



A FILM BY
LILLY RIVLIN

DISCUSSION
GUIDE

HEATHER BOOTH: CHANGING THE WORLD

This guide is dedicated to the memory of Anne Blachman with the generous contribution from Nancy Blachman and David desJardins

www.heatherbooththefilm.com

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INTRODUCTION

USING THIS GUIDE

This Guide was created to help you use *Heather Booth: Changing the World* to engage members of your community, organization, or class in a substantive conversation about how we create a democratic society that is equitable and just. Thanks for joining in this journey, especially at this particular moment in history when hate, division, discrimination, and inequality are promoted by many of our most powerful political, religious, and corporate leaders. Welcome to the Resistance! Welcome to organizing for social change!

**"IF WE ORGANIZE, WE CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD"**



Immigration reform rally - photo by Bing Branigin

The Guide is divided into three sections:

INTRODUCTION

Information about the film and facilitation tips to help you lead a productive discussion.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Open-ended questions that help audience members share their reactions, think more deeply about the issues, and draw their own conclusions. These end with a section of prompts designed as activities. To encourage the inclusion of planning action steps as an integral part of your screening event, there is also a section about brainstorming.

BACKGROUND

Information about people in the film, a timeline to help you recall key events mentioned, and a list of resources that you can use for your own preparation and/or share with participants.

CREDITS

This guide was written by Faith Rogow, InsightersEducation.com.

HEATHER BOOTH: CHANGING THE WORLD DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE FILM

Heather Booth: Changing the World (62 min.) is an inspiring examination of how social change happens. Heather Booth may be the most influential American political activist you've never heard of. Tracing her remarkable career, from the height of the Civil Rights movement through the decades that followed, the documentary explores many of the pivotal moments and issues in progressive social change movements over the last fifty years: the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, the founding of the JANE Underground, opposition to the war in Vietnam, second wave feminism's fight for women's equality, struggles for environmental protection, the election of Chicago's first Black mayor, the campaign for financial reform efforts and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and so much more.

Acclaimed filmmaker, Lilly Rivlin blends archival and contemporary footage with interviews of close friends, clients, political colleagues, students and others to help audiences understand how one dedicated person, willing to organize allies and transform clear vision into concrete action, can achieve changes that make the world a more just place for everyone. At a time when civil and women's rights are under attack, and when many are wondering how to make their voices heard, this documentary may be a reassuring and moving look at how to make a difference.

A NOTE FROM FILMMAKER LILLY RIVLIN



Heather Booth: Changing the World, is the third in my trilogy about activist women and the times they live in. As I reflect on my filmmaking career, and review the films I have made, clearly, I make films about parts of me. As a childless woman, I understand by now, that these films are all my children, and that I have gone through birth pangs for each film. *Grace* was not such a difficult birth because *Grace* was totally there for the audience to love, just as they have loved her *Short Stories*. Esther Broner, was a relatively easy birth, mainly because her book *A Weave of Women* and the women of the Feminist Seder, were all there to support me.

Heather Booth was a more difficult work because her art is Organizing and as Heather Booth said to me in our initial conversation, “organizing is boring” (which means a lot of tedious work). But more to the point, though I had total access to Booth, I did not have access to the behind the scenes meetings with her clients, so I had to find creative ways of telling the story.

Telling the story of Organizing in America through Heather Booth is a journey through the Progressive Movement. In addition to which, it is bringing to film the lessons Heather learned through 50 years of organizing. Her legacy is the establishing and ongoing work of The Midwest Academy. Most recently, I met a longtime activist and told her that I just finished a film about Heather Booth. “Do you know what the young people say about her? I shook my head. “She’s no joke,” she said and smiled.

FACILITATION TIPS

As a discussion facilitator, your leadership can model the values of social justice, or it can undermine them. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Discussions aren't about judging the people in the film; they're about helping participants use the insights they gain from viewing the film to improve their own lives.
- Dialogue is different than debate. In a debate people stake out positions and defend them in an attempt to convince others that they are right. In contrast, a dialogue is about exchanging ideas in order to learn from one another. This means actively listening, as well as talking.
- The film is the text. It's the one sure thing that everyone in the room has in common. Be mindful about bringing in other information. It can put you in the position of "expert" rather than facilitator.
- Take care not to let your beliefs overshadow those of audience members by unintentionally implying that they should agree with everything in the film or everything you say. This is especially important if the discussion includes people who have been silenced in their families or communities.
- Everyone interprets through the lens of their own experience, so don't expect everyone to have the same reaction to the film. In cases where disagreements arise, invite explanations of evidence or reasoning.
- When we feel passionately about an issue, it's tempting to want to tell people what to think, but the learning will be much deeper if you allow people to arrive at their own conclusions. Take care to offer open-ended, rather than leading questions.
- Structure the conversation to ensure that everyone who wants to speak has a chance to be heard (e.g., incorporate go-rounds, breakout groups, or pair and share).
- Allow participants to set the agenda by discussing the topics most important to them, which may or may not be the topics most important to you.
- Most people are swayed more by how you make them feel than what you make them think. Consider what you'll do to make people feel welcome, visible, and appreciated.
- Consider leaving time to plan action steps, and be prepared to help facilitate the action(s) that participants choose. Action is the counterbalance to cynicism and can prevent a discussion from devolving into a gripe session.



DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Conversations about the film will likely flow easily, so you probably won't need more than one or two questions to get things rolling. Choose those that best fit the interests and circumstances of your group and skip over anything that doesn't seem like a good match. The questions were crafted to meet a variety of needs, which means that some won't apply to your situation. There is no advantage to trying to cover everything or to using the questions sequentially. Let the conversation flow from the interests or concerns of the people in the room.



Rally for Climate Justice when Pope Francis came to Washington, DC 2016

OPENING THE FLOOR

These general prompts are designed to start a discussion.

- If a friend asked you what this film was about, what would you say?
- What was your major “takeaway” from what you just saw? Was there anything you heard or saw that especially “spoke truth” to you?
- In a word, how did the film make you feel?
- A year from now, what do you think you’ll remember about this film? Is there a moment in the film that is especially sticking with you?
- Was there anything in the film that surprised you?

VISIONS OF A MORE JUST SOCIETY

- According to Heather, community organizers believe that “if people come together and gain confidence in themselves because they are able to work with other people, we can build a better world.” If you knew that you could gather support from others, what would you create? What would your “better world” look like?
- Heather observes that “those in unaccountable power want to hold on to unaccountable power...” What’s the difference between “accountable” and “unaccountable” power? What would “accountable power” look like?



Women's Liberation March, 1970

- Heather speaks about having “clarity of purpose.” What’s your most pressing current goal and how will you measure success in terms of achieving it? Is your vision of success “all or nothing” (e.g., winning an election), or are mini victories possible even if the larger goal remains (temporarily) elusive? How do you suppose Heather would answer that question?
- When Bill Moyers asks Heather why she thinks she can stand up against very powerful interests, she responds, “in a David and Goliath fight we should remember that sometimes David wins.” Can you think of an example in your own life when “David” won? Thinking back, what made the victory possible?

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING IN A DEMOCRACY

- In what ways is organizing an expression of quintessential American values? In what ways does it challenge American values?

Heather quotes Alice Palmer's observation that "If you don't do politics, politics does you." What do you think that means?

- Jackie Kendall notes that in Saul Alinsky's model of community organizing, "You don't do electoral work. You organize and it doesn't matter who's in office, we organize enough power to make them do what we want." How did Heather (and others) explain their decision to engage in electoral politics? Do you find those explanations compelling? Why or why not?



You have to go through life with more than just passion for change, you need a strategy. And your plan better include voting. You see, change requires more than righteous anger; it requires a program and it requires organizing.

President Barack Obama

- Rep. Jan Schakowsky describes organizing as an essential part of the political process: "The threshold belief of organizers is that it is grassroots, ordinary people, putting pressure . . . elected officials at all levels, really, that is the key ingredient for changing policy. That without that, it really doesn't happen." What do you think would happen to American politics if there were no organizers?
- Jeff Blum says, "Democracy,' as Thomas Jefferson said, 'is a process that has to be constantly gone back to and renewed every generation.' Whenever there is progress, there will always be powerful special interests who don't really want that progress, because it constrains their ability to exert their power, usually moneyed power, and so if we're not active, they're going to be active." What would you say to the next generation to inspire them to engage in the task of renewing democracy?
- Saul Alinsky, and those who have followed in his footsteps (like many of the community organizers who appear in the film), have become special targets of far right media personalities. Why do you think that is? What is the perceived (or actual) threat posed by community organizing?
- Jackie Kendall says that community organizing is "about helping people to win real [concrete] improvements in their lives...[and] to help people to get a sense of their own power. Intentionally we don't say 'empower people' because it sounds like we have it to give...[And we work] to begin to change the relations of power." What's the difference between working to replace those at the top of existing power structures with people who support your goals, and actually changing the relations of power?

ORGANIZING TACTICS

- What do you now understand about organizing that you didn't know or weren't aware of before you saw the film?
- Heather explains that, "Organizing is 90 percent follow-up." Based on what you see in the film, what do you think she means by "follow-up" and why is it such a critical part of the job?
- Heather acknowledges that, "Part of organizing is dealing with the unexpected. It's easy for people to turn on each other...People can be angry at each other. It's easy to have misunderstandings; again, that's part of organizing." Have you ever been at meetings where people turned on each other? What happened? Can you think of any strategies that would have helped people work through those conflicts in effective and meaningful ways?



Women's March, 2017

- Joel Silberman jokes, "If you are in a meeting with Heather Booth and you have an idea, the next thing she will say to you is 'good, so you'll take charge of getting that done'...And an idea quickly becomes your responsibility." Is that approach more likely to silence people who have good ideas but not the ability or capacity to carry them out, or open up opportunities because it is based on the notion that everyone has the ability and capacity, even if they don't realize it?

ORGANIZING TACTICS

- Describing the planning for the Moral Action for Climate Justice rally, Heather says, “we do a review of the speakers, figuring out if there’s a way that we can move this to be 50 percent people of color, and 50 percent women. And it’s always a challenge to ensure that we reach those goals.” Why would it be a challenge? Why would it be important to meet that challenge? How is this type of commitment to diversity different than tokenism?
- Heather urges organizers to appeal to people’s self interest, sharing a story about working on environmental issues because her son had asthma. How often do you hear activists appealing to individual self-interest compared to attempts to persuade with academic arguments, guilt, or appeals to altruism? What do you think organizers should do when different facets of self-interest seemingly conflict (e.g., wanting cleaner air for a child with asthma but also depending on a job at an employer who pollutes)?



- When a woman who is hiding a study about childcare doesn’t show up for a scheduled meeting, Heather calls the media. What role do journalists play in achieving social change? What are the benefits and drawbacks of engaging with reporters?
- As you recall of each of the stories that Heather tells, what do you notice about how she responds to obstacles, insults, or resistance?
- What did you learn from the film about the impact of door-to-door canvassing?

COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

- The film opens with Rudy Giuliani and Sarah Palin deriding the work of community organizers. How would you explain to those who devalue or misunderstand it? What is a community organizer and why is their work important?
- How do you imagine that opponents would react to the film's depiction of Heather as an unsung hero? How would you respond to them?
- Heather says, "To be an organizer you have to love people and hate injustice." Why is "loving people" an important criterion?
- American schools often teach history by focusing on the efforts of individuals (e.g., Susan B. Anthony embodies the entire woman's suffrage movement or Martin Luther King, Jr. is the only civil rights leader that most students can name). What does Heather's experience suggest about the limitations of "hero history"? What do we miss when we learn exclusively about one or two famous people?
- Susan Oppenheimer admits that organizing is, "exhausting. It's 24/7. Because you're driven by passion and wanting to do it, it's often very difficult to balance relationships." What strategies would you offer to organizers so they could achieve some balance and take care of themselves?
- JANE was founded to meet the immediate needs of women who needed abortions. How do you decide when to focus on meeting immediate needs (perhaps reducing pressure for change as a result) and when to focus on preventative work that would eliminate the need?
- Rep. Luis Gutierrez says he learned from Heather that "if you truly believe in the candidate and your cause, when you spoke to people if they like you...if they trust you, they would vote for your candidate on Election Day." What's your reaction to hearing that people's willingness to support your cause is also about their response to you, personally, as well as their response to the cause?



Women's March with JANE banner

THE PATH TO ORGANIZING

- Heather’s brother notes that they were raised with a sense that social justice was important. What message about social justice and organizing has your family passed down to you? What are you passing on to others?
- Heather recalls that after moving from Brooklyn to Long Island, she felt like she didn’t fit in: “You know to some extent, I even think feeling insecure, and feeling that I was an outsider, is part of who I am.” Have you ever felt like an outsider? Were you surprised to hear this confident woman talk about feeling insecure? How did joining with others in community action help her overcome those feelings?
- Heather describes a pivotal moment that moved her towards activism: seeing Israel’s “Memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto had a profound effect on me. Because this was a place where people stood up and they fought back. This feeling of better to go down standing up than living on your knees...” Have you had any similar “aha” moments? What happened?

- Heather recalls being frightened and inept passing out fliers for the first time: “It was a simple task. I was just handing out fliers but I didn’t even know how to do that. I dropped them, I didn’t give one to a person, I’d get confused.” Some people might have given up at that point, consumed by self-doubt. But Heather’s takeaway was that people need training, support, and encouragement, even for simple tasks. How does the American notion of individual responsibility lead people to blame themselves – and exclusively themselves – for failure? Who perpetuates that notion and who benefits from it? How does it affect people’s inclinations to form coalitions to take action?



David, Jonathan and Heather Tobis; Heather and her two brothers, c. 1962

THE PATH TO ORGANIZING

- How does the pursuit of social justice issues, embraced by organizers like Heather, mesh with or contradict your faith tradition, spiritual beliefs, or core value system?

- Heather's parents were scared when she chose to head south to take part in Freedom Summer, but they were also proud of her decision. If a family member made a similar choice, what would you say to them?

- Jackie Kendall recalls, "I go to this picket line, and here's this woman walking around the picket line, pushing a stroller with one hand, holding a baby in the other. You know, if she can do that with two kids who are younger than mine I can do it." Why are role models important? Who are your role models?



Heather with her son, Gene Booth, at demonstration for child care, 1970

- In the training she designed, Heather includes skills and techniques for thinking strategically, i.e., "how to figure out what to do when you don't know what to do." What do you currently do when confronted with situations where you aren't sure how to proceed? How would having problem-solving strategies at your fingertips increase the likelihood that you'd risk taking the public actions and coalition building needed for organizing?

HEATHER BOOTH: CHANGING THE WORLD DISCUSSION GUIDE

ISSUES

Alice Palmer reminds us of Dr. King’s saying, “the arc of history is long but it leans toward justice.” She continues, “you have to have it in mind because you may not win on every issue but if you have connected the dots you have to see it in relation to the larger picture. As you look at the range issues that Heather tackles, how would you “connect the dots”? What’s the common thread? (If that question is too broad, pick 2-3 issues and identify the links):

- civil rights
- climate change
- consumer protection
- death penalty
- environmental protection
- financial reform
- childcare
- anti-war
- union rights
- reproductive choice
- voting rights
- LGBTQ rights
- women’s equality
- immigration



Women's March, New York, 2017

- Julian Bond asks, “Why is it that some people are so determined to keep Black people from voting on Election Day?” His answer is “because they know when we vote things change.” How would you answer his question?
- Commenting on the economic crash of 2008, Senator Elizabeth Warren observed that, “There were a lot of consumer protection laws, just no agency that would actually get out there and enforce them.” To change that, she led the charge to create the Consumer Financial Protection Board. Now that the CFPB is under attack, how would you convince someone that saving this government bureau is in their self-interest?
- What do you see as the most compelling issues today? How does your list compare to the issues addressed in the film?

LEARNING FROM HISTORY

- Heather says, “Mississippi Summer had a profound effect on me, and I think on everyone who was part of it. We saw the value of working for a goal that was much larger than ourselves; we saw you really could create change, change peoples lives, change the reality by taking action.” Why are people often energized by participating in something larger than themselves? Where do you see opportunities for that sort of inspiration today?
- Heather responds to one sexist incident by joining with the other women in the room, walking out, leaving the organization, and going “back to our towns, from wherever we came from, [to] start consciousness raising groups.” What were “consciousness raising” groups and could they be valuable today? What would the main topics of conversation be?
- What did you learn from Greg Moore’s explanation of dangling chads in Florida’s 2000 Presidential election? Why wasn’t their success at mobilizing more people to vote enough to achieve their goal?
- Heather reports that “by the time Roe v. Wade came, the women of JANE had, themselves, performed 11,000 abortions. How does that information reflect on opponents’ arguments that abortion clinics are unsafe and must therefore face increased regulation?



*Heather with Senator Elizabeth Warren; Roberta Lynch,
Illinois AFSCME Council Director in middle*

- Senator Elizabeth Warren says that, “The big financial institutions, boy, they got organized in like a nanosecond, they were spending, literally, more than a million dollars a day to lobby against the financial reforms and principally the consumer agency.” What were the strategies that ultimately led to the creation of the CFPB, despite the well-funded resistance?

WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT MAKING CHANGE?

- In Mississippi, the home of Andrew and Mary Lou Hawkins was firebombed because they brought a lawsuit asking the city of Shaw to equitably provide services to Black neighborhoods. Students trained during Freedom Summer learned from Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee workers that “if you’re caught from behind go limp: cover your head, your groin, roll up in a knot and hit the ground, head as close to your knees as possible, legs together, cause a leg sticking out can be broken with one quick stomp.” And many who dared to speak up were beaten or murdered. Since the Civil Rights campaigns of the fifties and sixties, what’s changed? What feels familiar?



Heather at 18 years old, with guitar, with Fannie Lou Hamer, Co-Chair of Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and two other friends, 1964

- How have digital technologies affected community organizing? What role is played by websites, citizen journalists, social media, trolling, bots, 24-hour news, and smart phones? Which of the capabilities are totally new and which were accomplished in different ways before the availability of digital connections? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN CAPACITIES

- How did the things you saw in the film compare to your own experiences? What was familiar and what was new?

- Rep. Luis Gutierrez says, “Everybody’s got a base, but you’ve got to grow that base in order to win and to be able to take on what seems to be impossible odds.” What/who is your current base? What specific groups and people could you reach out to expand that base?



Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D - Illinois

- Organizer Austin Belali Thompson says, “It’s the act and pursuit of justice, not necessarily the justice itself, that gives us purpose. And so the pushing of the rock up the hill, the struggles that we engage in, the small march towards a more just society – the joy comes from the pushing, the joy comes from the struggle, it comes from the moments where we meet together, where we sing together, when we face difficulties together.” Where do you find joy? How does it help sustain you in the down times?



Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D - Illinois

- Echoing the feminist slogan “the personal is political,” Rep. Jan Schakowsky says that we need to be engaged in politics “because it is about us in the most intimate ways.” Can you think of any part of your daily life that hasn’t been affected by politics, either positively or negatively? How might you use the connections you see to help others see the personal–political connections in their own lives?

UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN CAPACITIES

- Though they should have been able to expect people to act as allies, both Heather and Jo Freeman encountered sexist leaders and colleagues in their early years as organizers. Have you ever experienced or witnessed someone being silenced for their gender? Skin color? Age? Religion? Abilities? What happened? Is there anything you wish you had done differently?
- Think of the circumstances of Heather's involvement in founding various organizations and initiatives. Did she take any specific actions that you couldn't? Was there anything she did that you could see yourself doing in a similar circumstance (e.g., make a phone call, see me at end of meeting announcements, contacting news media)?

- Heather observes that organizers who don't appeal to others' self-interest, and are rejected as a result, sometimes mistake the rejection for apathy. Have you ever thought that someone was apathetic? If you re-examine the situation, is it possible that apathy was not the cause of inaction? If you assume that apathy is not the cause, how might your approach change?

- Jacky Grimshaw talks about organizing for the Harold Washington mayoral campaign at her kitchen table. Who could you gather for a conversation around your kitchen table? What would you want to talk about?



Jacky Grimshaw, Field Director for Mayor Washington campaign with Heather, Deputy Field Director, 1987



Heather at Harold Washington's mayoral campaign, Chicago

- Over the course of her career, Heather didn't just "do," she also taught others how to "do." In your community, what mechanisms exist for elders to share their skills and experience with younger activists and vice versa? What skills could you teach? What do you still want to learn and who might be able to teach you?

MEDIA, ART, & POLITICS

- How does art contribute to movements for social justice? Do you think of documentary film as art? Why or why not?
- What questions was Lilly Rivlin trying to answer in this film, and how do you know?
- What's the difference between documentary film and news? What's the difference between how a journalist and how a documentarian chooses sources? Did you find Rivlin's sources in this documentary to be credible? Why or why not?
- As you were watching the film, what emotional responses did you experience? What techniques did filmmaker Lilly Rivlin use to elicit those feelings?
- Prior to viewing, what had you learned about the events and organizations recounted in the film? How did that compare to the film's depictions? Were there events or organizations you hadn't heard about? Why do you think they aren't common knowledge?
- If you were assigned to cast a film (or draw a cartoon) depicting an organizer and you wanted to be sure that viewers would immediately know that the person was an organizer, what would they look like? Consider factors like race, age, costume, gender, hairstyle, etc. Would they look like Heather? Like you? What are the sources of our ideas about what leaders or activists look like?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

It can sometimes be hard to bring energized conversations to an end. These questions are designed to help you wrap up and segue to consideration of action steps.

- What is one thing you learned from the film (or this discussion) that you wish everybody knew? What do you think would change if everyone knew it?
- I think Heather's story is important because _____.
- One thing in the film that inspired me was _____. Now I will _____.
- If you could ask Heather one question, what would you ask? Why is that question important to you?
- As you watched, did you experience any "hmmm moments" – that is, moments that made you sit back and say, "I'm not sure about that. I need to think more about it"? What questions do you still have and where could you find answers to those questions?
- Are there points made in the film that you would like to pass on to others or embrace yourself? If yes, what are they? If not, why not?

DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These suggestions involve more than discussion. They are for situations where you have more time than a typical screening provides or you are meeting with the same group more than once.

- Austin Belali Thompson says, “Imagine a world where undocumented immigrants don’t have to fear their families being separated; imagine a world if you’re a single mother and you work full time, you don’t live in poverty; imagine a world where if you’re a young black man or woman who walks the streets, you’re not racially profiled by the police and have to live with that terror. That world is only possible if we organize, and only if we organize.”



Austin Belali, Director Youth Civic Engagement Roundtable

- Take a few minutes to imagine the world as you want it to be. What’s one step you could take this week towards creating that world?
- Look at the Midwest Academy’s Strategy Chart (find on page 31). Use it to analyze an initiative you’re currently working on.
- Use the Timeline in the Background section of the Guide to read aloud the events mentioned in the film one at a time. Ask anyone in the room who participated in the event or worked on those issues to stand and be honored. Talk about other ways to publicly appreciate the organizers who have made a difference in your community.
- Heather urges organizers to appeal to people’s self interest, sharing a story about working on environmental issues because her son had asthma: “If you had recruited me as an environmentalist and got me on the phone I would’ve said I’m washing the dishes, I’m off to another meeting, I don’t have time but I wish you luck. They would say you’re apathetic. You talk to me on the phone and you say your son Dan, he can breathe better, and I say when do I get there?”
- Choose an issue. Write or record an issue-based pitch to convince people to get active. Then re-write it to appeal to the self-interests of prospective allies.

BRAINSTORMING ACTION STEPS

Taking action can help people leave the room feeling energized and hopeful, even when conversations have been difficult or frustrating. So consider ending the event by carving out time to plan.

You might begin the process by reading aloud Heather's declaration at the end of the film:

“On November 9, 2016, we woke up to the end of a long and hostile presidential campaign, we did not anticipate the outcome. We need to build from love, justice and unity, and be agents of hope. The threatening promises that were made caused fear and anger. We will hold leaders in account. We will stand up. We will organize.”

Then invite people into the process:

1. **Brainstorm a list of possible actions.**

This can be done in small groups or with everyone together and it could include offering activists opportunities to invite people to join in existing efforts. Nothing should be excluded from the list.

2. **Help the group to narrow the list and choose a focus.**

Depending on the circumstance, you might want to lead a consensus process aimed at having everyone present commit to the same actions, or help people individually select something they are interested in pursuing.

3. **Plan concrete next steps.**

Guide the group to list steps that would help them act on their choice from Step 2. Then ask them to commit to taking at least one of those steps in the next week. Create a mechanism for everyone to report back (e.g., establish a Twitter hashtag, use the comment section of an existing blog, exchange phone numbers and assign everyone to call someone else in the room).

More detailed suggestions for facilitating action are available in the Organizers Guide on the film's website.

BACKGROUND

HEATHER BOOTH

Heather Booth is one of the leading strategists about progressive issue campaigns and driving issues in elections in the United States.

An organizer since the civil rights, anti-Vietnam war and women's movements of the 1960s, she was the founding Director and is now President of the Midwest Academy, training social change leaders and organizers. She has also been involved in and managed political campaigns and was the Training Director of the Democratic National Committee.

Other work has included (but is not limited to):

- 2000 - Director of the NAACP National Voter Fund, which helped to increase African American election turnout by nearly 2 million voters
- 2005 - Lead consultant, directing the founding of the Campaign for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
- 2008 - Director of the Health Care Campaign for the AFL-CIO
- 2009 - directed the campaign passing President Obama's first budget.
- 2010 - Founding Director of Americans for Financial Reform, fighting to regulate the financial industry.
- 2013 - National Coordinator for the coalition around the Supreme Court decision legalizing marriage equality.



Heather also served as strategic advisor to the Alliance for Citizenship (the largest coalition of the immigration reform campaign) and has been a consultant to many organizations including the Voter Participation Center, Center for Community Change, People's Action, and MoveOn. She is a member of Democracy Partners.

HEATHER BOOTH: CHANGING THE WORLD DISCUSSION GUIDE

TIMELINE

1964

Heather headed to Mississippi as part of Freedom Summer, a project to register African American voters. It was an act of resistance against racist Jim Crow policies and practices that had been used to block African-Americans from voting. The Project also created and ran dozens of Freedom Schools, Freedom Houses, and community centers in small towns throughout Mississippi to aid local Black communities.

Mississippi Democrats had refused to include duly elected African Americans in their delegation to the national convention. When the alternative Mississippi Freedom Delegation was reluctantly offered two independent seats at the Democratic Convention, Fannie Lou Hamer famously responded, “We won’t take two seats because we’re all tired.”



Young activists protesting in Mississippi during the Freedom Summer, 1964

1965

Heather created JANE, an underground service that linked women in need with safe abortion services. At the time, abortion was illegal and those involved in JANE risked arrest.

1966

At University of Chicago, Heather participated in the nation’s first sit-in against the war in Vietnam. At the time, she headed a campus Friends of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC was one of the civil rights organizations that had organized the Freedom Summer Project). The event is also where she met husband Paul.



A young Heather and Paul Booth

1968
-69

Jo Freeman edited Voice of the Women’s Liberation Movement, a newsletter that provided a way for many small groups across the country to communicate. Heather helped recruit subscribers.

HEATHER BOOTH: CHANGING THE WORLD DISCUSSION GUIDE

TIMELINE

1969

For part of Freedom Summer, Heather lived with the Hawkins family. That family would file a lawsuit against their town because it provided city services to white areas while denying those same services to Black parts of their town. The landmark ruling in *Hawkins v. Town of Shaw*, confirmed in 1972 after failed appeals, said that it was a violation of equal protection under the law for municipalities to provide unequal distribution of resources and services based on race. In 1976, the Supreme Court limited the principle of *Hawkins v. Town of Shaw* by holding that racially unequal effect of a law, without racist intent, does not violate the constitution (*Washington v. Davis*).

1971

Heather directed the Action Committee for Decent Childcare (ACDC, founded in 1970) to revise childcare licensing codes, create a childcare review board and won \$1 million in public funds to expand childcare for working women and their families.

1973

Heather set up Midwest Academy using money from a labor organizing lawsuit victory where she had won back pay. The Academy continues to train community organizers. Heather creates and Directs Midwest Academy, training center for organizers, using money etc.



*Heather and the first
Midwest Academy,
class of 1973*

1978

Heather initiated and Directed the Citizens Labor Energy Coalition (CLEC) to challenge the influence of big oil companies on U.S. policies and pricing.

1983

Heather worked to help elect Harold Washington as the first Black mayor of Chicago (ending long standing machine politics under the Richard J. Daley Administration).

HEATHER BOOTH: CHANGING THE WORLD DISCUSSION GUIDE

TIMELINE

2000

Heather served as the first Director of the NAACP's National Voter Fund. According to Julian Bond, the campaign resulted in "Two million new voters...voter turn out in Texas up 50%; voter turn out in Florida up 60%; Black voter turn out in Missouri up 134% percent, and they were voting for a dead man, and the dead man won."

2008

Heather became Executive Director of Americans for Financial Reform, which helped Sen. Elizabeth Warren's successful effort to create the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.



Elizabeth Warren at rally outside the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau headquarters in Washington, 2017

2015

On the occasion of Pope Francis' address to Congress, Heather was Senior Advisor to Moral Action for Climate Justice, organizing a Washington, DC rally to draw attention to pressing environmental and economic justice issues, etc.

PEOPLE IN THE FILM



FRED AZCARATE

Exec. Director, US Action



JEFF BLUM

Organizer, Common Defense Fund



GENE BOOTH

Heather's Son



PAUL BOOTH

Heather's husband

PEOPLE IN THE FILM



ROBERT BRANDON

Attorney, Robert Brandon & Associates

ROBERT CREAMER

Organizer, Author



LISA DONNER

Americans for Financial Reform

DIANE FAGER

Organizer and activist



PEOPLE IN THE FILM



**JESUS "CHUY"
GARCIA**

Cook County Commissioner

JACKY GRIMSHAW
Center for Neighborhood Technology



Jacky Grimshaw
Organizer, VP,
Center for Neighborhood Technology



REP LUIS GUTIERREZ

D - Illinois

JUDY HERTZ
Exec. Director, Midwest Academy



Judy Hertz
Executive Director,
Midwest Academy

PEOPLE IN THE FILM



Cristina Jimenez
Director, United We Dream

CRISTINA JIMENEZ

Director, United We Dream

JACKIE KENDALL

*former Exec. Director,
Midwest Academy*



Jackie Kendall
former Executive Director
Midwest Academy



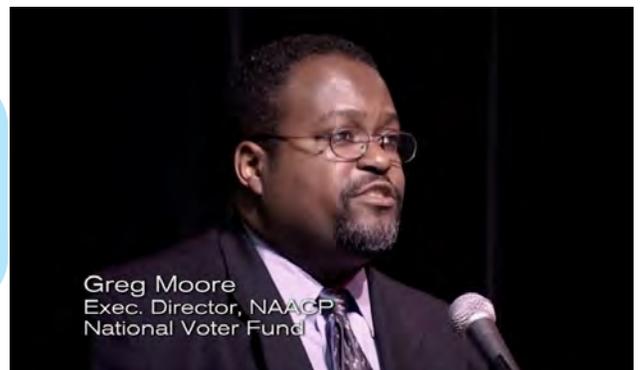
Steve Max
Organizer, co-founder,
Midwest Academy

STEVE MAX

*Organizer, co-founder of the
Midwest Academy*

GREG MOORE

*Exec. Director, NAACP
National Voter Fund*



Greg Moore
Exec. Director, NAACP
National Voter Fund

PEOPLE IN THE FILM



Susan Oppenheimer
Organizer

SUSAN OPPENHEIMER

Organizer



Alice Palmer
Educator, politician, activist

ALICE PALMER
Educator, politician, activist



Rep. Jan Schakowsky
D-Illinois

REP JEN SCHAKOWSKY

D - Illinois

JOEL SILBERMAN
Media Strategist



Joel Silberman
Media Strategist

PEOPLE IN THE FILM



AUSTIN BELALI THOMPSON

Organizer, mentee of Heather Booth

DAVID TOBIS

Heather's brother



TERESA VILMAIN

Organizer

SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN

D - Massachusetts



SELECTED RESOURCES

It would be impossible to list all the social justice or community organizing resources available, so we've limited our choices here to a few that are specifically tied to groups, issues, or events mentioned in the film. There are additional resources listed on the film's website.

[Heather Booth: Changing the World](#)

In addition to information about the film, the official website includes several helpful resources:

- Moving Forward One Sheet – Includes steps for moving forward in the current political climate, with links to groups doing just that (categorized by issue).
- Organizing Guide: Detailed guide and discussion about organizing
- Organizing Tips – General organizing guidelines
- Screening Guide – Steps for planning and facilitating a screening event for people interested in learning more about organizing, improving their skills, or organizing around a particular issue.

To learn more and get involved. You may want to start with those listed below:

[Americans for Financial Reform](#)

This nonpartisan and nonprofit coalition is a leading voice for Wall Street and government accountability, providing background information, policy statements, and advocacy on a range of issues related to creating an ethical financial system that serves the entire nation, not just those at top of the wealth pyramid.

[Chicago Women's Liberation Union](#)

The site has aggregated historical documents from several organizations mentioned in the film, including JANE and Jo Freeman's *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement* newsletter.

[Civil Rights Movement Veterans](#)

Hosted by Bruce Hartford, this site is a treasure trove of historical documents and information by and about veterans of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

[Democracy Partners](#)

The Democracy Partners work to elect Democrats and to create issue campaigns that turn progressive principles into progressive policy.

[Midwest Academy](#)

The center founded by Heather Booth continues to offer training opportunities. The site also includes a job board for organizers.

[NAACP](#)

The famed civil rights organization continues to fight for voting rights. See their resources and actions related to civic engagement, including a downloadable "Fighting for Democracy" toolkit.

[ResistanceNearMe](#)

This site is updated daily with local #Resist Actions near you.

[Planned Parenthood](#)

Planned Parenthood Federation of America is a nonprofit organization that provides sexual health care in the United States and globally.

[Veteran Feminists of America](#)

The site honors the legacy of Second Wave feminists by collecting historical documents and preserving them for future generations.

[Voter Participation Center](#)

The Voter Participation Center's mission is to increase civic engagement among the Rising American Electorate: unmarried women, people of color, and millennials.

[Zinn Education Project](#)

Based on Howard Zinn's classic book, *A People's History of the United States*, the site includes articles, documents, strategies, and a "today in history" feature, all designed to help teachers teach and students learn about the history of organizing and social justice movements in the U.S.

Midwest Academy Strategy Chart

After choosing your issue, fill in this chart as a guide to developing strategy. Be specific. List all the possibilities.

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, and Opponents	Targets	Tactics
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List the long-term objectives of your campaign. 2. State the intermediate goals for this issue campaign. What constitutes victory? <p><i>How will the campaign</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win concrete improvement in people's lives? • Give people a sense of their own power? • Alter the relations of power? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your long-term goal? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List the resources that your organization brings to the campaign. Include money, number of staff, facilities, reputation, canvass, etc. What is the budget, including in-kind contributions, for this campaign? 2. List the specific ways in which you want your organization to be strengthened by this campaign. Fill in numbers for each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand leadership group • Increase experience of existing leadership • Build membership base • Expand into new constituencies • Raise more money 3. List internal problems that have to be considered if the campaign is to succeed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who cares about this issue enough to join in or help the organization? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose problem is it? • What do they gain if they win? • What risks are they taking? • What power do they have over the target? • Into what groups are they organized? 2. Who are your opponents? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will your victory cost them? • What will they do/spend to oppose you? • How strong are they? • How are they organized? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary Targets A target is always a person. It is never an institution or elected body. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has the power to give you what you want? • What power do you have over them? 2. Secondary Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has power over the people with the power to give you what you want? • What power do you have over them? 	<p>For each target, list the tactics that each constituent group can best use to make its power felt.</p> <p>Tactics must be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In context. • Flexible and creative. • Directed at a specific target. • Make sense to the membership. • Be backed up by a specific form of power. <p>Tactics include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media events • Actions for information and demands • Public hearings • Strikes • Voter registration and voter education • Lawsuits • Accountability sessions • Elections • Negotiations

CONTACT US

For distribution or screenings:

Kristen Fitzpatrick, KF@WMM.org

or go to the website www.heatherbooththefilm.org

For organizer training: www.midwestacademy.com

For promotion, engagement, or community building using the film: heatherbooththefilm@gmail.com