

5 tips for building a successful advocacy campaign



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Are you trying to get the word out — either for a candidate or a cause you feel passionate about? [Social media](#) is great, but when online supporters turn into offline volunteers, your advocacy campaign reaches a new level.

Aisha Satterwhite of Blue State Digital, a leading digital-strategy agency, said, “Every group thinks its problems are different, but they’re often the same.” She said often a group uses conflicting messages for the same campaign, or a message that is so vague it won’t mean anything to people.

These five tips will help you match your message to your intended audience and motivate them to get off the sidelines for your cause.

Know how your audience communicates

Do the people you’re trying to reach respond to email? SMS texts? Will radio, print and other traditional media be most effective? For many advocacy campaigns, time spent knocking on doors produces better results than a hundred emails.

Macala Wright, a digital marketing strategist, suggests nonprofits with limited budgets take advantage of free resources to learn about online audiences. For instance, Google Analytics can tell you what country visitors to your website are from, where on your site they’re going and what devices (mobile, desktop, tablet) they’re using. “That’s information any organization can use to make informed decisions on how they’re messaging,” Wright said.

Figure out your messaging strategy

A good advocacy campaign has a core message, Wright said, and how you present that message determines how far it spreads. “There are three good ways to make your message appealing: humor, inspiration and enlightened education,” Wright said. “People share things that make them happy or make them want to learn more.”

Spur your audience to act

Know what it is you want your audience to do, and make sure the audience knows it too. Perhaps it is as simple as sharing your post on Facebook. Sign a petition? Attend a meeting? Vote for a candidate? If you’re asking for donations, Satterwhite advises that you “think what it would take for you to actually take money out of your pocket and give it to someone. How would you want them to approach you?”

Move people toward engagement



How engaged is your audience? This chart shows how influence can be increased by gradually increasing engagement. (Source: Blue State Digital, State Dept.)

Convincing someone to “like” your organization’s page on Facebook is easy; convincing him or her to host an event at home to raise funds for your organization is hard. These are examples of the bottom and top rungs of what media strategists call the ladder of engagement. By gradually asking more of your audience as it engages with you — to opt in for email updates, to make a small donation, to attend a live event, to knock on doors for your cause — you can convert an online bystander into an enthusiastic worker for your cause.

Test your messages

Both Satterwhite and Wright stress the importance of trying different approaches and learning from the results. For a social media posting, Wright advises trying the same message starting off with a question (“Have you thought about where your food comes from?”) and then again with a compelling fact (“Processed foods make up 70 percent of your community’s diet.”)

“Whatever has better traction in terms of share, engagement and reach,” said Wright, is the approach to use. But she said you must always try new things, because digital behaviors move very rapidly.”

YALI Live: How to Fail Forward

Learning from your past mistakes is a key part of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs Dante Disparte, CEO of Risk Cooperative, and Saran Kaba Jones, CEO of Face Africa share their knowledge during this video event. Watch below!

Biographies of Speakers:

Dante Disparte is the founder and CEO of Risk Cooperative, a strategy, risk and capital management firm. Mr. Disparte is a specialist in strategy and risk reduction through the design and delivery of comprehensive risk solutions of worldwide scope. He is credited with designing the world’s first card-based life insurance program for the United Nations. Previous work in sub-Saharan Africa with Landover, also provides Mr. Disparte with comprehension of the challenges working within the African business community.

Saran Kaba Jones, the Founder and CEO of Face Africa, a community development organization working to build and strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and services in remote communities across sub-Saharan Africa. Born in Liberia, Saran’s organization has raised over \$500,000 for water, sanitation and hygiene projects from organizations like JP Morgan Chase, Coca

Cola, Chevron, and more. The organization website is <http://faceafrica.org/>.

How Taxes Are Spent: 'Every Citizen Has the Right to Know'

Udamen Ilevbaoje at budgIT. Photo  courtesy Udamen Ilevbaoje.

People with little knowledge of financial management can get lost when they try to understand their government's budget, says Nigerian YALI Network member Udamen Ilevbaoje.

That is why in 2011 Ilevbaoje joined [BudgIT](#) as a volunteer. BudgIT is a nongovernmental group in Lagos dedicated to improving transparency and accountability in government. It focuses on presenting government budget data to the public in easy-to-understand tweets, infographics and interactive applications. It has since expanded from Nigeria into Liberia and Sierra Leone.

"We believe that in a democracy, every citizen has the right to know how his/her taxes are expended in the delivery of public infrastructure and services," BudgIT states on its website.

"Equality and open access to governance is entrenched in democracy and its institutions," says Ilevbaoje, now BudgIT's project officer. "Our work is to make this information available and get citizens in organized form to demand delivery of public services."

Ilevbaoje says that Nigeria presents its national budget to citizens in overall numbers but not in details such as how much funding is available for neighborhood projects like rehabilitating a school, repairing potholes in roads or purchasing buses to get people with disabilities to a rehabilitation center.

BudgIT's [Tracka](#) service allows citizens to research and track budgets and public works projects. They can also give feedback to the government and to their communities. With existing social media tools, the platform brings together people with common interests to share documents, videos, photos and comments. It uses live online meetings on Facebook to discuss topics like how funds are being used in Ebola relief.

Clients learn about financial  management and open dates at BudgIT offices.

Photo courtesy Udamen Ilevbaoje.

Its [Fitila](#) service uses graphics to highlight illicit financial flows in and out of a country. That can help save national budget losses from tax evasion and corruption.

Having won several prestigious international awards, BudgIT recently partnered with the Kaduna state government to help it develop open data and become more transparent.

“I use civic advocacy to drive improved service delivery,” Ilevbaoje says.

“Service to the community is critical to a functional society. ... I believe I can do this for a better society.

“I am inspired by the work of my lead partner, Oluseun Onigbinde, who took it upon himself to lead the advocacy to ensure that the schools are built. His personal example of accepting responsibility teaches me a lesson of taking the lead to solve problems at all times.”

[Nigeria's election: What went right?](#)

A woman from the Hausa tribe, with a  red mark on her thumbnail indicating she has already validated her voting card, waits at a polling station located in Daura, Nigeria. (© AP Images)

Nigerians earlier this year elected new legislative leaders and President Muhammadu Buhari, who defeated incumbent Goodluck Jonathan by 2.5 million votes.

The results were remarkable for reasons that transcend the individual candidates' careers. It was the first peaceful transition of power to an opposition party in Nigeria's democratic history. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called it a “[decisive moment for democracy](#).”

Other African nations with upcoming elections — such as Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Guinea — are studying what went right in Nigeria in hopes of replicating the process. Here's what they are finding:

Emboldened youth

Kingsley Bangwell, who runs a group called [Youngstars](#), credits a rise in youth activism in the years just prior to the election for creating a more engaged electorate. Students protested corruption in Nigeria's oil industry in 2012 and the Boko Haram insurgency in 2014. Young people, said Bangwell, grew confident in their ability to “organize around an issue and get the government to listen.”

Youth “drove the campaign of President Buhari,” according to Samson Itodo, founder of Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth and Advancement. Notably, Buhari was not the youngest candidate — he was almost the oldest. But young voters supported Buhari because they wanted to see “what someone who has ... the political will to fight corruption can do to improve livelihoods,” Itodo said.

Social media

Between 2011 and 2015, voters took to social media in droves. Before the March election, Nigerian rappers Banky and M.I participated in Twitter chats to raise voter awareness, and both sides used social media to reach young people.

[Enough is Enough](#), a coalition promoting good governance, hosted a concert to which attendees gained admittance by showing their voter cards. The coalition promoted the show on social media with ads encouraging voter registration. “People can be apathetic,” said Yemi Adamolekun, director of Enough is Enough, “so the idea was to use music and comedy to get them to participate.”

Youngstars built a media campaign called “Vote Not Fight,” which reached 62 million people with its message of nonviolence. The speaker of the house and the chairman of the national election commission joined thousands of others in signing on as “peace ambassadors” at the Vote Not Fight website, and the artist 2Face contributed a [“Vote Not Fight”](#) video.

Credible oversight

A woman registers to vote in Lagos,  Nigeria. (© AP Images)

Attahiru Jega, chairman of Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission at the time of the recent election, had overseen the 2011 general election, and that election had been called “significantly more transparent and credible” than the three preceding ones by a global monitoring group.

Jega gained trust in 2011 by compiling an entirely new voter registry. He required voters to be accredited at the polls prior to voting. This year, Jega’s commission introduced permanent voter cards with biometric information embedded in them. Polling stations had readers to verify voters’ identities.

While a six-week postponement of the election in February raised concerns about corruption, Jega reassured voters. A popular #iStandwithJega Twitter hashtag trumpeted his credibility. In the end, Jega enjoyed trust from both the ruling and the opposition parties ... and a lot went right.

Preparing for a public speaking engagement

Having a basic understanding of how to write, prepare for, and deliver a speech is essential in both your personal and professional life. This interactive checklist will guide you through the steps you need to take before delivering a speech. When you are done, you can save your checklist results and

reference them as you continue to prepare.

[Download the PDF public speaking guide and checklist](#) and use the interactive planner below:

This form requires JavaScript to complete.

[Screendoor](#)

[Applying to be a Mandela Washington Fellow: Answers from the Experts](#)

Britta Bjornlund and Todd Haskell from the U.S. Department of State answered hundreds of questions about the 2016 Mandela Washington Fellowship during a recent #YALCHAT. We have selected some of the most popular questions from YALI Network members to highlight below.

Q: How does the Fellowship help me for my future career?

If you are selected, the Mandela Washington Fellowship will provide you with the opportunity to develop your skills at a U.S. college or university with support for professional development after you return home. We encourage you to link the academic sessions, leadership sessions, site visits, and networking opportunities of the Fellowship to your future career goals.

Q: What does the selection process look like?

A: The Mandela Washington Fellowship selection process is a merit-based open competition. After the application deadline, all eligible applications will be reviewed by a selection panel. Following this review, chosen semifinalists will be interviewed by the U.S. embassies or consulates in their home countries. If advanced to the semi-finalist round, applicants must provide a copy of their international passport (if available) or other government-issued photo identification at the time of the interview. Finalists and alternates will be notified by their U.S. embassy or consulate of their selection.

Q: What does the application mean when it says “must be proficient in English?” What is the yardstick to measure that?

A: Can you speak, read, and write fluently in English? This is an intensive program conducted in English so all Fellows will need strong English language skills to make the most of the Institute and Summit. Semi-finalists will be interviewed in English at the U.S. embassy or consulate.

Q: Is it important to have a recommendation letter?

A: The Fellowship is looking for the next generation of leaders in Africa. It is up to each candidate to decide what documents best reflect your background, interests, capabilities and potential.

Q: I do not have a passport yet. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Yes! If you are selected, you will need to acquire a passport.

Q: Is the YALI program also helping Young African Leaders to be involved in the implementation of democracy in Africa (in countries where democracy is not fully applied)? If yes, what are the different tools given to them (to the Young African Leaders) to be fully involved in the implementation of democracy in Africa?

A: One of President Obama's top priorities in Africa is to strengthen democratic institutions. Progress in democratic governance will most certainly lead to gains in virtually every other sector. The Mandela Washington Fellowship provides young leaders the opportunity to learn leadership skills that Fellows can take back to their countries and put into action. We encourage returning Fellows to tailor the many opportunities for mentoring, professional development, and community service to support their particular goals, whether that is in public management, civic leadership, or business and entrepreneurship. To learn more about what each of these three tracks entail, please visit <https://youngafricanleaders.state.gov/category/washington-fellowship/>.

Q: I would like to know how the YALI Regional Centers and the Mandela Washington Fellowship are connected, are those who attended YALI regional eligible to apply to the Mandela Fellowship?

A: The YALI Regional Leadership Centers and the Mandela Washington Fellowship are two key components of President Obama's Young African Leadership Initiative. You can read more about the initiative at youngafricanleaders.state.gov. Those who have attended a program at a YALI Regional Leadership Center, or who are applying to one, are still eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship.

Q: I would like to ask whether Mandela Washington Fellowship follows the people that do the training after they have gone back home? What is the result of the training after long period of time this training had been taking place in America? Why isn't this program in another language to benefit everyone if it is important for a leadership democratically?

A: When Fellows return to their home countries, they bring back new skills and new enthusiasm, and can take advantage of professional development opportunities, including professional practicum experiences in companies and organizations in Africa, mentoring relationships, resources to speak at conferences, regional networking conferences, and entrepreneurship grants. The Fellowship hopes to inspire a multiplier effect — that returning Fellows share with their friends, family and colleagues what they saw, learned, and perhaps taught others in the U.S. so that this experience grows. We understand that there are a range of languages across Africa, but because the institutes are being held in the United States at American colleges and universities with American professors and U.S. leaders, the course work will all be in English. We hope that some of you who might be less skilled in

English will be able to participate in future years.

Q: There's a question on my application that asks if I have been to the U.S. before. If you haven't been, does that harm your chances of being selected?

A: Not having visited the United States does NOT harm your chances of being selected. There is no requirement to have traveled to the United States in the past.

Q: Hi, I am a citizen of Sudan currently living as temporary resident in Kenya. Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: Yes. Applicants must be currently residing in a country in Sub-Saharan Africa AND be a citizen of a country in Sub-Saharan Africa (it can be a different country) to be eligible. Applicants must be a citizen of one of the following countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Applicants must also currently reside in one of the above countries. If you are a citizen of one of the above countries but residing in a country not listed above, you are not eligible.

Q: Do the YALI Network online courses determine your eligibility for selection?

A: No, you do not need to have completed online courses to be eligible for the Fellowship, and members of the YALI Network do not have increased chances of being selected.

Q: How many Fellows will be selected from each country?

A: The Mandela Washington Fellowship does not use country quotas to make Fellow selections. The process takes a variety of factors into account to inform the final selection. The Fellowship anticipates including Fellows from each country in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2016, as it did in 2014 and 2015. The final selection for 2016 will incorporate diversity in all senses of the word. Opportunities are open to people regardless of their race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. The Fellowship is committed to fairness, equity, and inclusion. Final numbers from any given country will also take into account the country's population, the number of applications received, and other contributing factors.

Make sure you also check out the following links that also provide useful information about the application process:

[2016 Application Instructions \(PDF\)](#)

[2016 Application FAQ](#)

[Tips from a MWF](#)

Applying for the Mandela Washington Fellowship: The importance of being a leader

Lee Mark du Preez 

(Courtesy photo)

When South African Lee Mark du Preez first heard of the Mandela Washington Fellowship, he knew it was an opportunity for him to take the work he'd been doing in his community to the next level. Since his school years he'd been on the board of the Children's Home in his town of Pietermaritzburg, which helps orphaned, abandoned and abused children. He had also worked as an entrepreneur and consultant on South Africa's black economic empowerment initiative.

But when he applied for the fellowship in 2013, he was not among those invited to come to Washington. The next year du Preez applied a second time, and this time the outcome was very different as he was selected to be a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow.

What changed between his first application and the second, and why did he become a better candidate the second time he applied?

He remained on the board of the Children's Home but doubled his efforts to get involved, giving more of his time and taking on more responsibilities. In addition, he became an advisory board member at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for Enactus, a global student organization that uses the power of entrepreneurship to create positive social change. Enactus teams from 1,600 universities in 36 countries compete for the best plan with the greatest impact. His chapter, du Preez said with no small amount of pride, has "won the championship in South Africa five times. We've never not made the semifinals."

He was also asked by the leader of his local chamber of business to create a youth leadership and business development program. "I became more involved in programs that run on a larger scale," he said, which he believes helped his application to stand out in a way it hadn't before.

"Absolutely keep trying," he said, when asked what he would advise applicants for the MWF who have applied and not been selected. "They must keep trying like I did. But they should also continue to develop and raise their profiles, so that by the time they do try again, they can be so good that it's almost impossible for them to be ignored."

[Applying for the Mandela Washington Fellowship: Pitching yourself in the personal essay](#)

Whether you're writing an essay to apply for admission to university, graduate school or the [Mandela Washington Fellowship](#), your job is the same: demonstrating to the decision-makers that you're the person to choose. That's the essence of a "pitch," whether in business meeting or a personal essay.

In the case of the Mandela Washington Fellowship, focusing on "how to write a personal essay is the most important," according to Edward Monster, public affairs officer in Malawi who reviews applications for the Fellowship. "Too many applicants used the essays to describe 'big-picture' problems in their country or region," said Monster, "but failed to describe exactly what they as individuals were doing to confront the specific challenges in their communities."

Emphasize outcomes

"Sometimes we focus on things we've done" — an initiative or a job we undertook — "but we don't talk about what the result of that was," said executive coach Patty Beach, who is a managing partner of Leadership Smarts. By describing the tangible benefits created by your previous work, you can overcome what Beach calls the "'So what?' factor," which leaves the decision-makers uncertain whether your work had any measurable value or not.

Remember three things

Beach suggests thinking about three things before writing an essay: what you're good at (your natural and cultivated talents), what you're passionate about (the area to which you'll direct your talents), and how what you're applying for will help further your goals. "If you can effectively communicate those three things, you put yourself in the best position to be selected."

Enough but not too much

Shawn Abbott, dean of admissions at New York University, has seen more than enough admissions essays to know what works when it comes to selling yourself to an admissions board. He suggests limiting your personal statement to one page. "Admissions officers are reading hundreds, if not thousands, of applications. We have to be able to read quickly, and you want to capture our attention. One page is enough."

Think before you share

Abbott also advises giving thought to what parts of your worldview to emphasize in a personal essay. The Fellowship application emphasizes what you have done and plan to do to support your communities, so focus on your actions and outcomes. There may be different taboos for you to avoid for different types of applications, so think hard about what they might be before you put pen to

paper.

[#YALI Network Events Across Africa](#)

Aspiring entrepreneurs in Kigali, 
Rwanda (Courtesy photo)

In the two months since we launched #YALILearns, there has been a flurry of activity among #YALINetwork members organizing and sharing events in our Facebook face2face group. Dozens of meetings and hundreds of people have shared their knowledge and connected with other young African leaders across the continent.

Papy Sibomana got together a group of prospective young entrepreneurs in Kigali, Rwanda, to teach business and entrepreneurship using the YALI Network Online Courses. There was also discussion of the #YALINetwork and its benefits for younger entrepreneurs and an overview of the Mandela Washington Fellowship application process.

Discussing the activities of the Regional 
Leadership Center at a meeting in Addis
Ababa. (Courtesy photo)

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Frehiwot Negash joined with Yigrem Ashenafi, Asmeret Gebre, Edie Zachs and Helina Stiphanos to organize a #YALILearns event and even created a separate Facebook group.

“It was so inspirational,” Frehiwot said. “We look forward to our next monthly event.”

Zakariyyah Freeman Musa, a Nigerian working in Kenya, connected with the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania to develop a #YALILearns event at the American Corner in Zanzibar. Thirty people discussed the YALI Network Online Courses on leadership and took the quiz to get their certificates.

YALILearns meeting in Harare (Courtesy 
photo)

Southern Africa was particularly active, including Vincent T. Mabotja’s event in South Africa to discuss xenophobia and another that involved a march against corruption. In neighboring Zimbabwe, several events took off.

“#YALILearns is an amazing tool to seeing people grow and develop ideas into actual projects and livelihood,” said Kelvin Tinashe Mutize after a networking event he organized with #yalicreatives in

Harare.

Munya Bloggo, a 2015 
Mandela Washington Fellow,
teaches business in Gweru,
Zimbabwe. (Courtesy photo)

Munya Bloggo shared another Zimbabwe event, this time in the central part of the country where several Network members used the YALI Network Online Courses to discuss business planning and modeling at the American Corner in Gweru.

“We had a feisty discussion with students on how we can apply the lessons to a local context,” Munya said, before adding a competitive element to #YALILearns. “I think when it comes to advancing education, Zimbabweans go at it like it was the Olympics.”

Just north, in Zambia, Patience Chisanga shared her expertise at a multi-day event.

“I spoke to 25 young talented and exceptional filmmakers about redefining entrepreneurship, the importance of turning art into a business, the basics of developing a business idea, a business plan, and how to deliver a business pitch to investors,” she said.

YALINetwork members take a quiz on 
leadership for a YALINetwork certificate
at a meeting in Zanzibar, Tanzania. (Courtesy
photo)

To the west, Ruddy Kielo Lingela held an event that utilized the YALI business lessons in Lubumbashi, #DRC, at the American Space there.

“More than 20 young entrepreneurs were present,” he said. “I was much impressed (with the audience). All the participants arrived 30 minutes before the launch of the meetup. The Congo is changing my friends.”

Over in Ghana, Oxford Bonsu put together a group of 320 undergraduates at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology for an event.

A huge YALILearns event in Ghana saw 
320 people show up for a meeting
organized by Oxford Bonsu. (Courtesy photo)

“I used resources from YALI Learns to engage the students, and there was a positive feedback,” he said. “#YALILearns is a sure way to give back to your community and to empower young Africans to make real difference.”

If you want to hold your own [#YALILearns](#) event, you do not need any special tools or experience, just a willingness to gather people together and share knowledge. Use our courses or your own material, but please do share the results with us on our [#YALILearns feedback page](#).

Patience Chisanga, a 2015 Mandela 
Washington Fellow, teaches about
filmmaking at a YALILearns event in Lusaka,
Zambia. (Courtesy photo)

[Watchful eyes keep elections fair](#)

An election observer at a polling station 
in Nairobi during Kenya's 2013 election
(© AP Images)

The surest way to get fair elections, according to experts, is to have as many eyes as possible on every step of the process. With several countries in Africa holding presidential elections in October and November, citizen groups that monitor elections will play important roles in assuring that the [results are fair and credible](#).

The Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors ([GNDEM](#)) represents 190 watchdog groups in 75 countries on five continents. In 2012, the organization launched the [Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations](#) in a ceremony at the United Nations. The document spells out standards for citizens who work to keep elections fair.

The document matters because monitoring doesn't work without a careful plan. "You can't monitor everything," said Michelle Brown of National Democracy Institute (NDI), a nonprofit organization that supplies technical assistance to GNDEM's local watchdogs. "They have to focus," Brown said. "They have to figure out what are the salient issues that could have the biggest impact."

A woman registers to vote using a 
fingerprint reader in Lagos, Nigeria. (©
AP Images)

NDI helps the monitors create checklists for use in the field. Groups such as NDI train both long-term observers, who monitor how electoral boundaries are established, voter registration and ballot qualification, and short-term observers, who focus on election-day procedures.

What does it look like when election monitoring is thorough? "Nigeria is a great example," Brown said. Four prominent civil-society groups representing diverse interests came together to form Project Swift Count to monitor the 2015 Nigerian general election. "They did a very good job of early outreach and making people aware of who they were," Brown said. "They had a nationwide network, really nice pre-election reports, and then, in a very timely way, released their election-day findings."

Volunteering your time to help groups that monitor elections is a great investment in fair elections in your country. Contact these organizations in [Cote D'Ivoire](#), [Guinea](#), [Mali](#), [Tanzania](#) and [Uganda](#) to see how you can help.
