



MARCH FOR BLACK WOMEN

Get Involved: BlackWomen@blueprintny.org

#M4BW Toolkit

Black Women Speak Out

Organizing a Black Women's Townhall
to Build Power and Community.

#M4BW

Washington D.C. | September 30, 2017

#EveryBlackWomen

"I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood." Audre Lorde

What is a Black Women's Townhall?

A townhall traditionally is a way for people in the community to address concerns and come up with solutions to challenges they are facing, often with a politician present.

A Black Women's Townhall is about building political power of Black women in your community. It is an opportunity for Black women to name their own experiences as well as brainstorm solutions to common challenges. It is M4BW's hope that all those who host a townhall come up with a list of demands reflecting the needs in your community.

Organizing a Townhall? Where to Start:

You are the expert in your community. Think about where Black women gather in community: At the hair salon? At church on Sundays? Have 10 close girlfriends in a running whatsapp chat? Start where community is at to get folks talking about the idea of a townhall. Start with a small group of 2-3 people who can help you organize.

Planning Your Townhall: Community Organizing

Once you've identified your core group, it's time to community organize! Think about what issues from the Statement of Demands are salient and resonate in your community. Craft unique messaging that you can disseminate via social media and good old fashioned canvassing. Make sure to ask folks whether they would prefer an in person or online format like **freeconferencecall.com** and ask them what particular issues they may want to discuss!

Black Women Speak Out #M4BW

Planning Your In-Person Townhall: Choosing a Physical Location

In person townhalls are a great way for Black women to build community power. When thinking about a location go back to the question of where Black women gather. Townhalls can happen anywhere! In someone's living room, in the park, at church, in a school cafeteria. Make sure to choose a place that is accessible and easy for folks to get to from work or home. Decide if you want your space to have virtual participation capacity. This could mean someone fielding questions and comments from Twitter, using Facebook live, or a conference call line.

Planning Your In-Person Townhall: Considering Safety

As you're community organizing, make sure to gauge what folks need to feel safe in the physical space. Additionally, while offering to host a townhall in your home is a great idea know that it is your right to invite folks that you know and feel comfortable with.

Planning Your Online Town Hall : Choosing a Platform

Online townhalls offer convenience and accessibility for folks who may want to participate but cannot get to a physical location. Twitter, Facebook Live and Conference Calls are great ways for folks to plug in. Check out the resources section for some free conference call lines!

Planning Your Townhall: Setting an Agenda

An agenda is a roadmap for your townhall. While you don't necessarily need to share it with the participants, it will give you as an organizer a good idea of how to allocate your time so that the conversation runs smoothly. Prepare 3 - 5 guiding, open-ended questions for folks to answer centering their experiences. Don't forget to read the **Statement of Demands** and leave time for folks come up with and to talk about their own demands!

Black Women Speak Out #M4BW

During the Townhall: Facilitation and Documentation Tips

- Start off with a grounding exercise (see resource section), that allows folks time to come into the space, mentally and spiritually and set an intention for the time they will be spending at the townhall.
- Assign roles, ask for timekeepers and scribes!
- Set community agreements
- Make sure everyone has time to share their ideas and thoughts. Recognize if a dominant voice is emerging and be sure to try and center the voices of those most often left out of the conversation.
- **Document, document, document!** Take pictures and video (ask permission first), write down responses, retweet, and repost!

A Note About In Person Townhalls: It's important that you set up the space in a way that makes folks feel welcome and that facilitates the sharing of ideas! Light a candle or incense, play calming music, arrange chairs or cushions in a circle instead of rows and if you can provide water and perhaps a light snack or better yet, have a potluck!

After the TownHall: Connect with #M4BW!

We want to know what your demands are!

<http://www.mamablack.org/about-m4bw>

Resources

#M4BW Statement of Demands

<http://www.mamablack.org/about-m4bw>

Register Your Townhall

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/march-for-black-women-tickets-36159246279>

Guiding Questions

- What challenges are Black women and girls facing in our community?
- What strengths do we have as a community that we can draw on to organize in this political moment?
- What are our demands for the Black Women's March?
- What is the narrative about Black women and girls in our community?
- How can we organize to write our own narrative?
- What barriers exist in getting women to the March in D.C. and how can they be overcome?
- Can we organize a sister March?

Conference Call Platforms

<https://www.freeconferencecall.com/>

<https://www.gotomeeting.com>

Organize a March in Your City

#M4BW Press Kit

http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/f0223e_a7ed5ea9f4a84afdad809c258bccfa6a.pdf

Fund Black Women

<https://www.crowdrise.com/the-march-for-black-women1/fundraiser/blackwomensblueprint>