



# Virginia Organizing

"REAL PEOPLE RAISING THEIR VOICES AND TAKING ACTION TO CREATE REAL CHANGE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES."



Fall 2020 Internship

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# Who Is Virginia Organizing?

Virginia Organizing is a statewide **grassroots organization** that has a long and successful history of **empowering local Virginians to fight the injustices in their own communities.**

VO was founded in 1995, and has since grown to include **16 community chapters.** VO members **tackle several issues,** including racism, immigration, climate change, healthcare, and more.

## Virginia Organizing — by the numbers January to June 2020



# Building A Foundation

In order to create and maintain the large and diverse organization that they have today, Virginia Organizing has emphasized the importance of building a strong foundation their values and relationships to guide and support them.

## STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

VO's Statement of Beliefs was created at the very first meeting in 1995. It starts by saying **"We believe that all people should be treated fairly and with dignity in all aspects of life"**

Over the last 25 years, the Statement of Beliefs has reminded VO and others what and why they continue to fight

## ONE-ON-ONES

One-on-ones are conversations between two people in order to better understand each other and their values.

VO uses and teaches one-on-ones as a **crucial technique to form connections, learn about issues in their community, and make sure individuals are heard.** Many describe one-on-ones as the "backbone of VO."

## FUNDRAISING

In addition to strong values and relationships, financial stability is essential to maintain any organization.

**Fundraising not only raises money, but it also allows VO to (re)connect with new and old donors** and maintain contact information of their supporters.

# Building Community

Virginia Organizing is a chapter based organization that centers communities and their issues. As interns, we were encouraged to contribute to the communities we worked with, build relationships, and engage in meaningful advocacy.

## CHAPTER MEETINGS

VO's chapters meet once a month. At these meetings, community members discuss their current projects, develop strategies, share responsibilities and decide on issues after power mapping. **The health of this community is maintained through thoughtful and respectful engagement** as well as encouraging as many people to contribute as possible.

## ADVOCACY MEETINGS

As the Virginia Legislative session approaches, **many of the chapters are meeting with state legislators and local officials**. These meetings are important for getting our issues recognized. They are organized to have the greatest impact possible by leveraging research, the influence of Virginia Organizing as a statewide organization and building personal relationships.

## SPREADING THE WORD

We use many methods to spread information about our campaigns. This semester we were taught **the importance of letters to the editor in local newspapers and regularly attending local government meetings**. Some of us had the opportunity to develop graphics for a chapter campaign!

# Building Power

This year Virginia Organizing celebrated its 25th anniversary. How does one organization persistently work for long-term, sustainable change in Virginia? By sustaining organizers and building strong organizations, VO established longer timelines with space for transformative relationships. Our theory of change is based in one thing alone: people power!

## LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

VO not only believes in leading issue based campaigns but also **raising leaders from directly impacted communities to run those campaigns themselves.**

This semester we were able to attend a 3-month long leadership institute which invited organizers from across the state to learn about VO's history, ways of strategy charting, power mapping, etc.

## ORGANIZING SEVERAL ISSUES

To begin to improve people's lives and build power for social change, Virginia Organizing helps them understand that fighting for environmental issues intersects with better healthcare, which intersects with wages and employment, which intersects with supporting local businesses, and so forth. **The issues reflect this multi-pronged approach.**

## FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

VO leaders and organizers understand that sustainable long-term change takes time to accomplish. **"It is slow, it is incremental, but it is lasting."** The organization truly believes that the world can always be more just and to get an ideal sense of justice, we need to keep building power together. **Throughout this semester we were reminded to keep an eye toward the future!**