Four Roles Relating to Change

by George Lakey with thanks to social activist and strategist Bill Moyer

**INEFFECTIVE**

- **Believes** charity can handle social problems, or that helping individuals can change social structures
- **Focuses** on casualties and refuses to see who benefits from victimization
- **Provides** services like job training which simply give some people a competitive edge over other people, without challenging the scarcity which gives rise to competition

**EFFECTIVE**

- **Assists** people in ways that affirm their dignity and respect
- **Shares** skills and brings clients into decision-making roles
- **Educates** about the larger social system
- **Encourages** experiments in service delivery which support liberation

**INEFFECTIVE**

- **Promotes** anti-American, anti-authority, anti-organization rules and structure
- **Attached** to an identity as lonely voice on society’s fringe
- **Promotes** change by “any means necessary”
- **Uses** tactics without realistic strategy
- **Has** victim attitude, behavior: angry, judgmental, dogmatic
- **Uses** rhetoric of self-righteousness, absolute truth, moral superiority
- **Can be** strident: personal upset more important than movement’s needs

**EFFECTIVE**

- **Protests**: says “no!” to violations of positive American values
- **Employ** nonviolent direct action and attitude, including civil disobedience
- **Targets** power-holders and institutions
- **Puts** problems & policies in public spotlight
- **Uses** strategy as well as tactics
- **Does** work that is courageous, exciting, risky
- **Shows** in behavior the moral superiority of movement values

**INEFFECTIVE**

- **“Realistic politics”**: promotes minor reforms acceptable to power-holders
- **Promotes** domination by professional advocacy groups that are top-down, patriarchal and are more concerned about organization’s status than the goal of their social movement (such agencies can undermine democracy in movement and disempower the grassroots)
- **Identifies** more with power-holders than with grassroots
- **Does not** like paradigm shifts

**EFFECTIVE**

- **Believes** in people power: builds mass-based grass-roots groups, networks
- **Nurtures** growth of natural leaders
- **Chooses** strategies for long-term movement development rather than focusing only on immediate demands
- **Uses** training to build skills, democratize decisions, diversify and broaden organization and coalitions
- **Promotes** alternatives and paradigm shifts

**INEFFECTIVE**

- **Has** tunnel vision: advocates single approach while opposing those doing all others
- **Promotes** patriarchal leadership styles
- **Promotes** only minor reform
- **Stifles** emergence of diversity and ignores needs of activists
- **Promotes** visions of perfection cut off from practical political and social struggle