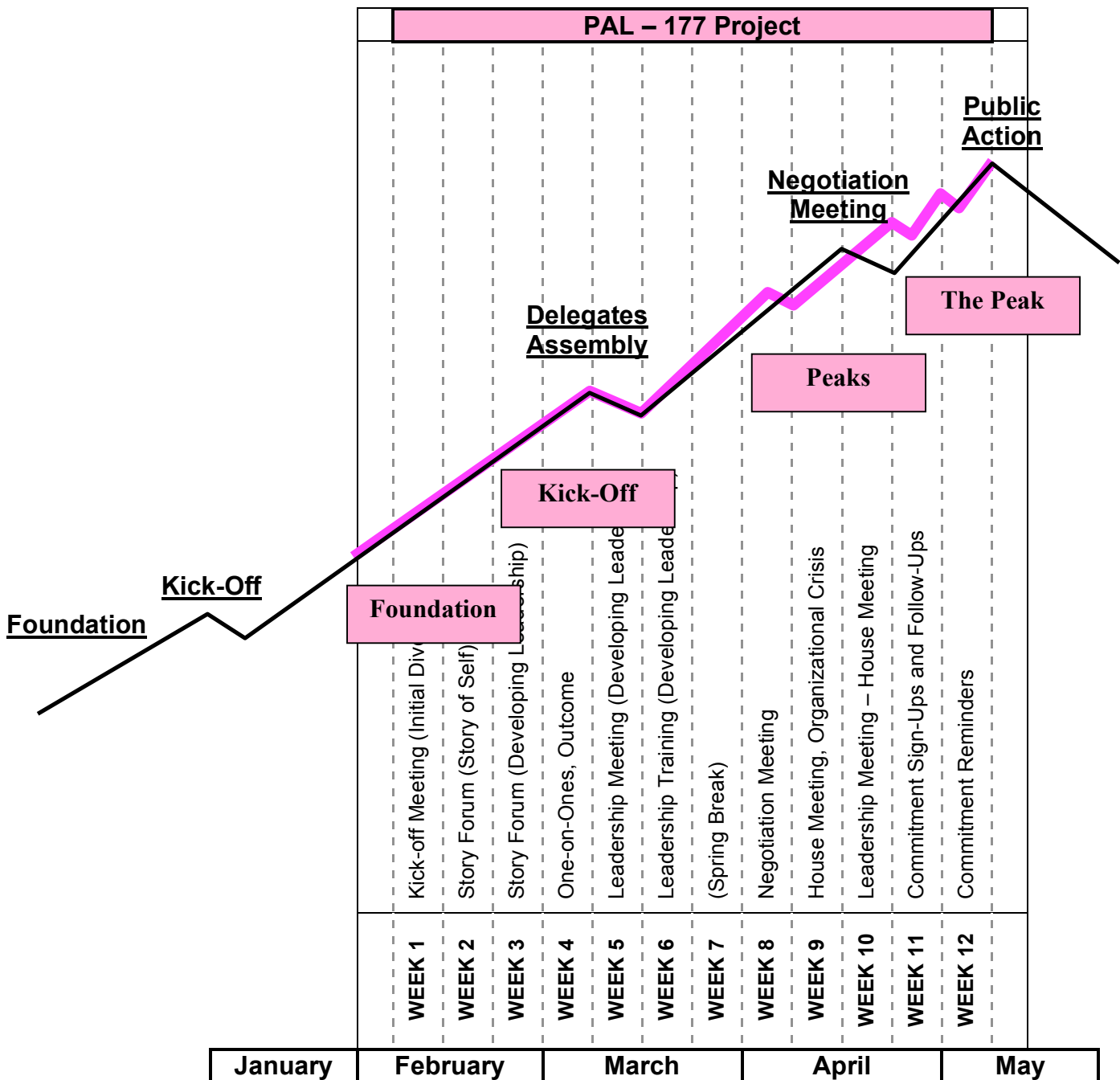


## Merrimack Valley Project (MVP) Campaign for Immigrant Justice

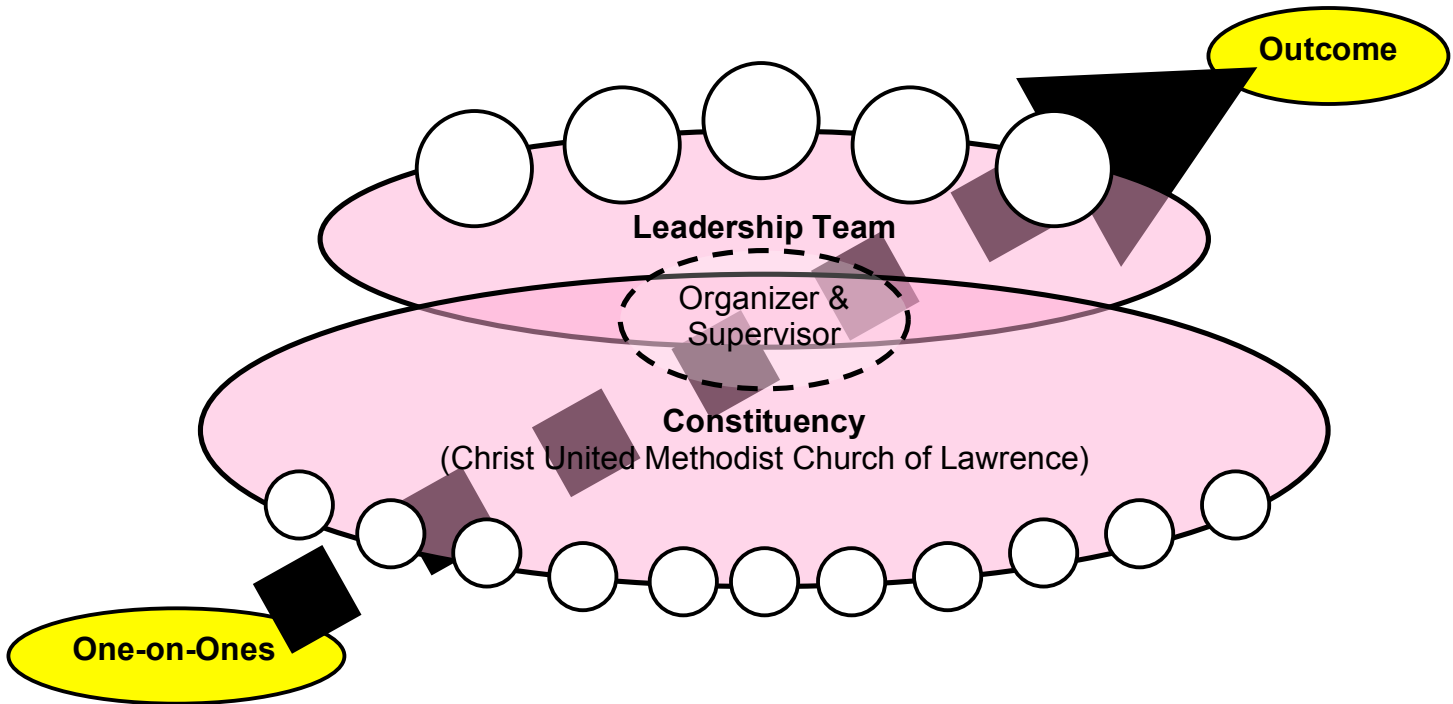
I organized congregation members and got a commitment from a State Representative and a State Senator<sup>1</sup> to support a proposed \$5 million increase in funding in the state budget for civil legal aid.

### Campaign within a Campaign Chart



<sup>1</sup> State Senator Susan Tucker sent her minister to represent her.

**Actors Map**



**Support**  
 Labor Unions  
 Churches  
 Foundations

**Opposition**  
 Private Attorney  
 Public School Superintendents  
 Market Basket  
 State Representative

**Competition/  
 Collaboration\***  
 Private Attorney  
 Public School Superintendents  
 Market Basket  
 State Representative

\* Specific targets have not been identified yet, therefore opposition organizations/individuals could also become competition/collaboration.

**Leadership Team:**

- Pastor Gabriela Garcia (Guatemala)
- Pastor Jim Todd & Mary Todd (Lawrence, MA)
- Juliana Tabi & Bernard Muna (Cameroon)
- Pastor Josue Garcia & Pastor Bella Garcia (Guatemala)
- Pastor Dorcas Karanja (Kenya)

- Loren Mc Arthur (Supervisor)
- Carlos Espinoza-Toro (Organizer)

**Constituency:**

- Anglo Congregation
- Hispanic Congregation
- Haitian Congregation

## **INTRODUCTION**

My project worked because we (leadership team and I)<sup>2</sup> were able to transition from leadership rich to leadership poor. During its initial phase my project was leadership poor. I came into the project thinking that I was already a good organizer. I brought with me a management “raft” that did not allow me to build strong leadership among my leaders. Even though I constructed a strong story of self I made several crucial errors along the way. I appointed leaders instead of building a space for them to assume responsibility. I performed great one-on-ones but did not follow-up on them to build leadership. I did not delegate responsibility and I started managing rather than organizing and therefore I did not earn my leadership among my leaders. When I was not longer able to sustain work in order to move the project forward I had a moment of crisis and found a personal quality that was impeding me from developing leadership: a lack of trust. I then balanced my management “raft” and by taking greater risks started to develop rich leadership. I applied the methodology in a much more efficient manner. Together we accomplished our goal at the project peak and were showing signs of rich leadership.

Even though we accomplished our outcome we did not develop much experience in several other organizing responsibilities. Our umbrella organization leaders were responsible for these other organizing duties. We developed limited organizing skills mapping power, selecting an outcome and organizing a large Public Action. Nonetheless, we helped their success.

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<sup>2</sup> We always refers to my leadership team and I.

## **LEADERSHIP POOR ORGANIZATION**

### **Already An “Organizer”**

I came to this project, and to this class, thinking that I was already an organizer. As a professional I had previously led teams of people to deliver a product for several clients. And since I had been successful at organizing people to accomplish my professional goals I thought I was a good organizer. I also thought that because I had dealt with people by talking and listening to them I had great one-on-one skills. Therefore, during my first initial meetings with the congregation members (Story Forums) I felt a bit threatened by the presence of Loren McArthur<sup>3</sup> who constantly added comments to complement my comments. In fact during one of our initial project meetings<sup>4</sup> I asked Loren to please let me handle the meetings by myself. My perception was that he was undermining my authority. In other words, I wanted to structure my authority as a manager directing subordinates and if I was going to be “in charge” then Loren should also be my subordinate. (Ganz, 2006, pp.28) This pattern of organizing from a management perspective was constantly present during the first part of my project.

### **Used My Management “Raft”**

As a manager I came to the project with a “raft” that provided me with management tools that I had used before in my life. I did not let go of this raft during the first part of my project because it allowed me to make my moves safely. (Ganz, 2006 pp.6) I knew that as a manager I had to establish my authority and that is why I asked Loren to acknowledge me as such. One of the most important things I learned as a manager was that no matter what your subordinates did, if something went wrong, I was responsible for it. This hindered my ability to trust and delegate

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<sup>3</sup> Loren McArthur is the MVP lead organizer and was my supervisor for this project.

<sup>4</sup> During project meetings Loren and I met to discuss how the project was going.

responsibility. In addition, it made it difficult for me to build a culture of accountability. My management “raft” was also compatible with another aspect of myself as a person that I did not explore until later on in the project: my individualist and competitive nature. I later understood that this nature had originated during my development as a child. But even though I dug deep within myself to construct my story of self I was not able to bring this nature to the surface and adjust from management to organizing.

### **Constructed Story of Self**

I constructed my story of self to gain legitimacy as an organizer and to earn leadership. (Class, 2008) During the first week, I had started to timidly approach the project. I was very conservative on how I presented myself and told different versions of my story depending on whom I was conveying it to. After having brief one-on-ones at the first Story Forum, in which I found myself changing my story of self to agree with people’s emotional reactions, I realized that I had to create a story of self. Therefore I constructed myself through narrative in order to meet the needs of this new situation I had encountered. (Bruner, 2002, pp. 64) My story of self had the right ingredients. It had migrant characters: my parents, a challenge: an abusive landlord, a choice: to focus on family welfare instead of fight injustice, an outcome: success of the children, and a moral: legal services to help fight justice are important (See Appendix 2). (Ganz, 2006, pp. 56-59) Even though I went through a painful emotional process, my story of self did help me motivate congregation members and leaders. During the second Story Forum I shared my story of self and congregation members immediately related to it, to their own stories and to stories of other immigrants they knew. This strategically constructed story of self was very powerful and

helped me gain leadership. Later on I realized that some hidden elements of this story were keeping me from developing rich leadership.

### **Appointed Leaders**

As Marshall would argue, leaders cannot appoint themselves and we cannot appoint them. (Ganz, 2006 pp.31) After the first Story Forum, Loren and I quickly identified Pastor Garcia as a strong leader, firstly because she had loyal followers and secondly because she brought them to the meetings and encouraged them to participate. We asked for her opinion on who among the congregation members could become a good leader. She pointed to two members and I quickly went to talk to them and told them: "...you are going to be my leaders..." and immediately asked them to help me prepare the next meeting. Basically I appointed them. Reflecting back on this initial development, I should have not appointed them in such a manner. I should have talked to them and got to know them better through a one-on-one. Or at least I should have asked them if they wanted to take the responsibility to be leaders. During a project meeting, Loren was concerned that some of the initial leaders I appointed might be committing just because they were loyal to Pastor Garcia. This concern was confirmed when 2 of the initial leaders stopped coming to the meetings. One of them was Pastor Garcia's niece.

### **Did not Build Upon One-on-Ones to Maintain Relationships**

After the second Story Forum I conducted successful one-on-ones. I strategically prepared for them. I made sure we had a comfortable space in the sanctuary where people could feel at ease and safe. I allocated 30 to 45 minutes to each one of them. I reminded people and had a 100% turnout. Furthermore, everyone committed to attend the following leadership meeting.

However, I assumed that these first commitments to attend another meeting were also commitments to support the project and become a leader. The participation during the next meetings was erratic. Even though I invited, called and reminded people to show up to the meetings, sometimes they would and sometimes they would not. I kept inviting them but I never did one-on-one follow-ups to understand why they were not showing up. I concentrated only on the ones that consistently showed up and therefore the leadership team size was sometimes limited. As Marshal would state, I had not maintained these relationships and therefore was missing the “glue” that made the ongoing work possible. (Ganz, 2006, pp.45) Later on during a project meeting, Loren reflected that if people were not showing up to the meetings I should have done one-on-one follow-ups. But at the time I was more concerned with moving things forward to achieve our outcome. During the first leadership meeting I remember skipping part of the faith reflection to go straight to the preparation for the next meeting. This meeting was very unsuccessful, firstly because faith reflections were a bonding element among congregation members and secondly because this was the first time the leadership team had met and it was premature to assume that they were already a leadership team and could start working together. As a result, at the end of the meeting, nobody volunteered to take responsibility for the next meeting.

### **Did not Delegate Responsibilities**

The Delegates Assembly helped turn around the failure of the first leadership meeting into a concrete outcome. During the assembly my leadership team (composed of 5) accepted the responsibility of delivering 60 people to the Public Action. However, since I was still using my management “raft” I did not create the opportunity for them to lead. After all I was having

problems as a leader myself and I had to fix that before I could assign leadership to others. After the assembly my leadership team was excited, I was excited too, but we did not meet for three weeks. Even though in part because I had other responsibilities as a student, I still think that if I would have developed better leadership, my leadership team would have conducted their own meetings in my absence. So during these three weeks I started doing mostly everything myself. I only asked people to volunteer to be hosts and facilitators for our house meetings and to meet with me for training. However, as Marshall would argue, developing leaders is not about assigning tasks, but offering responsibility. (Ganz, 2006, pp. 31-32) I did not offer responsibility because I was afraid to take risks. I remembered that several times I was going to ask Juliana Tabi to take responsibility for calling people but I was afraid that she would not perform well because she was constantly working. But I assumed this limitation, I never asked. I later reflected negatively on myself as I saw Juliana becoming one of our strongest leaders.

### **Did Not Earn Leadership**

In order to succeed developing leadership I started to change strategies. I realized that I could not train the facilitators by myself so I identified Pastor Todd as a strong speaker and experienced religious leader and I asked him to take responsibility to train and assist Juliana Tabi on her house meeting. He assumed that responsibility and helped Juliana conduct a good house meeting. But even as my strategies were constantly changing, my management “raft” was not. I still insisted on doing everything important myself. For instance, even though Pastor Todd assumed the responsibility of facilitator trainer, I did not work with him on preparing the facilitator agenda. Instead I wanted to get it all done perfect so that he would not have questions about it. As Marshall would argue, organizing is not static, it changes constantly to adapt to the

situation at hand (Class, 2008). I wanted to be in control of everything so that it was done right and then at that moment I was going to be ready to delegate. Of course, that moment never came. As the project progressed, my responsibilities became more time consuming and complex. Even though Loren asked me to delegate, even small things, like bringing food, or doing the agenda. I did not dedicate time to do that. As a result, I ended up with a group of individuals who were not working together towards a common goal but that came to the meetings because I was pushing them to come. If something needed to be done they would wait for me to assign it and did not volunteer themselves. I found myself in a situation where my authority, as a manager, had not earned my leadership (Ganz, 2006, pp. 28).

## **RECONSTRUCTION OF SELF AS AN ORGANIZER**

### **Experienced Self-Limitation**

After not having met for 3 weeks and not having too much commitment on the conduction of the house meetings I started doubting we were going to reach our turnout goal of 60 people. I thought this potential failure was going to be a direct reflection on me and therefore I had to make sure we reached our goal. During a project meeting, while Loren and I were discussing strategies on how to conduct more house meetings, I expressed my frustration with my leadership team and offered to conduct two house meetings myself in order to reach our turnout. He looked at me in a serious way and said: “this is not about you conducting house meetings, that is not the idea, the idea is for them (congregation) to do it themselves...” I laughed nervously for a second but then I realized that his words have absolutely drained my power away. In a desperate attempt to get things done right I had completely cancelled out my leadership team. But most importantly I had not built power. (Ganz 2006, pp 29-30) I asked

myself: If I did not have the power to come up with this turnout then who had the power to do it? If the answer was: “the leaders,” then my next question was: How were they going to do that by themselves if I had not been able to give up control to them? During this meeting, Loren also conveyed to me that he was going to work with some members of my leadership team to start conducting the negotiations in a parallel way. At this point I felt like I had lost total control of my project.

### **Performed Self-Analysis**

At this time of organizational crisis, I wrote a reflection in which I expressed my frustrations about my project and my feelings of despair. Dan<sup>5</sup> commented that this was a critical moment, like a fork on my project’s road, when things could go either great or the project could fall apart, but it was up to me to make the decisions. I reflected on Dan’s advice about motivating my leadership team and I realized that I had not created a story of US. So I started working on a story of US in order to motivate my leadership team and myself. While I was building a story of US upon my story of self I noticed that there was an important detail about my parents choice that had influenced myself profoundly. When my parents decided not to fight an injustice to concentrate on our welfare they systematically lost trust in the legal system, in their neighbors and in everybody that was not part of our nuclear family. This loss of trust was deeply embedded in my managing raft. I was raised not to trust, overcome obstacles and succeed. This loss of trust had been passed to me by my parents as a family value and was in complete conflict with the organizing methodology I was applying, which emphasized taking risks. One of these risks involved developing leadership by trusting other people with responsibilities.

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<sup>5</sup> TF Daniel Grandone

## **LEADERSHIP RICH ORGANIZATION**

### **Balanced Management “Raft”**

After understanding what was deterring me from developing rich leadership I decided to balance my management “raft.” This time I applied the learning framework but taking much greater risks. Learning from previous mistakes I started applying the leadership developing tools in a much more efficient way. I quickly identified the resources I had not been using. For instance, I had pastors who could reach out to Anglo networks (Pastor Todd) as well as Hispanic networks (Pastors Garcia). Up till now we had only be reaching out to Hispanic networks. I also had two leaders (Juliana Tabi and Pastor Karanja) that had shared great powerful stories of immigration and always jumped up at the opportunity to speak up during the meetings. I had never asked them to take responsibility for the facilitation or the faith reflection. In preparation for the next leadership meeting I asked each one of my leaders to take responsibility for different sections of the agenda. They all accepted their responsibilities and in less than a week Juliana Tabi, who had assumed the responsibility of facilitator, stepped up as a strong leader and started coordinating the agenda items with other leaders. During the leadership meeting I created and supported space for leadership by specifying our turnout goal (60 people) but coaching them to think and decide how they would like to reach it. Pastors Garcia and Todd came up with a congregation sign-up idea. Pastor Karanja asked for flyers to distribute. Juliana Tabi and Bernard Muna committed to keep people on track by calling them. They started to develop into a strong leadership team. (Ganz, 2006, pp. 29-33)

## **Took Action**

After our successful leadership meeting we conducted a house meeting and a congregation sign-up. Our goals were based on the on the resources we could mobilize by ourselves (Ganz, 2006, pp.85). For instance, while Pastor Todd set himself a goal of 10 people due to the size of his place, Pastor Garcia used her status as pastor and the church to set a higher goal of 60 or 70. In addition, we were able to deploy 4 immigrants to Pastor Todd's house meeting so that his Anglo network could hear the immigrant stories from immigrants. During the house meeting I started to see what Marshall would call communities in action (Ganz 2006, pp. 103-113). Our congregation reached out to a network of mainly native born. The fact that we had immigrants in our group as well as native-born was a strategic way to manage the inclusion vs. exclusion tension. The native-born engaged the native-born network while the immigrants shared their stories within native-born groups. At the end of the house meeting not only all the native-born attendees signed a commitment card, but they also identified with our stories and related them to their stories. The end of the meeting became a celebration of our accomplishment. This house meeting revealed elements of rich leadership. I saw my leaders assuming and performing leadership roles. I had interacted with my leaders, who in turn interacted with other network leaders, who in turn brought their nuclear families to interact with all of us.

## **Project Peak**

In the MVP Public Action of May 4<sup>th</sup> 2008, more than 400 people, from several congregations, labor unions and community based organizations, and their families gathered at the Christ United Methodist Church in Lawrence to demand support from public officials on issues affecting immigrants in the Merrimack Valley Region. Among the congregations, was my

leadership team from the Christ United Methodist Church in Lawrence composed by 8 individuals: Pastor Garcia, from Guatemala; Pastor Todd and his wife, from Lawrence; Pastors Garcia, from Guatemala; Juliana Tabi and Bernard Muna, from Cameroon, Pastor Karanja from Kenya. Together we delivered more than 60 people and helped deliver one State Representative to the Public Action. During the Action, one of us facilitated the agenda and two of us shared stories of immigration. At the end of the Public Action we hugged and congratulated ourselves for having such a great team and achieving our goals, and made plans to celebrate the success of the Action.

## **ORGANIZING UNDER SUPERVISION**

Even though we were able to transition from poor leadership to rich leadership and we were able to achieve our goal at the Public Action, we conducted a campaign within a campaign. This format meant that we were not completely exposed to certain organizational challenges that we would have otherwise faced if we had been organizing the larger campaign. For instance, we did not have to concentrate on mapping power, selecting an outcome or be the ones organizing the Public Action. We were, to a certain degree, organizing under supervision.

### **Mapping Power**

From the very beginning our emphasis was on building constituency through stories of immigration. I originally sketched a preliminary power map, but since we did not narrow down our objective, we could not identify key power stakeholders. After our Delegates Assembly our clear outcome became the turnout. As I mentioned before, Loren organized the negotiations with state representatives and invited me to attend. As a group, we did not map the

power we were demanding support from. Some of my leaders learned about this power the hard way during meeting with representatives at the state capitol. After these negotiations I was able to construct the “3 Faces of Power Map,” but with limited information (See Appendix 1). As Marshall mentioned in class, it is very difficult to get to that 3<sup>rd</sup> layer of power where you understand who has the real power to make the decisions. I think it was very difficult for us to get to that layer. Even though we reached out to state representatives we were not able to reach some key senators that were in the “ways and means” committee, which has an enormous influence on legislation concerning budget. I think MVP leaders did not pursue these legislators further because they wanted to accomplish a winnable outcome. Instead they pursued representatives who they thought were more inclined to support the MVP goals. During several discussions Loren always pointed out the lack of tension between the MVP constituency and the state representatives and how it made our negotiations very static.

### **Selecting Outcome**

Even though we got a commitment from state representatives to support budget expansion for legal service, we did not choose that outcome. MVP leaders and delegates selected the outcome for the entire MVP campaign. They selected immigration as a theme and drafted preliminary goals. They then narrowed those goals to a few goals. During the Delegates Assembly they asked delegates to vote for the 3 most important ones. As an organizer working on this project, I did not have to look for a constituency. I had to extract the leadership from an existing constituency. Searching for a constituency would have definitely presented greater challenges to my story of self and leadership building experience. In addition, all my leaders were members of the same church. This common denominator created a strong bond among

them. Therefore I think it was easier for us to narrow down our congregation outcome. If we would have not been under the MVP umbrella, narrowing down our outcome would have been much more difficult. We would have had to spend more time trying to agree and vote on a common outcome and maybe face the challenges of dissent. In our leadership team we had no dissent at all; there was a lack of tension. If we had had to select our own outcome, this would have triggered tension and this in turn created a stronger motivation.

### **Organizing the Public Action**

Even though we did help preparing the Public Action, MVP officials took care of most of the organization. Our congregation offered the space and the stories but we did not have to deal with making sure all the congregations got their turnout, parking, media, sound equipment, etc, which were essential for the success of the Public Action. Loren and MVP leaders were absorbed by most of this work. My leadership team came together for action on house meetings, leadership meetings and negotiations, but it would have been very challenging had we been tested with the responsibility for organizing the Public Action. We would have had to use several additional strategies and tactics.

### **CONCLUSION**

Overall, my project worked because we were able to make the transition from leadership poor to leadership rich. The first phase of my project was leadership poor because I organized using a management “raft” as my primary set of tools. This set of tools did not allow me to apply the organizing methodology in a manner that built leadership and as a result I performed all the tasks myself and took all the responsibility for their success or failure. A moment of crisis arose

when my responsibilities overwhelmed me and I was not able to move the project forward. This crisis also exposed a personal quality that was impeding me to develop leadership: lack of trust. The second phase of my project was leadership rich because after understanding my personal limitation I decided to balance my management “raft” by taking greater risks. This balance allowed me to apply the leadership development methodology in a much more efficient manner and by then end of the project peak my leadership team was showing signs of rich leadership. Even though we have been able to accomplish our goal as a group, there were several organizing skills that we learned in a limited manner because we were organizing within the umbrella of a much bigger organization. Nonetheless, we were able to take part on this other organizing efforts in many ways and learn from them.

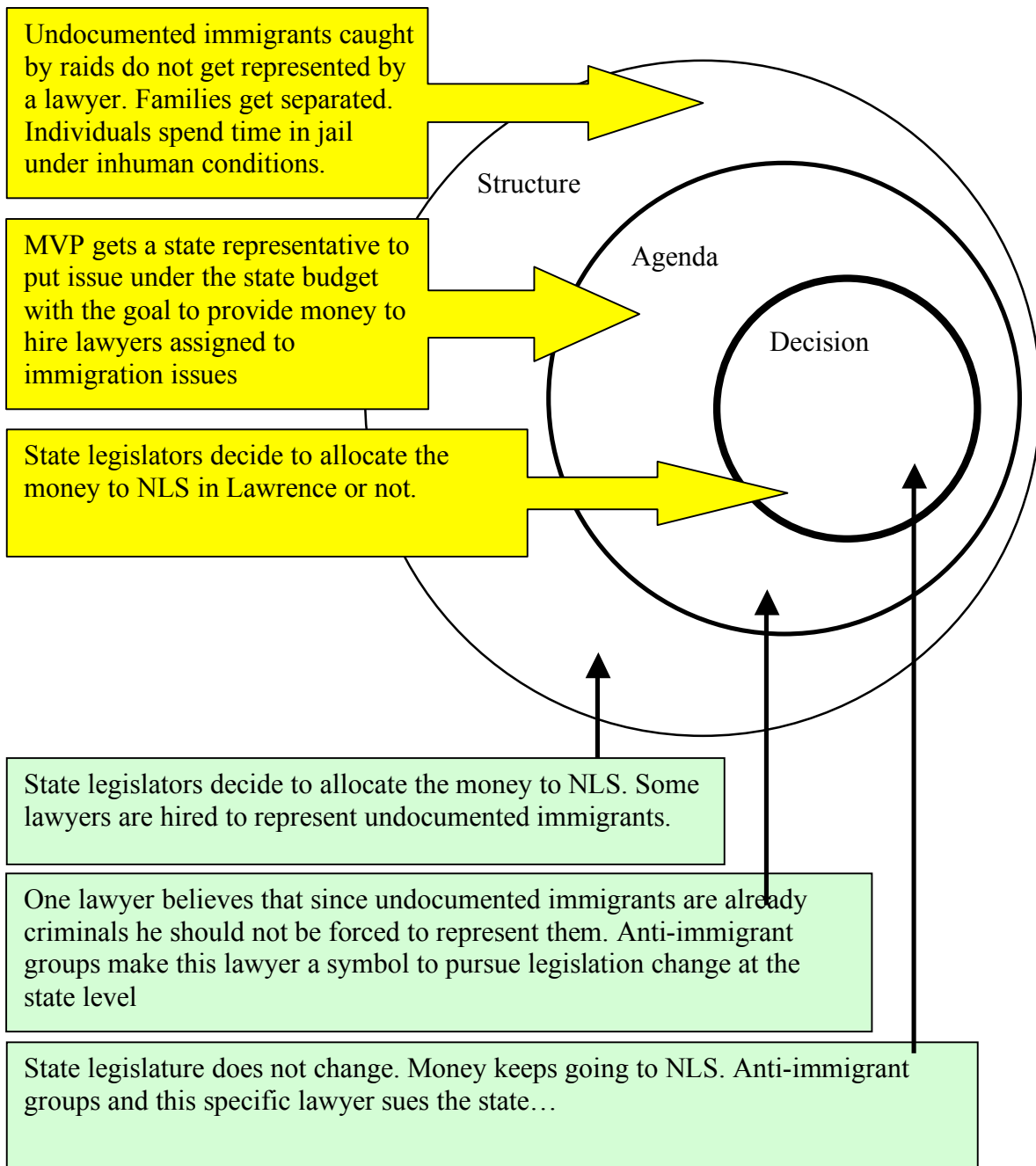
### **Notes**

(Bruner, 2002) Bruner, Jerome. Making Stories. Law, Literature, Life. 2002.

(Ganz, 2006) Ganz, Marshall. Organizing: People, Power and Change. 2006.

(Class, 2008) Notes taken in class.

### Appendix 1: 3 Faces of Power (Case: Legal Services)



## **Appendix 2: Story of Self (Script)**

- My name is Carlos Espinoza-Toro and I was born in Lima, Peru.
- My mother is a retired teacher and my father is a retired mechanic.
- Our family business was a mechanic shop, where I helped my father since I was 6 years old.
- We worked very hard to afford our essentials and our business was successful.
- However, since our business was in rented property and our landlord was abusive, we could not achieve economic prosperity. If our landlord saw that we had many cars in front of our business he would come to talk to my parents and without regard for a signed rent agreement, he would draft a new agreement with an increased rent and force my parents to sign it, threatening to kick us out.
- My parents were faced with two very simple choices: to fight for their legal rights (against a corrupt judicial system) or to allow the abuse to happen and concentrate on our welfare. They chose our welfare and put all our resources in education, with the hope that us (children) would achieve a better life in a better place.
- Through education I was able to immigrate to the U.S. and become a professional.
- Through education I was able to come to MIT and concentrate my energies to study economic and community development because I believe that hard work and sacrifice should be complemented by strong policies to help everybody achieve economic prosperity.
- After working in Lawrence, MA I have noticed that immigrants work very hard and make many sacrifices to prosper economically. However, in their heroic efforts sometimes their children, their health and their education are left behind. Their children and the next generation pay a high price for economic prosperity.
- I identify with these immigrant families, because I see in them the courage and intelligence that my parents had in order to provide a better future for their children.
- But I also understand that in the U.S. we (point to him/her and yourself) can achieve economic prosperity along with good education and health. The mechanisms and institutions that make it possible are in place. We can harness them (point to him/her and yourself).
- Therefore it is my commitment to work with immigrant families to provide a vision of economic prosperity that considers education, health and other factors that allow comprehensive immigrant prosperity.