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“Mohammed Must Go to the Mountain”

Learn as We Lead, Teach as We Fight, Educate as We Organize

By *Willie Baptist* and *Kristin Colangelo* | October 31, 2020

“Every day we’re not organizing the working class, as a class, united across lines of division is a day we’re losing ground.”

-- **Nijmie Dzurinko, Co-Founder and a Leader, Put People First**

Ending poverty means the complete abolition of the economic system that is based, on the one hand, on the production of profits for the few, and on the other hand, on the production of poverty for the many. That system is capitalism. It is a globalized economic system that prevails today and is upheld by a ruling class of big and global capital. It is a system that is exploiting, devastating, and ultimately killing the poor and homeless, the bottom economic layer of society. This bottom is part of the world’s working class majority employed, under-employed, unemployed, and black-marketed. The poor and dispossessed (property-less) must lead a social revolution to change this capitalist system. To do it must acquire class-conscious of the socio-economic position it occupies in this system. It must know who the ruling class of this capitalist society is and how to go about defeating this class enemy and class-based system. The revolutionary leader, V.I. Lenin gave a clear explanation of this central problem of class power and political strategy,

“People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises. Champions of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realize that every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is kept going by the forces of certain ruling classes. And there is only one way of smashing the resistance of those classes, and that is to find, in the very society, which surrounds us, the forces, which can—and, owing to their social position, must—constitute the power capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new, and to enlighten and organize those forces for the struggle.”

The poor and dispossessed masses today are the social force compelled by their class position to kill the system before it kills them. Clearly, of all the different

segments and strata of society, it is the most revolutionary class force. None of its problems as the most exploited, excluded, and oppressed can be solved today under capitalism. The responsibility for enlightening and organizing this social force falls on the shoulders of the many potential leaders, organizers, and teachers emerging from the ranks of the revolutionary mass fights for survival and self-emancipation. “Learning as we lead,” “Teaching as we fight,” “Educating as we organize” characterize the best aspects of the political organizing approach of the 1985 – 1993 National Organizing Drive of the National Union of the Homeless. In this regard, there were 4 important lessons to be drawn from that unprecedented effort: 1) ‘Mohammed must go to the Mountain, ‘Panning for Gold,” “Every Protest is a School,” and “Collectivity produces Creativity.” They all played no small role in the identification, education, training, and unity of leading and organizing cadre who are devoted to the fight of the poor and dispossessed to ultimately unite and organize itself as a class in the direction of abolishing poverty and ending homelessness.

The world’s history of the class struggles of the poor and property-less and of proletarian socialist revolutions confirmed this truth of revolutionary theory. This general experience of the poor organizing the poor includes particularly the lessons of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s vision of the 1967-68 Poor People’s Campaign, the birth and destruction of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and the rise and demise during the 1980s-90s of the National Union of the Homeless.

Not a single class in history has achieved power without producing its political leaders, its prominent representatives able to organize a movement and lead it.

-- V.I. Lenin, “The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement”

Launching and conducting a mass organizing drive to unite the class of the poor and dispossessed across color lines is inconceivable without *teams of indigenous organizers* among which exists a *core of political leaders*. The *teams* are necessary to construct *bases of operation* in terms of building various fighting organizations of the impoverished. These *bases* are constructed out of the various fronts of struggles such as the fights for food, housing, jobs, education, health and healthcare, etc. Among both the *teams* and *bases* is the growing united *core of political leaders* who direct and coordinate the teams’ work and the different operations of the bases.

The *core of political leaders* represents a higher level of development of the teams of indigenous organizers due to they’re being educated, trained, and united in two strategic principles: 1) Building a broad mass movement to end poverty led by the poor as an organized class force united across color lines and other lines of division, and 2) “You only get what you are organized to take.” These principles are embodied and carried out through the actual struggle to tactically implement what we called the **5 Ingredients**.* This the *core* does through the development of a common *line of communication* and *mutual support networks*.

The mass organizing drives, the *teams of indigenous organizers*, and the *core of political leaders* are inseparably connected with each other. This connection is

* *The Methods of Building Leadership and Organization: 5 Ingredients in the Poor Organizing the Poor* by Willie Baptist and Phil Wider defined by the basic organizing principle, “Mohammed must go to the Mountain.” The corollary is that this is because the ‘Mountain is not going to come to Mohammed.’

MOHAMMED MUST GO TO THE MOUNTAIN

The Mountain is the people, while Mohammed means the leader or organizer. Many conferences have been held and voluminous essays are written about what the Mountain needs and should do. So called “academic scholars” fly over many mountains to go to conferences to present their papers that cry crocodile tears about how much pain and misery the people they see down there are suffering. But none of them actually engage the people. They make eloquent calls for meetings and marches, but the mountain never comes.

Due to their economic and social position in the capitalist system, the poor and homeless are mostly confronted with many problems of bare survival. These problems translate into constant personal crises. The team of indigenous organizers must be able to tell the difference between “issue problems” and “nonissue problems.” The problems that are issues are the ones that most agitate the group of the poor targeted to being organized at any given moment. That is unlike a nonissue problem, the issue problem tends to stir them into some form of resistance or protest as a group.

For instance, when the National Union of the Homeless launched its local organizing campaign in Chicago, Illinois it engaged the homeless men and women in many different venues, probing and agitating to see what problem most aggravated them. What problem was the issue that most agitating or stirred them? This probing culminated in a meeting prepared by the national organizers. Free food and drinks were collected for the gathering at which this central organizing point was discussed. People spoke up about the problems that most concern them. For example, a group of supporters from the local group called the Coalition for the Homeless offered their current lobbying campaign in the state legislature in Springfield, Illinois as such an “issue”. It was a campaign to get a housing bill passed into law. They also offered to pay for buses for the homeless folks to be brought down to add strength in numbers to their lobbying efforts. Many of the homeless knew that they did not have adequate housing because they had inadequate or no income and that they had shitty jobs or no jobs, etc. In other words, they were well aware of the many problems that assaulted them daily. However, it turned out that the most burning problem that was an issue to most was not this policy issue, but was the fact that every morning between the hours of 5 to 7 am homeless adults and children had to get up and get in line, suffering the human indignity of receiving 5 sheets of toilet tissue for the day.

This is what most aggravated and agitated them into action and protest. This was the starting point while other issues subsequently provided similar points of agitation and education for the conduct of the local organizing drive throughout the different phases of the campaign.

RIGHT TO NOT BE POOR

The demand and fight for the human right to not be poor is especially possible and necessary today when the world production has reached a point unprecedented where scarcity in the basic economic necessities can and should no longer exist. The present micro-electronic technological revolution has brought about a new period of unheard productiveness and abundance. It has reached a morally inhumane and unjust point of poverty in the midst of plenty, of abandonment alongside unheard abundance. The fight to emancipate ourselves from unnecessary poverty is going to require the class unity and organization of the most impoverished and homeless men, women, and children guided by the basic principles enunciated in Karl Marx's and Frederick Engels' *Communist Manifesto*. Those principles were summed up in the directive, "Workers of the World Unite!" to "Abolish Private Property!"

The *Communist Manifesto* noted that all written history of society was a history of class struggles. Those struggles have been fought out in every social realm, the economic, political, and ideological. Within the political realm the fights over the predominance of the rights of private property (or legal ownership) have been in constant contention. The rights of private property since the emergence of the capitalist economy have been specifically meant 1) the ownership of the production, retail, and financial enterprises of the economy. And 2) the right to hire, fire, and profitably exploit the labor power of the masses of the people. These rights have long been considered sacred. To protect these rights of private property, the organized violence of the state governmental apparatuses held by ruling minority capitalist class have to maintain and manipulate the disunity and disorganization of the impoverished and dispossessed masses.

Since the defeat of Reconstruction in the United States and rise to political power of Wall Street centered capitalism, the poor and dispossessed masses have remained the most disunited, most racially segregated, and politically disorganized section of the population. To massively organize this bottom section, it is strategically important to frame and connect the immediate struggles, problems, and issues to the need to abolish private property and all the rights associated with it. This means building a broad and powerful social movement to put an end to the poverty-producing and profit-making system, and establishing the right to not be poor. Such a broad movement must have at its forefront the poor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once called it, "a new and unsettling force."

The American Revolution overthrew the British Empire's "Divine Rights of Kings" and established in the United States' Declaration of Independence the God-given inalienable rights to "We The People" of life, liberty, and the pursuit of

happiness as the founding creed. Although at first limited to the legal rights of a few land and merchant owning white males, the eventual reform and reconstruction struggles to extend these civil and human rights to women, black slaves, and other oppressed and exploited people have described much of the history of class struggles in the United States. The same is essentially true today for the contention of nations and classes worldwide.

One of the forms these struggles have taken is the tactic of gathering documentation of violations of the economic, social, and cultural rights articles of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This tactic of collecting documentations on human rights violations culminated in the holding of truth commissions where testimonies were heard and researched findings were discussed and judged by commissioners. The results were submitted to trusted local and state legislative representatives and at times to the United Nations' Human Rights Council itself. This entire political operation facilitated the process of locating the most agitating issues, identifying newly emerging leaders, and pushing our whole organizing drives forward. Organizing the poor and homeless around the immediate issues of housing evictions, water cutoffs and pollution, the cutting food and healthcare benefits, and other basic necessities as human rights violation have proved to be effective. This tactic has helped exposed and opposed the erroneous notions of blaming the poor for their poverty reinforcing a deeply embedded shame, self-blame and passivity blocking unity, community, and organization. In this way it helps give moral legitimacy and human dignity to the struggles and organizations of the impoverished, the most delegitimized and dehumanized.

PANNING FOR GOLD

“Our Task is to make thinkers out of fighters and fighters out of thinkers.”
– **General Gordon Baker**

Here we think it's very important that we mention another organizing principle derived from the experiences of the Homeless Union's National organizing drive as well as other poor organizing poor campaigns historically; the principle we call “Panning for Gold” the corollary of which is that everything that “Glitters ain't Gold.” This mean that in the course of the struggle and organizing campaign, especially at its beginning phases, the focus must be on the identifying, educating, training, and uniting leaders and organizers. The first step in any successful organizing drive is the “organizing of the organizers.” The struggles, protests, and organizing activities are the processes of the panning for gold, for finding these organizers. They are the processes that distinguish the real gold pieces from those that simply glitter, from those that only “talk” and the leaders that walk the talk.

The real gold pieces constitute the indispensable leading *teams of indigenous organizers* out of which is an educated and trained expanding *cores* of political clear, committed, competent, and connected leaders and teachers. These cores represent a network of organizers who has acquired a higher level of understand-

ing as expressed in a revolutionary commitment and a political strategic orientation. For the impoverished masses, the *cores of political leaders* ensures that the different organizing drives come together and complete their strategic objectives and goal, that is, to unite the poor and dispossessed as a class so as to abolish poverty.

The *teams of indigenous organizers* are indigenous meaning that they are largely recruited from the ranks of the poor and homeless themselves. As organizers they distinguish themselves from other members as the most active in carrying out the various aspects necessary for the success of the organizing drive. In other words, the *teams of indigenous organizers* displayed in the practical protests and other actions of the organizations an inclination to fight the hardest for implementing the 6 Panther Ps.

The 6 Panther Ps are practical considerations for the poor organizing the poor. They are conclusions drawn from comparative studies of parallel historical experiences. The national organizing drive of the Homeless Union drew parallels in their experiences with the heroic and historic experiences of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Studying the lessons derived from the parallel experiences from these two organizations of the poor and dispossessed resulted in tactical principles we called the 6 Panther Ps. The 6 Ps were: 1) uniting the Black Panther members around their Program (or Mission); 2) mobilizing Protests; 3) setting up cooperative Projects of survival that work daily meeting some of the immediate needs of members and the ghetto communities; 4) putting out regularly their Press to constantly communicate their cause, work, and the issues of protests; 5) conducting ongoing political education and trainings; and 6) efforts at Plans and planning that ties together all the other of the 6 Panther Ps. The Black Panthers was essentially a militant national organization of poor ghetto African-Americans whose political organizing inspired the development of other similar poor organizations nationally and internationally. Those organizations in the United States included the American Indian Movement (AIM), the Young Lords an organization of poor Puerto Rican Americans, poor Mexican youth of the Brown Beretts, and the Young Patriots an organization of poor Appalachian whites.

They become the cores of political generals and revolutionary cadre that are the foundation and backbone that ensure the direction of the struggle in terms of political educational linking of the immediate issues to the long-term strategic goal of abolishing poverty. This principle is very pivotal as its accomplishment, or not, determines the long-term success or failure of the organizing drive.

COLLECTIVITY CREATES CREATIVITY

In the different local organizing campaigns of the National Union of the Homeless, there were different starting points, or issues around which different local campaigns were launched due to the different tactical circumstances. A series of preparatory meetings were organized to help begin the development of

the collectivity of the teams of local indigenous organizers. This had proven absolutely necessary for the creative adoption and adaptation of the most effective forms of struggle for getting the local campaigns off the ground. We learned from all of human history that, especially when dealing with complex social problems, it is stupid to think only with your brain. It is smarter to think collectively, with the brainpower of many other team members as well as your own. As individuals we are often blindsided. A collective thought process can see better the many sides of a problem and is therefore superior and far more creative than an individual one. So another look at the so-called “Thinker,” the statue of the figure in Dante Alighieri's epic poem, *Divine Comedy*, he can be seen as not really thinking. He is simply taking a shit.

A picture-perfect example of this principle occurred in Austin, Texas, captured in the oft-repeated “Goose Story”. Organizers from the national office of the National Homeless Union came into Austin, Texas to team up with local potential organizers and leaders to launch and conduct the organizing of a new local union there. After exchanging lessons from the experiences of the national organizing drive, the groups were divided up into reconnaissance teams that were sent out to collect data about the particularities of the situation of homelessness in Austin. Based on our overall analysis, the situation of homelessness in the city was absolutely abominable and inhumane. For instance, in the downtown area there were blatant and widespread makeshift dwellings erected the size of doghouses located in many parking lots and alleyways. The reconnaissance teams were sent to different places to examine many aspects of this appalling situation of poverty in this rich downtown area. One team went to the historic district and observed a conclave of old mansions, which was a major tourist area. And another team visited the city hall and got a hold of the present city budget. They looked over every item on the budget and found one curious item. That was the purchase of Canadian geese at the cost of \$800 per goose. During that time the city council purchased geese to entertain the yuppies and buppies of city workers doing lunch. The collective of organizers examined all the data collected and came up with a creative plan of protest action.

The day came for the dramatic action that gave birth to the new homeless union local. The action started with the take over of a historic mansion. They then called the police and tipped off the news reporters. Both the reporters in their news vans and the police caravan came rushing over in the direction of the mansion taken over by the homeless brother and sisters. Both the police and the news reporters arrived at the same time and jumped out of their vehicles with their guns out and cameras rolling. They knocked on the doors and yelled, “We know you are in there, come out!” The homeless leaders yelled back saying, “We know you know because we told and called you!” Some 30 seconds or more elapsed and for a moment you can hear a pin drop. Finally, the large doors of the mansion slowly and creakily opened and there stood a homeless sister and brother holding the neck of a goose and knife in their hands. They had kidnapped the goose! In that moment the police, news teams, and everyone seem to stand still as the lead homeless organizer stated bravely, “Take a step closer and this goose is cooked.”

They had kidnapped a goose in a creative move that captured public attention. The standoff lasted nearly a week in a half with the homeless organizers holding press conferences at the mansion effectively questioning why priorities have been placed on the purchase of geese before allocating any relief for laid off and lockout homeless families with their children. As a result of this protest action, the new homeless union members were able to successfully break their political isolation with local trade union, religious, and student leaders joining and strengthening the Homeless Union organizing campaign.

EVERY PROTEST IS A SCHOOL

The history of society and fundamental socio-economic transformation has confirmed an inexorable law of the development of mass struggles and organizational changes. That is the law Marxist theory concluded,

“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.”

In other words, political agitation and classroom explanation alone are not enough to raise class and political consciousness. People have to also go through their own practical mass experiences. Before planting the seeds of new ideas, one must first “plow the fields” to dig out the old ruling ideas. Social experience along with practical agitation are what “plow the fields” opening the way for more political education and changing hearts and minds. Every protest, all struggles must be utilized as schools tied to and a part of political agitation and education. This process of education and training, leadership and membership development culminates in the “cultivation of the plants.” In a word, the strategic utilization of every “protest as a school” necessarily involves the corollary sequential political educational processes of “plowing the fields,” “planting the seeds,” and “cultivating the plants.” Any other approach to pedagogy, education, and scholarship is the worst academic and amount to “fiddling while Rome in Burning.” Classroom combined with class struggle learning and teaching mean engaging Rome to put out the fires. It means leadership that participates in the class struggle of the poor and dispossessed. It is an engaged scholarship, an engaged theology, or an engaged intellectualism leading as we learn, teaching as we fight, and educating as we organized.

Slogans, Symbols, and Songs

We have found that in mass political organizing of the poor and homeless that capturing slogans, symbols, and songs are indispensable. This is because they are succinct and often poetic statements of demands and aims that arise out of and are practically tested by the mass protests and campaigns of struggle, they serve as calls to action, organizing tools as well as accessible forms of mass political education and pedagogy. For examples, 5 key slogans arose out of and knitted together the National Organizing Drives of the National Union of the Homeless in

the late 1980s and early 1990s: “Homeless Not Helpless!” “One Paycheck or Healthcare Crisis Away from Homelessness”, “No Housing, No Peace!” “Up and Out of Poverty Now!” And “You Only Get What You Are Organized to Take!” From the experiences of the mass organization of largely homeless and poor families, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, the logo of the symbol of a Tent City along with slogan, “Too Legit, Too Quit” served as an effective rallying tool for the organizations many homeless encampment battles. And from the first attempt to reignite the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s Poor People’s Campaign in the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign’s (PPEHRC) the song, “Rich Man’s House” played an important role.

4 Cs in Developing and Uniting Leaders*

Niccolo` Machiavelli, an Italian Renaissance man, once wrote in his classic, “*THE PRINCE*,”

“There is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful of success, than to step up as a leader in the introduction of changes. For he who innovates will have for his enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm supporters in those who might be better off under the new!”

It should be clear why those who have vested interests in the socio-economic and political status quo would be enemies of the leaders who strive to introduce new ideas about the necessity for fundamental changes. But why “lukewarm” support from those who stand to gain from those changes? Because in history those who benefit from the existing economic order of things are the dominant forces that also control the ideological order of things; their ideas are the ruling ideas, their stories are the prevailing stories, and they hire political strategists, ideologists and theologians to manufacture and manipulate the hegemonic misconceptions and stereotypes.

At no times in history has a dumb force rose up and defeated a smart force; the very force controlling the hegemonic ideals and ideas. While every human being has the capacity to be an intellectual only highly developed and schooled leaders serve the function of intellectuals. The abolition of past systems of slavery and oppression, and generally every change of a society in fact, began with a change in mind. Frederick Douglas once stated,

"Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave."

Antonio Gramsci was a revolutionary Italian leader put in prison by the fascist administration of Benito Mussolini. Gramsci was mostly concerned with the problems of the necessity of developing and uniting leaders. He likened leaders to the generals of an army, pointing out in his prison notes collected under the title, “*THE MODERN PRINCE*”,

“They would be generals without an army, but in reality, it is easier to create an army than to create generals. It is equally true that an already existing army is destroyed if the generals disappear, while the existence of a united group of generals, trained to work together, in agreement among themselves, with common ends, is not slow to form an army even where none exists.”

Speaking on this same topic the Poverty Initiative’s Book entitled, “*A NEW AND UNSETTLING FORCE*” states,

“Concerned about the lack of careful and systematic study of the Poor People’s Campaign---both its goals and the reasons for its demise---the Poverty Initiative [the Kairos Center] at Union Theological Seminary decided in 2008 to concentrate much of its energies on a yearlong study and historical analysis of King’s last years... Learning from the crippling effects of King’s assassination, it becomes clear that there is a need to develop many “Martin Luther Kings.” Such leaders are not developed naturally---they must be systematically educated and trained.”

In considering such education and training we must pursue the development of certain important qualities of a leader. The experiences of world and US history as well as the recent experiences of the struggles of the working class have affirmed four indispensable qualities of what it means to be an effective and efficient leader devoted to the emancipation of the class of the poor and dispossessed. We can call them the “4 Cs” of the development of revolutionary leaders, that is, 1) Clarity, 2) Commitment, 3) Connectedness, and 4) Competence.

1) **CLARITY** - *Theoretical Education in Basic Historical Principles and Analytical Tools*

"The prescription for the cure rests with the accurate diagnosis of the disease."

-- *Where Do We Go from Here?* by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967)

“Knowledge is Power” (1500s)-- Francis Bacon

“Know your enemy, know yourself and in one hundred battles you will never be defeated.” – *Art of War* by Sun Tzu

First of all, what is a leader? A leader is someone who is able to make a correct assessment of a problem, put forth the solution to that problem, then to organize the implementation of the solution, and lastly to keep a continual check on the implementation. Your assessment of the situation confronting you determines the set of tactics you will apply in that situation. If your assessment sees comfortably a teddy bear lying next to you and the reality of the situation is that a hungry grizzly bear is coming at you? Then you are in trouble.

“Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy. Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be as armed with knowledge as they. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents.” --MLK, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here?*

“Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think.”
--MLK, Jr., *The Strength to Love* (1963)

Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre in her book, *Jesus Among Her Children*, pointed out an indispensable foundation of Clarity stating, “In the last several decades the voices of men and women from marginalized groups around the globe have proven the promise that what you see depends on where you stand.” All of history confirms this truth. This takes us to the next C, that is, Connectedness.

2) CONNECTEDNESS – *Education and Training in the Mastery of especially the Strategic and Organizational Principles of “A New and Unsettling Force,” and “Many Martins.”*

A leader draws their strength from being inseparably connected with the masses of the people and in collectivity with other leaders who share a common strategic concept or solution to a problem of struggle. In Greek mythology there was a hero named Antaeus. Antaeus was the son of Poseidon, god of the sea, and Gaia, the Mother Earth. He was great warrior who was invincible as long as he was touching the earth, through which his mother Gaia could magnify his strength. Yet another Greek Hero, Hercules guessed this secret source of Antaeus’s strength, and in one decisive battle managed to lift him up from the ground, at which point he could break his bones, keeping him suspended until he died.

All history confirms the truth of Frederick Douglas’s conclusion,

“Who would be free themselves must strike the blow.”

“The dispossessed of this nation -- the poor, both white and Negro -- live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against the injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty. There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life...”

-- Martin Luther King, Jr, *The Trumpet of Conscience* (1967)

Therefore, a starting point in the work of leaders must be adherence to the principle, “Mohammed must go to the Mountain, because the Mountain is never going to come to Mohammed.” Today the Mountain is the bulk of the 300 million American people and first of all, the masses of the poor and dispossessed. This means that with the many problems confronting the victims of the poverty-producing system, leaders must begin their organizing and educating on those problems that are the issues most agitating the Mountain. To find out which problems are currently issues as distinct from those that are non-issues, Mohammed must go to and connect up with the Mountain.

This quality of leaders being connected with themselves and with the masses of the people also finds expression in the key principle, “Teach as we fight; Learn as we lead.” A basic premise of all Antonio Gramsci’s analyses was his concept of the necessity of leaders of the poor and dispossessed being “organic intellectuals.” As distinct from the rest of the educated strata these leaders are inseparably connected (or as Gramsci said, “organically bound”) to struggles of the poor and dispossessed understanding and representing the needs and demands of this socio-economic group as a whole, immediate and long term. An indispensable function of such an intellectual is ensuring the intellectual development of the social forces fighting and leading a movement for fundamental social change. A leader is therefore necessarily a teacher because it is impossible to lead someone who disagrees with you.

A leader and teacher is not convincing, can not get anyone to agree, or stay in agreement for long, if she or he is not convinced and can demonstrate Commitment.

3) **COMMITMENT** – *All Encompassing Ideological Education*

What we do as leaders is not simply what we do, it expresses who we are. Who we are centers around our core values. In other words, most of our behaviors are guided by certain basic views we valued most. They are expressions of what are our real and emotional commitments. The core views and values held by a developed leader of the poor and dispossessed is necessarily not those of the exaggerated individualism of the US culture, which subordinate humanity to the selfish preoccupations of “me, myself, and I.” They are a commitment that put emphasis on the contributions the individual make to community as a whole. For this leader love is not restricted to *eros* (individualized sexual affection) and *philia* (individualized non-sexual affection) but most of all embraces what Dr. King often talked about and strove for, that is, *agape* love, a love for all of the human community and a just society.

The old coal miner’s song, “*Which Side Are you on?*” raises the question of what are your core beliefs, values, and basic commitment. The Reverend Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr. spoke to his commitment to the solution to the problem he understood with clarity. He once stated,

“I choose to identify with the underprivileged. I choose to identify with the poor. I choose to give my life for the hungry. I choose to give my life for those who have been left out... This is the way I’m going. If it means suffering a little bit, I’m going that way... If it means dying for them, I’m going that way.”

--Martin Luther King, Jr, cited in “*Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*” by Vincent Harding

These words of commitment by Reverend Dr. King echo the words in the last speech of the abolitionist John Brown made before a courtroom in a trial that sentenced him to death,

“...had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

“... I see a book kissed here, which I suppose to be the Bible... It teaches me... ‘remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.’ I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say, I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done as I have always freely admitted I have done in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!”

In this “cruelly unjust society,” to be committed to the “least of these” is to be truly committed to “all of these” or all of humanity, as most religions would say, all of “God’s children.”

4) **COMPETENCE** – *Political Education and Training in the Strategic and Tactical Art and Techniques of the Conduct of the Struggle for Economic Survival and for “Power to Poor People” (MLK)*

You can dream the impossible. But no matter how hard you try, you cannot do the impossible. The art of leadership and the art of political struggle generally is the art of the possible. To insist on the impossible is to wind up, despite at most a temporary outburst of emotional energy, in the dead end of cynicism and resignation. A creative and successful leader must have the analytical skills to

accurately assess a problem if he or she is to put forth an appropriate solution matching the cause, scale and scope of the problem.

History teaches that within every problem there exist the essential elements of its solution. Therefore a profound concrete assessment of the possibilities existing within the problem gives us the map and maneuvering room to creatively navigate the many detours in the road leading to the solution. Yes, a true vision gives you the ability to see what you don't immediately see, which is gleamed within the present, that is, the potential ways and means toward the future. An impatient glance at the effects of the problem will leave you blind to the solution. And as Christ Jesus once instructed, the blind cannot lead the blind.

Sun Tzu, the great Chinese strategist and philosopher, wrote about the problems of leadership over 2,500 years ago. This long history of conflicts up to and including the recent experiences of the present era of *Netwar* has confirmed the correctness of the basic principles he set out then. One such principle is,

“To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles are not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”

This principle involves the basic problems of the art of strategy and tactics. It sums up the whole history of human conflicts since their origins. That is with a clear and accurate estimate of the strengths and weaknesses compared with your own strengths and weaknesses, how, when, and where do you concentrate your strengths against the weaknesses of your adversary's position and argument. The US OK corral mentality of the cowboy days where one directly puts his strength up against the strength of his opponent might sound macho but is a failed strategy. As indicated competency in the art of leadership require the utmost of clarity, commitment, and connections.

The dictionary tells us the etymology of the word, strategy. It was originally a military term. It now broader uses applied particularly to conflicts other than war. The word comes from ancient Greece. That is from the Greek word, *strategos*. A *strategos* was an army general, and his post was a *strategia*, the way a president's post is a presidency. Over time, *strategia* came to mean the craft of generalship instead of just the job. *Strategia* spread to French as *strategie*, and then to English as “strategy” in 1810. The dictionary also defines the word generalship as meaning leadership. So that strategy in general can also mean the craft or art of leadership.

Strategy can be likened to a large map to a definite location allowing for many tactical and operational detours. Or we can use the metaphor of a staircase in which the building of a broad social movement to end poverty is represented. On this staircase a number of steps are taken as in the conduct of various campaigns and battles with the ultimate aim of building such a movement, finally reaching the top or the bottom of the staircase.

One false but prevalent notion is that strategy is morality. However, while strategy is a strong commitment to a morality or ethics in terms of hard decisions in the face of complex life situations but it cannot be reduced to this. It must also include a planned series or phases of actions delineating the path to political power and fundamental social change. In this connection, the British historians and strategists, B. H. Liddel Hart stated in his book, "*STRATEGY*,"

"History bears witness to the vital part that the 'prophets' have played in human progress—which is evidence of the ultimate practical value of expressing unreservedly the truth as one sees it. Yet it also becomes clear that the acceptance and spreading of their vision has always depended on another class of men---'leaders' who had to be philosophical strategists, striking a compromise between the truth and men's receptivity to it. Their effect has often depended as much on their own limitations in perceiving the truth as on their practical wisdom in proclaiming it.

"The prophets must be stoned; that is their lot, and the test of their self-fulfillment. But a leader who is stoned may merely prove that he has failed in his function through a deficiency of wisdom, or through confusing his function with that of a prophet. Time alone can tell whether the effect of such a sacrifice redeems the apparent failure as a leader that does honor to him as a man. At the least, he avoids the more common fault of leaders—that of sacrificing the truth to expediency without ultimate advantage to the cause. For whoever habitually suppresses the truth in the interests of tact will produce a deformity from the womb of his thought."

The logics of what has to be done is nothing without the logistics of how, where, and when it must be done, leading is nothing without organizing. The Reverend Dr King one pointed out in his speech, "*Honoring Dr. Du Bois*,"

"History ha(s) taught... it is not enough for people to be angry – the supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger become a transforming force."

Similarly, a major galvanizing slogan of the National Union of the Homeless was

"You only get what you are organized to take."

Further, a conclusion drawn by the Education Committee of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union was that,

"Organizing is more than simply mobilizing bodies. It is essentially about moving hearts and minds."

Organizing skills involve the mastering all forms of struggle and organization that are emerging in the fights of especially the political oppressed and economically exploited and excluded masses. The ability to combine and orchestrate these

fronts of struggle and forms of organization including particularly the higher leading forms such as the leading councils of generals. In the era of *Netwar*, or the so-called “Information Age”, leaders must master the network forms of organization tied the advanced and presently accessible internetted forms of mass media for purposes of the political education, unity and organization of the class of the poor and dispossessed.

V. I. Lenin in his *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, May 1920, similarly speaks to these 4 Cs when he summed up the essential conditions of the Bolsheviks’ success,

The **first questions** to arise are: how is the discipline of the proletariat’s revolutionary party maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its tenacity, self-sacrifice and heroism. **Second**, by its ability to link up, maintain the closest contact, and—if you wish—merge, in certain measure, with the broadest masses of the working people—primarily with the proletariat, but also with the non-proletarian masses of working people. **Third**, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided the broad masses have seen, from their own experience, that they are correct. Without these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party really capable of being the party of the advanced class, whose mission it is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform the whole of society, cannot be achieved. Without these conditions, all attempts to establish discipline inevitably fall flat and end up in phrase mongering and clowning. On the other hand, these conditions cannot emerge at once. They are created only by prolonged effort and hard-won experience. [**Fourthly**] Their creation is facilitated by a correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not a dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement...

On the one hand, Bolshevism arose in 1903 on a **very firm foundation of Marxist theory**. The correctness of this revolutionary theory, and of it alone, has been proved, not only by world experience throughout the nineteenth century, but especially by the experience of the seekings and vacillations, the errors and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For about half a century—approximately from the forties to the nineties of the last century—progressive thought in Russia, oppressed by a most brutal and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for a correct revolutionary theory, and followed with the utmost diligence and thoroughness each and every “last word” in this sphere in Europe and America. Russia achieved Marxism—the only correct revolutionary theory—through the agony she experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unparalleled revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial,

disappointment, verification, and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the political emigration caused by tsarism, revolutionary Russia, in the second half of the nineteenth century, acquired a wealth of international links and excellent information on the forms and theories of the world revolutionary movement, such as no other country possessed.

On the other hand, Bolshevism, which had arisen on this granite foundation of theory, went through **fifteen years of practical history (1903-17) unequalled anywhere in the world in its wealth of experience. During those fifteen years, no other country knew anything even approximating to that revolutionary experience, that rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement—legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms.** In no other country has there been concentrated, in so brief a period, such a wealth of forms, shades, and methods of struggle of all classes of modern society, a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the severity of the tsarist yoke, matured with exceptional rapidity, and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the appropriate "last word" of American and European political experience.

5 Levels of Political Educational (i.e., Theoretical and Practical) Development of Revolutionary Cadre

In our study of the most successful proletarian movements and revolutions in world history we have found that there were at least 5 levels of development of the cadre of revolutionaries of those class struggles. These levels are 1) *Agitational*, 2) *Definitional*, 3) *Textual*, 4) *Analytical*, and 5) *Polemical*. Each of these levels builds successively on the other. They involved the political development of potential proletarian leaders from activists to actual revolutionary cadres who exhibit the 4Cs (Clarity, Commitment, Competence, and Connected). See below. This political development was the production of both the practical experience of the class struggle and theoretical evaluation of classroom. In other words it required the combinations expressed in the principles: "We must teach as we fight, learn as we lead, educate as we organize, talk as we walk."

These 5 levels can be described as follows:

1) *Agitational*: the degree of development of mass political education (use of popular education approaches and techniques) in each of the issue-oriented and local mass organizations,

2) Definitional*: Introduction to the Science of Society, of Marxist theory and Method (use of MST-like popular education techniques) combined with the study (reports) of practical work outside of the School),

3) Textual:** More prepared and elaborate study of basic Marxist texts combined with a study of the historical contexts of each of those texts including a study of revolutionary processes in world history,

4) Analytical: Use of basic theoretical concepts as analytical tools in research and analysis of class and power relations,

5) Polemical: Critiques of prevailing narratives and analyses presented in different forms – Books, Movies, Essays, etc.

The following quotations help define and underscore the importance of theory and advanced political education in cadre development,

“Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy. Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be as armed with knowledge as they. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents.”

--*Where Do We Go From Here?* by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Theory is the experience of the working-class movement in all countries taken in its general aspect. Of course, theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory. But theory can become a tremendous force in the working-class movement if it is built up in indissoluble connection with revolutionary practice; for theory, and theory alone, can give the movement confidence, the power of orientation, and an understanding of the inner relation of surrounding events; for it, and it alone, can help practice to realize not only how and in which direction classes are moving at the present time, but also how and in which direction they will move in the near future. None other than Lenin uttered and repeated scores of times the well-know thesis that: "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement"

– **J.V. Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism***

United Front of the Working Class Against Fascism

By *Georgi Dimitrov* | 1935

Comrades, our best resolutions will remain scraps of paper if we lack the people who can put them into effect...

...There are plenty of people. They need only to be discovered in our own organizations, during strikes and demonstrations, in various mass organizations of the workers, in united front bodies. They must be helped to grow in the course of their work and struggle, they must be put in a situation where they can really be useful to the workers cause.

Comrades, we Communists are people of action. Ours is the problem of practical struggle against the offensive of capital, against fascism and the threat of imperialist war, the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. It is precisely this practical task that obliges Communist cadres to equip themselves with revolutionary theory, for theory gives those engaged in practical work the power of orientation, clarity of vision, assurance in work, belief in the triumph of our cause.

But real revolutionary theory is irreconcilably hostile to all emasculated theorizing, all barren play with abstract definitions. Our theory is not a dogma, but a guide to action; Lenin used to say. It is such a theory that our cadres need, and they need it as badly as they need their daily bread, as they need air or water.

Whoever really wishes to rid our work of deadening, cut-and-dried schemes, of pernicious scholasticism, must burn them out with a red-hot iron, both by practical, active struggle waged together with and at the head of the masses, and by untiring effort to master the mighty, fertile, all powerful teaching of Marx, Engels, Lenin.

→In this connection I consider it particularly necessary to draw your attention to the work of our **Party schools**. It is not pedants, moralizers or adepts at quoting that our schools must train. No. It is practical front rank fighters in the cause of the working class that should graduate from there, people who are front-rank fighters not only because of their boldness and readiness for self-sacrifice, but also because they see further than rank-and-file workers and know better than they the path that leads to the emancipation of the working people. All sections of the Communist International must without any dilly-dallying seriously take up the question of the proper organization of Party schools, in order to turn them into smithies where these fighting cadres are forged.

The principal task of our Party schools, it seems to me, is to teach the Party and Young Communist League members there how to apply, the Marxist-Leninist method to the concrete situation in particular countries, to definite conditions, not the struggle against an enemy 'in general,' but against a particular, definite enemy. This makes necessary a study of not merely the letter of Leninism, but its living revolutionary spirit.

There are two ways of training cadres in our **Party schools**:

First method: teaching people abstract theory, trying to give them the greatest possible dose of dry learning, coaching them how to write theses and resolutions in a literary style and only incidentally touching upon the problems of the particular country, of the particular labor movement, its history and traditions, and the experience of the Communist Party in question.

Second method: theoretical training in which mastering the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism is based on practical study by the student of the key problems of the struggle of the proletariat in his own country. On returning to his practical work, the student will then be able to find his bearings by himself, and become an independent

practical organizer and leader capable of leading the masses in battle against the class enemy.

Not all graduates of our Party schools prove to be suitable. There are many phrases, abstractions, a good deal of book knowledge and show of learning. But we need real truly Bolshevik organizers and leaders of the masses. And we need them badly this very day. It does not matter if such students cannot write good theses (though we need that very much, too), but they must know how to organize and lead undaunted by difficulties, capable of surmounting them.

Revolutionary theory is the generalized, summarized experience of the revolutionary movement. Communists must carefully utilize in their countries not only the experience of the past but also the experience of the present struggle of other detachments of the international workers' movement. However, correct utilization of experience does not by any means denote mechanical transposition of readymade forms and methods of struggle from one set of conditions to another, from one country to another, as so often happens in our Parties. Bare imitation, simple copying of methods and forms of work, even of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in countries where capitalism is still supreme, may with the best of intentions result in harm rather than good, as has so often actually been the case. It is precisely from the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks that we must learn to apply effectually to the specific conditions of life in each country the single international line; in the struggle against capitalism we must learn pitilessly to cast aside, pillory and hold up to general ridicule all phrase mongering, use of hackneyed formulas, pedantry and dogmatism.

It is necessary to learn, Comrades, to learn always, at every, step, in the course of the struggle, at liberty and in jail. To learn and to fight, to fight and to learn.

Cause and Effects – ‘Leaves, Branches, and Roots’

“... the general tendency of capitalistic production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages, or to push the value of labor more or less to its minimum limit. Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation. I think I have shown that their struggles for the standard of wages are incidents inseparable from the whole wages system, that in 99 cases out of 100 their efforts at raising wages are only efforts at maintaining the given value of labor, and that the necessity of debating their price with the capitalist is inherent to their condition of having to sell themselves as commodities. By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement.

“At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the

ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'"

--**Value, Prices, and Profit by K. Marx 1865**

"I sit on a person's back and persuade myself and him that I will do everything necessary to alleviate his condition except get off his back."

-- **Leo Tolstoy**

"...we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered... True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice, which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth.

--**"Beyond Vietnam" (April 1967) by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Excerpts from **"The Prospects of the Communist Party of Germany and the Question of Bolshevization"**

By *J. V. Stalin* | *Pravda*, No. 27, February 3, 1925

- The Party must regard itself not as an appendage of the parliamentary electoral machinery, as the Social-Democratic Party in fact does, and not as a gratuitous supplement to the trade unions, as certain Anarcho-Syndicalist elements sometimes claim it should be, but as the highest form* of class association of the proletariat, the function of which is to lead all the other forms of proletarian organizations, from the trade unions to the Party's group in parliament.
- The Party, and especially its leading elements, must thoroughly master the revolutionary theory of Marxism, which is inseparably connected with revolutionary practice.

- The Party must draw up slogans and directives not on the basis of stock formulas and historical analogies, but as the result of a careful analysis of the concrete internal and international conditions of the revolutionary movement, and it must, without fail, take into account the experience of revolutions in all countries.
- The Party must test the correctness of these slogans and directives in the crucible of the revolutionary struggle of the masses...
- In its work the Party must be able to combine the strictest adherence to principle (not to be confused with sectarianism!) with the maximum of ties and contacts with the masses (not to be confused with *khvostism!*); without this, the Party will be unable not only to teach the masses but also to learn from them, it will be unable not only to lead the masses and raise them to its own level but also to heed their voice and anticipate their urgent needs.
- In its work the Party must be able to combine an uncompromising revolutionary spirit (not to be confused with revolutionary adventurism!) with the maximum of flexibility and maneuvering ability (not to be confused with opportunism!); without this, the Party will be unable to master all the forms of struggle and organization, will be unable to link the daily interests of the proletariat with the fundamental interests of the proletarian revolution, and to combine in its work the legal with the illegal struggle.
- The Party must not cover up its mistakes, it must not fear criticism; it must improve and educate its cadres by learning from its own mistakes.

Political Strategy as Stages of a Social Movement

**Building a Social Movement! Building a HOUSE:
STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT**



- **BLUEPRINT** = Strategic Plan for building SOCIAL MOVEMENT
- Principles for the Use of Building Equipments (hammers, saws, nails, wood, bricks, etc)