

PRESS KIT

The Ultimate Guide to Political Activism— Praised by Scholars and Activists Alike



Every major arena of American life—voting rights, environmental policy, immigration, war and peace, the civil service, the courts—is now a site of political conflict.

Responding effectively requires strategy, not reflex. That's why Charles Euchner wrote *Rules of Activism*.

Without understanding how political power works from the bottom up—how movements form, how opposition succeeds or fails, and how strategy differs from expression—reformers and resisters struggle to find their footing.

Here's the problem: Political activism is rarely taught systematically. As Bill McKibben says, "there's no West Point for activists."

What's missing is a shared framework for exercising power at the grassroots level.

Lacking that framework, people become reactive. Instead of building coalitions and compounding power, activists often stage a rally and then disappear.

But that's not an option anymore.

Rules of Activism offers a practical framework for understanding the realities of political and social movements—how they actually operate. The book identifies fifteen concrete rules of activism. Drawn from history, rigorous research, real-world case studies, *Rules of Activism* shows how movements gain traction, build power, and confront the opposition.

Each rule is grounded in a detailed case study, followed by analysis that explains why the rule works and when it fails. The rules cover activism, from the start to the end:

Part I: Insight and Outreach

- Rule 1: Connect, Listen, and Share
- Rule 2: Identify Gaps and Contradictions
- Rule 3: Master the Big Idea
- Rule 4: Map the Sources of Problems

Part II: Building Capacity

- Rule 5: Recruit Allies, Near and Far
- Rule 6: Build a Strong Organization
- Rule 7: Nurture Servant Leadership

Part III: Strategy and Tactics

- Rule 8: Create a Multidimensional Strategy
- Rule 9: Work Off the Grid
- Rule 10: Rally for Solidarity and Attention
- Rule 11: Withdraw Consent
- Rule 12: Block, Occupy, and Subvert
- Rule 13: Create Enduring Symbols and Identity

Part IV: Win Some, Lose Some

- Rule 14: Evolve Multistage Campaigns
- Rule 15: Pivot from Protest to Policy

Rules of Activism is a field guide for political action. It helps us to make sense of events as they unfold—why certain moves succeed, why others fail, and how power is being accumulated or squandered.

Instead of seeing events in isolation, *Rules of Activism* shows how to recognize patterns, sequences, and leverage points, helping them decide when to mobilize, when to organize, when to wait, and how to move from protest toward durable policy change.

Charles Euchner brings this framework to universities, civic organizations, newsrooms, and activist groups through talks, interviews, and workshops. Sessions focus on concrete questions audiences face right now: how to diagnose a moment, identify leverage, choose targets, sequence actions, build coalitions, and convert pressure into policy.

Audiences gain a usable roadmap for movement dynamics and a short list of next moves tailored to their context—what to do first, what to avoid, and how to tell whether an effort is compounding or dissipating.

About the Book and the Author

Rules of Activism is, at once, the most comprehensive and concise guide to political and social movements in America.

Each chapter identifies a core imperative of activism and uses a detailed case study to show how that idea works in practice—how decisions are made under pressure, what consequences follow, and why some approaches succeed while others fail.

- Get the [Rules of Activism's Table of Contents](#).
- Get a breakdown of [The Rules](#).

To learn more, check out some [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

About the Author

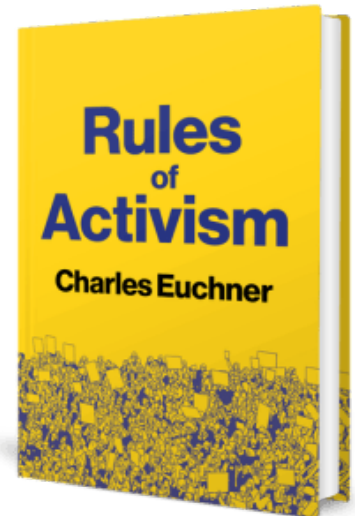
Charles Euchner (pronounced IKE-ner) studies how democracy works in practice—how ideas move, how coalitions form, and how pressure turns into policy. He has worked on grassroots policy throughout his career, not only as a scholar and policy expert, but also inside government, examining the mechanics of power from multiple vantage points.

Educated at Vanderbilt University and the Johns Hopkins University, Euchner has taught writing, politics, and public policy at Yale University, Columbia University, and the College of the Holy Cross, with a focus on helping people understand complex systems clearly enough to act within them.

Beyond academia, Euchner has worked inside government and policy organizations, including as a planner for the City of Boston, where he worked directly with community activists to translate neighborhood demands into citywide plans, budgets, and policy decisions. He has held senior roles at organizations such as New America, the Center for an Urban Future, and Harvard University's Rappaport Institute, where he designed research agendas, advised policymakers, and worked with advocates to turn analysis into actionable policy strategies.

He is the author of multiple books on American politics, history, and civic life. Across this work, his central concern has been consistent: how ordinary people organize, exert pressure, and make change in systems that resist it.

Euchner, a frequent speaker and commentator on American politics and civic life, is known for explaining complex dynamics in clear, direct language. His work emphasizes strategy over spectacle, diagnosis over outrage, and sustained action over symbolic gestures.



Early Reviews

Leading scholars and practitioners have praised *Rules of Activism* for its clarity and detailed treatment of this complex subject.

Nonviolent movement building is one of the greatest of twentieth-century inventions, a way for the powerless to stand up to the powerful. But we don't study it systematically — there's no West Point for activists. That makes a book like this, rich in detail and history, tremendously useful to everyone trying to make change happen.

—Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org and author of *The End of Nature*

Surprisingly, there are relatively few books about protest movements with a practical, activist's orientation. Charles Euchner has developed fifteen helpful *Rules of Activism* that will inform and motivate anyone with a practical interest in protest, from beginners to seasoned organizers

—Jeff Goodwin, New York University

This enticing, informative, and beautifully composed book not only captures the essence of activism but provides a powerful guide for those who wish to become active in the political and social arena. Euchner uses his in-depth understanding of activism across the centuries - drawing on a spectacular range of examples - to bring to life the importance of activism in any democracy.

—Barry Bluestone, Northeastern University

Raves for Charlie as a Speaker and Teacher

Charles Euchner—who has taught writing at Yale, planning at Columbia, and political science at Holy Cross—is a dynamic and experienced speaker. Comfortable behind the microphone, on a stage, and in a classroom, Euchner brings a lifetime of learning and work to his audiences.

The genius of a Charlie Euchner presentation is in the simple eloquence with which he delivers a bounty of usable information and advice. He connects with people using a conversational style loaded with ideas borne from his years of application and research. Given his impressive academic and real-world experience, he's earned his credentials as an intellectual, but he is as accessible as an old friend. Listening to Charlie extemporaneously engage a group is an exhibition of a brilliant and nimble mind at work.

— Chris Carroll, Vanderbilt University

Charlie's passion touches every listener and motivates individual transformation in an instant. Speaking without notes, he connects with an audience in just a few

moments, allowing the intensity and importance of his message to permeate straight into the learner. At the heart of his work is the power of storytelling, and his style of storytelling is impactful from the very first moment. I recommend Charlie as a workshop leader who makes a difference, and does so in an easy yet intense manner. And on top of it all, he's a very special human being.

— Harris Stone, The Graduate Institute

This was truly the most successful education program I've run here at Amneal, and everyone I have spoken with agrees that taking the program was time well spent. On a scale of 1 to 10, I think we scored at least a 12.

— Alan Z. From, Amneal Pharmaceuticals

Exam and Review Copies

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Author Availability

Charles Euchner has spoken to a wide range of academic and activist groups over the years, as well as media outlets. Bring him to your university or organization. Email him at cce@rulesofactivism.com or charles.euchner@yale.edu.

Photos

- [Headshot](#) (Photo credit: Isabel Chenoweth)
- [Book cover](#) ([3D cover](#))

Past Interviews

Charlie Euchner has been appeared in a wide range of news outlets, from *The New York Times* to “All Things Considered” to “Nightline.” To get a sense of his style as an interviewee, check out these interviews:

- [Interview with NPR's All Things Considered](#) about *Nobody Turn Me Around*.
- [Interview with Sonali Kolhatkar](#).
- [All Sides With Ann Fisher](#).
- [C-SPAN Book Talk](#).
- [The Pat Williams Show](#).