

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

A Note on Facilitation

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A NOTE ON FACILITATION:

This curriculum includes notes on facilitation styles and strategies so as to be accessible to groups with all levels of experience with one another and with collaborative leadership and also to encourage groups to examine the impact of their facilitation styles on group members. The following are some facilitation tools to try within your group.

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE FACILITATION: MAKING MEETINGS AWESOME FOR EVERYONE

Inefficient and ineffective meetings can leave people feeling drained, exhausted or discouraged, rather than inspired and energized. Good meetings help build strong, effective organizations and successful projects. Even organizations with great meeting process inadvertently perpetuate barriers to full member participation and access to democratic process. This happens through group dynamics of power, privilege and oppression that often marginalize women, people of color, queer, trans and gender non-conforming folks, people with disabilities and those with limited access to the cultural cues and financial resources that come with class privilege.

Whether or not you tend to act as facilitator at meetings you attend, building your facilitation skills will help you make your meetings better, more inclusive, and more fully democratic! Here are some foundational tips and suggestions that can have big impacts on your meetings!

WHAT IS FACILITATION, ANYWAY?

Facilitation ensures that the group is empowered as a whole.

- Be sure that everyone gets to participate and share ideas in a meeting, not just those who feel most comfortable speaking up and making cases for their ideas or proposals.
- Work to prevent or interrupt any (conscious or unconscious) attempts by individuals or groups to overpower the group as a whole.
- Keep an eye out for social power dynamics and work to interrupt these. Point out and address discrepancies in who is talking, whose voices are being heard.
- Help the group come to the decisions that are best for the organization/whole group. Help people keep an eye on what's best for the group, rather than their personal preference.
- Ensure the group follows its own agreed upon process and meeting agreements. Facilitation keeps an eye on time, and juggles it with the (ever present) need for more time.
- Offer periodic time check-ins.
- Help keep the group conversation on topic and relevant. Prevent ramblings and tangents.
- Make process suggestions to help the group along.

- Summarize discussion and note key areas of agreement, to help move the group forward.¹

Tools for Successful Meetings

- Brainstorms, Popcorn (no order, just popping in)
- Go around the circle, rounds
- Stacking (count off - limit to 3-5),
- Small-group discussion, dyads, tryads
- Advantages/disadvantages chart
- Straw Polls – sense of group
- Visual aids, Visible notes
- Criteria Process
- Goals'/priorities-setting techniques, dots
- Challenges/devil's advocate questions
- Active listening in pairs
- Support groups/caucuses, Feelings sharing
- Fishbowls, Role plays
- Evaluations, Food

¹ From *The Aorta Collective (aorta.coop)*

THE WHY COME SURVEY:

This survey is intended to be considered alone then discussed in your affinity group as part of the work you are doing together before coming to Ferguson.

You can write your answers down in the way that is most helpful to you, or reflect in pairs before discussing with the larger group. The idea is to get as deep into your motivations and intentions as possible, so please answer honestly and thoughtfully.

1. Why do you want to go to Ferguson?

a. What moved you? Is there a particular occurrence, moment or image that compelled you?

2. What skills or experience do you have that will be useful on the ground?

a. What do you see your role being in Ferguson?

3. What do you think you have to learn from the people in Ferguson?

a. How will this experience connect to your work at home?

4. Who are your leaders? (Philosophical, spiritual, movement figures, groups)

5. Do you have existing connections to people already on the ground in Ferguson?

6. Who is in the group you are considering going with?

- a. How long have you known each other?

- b. What do you see as your role in the group?

- c. Was this a group before? Will it continue after the trip?

NONVIOLENCE SPECTROGRAM:

Purpose:

Helps define nonviolence and violence for the group, brings up similarities and differences.
Helps group talk about considerations around nonviolence.

Declare one side of the room to represent violent and the other side is non-violent, and there is a lot of room in between the two. Those two spots are the two ends of one axis.

Give a scenario, such as – property destruction, spray-painting, breaking a window, etc..

Tell them to go stand on the side of the room where they think the scenario falls in terms of violence vs. nonviolence.

When they are positioned, create a perpendicular axis that is ‘would do it, would not do it’, and tell them to go stand where they want on that perpendicular axis.

Have a few people say why they are where they are. People can reposition themselves during the debrief if they change their minds.

Try the following scenarios: paying taxes, eating meat, pieing someone, blocking hotel doors, breaking corporations window, crowd pushing back a police line.

Debrief:

Ask: “What did you get out of this? What do we do with this knowledge?” Help participants identify commonalities and notice challenges, allowing people to look at those honestly. Expect acknowledgement that there is a great diversity of opinion and possible action, that even things we think are non-violent, others view as violent, and note that *what our audience thinks is part of having an effective action.*

Notice that some of the personal stances we have are not the organizational/movement stance. Ask, “How is that for you, given that you’ve committed yourself to this work?”

Create action guidelines for the action you are prepping for – has there been a policy of nonviolence decided?

STAYING SAFE:

Read “Staying Safe” in the *Coming To Ferguson* curriculum. Talk about the different roles members of your group will play. Go over the following scenarios with your affinity group. Discuss the different possibilities - don't be afraid to talk about worst case scenarios.

Traps

- 1) Your affinity group is non-violently blockading. The police are behind you. Some people come up and throw objects over you at the police. What do you do? What do you think the other actors (object-throwers & police) will do?
- 2) You are in a moving group. You go between two lines of police. (The police can then close behind you, blocking your retreat).
- 3) You are in a group. You go down a street with no side exits through the buildings. There are police in front blocking your path. They can form behind you & you are now trapped.
- 4) You are in a moving group. You go besides a line of police. An undercover agent in your group points out someone, the police then jump in and capture that person(s). The undercover agent may even help in the capture.
- 5) You are in a moving group. You go up to a line of police. You possess a legal permit to march. The police block your path and tell you to immediately disperse, or face arrest. What do you do?
- 6) Your moving group is about to turn left at the corner. What information do you need? How will you get it?
- 7) You are part of a group that is in a space. The police arrive. As they start forming around you, what do you think they might do? What should you do?

Safety

- 1) Your group unfortunately is about to get arrested. How should you act?
- 2) The police are in front of your group that is occupying valuable territory. They are putting on gas masks. What do you think they might do? What should you do?
- 3) The police are hitting people with their batons, pepper spraying people, launching tear gas, spraying water, firing plastic bullets, launching manure, charging people with their horses, &/or arresting selective people. What should you do?
- 4) You or others have been hurt by the police. What should you/your affinity group do?
- 5) After being hurt, people want to take photographs. What do you do? Why do they want to take photographs?
- 6) The police are clearing out a protest. They are: on foot; motorcycle; in vehicles; & or on horses. How do you exit safely? What are the positive and negative dynamics of escaping crowds?

7) The police attack a crowd. Some people get pumped up by the action and start throwing debris at the police. What do you do? How is this situation going to unfold?

8) How do you evaluate what you think you can get away with at a protest with police presence?

Protest Dynamics

1) Your affinity group is conducting a certain type of action (rowdy, peaceful, dynamic, static, etc.) Another individual or group enters the space and acts in a way that negates the effects of your action. What do you do?

2) You go to an action with a plan. At the action, an opportunity unfolds, and some other protesters ask you to help them with an action that isn't in your affinity groups' plan. What do you do? What information do you need?

3) You go to an action without a firm plan, but a general sense of what you could do. At the action, an opportunity unfolds, and some other protesters ask you to help them with an action that has a higher level of risk. What do you do? What information do you need?

4) You support a diversity of tactics, but some people are using tactics in a very un-cool or incompetent way. It's a public demo and you don't own it. What do you do?

5) Your blockade needs more people involved. A labour march is passing several blocks away. The marshals are diverting the march away from the real action where you are. What can you do to increase union membership in your local blockade?

6) Two large groups with different agreed-upon action guidelines find themselves in the same area wanting to do their action. How do you proceed? What are your objectives? What are the positives and negatives towards splitting up, or compromising and staying together?

7) It's one day of action, and there are lots of police and lots variety of tactics. Some people are not able to assume the risk of certain tactics. They also may not be prepared to protect themselves from a violent police response. What attitudes and roles should the various affinity groups and protesters assume? What goals do you have?

8) Your groups support a variety of tactics, and also to respect the working class St. Jean Baptist neighbourhood. But some people want to trash private commercial property there. What should you do?

9) What would you do if in the above scenario, the would be trashers accuse you of being peace cops? or sell-outs?

10) The situation is intense and people in your milieu are starting to panic. What steps should you take?

11) How should you respond to people shouting about imminent police arrival?

12) The situation is dynamic. A charismatic person makes recommendations for collective action that you think unwise, but seems to be well supported. What steps can you take?

13) The situation is dynamic and quick decisions must be made by representatives from the various affinity groups at a spokes council meeting in the middle of the street. How is your affinity group prepared to participate in the spokes council in an efficient and democratic way?

POWER ANALYSIS

This exercise helps people deepen their analysis of the society they are living in. You want to lead them through a process that **starts by asking people why they are active, what they want, why they came**. Solicit this; see if anyone says to build power. If not, after harvesting some reasons from the group, **ask if anyone is doing it to build power?**

I believe that building power is really at the core of our work if we want to manifest all the things people articulated as to why they are active.

Next, ask the group who has power in our society. Create a list

- Money
- State, Government, electors
- People
- etc

The people have power and potential power. But ultimately it is based on our numbers and our willingness to not cooperate in their unjust systems.

The “State” and the people who control the money do a lot of things to keep us from getting the power we need to manifest the world we want.

What do they do? Brainstorm a list – really work it. You will get all kinds of stuff, but make sure you also get drugs, TV, malls, consumerism, liquor stores, prison, and bad food on the list. The goal of this exercise is to see that everything in our society is set up to keep people from getting the power they need to manifest the world they want. It also teaches us some about why we have to start where people are.

This exercise is a small group process that is good for a group that has some pre-existing relationships.

Get people in groups of the three and have them go one at a time talking about the most radical thing they have ever done. This could be anything, not just actions.

After people have completed that process and shared back some of what they learned to the larger group, the facilitator can then ask how people felt in that process. Share these answers in the same small groups. Often what emerges is fear, courage and liberation. It is an opportunity for people to experience a sense of their power.

POWER MAPPING AND CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

STRATEGY = Plan (a way to win) = Take what you have and turn it into what you need....

Strategy is the choice of ground in which you choose to engage the enemy

Strategy means:

Looking at the big picture

Knowing who has the power to make the decision.

Concentrating the right resources in the right place(s) at the right time(s)....

Strategic campaigns are an important part of building a movement. They focus our energy on the forces that need to be changed, and can often result in some victory (big or small) or mitigation of damage. These efforts require participation and creativity. As we build power through campaigns, we model what can happen when we work together inspiring others and igniting imaginations that feed more and more organizing. The momentum of success attracts people who in general want to be aligned with those they believe have power. When we organize campaigns we build momentum and power.

Over the generations, people power movements have effectively used the concept of "Pillars of Support" to understand the institutions/forces that prop up unjust systems/power structures. From a strategic point of view, if you can erode or remove those pillars, those unjust rulers/state will not be able to continue. The art of this process is to pull support away from the pillar, which means persuading those people inside that institution/pillar to leave, stop or change their behavior.

Strategic Planning Methodologies

- **Identify Problem** – assumptions, facts, root, source, stories, get clear

- **Establish Strategic Objective or Goal aka...the SOLUTION or Remedy**

- **Assess Resource and Situation** – look at all factors in your world and your opponents' world

Know Your Opponent – strengths, weaknesses, history, interests, resources, plans,
VULNERABILITIES

Know Your Supporters - strengths, weaknesses, history, interests, resources, plans
Map your allies and political environment, Vulnerabilities

Web Analysis of Opponent – look for opportunities for leverage, what we can bring new into the situation or relationship that is either a carrot or a stick...Focus more in there capabilities than intentions. Intention change, but what can they really do?

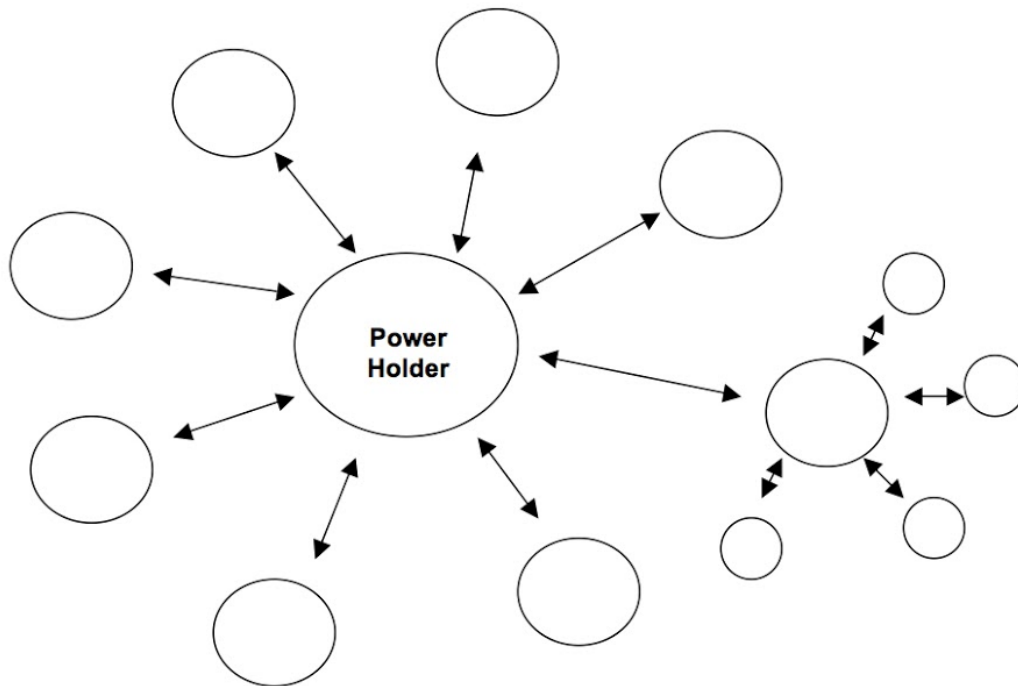
- **Public Participation** – get people participating in small easy steps first that build success and confidence and keeps people in motion.

- **Dilemma Actions** – actions, which cause your opponent to look bad if they try to stop what you are doing. They must either allow an action to continue, meet the demand or act in a way that may lose them their allies and/or credibility.

- **Containment** – we need to be mindful of our own internal problems, weakness, vulnerabilities, abuses lies, corruption, violence in leadership, etc. Certain levels of violence/corruption/oppression will destroy movements internally and externally.

PREPARATION

Tool 1:



Web Analysis – is a tool to begin mapping your opponent's world. Who do they care about? Who are they accountable to? What is the nature of the relationship?

1. Each Circle represents one of the players in your opponents world.

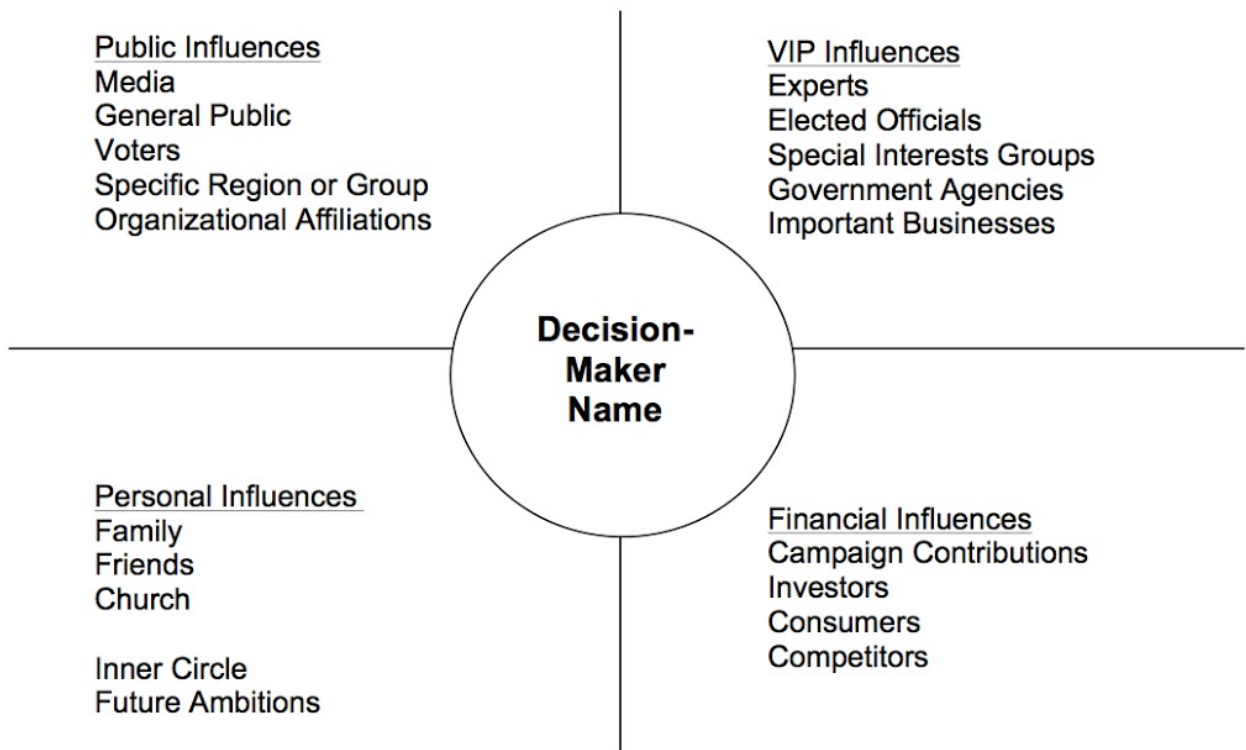
- Workers
- Management
- Public
- Customers
- Competitors
- Regulatory Agencies
- Governmental Bodies
- Legal Entities
- Divisions
- Media
- ETC

2. Each Arrow represents a relationship.

What can we bring into this relationship that is new? We need to look for opportunities to INTERRUPT or INTERVENE or ADD NEW INFORMATION in that relationship. It might be A "carrot" (positive incentive) or a "stick" (negative incentive).

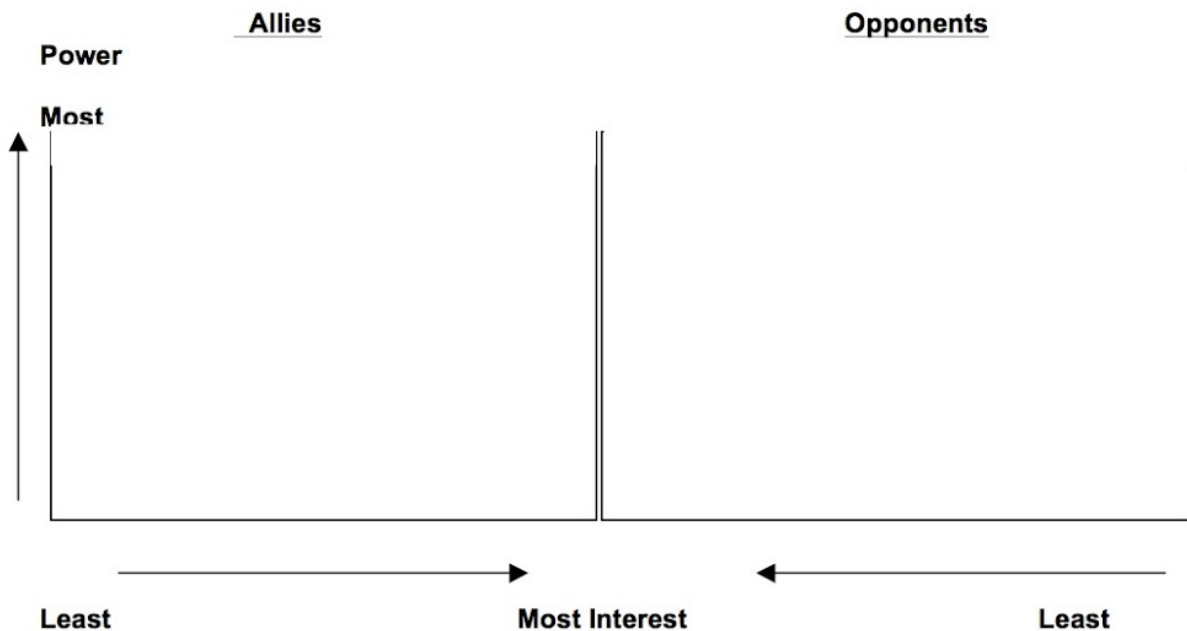
3. This can also be looked at as a "Web of Restraint." If your opponent is engaging in negative, illegal or unethical activity informing or making it visible to some of the more important players may help restrain the negative action.

Tool 2: Power Mapping



1. Who has the power to decide? Put them in the center
2. Who are the less powerful players that influence decision maker? Write their names down in the appropriate category
3. Who of these have the most influence? Circle them
4. Who do we have access to? Star them
5. Look over list – whom do we know that has access to and can influence those identified or the decision-maker directly?

**Tool 3:
Power and Interest Chart**



Put all possible stakeholders on this chart with those having the most power near the top and those with the most interests near the centerline. Then you want to focus energy on those with the most power and the most interest.

DEVELOPING A PLAN

Once you understand your opponent's world you can more effectively begin developing a plan. To begin with, zero in on who has the power to decide. You want to focus on them or the institution they represent, focusing on the behavior, policy, etc, but not the person. Over time, however, if things are not shifting you can then escalate more personally. If one chooses to go after the person, possibilities for settlement may be more difficult. The high road is often a good choice, but if over time they do not change, escalation is critical.

Phases of a Campaign

- Preparation
- Launch
- Battle
- Settlement

Three Fundamental Principles Of Direct Action:

- Win concrete improvements in people's lives.
- Make people aware of their own power (by winning victories).
- Alter the relationship of power between people, the government, and other institutions by building strong permanent organizations and relationships

BUILDING YOUR CREW:

Adapted from the OWS Affinity Group Packet²

History of Affinity Groups

The idea of affinity groups comes out of the anarchist and workers movement that was created in the late 19th century and fought fascism in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. The Spanish Anarchist movement provides an exhilarating example of a movement, and the actual possibility of a society based on decentralized organization, direct democracy and the principles behind them.

Small circles of good friends, called "tertulias" would meet at cafes to discuss ideas and plan actions. In 1888, a period of intense class conflict in Europe and of local insurrection and struggle in Spain, the Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region made this traditional form (tertulias) the basis of its organization.

Decades later, the Iberian Anarchist Federation, which contained 50,000 activists, organized into affinity groups and confederated into local, regional, and national councils. Wherever several FAI affinity groups existed, they formed a local federation. Local federations were coordinated by committees were made up of one mandated delegate from each affinity group. Mandated delegates were sent from local federations to regional committees and finally to the Peninsular Committee. Affinity groups remained autonomous as they carried out education, organized and supported local struggles. The intimacy of the groups made police infiltration difficult.

In July 1936, Francisco Franco, with a group of fascist generals, launched a military revolt to take power from Spain's government. Spanish workers and peasants armed themselves and defeated the military throughout much of the country, particularly in Anarchist strongholds. Millions of Spaniards took action to restructure society along revolutionary lines, not revive the treacherous Spanish government.

Factories, transportation, telephones and even wholesale and retail stores were taken over and run collectively; an estimated 1200-1800 self-managed workers' collectives were formed. Workers' self-management effectively replaced the remnants of government and private institutions, providing the everyday necessities of life - food, clothing, shelter, and public services. The experience of working in non-hierarchical affinity groups created the conditions for 6 million people in Spain to reorganize society along revolutionary principles, organizing workplaces, agriculture, and communities without bosses and government.

The idea of large-scale affinity group based organization was planted in the United States on April 30, 1977 when 2,500 people, organized into affinity groups, occupied the Seabrook, New Hampshire nuclear power plant. The growing anti-nuclear power and disarmament movements adopted this mode, and used it in many successful actions throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. Since then, it has been used by the Central America solidarity movement, lesbian/gay liberation movement, Earth First and earth liberation movement, and many others.

Most recently, affinity groups have been used in the mass actions in Seattle for the WTO and Washington DC for the IMF and World Bank, as well as Philadelphia and Los Angeles around the Republican and Democratic National Conventions.

Affinity Groups

Affinity groups are self-sufficient groups of about 5 to 15 people who come together with the intention of supporting one another and taking action together. A number of affinity groups may work together toward a common goal in a large action, or one affinity group might conceive of and carry out an action on its own. Sometimes, affinity groups remain together over a long period of time, existing as political support and/or study groups, and only occasionally participating in actions. Affinity groups are composed of people who have been brought together at a nonviolence training or have existing ties such as friendship, living in the same area, going to school or work together.

² Can be found online at: <http://organizingforpower.wordpress.com/action/action-resource/>

Affinity groups form the basic decision-making bodies of mass actions. They are usually considered "autonomous," independently entitled to develop any form of participation they choose, as long as they remain within the action guidelines and framework.

Groups of affinity groups working together are sometimes called "clusters." A large action can have several large "clusters" all working together. In large actions, affinity groups usually send "spokespersons" to a "spokes council" meeting, to communicate and coordinate the different groups' decisions and then bring the coordinated information or proposal back to their respective groups for their final discussion and approval.

Affinity groups also serve as a source of support for the members and reinforce a sense of solidarity. They provide a solution to the isolation or separation that can come to individuals acting alone. By including all participants in a circle of familiarity and acquaintance, the affinity group structure reduces the possibility of infiltration by outside agents or provocateurs. If a new person asks to join an affinity group, s/he should find out what the group believes in and what they plan to do, and decide if s/he can share in it.

Clusters:

A cluster is a group of groups. Affinity groups that are working on a certain task or part of a larger action might cluster together taking responsibility for blockading an area, organizing one day of a multi-day action, or putting together and performing a mass street theater performance. Clusters could be organized around where affinity groups are from (example: Texas cluster), an issue or identity (examples: student cluster or anti-sweatshop cluster), or action interest (examples: street theater or lockdown).

Spokes Councils:

A spokes council is the larger organizing structure used in the affinity group model to coordinate a mass action. Each affinity group (or cluster) empowers a spoke (representative) to go to a spokes council meeting to decide on important issues for the action. For instance, affinity groups need to decide on a legal/jail strategy, possible tactical issues, meeting places, and many other logistics. A spokes council does not take away an individual affinity group's autonomy within an action; affinity groups make their own decisions about what they want to do on the streets (as long as it fits in with any action guidelines.) All decisions in spokes councils are made by consensus, so that all affinity groups have agreed and are committed to the mass direct action.

Direct Democracy (DD):

Direct democracy occurs when people are making decisions about things that directly affect their lives. Affinity groups, clusters and spoke councils are forms of organization that support DD. Consensus has historically been the decision-making process used to make collective decisions.

Roles Within the Affinity Group:

Take turns so that everyone gets a chance to try different roles.

- At meetings: facilitator(s), timekeeper, recorder, vibes-watcher.
- During an action: those risking arrest, support persons (and during a mass action, affinity group spokespersons).

Facilitator

Helps formulate agenda

Helps establish a hopeful, upbeat, and safe atmosphere

Helps group work through decisions:

- Calls on Speakers
- Asks for clarification
- Summarizes, sorts, focuses discussion — lists threads of thought, agreements, and disagreements
- Helps prioritize and order discussion topics
- Brings out all viewpoints
- Looks for underlying agreements
- Synthesizes differences

- Restates Proposal, Limits proposals on floor
 - Formalizes Decisions
- Encourages equal participation
- Draws out quiet people
- Limits Talkers
- Uses Facilitation Tools
- Stays neutral while facilitating

Co-Facilitator

- Backup to the facilitator
- Takes stack
- May serve as vibes watcher

Scribe

- Records the exact proposal language.
- Notes anyone standing aside.

Vibeswatcher

- Watches the **process** of the meeting
- Notices underlying feelings from tone of voice and body language, points out tension and weariness, recommends changes
- Stops bad process (domineering, guilt-tripping, interrupting, put-downs, bulldozing, defensiveness, space-outs, etc.)
- Helps resolve conflicts
- Helps work out negative emotions (fear, anger, anxiety, hopelessness)
- Suggests tools to improve meetings
- Helps create a safe, accepting tone
- Deals with outside distractions

Time Keeper

- Keeps track of time
- Let's people know how much time used
- Reminds half way through, 2 min, 1 min etc

SAMPLE 1st Affinity Group Meeting Agenda: this will vary on whether or not the group is new people or pre-existing friendships and whether or not an action is pending

1. Intros/ Check-in go around –Name and why you think participating in this action is important or just checking in with how they are feeling, what's going on etc. good to do as a round with no interruptions.
2. Pick a Facilitator, check in on agenda
3. Report back from Spokes council – what actions are already happening? What intersections/buildings are already taken? What events are coming up
4. What is our AG name? How many can risk arrest?
5. Who do we want to target and why?
6. What do we want to do? Tone or flavor, Tactics go round – What tactics would you like to employ, is there anything you are not comfortable with?

7. Resources – People, hardware, art, music, media, training. Brainstorm. Break it into things the affinity group can provide and things you might want to ask the working groups for help with, e.i. trainings or blockade tools.
8. Decide on some Affinity Group Roles – The starred roles are more important than the others: *direct support, *police liaison, media liaison, *medic, photographer, videographer, *comms (communicate with the other groups), *jail support, props coordinator. For a complete list, see <http://www.actagainstar.org/article.php?id=16>.
9. Affinity Group Status - Do you want to have an open affinity group (anyone can join), invite only, or do you already have enough people? If it's invite only, brainstorm possible invitees.
10. Cluster Status – Open/invite/closed. Any affinity groups you might want to cluster with?
11. Spoke - Pick a spoke for the next spokescouncil meeting
12. Next Meeting - Pick a time, date, and facilitator for your next affinity group meeting and/or cluster meeting
13. Closing - game, chant, whip around

On Conducting a meeting to Build Consensus:

Why Consensus:

- It is open, participatory, democratic
- Values the group, trust, cooperation, good will
- Dynamic and creative process
- Forces responsibility for disruption

Consensus is a process for adopting proposals. People who disagree are responsible for voicing their concerns. No decision is made until concerns are heard and discussed. Any concerns that remain after discussion are acknowledged. The group may go ahead with a consensus decision without complete agreement.

When Consensus Works:

- Power and basic values are shared.
- Cohesiveness of the group is as important as the outcome.
- A range of good options is available.
- The group is willing to learn and practice group skills.

When It Doesn't Work:

- The group has no training in consensus.
- One person or group holds, is or perceived to hold, most of the power.
- One or more individuals consistently place their personal agendas in front of the group agenda.
- There are no good options:
 - Timing is urgent.
 - The issue is trivial.
 - The group has insufficient information.
- Participants don't have energy for the process.

Basic Procedure:

The Flow of a Cooperative Decision-Making Process:

Background

- What are we talking about? Issue raised- what is the problem?
- Clarify problem — put it in context

Discuss

- bring out a diversity of ideas, concerns, and perspectives — look at possible solutions and the problems with those solutions

Develop Proposal /Proposal Made

- Clarifying Questions
- Concerns
- Discussion / Friendly Amendments
- Re-state Proposal

Test for Consensus

- Strong concerns /objections
- Stand Asides
- Blocks
- Consensus
- Establish how the decision will be implemented
- Make sure there are no loose ends
- Restate the decision for the notetaker (including implementation)

Guidelines for Sharing:

Speaker

- Balance in time
- "I" statements
- No put downs or minimizers
- No piggy-backing

The Listener

- No cross-talk or interruptions
- No advice
- Confidentiality
- Amnesty

The Connection

- Visual or audible agreement
-

Tools for Stress-Reduction/Conflict Resolution

- Stretch breaks/cooperative games
- Singing
- Humor
- Affirmations
- Feelings sharing
- Silence (meditation, prayer)
- Calm voice
- Breathing (deep)
- Fears in the hat
- Appreciations/affirmations
- Active listening
- Restating other's viewpoint / modeling opposite views
- Support groups / Caucuses
- Venting emotions somewhere else
- Gripe sessions – share feelings
- Resentment sharing
- Expulsion – based on agreements, questions

LEGAL SUPPORT

How to do Group Legal Support For People Who May Risk Arrest

For actions and demonstrations the role of support in a civil disobedience action is crucial to those risking arrest. Support people accept the responsibility of being contacts to the outside once a member of the group is arrested. During and after a mass action support members need to stay in touch with support people from other groups, for information sharing and emotional support.

In actions where no one is planning on risking arrest, support roles are also important to think out in advance, both for taking on necessary tasks during legal actions, and to prepare for the contingency of unexpected arrests.

Ideally a Group Legal Support team is at least 3 persons, two on-site at the action, and one person not at the action at all. Check-in with each person in your group at least every night – is everyone home for the night? Keep up w/changing intentions around arrest risk and jail solidarity. Off-site support is encouraged to check in daily on how things are going.

Before Any Action Begins:

- Make sure that each person in your group has completed and given to you their support information form. (see Jail Support Form for detailed information)
- Keep all of the forms and any ID, passports, keys, bail \$\$, medicines in one safest possible place.
- Communicate with the Action Legal Team: your role; who your are supporting; how to contact you; how to contact your back-ups, both on-site and off-site; what to do if you and your back-up end up arrested or unable to provide legal support.
- Communicate all critical information to off-site support: a summary of the individual support forms, the one safest place with forms, ID, bail \$\$, and medicines; who your contact is on the Action Legal Team.
- Arrange ahead of time, *and let ALL of your affinity group members know*, a local number that accepts collect calls from jail where you can be reached, or that you will be checking regularly and .
- Know where arrestees are likely to be taken and have transportation to get there.
- Know the phone numbers and contact people for legal, medics, media, and action support.
- Set-up email lists to friends and family in case political pressure is needed as well as contact information for decision-makers.
- Get permission to publish news or pictures of arrestees on social media.
-

During the Action:

- **DON'T GET ARRESTED.** – Pay attention to what is happening; stay separate from the group etc.
- Make sure legal and other contact numbers are written discreetly on your body. It's amazing how easy it is to forget!
- Once arrests begin, write down each individual's name, and the time, place and nature of the arrest. If possible and safe, get name badge number and police force. Note whether there was any police misconduct (brutality, inappropriate words), circumstances and witnesses.
- Remember to take care of yourself as well as others.

- Bring extra food and water
- Have pens and paper to take legal observation notes, if possible, bring a camera or video camera.
- Get info, money, keys phones and other things from people who may not have planned on being arrested if possible.
- Keep in touch with arrestees as long as possible, noting any changes in arrest strategies, etc.
- At least one support person should stay at place of arrest until all members of your group are arrested, and at least one should go to where those arrested are being taken.
- Once all have been arrested or are out of risk, call jail support/legal and give information.

After Arrests Occur:

- Go to processing facilities and attempt to find out if your people are all there and what the charges are
- Contact Jail Support/Legal Support with individual information needed in jail: who is giving names, who isn't, who has requested administrative separation, any list of demands. Provide ID, bail \$\$, and medicine as needed.
- Be visible to police so they know the arrestees are not alone.
- Make calls you have been asked to make in the case of arrest.
- Contact the off-site support person with all information.
- Follow individual instructions regarding contacting home/social media
- Continue to facilitate the flow of information between the legal system, unarrested affinity group members, and family and friends at home. Make sure to have someone near the agreed upon phone at all times, so that all calls from jail can be received. Remind people calling that phones may be tapped (the jail's and/or yours).
- Being kind to yourself and support other support people -- working together will ease the load.
- Organize political pressure: e-mails, tweets, and phone calls to decision-makers; vigils, marches, singing, drumming, and chanting outside where they are being held.
- Be available until everyone in your affinity group is out of jail. Be there with hugs, cheers, food, drink, and an open, listening heart when they step out of jail. If you must leave make sure the legal office has all the relevant information.
- Coordinate rides for those released, this may mean collecting bus money etc

From Ferguson/St. Louis Jail Support (as of July, 2015)³

Things You Should Know:

You may have to remain in jail for a 24 hour period. This practice is to move us away from financially supporting the system that we are fighting against and to try to conserve resources since the legal

³You do not need to use the Ferguson/St. Louis bail fund. You can set up your own jail support within your affinity group using the guidelines in the first section of this document, and use bond money you have fundraised yourself. If you are in Ferguson/St. Louis, you should collaborate with the local jail support (who will know the system better) and can still use your own group's funds for bail.

support fund is running low. If there is an option to stay in jail for 24 hours without paying a bond, we will try to utilize this option. Of course, people's safety is our first priority; if someone who has been arrested has been injured, has a medical emergency, etc. we will do everything we can to get them released as quickly as possible. When at all possible, we will talk to people before they are arrested or once they are arrested (when they call from their cell) to confirm that they can stay in jail for 24 hours.

Here is a run-down of what should happen when you commit to staying in jail for 24 hours (of course, we can't always know what kinds of ridiculous and unjust things the courts and jails will do):

- When you are arrested and processed, your appearance bond is set (sometimes by a bond commissioner, court clerk, etc.) This is the bond that jail support has usually been paying up to this point (typically \$150 per charge in the city).
- Your case goes in front of a judge within 24 hours (you might not be physically taken in front of the judge, but the prosecutor and judge will discuss your case). The judge then sets a new bond. Sometimes, this is the same as the appearance bond, but sometimes it is reduced a significant amount or all the way down to \$0 (personal recognizance). This generally happens about 18-20 hours after you were arrested.
- If your bond is not reduced, you have 48 hours to be physically brought in front of a judge. At this point, jail support will bail you out if we have the funds available.

JS cannot pay your bench warrants. Fortunately, as a result of recent legislation, it is becoming less likely that you will be placed in jail as the result of outstanding traffic violations. Even if you have warrants, we can post your bond for the protest related arrest.

If you fail to appear for court, you may forfeit the possibility of using additional jail support services. The jail support fund is designed to be recycled so that as cases are concluded bond money goes back into the pot for others. Failure to appear to court forfeits bond money and makes us unable to assist other arrestees.

Should you choose not to use a movement lawyer, we may be able to assist you with your independent fundraiser, but we cannot guarantee that any funds will be provided from Jail Support.

The jail support number is 314-862-2249. If you are in jail and must make a collect call we can receive your calls at this number. You can also contact jail support using the number 314-59 MARCH (596-2724) but this number cannot accept collect calls. If no one answers, ALWAYS LEAVE A MESSAGE WITH YOUR LEGAL NAME, DATE OF BIRTH AND THE NAME/MUNICIPALITY OF THE JAIL FACILITY YOU ARE IN.

When you are planning actions that have any potential for arrest, **please notify jail support 48 hours in advance.** In addition, Jail Support information for all persons participating in the action should be left with someone who will not be at the action. Information should include: Legal names; Dates of birth; Urgent medical conditions or medications needed; Gender status; and if the person is willing and able to stay in jail for 24 hours if arrested. If you don't notify us 48 hours in advance, we cannot guarantee that the hotline will be staffed when people are arrested or in jail (especially if it is late at night). However, we check messages every morning. So, if arrests occur and no one picks up the phone when you call the hotline, leave a message with all of the info and we will begin working on people's release the next morning.

If you are a Trans person, jail can be very dangerous and we may have a harder time finding you. Please provide gender information to someone not at the action if you think there is a chance you may be arrested.

Jail Support Form

*This form is for everyone planning on going to the protests. Please fill it out ahead of time and give it to your legal support person. Do not bring this to the protest. **This form is voluntary and you may leave any questions blank.** See back page for full instructions.*

1. Legal name:

2. Date of birth:

3. Address:

4. Gender Identity:

5. Citizenship/ Immigration status:

6. Email:

7. Phone # - Cell:

Phone # - Home/Other:

8. Medical concerns & details (Illnesses, Medications, Dietary needs):

9. Other concerns:

10. Who do you want me to call if you get arrested or there's an emergency?

Name

Phone #

Connection to you

What should I tell them?

Name

Phone #

Connection to you

What should I tell them?

11. Personal property - where is it?

Vehicle (type, license plate, where did you leave it? Who has the keys?):

Other:

12. Legal timeline: What is your jail timeline? (Do you want to be bailed out immediately? Is there a date by which you must absolutely be out? Do you want us to wait to talk to you before we bail you out? Can you be de-prioritized if there aren't enough resources to bail everyone out?)

Instructions for the Jail Support Form:

Whether or not you plan to risk arrest, complete this form and give it to your legal support person. **DO NOT BRING IT TO THE PROTESTS** – we don't want this information to be confiscated by police. **The form is voluntary and you may leave any of the questions blank.** The purpose of the form is to have information available that may help if you're arrested. Don't write anything that could be used as evidence against you.

The first four questions on this form are also booking questions. Answering them in jail will probably speed up your release. For any other questions cops ask you, say, **"I'm going to remain silent. I want to see a lawyer."**

- 1. Legal Name (Booking)** - Lawyers usually need your exact legal name or some other identifying information to visit you in jail.
- 2. D.O.B. (Booking)** - Your legal support should not reveal your age to the arresting agency. If you're under 18 you may be moved to a juvenile detention facility, even if you'd rather stay with your friends in the adult jail.
- 3. Address (Booking)** - A judge may release you with no bail if you give a verifiable local address.
- 4. Gender Identity (Booking)** - Your gender will usually be assigned by what the arresting agency believes it to be. Generally you will be kept in custody with people of that gender. It is useful for your legal support to know where you may be housed. Some jails have policies regarding housing for transgender people, but most do not. If you believe that you will face discrimination because of your gender, please put this on the form.
- 5. Citizenship/ Immigration Status** - You should never reveal this information to law enforcement, on the streets or in jail. It is part of your right to remain silent and you do not have to answer any questions regarding your immigration status. However, it can be useful to let your legal support know your status on this form. (Even if you are a US citizen, you may choose not to answer these questions to make it harder for law enforcement to single out immigrants.)
- 6 & 7. Email & Phone** - This will help you organize legal support with the rest of your affinity group.
- 8. Medical Concerns** - Most activists are cited and released within a few hours of arrest - but you may be in jail for days. Please indicate any other medical conditions you want your legal support to be aware of.
- 9. Other Concerns** - If there are any other reasons your time in custody may be more complicated, or make it likely that you will not be treated like other arrestees, please let your legal support know.
- 10. Other people to contact** - Let your legal support know if there is anyone who should be contacted if you are in custody for an extended period: your employer, childcare provider, pet sitter, etc.

Note to the Legal Support Person: *Collect this information before the action, and do not bring it to the protests. Once your friends are released, collect the information about their arrest and charges, and make sure to destroy this document. If your friends witnessed or suffered any misconduct, have them fill out our Police Misconduct Report from www.midnightspecial.net*

ACTION PLANNING TEMPLATE

Build your Vision:

Goals

What are we trying to accomplish – concrete, tangible, winnable. What does victory look like? What do you want the headline to read the next day?

Target

Who has the power to decide? Who are we trying to impact/move, what is strategic reason for it/them. If there are multiple sites, which is best suited for an action?

Messaging & Demands

What do we want our target to do? What do we want them to know? Are there other audiences besides the target?

Messenger

Who is delivering our message? An impacted person or community leader working on a particular issue is always more powerful and credible than a talking head spokesperson. Is there a process for getting feedback/response from target?

Mobilization

How many people do we need? What are our turnout goals? Who will we reach out to—people, groups etc? What are the recruitment plan, rap, commitment, reminder and follow-up plan? I use a 50% rule...that is what I expect will turn out based on the commitments. So if 100 people say yes, expect 50!

Scenario

What will happen, what does it look like? What are the beginning, middle and end? How will the message/story be told – visuals, words, props, and signs?

Once you build your vision, you'll need:

Publicity: fliers, ads, PSA's, emails, mailings, facebook, blogs, calendars etc

Program: Speakers, performers, diversity, culture, participatory, when, where

Schedule: break it down, what happens by who and when, from pack up to clean-up...

Outreach: fliers, door-knocking, phone calls, allies work

Logistics: all the things you need! (See below)

Legal: police relations, permits, etc

Media: press releases, phone calls, spokespeople, media liaison, follow-up

Props: signs, banners, puppets,

Security/Traffic Plan: what is needed? Who will coordinate, train and recruit? We often skip this step, but it is critical for mobile tactics. If groups are crossing intersections or moving through the streets, we need people paying attention to traffic and who are facilitating our safe passage by holding cars back.

Coordination/Prep: trainings in advance and prep meetings day of or day before with as many people involved in filling a role as possible. Make sure everyone is on the same page and schedule, communications, review maps, communications, contingencies, getting everybody on board and knowing who is who and what will happen. This is a really critical step that is often overlooked.

For Civil Disobedience/Direct Action:

Scouting and Mapping – of site(s)

Trainings – how we orient and prepare for the plan and risks we are taking, also legal etc

Model of Org – Affinity Groups, Action Teams, Buddies, Clusters, Blocs, Gaggles

Spokes Councils or Tactical Leadership – will it be a small group who will decide and direct or will it be a meeting of representatives of the participating groups or some collaborative process between the two models.

Legal Strategies and Plan – lawyers, observer, laws, jail solidarity, court plan

Police Strategies and Set-Up – do we inform them, get permit, how do we build a web of restraint on them?

Media – press releases, phone calls, spokespeople, media liaison, follow-up

Documentation plan – video, cameras, audio, blogging etc

Street Medics – got some? Do you know where hospitals are, any relationship with EMT's or fire department?

Communications –scouts, bikes, radios, flags, twitter, text mobs?

Jail Strategies – support outside and inside – Jail Solidarity

Trauma and Healing – when people are hurt or really afraid.

Post Action Legal Follow-up – Courts, Diversions, Community Service. Lawsuits

Logistics – vary depending on event

Date, Time, Place

Route / Maps

Megaphones

Chant / Song Sheet

Sound System

Staging

Permits

Banners

Flags

Signs

Stickers, Buttons, Armbands

Leaflets to Distribute

Armbands, sashes, hats for role identification

Vehicles
Trash Bags
Water
Food
Bathrooms
Transportation
Directional Signs or chalking the sidewalk
Cameras to Document

Things to look for when mapping a city

Highways
Roads / Streets – how many lanes / traffic flow at various hours
Bridges – where they are, are they accessible and how, good for banners, posters etc
One Way Streets
Police stations
Jails
Court Houses
Meeting spaces
Parks
Rivers/waterways
Construction sites
Parking Garages
Heart of the City
Symbolic Locations
Tourist Sites
Community Centers
Public Transportation
Hospitals
Public Buildings, Bus Stations, Libraries,

Some Things to look for when scouting buildings:

Security: desks, cameras, personnel
WIFI
Entrances, exits, loading areas, fire escapes
What kinds of doors/door handles: important for planning how to get in and out quickly or how to close down. (As always, keep in mind your goal before doing anything!)

Lobby Lay Out and security procedures

Elevator locations, floors, access

Sidewalk space, landscaping, trees, etc

Windows: visibility in and out

Places for possible banner drops

Parking and parking garages (great for banner drops, which are great small team actions that can really lift spirits during a demonstration)

Other tenants?

Retail Outlets/Eateries as tenants

Janitor/staff schedule

Other suggestions for mapping and scouting:

Make a map for the people coming into your city with lots of information (don't forget to include where bathrooms are along your route!)

Phone cameras are a great way to discretely capture important info about locations, maps of buildings, directory of tenants etc

Make yourself invisible, act like you fit in, wear clothes that won't stand out

Know where you're going and what you want to look at before you get there. Do online recon first

When making a map, be thorough of what is where, obstructions etc, collect measurements (i.e. number of steps)

Scout at about the same time of day as when the action will be; multiple trips both driving and walking to collect info can be helpful as well

Have a story in case you're stopped, "students doing research" is generally solid -actually eyeball the location!
Don't just rely on the internet like google earth, for your information, although that can be very helpful!

BUILDING BELOVED COMMUNITY:

RED FLAGS AND INDICATORS - HOW THE VALUES OF OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS TEND TO ARISE IN ORGANIZATIONS (AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT)

Examples and indicators for oppressive tendencies in organizations:

Racism and white supremacy: race, culture, ethnicity

- the assumption of white as the norm, universalizing white experience
- talk about needing to “pull” people of color in, or “reach out” to people of color to “diversify” the organization, rather than needing to change the organization’s culture, build skills and analysis so that people of color will want to/be willing to join (and stay in) the organization
- leadership or public face of the organization is disproportionately white
- organization is majority or predominantly white
- higher turnover of people of color
- lack of adequate translation for folks who don’t have English as a first language
- the assumption that “we don’t have racism here”
- deracializing: removing or not including race in discussions, not recognizing or addressing the impacts of race on the organization and the people in it
- challenging the creation or existence of people of color spaces, not understanding the need for them
- conversations dominated by white people, white voices held in higher esteem
- downplaying or ignoring organizational concerns raised by people of color

Patriarchy and male supremacy: gender, sex, transphobia

- policies and bylaws that use gender binary language (he/she) rather than gender neutral pronouns (they/them)
- office space or work space has gender segregated bathrooms
- leadership or public face of the organization is disproportionately male/masculine presenting
- masculine voices dominate at meetings
- masculine opinions are held in higher esteem
- cis men feel more entitled to propose changes to policies or practices in order to get their needs met
- organization is majority or predominantly gender privileged men
- higher turnover of women and trans people
- women and trans people do the majority of the unrecognized and undervalued work: taking notes, cleaning, answering the phones, taking care of coworkers, recognizing and appreciating people’s work

- masculine people restating words, statements, ideas of women, trans, and gender non-conforming people in meetings, or not listening to what women, trans, and gender non-conforming people are saying
- challenging the creation or existence of women and trans spaces, not understanding the need for themselves
- health benefits do not cover trans health care
- refusal to refer to people by their preferred/requested pronouns
- certain tasks considered “macho” or “manly” and treated with more respect

Capitalism: class, income, wealth

- childcare not provided for meetings
- food not provided at meetings (especially long meetings or ones that fall during meal hours)
- meetings held outside of work hours (in evenings or on weekends)
- low paying jobs, with the assumption that people will be able to coast off their partner’s jobs • not providing health benefits, retirement plans
- expectation to work more than 40 hours/week, or long hours to “get the job done”
- people who have more money considered more trustworthy, valuable, legitimate, intelligent
- assuming that everyone has the same class background and needs the same money (equality)
- devaluing life experience, placing higher value on institutional education, or conflating institutional education with “intelligence” anti-oppression resource and training alliance • universalizing middle class experience: assuming it as the norm

Ableism: mental, physical, and emotional ability

- only full time workers get health benefits
- undiversified work structure with no room or options for people with disabilities
- no options for part time work
- if you can’t work, you don’t get paid
- if you can’t work fast or “hard” enough, you aren’t hired, or should quit/leave
- not providing health benefits, retirement plans
- expectation to work more than 40 hours/week, or long hours to “get the job done”
- using the word “crazy” in ways that equate it with wrong, bad, or broken
- casual use of the word “retarded,” and “lame” as unpopular, bad, or negative
- work values that build burnout culture, with no support provided when people are unhealthily stressed or burned out (they often instead are shut out or devalued)
- not prioritizing wheelchair accessible spaces, scent free/ reduced spaces
- the strict and exclusive value of physical labor over other work

Homophobia and heteronormativity

- assumption of straight as the norm
- lack of recognition or visibility of queer people, assuming people are straight
- offhanded comments, jokes that equate gay with bad, weak, lesser, gross
- questions to queer people: “Why don’t you have a boyfriend?”
- statements to queer people about their gender expression: “You’d look so good in a dress.”
- low paying jobs, with the assumption that people will be able to coast off their partner’s jobs
- higher turnover of queer people
- health benefits don’t cover same sex partners, or only cover spouses
- harassing or socially ostracizing people with non-normative gender behaviors

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who are the leaders of the organization? How did they get there?
- Who do people go to to get questions answered?
- Who are the ‘experts’?
- Who holds the power in the organization? Whose opinions and voices matter most?
- What are the assumptions of needs of folks in the space?
- What is the division of labor in the organization?
- What types of knowledge and skills are valued? Which are not valued?
- Are there types of work that are unpaid? What types are they?
- What language is used around sexuality?
- How is gender identity talked about and addressed?
- Are there people who speak english as a second language in the organization? If so, what structures, if any, exist for language development, interpretation and translation, to ensure their full and knowledgeable participation?

DEAR FELLOW WHITE PEOPLE:

by John Costello, *white person*

I'd like to begin with a brief disclaimer: the terms "racist" and "racism" are considered bad words to all reasonable members of our society. And rightly so, racism and racist thoughts, actions, and ideas must be eliminated if our goal is destroying the white supremacist power structure. However, we have arrived at a point where we as white folk consider being called racist as somehow worse than actually being racist. Implicit bias, a more innocuous term for ingrained racist ideation, is a natural byproduct of generations of white supremacy. White supremacy IS racism. White privilege IS racism. White silence IS racism. We white people were born into a vast system that centers and privileges whiteness at all times and has for hundreds of years. It's time that we stop hiding behind more palatable words and just call it what it is. Fellow white people, I am racist, and so are you. It is not your fault, but it is your responsibility.

This section is designed to utilize the experiences and lessons of white people in the movement to help other white people be as useful and effective as possible.

Framing your whiteness in this movement moment

(adapted by John Costello from *Boston White Racial Justice People Activate* (<http://bit.ly/1NtiSig>))

White inaction is violence

Inaction and silence = endorsement (which causes more harm)

White Silence = State Violence

White Self-Criticism is Essential

Always check your motives

Own your mistakes and hold yourself accountable

Talk about anti-racism with other white people in the movement. Do this often.

Do NOT Expect People of Color to Teach You How to Not be Racist

It is a form of violence to request that oppressed people explain their oppression to their oppressor (and make no mistake, we white people are the oppressor)

Follow Black Leadership

Do not become defensive when you are called out. Instead try to understand why your words and actions may be problematic

We Center Black Lives at All Times

Not just when we are in the streets, but also at work, in our families, etc.

“Solidarity” is being willing to run the same risks

White people as accomplices, not leaders of this movement

Read: *Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex*⁴

This means not only taking on leadership amongst white people, though that is important (e.g. taking on the work of educating and building communities), but also responding to and taking direction from BLM leaders (not giving direction or creating demands)

Examples of accomplice actions:

- Interrupting oppression
- Risk Taking
- Solidarity – not leaving Black and Brown people alone in the struggle
- Strategic use of white privilege to gain larger access to resources or alleviate Black individual or group negative consequences
- Stepping back
- Accountability

Solidarity: We know that the structures of domination cannot be undermined without risk. Through solidarity, we share the price of our resistance and attempt to mediate the violence of the systems of oppression. While we may incur suffering as a result of our actions, we don't embrace suffering for its own sake. Our goal is to alleviate suffering, and our solidarity extends to all who suffer under political and economic repression.

Lisa Fithian

Roles & Responsibilities for White People in Movement Space

These are not up for debate – this is what we've been called to do. They might sound obvious to some, but they are necessary to hear, repeat, and amplify.

- We are called to commit to the struggle for liberation
- This is not a test – this is a struggle for liberation. (This is the real thing.)
- There's no greater reward for our actions than freedom
- These commitments are not about having a “perfect track record” or being “a good white”

⁴ <http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/>

Show up: the presence of white people in the street often determines the level of police aggression. Do NOT escalate police aggression.

Stay off the megaphone: this is simple, you are not a march leader, you are not a chant leader.

Direct media to Black leadership: it will be flattering and tempting when media approaches you, and they will. The media loves white faces. You are not a spokesperson for this movement. Show media the Black Leadership who are.

Follow direction of Black leadership: And recognize that Black leadership won't always be accessible

Protest from our position:

We are not Mike Brown. We CAN breathe. – Instead of co-opting Black people's experiences, we can carry signs challenging white supremacy

"Whose streets? Our streets!" – We do NOT need to keep chanting this and claiming the streets for white people

Use our position within white supremacy to challenge it

Call-in/collect white folks who are causing harm and/or breaking guidelines set by Black leadership.

Meet the level of escalation with police, DO NOT exceed it

- Recognize that police reaction to white escalation affects Black people exponentially more than white people
- If you take a risk as a lone wolf, you are potentially endangering Black lives
- Do not abandon Black people during the action to face police alone

We have a strategic commitment to militant nonviolent resistance – honor that

- This is the directive we've received in this movement moment (attend a training to learn more!).
- Militant = confrontation (not a pep rally), we're creating "moral drama"
- Nonviolent = not engaging in violence against people or the state
- Property destruction refocuses attention on white actions
- "We are decentralized and disciplined." – Rev. Sekou

Recognize group responsibility before, during, and after action. Ensure everyone is bailed out of "jail," and strive to do court support

This extends beyond those who are in court for action-specific arrests, recognizing that many of the people going through the court system are affected by the system that we're protesting

When planning white-specific solidarity actions, target spaces of white power, and don't speak for Black people but about white culpability

- We're talking about systemic transformation, not asking communities of color to change their behavior for white benefit.
- If you have to go somewhere where you don't generally go (and you haven't been invited by Black leadership), that's probably not the right place to coordinate an action

- Think about how to utilize our position as white folks to interrupt white-dominated spaces and white normalcy

We have been called to action, not just speaking. We need to be responding appropriately, taking risks, following through. We can be successful.

If we're going to ask white people to leave their comfortable lives and start challenging racism (potentially an alienating move), we have a responsibility to create a space for them to come into – to move in the direction of community.

As we use this moment to make connections, we should recognize that we're not yet where we want to be. Some work is structural/risk-taking. Some work is creating counter-culture.

Make centering Black lives an authentic part of your daily practice. Choose to use your whiteness to dismantle white supremacy.

Seek supportive guidance from Black leadership with organized and thoughtful proposals as opposed to badgering Black leadership for handholding support (think it through before approaching POC for feedback). Remember: we have been called to *action*.

IN DEFENSE OF LOOTING

By WILLIE OSTERWEIL

For most of America’s history, one of the most righteous anti-white supremacist tactics available was looting.

As protests in Ferguson continued unabated one week after the police killing of Michael Brown, Jr., zones of Twitter and the left media predominantly sympathetic to the protesters began angrily criticizing looters. Some claimed that white protesters were the ones doing all of the looting and property destruction, while others worried about the stereotypical and damaging media representation that would emerge. It also seems that there were as many protesters (if not more) in the streets of Ferguson working to prevent looting as there were people going about it. While I disagree with this tactic, I understand that they acted out of care for the struggle, and I want to honor all the brave and inspiring actions they’ve taken over the last weeks.

Some politicians on the ground in Ferguson, like alderman Antonio French and members of the New Black Panther Party, block looting specifically in order to maintain leadership for themselves and dampen resistance, but there are many more who do so out of a commitment to advancing the ethical and politically advantageous position. It is in solidarity with these latter protesters—along with those who loot—and against politicians and de-escalators everywhere that I offer this critique, as a way of invigorating discussion amongst those engaged in anti-oppression struggle, in Ferguson and anywhere else the police violently perpetuate white supremacy and settler colonialism. In other words, anywhere in America.

• • •

The dominant media is itself a tool of white supremacy: it repeats what the police deliver nearly verbatim and uncritically, even when the police story changes upwards of nine times, as it has thus far in the Brown killing. The media use phrases like “officer-involved shooting” and will switch to passive voice when a black man is shot by a white vigilante or a police officer (“shots were fired”). Journalists claim that “you have to hear both sides” in order to privilege the obfuscating reports of the state over the clear voices and testimony of an entire community, members of which witnessed the police murder a teenager in cold blood. The media are more respectful to white serial killers and mass murderers than to unarmed black victims of murder.

And yet, many of the people who perform this critique day-in, day-out can get jammed up by media perceptions of protesters. They want to correct the media’s assertion that protesters were all looters for good reason: the idea of black people looting a store is one of the most racially charged images in the white imaginary. When protesters proclaim that “not all protesters were looters, in fact, most of the looters weren’t part of the protest!” or words to that effect, they are trying to fight a horrifically racist history of black people depicted in American culture as robbers and thieves: Precisely the image that the Ferguson police tried to evoke to assassinate Michael Brown’s character and justify his killing post facto. It is a completely righteous and understandable position.

However, in trying to correct this media image—in making a strong division between Good Protesters and Bad Rioters, or between ethical non-violence practitioners and supposedly violent looters—the narrative of the criminalization of black youth is reproduced. This time it delineates *certain kinds* of black youth—those who loot versus those who protest. The effect of this discourse is hardening a permanent category of criminality on black subjects who produce a supposed crime within the context of a protest. It reproduces racist and white supremacist ideologies (including the tactic of divide-and-conquer), deeming some unworthy of our solidarity and protection, marking them, subtly, as legitimate targets of police violence. These days, the police, whose public-facing racism is much more manicured, if no less virulent, argue that “outside agitators” engage in rioting and looting. Meanwhile, police will consistently praise “non-violent” demonstrators, and claim that they want to keep *those demonstrators* safe.

In working to correct the white-supremacist media narrative we can end up reproducing police tactics of isolating the individuals who attack property at protests. Despite the fact that *if it were not for those individuals the media might pay no attention at all*. If protesters hadn't looted and burnt down that QuikTrip on the second day of protests, would Ferguson be a point of worldwide attention? It's impossible to know, but all the non-violent protests against police killings across the country that go unreported seem to indicate the answer is no. It was the looting of a Duane Reade after a vigil that brought widespread attention to the murder of Kimani Gray in New York City. The media's own warped procedure instructs that riots and looting are more effective at attracting attention to a cause.

But of course, the goal is not merely the attention of dominant media. Nor is the goal a certain kind of media attention: no matter how peaceful and well-behaved a protest is, the dominant media will always push the police talking points and the white-supremacist agenda. The goal is justice. Here, we have to briefly grapple with the legacy of social justice being won in America: namely that of non-violence and the civil rights movement. And that means correcting a more pervasive and totalizing media and historical narrative about the civil rights movement: that it was non-violent, that it claimed significant wins because it was non-violent, and that it overcame racial injustice altogether.

In the 400 years of barbaric, white supremacist, colonial and genocidal history known as the United States, the civil rights movement stands out as a bright, beautiful, all-too-brief moment of hope and struggle. We still live in the shadow of the leaders, theory, and images that emerged from those years, and any struggle in America that overlooks the work (both philosophical and organizational) produced in those decades does so at its own peril. However, why is it drilled into our heads, from grade school onward, in every single venue, by presidents, professors and police chiefs alike, that the civil rights movement was victorious because it was non-violent? Surely we should be suspicious of any narrative that the entire white establishment agrees is of the utmost importance.

The civil rights movement was not purely non-violent. Some of its bravest, most inspiring activists worked within the framework of disciplined non-violence. Many of its bravest, most inspiring activists did not. It took months of *largely* non-violent campaigning in Birmingham, Alabama to force JFK to give his speech calling for a civil rights act. But in the month before he

did so, the campaign in Birmingham had become decidedly not-non-violent:⁵ protesters had started fighting back against the police and Eugene “Bull” Conner, throwing rocks, and breaking windows. Robert Kennedy, afraid that the increasingly riotous atmosphere in Birmingham would spread across Alabama and the South, convinced John to deliver the famous speech and begin moving towards civil rights legislation.

This would have been impossible without the previous months of courageous and tireless non-violent activism. But it is also the emergent threat of rioting that forced JFK’s hand. Both Malcolm X and MLK had armed bodyguards. Throughout the civil rights era, massive non-violent civil disobedience campaigns were matched with massive riots. The most famous of these was the Watts rebellion of 1965 but they occurred in dozens of cities across the country. To argue that the movement achieved what it did in spite of rather than as a result of the mixture of not-non-violent and non-violent action is spurious at best. And, lest we forget, Martin Luther King Jr., the man who embodied the respectable non-violent voice that the white power structure claims they would listen to today, was murdered by that same white power structure anyway.

Though the Civil Rights movement won many battles, it lost the war. Mass incarceration, the fact that black wealth and black-white inequality are at the same place they were at the start of the civil rights movement, that many US cities are more segregated now than they were in the sixties: no matter what “colorblind” liberals would say, racial justice has not been won, white supremacy has not been overturned, racism is not over. In fact, anti-black racism remains the foundational organizing principle of this country. That is because this country is built on the right to property, and there is no property, no wealth in the USA without the exploitation, appropriation, murder, and enslavement of black people.

As Raven Rokia puts it, “In America, property is racial. It always has been.” Indeed, the idea of blackness was invented simultaneously with American conceptions of property: via slavery. In the early days of colonial America, chattel slavery was much less common than indentured servitude—though the difference between the two was not always significant—and there were Irish, French, German and English immigrants among these populations. But while there had always been and continued to be some black freedmen, over the course of the 17th century light-skinned European people stopped being indentured servants and slaves. This is partially because production exploded in the colonies much faster than a working population could form to do the work—either from reproduction or voluntary immigration—and so the cost of hired labor went through the roof. Even a very poor and desperate European became much more expensive than an African bought from the increasingly rationalized transatlantic slave trade.

The distinction between white and black was thus eventually forged as a way of distinguishing between who could be enslaved and who could not. The earliest working definition of

⁵ I use the rather clunky phrase not-non-violent purposely. For some non-violence ideologues breaking windows, lighting trash on fire or even building barricades in the street is “violent”. I once watched a group of black teens chanting “Fuck the Police” get shouted at for “being violent” by a white protester. Though there are more forms of violence than just literal physical blows to a human body, I don’t believe a conception of “violence” which encompasses both throwing trash in the street and the murder of Michael Brown is remotely helpful. Frustratingly, in protest situations violence tends to be defined as “whatever the nearest cop or non-violence practitioner says it is.” Calling breaking a window “violent” reproduces this useless definition and places the whole argument within the rhetorical structure of non-violence ideology. Not-non-violent, then, becomes the more useful term.

blackness may well have been “those who could be property”. Someone who organized a mob to violently free slaves, then, would surely be considered a looter (had the word come into common usage by then, John Brown and Nat Turner would have been slandered with it). This is not to draw some absurd ethical equivalence between freeing a slave and grabbing a flat screen in a riot. The point, rather, is that for most of America’s history, one of the most righteous anti-white supremacist tactics available was looting. The specter of slaves freeing themselves could be seen as American history’s first image of black looters.

On Twitter, a tongue-in-cheek political hashtag sprang up, #suspectedlooters, which was filled with images of colonial Europeans, slave owners, cowboys and white cultural appropriators. Similarly, many have pointed out that, had Africa not been looted, there wouldn’t even be any black people in America. These are powerful correctives to arguments around looting, and the rhetorical point—that when people of color loot a store, they are taking back a miniscule proportion of what has been historically stolen from them, from their ancestral history and language to the basic safety of their children on the street today—is absolutely essential. But purely for the purposes of this argument—because I agree wholeheartedly with the political project of these campaigns—I want to claim that what white settlers and slave traders did wasn’t mere looting.

It was genocide, theft, and barbarism of the lowest order. But part of how slavery and colonialism functioned was to introduce new territories and categories to the purview of ownership, of property. Not only did they steal the land from native peoples, but they also produced a system under which the land itself could be stolen, owned by legal fiat through force of arms. Not only did they take away Africans’ lives, history, culture, and freedom, but they also transformed people into property and labor-power into a saleable commodity. Chattel slavery is the most barbaric and violent form of work coercion—but as the last 150 years has shown, you can dominate an entire people through law, violence, and wages pretty well.

Recently an Instagram video circulated of a Ferguson protester discussing the looting and burning of the QuikTrip convenience store. He retorts the all too common accusation thrown at rioters: “People wanna say we destroying our own neighborhoods. We don’t own nothing out here!” This is the crux of the matter, and could be said of most majority black neighborhoods in America, which have much higher concentrations of chain stores and fast food restaurants than non-black neighborhoods. The average per capita income in Ferguson, MO is less than \$21,000, and that number almost certainly gets lower if you remove the 35% white population of Ferguson from the equation. How could the average Ferguson resident really say it’s “our QuikTrip”? Indeed, although you might hang out in it, how can a chain convenience store or corporate restaurant earnestly be part of anyone’s neighborhood? The same white liberals who inveigh against corporations for destroying local communities are aghast when rioters take their critique to its actual material conclusion.

The mystifying ideological claim that looting is violent and non-political is one that has been carefully produced by the ruling class because it is precisely the violent maintenance of property which is both the basis and end of their power. Looting is extremely dangerous to the rich (and most white people) because it reveals, with an immediacy that has to be moralized away, that the idea of private property is just that: an idea, a tenuous and contingent structure of consent, backed up by the lethal force of the state. When rioters take territory and loot, they

are revealing precisely how, in a space without cops, property relations can be destroyed and things can be had for free.

On a less abstract level there is a practical and tactical benefit to looting. Whenever people worry about looting, there is an implicit sense that the looter must necessarily be acting selfishly, “opportunistically,” and in excess. But why is it bad to grab an opportunity to improve well-being, to make life better, easier, or more comfortable? Or, as Hannah Black put it on Twitter: “Cops exist so people can’t loot ie have nice things for free so idk why it’s so confusing that people loot when they protest against cops” [sic]. Only if you believe that having nice things for free is amoral, if you believe, in short, that the current (white-supremacist, settler-colonialist) regime of property is just, can you believe that looting is amoral in itself.

White people deploy the idea of looting in a way that implies people of color are greedy and lazy, but it is just the opposite: looting is a hard-won and dangerous act with potentially terrible consequences, and looters are only stealing from the rich owners’ profit margins. Those owners, meanwhile, especially if they own a chain like QuikTrip, steal forty hours every week from thousands of employees who in return get the privilege of not dying for another seven days.

And the further assumption that the looter isn’t sharing her loot is just as racist and ideological. We know that poor communities and communities of color practice more mutual aid and support than do wealthy white communities—partially because they have to. The person looting might be someone who has to hustle everyday to get by, someone who, by grabbing something of value, can afford to spend the rest of the week “non-violently” protesting. They might be feeding their family, or older people in their community who barely survive on Social Security and can’t work (or loot) themselves. They might just be expropriating what they would otherwise buy—liquor, for example—but it still represents a material way that riots and protests *help* the community: by providing a way for people to solve some of the immediate problems of poverty and by creating a space for people to freely reproduce their lives rather than doing so through wage labor.

Modern American police forces evolved out of fugitive slave patrols, working to literally keep property from escaping its owners. The history of the police in America is the history of black people being violently prevented from threatening white people’s property rights. When, in the midst of an anti-police protest movement, people loot, they aren’t acting non-politically, they aren’t distracting from the issue of police violence and domination, nor are they fanning the flames of an always-already racist media discourse. Instead, they are getting straight to the heart of the problem of the police, property, and white supremacy.

Solidarity with all Ferguson rebels! Justice for Mike Brown!

THE CLERGY'S PLACE IS WITH THE PROTESTORS IN FERGUSON

Jesus calls us to the streets to speak out against injustice

November 23, 2014 2:30AM ET | by Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou @RevSekou

The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict.
— Martin Luther King

My Dear Fellow Clergy:

It been brought to my attention that some of you are questioning the intentions of the protest movement in Ferguson, Missouri, and of the clergy supporting it. While having one's intentions questioned is not new, it appears necessary to address these concerns while so much is at stake during these dark days of American democracy.

I am a preacher of the gospel of Jesus — a poor dispossessed peasant whose life was cut short by state violence. For over a century, men and women in my family have preached that a hunted and hated people must always respond with dignity and deep abiding love.

The gospel is not neutral. It is a calling to become the living flesh of justice in a death-dealing society. Born in the heat of slavery and refined in the struggle for justice, this is my ideology. Some have noted I have been seen consorting with anarchists and communists. While I disagree with the ideological proclivities of many people, they are, nonetheless, children of God. And is not the gospel for the anarchist, the faithful and the communist alike? There is room for all at the table of justice.

In August, when militarized police occupied Ferguson, Phil Agnew, co-founder of the Dream Defenders, presented me with a challenge: "Ferguson will determine whether or not the church is still relevant." Our teargas summer has become a bitter winter of waiting, and the clergy seem to be running that risk of irrelevancy. Some have expressed dismay at the angry youth who responded to both the unconscionable killing of Mike Brown and the unconstitutional repression of protest. It has been noted that the rage-filled protesters make many clergy and their congregants uncomfortable, and that acts of civil disobedience have caused our movement to lose ground in the white community.

White anxiety cannot become the measure of this movement or of the nation. Our movement must not be guided by the need to assuage white discomfort in the face of righteous black rage. Too often, there has been minimal or fleeting efforts by many in the liberal white community to address police brutality and the bone-crushing poverty exacted upon black bodies across this nation. If we rush to accommodate and appease those white liberals whose presence on the streets of Ferguson has been negligible, we betray the blood of the innumerable Mike Browns of America.

Peacekeepers or protesters?

There are those who assert clergy have a specific role to play in Ferguson. That role is perceived to be unlike that of the protesters. For many the clergy role of “peacekeeper” is more of an acceptable station than that of “protester.” Some claim that our rightful place is to be above and beyond the protesters, distancing ourselves while serving as mediators between the police who teargas protesters and those protesters themselves.

Opening our doors to a besieged and denigrated community is the least we can do. The question before religious leaders is whether our houses of worship will leave doors open for the forces of the powerful or act as sanctuaries for the broader community. The church of the street and the communion of protest have drawn clear lines between the just and unjust. These urban protestants will not be seduced by slanted news stories, a corrupt judicial system or clergy who seek peace without justice. The gospel of magnanimity can be merely a rhetorical cover for cowardice. There can be no progress without protest. To call for reconciliation without justice is to desire the resurrection without the crucifixion.

Moreover, the tired line that outside agitators are the reason for social unrest must be consistently challenged. Police, government officials, segregationists and liberals alike have levied this charge time and time again throughout history. Some have also said that those who do not live in the region do not have an understanding of the local ramifications of our actions. On the contrary, those who say this don’t understand the global ramifications of what happened; Ferguson is America and beyond. The nature of our struggle in Ferguson and greater Saint Louis has touched a deep and depressingly familiar nerve nationally and internationally. Many have returned to the region to deploy the skills we’ve acquired in past social movements. Like generations before, we have returned home in search of the promise of American democracy. It has been the shameful images of teargas and tanks on American soil that prompted the nation to pay attention to these young people—most of whom are not in our pews.

Calls for moderation are the hallmark of leadership too closely tied to the powers that be.

Mike Brown’s death is an American story. Every other day — somewhere in America — grieving parents and an enraged community set up makeshift memorials for their fallen — candles are lit and teddy bears lain upon the altars of black and brown suffering. And the justice system gives us little to no recourse.

Global struggle

Ferguson is just one link in an entire chain of global phenomena. From Palestine to Paris, oppressed people around the world sent solidarity messages and joined in protest, making links to their specific struggles. In concert with the Arab Spring, the 2011 London uprising and the Occupy Movement, Ferguson must be properly situated as part of a worldwide movement of historically oppressed people throwing off the shackles of tyranny, which is all too often buttressed by respectable religious leadership.

The tone and tenor of these protests are loud, raucous and at times profane, but nonetheless beautiful and righteous. One of the main methods of protest has been taking to the streets and

reclaiming public space. Ferguson is the latest iteration of youthful holy impatience. The universal sign for surrender — hands up — has been transformed into an international gesture of those yearning to breathe free. Around the world the disinherited and disenfranchised have been met with riotous police, teargas, tanks, rubber bullets and media assassinations.

For over 100 days, Ferguson protesters have been overwhelmingly nonviolent. There has been some property destruction. I witnessed first hand plastic water bottles thrown at baton wielding, assault weapon-pointing riot police flanked by armored vehicles. I repudiate and forswear violence, but must be equally concerned about the conditions that produce civilian unrest.

Martin Luther King, Jr., the nation's most venerable apostle of nonviolence, once observed, "A riot is the language of the unheard." To be haunted, hunted and hated is nothing less than maddening. The untold level of police harassment experienced by most young black folks creates a daily existential crisis. Heavily policed and deprived of decent wages and a proper education, some young people expressed discontent via property destruction and looting. In many instances, community members prevented destructive behavior by blocking the entrances to stores, urging their compatriots to stop. This was not reported in the mainstream media but many of us who were in the streets witnessed it with our own eyes.

Local, state, and federal agencies and elected representatives have made it clear that black lives do not matter. In anticipation of what we believe will be a miscarriage of justice, police agencies have stockpiled enough weapons to wage war on a small country. Young people have been backed into a corner, with many leaders and clergy calling on them to calm down. They have been betrayed by every level of government, tragically by many of the very same churches and traditional civil rights groups that broke the back of American apartheid. Young folks have made a way out of no way. They are the generation we have been waiting for.

Called to protest

There is a certain irony in clergy calling upon youth to calm down to allow the system a chance to run its course. These calls for moderation are the hallmark of leadership too closely tied to the powers that be. It is grounded in a fundamental belief that the system is largely good, perhaps flawed, and with a few bad apples. On the contrary, our struggle is not against a few bad apples, but against a rotten system. As the young activists have chanted: "The whole damn system is guilty as hell."

These words, chanted with the voraciousness of an injured, traumatized, but deeply resilient community must be affirmed. And we must also take a step further. We, too, should be angry; we, too, should be mad as hell. Our blood should boil at that fact that black blood is spilled with impunity in the United States. If we are not mad as hell, is it because we have forgotten that Mike Brown lay on the street for more than four hours? Or that police dogs and back-up officers were called to the scene before emergency services? Have we chosen to repress the litany of names from Emmett Till to Jordan Davis to Renisha McBride to Amadou Diallo to Andy Lopez to Trayvon Martin to John Crawford and on and on and on? Are we not paying attention to this critical moment in the struggle against oppression? To be sure we must be angry, but our anger cannot have the last word.

Nonviolent civil disobedience presents us with the container to channel our anger into a powerful force for justice. The spirit that guides nonviolent civil disobedience is a deep abiding love, which only comes with deep preparation. “Acceptable” protest only tampers the fire and quiets the possibility of deep abiding love to run its course.

Hence we are called to choose sides. Clergy must not only “support” protesters. We are called to be protesters — at once outraged and disciplined. By placing our bodies on the cross of a militarized police, deep infrastructural racial bias and a system that profits from human misery, a new way of being and seeing America and all its promise is being born.

A willingness to be bruised, broken or detained for the sake of the gospel is our only option. Once we make this choice then and only then will our presence be warranted and blessed by the youth who quite reasonably distrust us. The side of love requires that we are uncomfortable. Deep abiding love challenges pastor, protester and police officer alike. The road from accommodation to acting in nonviolent civil disobedience is long and muddy. But we will get there.

Sincerely,

Rev. Osagyefo Sekou

Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou is Scholar in Residence at the Martin Luther King Papers Project at Stanford University. He has been on the ground in Ferguson for the past three months organizing on the behalf of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

READING LIST:

NONVIOLENCE, ACTION:

“The Art & Science of Actions: Shutting Things Down to Open Things Up” – Lisa Fithian

<http://organizingforpower.org/action-2/>

“On Civil Disobedience” – Henry David Thoreau

“In Defense of the Ferguson Riots” -- Robert Stephens II

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/08/in-defense-of-the-ferguson-riots/>

Peace Is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation

edited by Walter Wink

“The Power of Nonviolent Direct Action” – Daniel Hunter

<http://mettacentr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/the-power-of-nonviolent-direct-action-daniel-hunter-final.pdf>

“Making Nonviolence Work” – Starhawk

<http://organizingforpower.org/making-nonviolence-work/>

Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict

Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan

“The Gospel is Not a Neutral Term” – Rev Sekou

<http://bit.ly/gospelisnotneutral>

HISTORY AND CONTEXT:

What is Systemic Racism? Video Series from Race Forward

<https://www.raceforward.org/videos/systemic-racism>

Ferguson Resources: Historical Context (a reading list)

<http://libguides.library.arizona.edu/c.php?g=173589&p=1233723>

#BlackLivesMatter long-form reading list

<http://www.autostraddle.com/blacklivesmatter-the-longform-reading-list-265454/>

Baltimore Uprising Reading List

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QRXOeqP5wcAwtjBIs6v59HHTGZVzHaacy-MKBGEUusY/edit?usp=sharing>

Black Prophetic Fire – Dr. Cornel West

The Black Radical Tradition – <https://libcom.org/library/black-radical-tradition>

Discipline and Punish – Foucault

“The Future of American Progressivism” – Dr. Cornel West

“Go to Trial: Crash the Justice System” – Michelle Alexander

Jesus: a Revolutionary Biography – John Dominic Crossan

The New Jim Crow – Michelle Alexander

“The New Jim Crow: Organizing Guide” – Daniel Hunter

The Wretched of the Earth – Frantz Fanon