

Teacher Unions and Social Justice



Session 3 Testing Leaders, Structures, and Tactics that Lead to Power Building

Online Resource Package

This is a four-part series focuses on strategies used by a growing number of affiliate staff supporting the creation of multiracial alliances with communities and the importance of centering social justice in their unions. Social Justice Unionizing seeks to expand how we think about issue identification, power building, bargaining, partnerships, and the wins we achieve. Content and resources from the book, "Teacher Unions and Social Justice," will be highlighted through a variety of media and discussion formats. The series will provide an in-depth study of the full text, and full attendance is strongly encouraged, but not required.

January 21, 22, 28, and 29
2:30-4:00 PM ET

Lead Contacts:

Ellen Holmes
NEA Center for Organizing
eholmes@nea.org



Revitalizing the Union Movement – For the Union Staff Pg. 236

“Social Justice Unionism is an organizing model that calls for the radical boost in internal union democracy and increased member participation. This contrasts to a business model that is so dependent on staff providing services that it disempowers members and concentrates power in the hands of a small group of elected leaders and/or paid staff. An organizing model, while still providing services to members, focusses on building union power at the school level in alliance with parents, community groups, and other social movements.

Three components of social justice unionism are like the legs of a stool. Union need all three to be balanced and strong:

- *We organize around bread and butter issues.*
- *We organize around teaching and learning issues to reclaim our profession and our classrooms.*
- *We organize for social justice in our community and our curriculum.”*

Bob Peterson’s essay, “A Revitalized Union Movement,” (pages 237-247) provides a number of provocative reflections for Union Staff to consider who are working on social justice issues. There are three requisite conditions that are described in this essay. Take some time to reflect on the extent to which these exist in the locals you work with and what is your role in building them.

Does this condition exist? To what extent?	What is my role in building this?
1. Internal Union Democracy	
2. Increased Member Participation	
3. Building Power at the School Site Level through Alliances with Parents, Community Groups, and Social Movements	

How to Be a Staffer in a Democratic Union

June 05, 2014 / [Alexandra Bradburyenlarge](#)

<https://labornotes.org/2014/06/how-be-staffer-democratic-union>



If members run the local... what exactly is the union rep's job? We asked four experienced staffers how they approach their day-to-day tasks while keeping the rank and file in the driver's seat. Photo: Jim West/[jimwestphoto.com](#).

Suppose you're a union staff rep. (Or a business agent, an internal organizer, whatever the local lingo is.) And suppose you believe in union democracy: the members should run the fight against the boss.

Where do you come in, then? What exactly is your job, and how can you do it in a way that keeps the rank and file in the driver's seat?

The obvious danger: you work for the union all day, while members have their jobs to do. It can be all too easy for members and staffers alike to start thinking "the union" means the people who have desks at the union hall: the top brass and the reps they hire. That's not only undemocratic—it's a terrible foundation for building power.

We asked four experienced staffers how they see their jobs and how they translate the idea that the members run the union into their day-to-day tasks.

GOLDEN RULE

One union tackles the problem at its root by drawing a thick line around the role staffers play.

University Professional and Technical Employees "takes member-run to the nth degree," said Vice President Lisa Kermish. She was a research administrator at the University of California before coming to work for her union.

Stewards do all UPTE's representation, even arbitrations that pit them against management attorneys. Union staff do no direct grievance handling.

Staffers don't participate in bargaining; they're not even in the room during negotiations. Nor do they participate in discussions of the union's policies or direction. Instead, their job is to recruit and train members to do these tasks.

"Our golden rule is, don't do for members what they can do for themselves," Kermish said, "and its platinum corollary is, if there isn't a member to do it, it won't get done."

Holding fast to these rules isn't always easy. What's a staffer to do when the clock is ticking on a grievable situation and no steward is willing to take it on? Sometimes the union has to call in a "super steward" from Los Angeles to handle a case an hour away in Irvine, or throw a new steward "into the deep end of the pool"—with support from staff, but never with a staffer doing the task for the steward.

The policy, Kermish said, is "based on the premise that, if we're really a member-run union, we have to do more than talk the talk."

TEAM EFFORT

Part of a union rep's job, Joe Fahey says, "is to help people do things they're not used to doing. None of the big changes that we're trying to make in the labor movement, in our workplaces, in the world, are going to happen if we don't make small changes, like in how we talk to each other and how we run meetings."

Tips and Principles for Staffers

Democracy is a lot more than elections. A democratic union is “more about voices than votes,” Joe Fahey says. Who gets to speak in meetings? Who has a say in the strategy? Make room for real debate.

Members make the decisions at every step of organizing, not just the end. It’s not good enough if “some well-worked-out plan has been arrived at, and then members come to a meeting to give it their stamp of approval,” says Ellen David Friedman.

UPTE’s “golden rule”: staffers shouldn’t do for members what members can do for themselves—even if that means sometimes a task goes undone.

Get members talking and working with one another, not just with you. Fahey kept grievances in a stack on his desk. When someone brought a new one, he’d say, “If it’s just you, it’ll go in the pile, but if you can bring back two to three people who have similar problems, it’ll go to the top.”

Encourage people to connect their experiences to a bigger picture. When he organized home care workers, Matthew Luskin learned nearly all had faced abuse or sexual harassment from a client. Each story might feel personal, “but they also knew it was deeply linked to sexism in the industry,” he said—a pervasive atmosphere, not just one abusive guy. Members may not expect the union to deal with racism, sexism, or the economy until you open the door. When he did, Luskin found, “people had a lot to say.”

Fahey, a retired Teamster, was a union staffer for two decades. He recalls a bottling plant where different groups of workers took out their tension and mistrust on the steward.

“The workers would have a steward election and then be extremely dissatisfied with the steward, whoever it was,” he said, “and so there would be a call to get rid of that damn steward and put somebody else in their place. It just looked like an impossible setup.”

So he called a meeting and asked all the workers to consider themselves potential stewards.

They went around the circle answering the question, “What qualities do you have that would make you a good steward?” Then they went around again to answer, “What would be difficult for you about the job?”

Some said they were shy, didn’t like conflict, or had trouble understanding the contract language. A couple of people said they’d be terrified to do something the old steward used to: stand up near the end of lunch break and yell that the union meeting was going to be on Tuesday.

“By then it was sort of self-evident: there’s no perfect steward,” Fahey said. “Everybody’s going to have parts of the job they could do more easily than other parts.”

He asked the group, “Is there anybody here for whom it wouldn’t be a difficulty to yell that at the end of lunch?” Most hands went up. “So, if someone else was otherwise the best steward, is there anybody here who would help do that part of the job?” The same hands went up again.

Members reached a consensus on the most important qualities of a steward, and agreed it would take a team effort to support whoever had the job. The next steward stayed on for years.

The staffer doesn’t have to be the idea person. In this instance Fahey guided the process, but didn’t supply his own opinions on who should be steward or which qualities were important.

Especially “being a white guy in a union full of mostly Mexican women, more often than not I didn’t have the best answer to the problem facing the group,” he said. “It’s easy for a group to recognize a good idea. My role was to ask the question that led to generating the most ideas, so the group could pick the best one.”

DON’T PRE-JUDGE

Ellen David Friedman, who organized for many years with the Vermont National Education Association, agrees: be careful not to pre-judge the solution.

Whatever the problem you're setting out to confront, she said—member apathy, division inside the union, a bad boss, a contract campaign—it's members who need to define it and plan what to do.

"It's not authentically democratic," she said, "if members are simply going out with a goal, like 'we have to get so many signatures on a petition,' or 'get so many people to turn out at a rally.'"

Instead, begin by finding out who's already aware of a workplace problem, and get them talking to each other.

Your job in the conversation is "to turn what looks like just a dead end or an endless cycle of wheel-spinning or pessimism—'we've tried that, it hasn't worked, no one cares'—into a frame-able, settable goal," David Friedman said. "With some dose of, if not optimism, at least commitment to try something."

Encourage members to figure out who else is likely affected by the problem and how to bring them into the conversation, she said. You can help them prepare and practice what to say to their co-workers.

MESSY, SLOW, UNEXPECTED

Maybe the group agrees to do a survey. When you come back together, she said, "now instead of five people concerned, we've talked to 50, and wow, 88 percent of them said their problem was x." Maybe they write up the results, go back out to check in with people again, hold a meeting.

Again you might role-play or talk through how to frame the issue. The organizer's task is "to prepare people for having their own conversations with each other," David Friedman said. "Those are where the democratic process is going on."

But "it's not as if the organizer or staff person is invisible. They have a job to do: matching power to appropriate goals," she said. "Members who are not experienced organizers might have an idea of what they want, but it bears no relationship to what can be achieved based on existing power."

So your role is to point out, "If we really want to do that, we need to build up our power."

"The question is always, how detached can the organizer be from controlling the outcome? Things may go in a different direction than you expected. They may take a lot longer. They may be a lot messier. But the result is authentic and powerful."

TALK ABOUT WHY

For Chicago Teachers Union organizer Matthew Lusk, a big part of the job is to put union strategy on the table for members to discuss.

"Organizing can't just be about getting people to do things," he said. "It has to be about getting people to believe in *why* we're trying to do these things."

The reformers who won leadership of CTU in 2010 believed it would be necessary to build towards a strike. They also knew many members weren't yet thinking that way.

So organizers' job wasn't just to turn out members for this or that event. It was "winning people on the whys" of the strategy that officers were proposing. "We were engaging people in a very honest conversation," Lusk said: "'here's what the challenges are, here's what the risks are, here's what we think we could win.'"

Organizers also talked with members about "what sorts of experiences would build people's confidence that these were strategies that could win," he said.

Members weren't just asked to wear red union T-shirts every Friday, for example. It was discussed: this will show the scared members at your school how much support the union has. Other activities aimed to prove the union could get parent support.

“I have a low tolerance for meetings where you pretend everybody can participate but really there’s only one acceptable outcome,” Luskin said. “I’m not saying we don’t have a planned strategy we’re trying to get people to agree to. I’m just saying they can say no to it.”

Before and since the 2012 strike, dozens of members have gone through CTU’s summer member-organizer program. There they receive much of the same training a new staff organizer would get: how to draw out a fellow member’s issues and move that member to action.

They learn strategy and campaign planning, too. “It’s important to push back against the ultra-professionalization of organizing work,” Luskin said, “the idea that it requires a secret handshake and training that are not accessible to the rank and file.

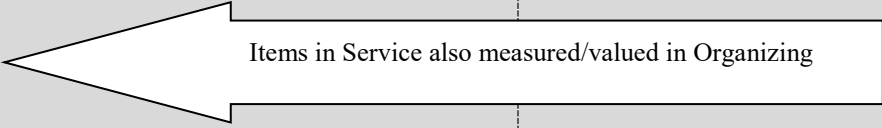
“Are there skills and training that staff get, through experience and time? Sure. But the problem we have in the labor movement is not needing more brilliant strategists and tacticians. It’s ‘do we have huge numbers of people willing to take real risks to fight?’”

The point of CTU’s member-organizer program isn’t to boost a particular campaign. The point is how members are changed by the experience.

“We want members to come out of this able to organize their co-workers and community around a struggle in their neighborhood,” he said. “We want to expand the number of fights the union can take on, and that can only happen if more members feel comfortable developing strategies themselves.”

Organizing and Service Working Together

NOTE: When considering the issue of "creating a culture of organizing," it is vital to realize that it is not the issue of organizing vs. service. Service to members is important. The point of consideration is how does a pure "service culture" which is episodic build the capacity of the organization? An organizing culture which is continual and sustainable provides the context for the servicing of members and builds the capacity of the organization. Organizing supports the delivery of services, it is not an either/or proposition. The organization has placed value on those things that we can count and quantify. The following illustrates how an organizing culture provides the context for the service culture.

Organizing (Continual/sustainable)	Service (Episodic)
	
Clearly stated vision developed collaboratively that engages members, leaders, staff	Number of members maintained
Number of programs and resource allocation that reflect association mission/vision/core values	Number of grievances filed and processed and employment issues solved
Ratio of members involved in programs that welcomes member participation	Number of arbitrations
Number of new members recruited/ retained	Number of contracts negotiated/unresolved
Number of new leaders identified and trained	Percent of salary increase negotiated
Number of new minority leaders identified/trained	Number of unfair labor practices filed
Number of members engaged in association decision-making and broaden power sharing in the organization	Number of successful election campaigns
Number of political and community coalitions	Amount of PAC fund raised
Number of grassroots political action organizers	Number of successful legislative initiatives
Purpose of the organization known in community via known "brand" of the organization	
On-going assessment of organizational effectiveness	

Structure Tests

From Jane McAlevey’s *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing, and the Fight for Democracy* (2020). Reprinted with permission from the author. (See Inouye, p. 252 and Schirmer, p. 227.)

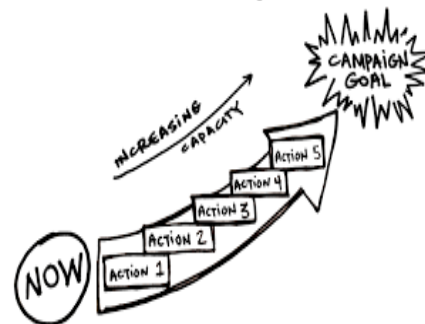
UNIONWIDE STRUCTURE TEST	DATE	IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURE TEST
Each of these was done by hand, face-to-face, across 900 schools. They were carried out by teacher leaders under the guidance of staff organizers. Each test helps the leadership understand where they are strong and where they are weak, which helps to prioritize their efforts.		
Regional rallies in the contract that had expired in 2011	November 2014	Used an “I’ll be there” sign-up sheet in the weeks before these smaller regional rallies, as they planned their first big citywide rally set for early 2015. This was the contract the new leadership inherited: the people who lost the election had been negotiating it for more than three years.
Organizing for February 2016 Stand Up citywide rally for the 2011 contract	January 2015	Launched a campaign-commitment card with check boxes of what people were willing to do: school-site picketing, parent outreach, attend a downtown rally in February 2015, boycott faculty meetings, protest testing, and strike if necessary.
Stand Up rally at Grand Park, escalating to citywide	February 2015	15,000 union members attended, making it the largest action since the 1989 strike

The teachers win big, a 10 percent raise (the first raise in 10 years), finally settling the 2011 contract and demonstrating to members that the new methods of organizing work.

UNIONWIDE STRUCTURE TEST	DATE	IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURE TEST
Launch I'll Vote Yes to Build the Future, Fund the Fight	Fall 2015	More than half of the members of the union signed a public petition saying they would vote yes to increase their dues, which they framed as Build the Future, Fund the Fight.
Membership-wide union election to allow the rank-and-file members to vote to increase dues	February 2016	A majority of members actually participate in the ballot, with 83 percent voting yes. Like most union elections, as with most American elections, traditionally only a minority vote. But UTLA was determined to have real union democracy, with an important question going to the members, and they achieved more than 50 percent turnout.
School site-based rallies for health insurance	Fall 2017	Health benefit negotiations took place parallel to the overall contract bargaining (with a coalition of LAUSD unions), because nonteachers and teachers alike negotiate insurance benefits at the same time.
All In launches and ratification of healthcare contract	February 2018	Because the union anticipated that the right wing would prevail in the <i>Janus</i> Supreme Court case, it planned ahead and had the entire membership sign new cards with language the court would stipulate.
4 Questions petition launch	April 2018	This petition asked members about their willingness to take four actions, indicated by hand checks on boxes and their signature.
All-In for Respect rally	May 2018	12,000 members turn out at Grand Park rally
Strike vote	August 2018	84 percent turn out and participate, 98 percent vote yes.
I Will Strike petition	Fall 2018	More than 75 percent sign.

Achieving Social Justice Wins Case Studies

Our focus in Session 3 is on leaders and structures that transform the relationships of rank and file, leaders, and communities with their union. For our time together we will focus on the cases of the North Carolina Association of Educators and Arizona Educators United/ Arizona Education Association.



Case	What are the key issues that this story “wins” ?	What are the ways that they thought of leaders and structures? How did this transform their union?	What are the small steps along the way (tactics or structure tests) that were put in place?	What is the staff role?
“It’s Not Magic. It’s Organizing” NCAE Pg 226				
“You Need Rank and File to Win” Arizona Teachers Pg 189				

Celebrating Ella Baker and Her “Group-Centered Leadership”

Ella Baker’s Legacy: A Different Model of Leadership

As a community organizer, Ella Baker brought a different style of leadership to the civil rights movement—one that contrasted with the traditional model that celebrated a few charismatic individuals. Baker believed in deemphasizing top organizational figureheads and instead cultivating the abilities of everyday people to collectively join together and take action. She upheld the idea that organizations should be run by those most impacted by the problems the organization is trying to solve.

In a June 12, 2015 article in Colorlines, Barbara Ransby discussed Baker’s approach to leadership:

Although she objected to the top-down, predominately male leadership structures that were typical of groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) and the NAACP in the 1950s and ’60s, she realized the necessity for grounded, community-based leader-organizers such as sharecropper Fannie Lou Hamer and Cleveland, Mississippi-based local organizer Amzie Moore. Baker was not against leadership. She was opposed to hierarchical leadership that disempowered the masses and further privileged the already privileged.

When Oprah Winfrey complained that recent protests against police violence lack leadership, she was describing [Martin Luther King’s] style of leading, or at least the way in which the King legacy has been most widely branded: the reverend as the strong, all-knowing, slightly imperfect but still not-like-us type of leader.

Baker represented a different leadership tradition altogether. She combined the generic concept of leadership— “a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task”—and a confidence in the wisdom of ordinary people to define their problems and imagine solutions. Baker helped everyday people channel and congeal their collective power to resist oppression and fight for sustainable, transformative change....

That collective effort required leaders who were accountable to one another and were not singular. There were many organizers in groups such as SNCC who modeled Baker’s brand of what sociologist Charles Payne has called “group-centered leadership.”

Rather than someone with a fancy title standing at a podium speaking for or to the people, group-centered leaders are at the center of many concentric circles. They strengthen the group, forge consensus and negotiate a way forward. That kind of leadership is impactful, democratic, and, I would argue, more radical and sustainable, than the alternatives.

<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/ella-taught-me-shattering-myth-leaderless-movement>

Another way in which Baker’s leadership style contrasted with the norm within many civil rights organizations was her emphasis on valuing the contributions of women. Baker was opinionated and outspoken, even when social norms held that women should be quiet and deferential. At both the SCLC

and NAACP, she protested the fact that formal power rested in the hands of men, who almost exclusively were given top offices, while women were relegated to support roles.

Congressperson John Lewis, himself a prominent civil rights activist, wrote in his memoir *Walking with the Wind*: “Long before people began using the term ‘male chauvinism,’ Ella Baker was describing it and denouncing it in the civil rights movement, and she was right. There were very, very few women getting credit for their work, and even fewer emerged into leadership positions.”

In a January 16, 2017 article for *Time* magazine, journalist Julie Scelfo notes that the prevalence of sexism, even within the movement, may be one reason that Baker is less well-known today than she might be otherwise:

Despite her level of experience and proven track record, [Martin Luther King, Jr.] had difficulty allowing a woman’s decisions to trump his own, and her idea was that the organization should devote its resources more to promoting and enabling its overall mission rather than celebrating a charismatic leader. Wyatt Tee Walker, an early SCLC board member, told the filmmaker Joanne Grant that the ministers’ refusal to follow Baker’s advice was in practice with the era’s norms. “This was before the days of women’s liberation,” he says in the 1981 film [Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker](#)....

Despite Baker’s gifts for leadership and oratory, the SCLC pastors, intent on preserving their patriarchal hierarchy, refused to allow her to share in their prestige.

<https://time.com/4633460/mlk-day-ella-baker/>

Scelfo goes on to discuss another reason why Ella Baker may be less well-known and widely celebrated today than some other civil rights activists:

Baker spent years of her life performing the essential—but far from glamorous—act of listening, a crucial first step in helping beleaguered Blacks develop enough self-worth to demand being treated with dignity in an environment where they had every reason to fear brutality and economic reprisal from their white neighbors. She also understood group dynamics and how to empower people to join forces, a delicate task that involves responding to a wide array of human feelings.

A narrative about this kind of work is inherently less dramatic and far more complicated than, say, the tale of a discreet act of bravery on a bus. But great leaders have recognized for centuries that high emotional intelligence, or the ability to recognize and respond to other people’s feelings, is central to successfully influencing them.

<https://time.com/4633460/mlk-day-ella-baker/>

Baker possessed this type of intelligence and infused it into her approach to organizing. In doing so, she paved the way for many young people and women to grow in their own leadership.

Today, her legacy can be seen in organizations like Black Lives Matter, which promote a “leaderful” and feminist style of organizing. Because of this, Baker not only helped change the world, she changed how people went about changing the world.

For Discussion:

1. How much of the material in this reading was new to you, and how much was already familiar? Do you have any questions about what you read?
2. Did your perspective of the civil right movement change due to this reading? If so, how?
3. In what ways has sexism affected how we remember the civil rights movement? What were some ways that Ella Baker tried to intervene to highlight the work contributed by women?
4. What do you think about Ella Baker's style of leadership? What positives do you see? Are there any potential negatives you can think of? Explain your position.
5. Ella Baker believed that everyday people should be empowered to lead their own struggles against issues that directly affect them. Do you think this idea is relevant today? If so, how?
6. Think about the changes you think we need to see in this society. Do you think this change will be brought about only if great leaders emerge to make it happen?
7. Do you share some of Ella Baker's qualities, such as the ability to listen to others closely? Understand group dynamics? Encourage people to join forces? How might your talents be put to use for positive social change?

Marshall Ganz' Framework PEOPLE, POWER AND CHANGE (Excerpted for TUSJ March 2022)

RESTRICTIONS OF USE

The following work is provided to you pursuant to the following terms and conditions. Your acceptance of the work constitutes your acceptance of these terms:

- You may reproduce and distribute the work to others for free, but you may not sell the work to others.
- You may not remove the legends from the work that provide attribution as to source (i.e., "originally adapted from the works of Marshall Ganz of Harvard University").
- You may modify the work, provided that the attribution legends remain on the work, and provided further that you send any significant modifications or updates to marshall_ganz@harvard.edu or Marshall Ganz, Hauser Center, Harvard Kennedy School, 79 JFK Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
- You hereby grant an irrevocable, royalty-free license to Marshall Ganz and New Organizing Institute, and their successors, heirs, licensees and assigns, to reproduce, distribute and modify the work as modified by you.
- You shall include a copy of these restrictions with all copies of the work that you distribute and you shall inform everyone to whom you distribute the work that they are subject to the restrictions and obligations set forth herein.

If you have any questions about these terms, please contact marshall_ganz@harvard.edu or Marshall Ganz, Hauser Center, Harvard Kennedy School, 79 JFK Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Organizing can be learned as a leadership practice based on accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose under conditions of uncertainty: identifying, recruiting and developing leadership, building a constituency around that leadership, and transforming the resources of that constituency into the power they need to achieve their purposes.

There are five basic organizing leadership practices.

1. How to translate values into the motivation for action by learning to tell a story of why they were called to lead, a story of their constituency, and a story of an urgent challenge that requires action: self, us, and now.
2. How to build intentional relationships as the foundation of purposeful collective action.
3. How to structure a collaborative leadership team with shared purpose, ground rules and clear roles.
4. How to strategize turning the resources of one's constituency into the power needed to achieve clear goals.
5. How to secure commitments required to generate measurable, motivational, and effective action.

What is Leadership?

Leadership in organizing is rooted in three questions articulated by the first century Jerusalem sage, Rabbi Hillel:

“If I am not for myself, who am I?
When I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?”¹

These three questions focus on the interdependence of self, other, and action: what am I called to do, what are others with whom I am in relationship called to do, and what action does the world in which we live demand of us now?

The fact these are framed as questions, not answers, is important: to act is to enter a world of uncertainty, the unpredictable, and the contingent. Do we really think we can control it? Or do we have to learn to embrace it? Uncertainty poses challenges to the hands, the head and the heart. What new skills must my “hands” learn? How can my “head” devise new ways to use my resources to achieve my goals? How can my “heart” equip me with the courage, hopefulness, and forbearance to act?

Leadership requires “accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose under conditions of uncertainty”.² Conditions of uncertainty require the “adaptive” dimension of leadership: not so much performing known tasks well, but, rather learning what tasks are needed and performing them well. It is leadership from the perspective of a “learner” – one who has learned to ask the right questions – rather than that of a “knower” – on who thinks he or she knows all the answers. This kind of leadership is a form of practice - not a position or a person – and it can be exercised from any location within or without a structure of authority.

Leadership is taking responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty.

¹ Pirke Avot (Wisdom of the Fathers)

² Marshall Ganz, “Leading Change: Leadership, Organization and Social Movements”, Chapter 19,

We also take a particular approach to structuring leadership, a structure that enables us to develop the leadership of others, even as we exercise our own. Sometimes we think leadership is about being the person that everyone goes to.

How does it feel to be the dot in the middle of all those arrows? How does it feel to be one of the arrows that can't even get through? And what happens if the "dot" in the middle should disappear? Sometimes we think we don't need leadership at all because "we're all leaders", but that looks like this:

Who's responsible for coordinating everyone? And who's responsible for focusing on the good of the whole, not just one particular part? With whom does the "buck stop"?

Another way to practice leadership is like this "snowflake": leadership practices by developing other leaders who, in turn, develop other leaders, all the way "down". Although you may be the "dot" in the middle, your success depends on developing the leadership of others.

What is Organizing?

Organizing is a form of leadership that enables a constituency to turn its resources into the power to achieve its goals through recruitment, training, and development of leadership. Organizing is about equipping people (constituency) with the power (story and strategy) to make change (real outcomes).

PEOPLE: Organizing a constituency

The first question an organizer asks is not "what is my issue" but "who are my people" – who is my constituency. A constituency is a group of people who learn to "stand together" to decide, assert, and act upon their own goals. Organizing is not only about solving problems. It is about enabling the people with the problem to mobilize their own resources to solve it . . . and keep it solved.

POWER: What is it, where does it come from, how does it work?

Rev. Martin Luther King described power as the "ability to achieve purpose." We all require resources to achieve our purposes. Few if any of us control all the resources we need to achieve all our purposes. But your interest in my resources and my interest in your resources may give us a common interest in combining our resources to achieve a common purpose (power with). But if I need your resources more than you need my resources, you may be able to get what you need at my expense (power over). So power is not a thing, quality, or trait – it is the influence created by the relationship between interests and resources. You can "track down the power" asking—and getting the answers to—four questions:

1. What are the interests of your constituency?
2. Who holds the resources needed to address these interests?
3. What are the interests of the individuals or organizations who hold these resources?

4. What resources does your constituency hold which the other individuals or organizations need to address their interests?

Our power comes from people. Because powerlessness is the source of so many of the problems people face, organizing not only enables people to solve those problems, but also, by working together, to become more powerful people.

So organizing is not only a commitment to identify more leaders, but also a commitment to engage those leaders in building the power to create the change we need in our lives. Organizing power begins with a decision by the first person who wants to make it happen to commit. Without this commitment, there are no resources with which to begin. Commitment is as observable as action. The work of organizers begins with a decision to accept responsibility to challenge others to do the same.

CHANGE: What kind of change can organizing make?

What urgent problems do your people face? How might the world look different if those problems were solved? What first steps can they take to begin solving those problems? Change is specific, concrete, and significant. It requires focus on a goal that will make a real difference that we can see. It is not about “creating awareness”, having a meaningful conversation, or giving a great speech. It is about specifying a clearly visible goal, explaining why achieving that goal can make a real difference in meeting the challenge that your constituency has to face, and making it happen.

1. Creating Shared Story:

Organizing is motivated by shared values expressed through public narrative. By learning the craft of public narrative we can access our shared values for the emotional resources we need to respond to challenges with courage rather than reacting to them with fear. By learning to tell stories of sources of our own values, a “story of self”, we enable people to “get us”. By telling stories of the sources of values we share, a “story of us”, we enable people to “get” each other. By recognizing the current moment as one of urgent choice and proposing a hopeful way forward, a “story of now”, we motivate action. Values-based organizing—in contrast to issue-based organizing—invites people to escape their “issue silos” and come together so that their diversity becomes an asset, rather than an obstacle. By learning how to tell a public narrative that bridges the self, us, and now, organizers enhance their own efficacy and create trust and solidarity within their campaign, equipping them to engage others far more effectively.

2. Creating Shared Relational Commitment:

Organizing is based on relationships and creating mutual commitments to work together. It is the process of association—not simply aggregation—that makes a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Through association we can learn to recast our individual interests as common interests, identify values we share, and envision objectives that we can use our combined resources to achieve. And because it makes us more likely to act to assert those interests, relationship building goes far beyond delivering a message, extracting a contribution, or

soliciting a vote. Relationships built as a result of one-on-one meetings create the foundation of local campaign teams, and they are rooted in commitments people make to each other, not simply commitment to an idea, task, or issue.

3. Creating Shared Structure

A team leadership structure can enable organizing that grows stronger through collaborative and cascading leadership development. Volunteer efforts often flounder due to a failure to develop reliable, consistent, and creative individual leaders. Structured leadership teams encourage stability, motivation, creativity, and accountability—and use volunteer time, skills, and effort effectively. They create a structure within which energized volunteers can accomplish challenging work. Real teams can achieve the goals they set for themselves, grow more effective as a team over time, and enable the growth, development and learning of their individual members. Effective leadership teams must be bounded, stable, and diverse. They must agree on a shared purpose, clear norms, and specific roles.

4. Creating Shared Strategy

Although based on broad values, effective organizing campaigns focus on a clear strategic objective, a way to turn those values into action; e.g., desegregate buses in Montgomery, Alabama; getting to 100% clean electricity; etc. Trans-local campaigns locate responsibility for strategy at the top (or at the center), but are able to “chunk out” strategic objectives in time (deadlines) and space (local areas) as a campaign, allowing significant local responsibility for figuring out how to achieve those objectives. Responsibility for strategizing local objectives empowers, motivates and invests local teams.

5. Creating Shared Measurable Action

Organizing outcomes must be clear, measurable, and specific if progress is to be evaluated, accountability practiced, and strategy adapted based on experience. Measures may include volunteers recruited, money raised, people at a meeting, voters contacted, pledge cards signed, laws passed, etc. Although electoral campaigns enjoy the advantage of very clear outcome measures, any effective organizing drive must come up with the equivalent. Regular reporting of progress to goal creates opportunity for feedback, learning, and adaptation. Training must be provided for all skills (e.g., holding house meetings, phone banking, etc.) to carry out the program. Social media may help enable reporting, feedback, coordination. Transparency must exist as to how individuals, groups, and the campaign as a whole are doing with regard to their progress toward their goal.

Social Justice Unionism Organizing Strategy Readiness Assessment

To determine readiness for using a Social Justice Unionism Organizing Strategy, locals should assess and reflect on four categories: general readiness and landscape, community/parent relationships, internal organizing capacity, and bargaining status. For each of the four categories below rate each readiness descriptors with a 1-4 in the small boxes, then use the larger box to do a brief SWOT reflection.

1 – Not yet

2 – Basic Understanding and Planning

3 – Emerging Implementation

4 – In Place and Proven

1. General Readiness and Landscape:

- ☐ How interested is your affiliate in using a Social Justice Organizing Strategy? Is there buy-in from the key players (Leadership, board, staff)?
- ☐ Has the affiliate addressed the change in this structure and workload with the UD staff?
- ☐ What is the local public sentiment towards unions and worker issues?
- ☐ What is the relationship like with the local administration? School Board? Elected officials? Business? Community?
- ☐ *In what ways does the local currently frame racial justice in their work? (See Three Frames of Unionism for Guidance)*

For this category – what are your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats?

3. Internal organizing capacity:

- ☐ How many members and potential members?
- ☐ What are membership trends?
- ☐ Who are the decision-makers in the affiliate? State leadership, board, local leadership, UDs, bargaining team?

- ☐ What distributive leadership structures does the affiliate currently use? Building reps, building action teams, community liaisons, bargaining team, social justice teams, etc. (Refer to Dunbar's Number as you do an honest assessment of your leader to member ratios in each worksite)
- ☐ How has the affiliate sought buy-in from the membership for focusing on social justice issues?
- ☐ Do members readily take action as part of their union?
- ☐ Are members participating in all levels of organizing not just the actions? (planning, designing, leading, etc)
- ☐ Are individual buildings, or the local as a whole, running issue campaigns around worksite issues?
- ☐ Have leaders and staff in the affiliate been trained in organizing conversations/relational organizing?
- ☐ *Does the local or state affiliate have an advertising budget for the campaign?*

For this category – what are your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats?

2. Community/parent relationships:

- ☐ Is the affiliate part of a coalition? (Is this ALREADY formed and do you support those partners in their actions?)
- ☐ Has the affiliate mapped their local community organizations and ties?
- ☐ What is the nature of their parent and community relationships and coalitions? (Informal or formal, designated liaisons, etc.)
- ☐ Are the community partners interested in a Common Good strategy, or attending a meeting/training?
- ☐ *Are community partner spokespeople identified? Media trained and/or experienced with media?*

For this category – what are your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats?

4. Bargaining Affiliates:

- ☐ Do the laws in this state facilitate open bargaining, or have any other limits to flexibility with bargaining teams? (not necessarily a deal-breaker, but helpful to know).
- ☐ Does the law allow for the ability to strike upon contract expiration? If not, what possibilities do exist for potential job action?
- ☐ How much has the affiliate moved towards student-centered advocacy?
- ☐ Do you do open bargaining and/or large, representative bargaining teams?
- ☐ Do you have community partners in bargaining?
- ☐ What stage are you in the contract cycle? *Expiration date?*
- ☐ *How did or will you determine bargaining priorities?*
- ☐ *Do you have anyone focused on the communications for bargaining effort? Staff or volunteer comms coordinators? Does this person work on media outreach, member materials, spokespeople training, community outreach?*

For this category – what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats?

4. Non - Bargaining Affiliates:

- ☐ Do the laws in your state allow you to bargain at the local level ? or is bargaining not permitted?
- ☐ How does your union secure and define worker rights? School Boards? Legislature? What are the laws regarding this level of advocacy and policy development?
- ☐ Does the law allow for the ability to strike? If not, what possibilities do exist for potential job action?
- ☐ How much has the affiliate moved towards student-centered advocacy?
- ☐ How much experience has your local had with large, ongoing, public worker actions?
- ☐ Do you have community partners that share in securing worker rights?
- ☐ *How do you determine organizing or advocacy priorities?*
- ☐ *Do you have anyone focused on the communications for organizing efforts? Staff or volunteer communications coordinators? Does this person work on media outreach, member materials, spokespeople training, community outreach?*

For this category – what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats?