

Process Guide | Naming political assumptions

Objectives

Analysis and planning is improved by being aware of the lens through which we see the world. Our lens is influenced by our assumptions and values. Because these differ among people, different people can look at the same situation and see entirely different. The objective of this exercise is to identify the political assumptions that shape our opinions and analysis.

Time needed: 45 to 60 minutes

How it's done

Step 1

In plenary, ask the group to brainstorm the assumptions that shape their views of power, and social change. If the group is large, divide into small groups to brainstorm. To help participants develop a list of assumptions, participants may want to consider the following questions:

- What do we assume to be true about processes of social change?
- What do we assume to be true about power and conflict?
- What do we assume to be true about the political process?

Step 2

After 10-15 minutes, ask the groups in plenary to make up a shared list of assumptions they bring to the task of advocacy planning.

- What are some of the assumptions we share?
- Where are there differences?
- How do these assumptions affect our choices about what we do?

When we do this analysis, we assume that...

- History is made as these groups come into conflict and resolve conflicts.
- Some groups have power and privilege at the expense of other groups.
- This oppression is unjust, and we must stop it.
- If we want to participate actively in history, we must understand the present as well as the past.
- We can learn to interpret history, evaluate past actions, judge present situations and project the future.
- Because things are always changing, we must continually clarify what we are working for.
- To be effective, we must assess the strengths and weaknesses of our own group and those working with and against us.
- At any moment there is a particular interrelationship of economic, political, and ideological forces.
- These power relationships shift from one moment to another.
- When we plan actions, our strategy and tactic must take into account these forces and relationships.
- We can find the free space that this particular moment offers.
- We can identify and seize the moment for change!"

Source:

From Deborah Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action, A Manual for Community Groups*. Toronto: The Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, 1989.

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