

The Movement Chakras of vision, strategy, organizing, workstyle, redemption, transformation and summation are congested, obstructed, jammed up. I have often said some of the brightest and imaginative people are in our social justice movements. We can—and must—figure out our collective vision and purpose. Our goal in the next five years is to build highly disciplined organizations and formidable movements that actively engage in political education, constructive criticism and radical workstyles. We need to get our people ready for battle. It's time to get in formation.

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### **Unblocking our Movement Chakras: Recommended Resources**

*(Please share any readings, videos, etc. related to the series that we can add to this list.)*

#### [Accountability to the Collective](#)

A protocol created by the Organization for Black Struggle

#### [Creating a Viable Left: Sixteen Lessons Learned from Building the Black Radical Congress](#)

By Jamala Rogers and Bill Fletcher, Jr.

#### [Combat Liberalism](#)

By Mao Zedong, Adapted by the Organization for Black Struggle-St. Louis, MO

#### [The Demise of the Women of Color Resource Center\\*](#)

By the Community Task Force

#### [Ella Taught Me: Shattering the Myth of the Leaderless Movement](#)

By Barbara Ransby

#### [More Than We Imagined\\*](#)

Ear to the Ground Project by NTanya Lee and Steve Williams

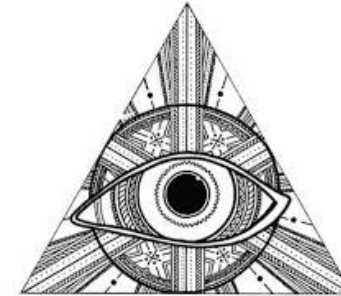
#### [Up You Mighty Race\\*](#)

By Umi Selah (Formerly known as Phillip Agnew)

### **Vision: Another World is Possible**

*Where there is no vision, there is no hope.*

-George Washington Carver



One thing that our radical movement is clear about: We are staunchly anti-. We are anti-capitalist, anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-heterosexist, anti-ageist, anti-patriarchal, anti, anti. We are quite articulate about the features of capitalism that we vehemently oppose. But we are generally vague about what we are for. Vision is the long-term view of what we want for our families, what we want this country to be, what it should look like in the future. Vision is what we are asking the masses of people to fight for. That vision helps to shape and define the strategy, tactics, guiding principles and other elements that move our struggle from aspirational to transformational. Vision is the first chakra that our Freedom Movement needs to blast wide open.

One of the few encouraging lights of the U.S. presidential election was the percentage of the electorate who were not just anti-capitalist but who openly claimed to be socialist or leaning towards socialism. No doubt, the Bernie Sanders campaign for president helped to elevate the S word to a higher place in public discourse. Several polls pointed out that nearly 50% of Americans favored a socialist candidate. In other polls, as high as 60% of Democratic voters had a positive view of socialism. These facts

During the 1980's the New Communist Movement attempted to bring credibility back to the term. The Occupy Movement's delineation of the One Percenters and the 99 Percenters also helped to illuminate the class divisions for a new generation of activists and organizers.

This article is not to debate the merits or failures of socialism. My point is that folks in this country are desperately seeking alternatives to the current system of human exploitation and environmental degradation. The intensifying state violence across nationality, gender and religion is demanding a bold and just vision. president donald trump is putting the country on a neo-fascist track and daring us to stop the train.

So how should we think about vision? In 20 year increments? By city— as in what do we want Detroit to look/act like by 2037? By region— as in who controls the land and human resources in the Black Belt South? By social movements— as in what environmental norms should we be re-envisioning for the next century. These are questions that don't necessarily take unanimity of the whole. Start the conversation.

Back in the day, Black Panther Fred Hampton said, "...we're not gonna fight capitalism with black capitalism, we're going fight for socialism." I was right there with the Chairman but maybe we shouldn't start with advocating for a system at all—not even a socialist system—and instead describe how human life will be valued, protected and respected in all its facets. What would the U.S. look like if we nationalized the resources and profits for the greater good of the people, for the advancement of humanity?

Who has the authority to project a vision for our movement? Has the movement created an atmosphere of timidity about advancing ideas without permission? Who decides?

Many individual organizations in our social justice movement advance their own group's vision and mission. This can contribute to moving a broader discussion around vision because at least these groups have looked at a vision on a micro level. Visioning on a micro level is the next logical step.

In our current situation, to resist is to almost be passive. It's like trying to hold back the floodgates of neo-liberalism but not move forward. There must be an action verb connected to resist. Resist and rebuild. Resist and renew. Resist and organize. It imperative that we don't lose the political ground that we've fought so hard to gain. Now, we must be bolder and more creative in our strategy and tactics. We should start thinking about disruption tactics (like a national strike!) to turn up the heat and to win our demands. This is a good time to discuss campaigns like UnGovernable2017 as a focus for strategic action.

Last year the New York Times reported on protests of police killings in 88 cities over a two-week period. I wondered what our movement's net gain was given the amount of energy and resources these actions took. Did we get a cop convicted? Did we change a department's policy on deadly force? Did our organizations grow? We know that these mass actions are psychological boosters for our people but we need to be planning protests in a way that advances our struggle, pushes a set of demands. This is the time to be more sophisticated and strategic. Let's rally people beyond a protest sign and around a strategic, principles of organizing and a revolutionary code of conduct.

First, do no harm to our movements and its committed members. If we take ourselves seriously, the way in which we do our work reflects whether you believe our struggle is worthy and winnable. There's gonna be hustlers in our movement. There's gonna be those who don't do the work but take credit for the work of others. We should make it difficult for these blood-suckers of the movement to operate and to operate without consequences. We must create healthy and safe space for the vigorous practice of self-criticism and criticism as well as for redemption and healing.

What study and retooling does our movement need to better understand the period we are in? Groups like Project South, School of Unity and Liberation (SOUL) and institutions like The Highlander provide us with valuable popular education and training modules. Can we give them feedback when we use their resources to improve their relevancy and potency? Of course we can, but we must be disciplined enough to conduct trainings and political education for our networks, then facilitate a summation that allows us to build and grow. Feel free to add to the accompanying resource list to the Chakra series.

## Unblocking Our Movement Chakra: The Epilogue

*"No movement can survive unless it is constantly growing and changing with the times. If it isn't growing, it's stagnant, and without the support of the people, no movement for liberation can exist, no matter how correct its analysis of the situation is."*

- Assata Shakur



I've received incredible response to the Chakra series already; the articles are resonating with freedom fighters. I believe it's because over the last several years I've been listening to your frustrations, pain, insights and aspirations. There's enough of us seriously doing the work to create a sea change in movements for transformative

change. Let's start, or in some cases, accelerate the important discussion about what we are building and how we will organize for power.

I started off the year with talking about the 3 S's—what we need more of in our movement building. To be more strategic, more serious and more sophisticated. I talked about the 3 S's publicly as a panelist in the M4BL webinar on "Political Power." Since then, I've added two more S's: More science and more study. All five are critical to thinking about organization for transformation.

Winona LaDuke reminds us that there is no "social-change fairy." Neither can we chant or talk our way to power. We must organize the masses of people based upon a vision and a strategy. It takes a plan to build a house, write a book. It takes a protocol to do surgery, to work in the pit stop. Individualism in our movements is on steroids and contributes to the erroneous view that we can come into the movement, and stumble and fumble up on social change.

About 20 years ago, Angela Davis and others founded Critical Resistance. CR's vision is to abolish the prison industrial complex. Since your vision drives your strategy and tactics, the group does not engage in any work that extends the "life or scope" of the PIC. For many, this vision seemed/s far-fetched and an impossible goal to reach. However, we know from the research of Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*, that prior to the so-call war on drugs the U.S. government was re-thinking the utility of prisons because of the low levels of crime. One must wonder if our movement had the vision and the political analysis at that time, what would our penal system look like today. In the absence of that vision and the work needed to actualize it, abolishing the prison system as it currently exists is now markedly more challenging. Still, abolition is not impossible. It takes vision to see the end game.

The US Social Forum set off to provide a movement-building space to design "what we want our world to look like and we must start planning the path to get there," and that it's going to take more than movements "stand-against" all that is oppressive and exploitive. Some fifteen years later, I don't think we've sharpened that discussion to move closer to a consensus vision. With thousands convening at these forums, it's an appropriate space to have the discussion about what "another US" would look like. At some point, we can say we don't have a perfect vision that all can unify around but we do have a vision that can be perfected as we move forward.

It is important to truly know what vision is to our movement because it presupposes that not only do we see a future, we have made a commitment to fight for that future. It's also important because it gives breath to strategy and tactics.

In the coming months, the trump administration will throw lots of curve balls at us. Mobilization without a clear strategy could result in battle fatigue for the tens of thousands who are standing up to be counted in the struggle for freedom, justice and equality—many for the first time in their lives. When we fail to effectively and strategically organize, our movement validates the false narrative that the multi-racial working class can never win against the ruling corporate elite in this country.

Vision is sight beyond today. The future is ours to take.

## Unblocking our Movement Chakras: Strategy and Tactics

*“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”*

--Sun Tzu, The Art of War



In recent years, movement strategy has become synonymous with tactics. We've sunk a lot of energy and resources into mobilizations that are devoid of strategy. A tactic of the trump administration and the organized right-wing is to hurl us into a dizzying spin, mobilizing against every reactionary commentary, policy,

legislation that's thrown at us. This tactic will effectively quickly lead to battle fatigue and demoralization – a victory for neo-liberalism. Sharpening our understanding of strategy will open this movement chakra. The chi will move us forward in a more precise and unified manner.

Over the past decade or so, I have watched us running to protests from one city to the next. We may get a cop fired here or there or temporarily stop a pipeline. Where's our vision for state repression? We don't have a national strategy on one of the most persistent and rampant issues in the U.S. Where's our vision for the assault on the planet that gives us life? The corporatocracy is poisoning the air, the water and the land and making us pay for it. The price is high for being disorganized and unorganized.

I had the occasion to talk with Praxis Project founder Makani Themba after the trump coronation. Protests were spontaneously happening across the country in response to his electoral college victory. I told Makani that I was not going to waste one minute in protest to which she replied that it is important for people in other countries know we don't support the new president. She tempered my frustrations with thought

Espousing politically correct rhetoric will not adequately address hegemony, we must be radical and get to the roots. On a personal level, this means understanding the political, cultural, social and familial forces that impacted your development as a child and young person. Generally, if you are a male, you got many messages that you were superior to women. If you are heterosexual, you got messages that homosexuality was abnormal. If you are white, you received messages that people of color are inferior. If you are Christian, all other religions are illegitimate. Fierce study and principled debate can help us identify the signs whenever and wherever they appear.

#3-Our inability and in some cases, our refusal, to combat liberalism can never lead to principled and healthy self-criticism and criticism. Having crit and self-crit can be compared to the agitator of a washing machine. Some dirt from the clothes may be loosened up just by being put in soapy water but the agitating is going to loosen up a lot more dirt. It's the difference between a dingy wash and a clean wash. Our dingy movement needs some serious agitation.

And can we discuss a revolutionary morality in our movement? This is different from how the religious right frames it. I'm talking about creating internal organizational cultures where negative behaviors will not be tolerated whether it is womanizing, theft or sexual assault. These behaviors or acts of disruption have little to do with our struggle for liberation and democracy. They will always undermine our unity of purpose and any strategy for power. Always. I would hope that a revolutionary morality is one that perpetually lifts up the most just and humane characteristics of people. A revolutionary morality is nurtured in an environment free of exploitation and oppression often perpetrated by us.

Self-transformation must be a perpetual act to create and strengthen a counter-hegemonic culture that challenges the racist, patriarchal status quo. The social justice movements are open to all who want to struggle to be our best selves—physically strong, mentally sharp, spiritually sound, ideologically clear and politically grounded. This is not a come-as-you-are party. You gotta leave your bags at the door. We're transforming. Another world is coming.

mount a serious offensive against the Empire. Sadly, you'll hear people in the movement say things like "I've done my time" before they move on to something else— as if they just served a prison sentence.

Conflict is inevitable but it can be a healthy conduit to a deeper unity if we engage in a collective, democratic process. Our groups do not, cannot survive this chaos and confusion. Our struggle with hegemony must be a conscious and ongoing one or else our organizations will be plagued with the same isms that infect the broader society.

Three reasons why our social movements don't have the necessary intensity of struggle against hegemony that we need is because: 1) individualism is rampant in our organizations and movement spaces; 2) we often lack consciousness about the manifestations or dangers of hegemony and about our own complicity; and 3) we are hampered by liberalism, i.e. unwilling to have genuine self-criticism or raise constructive criticism of others for the greater good.

#1-Individualism is highly promoted by this capitalism culture, as in you are so damn smart, you don't need these other losers. Individualism is ugly all by itself but when class is a motivating factor, it's super ugly and always destructive. It's a bad case of petty bourgeois individualism with emphasis on petty as in trivial, insignificant, small-minded, self-centered. Being born into the working class does not ensure automatic, life-long membership for those who love to throw their working class roots at you; you must consciously choose to throw down with the class and all that it represents. The people I know who did the most damage to organizations were the ones who lacked working class consciousness.

They had the rhetoric down but when it came to their class interests, those folks exercised their class privilege every time. Once they get what is needed to promote their careers or if their self/class-interests are threatened, they are likely to leave the organization in shambles with little remorse.

#2-Under capitalism, the struggle against hegemony must be relentless. Our movements must do intense study of hegemony because it is a smooth operator. It has us doing the dirty work of propping up capitalism without even knowing it. Or if we know it, the personal rewards are so pleasurable that we don't care how it impacts us or others.

ful objectivity and ultimately, we agreed that mobilizations must be connected to a strategy or minimally a set of demands to rally people around. There's always value – and beauty – to convening people for agitation and solidarity. I feel strongly that the days of bringing thousands of people together with no plan beyond the mobe be brought to a screeching halt. Each mobe/protest must result in a tangible win.

Ours is a movement where historically people's entry points on the battlefield are welcomed along with their range of skill sets and knowledge. This makes for both opportunities and challenges in managing the diversity of personalities and experiences around a set strategy. Because of our big tent, there is a need for continual clarification for common language, especially the difference between strategy and tactics. I'm sure there's probably some of you who would be glad to see any semblance of a plan coming out of a particular struggle at this point. We're in a period that demands that we be much more sophisticated. Our enemies just took the struggle up a notch.

Before I dive into strategy, there are a few elements to consider as we work towards our shared vision. I think core values like accountability, integrity, passion and compassion are important when we are struggling to develop the trust for a collaboration. Values define your beliefs and dictate your behaviors; they provide the lens for how you look at vision, mission, strategy and tactics.

To be as scientific as possible, getting to strategy requires an assessment of the material conditions. People in the nonprofit world use what's commonly referred to as a SWOT analysis. Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats. Developing a political analysis means taking a critical and investigative look at the situation both inside and outside the organization/movement. Factors to consider in this democratic process include capacity, finances, laws, relationships, political climate, etc. The more precise we are about current conditions and trends, the more successful our tactics will be.

Strategy describes the destination and can include short-term or long term goals that we are trying to reach. Strategy tends not to change; tactics are flexible. Tactics describe the specific actions we will take to get there. Tactics can be campaigns, initiatives, protests, boycotts, workshops, etc. The devilish details will include who does what, what are the deadlines and

maybe even how it's going to be done. The tactics are tangible so that we can measure how close we are to achieving our goals.

One of our movement's perennial tensions is around the participation in electoral politics. That's because some of us see the electoral arena as a strategy while others see it as a tactic. Electoral politics is one of many tactics toward the goal of political power.

The election of Chokwe Lumumba for mayor was a tactic in the strategy for black political empowerment in Jackson, MS. The building of the People's Assemblies is another tactic coordinated by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and the New Afrikan People's Organization to advance self-determination and power. Sectors of the Black Liberation Movement were critical of the fact that a revolutionary like Chokwe was choosing to become part of the system. The election wasn't the end game. It was part of the plan to get Brother Lumumba into office to carry out the vision. Because of the untimely death of Chokwe, tactics had to change but the strategy remained the same. Antar, Chokwe Lumumba's son, is currently running for mayor as a continuation of the Jackson strategy. The Jackson experiment is an innovative model that we should support, assess and critique.

We need to build organizations and mass movements to scale. We cannot do this without a vision and political analysis that informs an effective strategy and concrete, imaginative tactics. We must be able to educate and politicize large segments of the population on why this capitalist system will never work for them. This can't be done in 144 characters.

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### Developing a Workstyle for Working Class Victories



*"Nothing will work unless you do."*

– Maya Angelou

The term "transformation" can be over-used in movement spaces. Transformation this, transformative that. It's almost as if once you speak the word, transformation will magically take place. However, I do prefer the term because it implies a dramatic change from one condition to another. We don't understand the penetration of the hegemonic tentacles that wrap around us at birth in this country. This means these chakras usually stay jammed and affect our behavior in movement spaces. If ever there was a critical mass of this chakra operating freely, I think we'd experience tsunami-like chi on multiple levels. We would realize the transformative changes we only theorize about now.

If there were sound effects associated with our political baggage, we would hear us coming before we hit the door. For some, it sounds like boxes moving across the floor. For others, it sounds like the stones of the Great Pyramid grinding on a concrete surface. Stuffed in these bags are the isms of individualism, racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, homophobia and classism. These isms are the carry the toxins that maintain the hegemony of capitalism such as values, beliefs, ideologies and practices. Whether ours is a fanny pack or multiple matching luggage depends on how intentional and consistently we unpack our baggage as we grow older. Although it starts with self, unpacking your cannot be a solo act; it takes the support and wisdom of a radical collective.

In all the readings I've encountered, the target of transformation is mainly the society. Rarely is there exploration of that piece of the oppressor that Sista Audrey Lorde warns "is planted deep within each of us." All of us consciously or unconsciously are feeding the capitalist monster. These toxins crowd out the healthy microorganisms of self-transformation and result in our becoming the willing carriers of all the isms which spill out into our organizations. Those in the movement for social justice are not immune just because we can spout political phraseology or because we've been organizing for x-number of years. We have internalized the poisonous beliefs, values and behaviors that become normalized unless we resist, unlearn and replace with revolutionary behaviors.

When people come together into a collective or into a social movement, our personal baggage collides with the political baggage. This is when our organizations become consumed with containing the drama, extinguishing the fires and dodging the political arrows. This is exhausting, demoralizing and unproductive. It leaves us little time and energy to

WCRC, the National Center for Human Rights Education also bit the dust. Founded by Loretta Ross, the center was handed off to a new executive director after a decade of exemplary leadership by Ross. Like the Resource Center, the crew at NCHRE had engaged in a serious vetting process. Sadly, the vetting did not guarantee a successful transition in either case.

We can go up and down history and study what took down organizations from the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) to the League for Revolutionary Struggle (LRS). We could, but we're too busy making the same mistakes. Too often, we don't take the time to reflect and understand what worked and what didn't; we jump right into the next project.

The great thing about summations is that you must be doing work to have something to sum up. New and younger activists are looking for best practices in organizing and movement building. Our movements have a responsibility to them and to ourselves to document our successes as well as our failures in as many creative forms as possible. Let the summation do the talking—in the words of the people who did the work.

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### **Moving from Self-Centeredness to Collective Grounding**

*"The true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations that we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us."*

– Audre Lorde



Our movement for freedom, justice and equality needs to raise the bar of our excellence. Clearly, there are people in the social movements who develop and practice good—even exemplary—workstyles. However, our struggle against the empire has not been optimized because of our attitude and approach towards the work. What is a radical workstyle and what does it look like in our movement spaces? We must unblock this chakra so that it leads to the full intensity of the collective chi.

Work is how we carry out the plans emanating from our strategy and tactics. The way in which we carry out that work is connected to an ideological worldview; it is a vivid reflection of our belief that our struggle is both worthy and winnable.

In most of our organizations and hence our movements, individualism runs rampant. When there are no accountability mechanisms, the individualistic behavior undermines the effectiveness of the collective. Individualism and mediocrity are toxins; they often destroy the unity of the group in achieving its goals.

There are people who don't read, acknowledge or respond to emails, texts or calls in a timely and considerate way. They take on assignments but don't follow through with them or complete them in a half-ass way. People are late to gatherings (or are no-shows) even when they have assignments germane to the event's success. They don't study because they already have the answers. These people are incapable of engaging in genuine self-criticism and do not respond well to constructive criticism.

In the 1990's, Kalimu Endesha coined a phrase for the above set of behaviors. Endesha is one of the founding members of the Organization for Black Struggle and is a veteran organizer. He called it "ghetto volunteerism" because we've internalized the oppressor's belief that since we are not important, nothing we do is either. Endesha also reminded us that we all know these behaviors would never be tolerated in the corporate or business workplace. Try being late at the Ford Motor Company. If people have a sloppy and irresponsible workstyle on their paying gigs, there's a price to pay. So why bring these practices into the righteous work of liberation?

Endesha further elaborated on ghetto volunteerism in a piece he wrote,

“Our movement has abandoned high standards regarding a revolutionary work ethic. There is little accountability to one another or to the collective. People agree to do a task and it’s a throw of the dice if they will follow through on their commitment. If they don’t, can’t or won’t do what they gave their word to do, there’s usually no advanced warning, no explanation and rarely any self-criticism. The “whateva” attitude has infected our liberation efforts in a serious way and threatens any meaningful progress and genuine unity.”

A radical workstyle takes into consideration the value of time and relationships. We can never recoup time and so we must always proceed in the most efficient and effective manner possible. When we breach trust in our relationships, rebuilding broken trust takes time and effort.

A radical workstyle reflects a conscious understanding that our actions are important and connected to the work of others. When we don’t show up or follow through, there are negative organizational and psychological impacts on the collective.

A radical workstyle advances the group’s goals and influence. It can take the best of our individual knowledge, experiences, skills and talents to another level. Adversely, it can squander human resources and energies as well as impede the forward motion of our struggle.

A radical workstyle promotes a model of what we think are necessary and appropriate practices in collective spaces. Think of it as a projection of what new people to the movement should see when they step up to make a commitment to work on transformational change. They are presented with the expectations for their participation.

A radical workstyle lifts and celebrates the positive attributes of quality, discipline, collaboration, integrity, innovation, study and accountability.

Our political analysis, strategy and tactics provide the direction to meet our goals. In some cases, we have principles of unity that give us additional guidance as to how people will work together on achieving the mission, strategy and tactics. Rarely do we give people the elements of a radical workstyle and how to perfect it. A radical workstyle is a collective workstyle.

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There are times when our organizations should sum up a trend that is harmful to its members or to the organization. For example, if there is factionalism (political clique) brewing, the tendency must be critiqued and steps put forward to eliminate the disruptive trend. Then there must also be a summation to determine if those steps were successful in rooting out the negative behaviors. Remember, it’s all about saving the patient(s).

A summation gives us guidance on what are our strengths and weaknesses. Where there are strengths, our organizations can build on them. Where there are weaknesses, we can map out what we need to get it together including more study, trainings and mentoring. Our movement is anemic on study; it’s easier to argue about opinions than to assert a historical analysis based upon facts. Memes can be clever in delivering a short, powerful message but they are no substitute for a disciplined dive into theory, ideology and philosophy. We must strive for the same command of issues like critical race theory or market economy as we have of our protest chants.

One of the most poignant and in-depth summations that I have read in recent times was on the demise of the Women of Color Resource Center (WCRC). This kick-ass group of sistahs had been doing the critical work around women’s issues for nearly two decades. The leadership torch was passed from Linda Burnham to a new director. Two years later, the organization crashed and burned. The support community around WCRC took the extraordinary steps to find out what happened and to publicly share those hard lessons with the movement. The findings of the community task force that convened are very detailed; they include a letter of desperation from the board to the larger community, financials and even summaries of staff interviews. A sentence in the report always feels like a kick in the gut, “...with the writing and sharing of this report with you, we are now ready to scatter the ashes of our beloved organization.”  
Damn.

I hadn’t read the report since it was circulated and it’s just as heartbreaking now as it was then. Reading it again made me realize that it encompasses all the chakras I have written about. It’s all there in painstaking detail why our movement must focus on transformative work on ourselves and in our organizations. Right around the same time as the fall of



## Summation: Going back to go forward—faster

*"We are airing our shame and failures because we want you, our movement sisters and brothers, to tuck lessons from this trauma into your sewing kits and toolboxes to create sturdier organizations in your communities."*

-Sharing Sorrow: Women of Color Resource Center's Downfall,  
Community Taskforce Findings, March 2011

**2A x S(2) + S(O)<sup>2</sup> - BS = TC + S**

**Break down the equation!**

Start with a political analysis, add strategy  
then a double dose of serious organizing.

Subtracting the bullshit equals trans-  
formative change. Do a summation.

There are several terms used to critique if we are effective in what we are building and how we are doing it. Evaluation, assessment, review. I'm most accustomed with the word summation, as in creating a culture of summation in an organization. Summations are important because they validate whether our political analysis and strategy were realistic. Ultimately, it should help us improve our internal functioning and organizing. Without regular, thorough and collective assessments, this chakra gets clogged. When this happens, our political analysis becomes dull and our development is stagnated.

Summing up our practice or a campaign should be a routine part of organizational planning. When we sum up a program or campaign, the starting point is if we achieved the stated goals and objectives. These are based upon our analysis of conditions and capacity and how the program/campaign had fit in with our overall strategy. A summation can vary in depth from a cursory assessment to looking at all the elements of the campaign including the roles of individuals.

## Organizing in Truth and Power

*"We'll never have a real movement without locally rooted, organized bases of people."*

-Respondent, More Than We Imagined Report



Organizing. Organizer. These two words have become so diluted and used incorrectly as to render them almost meaningless. Being an organizer is not a self-identification like racial identity. These days you can literally claim whatever race or races you want. Being an organizer is not the same as being a protestor or being an activist. Organizing is not synonymous to mobilizing or protesting. The organizing chakra has been obstructed for too long. It's past time to unleash the intensity of this chakra and stand back to witness its force.

My intent here is to get us closer to some working definitions and most critical, to understand the "who" we organize and the "how" so that we can make colossal strides towards our strategic goals in this latest configuration of neo-liberalism.

When social justice organizations talk about vision and mission, strategy and tactics, programs and action plans, some may also advance a theory of change (TOC). The TOC is basically how you see making the change happen that you envision. For example, Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ) seeks to make Black workers central to the both the Freedom and Labor movements. It's basic theory of how that will be done is by building the strength and leadership of Black workers in those movements.

Some might be saying “I didn’t know all this went into organizing!” I frequently say that organizing is both a science and an art. You can put your own creative flourish on a universal organizing principle but you have to first know the basic principles. The organizing forms used by people across the globe under various conditions is endless. Some more successful than others from winning the fight for a \$15-hour wage in Seattle to the fight for a progressive, African American district attorney in St. Louis. Conversely, when a strategy was unclear or under-developed, massive mobilizations did not result in reformative or transformation changes. We saw this with the U.S. Occupy Movement and with the Arab Spring.

While our movement may not have an algorithm for perfect outcomes, there are universal organizing principles. The elements outlined above must be observed and put in place or you will fail to reach your goal. One can have all the ingredients for bread but if you leave out the yeast or you don’t let that yeast rise at a certain temperature for a certain amount of time, what comes out of that oven can technically be called bread but...well, you get the picture.

Organizations whose theory of change is rooted in organizing the working class as the key link to transformative change seem to be in short supply. If there’s no base building going down among the working class, I’m unsure of how our movement is going to grow, challenge structure and take power. Base building may not have the same appeal as mobilizing a protest but the outcomes are far more enduring and impactful. Wrongfully or not, I’ve concluded that people steer away from organizing a base because 1) they don’t know how; 2) they don’t want to know how; and/or 3) they’re fearful of the working class especially the Black working class.’

A few years ago, a compelling report was released that, in hindsight had our movements taken it more seriously, we may be in a different place now as we face president trump and his neo-fascists forces. “More Than We Imagined” was an introspective probe into the status and well-being of the US social movement in 2013 and how to move forward. NTanya Lee and Steve Williams embarked upon an earnest process and engaged movement forces in thoughtful conversations to draw out certain themes and to assert informed recommendations.

I publicly raised the issue of redemption in my article titled “#Cutthecheck is not a Movement” and again when I responded to a distressing Facebook post by a Ferguson activist who revealed personal pain caused by other activists. Both of my responses generated interest for the need to build into our movement structure the mechanisms to hold people accountable. Our movement leaves many victims in its wake; they must be made whole too.

As Bob Marley sings, we must emancipate ourselves from mental slavery. That’s going to take real effort by the individual and the collective. While we are creating paths of redemption, we will also have to establish ways of dealing with incorrigibles who continue to wreak havoc in our political spaces despite our most determined efforts. If there are groups who have working models for dealing with internal conflict, I would encourage them to share widely so that people don’t have to re-invent the wheel.

What would redemption look like in our movement? I think that the emphasis should be put on justice and restoring people and organizations to a place of wholeness. The starting place should be understanding that we all have been socialized under capitalism. Some people’s lives have been more traumatic than others. That means we act up and act out. Our movement must be proof that we are capable of change or else we can’t expect the masses of people to believe that real transformation is possible. Our organizations should engage in consistent and just approaches to root out hegemonic behaviors whenever they rear their ugly heads. Just remember, the patient is our *campanero* in struggle not the enemy.

When the redemption chakra is unfettered, I think we will experience people in our movement truly striving for to exceed their human potential. We will support one another so that we become our best selves for the movement and new society we are creating. This will lead to an invincible movement that is as compassionate to our people as it is merciless to our enemies.

Before you think I'm talking about bustin' knee caps with a baseball bat or throwing people in the river with a cement block tied around their neck, I suggest we turn to Chairman Mao. The two approaches below have helped me over the years to stay grounded when dealing with movement conflict. In 1942 Mao saw how people in China were confusing the two and we can certainly see it in 2017.

Mao said, "In treating an ideological or a political malady, one must never be rough and rash but must adopt the approach of "curing the sickness to save the patient", which is the only correct and effective method."

On the contradictions among the people, Mao advised us that there are contradictions "between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people...the two are totally different in nature." The inescapable vapors of capitalist ideology affect the entire society. Those of us doing the hard work of transformation must have an accurate understanding of how these capitalist toxins affect us and our organizing. Our organizations can be proactive in saving the patient if first we have created trusting and supportive environments and if the patient wants to be saved.

The way that movement people deal with one another cannot be the same way in which we deal with enemy forces. In too many instances, our response is even harsher towards each other than we are towards the enemy. We need to call this behavior out whenever it happens because it is dangerous. But it can't stop there. The patient must understand the harm s/he has done, own it and submit her/himself to a collective process of accountability and healing. This takes both humility and trust of the process. The collective must be loving but firm in supporting the purge of negative behavior before we jump to purge the individual. There were plenty of purges during the Black Power Movement and the New Communist Movement but such extreme acts seldom resulted in a more healthy and democratic organization. Instead it produced fear, resentment, paranoia and the departure of many committed freedom fighters.

There are many gems of wisdom laden in the report and it needs to be circulated to the legion of new and younger activists who've come into the movement since the Ferguson Uprising. While some are building their personal brand, many of them are eager to learn how to organize. This is forcing us to hold our models of organization up for scrutiny and to overhaul our organizing strategies. This should be an exciting time for organizing and organizers!

Nearly 40% of the participants in "More Than We Imagined" identified as coming from base building organizations. I found this curious because I rarely see groups organizing in this way. We morphed into a movement of consultants with theoretical understandings of organizing and nonprofits who mobilize one another. An updated critique is needed of the nonprofit industrial complex and its impact on the radical social movements. The starting point would be **The Revolution Will Not be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex**, then fast forward to 2017. The groundbreaking book by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence is now about a decade old and the nonprofit world continues to pluck up some of our most talented thinkers and organizers. I don't believe this scenario is inherently antagonistic. We do need a healthy discussion to clarify each one's roles and limitations so that we can build the strongest, broadest and most unified movement possible. There's plenty of room in our tent if first you do no harm to the movement.

I also don't believe that technology/social media are incompatible with 21<sup>st</sup> Century organizing. Again, role and limitations must be clarified so that young activists (mainly) understand that social media is no substitute for face2face organizing. FaceBook, Twitter and other social media platforms can be useful tools that support organizing. We should pursue innovative ways to integrate the technology into our organizing practices. Umi Selah of the Dream Defenders does an effective critique on the topic in "Blackout Reflection: No one Should Have all that Power."

Organizing is to build power for the masses of people victimized by capitalism and all its tentacles. Organizing is to build organizations or institutions that expand and defend that power. If people are intentionally organizing for power, if people are strategically building a

base to expand and amplify the voices demanding justice, equity and dignity, I believe our movements will be closer to the vision of the world we deserve. As veteran labor organizer Bill Fletcher aptly reminds us, magical thinking will not get us there. We must be bold, methodical, consistent and imaginative in carrying out a strategy for human liberation.

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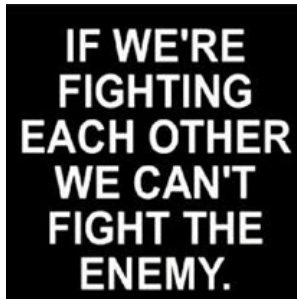
### Redemption: An Act of Humility and Humanity

*"Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery  
None but ourselves can free our minds."*

-Redemption Song, Bob Marley

Our social movement can be schizophrenic about how we treat one another. While we can be a loving, caring bunch of folks, we can also be mean-spirited and self-serving. Whether you call yourself a progressive or a revolutionary, movement forces don't always live up to our lofty principles. This article will focus on how our movement deals with disruptive, inhumane and criminal behaviors amongst us. It's time to discover the chakra of redemption as a more humane way of dealing with contradictions. The pre-requisites to redemption are accountability and humility.

Our organizations and social movement have at least two issues going on in the arena of negative behaviors. One is how we deal with self-criticism and criticism, and recognize the importance of integrating the practice in our work styles in a healthy, non-punitive way. The other is the need for an established recourse for when one of our own has done mental, physical, social and financial harm to a person or to an organization in our movement. These two realms are inextricably connected and our movement has dealt with both in a half-hearted, superficial way.



Our movement can't seem to engage in healthy, principled debates nor do people feel open to expressing legitimate disagreements. We have developed some crafty tactics to shift or shut down debate. If a heterosexual disagrees with a non-cis person, s/he is labeled homophobic. If a white ally raises a critique, they are dismissed as racist. If a male has a different assessment than a female, his patriarchy is called into question. If a Jewish person is presented with a valid criticism, it must be rooted in anti-Semitism. If an elder shares an opposing viewpoint with a younger person, a charge of respectability politics is hurled back. The goal for engaging in political or ideological discussion is to reach a higher level of unity and clarity. If this process is discouraged, stifled or rebuked, our movement will operate on a shaky unity and a guaranteed confusion about our strategic goals. Unity-struggle-unity means one comes to the circle seeking unity (not a fight); this allows for a genuine struggle of ideas or tactics that should lead to improved relationships and a deeper unity about moving forward.

Social media is often misused as a forum to raise criticisms about people or groups. Facebook is the last place you should come to resolve a problem or misunderstanding because then it's clear that you aren't interested in resolution, you want to engage in character assassination. We know from history that these kinds of infantile political tantrums only serve our enemies (police, FBI). Veteran human rights activist Harry Belafonte brought this warning to young protesters when he came to Ferguson; he had been informed of their vicious barbs being exchanged over the internet.

Unsubstantiated political and personal attacks, sabotage of work, bullying, malicious gossip, destruction of property, adultery, embezzlement, theft, domestic violence, assault, rape, child molestation, etc. There's a range of contradictions flourishing within our ranks from political misdeeds to acts considered criminal under U.S. law. I've been in numerous organizations over my adult life. I've witnessed their devastating effect on individuals and their families as well as the organizations involved. Crimes against persons in our movement frequently go unpunished because we don't want to turn perpetrators over to the state for its special brand of just-us. Yet, we've developed no alternative process or internal mechanism to hold people accountable, to challenge their behavior and to ultimately change that behavior.