Responsible Civic and Community Engagement
You want to do something, but what?
How can you achieve the best outcomes for impacting an issue you care about?

RESPECT THAT THERE ARE MULTIPLE SIDES
- Everyone is entitled to voice a narrative and opinion
- Listen to others without necessarily trying to change minds or reach agreement
- Put yourself in others’ shoes so that you can more readily understand their perspectives
- Give people a chance to explain why they may be reacting as they are

EDUCATE YOURSELF
- Consult several sources of media to get facts and analyses
- Consider the reliability of sources and evidence in assessing the facts
- Learn the context and history of a situation or issue—things do not happen in a vacuum
- Talk with people directly involved rather than rely exclusively on third party sources
- Explore how relationships of power work and can be shifted
- Dialogue with others and ask questions

ASK HOW YOU CAN BE MOST USEFUL
- Build relationships to share or shift resources
- If you are not a member of an impacted community, make sure you are taking direction from the community
- Don’t rely on good intentions—just because you want to help, does not mean that your help is needed
- Know the agenda and/or demands of those with whom you are advocating
- Be nimble and explore tactics that meet changing needs and priorities
- Find out if there are existing efforts or organizations you can support rather than creating something new
- Identify your particular skill set and how it matches the needs of the community

CHOOSE YOUR STRATEGY
Organizing for social change can take many different forms. For example:
- Dialogue: Start conversations within your own community and social networks
- Formal Statements: Draft articles, group petitions or Facebook pages, public speeches
- Symbolic Public Acts: Create displays, mock ceremonies, new signs or names
- Withdrawal: Engage in walk-outs, turn one’s back, boycotts
- Direct Action: Participate in non-violent protests or processions
- Political Action: Contact legislators and policymakers, initiate legislation, vote
- Service: Find volunteer opportunities

THINK BEFORE YOU ACT
- Think about your long-term vision and goals and how your actions may impact that trajectory
- Consider the numerous potential consequences (e.g., social, legal, political, employment, education) of your actions and be ready to face them
- Decide on what you might be willing to compromise and what might be a deal breaker
- Refrain from saying or writing something on the internet or elsewhere that may be harmful or regrettable

Sources:
Steve D’Arcy Thinking About Protest Tactics
New Organizing Institute
http://neworganizing.com/
Gene Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action
http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org/resources/nonviolent/methods.php