body—which is all one brings into the world and all that one takes out—then what do any of the other freedoms mean? There is nothing more essential than the right to control of one's own body because it forms the base of autonomy and freedom.

- **Sex Education.** The religious Right opposes sex education in the schools, in government funded programs, in books and materials—anywhere outside the home and religious institutions. Obsessed with sex, they believe that any discussion of sex leads to sexual activity that is outside marriage and control of the theocratic hierarchy of God and man.

Result: Information is closed down that could help prevent unwanted pregnancies, the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, domestic violence, child sexual assault, and promote good parenting and healthy relationships. As with reproductive rights, promoting sex education supports personal autonomy and freedom—and consequently the Right opposes it.

- **Multi-culturalism.** In both higher education and public schools, the Right has vigorously opposed teaching multi-culturalism (literature and history of our diverse cultures), arguing that it destroys traditional western values—and has used the inclusion of books about lesbians and gay men in the curriculum as the emotional organizing point to bring together both white people and people of color to oppose it.

Result: We entrench ourselves as a mono-cultural, English-only, white dominated society in which all those who are different from the norm must adapt themselves to white, heterosexual, Christian, middle-class behavior and standards. Multi-culturalism presents all cultures as having equal value, providing the student with many beliefs and customs to choose from. To find one's way within these choices requires critical thinking which is essential both to the workings of democracy and to freedom itself. Critical thinking is the major weapon against authoritarianism and fascism. It stands directly in opposition to the Right's goals.

- **Violent Crimes.** The Right supports greater enforcement of the death penalty and its expansion to cover more crimes. The current crime bill before Congress calls for 54 crimes requiring the death penalty. They support larger police forces, increased jail capacity, tougher border patrols, reduction of the age for juveniles to be tried as adults, while opposing gun control, rehabilitation programs for the incarcerated, and orders of protection for battered women. They consistently link, either overtly or covertly, violent crimes with people of color, despite evidence showing that violent crimes cut across race and class. Omitted from this get-tough-on-crime movement is significant discussion of violence against women who are raped, battered, assaulted and violently killed in large numbers every day.

Result: The public's fears about safety, plus pervasive racism, are used to bring about a call for a more authoritarian government whose police state will save us from violent people of color and social deterioration. While all other public services are being cut back, police forces and jails are being expanded rapidly. The Right is moving the body politic to a belief that democratic principles can be sacrificed for the sake of our personal safety. Race/racism is a major weapon the Right is using to justify the destruction of democracy.

Conclusion

Several conclusions are probably apparent from this discussion. For instance, it is no doubt obvious that the Right is not just one group, but is a linkage of people and groups that share many of the same beliefs—and many of those beliefs also reside in the general population, including those of us who consider ourselves progressive. The Right is not working in a vacuum as it moves the body politic, including Bill Clinton, to the right. It is working with the racism, sexism, homophobia, and capitalist greed that exist in ordinary people in this society.

Much of the current analysis of our ills masks the fact that it was a combination of corporate greed and governmental policies, particularly under Ronald Reagan's administration, that led us to this time of social and economic crisis. When people are

ignorant or forgetful of the cause of their problems, they can be moved easily to scapegoat those closer to them as the source of their dissatisfaction and discontent. They welcome anything that relieves their discomfort and pain, even if it is state violence and loss of freedom.

Ironically enough, it is once again the corporations, in partnership with religious institutions, that stand to gain from all of the issues we just discussed. Through a theocracy, they gain control of the populace while capitalism runs unchecked, with obscene profits going into the hands of the few, while less is spent on services and human needs for the many. The Right, particularly the ground troops of the religious Right, paves the way for authoritarianism by eliminating personal freedoms, autonomy, access, participation, and critical thinking.

Discussion (20-30 min.)

Ask for each person's reaction to what s/he just heard.

Ask people to talk about what they have witnessed in their own communities and how the Right has personally affected them.

Lead a discussion on what people think might be helpful in resisting the Right, and in creating inclusive communities that expand democracy.

(Local groups should provide specific activities here for people to take part in.)

What Can We Do?

First, we must not despair, we must not give up hope in the dream of social justice. We must doggedly work for social change, not just for now but for the long haul. Our job is to connect the issues, then connect the people affected by them, and together, create the solutions.

An effort by dedicated people on our side can counter the Right's anti-democratic campaigns. All over the country people such as ourselves are having meetings. They are developing small public forums to get our views out, organizing people to write letters to the editor or op-ed pieces, attending school board meetings, running candidates for school boards and library boards, joining ballot issue campaigns, going house to house to register people to vote and while there, talking about our issues.

Second, we must build relationships that are strong, enduring, and which contain our politics on both the personal and the community level. We must live the world we dream of. It is in our relationships that we must eliminate oppressions and seek equality. We have to build those relationships across differences such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, etc. We have to do this building personally, organizationally, and within community. This is how we build true coalition: by building lasting relationships that seek the common good.

Third, once we build relationships, we must organize, organize, organize. We need to join and build organizations that serve communities, that are responsive to constituencies, that resist the Right and work with people to create better lives. We must bring people together in every way we can—small meetings, potlucks, social events, at home or in public places—to talk about the ways we can build inclusive communities, step by step.

Finally, we must give of ourselves—our commitment, our time, our money. We must talk, talk, talk, discussing with everyone possible what we see is happening in this country and what we want to happen instead. We have to resist what is happening by not adapting to repression, by not giving up political space, by not allowing civil rights to be put to the vote, by not allowing dissenting voices and minority opinions to be extinguished, by not allowing scapegoating and the development of a police state. We have to come out openly and authentically as who and what we are and present our politics, our vision, our belief in our moral vision of inclusion, of fairness, of equality, of

justice. We have to let people know it is worth fighting and dying for--this dream of freedom and justice for all people.

Final Matters 10-20 min.

- 1) Volunteers: hand out a sheet that lists all of your current and anticipated volunteer jobs; then send around a sign-up sheet for volunteers, asking for them to indicate their particular skills and jobs they would like to do.
- 2) Financial support: make a pitch by describing the value of what your organization is doing and then ask for contributions, either by check or cash now or by monthly pledge. Tell them how their money will be spent.
- 3) Ask for people in the room to volunteer to hold a similar house meeting at their home that you will help them organize.

Tips for Presenters

- 1) Don't refer to the religious Right as "all Christians" or "all fundamentalists." The religious Right, which includes some Jews, refers only to those who are organizing around a political agenda. The majority of Christians and fundamentalists are not involved.
- 2) Be clear that the leaders of the Right are our primary concern. Don't demonize their followers, who are ordinary people seeking answers. Given different, persuasive information, they could be changed. Remember that they are people like ourselves; many of them are within our own families.
- 3) Be open to different ideas and analyses. Being unnecessarily argumentative, defensive, or attacking does not help sway people to join a cause. People change because their lives are touched in direct, meaningful ways.
- 4) Model the world we are working for. Be inclusive and welcoming of all in the room. Make sure every voice has a chance to be heard. How we treat people is as important as what we have to say.
- 5) Be a prophet of hope, not doom. Why would anyone want to join a group of people that does not find joy in their beliefs and work? Why would anyone want to join a group where they are not allowed to be whole and bring their complete selves to the task at hand?
- 6) Provide handout sheets and reading lists to help people with their questions. Don't present yourself as having all the answers.
- 7) Don't dramatize or exaggerate the problems we face. They are bad enough as they are, without enhancement. For example, don't make comparisons to the holocaust or slavery. Let people draw their own conclusions about what is happening—always encourage critical thinking and differing views.
- 8) Be sure that everyone gets to know each other. Remember that one of the goals is building relationships and connections.
- 9) Encourage everyone to take on some piece of work, even if it is simply talking to one or two other people—a family member, a co-worker—about their concerns. Every conversation helps to create a dialogue that opens up space for alternative views.
- 10) Thank everyone for attending. Give appreciation for them devoting their time to something so important. Re-emphasize that people create a family, a community, institutions, government, people just like us. What happens to our communities, to this country, is in our hands.