

# OCCUPY Sandy Field Orientation

## TRAINING AGENDA

November, 2012

### 1. Opening / Context

- 1a. Introductions
- 1b. Introduce the Training
- 1c. Occupy Sandy

### 2. What we're doing and why

- 2a. Why are we here?
- 2b. Where are we going?
- 2c. What do people in those communities need?
- 2d. What are we trying to do?

### 3. Principles in action

- 3a. Confronting privilege in our work
- 3b. Recognizing local leadership
- 3c. Respecting people's survival behaviors
- 3d. Redefining efficiency and taking our time
- 3e. Taking care of ourselves and each other

*#s 1-3 of the training can apply relatively well to most of our training contexts*

*#s 4-6 are meant to be tailored to and written by specific sites and specific roles/tasks*

### 4. Specific Skills and Tools

*(To be written on site)*

### 5. Role Plays

- 4a. Set Up the Role Play
- 4b. Do the Role Play
- 4c. Debrief the Role Play

### 6. Get going

- 5a. Nuts and Bolts
- 5b. Things You Can Do on the Car Ride
- 5c. Break them into Car Groups
- 5d. Get point person volunteers
- 5e. Recruit people to come back again
- 5f. Hotline numbers

# OCCUPY Sandy Field Orientation

## TRAINING CURRICULUM

November, 2012

### 1. OPENING / CONTEXT

#### 1a. Introductions

- Welcome people
- Introduce yourself
- Ask people to just introduce themselves to the couple of people they're sitting next to.

#### 1b. Introduce the Training

- Explain what this training is for
  - Setting a context for the work we're going to be doing
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (depends on what the training is for and when they will be going out)
- Explain how this training will run
  - We will stop often to ask for questions and concerns
  - These are just guidelines to get us thinking, not answers
  - It will be fast, but tell us to stop or be loud or anything you need

#### 1c. Occupy Sandy:

We're providing people-to-people relief. We're based on the principles of **Anti-Oppression** and **Mutual Aid**. Both of these principles have both external and internal dimensions.

#### **Anti-Oppression:**

- On an external level: We're dealing with actual systems of oppression that frame the values and institutions that affect our lives. It's not just that people aren't nice to each other, we are dealing with actual systems.
- On an internal level: Those systems structure the way we behave.
- We oppose those systems both externally and internally, meaning that we are building a movement to fight the systems, while behaving here in a way that is anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist.

**Mutual Aid:**

- Externally: We are people who have been affected by Hurricane Sandy in a variety of ways, and are offering people-to-people support to help communities rebuild themselves. It's not about charity, it's about social justice.
- Internally: We want to practice that here, by being good to each other, taking care of ourselves and the people around us, etc.

## 2. WHAT WE'RE DOING AND WHY

### 2a. Why are we here?

- PERSONAL: On a personal level, we're here for a variety of reasons, and each of us have a different story. We have all been affected in one way or another.
  - Ask people to raise their hands if they are comfortable, and to look at each other:
    - (Note: This is to give the trainer an idea of the group, but also to get the group involved – everyone will raise their hands at one point or another and the point is that everyone is somehow connected to this thing or they wouldn't be here).
      - If you experienced a power outage during the hurricane
      - If you know someone who did
      - If you were flooded
      - If you know someone who was
      - If you missed work
      - If you know someone who did
      - If you lost a job or a home
      - If you know someone who did
      - If you helped friends or family through the hurricane or its aftermath
      - If you've ever done volunteer work
      - If you've ever done community organizing
      - If you've ever been an activist
      - If you've had any previous experience with Occupy.
  - It's important to respect the different experiences and ways people got here.
  - We are all connected to this in some way
- POLITICAL: We're in the middle of a crisis.
  - On the surface, we are dealing with the aftermath of a massive hurricane that materially damaged the lives of thousands of people in the NYC area. It has left people hungry, homeless, cold, angry, isolated, and frightened.
  - But the hurricane is more than it seems. Hurricane Sandy is an expression of erratic weather conditions, which are a product of climate change, which is driven by a handful of enormous multinational fossil fuel corporations who have a disproportionate say over the political, economic, and social institutions that govern our lives.
    - So the immediate crisis is a hurricane, but it's connected to a much broader crisis, caused by a system.
  - That's not all. This crisis lands on top of already existing crises. The communities most affected by Hurricane Sandy are the same ones with the highest rates of unemployment and mass incarceration, the ones least likely to receive relief, the ones whose public institutions are being taken away.
  - That's also part of a system. For example, austerity is a process by which public

institutions (schools, hospitals, aids clinics, etc.) are cut to pieces in order to provide tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, who then privatize those institutions and profit from that. That's a process of neoliberal capitalism.

- So this immediate crisis (the hurricane) is connected to a much broader crisis (climate change), which is caused by systemic realities, on top of a whole other set of crises caused by systems.
- We don't have to agree on all of the details of all of this (you can talk about it in your long car rides...), but these are important things to think about. Because there are a variety of crises and systems at play here, this work is inherently political.

## 2b. Where are we going?

- We're going to Staten Island, the Rockaways and Coney Island
- Most of these communities are working class, low-income, mainly communities of color. Many of them are Black communities, Latino communities and some Eastern European immigrant communities.
- Patterns (like race, class, etc.) are important, but we shouldn't assume things. Communities are diverse, just like this group.
- People have been living without power for almost two weeks. Many people without light, heat, running water, warm water, stoves, etc. Elevators aren't working. People are missing work or losing jobs (a large percentage of the US population is less than 3 paychecks away from being homeless...). Some are with families, some are elderly, disabled, etc.

## 2c. What do people in those communities need?

- As we discussed earlier, the crisis is deep and broad. Because of that, needs are deep and broad as well. People need a diverse set of things, from a blanket and a hug to jobs and a government that represents them. It's a lot.
- You can't meet all those needs, and it's not your role to do so. Admit that and don't be handicapped by the scale of the problem
- ZOOMING IN:
  - **Material Support:** Blankets, Food, Water, Medical supplies, Batteries,
  - § There are other, more diverse needs as well. Baby clothes, pampers, jackets, socks, etc.
  - **Emotional/Psychological Support:** People need human contact, emotional support, someone to listen.

§ Being trapped in a blacked out apartment without power for 13 days can take its toll. Some people have lost jobs, lost homes, lost family members. They need people to talk to, human interaction. That is not peripheral; it's a different kind of material need.

○ **Long-term Support:** People need support in rebuilding their communities and preparing to fight for them.

§ The relief effort will change soon, but that doesn't mean the many crises at play here will end. Disaster capitalist developers who have always wanted to knock down those projects and turn them into condos are getting ready to try to do just that, the austerity measures this city and others impose every year are still being prepared. This is the beginning of a long, essential climate justice movement. People need support in taking their communities back.

## 2d. What are we trying to do?

· Broadly speaking, we are going to try to meet as many of those needs as we can, with an understanding that our abilities are limited and that we are supporting local work whenever and wherever we can.

· We want to **meet those material needs**, which is why many of you will be going out to assess needs and deliver goods.

· We want to **meet emotional/psychological needs**, which is why you will take your time when you are out in the field and give people the attention they need.

· We want to **meet long-term organizing needs**, so we need to do our work in a way that's constantly looking to support communities in liberating themselves, and supporting local leaders who emerge to lead those processes.

### **3. PRINCIPLES IN ACTION**

#### **3a. Confronting Privilege in our work**

- We are going to working class/poor communities, in many cases communities of color. We do not all share that experience.
- Many of us also do not come from those specific places.
- We don't want to boil this group down or over generalize. We come from different backgrounds and experience, have different levels of access to power. Have suffered different physical, psychological, or emotional damage in this crisis.
- That being said, we all have some level of privilege, even if just by merit of being in a space that has resources and being functional enough to try to bring those resources to other communities.
- We need to think about our privilege and counter it because:
  - If we don't, we run the risk of recreating social patterns and hierarchies we are trying to defeat, systems that are asking us to participate in perpetuating them.
  - It will help us remember to respect people on the ground and honor their experience
  - We are going to support people in taking their own communities back ultimately, so their wisdom, their needs, their desires need to be front and center, not ours.
- We are not talking about privilege in order to feel guilty
  - These systems are bigger than us.
  - You're no good to anyone if your guilt handicaps you. That's what people with power want.

#### **3b. Recognizing local leadership**

- We're not there to "help" or "save" people; we're there to support people in their own recovery and resistance.
- Assume that there already is local and organic leadership in place
  - In crises, people change their patterns and behaviors in order to support each other, and leaders emerge to support others.
  - In many communities, there were already leaders – people with social networks, practical skills, and longstanding roots in the community.
  - In some cases there are also local organizations, or community organizations that have come there to do relief work.
- Our role is to support these leaders, and leave a lot of space for new ones to emerge. That means asking a lot of questions, considering oneself an ally, remember that we will go home at the end of the day and that ultimately it is these people who will be the leaders of emerging frontline communities in the coming climate justice battles.

#### **3c. Respecting People's Survival Behaviors**

- Being stuck in a blacked out high rise apartment for two weeks, or losing a job or a home, or being in many of the crisis situations people are in right now, cause a lot of trauma, and force people to behave in certain ways to meet their basic needs.

- I act differently from you, and I also act differently from my usual self after two weeks under those conditions.
- Respect people's needs to do what they have to do to survive.
  - For example, "looting" is a racialized term. It's only used to refer to working class communities of color, and that's because of the systems in place. We don't use that language.
  - Step back before judging people's behavior.
  - That being said, it's not carte blanche. People are entitled to their safety and so are you. Not all behavior is acceptable, so be real. But take a step back and remember your place and your role.
- You are not there to police a community, or force people to participate in institutions they don't want to be a part of
  - Many people have had negative experiences with government bureaucracies
- § There are all sorts of reasons people might not want the police to intervene in their affairs, or might not want to go to a hospital.
- § People might have records, or be undocumented, or otherwise traumatized.
- § You are not there to solve all of these crises, but to support people and create options.

### **3d. Redefining Efficiency and taking our time**

- We don't want to abandon efficiency, we want to redefine it and broaden it.
- A narrow sense of efficiency might compel us to take as little time as possible in each conversation or canvassing mission, because it saves time. But that doesn't actually achieve our goals.
- If our goals are to have a real understanding of people's needs, directly meet people's needs of providing human contact, and provide space for community and movement building, that it's actually far more efficient to take our time
  - Introduce yourself, open up space for conversation. This will go a long way in establishing trust and forming relationships.
  - Ask questions, and mainly listen. People know what they need and what they want.
  - Be calming. People have gone through a lot of trauma, and also have a lot of baggage about people coming into their communities and dumping things on them.
- § Offer material support, but don't make promises. You are part of a vast network, and you don't necessarily have all of the material goods in your pockets, you don't necessarily control when the rides go out. Be real about that, people will appreciate honesty.

### **3e. Taking Care of Ourselves and Each Other**

- Take care of yourselves and each other.
- You are important, this group is important.
- Drink water, eat meals, and take breaks.
- We don't need martyrs, and you're no good to anyone if you burn out after a day. This is a long-term movement process.
- Debrief what you learn. It will help you and others do tMake sure to report back to us. It

will help us make the trainings better. Things are changing and we need to keep things updated. Keep us informed.

- Have fun!

#### **4. SPECIFIC SKILLS AND TOOLS**

- **NOTE: This part of the training should be written by different sites and for different roles. The above is the general political education and practical prep that people need to understand their context and take on the basic skills and tips they will need to be effective and sensitive. The rest needs to be tailored to specific needs of different hubs and tasks.**

## **5. ROLE-PLAY**

**NOTE: See note from #4 above.**

**A more generic role play might be:**

### **5a. Set Up the Role Play**

§ Let's try a role play. Who wants to try out knocking on a door? (Choose a volunteer.)

§ The trainer should role-play the person whose door is being knocked on.

### **5b. Do the Role Play**

Some things to do in the role play:

§ Act suspicious of them for knocking on your door.

§ Ask about organization. Say things like I don't know you. I don't trust you.

§ Talk about the conditions: It's cold. The powers been out. It's been days. Nobody's come out here.

End the role play after a couple minutes. .

### **5c. Debrief the Role Play**

§ Ask the group what they thought worked or didn't work in the role play. Use this to repeat points of advice from above.

§ Give them the how-to's handout if you have it!

## 6. GET GOING

### 6a. Nuts and Bolts

- People need hotline numbers, hub contacts, tasks, roles, point people, forms, guidelines, timelines, etc.
- These are specific to the different sites and different roles being trained for.

### 6b. Things You can Do on the Car Ride

#### On Your Way There

- Introduce yourselves, and get to know each other.
- Share contact information.
- Role play outreach, and give each other feedback. Some

#### possible scenarios:

- A person who is very nervous because s/he hasn't had her anxiety medication. S/he is nervous about talking with you and upset about how cold it's getting. S/he is nervous about sharing any information.
- An older person who hasn't talked with anyone in a week. S/he is running low on food, and she can't move well enough to leave her house for more. His/her neighbor has been checking on him/her and helping with food. S/he is worried about her/his daughter who lives in Staten Island.

#### On Your Way Back

- Introduce yourselves, and get to know each other (if it's a different car of people)
- Share contact information.
- Debrief your experiences doing outreach. Talk about what worked, and what didn't work. Talk about how you're feeling and what kind of support you need. Help each other strategize on how to get that support. Talk about any feedback you can give to the trainers or coordinators to improve our work together.
- Make a plan to come back, and take on more roles. We are all leaders.

### 6c. Break them into Car Groups

- Ask: Who can drive?
- Then go to dispatch with those numbers. Ask how many people they need where.
- Go back to the group with that information. Ask for x number of volunteers to go with each driver.

### 6d. Get point person volunteers

- Ask: Who can be the point person for each car?
- These people are expected to communicate with the hub and report back to the

canvassing hotline afterwards.

- Have them circle their names on the sign-up sheet, and write in their driver's names.

### **6e. Recruit people to come back again**

- Ask: Who wants to come back and help other people do this later? Run trainings and so on...
- Have them star their names on the sign-up sheet.

### **6f. Make sure they have the hotline numbers.**

§ You can call a hotline if you need to talk or have information to share.

**Main hotline: 347 - 770-4520** or [Sandy520clinton@gmail.com](mailto:Sandy520clinton@gmail.com)

- This hotline is a line for general communications and dispatching information.
- There will often be a real person answering, but it may go to voicemail. Don't worry; the voicemail is being checked every 5 - 10 minutes.
- You can call this number to tell us if you find a situation with desperate material needs or to give us your assessments of what's happening.
- If you want any information to get back to the training team (feedback on the orientation and so on), you can leave a message here and tell them to let us know!

**Canvass hotline: 347 699 6520**

- You can call this number if you need to debrief your experiences with canvassing. Make sure you get the support you need!