

# TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIONAL MOVEMENT

*[Thoughts from Daniel Hunter, author of [Building a Movement to End the New Jim Crow](#), a complementary organizing guide to Michelle Alexander's best-selling [The New Jim Crow](#). More about those and other resources at: <http://www.NewJimCrowOrganizing.org>]*

**I**n the last chapter of her book Michelle Alexander challenges readers:

*Those who believe that advocacy challenging mass incarceration can be successful without overturning the public consensus that gave rise to it are engaging in fanciful thinking, a form of denial. Isolated victories can be won – even a string of victories – but in the absence of a fundamental shift in public consciousness, the system as a whole will remain intact. To the extent that major changes are achieved without a complete shift, the system will rebound. The caste system will remerge in a new form, just as convict leasing replaced slavery, or it will be reborn, just as mass incarceration replaced Jim Crow.<sup>1</sup>*

This challenge calls us to build a *transformational movement* – a movement beyond policy changes to a revolution in values such that the idea of caging people is unthinkable. Such a revolution in values means our struggle must move beyond transactional interactions with policymakers and the public. We must take the time to move people along the spectrum of allies, to connect them to groups and networks that challenge fundamental assumptions, to build relationships that mirror the society we wish to see – where each person is treated with dignity and full personhood.

This mirrors Dr. King's passion for creating the *beloved community*. "The aftermath of nonviolence," Dr. King spoke, "is the creation of the beloved community, so that when the battle's over, a new relationship comes into being between the oppressed and the oppressor."<sup>2</sup> In this vision of a beloved community love for all people informs how we create policies, write laws, and treat each other.

Building a *transformational movement* requires hard work and inner reflection, and it does not have easy answers. Yet if we do not try to answer the tough questions, we may one day find ourselves in a situation where we have removed enough pillars of mass incarceration for it to fall, only to see it replaced by a new form of racial casting, perhaps just as devastating.

One model for thinking about creating the conditions for transformation comes from environmental and civil rights activist, George Lakey.<sup>3</sup> He looked at past movements around the world to see what helped them make radical changes that rippled out through all of society, as opposed to merely winning policy reforms without impacting the rest of society. He came up with five core steps:

- Personal and cultural preparation;
- Organization-building and networking across issues;
- Confrontation with unjust authority;
- Mass political and economic noncooperation;
- Parallel institutions.

He writes about them as sequential stages, but since they overlap in reality, they can be thought of as different principles for building a transformational movement. Let's look at each in turn, not in a spirit of knowing with certainty what we need to do, but of exploring about what we can use in our movement.

## **PERSONAL AND CULTURAL PREPARATION**

Transformational movements start with changing how we see ourselves and how we act. Some have likened oppression to smog: without a choice, we all inhale smog. It is in our body. The toxicity of oppression is in all of us. It makes us callous to the oppression of others – and even our own selves. Personal preparation reconnects us with our natural empathy. We must detoxify ourselves, eliminating those beliefs that make prisons okay or that grind away at our sense of self-worth. We must detoxify ourselves from the smog and create a culture standing on higher values.

This is not an individual task. We need each other's help to get the smog out of our system. The late Eddie Ellis gives us one example of creating such a culture. In an open letter he writes how language shapes public perception of people, like himself, who were incarcerated:

*When we are not called mad dogs, animals, predators, offenders and other derogatory terms, we are referred to as inmates, convicts, prisoners and felons—all terms devoid of humanness which identify us as 'things' rather than as people. These terms are accepted as the 'official' language of the media, law enforcement, prison industrial complex and public policy agencies... In an effort to assist our transition from prison to our communities as responsible citizens and to create a more positive human image of ourselves, we are asking everyone to stop using these negative terms and to simply refer to us as PEOPLE. People currently or formerly incarcerated, PEOPLE*

*on parole, PEOPLE recently released from prison, PEOPLE in prison, PEOPLE with criminal convictions, but PEOPLE.*<sup>4</sup>

Cultural preparation includes creating new language, symbols, trainings, resources, and alternative institutions that express an emerging vision of a society rooted in our deeper values. These values are bigger than any single campaign. They shape a vision of storming the castle and what will be built in its place: *What would it look like to elevate our souls and eliminate systems of human exploitation?*

In this country, few issues have clouded this question as much as race. We need to do our best to clear our heads of the toxic smog of racism so that we can help others clear it, too. If we are to build a transformational movement, it must be one that reaches across the US population – across race and across class.

It's easy to conquer a divided people. We need to see clearly how race is and has been used as a wedge, particularly to divide poor and working people.

This has been the case since the beginning of US history. In the 1600s, the largest US colony, Virginia, allowed blacks to own property, inter-marry, even own (white and black) servants. The lack of racial division meant it was easy for blacks and poor whites to share their circumstances – and to organize together.

This natural alliance of black and white servants with black slaves sparked events like “Bacon’s Rebellion,” when Nathaniel Bacon organized an army of blacks and poor whites to try to force the government to seize and redistribute land. Though the insurrection wasn’t successful, it scared the ruling class and marked a turning point.

The elites – the 1% of their day – needed a way to divide up poor people, so a new set of racial caste laws were created. Poor whites were given small concessions, like reduced taxes and lighter punishments based on their race.

Blacks were slammed with heavy discriminatory laws and violent mistreatment, and their unpaid wages during slavery amassed slaveholders huge fortunes – to the tune of \$6.5 trillion<sup>5</sup>. A raft of accompanying rationalizations and institutions were meant to explain racial superiority and the mass enslavement of a people.

This race-based system successfully broke apart the alliance of poor black and whites. In the job marketplace poor whites saw their wages go down, with blame going towards blacks instead of those who set up and profited from the system.

This same divide-and-conquer strategy plays out today. Author Tim Wise gives an example from New Orleans after Katrina. Across the tracks from the Lower Ninth Ward was another neighborhood hit hard by flooding: the Saint Bernard Parish Chalmette. Both are heavily working class and poor, underresourced communities. The major difference: St. Bernard Parish is white, while the Ninth ward is black.

Tim Wise describes how, when the levees broke, all of their homes went underwater. “But if you had asked white folks in Chalmette – and I’ve done it – who was the cause of the problems in the greater New Orleans area prior to the flooding, they would have pointed across the canal at those black folks and said there’s the problem. 70% of the white folks in St Bernard Parish voted for David Duke, white supremacist neo-nazi for-

mer head of the largest Ku Klux Klan group in the United States when he ran for governor in 1991.”

The irony is that while they were blaming black people for their problems, it was the white elite politicians in Baton Rouge whose responsibility it was to secure the levees and make sure that funds afterwards were spent in proper ways. “The lure of whiteness has tricked these have-nothing-in-their-bank-account white people that they have more in common with these white people on St. Charles Avenue that didn’t lose anything in that flooding than the common black folks who live about 500 yards away.”<sup>6</sup>

We can see this same divide-and-conquer strategy in the biggest growth area for prisons: immigrants in deportation centers. Immigrants are targeted as the cause of lower wages and reduced job employment for US citizens, a convenient excuse for elites with no plans to raise wages for anybody. New scapegoat, same story.

*How do we deepen our analysis so that it connects with others issues and other ways of viewing? How do we include immigrants and poor whites and others in the struggle against mass incarceration?*

The answer lies in stepping outside of the divide-and-conquer framework. Clearing the smog means seeing shared interests across these lines. In *Bridging the Class Divide*, Linda Stout, a raised-poor white anti-racist, retells the story of Ku Klux Klan member C. P. Ellis to demonstrate the connection between shame and racism.<sup>7</sup>

C. P. Ellis tells his story of growing up poor in the south. He tells of being ashamed of his shabby appearance in school, how his dad was embarrassingly turned down for a loan, and how his family could only purchase small amounts of oil to heat their home. As an adult, Ellis worked all the time scraping together enough money to purchase a service station. He poured his heart into it, working seven days a week, 12 hours a day. But when he got sick and his wife couldn’t manage the shop, the bank foreclosed.

Ellis felt rage, but couldn’t see where to direct it. The economic system was invisible to him. Recruited by the Klan, he found a group that for the first time in his life made him proud of who he was. At his initiation ceremony 250 people applauded him. Nowhere else had he met such honor. The Klan offered him respect, and acceptance, and racism seemed to be a vehicle that could hide the shame that haunted him. His shame wasn’t his fault he was told: it was someone else’s.

Linda Stout continues, “Ellis tells how leaders in his community who were wealthy and well-educated would call on the Klan to do their dirty business, but how they wouldn’t shake his hand or speak to him on the street... That was when he began to understand that something was wrong.”

Eventually an interaction with a black woman changed his outlook. He and she sat, very uncomfortably, on the same school board and finally connected when they shared how both their kids were beat up by other children of their same race because of their parents’ even appearing to work with the other.

*How do we address the racial realities behind incarceration? How do we do so when its very nature is shrouded in official colorblindness? How do we deal with this when bringing*

*up race privilege can turn off the very people who most need to hear the message? Through it all, how do we help people deal with their shame so they can see the work of an oppressive system more clearly?*

The work of personal and cultural preparation means helping people understand how structures of oppression impact us. Like Jerry Elster, the organizer from Chapter 1, we have to help people see their personal experiences in a context of systems of oppression. In cultural preparation, we help everyone see how structures of oppression work on them.

Rooted in values deep enough to be unswayed by divide-and-conquer strategies, we can extend to building larger networks and groups to grow our movement.

## **ORGANIZATION-BUILDING AND NETWORKING ACROSS ISSUES**

Stirred up by a shifting culture, people need to move into action. Education without action is informed powerlessness. By building groups and networks we give people power to act and move.

*Do we stick with organizations that already exist or do we build new ones?* The civil rights movement made heavy use of established churches, with all their resources and limitations. The movement to halt nuclear power plants, saw no adequate structures. They created affinity groups, small groups of a dozen or so people bonded together to fight local campaigns. These affinity groups allowed tactical creativity and local control, and were held together through loose national networks.

Each movement must find structures that align with its values and support deep cultural change. Structures must also allow the movement to grow and work in new coalitions.

During organization-building, movements also connect with other issues. The mass incarceration movement needs to connect with issues of unemployment, reproductive justice, environmental destruction, poverty, mental health, and beyond. It needs alignment with new populations, like those whose lives are being destroyed in the ripples of the US War on Drugs in Mexico and Colombia – and the growing number of incarcerated immigrants.

Networking across race is not easy. An illustrative study on racial bias asked questions to two different mixed-race groups.<sup>8</sup> The first group was simply asked if they oppose or support the death penalty. In that group 50% of black people supported the death penalty and 65% of the whites.

The second group was given a “racial argument.” They were asked if they supported the death penalty given that it is “unfair because most of the people who are executed are African Americans.” Unsurprisingly, support from black people went down (38%). But for whites, their support for the death penalty *increased* (77%!).

Variants of this study have been replicated on a variety of issues in criminal justice and show similar results.

On its face, it suggests that talking about race turns white people off. One option is to use “race neutral” arguments. In the study they told a third group that some say “the

death penalty is unfair because too many innocent people are being executed.” With this race neutral argument the fewest blacks supported the death penalty (only 34%) and whites marginally reduced their support (64%).

Yet an approach that refuses to provide language to talk about how racism is at play falls short of a *transformational* movement. *How else do people get confronted with the uncomfortable reality of racism’s underbelly if not by a bold movement?* Because if it’s not addressed, the racial casting will merely emerge somewhere else, in another system.

Some groups have chosen more nuanced ways to deal with organizing around racism’s divide-and-conquer strategy. Take Equal Justice USA (EJUSA) Maryland Citizens Against State Executions (MDCASE), and the NAACP.<sup>9</sup> They teamed up with a broad coalition to defeat Maryland’s death penalty, which is disproportionately used to kill people of color convicted of murdering white people.

Though the injustice is blatantly racist, the coalition needed to navigate through people’s racial blinders and so focused on the unmet needs of victims (most of whom were African-American). Their strategy was largely led by families of murder victims and individuals exonerated from death row who noted that the government spent more energy killing a handful of individuals rather than spending that money and energy on building up their neglected communities.

In strategic terms, they picked a *widely-shared value*, one that crossed races, as their entry-point: support for victims families. Their bill called for repeal of the death penalty and reallocation of the savings to programs for families of victims.

This widely-shared value appealed to people across race and class lines: how can we defend funneling over \$186 million<sup>10</sup> away from impacted communities in order to kill a small number of people? Once they had a starting point that connected to a large swathe of Maryland, they were able to nuance the conversation and talk explicitly about race.

That value was tested in 2013 when the legislature repealed the death penalty but stripped out the victims funding portion. The coalition held firm and, despite tough odds in a financially-strapped political context, in 2014 they forced the legislature to pass additional funding for victims, too.

That’s one option often available to our campaigns: lead with widely-shared values that build trust, before explicitly addressing race.

Another approach comes from the work of the Pelican Bay hunger strikers. They built on the pre-existing network of gangs to work in a wide coalition, addressing race head on. Ahead of their widely-publicized June 2013 hunger strikes, they wrote an historic Agreement to End Hostilities, a statement refusing to allow race to be a barrier to working together and discouraging the escalation of fights along racial lines.<sup>11</sup> Signed by thousands inside prison, the document pointed out how racial division was actively used to break up the movement.

Behind that agreement was months – and years – of hammering away at how race was used to divide in order to unite in common struggle. They had very explicit conversations about race, carefully backed up by extensive relationship-building.

Lessons for us: build new structures or adapt old ones that reflect our movement's core values, network with other movements, identify and run campaigns on widely-shared values that cut across race and class, and reject the use of race as a wedge.

## **CONFRONTATION WITH UNJUST AUTHORITY**

Over time a transformational movement reaches the limits of the traditional channels of change. Courts, elections, lobbying – all come up short in implementing the radical values of the movement.

It's at this point that movements often turn towards varying kinds of confrontation. The civil rights movement found the courts unable to provide the justice needed, so they turned to sit-ins and other forms of nonviolent direct action. Frustrated with an unbending political establishment, women suffragettes turned to hunger strikes. Labor unions turned to strikes, and so on.

Eventually, whether you look forward to it or not, the movement needs to develop methods outside of established channels. Gandhi said, "It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death."<sup>12</sup>

Such confrontation involves a willingness to risk. After years of broken promises by politicians in D.C., young undocumented immigrants decided to step up. They wanted to expose that the government wasn't really honest when it said it was just focusing on deporting "serious criminals." To do so, several resolved to go into the belly of the beast and intentionally risk arrest and deportation.

They knew they were taking a risk, but they were chancing it knowing the government often avoided deporting young students without past criminal convictions because of the bad publicity it generates.

In deportation jails they met people caught up in the system. They collected their stories and provided advice, like telling them not to sign voluntary deportation papers. Then they began to orchestrate their networks to fight for people like Javier de los Santos, who was being ripped from his infant son and deported for a broken license-plate light. When they were released (as they had hoped), they lined up a lawyer for Javier, raised money for a bond payment, got local media coverage, and organized an online petition. He was freed – and with it their high-risk strategy paid off. They soon got re-arrested so they could organize more people from the inside.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond helping individuals, these high-profile actions are shaking away pillars of support for the current system of deportation, as it gets exposed as arbitrary, destructive to families, and a needless punishment of vulnerable populations. The young activists' sacrifice highlights Dr. King's point that unearned suffering can be redemptive.

That kind of boldness is part of what is necessary for a movement. When the going gets tough, transformational movements escalate. Rather than searching for easy wins, we can be challenged by the words of the late Dr. Vincent Harding: “We must struggle in the hard places.”

Perhaps one of the core lessons to learn for movements wishing to engage in confrontation is how to create *dilemma demonstrations*.

Dilemma demonstrations are actions that force the target to either let you do what you want, or to be shown as unreasonable as they stop you from doing it. For example, in a campaign I worked on against two giant unwanted casinos, the community was locked out at every step. No public input. No engagement. We were expected to roll over and give up.

We wanted more than a rally. We wanted a way to embed our movement’s values in our action. So we set-up a dilemma, giving a one month notice that we wanted the release of all the previously secret documents concerning site plans, social impact studies, environmental plans, architectural renderings, and economic studies. “We are asking for all these documents to be made public by December 1 at high noon,” we announced. “If they are not, then we will be forced to get them ourselves, going to the Gaming Control Board headquarters and performing a citizen’s document search to liberate them.”

Our action was our message. And the dilemma placed those opposed to us in a double-bind. If they kept the documents secret, they confirmed public suspicions that they were hiding something nefarious. If they released the documents, we achieved a win for transparency. Either way the movement won.

These are vastly different than tactics like rallies, marches, or vigils, which are symbolic in nature. Dilemma demonstrations take a piece of our vision and implement it. That gives them *action logic* – the degree to which the outsider can understand the meaning of the action because it’s message is embedded in the action itself, not in a sign.

Dilemma demonstrations have been used to great effect:

- When refused service at lunch counters, black citizens kept sitting at the counter demanding to be served. They further highlighted the injustice by modeling dignified behavior;
- When national governments were secretly negotiating a massive “free trade” agreement, undermining workers’ and environmental rights (called the Free Trade Area of the Americas), a rag-tag group of protestors openly and publicly announced their intention to “liberate” the texts through a “nonviolent search and seizure” which eventually led to the collapse of the talks;
- During the Vietnam war, Quaker peace activists sailed a ship loaded with humanitarian aid to North Vietnam, in direct violation of the law – but in good conscience with their religious duty to help those suffering.

## MASS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION

In the face of confrontation, powerholders who prefer the status quo try to offer concessions: a few prisons closed, reducing the frequency of solitary confinement, or increasing funding for re-entry programs. The hope is that with those concessions the movement will be satisfied and go away.

The movement very well might. Movements have gone from a radical stance to watered down politics. This is especially true when movements are led by allies – but plenty of movements led by directly impacted people have been swayed by powerholders' concessions, too. The earlier stage of cultural preparation needs to create a groundwork where movement leadership and culture is aligned and prepared to keep asking for deeper change.

Some movements stay committed to their radical values, but grow insular and metastasize into ideological purity. In effect, they become a group that is confident they know what's best – but are unable to keep reaching out to new people.

Moving into political and economic noncooperation, therefore, is about two things: mobilizing large segments of the population, and escalating in a way that shakes the foundations of the system and changes power relationships so the movement can reshape society.

Examples: mass demonstrations in Egypt where millions refused to recognize the dictatorial government, a general strike in Norway that broke the power of the 1%,<sup>14</sup> or a massive grape boycott in the US forcing growers to recognize the United Farm Workers.

Each activated large numbers of people in either political noncooperation (refusing to accept the political establishment) or economic noncooperation (strikes or boycotts).

To prepare for mass political and economic noncooperation, we must learn from other movements that have reached this stage. A dramatic example of mass noncooperation comes from Burma, which (though ultimately unsuccessful) offers some lessons, especially in the different trajectory of two cities – Rangoon and Mandalay.

In 1988 millions of people took to the streets revolting against a brutal military junta. Rangoon sprung up first in response to police violence organized by students. Mandalay protests followed, organized by lawyers and monks. Both cities brought tens of thousands of people into the protests against government corruption, brutality, and a lack of democracy. And both cities steadfastly refused to accept the government avoiding implementing a true democracy by shuffling its cabinet.

However, the two cities diverged in terms of preparation and strategy. In Rangoon, the hastily organized protests – which reached hundreds of thousands of people – made attempts to persuade the army to join, with cultural acts like kissing the shoes of soldiers. But when the army shot into crowds, protestors often reacted violently, responding by throwing Molotov cocktails and rocks.

The Mandalay protests were built largely using the backbone of highly-respected Buddhist temples. In marches of over 100,000 people, Buddhist monks acted as “public security,” even throwing themselves in front of army's bullets to protect the crowd. In this way

the acts of noncooperation of Mandalay were done with a high-ground modeling of respect for the values they sought. The contrast between the outrageous violence of soldiers with the decency of the protestors resulted in high defection rates in the army.

The Mandalay protestors' commitment to peaceful resistance also meant they did not get baited. In Rangoon, protestors often took the bait of government *agent provocateurs* hired to incite riots. When protestors joined the rioting, it gave soldiers the pretext for mass slaughters.

Despite this, protests continued and escalated into a country-wide general strike. Unable to keep control, the government decided to withdraw from major cities. To cause as much chaos and devastation as possible, they removed police, burned factories, disabled hospitals, and opened up the doors to prisons and mental institutions.

In Rangoon, the situation destabilized. The hastily assembled strike committees could not handle the chaos left in the wake of the government's withdrawal. There were no institutions ready to take over the functions of government, like distributing rice. This left Rangoon in an unsteady state, filled with hunger and uncertainty.

The situation in Mandalay was different. Monks in saffron robes directed traffic and organized trash pick-up, recruiting volunteers from outside their social circle to replace those functions. One eye-witness described the monks who "have taken it upon themselves to fill the void created by the removal of all other forms of authority in the city. The government simply doesn't exist anymore here."<sup>15</sup>

If done correctly, noncooperation opens a void in the current system, providing a unique opportunity to replace it with new institutions. The monks in Mandalay were ready to step in.

Amidst the confusion in Rangoon, however, the government saw an opening. It renamed itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council and promised to end the chaos. Without another option at the ready, SLORC took back Rangoon by slaughtering thousands and imposing harsher measures than before.

With the capitol lost, Mandalay would eventually fall – but two years later they were still mounting protests of upwards of 3,000 to 7,000 people.

Some important lessons about effective noncooperation:

- Commit to behavior that reflects the society you want to see (their a refusal to take arms against their opponents);
- Heighten the contrast between protestors and soldier behavior to win over soldiers and neutrals;
- Remain unwilling to go away when offered minor reforms (changes in the faces of the military junta), instead ask for structural changes (democracy);
- Escalate tactics (from small marches to a general strike);
- Constantly appeal to new constituencies to add movement power;
- Cultivate alternative institutions so that when the opening comes, you are ready;
- Handle opponents' infiltration by refusing to let them bait the movement towards violence.

The nature of noncooperation for the mass incarceration movement will of course look different. But it may be helpful to remember how hard black people had to fight to eat next to white people at lunch counters – and how much more backlash we can expect when we're talking about reshaping economic systems.

Mandalay's monks took the movement further because they had built alternatives. They were ready to take the place of the institutions of government. That prefigurative work is necessary – and leads to the important fifth element of building a transformational movement.

## **PARALLEL INSTITUTIONS**

When the government withdrew from Rangoon, a political space opened up. Nature abhors a vacuum, so that space gets filled by those who are ready to step in.

We would be naive to believe that private prison companies are not drawing up plans for alternatives if the prison system were to be radically challenged. Therefore, transformational movement work must cultivate its own alternative structures. The final stage – Parallel Institutions – is the implementation of these structures on a mass scale.

Many movements build alternative institutions as part of their organizing. Think about the Black Panther's breakfast program (which later were mimicked by the Head Start program). The Black Panthers started it as part of a movement program, both to connect with people and to provide real, tangible needs.

Within the mass incarceration movement, alternative institutions include the work on restorative justice models which are being used in place of the traditional system. Immigrant communities are creating co-ops which stabilize income in the face of repression and deportation raids, while boosting movement participation. There are far-reaching institutions needed, from different forms of public schooling, alternative (non-lethal, non-retributive) policing methods, full employment policies, medical and mental care for all, and so on.

We must ask if our movement is building alternative institutions and structures that are ready to scale up to millions of people. Our work may result in a revolutionary moment – when society has accepted that the current situation does not work and people are looking around for solutions. If ours is not ready at such a moment, people will turn to whatever is available – even if, as in Rangoon, it turns out to be worse.

Supporters of the status quo will tolerate alternative institutions as long as they are small and isolated enough to pose no threat. This is why a movement's capacity to engage in mass noncooperation must grow, so that by the time they do become a threat, those supporting the status quo will have lost their power.

Those institutions, nurtured through the movement's growth in the stages of cultural preparation and organization-building, now can move into the vacuum, becoming part of the structure of a new and more just society.

## IN CONCLUSION

These are just some of the threads of a transformational movement, but taken together they provide a picture of what it might look like and what is required for us to not only shake the roots of the system, but dig them up and replace them with something new.

That starts with doing our own internal and cultural preparation, helping each other clear the smog from our system. Then we build the organizations and networks that reflect those new values, connecting with other people who enhance and deepen our own search for a more human-based way of working with each other. From those organizations we enter confrontation: launching campaigns that use dilemma demonstrations to teach others about these values and entice them to join us.

If we do that well, we will grow larger and stronger, and prepare ourselves for mass political and economic noncooperation, when others get the chance to join in toppling the current system. And finally, when the political space opens up, we can implement parallel institutions to replace the oppressive ones.

This is hard work, but as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. encouraged us, “We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals.”<sup>16</sup>



## NEXT STEPS

1. *This chapter opens with a call to build a transformational movement. What does that mean to you? What helps you develop big vision?*
2. *As your group wages campaigns against mass incarceration, how can your group keep their eyes and heart on the deeper, longer term prize of building a better society? How could this idea of a building a beloved community influence how you approach your organizing work? What might need to change in your current approach?*
3. *In personal and cultural preparation, we help ourselves and others see the impact of structural oppression on us: “the smog.” Take a few minutes to journal or draw about your own experience – what is the smog inside of you? When does your judgment, self-doubt, or skepticism hold you back from being a more effective organizer? Identify one person in your life who could support you to work on clearing the smog inside you.*
4. *Racism and classism continue to be one of the major dividing lines in this country. What are two examples of how those things show up in your change work? What have you learned so far about how you could challenge these dynamics. Who is someone you could enlist as an ally?*

*5. In the section on confrontation, there are examples of dilemma demonstrations. What makes a dilemma demonstration more powerful than a symbolic demonstration or protest? Have you heard of other dilemma demonstrations? Read more at: [www.NewJimCrowBooklet.org](http://www.NewJimCrowBooklet.org).*

*6. What are some examples of alternative institutions that people fighting mass incarceration are already experimenting with? What other alternatives would you want to see implemented into parallel institutions? Get specific. How can you help them to grow faster or increase their reach?*

# NOTES

Additional resources at: [www.NewJimCrowOrganizing.org](http://www.NewJimCrowOrganizing.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (The New Press 2012), 222.

<sup>2</sup> *The King Philosophy* from [www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy](http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy)

<sup>3</sup> Adapted with permission [www.peacenews.info/node/6887/toward-living-revolution-five-stage-framework-creating-radical-social-change](http://www.peacenews.info/node/6887/toward-living-revolution-five-stage-framework-creating-radical-social-change)

<sup>4</sup> Eddie Ellis, "An Open Letter to Our Friends on the Question of Language," [www.centerforleadership.org/current-projects/the-language-letter-campaign/](http://www.centerforleadership.org/current-projects/the-language-letter-campaign/).

<sup>5</sup> This is a conservative estimate not including physical harm or ongoing costs of discrimination. Larry Neal, "A Calculation and Comparison of the Current Benefits of Slavery and an Analysis of Who Benefits" in *The wealth of races: The present value of benefits from past injustices*, ed. Richard America (Greenwood Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Tim Wise's video "On White Privilege" can be seen at: [youtu.be/J3Xe1kX7Wsc](http://youtu.be/J3Xe1kX7Wsc).

<sup>7</sup> Linda Stout's book *Bridging the Class Divide: And Other Lessons for Grassroots Organizing* brings great wisdom to this topic of intersecting race and class (Beacon Press 1997). She draws from Studs Terkel's interview with C.P. Ellis originally in *American Dreams: Lost and Found in America* (Ballantine Books, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> "Persuasion and Resistance: Race and the Death Penalty in America," Mary Peffley and Jon Hurtwitz, [www.uky.edu/AS/Polisci/Peffley/pdf/Peffley%20%26%20Hurwitz%20Death%20Penalty%20ajps\\_293.pdf](http://www.uky.edu/AS/Polisci/Peffley/pdf/Peffley%20%26%20Hurwitz%20Death%20Penalty%20ajps_293.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Learn more about Equal Justice USA ([www.ejusa.org](http://www.ejusa.org)), MDCASE ([www.mdcase.org](http://www.mdcase.org)) and the NAACP ([www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)).

<sup>10</sup> John Roman, et al, *The Cost of the Death Penalty in Maryland* (Urban Institute Justice Policy Center 2008), [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/CostsDPMaryland.pdf](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/CostsDPMaryland.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Their complete statement is available at: [www.sfbayview.com/2012/09/california-prisoners-make-historic-call-to-end-hostilities-between-racial-groups-in-california-prisons-and-jails/](http://www.sfbayview.com/2012/09/california-prisoners-make-historic-call-to-end-hostilities-between-racial-groups-in-california-prisons-and-jails/).

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by Gene Sharp in "The Technique of NVA," in *The Strategy of Civilian Defence*, ed. Adam Roberts (Faber and Faber, 1967), 97.

<sup>13</sup> Michael May, "Los Infiltradores" in *American Prospect* (June 2013), [www.prospect.org/article/los-infiltradores](http://www.prospect.org/article/los-infiltradores).

<sup>14</sup> George Lakey, "How Swedes and Norwegians Broke the Power of the '1 Percent'" online at *Waging Nonviolence* (January 26, 2012), [www.wagingnonviolence.org/feature/how-swedes-and-norwegians-broke-the-power-of-the-1-percent/](http://www.wagingnonviolence.org/feature/how-swedes-and-norwegians-broke-the-power-of-the-1-percent/)

<sup>15</sup> Bertil Lintner, *The Resistance of the Monks: Buddhism and Activism in Burma* (Human Rights Watch, 2009), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech at the National Cathedral, Washington, D.C., on 31 March 1968 (Congressional Record, 9 April 1968 as written in [mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/remaining\\_awake\\_through\\_a\\_great\\_revolution/](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/remaining_awake_through_a_great_revolution/)).