

Terry Stanley



Terry Stanley, Youth Organizer at Mid-City Can Community Action Network: Became the Youth Organizer as a result of his work as a youth member of the Mid-City CAN Youth Council. ([Profile on Terry here](#))

"Terry Stanley is new to the staff role, but is well-known to City Heights community members. He estimates he has been involved with Mid-City CAN for about three years, first becoming involved in the Mid-City CAN Youth Council during an advocacy event called Park(ing) Day, when the group converted a parking lot into a skate park and community gathering place. Mid-City CAN is the local hub for the Building Healthy Communities Initiative, a 10-year, \$1 billion effort to change the way that health happens in 14 communities in California, including City Heights."

Mid-City Community Advocacy Network is a community collaborative based in City Heights, a dense and diverse urban community of about

95,000 people living within a 6.5 square area of San Diego. Our mission is to create a safe, productive, and healthy community through collaboration, advocacy, and organizing.

Interview/ Discussion Questions

Why is it important to have youth participate in decision making and community changes?

It is important to have youth participate in decision making and community changes because they are residents of the community as well. Although they cannot vote, they hold power within their voices and

knows the community the same if not better than most adults in the community.



Now having been on both sides of a youth engagement project, as a youth participant and now as a youth organizer, what are some ways that you aim to build youth confidence, critical thinking, and other transferable skills? (Please talk about some of the skills you developed as a youth participant that you think have helped you move into a staff position with the Mid City Community Advocacy Network)

Some ways I want to build youth confidence, critical thinking, and other skills are by letting them experience training and opportunities to build up leadership skills. Create a family based environment with among each other so that they feel comfortable enough to take and give skills with one another. As a youth member, I developed leadership skills, communication/networking, public speaking, organizing, base-building, etc. The list goes on.

Can you share some tips/tools for challenging young people in a respectful way?

Some tips I suggest is to open up to them and give them the feeling that it's ok to be afraid. We all have a past and it is what shaped us to be who we are today. Do ice-breakers and develop games to build trust and get to know each other. For youth, don't be afraid to have your voices heard and take as much

opportunities as you can.



How do you handle the common situation of disagreeing with youth opinion, yet still trust their perspective and take action on their recommendations?

Everyone has different perspectives on what we want or what our opinions are. As a youth mentor and facilitator, my job is to let the youth give me insight in their perspective. Their answers are never wrong but unique. Although we have our own opinions, we respect the youth's point of view and work with it. Our goals should line up accordingly.

Can you talk about how to be aware and explore the assumptions you make, or your organization makes about what youth can/cannot do? /What are the common missteps adults take after assuming things about youth?

We believe in a system where youth control the meetings and campaign is fully led by youth. We teach them about adultism and limit what adults in our program can do to our youth. We believe the youth can do anything, will do anything and succeed. For those we cannot do, we create a way to make it possible. A common misstep adults take after assuming things about youth is that youth don't know anything about their communities, that they aren't leaders and are just a hassle to society. In reality, the youth are who we all once were. A lot of youth are actually involved in different orgs. Sports programs are growing to the point where most decisions are being made by the youth in our society.

What are some ways to authentically engage youth in the decision making process?

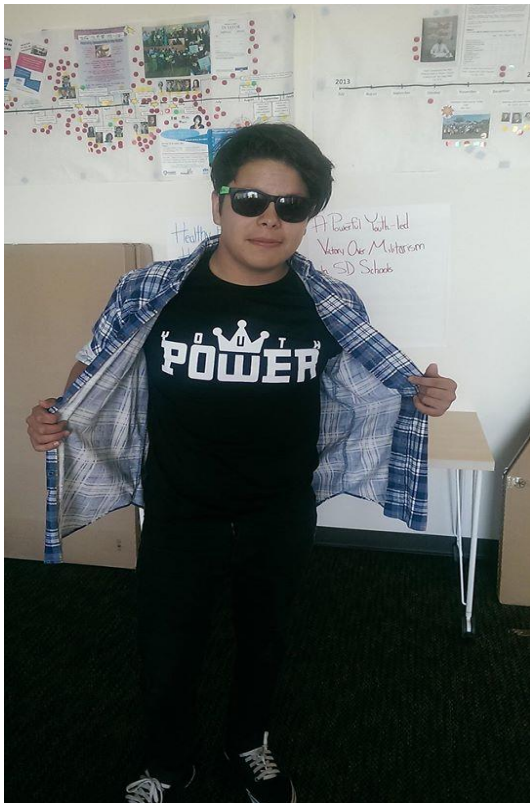
Some ways to engage youth in the decision making process is to show them how the government works. Create a Base, start a campaign and do a power analysis on who is a champion and who are those who oppose. Develop working relationships and create bonds that will help your campaign go through. Find open seats and ask for seats that youth can be involve in with decision making tables.



What are some ways that you give youth power during the research and planning process of an intervention? (Speaking about why it's important to allow youth to be a part of the whole process even as projects move upstream in government)

I explain to them that they are our future leaders. We all have a voice and it is our right to speak up for what we believe in and want. Most laws that are passed and policies that are changed may not affect them now, but later in the future will. I like to tell my youth this quote, "If a nation takes care of its

children, the children will grow up to take care of its nation.”



Anything else about your experiences with youth engagement that you would like to add?

Be there friend. Don't only speak to them about work, get to know them and develop that trust and family like environment. Take a step back and listen to them, you will learn from them as much as they learn from us.

Contact information for anyone who might want to know more about your work or questions about how they can try to do similar youth engagement projects:

Terry Stanley

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