



Metropolitan Group

the power of voice



United Way  
for Southeastern Michigan

# **Building Public Will:** *The “Holy Grail” of Citizen Advocacy and Social Change Creation*

Kevin T. Kirkpatrick, Metropolitan Group

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Metropolitan Group crafts strategic and creative services that empower social purpose organizations to build a just and sustainable world.

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Dow plunges 500 points - Iraq war claims 4,000 U.S. troops - Panic engulfs global markets - Half of mammals in decline - Bank failures expected to rise - AIDS infections up for young people - Hurricane holdouts face “certain death” - School test scores fall - Parents link autism to vaccinations - Clergy sex-abuse case goes to jury - Home foreclosures at highest rate - Prescription drug costs up - Bin laden releases new tape - New airport screening procedures announced - Arts funding slashed - Study links cell phones and cancer risk in kids - Home values shrinking - UN calls for response to genocide - Global warming claims another endangered species - Campaign takes sharply negative turn - Gang violence claims another victim - Insurance costs double in 5 years



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**“There is no such thing as a social problem, until enough people, with enough power in the society, agree that there is.”**

– Armand Mauss and Julie Wolfe, eds., This Land of Promises: The Rise and Fall of Social Problems, 1977

**“...the way in which the world is imagined determines at any particular moment what men will do.”**

– Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion, 1921



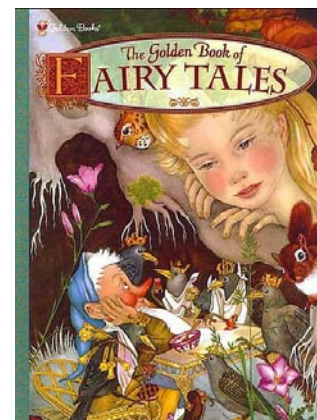
In other words ...



The manner in which we process new information and make decisions about **what to believe** or **what to do** is related to our deeply held views and assumptions about **how the world works**



# How it works





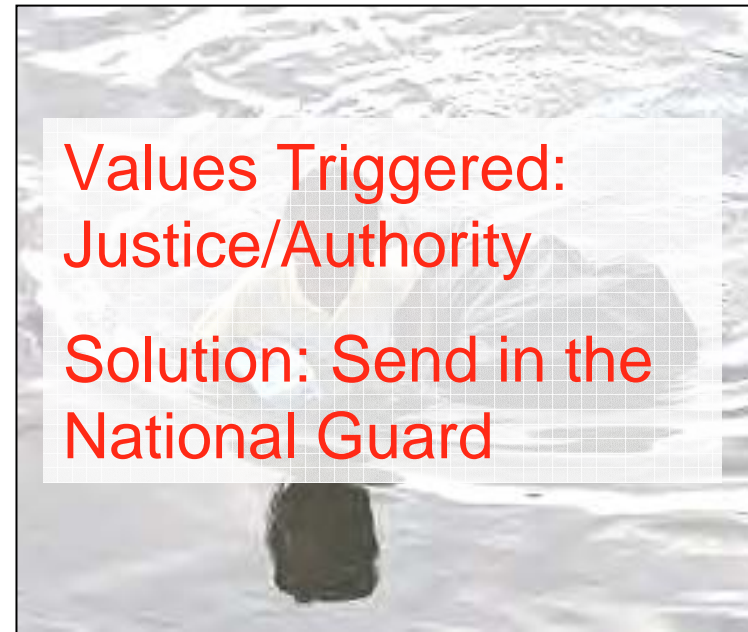
# For example



Values Triggered:  
Shared Responsibility  
  
Solution: Send food,  
water, money, etc.



AFP/Getty Images – Tue Aug 30, 3:47 AM ET  
Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)



Values Triggered:  
Justice/Authority  
  
Solution: Send in the  
National Guard



AP – Tue Aug 30, 11:31 AM ET  
A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it made landfall on Monday. (AP Photo/Dave Martin)



In advancing long-term, **sustainable social change**, success depends on how effectively an issue is **framed** to trigger certain values and establish relevancy for a proposed solution, and how completely advocates move **beyond public opinion to public will**



# Public Opinion ≠ Public Will



- **Public Opinion**
  - Seeks to influence attitudes or behaviors in the short-term
  - Typically relies on mass media
  - Narrows the discourse
  - Hard to sustain, and doesn't necessarily lead to public will
- **Public Will**
  - Seeks to create long-term, sustainable changes in attitudes and behavior
  - Employs grassroots and mass media
  - Broadens the discourse
  - Harder to achieve, but easier to sustain



# Building Public Will



- Public Will
  - Galvanizes community members and thought leaders around a new/different set of values on a particular issue
  - Defines new norms of collective behavior
    - Results in new policies to encourage/reward these behaviors
  - Motivates, enables and sustains positive changes in individual behavior reflecting these new norms

# *building* PublicWill



## **Five Phases of Building Public Will:**

Organizers and Audiences

- Framing the problem
- Building awareness
- Becoming knowledgeable/transmitting information
- Creating a personal conviction
- Evaluating while reinforcing

To download MG's entire Public Will Framework, visit [www.metgroup.com](http://www.metgroup.com).



## Building Public Will



- Answer this: “Are you sure you *need* public will?”
- Engage your constituencies early and often
- Clearly connect with people’s values
- Propose relevant and credible solutions
  - Good intentions are not enough; document and communicate outcomes and impact
- Employ both top-down and bottom-up strategies
- Remember, it’s a long-term proposition



## Metropolitan Group

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### Chicago

35 East Wacker Drive Suite 1750  
Chicago Illinois 60601-2208  
Phone 312 628 1447 Fax 312 628 1449

### Portland

519 SW Third Avenue Suite 700  
Portland Oregon 97204-2519  
Phone 503 223 3299 Fax 503 223 3474

### San Francisco

4104 24th Street #413  
San Francisco California 94114  
Phone 415 519 2414 Fax 503 223 3474

### Washington DC

1800 K Street NW Suite 200  
Washington DC 20006-2247  
Phone 202 380 3123 Fax 202 380 3127

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