

# From Narrative to Analysis

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Present a case study of an on-campus situation involving student efforts to organize an event or to make change or a community service experience that was problematic.

**EXAMPLE:** A university student stood in front of the campus bookstore passing out fliers urging customers not to buy clothing because much of the clothing was from companies using sweatshop labor. A security guard asked the student to move along as this area of campus was not a “free speech zone”. The student claimed that he was not speaking, only passing out fliers and not disturbing anyone. The guard persisted. The student noted that just yards away, a credit card vendor was making much more noise hawking his cards. The guard explained that the vendor had university permission to be there. The student said that as a student, he had a right to be where he was. The guard insisted that political activity was limited to the free speech area. When the student refused to give ground, he was placed under arrest for disturbing the peace, cuffed and taken off campus.

*(Note: this activity will be much more effective if you use an incident from your own campus and/or community rather than the example.)*

The questions below are suggestions and considerations. Do not feel you need to use all or any of them, or feel free to adjust them to better fit your campus, your group, or the situation you are addressing.

## **Ask the group to analyze the incident along the following lines:**

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1. What were the expectations of the involved parties?
2. What role did communications play in resolving or complicating the situation?
3. Who held the reins of power and what means were used to attempt to counter power?
4. What role did resources or the lack of resources play in the incident?
5. What role might stereotypes have played in the incident?
6. What strategies might have been used by either party to lead to a more positive outcome?
7. How does this incident relate to larger philosophical issues of campus activism or community service?
8. What strategies might be used to insure that this situation is not repeated?
9. What is the importance of this situation to our understanding of “civic engagement”?