



THE • CENTER • FOR
ARTISTIC ACTIVISM

2025 FIELD TESTS

Proving Pathways to Success

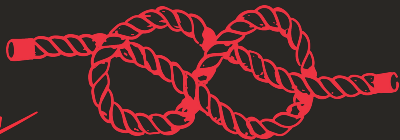


A photograph of two women sitting at a table during a book launch event. The woman on the left is smiling and waving, wearing a black top and a necklace. The woman on the right is wearing a dark, patterned dress. On the table in front of them is a book titled 'TEXORCISM' by 'THE TEXAS GHOSTS'. The background is dimly lit with purple and blue stage lights. A sign in the background reads 'PATIO BAR'. A person is standing behind the women. A large, stylized plant is on the left side of the frame. The text 'BUILD BOLD CAMPAIGNS THAT' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters across the middle of the image. Below it, the word 'Effectively' is written in a cursive script.

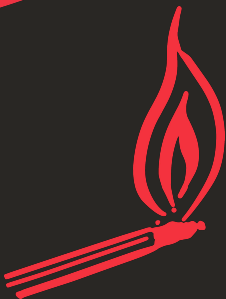
**BUILD BOLD
CAMPAIGNS THAT**

Effectively

HELLO!



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Our challenge: Develop and test **five** ways to achieve one of your current social justice objectives.

Partners Focuses

AAPD - Help people with disabilities living in congregate settings register, feel ready, and commit to vote in Ohio's' 2025 elections

Be The Ones - Increase the imagination of local grassroots organizations and community leaders to reimagine the South Carolina State House as a State Home

Fair Count - Educate and collect commitments to vote from rural faith communities in Mississippi and Georgia

QLatinx - Mobilize the community against cuts to healthcare, particularly HIV and AIDS funding, in Florida

Experiment Parameters

- Different tactics, with a control
- Same audiences
- Same call to action
- Hold as many variables constant as possible: personnel, setting, etc.
- Document *everything*

And... Experiment Limits

- “In the Lab” vs “In the Wild”
- Necessity of different audiences, settings, or personnel
- Question of control
- Partner desire for real world impact
- Sh*t happens: weather, health, etc.

Findings on Creative Activism

- ★ Get attention, provide explanation, move to action
- ★ Allow for meaningful collective and individual participation
- ★ Know your audience and connect through something personal, emotive, or useful
- ★ Design for multiple accessibilities and ages
- ★ Match time and tone to activity, audience, and desired outcome

**Get attention, provide
explanation, move to
action**







**Allow for meaningful
collective and
individual
participation**







**Know your audience and
connect through something
personal, emotive, or useful**



FAIR  COUNT

COMMUNITY POWER

An aerial view of a bustling city street festival. A large banner reading "COMMUNITY POWER" is stretched across the middle of the street. The street is filled with people walking, some standing in groups. There are several tents, including a yellow one on the left and a blue one on the right. A small gazebo is visible in the background, and a flagpole stands near it. The surrounding buildings are tall and modern, and the overall atmosphere is lively and community-oriented.

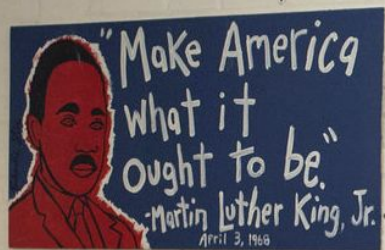


Design for multiple accessibilities and ages

**Match time and tone to
activity, audience, and
desired outcome**



**be.
the.
ones.**



ELEMENT

- ☐ what's at stake
- ☐ intention of origin and beginning
- ☐ when it is told
- ☐ details
- ☐ change happens
- ☐ intention of
- ☐ intention of
- ☐ centered on
- ☐ TRUTH
- ☐ Belief



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BENEFITS OF EXPERIMENTATION

Why experiment?

Experimentation:

- Motivates multiplicity (vs. finding the one right thing)
- Reframes “failure” and “success”
- Inspires creative iteration
- Encourages observation and documentation
- Reinforces and expands cause and effect thinking
- Energizes staff and volunteers

HOW TO RUN YOUR OWN EXPERIMENT

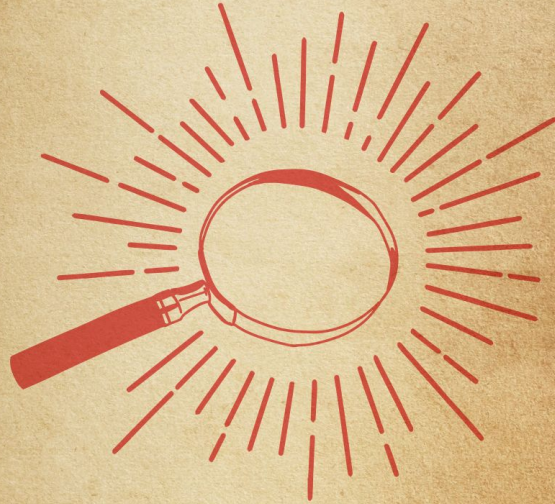
A graphic featuring a white background with a red sunburst pattern. The pattern consists of numerous red rays of varying lengths radiating from a central point, creating a dynamic, energetic feel. The rays are arranged in a way that they appear to be coming from behind the text.

INTRODUCING...



THE • CENTER • FOR
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THE 2025 **FIELD TESTS**
Proving Pathways to Success



A Field Guide featuring our creative experimentation program with



More Details!

Deeper Explanations!

Your Experiment Checklist!

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The Experiments

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American Association of People with Disabilities

AAPD's REV UP Campaign worked on reaching people with disabilities living in congregational settings — such as nursing homes, state-operated developmental centers, and group homes in Ohio and getting them registered, ready, and committed to voting in Ohio's 2025 elections.

Due to interest from six congregational homes, AAPD designed and tested six tactics, one in each residence.

The activations they tested were:

- A typical Know Your Rights educational slide-show program
- A Rock the Vote concert by local musicians
- A Ballot Bingo game
- A Democracy Salon, in which residents were treated to manicures from students at a local cosmetology school
- A postcard writing session where residents wrote a message to their future selves, which AAPD mailed back to residents in advance of the election
- An individual visual art prompt, in which residents could draw their ideal city and its politicians

AAPD's Democracy Salon experiment. Photo by Ambershaun Byrd.

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Lessons on Creative Activism

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Match time and tone to activity, audience, and desired outcome

Attention spans keep getting shorter and shorter, and so many in the movement have adapted their actions to match. It was striking, then, to find that shorter activations did not necessarily mean better results. What really mattered was that the length of the activation was a good fit for the people involved and the call to action.

Be The Ones was working with organizers on the challenging task of imagining. With this focus, more time and space was not only required but welcomed by participants. Anna Long, Program Director at Be The Ones, summarized:

"I think sometimes we don't wanna make a meeting more than 90 minutes, because then people will leave. But when I look at our 90-minute workshops, they weren't as good. People did come to the longer ones, and then they stayed longer because they were enjoying themselves. As long as you're intentional about how you're using your time, it's not necessarily bad to do a long thing."

Of course, more time isn't always available. AAPD was working in state-operated developmental centers in which residents' days are highly planned. AAPD was usually given only 60-90 minutes of time with residents. They learned they could get a lot done in that time by being very focused, which they summarized as: "Stick with ONE great idea and ONE activity and make sure your objective is tied directly to that."

Fair Count in particular learned the importance of matching tone to audience and outcome. Their gospel song was an easy and welcome addition to church services, whereas their comedy video was a harder sell because a humor segment was considered out of place. On the other end of the spectrum, AAPD's playful and joyous events were welcome because they offered a change of pace from usual activities, while also reinforcing the positive associations they wanted residents to have with voting and civic engagement.

For time and tone, what matters most is resonance.

In practice:

- ☐ Make it attention-grabbing and then explanatory so people know what's happening and what to do next.
- ☐ Invite collective and individual participation that feels real and meaningful.
- ☐ Know your audience, connect with them emotionally, and give them something of value.
- ☐ Design for accessibility across bodies, ages, styles, and senses.
- ☐ Match time and tone to your purpose.

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Tips for Experimentation

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Experiment Checklist

- ☐ **Identify your learning objective:** What is one of your current goals? What is something you need to figure out about how to achieve it?
- ☐ **Brainstorm tactics:** Develop multiple tactic ideas that can achieve your goal. Include one that is your traditional approach to serve as your control and at least four that are much more creative and novel.
- ☐ **Limit variables:** Choose the tactics you'll test and then work to make as many things across them as constant as possible.
- ☐ **Include your stakeholders:** Talk to staff, partners, and volunteers about your plans. Get their feedback, adjust for concerns, and provide additional trainings if and as needed.
- ☐ **Plan to measure effect and affect:** Put systems in place to capture actions taken and the emotions related to them.
- ☐ **Find an observer:** Designate someone whose sole purpose can be to observe how the experiment is going.
- ☐ **Think about whom else you might reach:** Who are your secondary and unintended audiences? What are ways you might be able to engage them, too?
- ☐ **Form a backup plan:** What might go wrong? What can you have in your back pocket to help you adjust?

Ohioans enjoy AAPD's Rock the Vote concert. Photo by Braxton Daniels.



**WHAT'S
NEXT?**

INTERESTED IN CREATIVE EXPERIMENTING?

**SIGN UP FOR OUR
OFFICE HOURS**





THANK YOU!



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GOODBYE!!!

Center for Artistic Activism

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