

FAMILY PAROLE ADVOCACY OUTLINE

Veronica Obregon, Free Rosario Muñoz Committee

I. How to organize a family campaign to fight a governor's no parole policy – ***Family members are crucial to helping their loved ones get out of prison.***

1. Identify a point person/persons/a leader/a representative/spokesperson that will take the lead in the campaign.
2. Have family meetings where you can discuss and plan your campaign
 - a. First, have a meeting where you can discuss and share your true feelings and thoughts about why your loved one is in prison and what you want to do about it. [e.g., You think she made a bad decision but you know that she was victim]
 - b. Identify who will be involved [e.g., Maybe the children will not want to be identified but the sister is willing to do interviews.]
 - c. Identify how you will finance your actions [e.g., Maybe a cousin doesn't want to go to the demonstrations or ask for support letters but she is willing to donate water, food, money]
 - d. Discuss how you will handle the media [e.g., Who will do the interviews? How will you decide what interviews to grant? What is your message going to be? Who will contact the media?]
 - e. There may be some family members that do not wish to participate and that is their right, so try to respect everybody opinions. Figure out what is the best way to make decisions in your family. [e.g., After discussing pros and cons, take a vote and majority wins]
3. Give your group a name so that your loved one's name can always be remembered. [e.g., *Free Rosario Muñoz Committee, Maria Suarez Defense Committee, Free Maria Badilla Coalition*] Always refer to her in her full name so that the name can be ingrained in people's minds.
4. Set up a website or a webpage with an email address that people can remember [e.g., Freerosariomunoz@att.net]. Link it up to websites working for prisoner's rights.
5. Buy a banner with your message [e.g., "Gov. Schwarzenegger free Christy Camp Now!!"] that you can use at demonstrations or protest.
6. Make T-Shirts with your loved one's picture and the name of your organization.
 - a. Choose a color for your group so that when you wear your shirts you will be easily identified. [e.g., The FRMC wore yellow, Maria Suarez group wore pink].
 - b. Make flyers, stickers, business cards, buttons to hand out to people when you meet them.
7. Work closely with organizations that support prisoner human rights, women in prison, or juveniles in prison.
 - a. These orgs can help you link to many resources such as training, funding opportunities, access to their membership [for support letters], emotional support, and consultation.
8. Take your story to the Media! Be persistent, don't give up! Let them know that you have a story that people want to hear.
 - a. Contact media in your city and community [Spanish language television, Black newspapers] and tell them your story

- b. Have your incarcerated loved one grant interviews
- c. Write to newspapers, call reporters!

9. Contact your elected officials

- a. Be persistent! Let them know that you want to meet with them to discuss how they can help you help your loved ones or if they can point you in the right direction
- b. Write letters to them

10. If your loved one is a citizen of another country, contact the local consulate and ask them for help.

11. Attend community events such as protests, church meetings, cultural festivals to set up a table to give out information, collect support letters, speak at public events.

- a. This is where you will get most of your support letters
- b. Plan your own demonstrations and events and send out press releases to get people to support you.

12. Contact families and ex-prisoners who have been through this before

- a. Free Rosario Muñoz Committee -- freerosariomunoz@att.net
- b. Maria Suarez -- www.freemariasuarez.org

13. Don't take no for an answer and don't give up! It may be difficult and emotionally draining at times but the more you get the word out about your loved one, the more it will help.

- a. A campaign can also be very therapeutic in that it can instill hope and increase self-esteem for your loved one inside.

II. There were some important factors in my aunt's case that contributed to our success.

1. It was a sympathetic case: Battered Immigrant Woman in Prison with 3 children
2. Good behavior of inmate: My aunt had very good behavior, talented painter, learned a profession
3. Found suitable for parole once before: My aunt's date was taken away by Davis in 2002 but found suitable again in 2003
4. Family involved in campaign: I was the coordinator of the FRMC but we had consistent participation from more than 15 people in our family

These 4 factors allowed us to garner massive public support that influenced elected officials to support our campaign. Even though, you may not have one of these factors in your case it is still possible to mount a successful campaign. However, it is very important to have (#4) family involvement.