So thank you everyone for joining us tonight, this is our fourth workshop of our Activism in Action series. I'm Elizabeth, she/her pronouns and Syeeda has been helping me plan these. We're so happy to have Lizzie Rutberg here tonight. She's an organizer I met this summer when I was actually working on a campaign with her and I learnt a lot with organizing with her. So, I'm very excited and I'll let her take it away.

Hi everyone, my name's Lizzie. I am really excited to be here tonight. I've been organizing professionally since summer 2018 where I got my first job on the 'Yes on 3' campaign for transgender equality. I've been bumping around Massachusetts politics ever since and spent last year working with Lizzie on the campaign to reelect our boy senator Ed Markey.

So really excited to bring what I’ve learned from organizing into this space and I hope that you find it fun and interesting.

So yeah, tonight's agenda, I'm going to introduce a case study that I'm going to be using throughout this presentation which is the Massachusetts 2018 Yes on 3 campaign for transgender equality where I got my start and learnt how to organize. We're going to talk about the personal story a little bit and how important that is to this work. We're going to talk about relational organizing, why we do it, how to do it, having one on one meetings with your friends and then a little bit over about phone-banking canvassing conversations. We're going to end having practiced the hard task.

So yeah, introducing the Yes on 3 campaign, this to me is kind of the gold standard of
field organizing. It was really incredible. This is where I learned how to organize and where I

came up. So, the issue of this, this was a statewide ballot question, like repair or

cam choice was last cycle. The issue was whether to uphold or to repeal

a 2016 law granting transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming people legal protections

against harassment and discrimination in public spaces. Which includes public restrooms but also

libraries, public transportation, grocery stores, hospitals, everything pretty much.

I joined this campaign in fall 2017, I got street canvassed in Davis Square. Someone was like hey,

your human rights are going to be up for a statewide vote in 14 months, I was like,

"Oh, shit, I better do something about that one." And the field strategy of this campaign

was rooted in deep canvassing. What this is is having long meaningful conversations with

others where we dig in to their values, their experiences, their feelings around trans people,

build a real relationship empathy with everyone we talk to and use that empathy

to try to move people towards a more accepting position of trans people.

The reason we decided to do it this way with that deep canvassing

is we looked at the Hero Initiative in Houston, Texas, this was a citywide ballot campaign about

protections in public spaces for all kinds of minority groups and not just transgender people.

That issue had been pooling at around 60% and then opposition managed to boil it down to like,

this will put trans women or men and they're going to go in women's bathrooms and attack your kids

and then support for the issue plunged 20 points in two weeks, and then we lost.
So we needed to inoculate enough voters against this messaging by having deep canvassing conversations with them where we would actively introduce this messaging in the conversation and ask them how they felt about it, how they reacted and then work through those complicated feelings.

We needed to have enough of these conversations and inoculate enough voters to create a buffer against the effect of that negative advertising which inevitably would be used here as well.

We needed to have 100,000 deep canvassing conversations with voters and their persuadable middle of Massachusetts voter block, and we did it. So that's the campaign that I'm going to be talking about throughout the rest of this presentation.

So, to start with, why we organize. The thing that undergirds all effective organizing, the thing that you need to do to be an effective organizer is to know yourself and to know why you're doing what you're doing. What does this issue or this candidate mean to you and what is it going to mean to the people around you that you're going to be asking for help?

Organizing is about asking people to join your cause, take an action with you. People take actions because they want to, because they feel that it's in their enlightened self-interest to do that.

So it's up to you to build an emotional connection with someone and use that connection to make them feel like they want to join you.

To do that, you have to know why you're in it yourself and you need to be able to communicate...
07:26 why you're in this fight. You can do that with your own personal story.

07:34 So a story that I like to tell about Yes on 3 is the reason that campaign felt so important to me,

07:43 besides the fact that I'm a trans woman myself, is I think about a friend of mine from high school

07:55 who's trans. She still goes by her birth name because she's closeted, but she once told me that

08:03 if she had a choice she would go by Lindsay. So, Lindsay told me just before we all graduated

08:13 that she was trans and she was really scared about that because her family didn't accept her.

08:27 This is central Massachusetts, 2015. So, it's a pretty hostile social context for trans people.

08:39 We got pretty close in those last couple of weeks before graduating.

08:47 At one point in some grad party, she was opening up to us and telling us that

08:57 she was having a hard time literally making it from one day to the next,

09:04 because she had to stay in the closet. So, what this campaign was about was making Massachusetts

09:15 a place where she could feel safe being herself and living the way that she needed to live.

09:25 If we won, it would bring her one step closer to being able to do that. And if we lost,

09:36 she would go her whole life knowing that her state doesn't want her to be safe in public.

09:46 That's why I did all the things that I did on that campaign.

09:53 I heard countless similar stories from volunteers who were trans themselves or their partner was,

09:58 or their child or their best friend and we were able to build powerful working relationships

10:05 with each other around our shared love for the trans people in our lives.

10:18 Not to be corny, but that love is literally what
10:23 powered our field team to do all of the insanely difficult things that we did.

10:33 So anyone else here who can tell a story about a specific point or event in your life, which made you want to start organizing, or which drew you to this work? A specific thing that happened to you or someone you love that makes you want to do this and like throw down for justice?

11:01 [Finn] I can share a quick little personal story. So, in my local town, there's a school committee race coming up and I'm not really involved in local politics or any of that, but someone I know who's a pretty progressive candidate, who really supports safe free opening for schools in my town has this whole thing about, we have a logo that’s really outdated and really offensive. It's an Indian head. It's just really racist and it's not appropriate to have as a school mascot. There's this whole town wide debate. And there’s a string of candidates running against him trying to keep this head while he's trying to remove it. It's not that of a personal thing, but for me, it's like, this is the town I grew up in. This is the school I went to. I really care about it and I want it to be a strong foot forward and I want it to be a good welcoming town and not to have these values that don't match what the people think.

12:00 I really didn't want to join this campaign, but I kind of felt morally called to do it and that I need to stick up and join this campaign and help him win so that we can move my town forward.

12:31 [Rutberg] Yeah, absolutely. That's your home, right? You don't want your home to be like a shitty racist place to people. That’s important. I mean, it's important on a personal level. That's kind of how that self-interest works. Anyone else have like a quick story?
I could share one too. I think just a little bit of background of that. I'm an immigrant, like I'm a BOC person and I always kind of thought, like I didn't really experience racism or it was so slight that I didn't want to admit it. But when I was doing my college interviews with Stanford and Yale and some of the comments I got from those, you're not like other Asians or you have a personality and it was like backhanded compliments, you know? So that summer before freshman year of college, I ended up running like a workshop to teach young girls about the type of racism that they could experience and how to deal with it and what different sectors they could experience it in. Because I think I hid from myself for so long that I was like, other people should realize that this is very common and it's okay to let it out.

Yeah. That's sort of a way that you were able to help other younger people protect themselves. Well, that's, that's really cool. So yeah, in organizing, your story and sharing things that can be honestly personal and vulnerable, is one of your greatest tools as you talk to voters and would be volunteers on the campaign. So, encourage you all to think about what are those events for you? What are the things in your head, heart and gut, which drive you to do this kind of work and how to communicate that?

So now a little bit about relational organizing. Starting with people you know, is the best way to organize. This is a pillar of what made our field program on
the Markey campaign so strong. It was our most effective recruitment tactic during Yes on 3

and especially in non-electoral forms of organizing, this is really central. So

what do you think are some of the advantages of starting by reaching out to people that you know?

I think one thing you're just really comfortable with them, so you talk to them about anything,

why not talk about an issue that you really care about with them?

It's a way to expand, to deepen your relationship with them.

There are people you care about, who care about you, people who

probably have the same values as you, hopefully. So, people who are already kind of predisposed

to care about the same kind of issues that you care about. Anything else come to mind?

I mean, they're more likely to listen to what you have
to say than just some random person on the street.

Yeah, 100%. They trust you. And also, if you spent two hours calling your friends versus
two hours calling strangers, your friends are way more likely to actually pick up the phone

and even talk to you to begin with. So, it’s more conversations, it's better conversations

and a lot more organizing potential. During Yes on 3,

I relational organized my hometown of Holliston in central Mass for the campaign. I brought together

my mom who is the mother of a trans person, so that’s why she cared about this. And another

band mom named Leslie who also is a mom of trans kid. Our band teacher, Sean, who's a trans man
himself and Lisa our sort of local democratic committee champion. Got together, just shared our

feelings and frustrations and fears for a little while and then made a plan to act and stuck to it.

They hosted weekly phone banks for probably like the least six or seven

and then collected postcards and had a big visual presence at our fall annual celebrate Holliston

parade/booth thing in the park and it got us a lot of identified supporters. It

showed that visible presence of Holliston for Yes on 3. And then we won Holliston by a

significantly larger margin than we did statewide. They did that because I knew them and I was able
to just call them up and be like, "Hey mom, hey Leslie, hey Sean." And it was great.

So just to stick with the theme of trans rights campaign, who in your life can you think of

who would want to be part of a campaign for trans rights? If you were an organizer for Yes On 3,

who in your life, would you think of to recap to?

I would reach out to my work team most likely because I work in an organization that's

filled with a lot of people from the LGBTQ+ community. And they're all working in activism

and organizing. So, I know they would do something or at least helping me find people who could help.

Yeah. That sounds like a great crew. Anyone else just like a specific individual in

your life that you would want to reach out to, if you were on this kind of campaign?

I have a friend who's non-binary, so they would really feel passionate about this issue and I know they really care about it. So, I would definitely recruit them.
20:50 [Rutberg] Yeah. Real good choice. So, you've got your list of, of people in your life that you
21:01 would want to recruit for this. You'd think about, do they have the ability to help out?
21:06 Do they have the belief in your same sense of values and do you have their contact info?
21:14 Then once you have your list, you reach out to them and you ask them for help.
21:20 This could look like a few things. It could look like you might ask for their vote.
21:28 You might ask them to take on a volunteer shift with the campaign,
21:36 or you might want to plan something more in-depth with them. If you wanted to get like
21:43 a Suffolk for Yes on 3 team off the ground, for instance.
21:51 If you have something more in-depth in mind, you’ll want to have a one-on-one with them. It's
21:58 in the title of the slide, a one-on-one is one of the fundamental tools of all kinds of
organizing.
22:09 Not just about for all campaigns labor campaigns, union, whatever you're putting together,
22:18 you're probably having one on months. What this is is two people make a specific
22:29 time to intentionally sit down together, talk about a campaign. You build an emotional
22:37 connection from another specific issue. Once that connection is made, you make a plan,
22:46 you make commitments to each other to do something about this thing you care about,
22:51 and then you commit to following up with each other to make sure it happens.
22:56 More on how this goes right in the middle. So yeah, this diagram is a sort of a map of
roughly
23:08 how a one-on-one goes. They typically last around 40 to 60 minutes.
23:17 I like long one-on-ones. I like to take my time with them and really vibe with the person.
23:26 You reach out to them like, Hey, I'm on this campaign, I would really love your help with it.
Can we find a time to sit down together and talk about it? You get there, you sit down.

The first 50% or so roughly, you spend getting to know them better.

Why do they care about this? What experiences have they had in life that has fed into that feeling for them? What kind of organizing have they done before, what are their expectations? What are their hopes, doubts questions and their personal story behind what makes this something they want to do?

This is also a place where you want to be vulnerable yourself. What's your story? What feelings are driving you to do this? Then after you've shared a little bit with each other, the rest of the conversation goes by way easier. So, don't skip this.

Can I ask a question, Lizzie?

Sure.

So one-on-ones, some people might say they're very time-intensive,

there's a lot that you have to invest.

What's the advantage to doing a one-on-one if the trick is to try to get as many people voting for whatever it is you're trying to get them to vote for? This seems like kind of a more drawn out.

I'm being a little provocative in the way that I’m asking the question, but that seems a little bit more of a drawn out process. So, what's the advantage? What do we gain by doing one-on-one?

Great question. You could get an organizing partner. Say it's February, election's in November, you're putting together a Suffolk for Yes on 3 organization.

If you try to do it yourself, you're going to burn out in three weeks and not get anywhere.
So, you need someone, you need comrades. It’s hard to have a relationship with someone where you can trust each other and rely on each other and be accountable to each other, without doing this kind of intensive, intentional relationship building.

So yeah, if you just needed to get someone to vote for something, you might not want to have a one-on-one with them. But if you are working on a project that feels big, bigger than you can handle and you need friends to help you with it, this is what you do. Great question.


[Rutberg] So the 30 to 45-minute mark are sort of roughly the campaign overview. What's going on, what's the context of the campaign, what’s the fields and what's the strategy so far?

What's the goals, what's the challenges. What is the specific thing that you need help with?

Then the last 15 minutes, you're making a plan for action. This is where you lean on that connection you've established, to make commitments to each other, to do something, to take action and make a specific plan to follow up with each other afterwards. Whether that's let's check in again same time next week or something like that.

There's definitely more to it, but this is the shorter version of how a one-on-one goes. So all of that was a little more, I don’t know, abstract conceptual, more high level thinking. Here is something more straightforward. This is the phone banking, the canvassing, the voter outreach, whatever conversation. It means are you in a campaign by having a shit ton of these? No matter what kind of campaign you're on, you are reaching out to people
and asking them for something. You want to know what you're going to ask them for before you call them or knock their door, whatever. So, what are some things that a campaign needs that you might be asking for when you reach out to random voters or friends?

Volunteers.

[Rutberg] Yes, campaigns need volunteer shifts. You might be asked for public here shifts.

What are some other things campaigns need?

[Rahman] I would say like maybe social media support, which is a little easier to gain.

[Rutberg] Mm-hmm. That's something you might find yourself asking for as well.

What else do campaigns need? Something in the chat. Money,

campaigns need money. They need lots of money. And what's something else that they need?

Something else that campaigns need? They need votes. Yeah, so volunteer shifts, money and votes are probably the big three things you will probably be asking people for when you call them.

I've done a little bit of asking for money. I've done a lot more asking for votes and volunteer shifts. So yeah, and during Yes on 3, we had that this deep canvassing conversation, right?

Where the ask is a little less straightforward. The ask is, will you dig into your own feelings and do the emotional work that you need to do in order to support trans people enough to vote yes on question three? If that makes sense.

Then we would also call people and ask them for volunteer shifts over and over again.

No matter what you're asked for though, the basic conversation or emotional arc or logic of the conversation is the same. You want to build an emotional connection
with the person you're talking to, around the issue you're working around

with curiosity, with vulnerability. You apply urgency to the situation

by you need their help. Then you make a hard ask, which we're going to get into very shortly.

But first, why do we want to be curious

with people? Why do we want to be curious and vulnerable when we ask someone for help?

[Rahman] To connect with them? Because I think

without kind of having your story out there, they might not even want to listen to you or understand

where you're coming from or why it's important that you listen or act on this thing.

Yeah. You want to open up space for them to share about themselves. I've definitely

heard a lot of powerful, surprising stories when I ask people why people why during Yes on 3.

And definitely connected with people by telling them what was in it for me.

Then for the urgency, what are some things that you could do like ramp up the urgency in a call

and may someone really feel like they needed to do the thing that you're going to ask them to do?

In the chat Mark says, tell them the story. Absolutely. Lizzie, did you have something too?

[Finn] I was going to say put a deadline on it and make it time sensitive,

that it needs to happen within this much time, so they feel pressure to actually do it.

Absolutely. And elections are great for that.

You can be like, hey election's in six days, when can you phonebank citing,

polls that suggest that you're tight or in a tight race. Even if you have to massage the
truth a little tiny bit. In Yes on 3, it would be whoop, sorry. Yes on 3, it would be like,

our opponents are going to put out this messaging and our support is really going to drop

unless we have enough of these conversations. Can you have these conversations with us? Or

like it's in two weeks, can you join us? Move them from like,

I care about this issue to, I want to take a specific action.

Then we're going to talk about the qualities of hard ask right now. A hard ask is specific.

It is uncompromising, unapologetic. It is tied to someone's core values and motivations.

So we're going to dig a little more into the hard ask and we're going to start

with an example of a very weak ask. Here is an example of a very weak ask. (Music)

So, "Hey, I just met you and this is crazy, but here's my number, so call me maybe."

From the iconic song "Call Me Maybe" by probably Carly Rae Jepsen. What makes that such a weak ask?

For starters it says call me maybe. It's not like a definite,

no you're going to call me, it's Oh, well, maybe.

For starters it says call me maybe? Right. It's like call me maybe?

That's weak as hell. Yeah, it's not assertive enough. Anything else you can identify?

It also starts off with all of this stuff about, Oh, this is totally crazy for me to ask you

and saying that makes it sound like it's good to say no to it.

[Right. She's literally giving out excuses

and reasons to say no. Not even making a person come up with their own excuses.

Then also she puts like the impetus on the other person to follow up.

It's not like, can I count on you to come to the shift? And like, I'll send you all the

information you need to know. It's like, here’s my number, if you want to call me.
When you put the impetus on the other person to have to actively follow up like that, they're much less likely to do the thing. So, a good hard ask is kind of the opposite of that. It's specific. It sounds roughly like, can I count on you to come to our public education phonebank at the old South church on Monday, June 18th at 6:00 PM?

What made that better?

Finn: You gave a date and a time.

Rutberg: And the location. Easy to forget locations, because we've been organizing largely without them. But locations are important too. What else?

Rahman: You asked them a straight up yes or no question. So, they know the exact answer.

Rutberg: Yeah. Yeah. It's not like you think you might be interested or if you have time, do you think you might, or would you maybe want to? It's, are you going to be there or are you not going to be there?

What did you notice me do with my voice?

Finn: It was very assertive. It wasn't like the kind of high pitched maybe, will you come?

Rutberg: Yeah. And the specific vocal trick you can use to make your asks stronger, is to end on a down tone. To compare, can I count on you to come to our voter contact phone bank at the old South church on Monday, June 18th at 6:00 PM? Versus that I count on you to come to our voter contact phone bank at the old South church on Monday, June 18th at 6:00 PM?

That low vocal trick will make you sound a lot more authoritative, even if you don't actually feel authoritative. Then after you ask them,
39:57 It's the golden silence. You don't say anything. You put all the impetus on them
to make the decision around what their boundaries are and what they feel like they can
do?

40:15 Anything you say after that ask, will just weaken your ask.

40:23 All right, I'm about to shift into a section where we make you rehearse stuff.

40:30 But first before I do, any questions about any of this stuff so far?

40:47 Awesome. I must be a good presenter. All right. So now, you try. It's time for activity.

41:04 We're going to split you randomly into breakout rooms of two. I'm not ready, but on my
word.

41:18 You're going to practice hard asking each other for a volunteer shift. I'm going to put
the exact information and language of what you're going to ask people for in the chat.

41:47 Cool, yeah. Just take a few minutes to debrief how that went. What was it like
getting yourself to use that strong ask language and all that inflection, what was it like
to make yourself do that?

42:15 [Rahman] For me, I think it, I'm not someone that loves inconveniencing people, so that's
something that

42:25 I definitely had to learn. Especially the past year. So, James and I were definitely talking
about that and how uncomfortable it feels to say something like that and ask something
like that,

42:36 of someone knowing that they have other things going on. But I think we got there at the
end.

42:43 [Rutberg] Awesome. Yeah, the hard ask is very outside of our natural way of how we were
socialized to be

42:54 and it takes a lot of unpacking to get to a point where we're able to do it. So, I'm
glad you were able to work through together. Anyone else have something they want to
share?
43:09 [Westbrook] I'll share. One of the things, I was linked up with Mark and we actually never got to the hard ask because we were kind of on the connecting phase. 10 minutes is a short period of time of course, and I know this is a workshop to practice but it kind of occurred to me how much easier the hard ask would probably be if we had more rapport that was built up over some time. Even though we didn't get to the hard ask, I think that this experience kind of highlighted for me how important that connection piece is and not to jump too fast to the hard ask. Right.

43:48 [Rutberg] Yeah. 10,000%. Having that, even if it's just like a couple sentences from each side, having the chance to build even a little bit of relationship with the other person makes it feel so much easier if we'd ask them to do stuff.

44:04 Any time for one last share and then we probably got to go?

44:22 [Finn] It was good to practice because I know I phone banked before and you get very nervous when you're asking someone and then your immediate gut reaction is to be like, Oh, well it's fine if you don't. So actually, taking the time to walk through it and be like, all right, if this was real, this is how I would do it. This is how I would kind of stick to my gun and be like, can you come? And really work on being that assertiveness, because I think when you're thrown really into it, you're a lot more nervous and you tend to be a lot more timid.

44:58 [Rutberg] Yeah. Yeah. It helps to just literally just drill it over and over again.


45:15 is now 8:00 PM, so you've got to go, I won't be keeping you anymore.

45:22 [Finn] Thank you so much, Lizzie for coming and leading with us.
45:25 We really appreciate it. Again, thank you for everyone who came. So, we have, I think left

45:34 James and Mark. So, we will be in touch about a gift card to see who will win that. So, thank you so much for joining us. And then two weeks from now, we have our fifth event on March 31st at seven. It's all about how to contact your local officials. So we hope you guys can join us for that one. So, thank you again and everyone have a great night.


46:10 Thank you.