

COALITIONS AND ALLIES

A ONE-PAGER

Reports can get long. Here's a one-page breakdown of what you need to know:

Why should movements choose a decentralized structure? Movements with decentralized structures are well-suited for building power during the early stages of a movement, because they can enable mass mobilization to the streets. No one is waiting around for a leader to say, "go here, and do this." People are able to join how they want, when they want, and in the ways they want to help sustain and maintain the movement's power. However, a decentralized structure can become a liability if movements wish to negotiate, exactly because of its leaderlessness and loose bonds.

So what should movements that want to negotiate do? when a movement has reached this point in its strategy, we think it becomes paramount that organizers work to consolidate their coalitions before stepping into the negotiation room.

Why are coalitions important? In short, greater numbers on the street means greater power at the negotiation table; protests and other direct actions like it can be a visceral and effective way to demonstrate a movement's popular legitimacy, its sheer people power, and the potential for that movement to levy consequences on a political leader should that leader walk from the negotiation table. And when it comes to getting people to the street, building coalitions with other organizations is essential.

How should a movement think about allyship? Forming alliances both with people that you like (and sometimes with people that you don't) can be the difference that tips the scale in your favor. And they're important because just as one individual alone does not make a movement, often one community can't either. In short, movements need allies. Here's how we suggest thinking about which ones you'll need:

1. **Natural allies.** The people who understand your cause and are sympathetic to it. They're the easiest to build support in, mobilize out onto the streets, and engage in other tactical actions. Basically, they're your buddies.
2. **Strategic allies.** These individuals and groups, by contrast, are closest to the political leadership, those who help prop it up the most. They may not naturally overlap with all of your interests, but it's absolutely essential that you peel them off, because it saps the power of the political leadership and gets you new power that you might not otherwise have.

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