

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - TACTIC

Name	Hero Austin and Margaret Agyapong – People's Empowerment Alliance for Custom House (PEACH)
Details, area of experience	Community organisers and residents of Custom House, Newham, London
Interview date	December 2020
Issues addressed	Affordable housing; private rented sector; poor housing conditions
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Locations referenced	Newham, London
Campaigns, movements, protests	Affordable and safe housing in London; social rents; gentrification
Historical context	2010s
Tactics	Speaking with local people and building networks ; hosting a BBQ rather than formal meetings; attracting media attention ; protesting outside Mears HQ; collecting evidence by taking videos of the issues in the house (e.g. ceiling's falling in, mould, and unsafe drinking water); making a film ; dressing up as judges to raise awareness of the unfair nature of the council decision making process.
Key words	Community and creative organising Isolation Agency – having a voice

	<p>Communication Local councils Private rent</p>
<p>Key points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative organising made people feel more like a community • Communication is key to getting your voice heard • Rent reductions, completed repairs to housing and a return to council ownership are achievable • Make the campaign fun. BBQs and making films • Building allies and networks
<p>Stand-out quotations</p>	<p>“That was a trigger point, finding out that the whole community had the same issues.”</p> <p>“We came to it together saying ‘this has to stop’ our voices has to be heard.”</p> <p>“We had been holding meetings ... but every time we tried to get a few people together ... people were so angry and overwhelmed and upset by the living situation ... that talking about it was so difficult that people would leave that meeting and we wouldn’t see them again! So ... we need to organise in a way that brings people together that has more joy as part of it ... so that is when we started to hold the BBQs.”</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>Hero Austin and Margaret Agyapong talk about tactics used in the People’s Empowerment Alliance for Custom House (PEACH) campaign. Working with hundreds of other families living in unsafe and unhealthy homes owned by a private corporation, Hero and Margaret successfully campaigned to return the properties to council ownership and secured rent reductions for all.</p> <hr/> <p>Hero Austin and Margaret Agyapong are part of the People's Empowerment Alliance for Custom House (PEACH) in Newham, London. Custom House was in a regeneration zone, meaning it was marked for demolition. For four years, the group campaigned against the private landlord Mears who had taken ownership of Customs House from the local council. The properties that the private company owned had fallen into a state of disrepair, resulting in hundreds of families living in unsafe and unhealthy housing.</p> <p>PEACH successfully campaigned for the properties to be returned to council ownership, to pay social rent, and to have repairs completed in a timely manner. To do this Hero and Margaret deployed a number of tactics. Speaking with local residents and neighbours to ask what issues they were facing and they soon discovered that many people were experiencing the same problems – repairs not being completed and high rents. This was</p>

	<p>the catalyst needed to kick start the campaign as there was a sense of being in this situation together.</p> <p>Margaret joined PEACH when she attended a BBQ the group had organised. It was a great way to bring the community together and raise awareness for the issues that everyone was facing.</p> <p>Communication was key in achieving their aims. The individual residents took videos of the unsafe and unhealthy conditions in their homes and this was made into a film that went viral. The BBC picked up some of the videos and came to the properties to film the unsafe conditions. A bus was organised to take residents to Mears headquarters so that they could protest outside. PEACH also worked closely with the local council, the Mayor and other organisations to put forward their case for a return to council ownership and rent reductions. All of this action built allies and networks – both on and offline – that strengthened the campaign.</p>
Main themes for learners	<p>Getting your voice heard: gaining a sense of agency from campaigning</p> <p>Creative ways to get your message out to your community</p> <p>Breaking isolation: the value of showing as well as telling people what the issue is</p>

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