

## ORGANIZATIONAL MANUAL - Revised

by

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is designed to help build new CORE chapters and strengthen established ones. The basic material contained in this brochure has been tested in the field over many years. If these composite suggestions and organizational techniques are used creatively, then a strong and healthy CORE chapter should emerge.

It must be clearly understood, however, that conditions vary with the community involved. To effect a workable program in your town these basic techniques must be adapted to the local conditions.

STRUCTURE OF CORE

CORE is a national interracial organization with affiliated local groups. Local chapters must agree with the purposes and methods of the national body. The local constitution and by-laws cannot conflict with the national constitution. In conjunction with this manual you should read the National Constitution, the sample local constitution, "This is CORE," and "The CORE Rules for Action."

National CORE is governed by the annual convention, which consists of delegates from the affiliated chapters; and by the National Action Council. The chief executive office is the National Director.

National CORE obtains its funds from the local chapters and from individual contributions. The national office has full-time employees whose main functions are to develop and organize new chapters, coordinate established groups, initiate national projects, and obtain operating funds.

Local groups must do their own local financing. For the most part they are free to originate and carry through their own action programs. The national office may be requested to secure the help of other local CORE chapters on special projects.

Essentially CORE is action groups. In many cities where CORE has been effective the Active Membership of the chapter has been from twenty to thirty people. Some chapters are larger, but others have done outstanding jobs with only ten or fifteen members. The dedication and desire to work in a disciplined fashion are more important in achieving our goals than just getting a large membership. However, including Associate Members who will participate occasionally, the membership may well run into the hundreds.

LOCAL CORE CHAPTERS

1. Officers: A local chapter should have the following officers: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. In addition to these officers most groups will have a Corresponding Secretary, Publicity Chairman, Membership Chairman, Project Chairman, etc.



The officers are usually elected for a period of six months or a year and a few groups use the system of rotating chairman. The idea of short office terms is to share responsibility. An Active Member should not decline to run for office; however, if for certain reasons he feels he would not make a good officer he can so advise the group. It should be kept in mind that all members of CORE are expected to be more active than members in most other organizations.

2. Meetings: CORE should meet at least once every two weeks and during an intensive action program most groups will meet weekly. Experience has indicated that an action program is difficult to maintain unless the group meets frequently.

CORE chapters follow the policy of majority rule. The rule is often loosely applied. If a substantial minority objects to a particular decision, particularly if the decision concerns an action project, then more discussion is in order and perhaps postponement of that particular project to a later date. Meetings are usually informal with many decisions reached by common consent, but always with the understanding that on the request of any member Robert's Rules of Order will be used.

CORE meetings have been held in churches, members' homes, community centers and union halls. Most groups find it wise to obtain a regular meeting place with facilities large enough to accommodate at least thirty people. Some groups have offices which are manned half-time by volunteers.

3. Membership: Any person who subscribes to the purposes of CORE as set forth in the National Constitution and who is willing to abide by the "CORE Rules for Action" and meets the requirements of the local chapter is entitled to Active Membership. Each chapter is required to establish membership requirements and it is suggested that the following basic techniques be used after adaptation to local needs:

(a) Probationary Period -- a person interested in becoming an Active Member is first interviewed by a member of the Membership Committee and then placed on a probationary status. The Probationary Member works on CORE action projects, attends meetings and learns about CORE philosophy. The vice chairman of the chapter often serves as Membership Chairman and thus has the responsibility of training new members.

(b) the Probationary Member must agree to abide by the "CORE Rules for Action" while engaged in CORE projects. He must also be willing to abide by group decisions. CORE's name is never used by an individual unless on an authorized CORE activity.

(c) Finally, when the Probationary Member has completed the probationary period, his status as an Active Member with full rights must be approved by majority vote of the membership.

(d) Associate Membership -- most local groups also have Associate Memberships. Associate Memberships are one of the most effective means of raising funds and gaining community support. Associate Membership cards and material are available from the National Office. Proceeds from the sale of associate memberships is split between the local chapter and the National. Associate Members may be called upon occasionally to join in an action project, but they do not have a vote in chapter elections or on matters of policy.

Essentially then, new CORE members go through a training period and must be given an opportunity to learn and understand the use and theory of



direct nonviolent action. Quite frankly, groups such as CORE are bound to attract "characters." Each group must devise methods of dealing with individuals of this type. The Membership Committee should be on the watch and attempt to weed out the true characters and others who may create problems for your chapter.

#### FORMING OR EXPANDING YOUR CORE GROUP

1. It only takes a few people to start a CORE group:

(a) To start a chapter, call together a group of people who are interested in using nonviolent action methods in the field of race relations.

(b) When a decision has been made to organize the CORE group you should notify the national office. The office will try to have a national representative visit your community as soon as feasible. You need not wait to get a lot of members before starting. Only ten persons are required to be affiliated.

(c) Form a temporary organizational structure; start your action program and ask others to join.

(d) Initial project should be simple. First steps can include such activities as testing of service to Negroes in lunch counters, restaurants, barber shops, rental apartment or recreational facilities. When people start activity they usually remain interested and others will be attracted to your chapter.

The first thing to do after the formation of the chapter is to initiate a simple action program. (See "This is CORE") Don't be too concerned initially about setting up elaborate committees, preparing a constitution etc. Get started on a project and keep your members busy.

2. Guest night meetings where CORE members bring friends who are interested in learning about CORE have been used to increase membership. Usually, part of the meeting is devoted to regular business and the rest of the meeting to CORE philosophy, techniques and projects. You might have a speaker and serve light refreshments.

3. Every chapter should have a newsletter. It should be mailed to the Active and Associate Membership, other interested groups and individuals, and to the national CORE office. It serves a dual purpose of informing the community of your program and of attracting interested people.

4. Keep the members that you have. Give them jobs and responsibilities. If these people are not given something to do they are not apt to stay with the group very long. In St. Louis new members and prospective members are asked to test restaurants and make reports at the next meeting.

#### EDUCATION OF MEMBERS IN CORE PHILOSOPHY

This is one of the most important aspects of maintaining an active CORE program. An understanding of CORE is essential to a good action group. One person is usually given the major responsibility in this area. The following methods have been used:

1. Informal orientation meetings or "bull session" held in members' homes. Some CORE groups have also had weekend workshops or retreats.

2. Literature secured from national CORE should be used. The literature should be given to new people and can also be sold or lent from the local CORE headquarters.



3. Socio-drama can be used as a means of showing how CORE members conduct themselves while participating in CORE activities. Socio-dramas also give new people a feeling of what it is like to actually participate in a negotiation, picket line or sit-in.

### DIRECT ACTION PROJECT

In all direct action projects you must be prepared. Let us assume that the project involved is a sit-in demonstration at a restaurant and that all preliminary steps such as testing and negotiations have been followed.

1. Investigate the physical layout: know how many doors, how many stools or tables; know how to get in the restaurant and how to get out.
2. Select a project leader. He will make all on-the-spot decisions and be the official spokesman for the group. A second and third leader should also be named to take charge in case of necessity.
3. The press and the police should normally be notified of the demonstration. How much detail you will give them and how much advance notice will depend on local conditions and your chapter's relations with them.
4. When you start into the restaurant do not hesitate; each person should walk directly to the place where he is to sit. If the manager or someone else should try to block your entrance, don't run over him; but one of the group leaders could engage him in conversation while the others take their seats. Usually you can catch the management off balance -- don't give them time to recover. If, however, your entrance is effectively blocked the sit-in can be converted to a stand-in on the spot. Decisions of this nature must be made quickly by the project leader.
5. Leave promptly at the agreed time. The important thing is to be prepared. Discussion at the meeting preceding the project should cover as many possibilities as possible. You cannot anticipate everything, but many contingencies can be prepared for.
6. If you anticipate trouble, particularly physical violence, then perhaps the first demonstration should be by women. Remember, we are interested in avoiding violence and the project should be structured so as to minimize the possibilities for violence.

### FINANCES

Each CORE chapter has financial responsibilities, both to itself and to the national organization. Local CORE groups need money for projects, letterheads, postage, printing, legal expenses and for sending delegates to national and regional meetings. The following methods are recommended:

1. Dues. There may be a dues system. Most CORE chapters have a monthly membership pledge, and some chapters have even made payment of dues a requisite for voting. However, dues should be reasonable and on occasion you may accept members who cannot afford to pay.
2. Associate Memberships. Maintaining Associate (contributing) Members is a good way to raise money and also involve additional people in your activities. Associate members may give \$3, \$5, \$10 or more annually. Half of the Associate Membership money is sent to the National Office and



and half is retained by the chapter. Persons who give \$3.00 or over a year receive the CORElator regularly. Each chapter is expected to have an Associate Membership drive each year, preferably in the Spring.

3. Special Projects. Each CORE chapter is also expected to hold at least one major fund-raising event annually for the benefit of the national organization. Such an event might be a large rally featuring nationally known personalities, a theatre benefit, a dance or jazz concert or any other variety of things.

4. Other methods. One group got \$400 from an appeal to its mailing list. Another chapter had wallet-sized cards printed listing restaurants and other facilities desegregated by the CORE chapter. These cards can be sold or distributed with an appeal to contribute.

The question of raising sufficient money is an important one for a local CORE chapter. The chapter must raise enough to pay for local projects, to send delegates to the National Convention and for its other general purposes.

#### INFORMING AND WORKING WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS

1. Special care should be taken to keep the community informed of CORE activities.

- (a) Publish a regular CORE newsletter.
- (b) Get a regular column in the local newspaper. This is usually possible in the weeklies.
- (c) Some chapters have secured regular radio time for a report on CORE activities and other civil rights news.
- (d) Make speeches before church, labor, fraternal and community groups.

2. CORE groups often work with other organizations on specific projects and we recommend that wherever possible CORE obtain the support of these organizations. The prestige of these groups can give impetus to the campaign of a new CORE chapter. In working with other organizations it is wise to keep the following things in mind:

- (a) Other organizations do not act as fast as CORE. They usually meet once a month, whereas CORE meets once a week or at least twice a month.
- (b) Other groups may not be willing to commit themselves to CORE action and discipline.
- (c) When working with other groups you should try to bring them in on the planning stage of a program. People often feel that if they didn't plan it then they have no responsibility.
- (d) Experience indicates that joint projects should only be undertaken when CORE cannot do the job alone. When other groups do cooperate they must agree to comply with CORE discipline.

#### CONCLUSION

Remember, CORE is an action group! All your activity should be pointed toward an action project to eliminate racial discrimination. This is our reason for existence. There are plenty of educational and fund-raising groups in the field of race relations -- but CORE is the only national organization dedicated to the elimination of discrimination through a NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION PROGRAM.

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