



# RACIAL FAIRNESS AMERICA

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## How to start a Local Affiliate (the Basics)

It's no cinch to start any kind of organization from scratch. Here are the steps we think should normally be taken:

- 1) Find a partner or two, at least:** You need to start with at least one or two other people like yourself – committed to undermining racism and its effects, and willing to put in time and effort. Try not to be content with just your best friends. You'll need people very different from you, to make this succeed. The sooner you find some of them, the better.
- 2) Get in touch with us:** We like to know who's out there wanting to join in on what we're doing, but more important, we can provide help where you need it, beyond what's in writing here.
- 3) Understand what you're getting into:**
  - a) Cruise around our website, especially the parts about Racial Fairness and Local Affiliates.
  - b) Define your "area." Is it a city, a county, some other kind of district defined by geography or some other way? Is it multi-racial? If not, you should probably expand your area to include communities different from you, even if you don't already have good connections there.
  - c) Get to know more about the minority communities in your area – what color or racial or ethnic identities do they have? How do they identify or define themselves? Get on their websites if they have them, or if they have organizations of their own, get in touch and see if you can go to a meeting or just have a chat with someone.
  - d) Don't be surprised if you're not always welcomed with open arms immediately. There is a long history in our country of white people trying to be helpful and failing badly. This can be puzzling at first, so see our pages on [White Saviorism](#). Our early experience is that some groups will welcome you eagerly, while others will criticize and discourage you. *Work with the eager ones, and don't argue with the critical ones.*
- 4) Dig in deeper: Set up your Exploratory Committee**
  - a) Ideally, find an equal mix of People of Color and white people. A total of six is a good target, though you can do it with fewer. Or more. But don't do it alone (or even just

with two people), because there are many tricky issues to discuss, and different points of view are helpful.

- b) RFA Inc. can provide you with a list of issues to discuss and make at least tentative decisions about.
- c) Not that we want to be domineering, but either stay close to the RFA model, or don't try to affiliate with us. If you have your own ideas, and you've discussed them with local People of Color, and you're pretty sure they will work, then by all means, create your own model, or use ours as a starting point and take flight from there. But please, if you're not following our model pretty closely, don't use "Racial Fairness" in your name. It will just confuse people and possibly get you and/or us into trouble.
- d) Produce a written plan, stating clearly what you're trying to accomplish and what your group intends to do to get there. Keep it to a few pages. This is what you will pass around to people you try recruiting to your team.

## **5) Expand your team and get to work**

- a) Proceed with recruiting new team members, ideally reflecting the racial and ethnic diversity in your area. But if some People of Color or their organizations resist, do not twist their arms. At all. Your words will probably not persuade them, but if you get your own group going and it does what you want it to do, and it really does help people without causing new problems, you will increasingly win people over.
- b) Some people on your team will be the worker bees, and others will not be able to be that during your start-up phase. Assemble the worker bees, make a to-do list for the group, assigning tasks to those who can do them best. At the least, the list should probably include:
  - i) Incorporate in your state as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charity. You will need to have a Board of Directors. Then put together your Articles of Incorporation. You should have By-Laws as well even if your state doesn't required them (they set rules for how your organization will run, and you should have good ones). Most people hire a lawyer to help with this and other steps in the process, but it is quite possible to do it on your own. An experienced accountant could also guide you. Once you're incorporated, get an Employer ID number (EIN) from the IRS; this just requires you to fill out a pretty simple form. You need this to take further steps.
  - ii) Then you can apply to the IRS for your non-profit status. The [IRS tells you step by step what you need to do](#).
  - iii) Set up your website and social media. Start to think about other avenues of publicity, but don't get too far ahead of yourself.
  - iv) Collect some start-up money and open a bank account.

- v) If you will have paid employees, make sure you are set up to process payroll correctly, including employer and employee contributions to Social Security, federal (and state, if applicable) income tax withholding, and your state's unemployment insurance fund.
- vi) Make sure you're ready to accept donations (of money, time, expertise, physical goods, etc.) We do have an app for that, but you probably don't need it on Day One. Just make sure you keep good paper records, if that's how you're starting out.
- vii) Have a sub-plan for how you are going to solicit from the white folks. Identify likely audiences, figure out how to get in front of them, put together a polished presentation. Publicize your events. But as you can see, if you're doing this, you're actually in operation, so now take a breath and think about how you keep all the moving parts working together. Here are some thoughts about [how to keep your momentum going](#).