

The Public Eye

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What Now? Strategic Thinking About the Progressive Movement and the Right

"The strategies and struggles that will drive future political movements are being incubated in the places where direct experience of oppression and injustice is fresh and raw, among people without political turf to defend, who are willing to try new ideas and experiment with new strategies."

John Anner in Introduction to *Beyond Identity Politics*¹

BY JEAN HARDISTY

INTRODUCTION

As liberal and left politics live in the shadow of the right's current resurgence, a body of literature has emerged about the complex political challenges faced by social change activists. The common goal in this discussion is to fix blame for mistakes made and propose the steps necessary to take power back from the right.²

It is difficult even to participate in this discussion without first clarifying the use of terms. In the past, important political distinctions between leftists and liberals, the Old Left and the New Left, reformers and social change activists were more precise and widely understood. For instance, journalists, activists, and academics once could agree that liberals were those who favored reform of the economic and political system to make it more egalitarian and inclusive. Leftists of the Old and New Left, on the other hand, saw capitalism as an evil system that ultimately could not deliver social justice on anything more than the margins.

When the right captured the Presidency in 1980, much of its ride to

power was achieved by demonizing liberals and liberalism. Sensing the mood of the country, liberals ran for cover, abandoning the term liberal for the less tainted term *progressive*. Leftists of the New Left often did the same, finding that to describe themselves as leftist automatically placed them outside the dominant political debate. For leftists of the New Left, the Progressive movement of the late 19th Century provided a historically noble label they could live with.³ Leftists of the Old Left, however, have never been comfortable with the fuzziness of the label "progressive."

I will use the term "progressive"—as it is now widely used—to describe a broad area of liberal, center/left, and left politics. In the 1990s, it is the closest thing we have to an inclusive term to refer to a loose coalition of leftists, liberals, and social change activists of the various "identity" or reform movements, such as the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the Latino rights movement, community-based social justice activists, environ-

mentalists, labor, the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender movement, and the disability rights movement. It does not include the "new Democrats," who believe the Democratic Party should abandon liberalism, or the conservative members of the identity movements, such as gay conservatives or pro-business environmentalists.

Certainly it is imprecise and oversimplified to refer to such a broad political spectrum as "the progressive movement." However, this umbrella term does capture those who are under attack from the right and who oppose the reactionary policies and principles of the right. A politician or activist who defies even such a broad categorization

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Guest Commentary

by Urvashi Vaid

The feature article in this issue of *The Public Eye*, outlines the tasks progressives face in trying to rebuild a left, and assesses the chief strategies being promoted. The article has the clarity and good insight that are the hallmark of PRA. But it is the subtext that fascinates me. Look behind the curtain and it is queer progressives, radical people of color, and feminists who are the innovators behind a newly resurgent left.

This dichotomy between text and subtext is mirrored in the broader progressive movement. In the many books written by new left academics, the lead articles in *The Nation*, it is easy to miss who is at the passionate heart of the progressive movement.

The ruling premise in the contemporary left is the liturgy of the patriarchs of the defunct 60's New Left, who argue that identity politics derailed their wonderfully universal, class-based movement. In this analysis, the only hope for progressive renewal lies in the cessation of the politics of difference and the resumption of the politics of deference to the old universals.

The subtext of *What Now?* exposes this kind of thinking as wishful nonsense, arising from willful ignorance. It is inside the very movements most criticized that the freshest theorizing, thinking, organizing, and collaborative work is taking place. Progressive men and women of various backgrounds—inside racial justice, queer, feminist, and grassroots movements, and the much maligned centers of academic multiculturalism—are birthing a new progressive movement. Operating largely out of the limelight, we are building new bridges and creating surprising alliances. For example:

- ♦ Groups like the African American Policy Forum, or Manning Marable's network of progressive black academics, work to re-establish a community-based progressive presence in black communities.

- ♦ Media organizers at Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund, and African American Agenda 2000 plan creative new strategies for re-invigorating public discussion about women. Meanwhile, the Institute For Alternative Journalism plans to bring progressive media activists from different movements together at a strategic retreat.

- ♦ Grassroots organizers from various movements plan a retreat convened by the Center for Human Rights Education to discuss using the human rights framework as an umbrella.

- ♦ Groups like the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force commit to constructing a new progressive movement by starting a Center for Progressive Renewal inside its think tank.

- ♦ Immigration coalitions and the racial typecasting of the affirmative action debate bring Asian Americans into the political process in droves, and the scapegoating results in new, if still uneasy, alliances between Asians and Latinos, and immigrants and queers.

Behind each of these efforts are the very people—the cultural movements, the identity-based leaders, and theorists and organizers—who are often derided by the older New Left. Now, the message of these new initiatives is not about a vanguard—it is about a shift that has taken place inside social justice movements. Progressives inside each of the movements are asserting themselves and forging a new political consciousness. Identity-based leadership is attempting to link up. Groups with one principal focus are broadening their policy objectives and taking on sexism, racism, homophobia and class.

A new progressive politics is finally emerging. It is a politics of specificity, not universalism; of multiplicity not one single strategy; of increments rather than totalizing changes. It is a politics which comes out of the past 30 years of fights about sexism, racism, heterosexism, and classism, not one that ignores them. And that is the real good news contained in this issue of *The Public Eye*.

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as "progressive"— for instance, a Catholic liberation theologian who is anti-capitalist and radically egalitarian, but vehemently anti-choice and anti-gay— illustrates that internal contradictions are present in any political movement. Certainly the progressive movement is no exception. The indistinctness of the term "progressive" could serve as a metaphor for the muddled state of the progressive movement. Indeed, fragmentation and lack of ideological clarity or consensus are its primary characteristics. The movement itself could be said to be having an identity crisis.

However, as captured in the famous Chinese saying, in crisis is both danger and opportunity. Those of us who see ourselves as social change activists, whether or not we use the term "progressive," are creating new rules and axioms for our political work. The dominance of the right has forced us to rethink both the substance and style of our political work. Several questions demand answers from progressives:

Why has the right been so successful? Without a thorough understanding of the reasons for its resurgence and the strategies that led to its success, we won't be able to fully understand the decline in popular acceptance of progressive principles.

What vision unites the progressive movement at this historical moment? Are there fatal contradictions within the existing vision? Should we question the basic principles of social justice, such as equality, impartial justice, respect for diversity, self-determination, and the redistribution of power and resources to poor and marginalized people?

What strategies and tactics are most appropriate for the come-from-behind position that progressives find ourselves in at this moment?

To whom should we look for leadership in these matters? Leaders usually emerge when their voices are loud and their

programs touch a sympathetic chord in a large following. But sometimes they emerge when, though their voice is not loud, people look to them for leadership.

A theme common to nearly all those who discuss the state of the progressive movement and its future is our lack of a unifying vision around which the movement's fragmented groups can coalesce. The absence of such an overarching vision is sometimes blamed on identity politics, sometimes on overreaching by the left, and sometimes on the right's successful exploitation of political differences and resentments between groups by race, class, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

I believe it is unlikely that in the near future progressives will work in a unified movement with a shared vision, as they have at times in the past. It is also unlikely that progressives will see major victories, a dramatic turnaround of the right's dominance, or a substantial change in the globalization of the economy and the stranglehold of free-market capitalism. History dictates a period of small victories, achieved as the progressive movement gradually rebuilds.

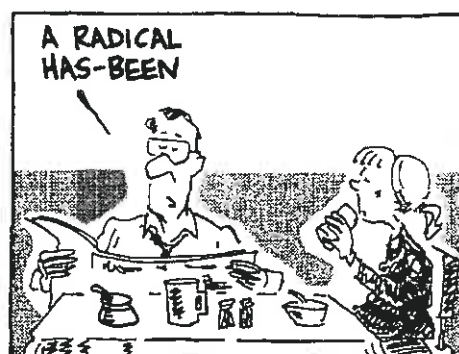
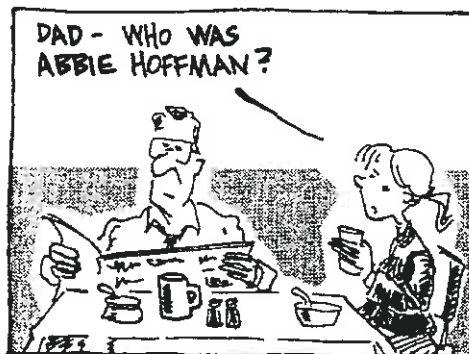
The work of rebuilding needs to be

an incremental project that leads to the long-term goal of radical social change. It is a step-by-step process that first and foremost responds to the reality of the moment. It won't be one leader or one party or one cause that turns this situation around. It will be all the small victories, all the person-by-person recruiting, all the media campaigns that succeed issue-by-issue in delivering a progressive message that forces complexity into the public debate. Progressives must scale down our expectations and focus on movement rebuilding, grounded in an awareness of the limitations imposed by current historical conditions.

LESSONS FROM THE RIGHT

A movement can be defeated for many reasons. It can lose its issues, lose its base, or be outsmarted strategically; it can find itself in inhospitable circumstances; or it can be destroyed by government-sponsored repression. During the last sixteen years, progressives have had all these factors arrayed against us.

The right's ascent was accomplished when historical conditions provided a hospitable political climate. It organized during a period of economic insecurity, religious revitalization, and



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racial and gender backlash against a previous reform era.⁴ While benefiting from this environment, the right acted to assure its longevity by shrewdly and effectively building a movement infrastructure.

This infrastructure consists of solid, well-financed, and ideologically-driven political organizations at the national, state, and local levels. At each level, issue-specific groups and action-oriented groups pursue their own agendas, while simultaneously networking with other organizations on the right. Movement-based professional groups, such as right wing law firms, publishing houses, research centers, and academic organizations, provide back-up.⁵ Distinct sectors, such as conservative Christians or women, function in separate groups that overlap and interact to increase each other's effectiveness. And the entire infrastructure is perpetually mobilized in the service of electoral politics, specifically the right wing of the Republican Party.

But it is a mistake to judge a movement exclusively by its wealth or the number of organizations it boasts. A more important measure of a movement's health is the effectiveness and internal coordination of its infrastructure. By this standard, the right is a thundering success. Even stumbles, such as Newt Gingrich's overreaching triumphalism, are only a blip on the screen.⁶ One measure of the effectiveness of the right is the ideological realignment of Democrats, who have now conceded many, if not most, of their bedrock principles under pressure from the right's more effective infrastructure.

The right has successfully appropriated much of the language and many of the organizing techniques of social change activism, courted liberalism's base, debunked liberal solutions, and caricatured liberal ideology. Much of the public now sees a "liberal" as a big-spending, high-taxing, socialist-leaning, government-supporting, bleeding heart. Policy discussions do not even consider socialist solutions. And the right's spokespersons now appear in the mainstream media as just another centrist voice.

In the face of these adverse conditions, the progressive defense of social programs has been sincere, even impassioned, but ultimately ineffective. As the right has attacked low-income people, using stereotyping and scapegoating, progressives have been unable to mount an effective counter-attack. As a result, the right has picked off programs like public housing, welfare, and legal aid, one by one. Progressives have been unable to convince the country that it is losing the only recourse to social justice now available.

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A center/left coalition that had defended and expanded New Deal social programs was split apart in the 1980s by the use of cultural conservatism as a wedge to divide those with common economic interests, especially in the South. Now the right has caricatured members of that coalition as obsessed with "political correctness" and derided feminists as "feminazis." Further, many (though not all) of the sectors that make up the broad base now known as the progressive movement have diminished in both numbers and left activism over the last 15 years.

Widespread acceptance of the right's caricatures illustrates how far the progressive movement has fallen. Liberalism has become a scapegoat for an economic reordering in which the average person has less and the rich have more. Liberalism's clients—the poor, workers, immigrants, welfare recipi-

ents, women—have become scattered and confused, at times seemingly unsure of their own interests.⁸ Politics has become a matter of "cutting an individual deal," rather than identifying with a movement.⁹

How did the right recruit so effectively? Certainly, right-wing activists listened carefully to a deep chord of conservatism that runs throughout many of the working- and middle-class communities previously claimed by progressives. In hindsight, the progressive movement did not respond to some of the political messages that came from people at the neighborhood level because, to progressive ears, these messages seemed so reactionary. It seemed, for instance, that the fear of crime and drugs, especially when expressed by white people, reflected what was in truth a fear of Blacks and the inner city. Calls for a return to "standards" and anger against government programs sounded like the resentments of white men who felt their traditional hegemony was being threatened by the growing visibility of women of all races and men of color. So progressives turned a tin ear to these reactionary messages. We did not systematically examine them, take the fears underlying them seriously, or construct a progressive response to address those fears.

By contrast, the right took the fears seriously, recognizing in them the opportunity for political gain. The right's leadership constructed responses that spoke directly to the most reactionary aspects of these fears. The right's messages played on latent racism and created easy scapegoats (liberals, "affirmative action babies," selfish unions, lesbians and gays, and "welfare queens"), and fueled cynicism that could then be harnessed and turn against the government and its programs.

Even if progressives *had* heeded such "reactionary" fears, we did not have a ready response. Using a marginalized group as a scapegoat is not an option for us. For progressives, the villains are racism, an unjust economic system, sexism, homophobia, and foot-dragging, miserly federal programs—an analysis obvious to us, but

not to the general public. Without the cooperation of the media and a public receptive to this message, it was not possible to effectively rebut the right. The result was the spread of the right's disinformation, loss of popular support for liberalism, and electoral defeat.

Progressives must face head-on this bleak picture of our current political context. In order to craft an effective response, we need an accurate understanding of existing conditions. Although the situation is not hopeless, only clear-headed thinking based on reality, not denial, is a firm grounding for political recovery. We must examine the vision—the goals and principles—on which we have based our movements, identify the weaknesses exposed by the right's success, and identify strategies to move forward.

It is tempting to believe that progressives could simply emulate the right's strategies and enjoy similar political success. But the country has moved deliberately and cruelly to the right. As we continue to sort out what went wrong, we must press forward with the search for *new* solutions to the social problems we face. This search must include a wide spectrum of progressives: front-line activists, researchers, theorists, the spiritually-motivated, the electorally-inclined, and especially those whose voices have too often been marginalized within the progressive movement—such as low-income women or gay Black men—and who live with double and triple forms of oppression.

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE CURRENT VISION

In the growing body of literature critiquing our past mistakes and recommending steps for the future, progressives have examined mistakes in communicating and promoting our vision. They have identified mistakes of strategy and tactics as the reasons for the dramatic drop in acceptance of the movement's vision. The vision itself usually remains unexamined. Only its execution (and movement leaders and activists) are put under the microscope.

I too see the long-standing progressive principles of social justice as

basically sound. A vision that seeks a high level of equality, an end to discrimination, freedom from government repression, and shared public responsibility for those left behind by a rapacious free market, leads to policies like a progressive income tax, government housing programs, and guaranteed health care for all. Although progressives differ as to whether this vision is best achieved under socialism, reformed capitalism, or a mixed economy, in all cases the vision relies on a powerful central government.

Like many progressives, I tend to see government as responsible for assuring a critical level of social justice. If I trusted government agencies and agents more, I would argue for a government program for every social ill. But in the context of US capitalism, government is only able to deliver social justice when the needs of the market allow it. Government programs often serve as tools of the rich and powerful. Government security agencies are the principal agents of repression of left forces, both in the US and internationally.

So, we have to watch government programs constantly and with unblinking suspicion. They are quite likely to conceal Trojan horse boondoggles for the wealthy. They are often underfunded, co-opted, and stolen from. They sometimes serve as agents to punish or humiliate people. But, nonetheless, they also can act as a moderating force on the gross injustices of unfettered capitalism.

One important strength of federal programs as a delivery system for social welfare is that they are *not* locally-based. They can, therefore, override local power structures—in which racial, ethnic, and class prejudices and discrimination so often thrive—with federally-mandated principles of fairness. Correctly conceived, federal social welfare programs do have the potential to increase both equality and the public welfare. But because they are so often ill-conceived, progressives have often taken anti-government stands, even though ideologically we look to government as a vital part of our political platform.

The right is anti-government for very different reasons. In its pursuit of radical individualism and free market capitalism, it opposes any government role in ameliorating the effects of the free market system. Its pro-business, anti-communist, and conservative Christian roots justify a government role in only three areas: support for individual and corporate capitalists, defense against external and internal enemies, and defense of conservative Christian values and practices.¹⁰ Both progressives and the right have saturated the public with anti-government messages. As a result the public is alienated from government, though it largely lacks a political analysis of that alienation.

It is important for progressives to maintain a careful balance in our attitude toward government. Government that practices corruption and abuses power, and/or becomes a vehicle for the interests of the rich or of authoritarian forces must, of course, be opposed uncompromisingly. But we should not confuse the need to scrutinize and control government with delegitimizing it altogether. Under the capitalist economic system that, for the near future, has a lock on the American economy, democratically-conducted government is still the greatest hope for serving the needs of the vast majority of people, and, especially, for protecting the interests of the least powerful.¹¹

But a truly responsive and democratic government now seems so distant a possibility in the US that reliance on it as the central progressive solution has become nearly untenable. In the long run, we will have to identify a new vision that incorporates progressive principles of equality and fairness with new thinking about the means for assuring the implementation of those principles.

THE ROLE OF IDENTITY GROUPS AND SINGLE ISSUE GROUPS

An equally important challenge for the progressive movement is to reach consensus over the political significance of "identity" groups, distinctive groups of activists and group members who organize to address the

special nature of their shared oppression. In the 1960s, for example, the civil rights movement both reflected and affected the consciousness of African Americans, with demands that their distinct oppression— especially the de jure and de facto segregation maintained by a racist system— must end. Assisted by the model of the civil rights movement, other groups also soon mobilized around the profound nature of their shared oppression, and began to see themselves as distinct groups with distinct grievances. The Native American movement, the women's movement, the gay and lesbian movement (now known as the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender movement), the disability movement, the Latino rights movement, the Jewish renewal movement, and the Asian rights movement "identified" themselves and grew in political effectiveness. Movements also formed around issue areas, such as environmentalism, labor, housing, jobs, welfare rights, and children's rights, and are sometimes referred to as single-issue groups because they focus exclusively on achieving reforms in one specific area of public policy.¹²

Identity groups are a favorite target of critics who bemoan the current state of the progressive movement. They are accused of promoting fragmentation of the movement, and betraying the movement's larger goals. Three white male writers who are representative of these critics— Todd Gitlin (1995), Michael Tomasky (1996), and Michael Lind (1996)— argue that the fragmentation of the progressive movement into various "identity groups" has reduced progressive politics to a simple aggregation of the specific concerns of each group. They attack identity politics for abandoning the movement's long-standing focus on class. All three see identity politics as a source of elitism within the current progressive movement. They trace that elitism to the tendency for the agendas of identity groups to be middle-class— pursuing goals that benefit middle-class members of the group, often by advocating for individual rights (and sometimes privileges). As a result, members and activists are not necessarily committed to the struggles of those outside their own group, or even poor

and working-class members of their own group. In this political fragmentation, they argue, the broader progressive agenda of social justice for *all* is buried.¹³

I too worry about the narrowness of identity politics. Like many other middle-aged progressive activists, I was first radicalized by the class-conscious, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist politics of the Old Left, and only later found a more personal connection to those political principles through the New Left and identity politics. Now I am dismayed that so many identity group activists never talk about the exploitative nature of capitalism, the role of US imperialism, or the existence of a class-based power structure.

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But I don't blame identity politics for this change. First, it is simplistic to assume that identity politics has somehow acted as a temptress, drawing attention away from larger, more profound and universal forms of oppression. In fact, work done by identity groups has often moved us forward by deepening our understanding of how oppression works. This is the nature of the radicalizing power of identity politics. For instance, Black feminist intellectuals— ostensibly a narrow fragment of one specific identity group— have not simply raised the issues and themes common to Black women, but have contributed the best analysis of how race, class, and gender interact in this society. This analysis is of vital use to *all* progressives.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the pro-

gressive movement has become a "movement of movements." Not only are the different groups driven by different visions, but they often seek different and conflicting goals. For instance, in seeking to preserve old forest and clean air, the single issue environmental movement is often at odds with the labor movement, whose primary concern is jobs, including those in lumbering and heavy industry. Especially when class issues are obscured or ignored, there is no means to mediate the two groups' conflicting goals, and to enable both to work within a larger vision of social and economic justice.

Though the result may be a fragmentation of the movement, to blame the identity movements for the decline of the larger movement fails to look at the reason they arose in the first place— the neglect of their input and their issues. To the heterosexual, white, male leadership of the Old Left, class oppression (and hence the demands of the labor movement) was the principal concern of the movement. The neglect of "other" oppressions stemmed in large part from their lack of relevance to that leadership. Identity constituencies forced their issues onto the progressive agenda by demanding that attention be paid to race, ethnicity, poverty (as opposed to class), gender, sexual orientation, and disability. In this setting, labor became just another sub-movement, in part because it missed its opportunity to reach out to the identity groups and recognize their issues.

Critics of identity politics say that this has led the progressive movement to abandon its long-time constituency, the white working class (both Southern whites and northern ethnic workers). They argue that it is seductively comfortable inside an identity group, and that it is not surprising that, while each group organizes its constituency to become politically active, it also, far too often, works to confine that activism to the concerns of its particular movement.

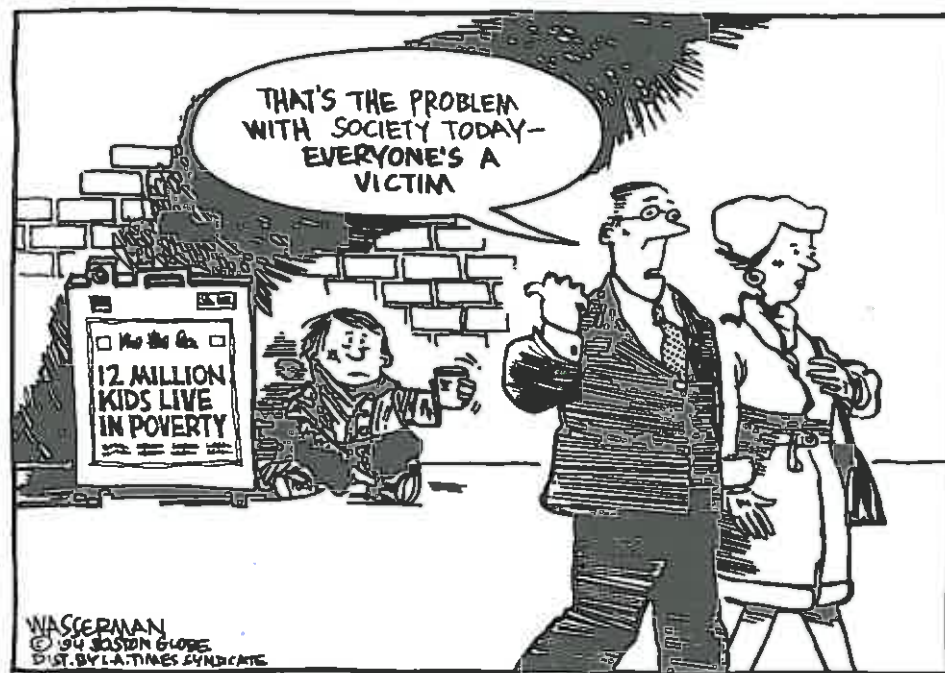
Again, there is truth to this critique. But the idea that identity groups are narrow, self-absorbed, and indifferent to larger progressive goals reflects a reading of identity politics that is itself narrow, and perhaps uninformed. Identity

politics has striking political virtues, as well as costs. Within an identity group, activists link up with others who share the same type of oppression. There they find strength, discover skills, and have a better chance to emerge as leaders. Learning about the lives of those who share their own experience, they gain new, invaluable insights into their own lives. For those belonging to multiple identity groups, each affiliation is an opportunity to raise consciousness about a separate aspect of their oppression (and can painfully highlight the insensitivity of one group to another's oppression). And others within the group raise neglected issues that are particularly relevant to them as group members.

For groups who were virtually invisible within the left, identity politics has not simply been a place for self-promotion. It has been a place for the exploration of liberation. When bell hooks talks about "the most urgent need" to "write our way into freedom, publishing articles and books that do more than inform, that testify, bearing witness to the primacy of struggle, to our collective effort to transform," she is talking about work that is at the heart of identity politics. It is often within identity groups that a crucial, bottom-line understanding of the history of struggle against oppression occurs. When such revelations are specific to a group's experience, it can be especially meaningful and eye-opening to group members.¹⁴

Obviously, there is a danger that identity group organizing creates a political cocoon, in which group members do not develop a larger vision. Plenty of examples illustrate this danger— gay conservatives, pro-military lesbians, racist cancer activists, and homophobic civil rights activists, to name just a few. We know very well that just because a person adheres to the liberation of his or her own group, that same liberation instinct is not necessarily extended to other groups. Identity politics has transformative and radicalizing potential, but it can also allow political retreat into an inward-looking, "me-first" individualism.

It is also possible for identity groups to place themselves in relation to other



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identity groups, by comparing oppressions or drawing parallels between oppressions, in ways that are damaging to their collaboration. Urvashi Vaid, in her 1995 book *Virtual Equality*, discusses the hard feelings aroused when the gay and lesbian movement compares its work to that of the Black civil rights movement. She points out that this use of analogy "is suspect, coming as it does from a movement deeply splintered over the relevance of racism to the fight against homophobia... This dichotomy— between our actions and our rhetoric— leads a largely white gay movement to sound hollow and opportunistic and fueled tremendous resentment."

However, because there is a great deal of overlap among different identity groups, being politicized about one issue of injustice often makes a person more sensitive to other issues. Thus, in many cases, those who are in identity movements have a broad progressive political vision. Rather than blame identity politics for the decline of the progressive movement, these activists instead address the need for all activists to "make the connections" among identity issues.

For instance, in the lesbian and gay movement alone, Martin Duberman, a widely-known white gay activist and academic; Mandy Carter, an African-American lesbian activist who opposes

the right's incursion into the Black community through the Gay/Lesbian Black Leadership Forum; Mab Segrest, a white lesbian civil rights activist who has worked tirelessly to oppose the far right; Carmen Vazquez, a Puerto Rican lesbian who is Director of Public Policy at the New York Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center; Suzanne Pharr, a white lesbian activist and writer from the Women's Project in Little Rock, Arkansas; Barbara Smith, African-American lesbian writer and activist; and Urvashi Vaid, Indian-born lesbian Director at the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, are all well-known progressive spokespersons who, while imbedded in identity politics, simultaneously call for an end to the fragmentation of the progressive movement.

At the moment, the validity and role of separate identity groups is a matter of debate within the progressive movement. Many of our most impressive progressive leaders have "come up" through identity politics, demonstrating the transformative potential of the identity experience. Even when they have chosen to work in a specific single issue area, they bring a broader political analysis to that work. Nevertheless, identity politics can become a political cul-de-sac, in which activists are created in a narrow mold and fail to move beyond it. Both the white male progressive

critics cited above, who are harshly critical of identity politics, and the identity politics activists who believe that identity groups should seek a shared ideological commitment to certain progressive principles, share the goal of uniting the movement and defeating the right. Therefore, in discussing the future of the movement, we must explore what vision or set of ideas might be powerful enough to play that unifying role, by drawing the political allegiance of the separate identity groups into coalition and common purpose.

SEEKING A VISION THAT COULD CREATE A UNIFIED MOVEMENT

Four "new" visions are currently being discussed among progressives: human rights, the politics of meaning, prophetic political morality, and economic populism. Each attempts to transcend the fragmentation of the progressive movement and unite the separate identity groups. Interestingly, each ducks the question of the role of government in a post-industrial, globalized capitalist system. To varying degrees, each vision has the capacity to fuel future attempts at creating a unifying ideological umbrella.

HUMAN RIGHTS

In the US we associate human rights with government repression in other countries—specifically arbitrary imprisonment, murder, and torture. President Jimmy Carter used a foreign country's human rights record as a factor in considering foreign aid, military aid, and trade relations. Even though the yardstick was applied unevenly, Carter's policy on human rights was clearly an advance in the conduct of US international relations.

In other countries, the concept of human rights is more broadly defined than it is in the United States. In addition to the right to be free of brutal government repression, human rights in many countries is the umbrella concept for all the rights we classify as civil, economic, political, social, and cultural. Internationally, many fold under the umbrella of human rights a wide range of progressive principles—from democratic elections to an end to economic exploitation

of children to free artistic expression to the right to different sexual orientations.

A number of US activists of different races, some deeply affected by exposure to the human rights paradigm at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing, advocate moving beyond race and class as the defining center of progressive politics by placing a human rights agenda at its center.¹⁵ Human rights encompasses resistance to the oppressions identified by the identity movements, as well as incorporating the economic analysis that has always characterized the left. If adopted by progressives, a movement that used the internationally-accepted definition of human rights would advocate a broad range of individual freedoms and class/group rights. It would, presumably, have a harmonizing effect on the competition and resentments among various groups that can interfere with the success of the left as a whole. It would create a point of entry into the progressive movement available to anyone whose rights have been violated.¹⁶

Presumably, no particular cause would reside at the center of such a movement. The bottom line would not be race, gender, class, or sexual preference, but our common humanity and the individual and group rights (including religious rights) that properly belong to each human being. The human rights concept is, in short, a plea for a return to the humanism of the Enlightenment, when, in theory, the individual was elevated to full humanity, complete with rights, powers of individual choice, and the dignity of full consciousness. In practice, the Enlightenment's humanism was limited to privileged white men, but the powerful idea that a person could be, in some respects, elevated to a status formerly allowed only to God, was a profoundly liberating political principle.¹⁷

Such Enlightenment ideas are anathema to the right, especially to the ultra-conservative religious right. To this sector, the secular humanism associated with the Enlightenment is the ultimate evil, because it replaces the rule of God with human rule. A correct society, in their view, is Biblically-based and led by those whom God has chosen.¹⁸ The re-

sult is an authoritarian theocracy, the opposite of the society envisioned by the promoters of human rights.

Despite its enormous appeal, I see two major weaknesses in the human rights paradigm. First, because its scope is vague, it does not provide a resolution when two rights conflict. A classic example is the conflict between the right to free speech, which can be aggressive and frightening, and the right to freedom from violence. The standard for free speech protection—that crying "fire" in a movie theater is not protected speech—is not adequate to distinguish which of the two freedoms should prevail in many instances. Second, the term "human rights" has been applied very narrowly in the US. Were it to become the central progressive organizing concept, progressives would have to introduce to the US public a massive public education process regarding the use of the concept internationally by pro-democracy activists. Given the difficulty progressives are experiencing in gaining access to mass media, such a huge public education project would be a daunting task.

These weaknesses do not, however, detract from the sheer appeal of human rights as a possible "new vision" for the progressive movement. Speaking a universal truth about the rights of people, this concept could conceivably touch a deep chord in the American public.

THE POLITICS OF MEANING

In response to the New Right's "family values" agenda, Michael Lerner was perhaps the first to argue that liberals and leftists should take seriously the relationships and attachments (both religious and secular) that the right's rhetoric had both addressed and captured. Writing in a magazine he founded, *Tikkun: A Bi-monthly Jewish Critique of Politics, Culture and Society*, Lerner spoke with persistence to a skeptical progressive audience about the importance of family values. As the New Right scored victory after victory by using the family values theme to attack liberals and identity groups, progressives' reactions to Lerner's recommendations ranged from caution to hostility.

Lerner envisions a public "awak-

ened" to a reality different from the current one of individualism and selfishness. He imagines a transformation of people through a change of consciousness and changes in the way people live. Lerner sees those who undergo (or have undergone) these changes as the base for the successful progressive movement of the 21st Century. He argues that a "politics of meaning" is the only hope of breaking through a "meaning-deadening society."¹⁹

Lerner's awakening has parallels with that experienced by members of the religious right. Clearly, born-again Christian evangelicalism appeals to spiritual yearnings and idealistic values of community and selflessness. It excludes, however, those outside the community, and draws the boundaries of the community by demonizing those outside it.

Lerner proposes a *progressive* version of this awakening. Much as the religious right was led to its awakening by the exhortations of its leaders—Jerry Falwell, James Kennedy, Pat Robertson and many others—Lerner sees himself as the guide for progressives toward a similar awakening and more fulfilling life.

In April 1996, Lerner's new organization, The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, held an inaugural conference in Washington, DC. The conveners were surprised when approximately 1,500 people attended. The conference, however, reflected many of the shortcomings of Lerner himself. Conference attendees were primarily white, reflecting a lack of successful multicultural base-building. The skills and experience of those at the conference were not mobilized. In fact, for many the conference confirmed a deep-seated suspicion of Lerner, who attracts suspicion because he does not solicit or incorporate feedback from recruits and supporters. He seems out of touch with the need for scrupulous democracy in progressive movement-building.

More important, Lerner's "politics of meaning" is not truly progressive in either its values or the programs that might emerge from them. A general humanitarian consciousness and renewed spiritual connectedness are not

solutions to the problems created by unregulated free market capitalism. It is a particularly anemic program for all those who fall outside the economically secure white male model that pervades this vision.

PROPHETIC POLITICAL MORALITY

"We can find common ground only by moving to higher ground." Written by Jim Wallis, founder of the Washington, DC Christian evangelical community Sojourners, these words represent the message of many Christian progressives and appeal as well to many who are not

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religiously affiliated.²⁰ Much of Wallis's "higher ground" has to do with building community and with emphasizing our connectedness as a society.

Wallis bases his recommendations on a sweeping and perceptive critique of contemporary society. Out of that critique he rejects both liberal and conservative politics, saying, somewhat simplistically, that "the critical link between personal responsibility and social change is missing on the left."²¹ Wallis speaks from a position of solidarity with the poor. Closely related to that of liberation theology, his perspective is simultaneously radical and compassionate.

Wallis doesn't claim to propose a new vision. Indeed, he says we do not yet have the new vision we need, nor should we look for any.²² He accurately points out that new visions emerge from

movements rather than from political parties. Most importantly, he advocates a renewed consciousness of the priority of the poor as a major factor in a spiritual revolution, which, in turn, could lead to a new vision.

Wallis shares with Lerner certain shortcomings in his political consciousness. First, like Lerner, he comes out of a specific identity group base. In Lerner's case it is his identity as a Jew; in Wallis's case, as a white evangelical Christian. Both are, of course, valid bases, but to broaden them to the full breadth of the progressive movement requires scrupulously inclusive organizing—not only reaching out to women, people of color, lesbians and gays and other oppressed groups, but placing them at the center of decision-making. There is scant evidence that Wallis has accomplished that broadening process, though his work with low-income people in Washington's inner city by its nature puts him in closer contact with people who are excluded from power and whose voice is seldom heard. It is particularly troubling that he shows little consciousness of women's issues, or the impressive and brave work of Catholic and Protestant feminists to challenge institutional sexism within the churches. He is at best patronizing toward lesbians and gays, who are struggling to gain the right to marry and need support from heterosexuals as they are increasingly targeted by the right. Nor has he reached out systematically to the Jewish or Muslim communities. In these respects, he has failed to transcend important pitfalls within progressive Christian social justice activism.

ECONOMIC POPULISM

Progressives have always understood that capitalism guarantees inequality. Within the progressive movement, there is a wide range of responses to capitalism—from the left's conviction that it must be overthrown, to liberalism's reform-minded regulations and anti-poverty programs.

The right has been remarkably effective in its campaign to free capitalism of the constraints of regulations, taxation, and unionization. This implementation of an unfettered free-market capi-

talism has given new urgency to the progressive anti-capitalist critique. However, the likelihood that the US public will adopt socialism as an alternative to capitalism is now slight, to say the least. Socialism has so little popular support in this country that it is difficult to promote it as a realistic alternative to capitalism, for practical, if not theoretical, reasons.

Progressives are now discussing less ambitious anti-capitalist critiques that might be called "economic populism," though its activists may not use that title. It advocates breaking up the concentration of economic power in mega-corporations, reversing the growing inequality of wealth, and punishing public and private greed, corruption, and exploitation.²³

Rev. Jesse Jackson has always been the most prominent spokesperson for this anti-capitalist critique. Jackson's economic populism—demonstrated by his frequent support of striking workers—has the additional component of a consistent anti-racism. This ideological combination has led him to call attention to the plight of white farmers during the (ongoing) crisis in the farmbelt, as well as to maintain a constant focus on the decapitalization of inner city Black and Latino neighborhoods.

An example of a broad coalition formed around issues of economic populism was that against the ratification of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and, especially, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Although labor took the lead, individuals and groups from across the progressive movement joined together in that struggle. This sort of activism draws on a growing body of analysis that addresses the current redistribution of wealth upward and the globalization of corporate power.

Progressive economic analyst Holly Sklar, in her book *Chaos or Community?*, presents a hard-hitting analysis of the dramatic increase in income inequality under government deregulation, globalization, and an increasingly regressive tax structure.²⁴ She proposes a 16-point plan to "foster fair and sustainable development" for what she

calls "economics for everyone."²⁵ This is an action guide for economic populism. While it depends on an active role for government, the last recommendation—several steps to be taken to create a more participatory democracy—demonstrates her understanding that government, as now constituted, cannot deliver the other 15 recommendations.

Progressives closer to the Democratic Party, who believe the current economy can be reformed through government programs, advocate a return to the notion of a social contract that tried to apply "standards of human decency to the amoral marketplace."²⁶ Recognizing the importance of government's role in creating a fair society, they look to the Democrats to return to their roots as the heirs of the New Deal and to take the country toward economic populism—with a program of public-private collaboration. However, unlike the Reagan/Bush version of public-private collaboration, the interests of private profit would not trump the public interest.

Unfortunately, Jesse Jackson's once-large following has shrunk, through his neglect of political base-building. Although still a major progressive spokesperson, Jackson is not building a movement around economic populism's themes. However, organizations *are* emerging that are refining the themes of economic populism and polishing the organizing techniques needed to build a movement around them. I will discuss two such organizations, Share the Wealth and the Labor Party, later.

INCREMENTAL STRATEGIES TO REBUILD THE MOVEMENT

Although the visions discussed above hold varying degrees of promise in the long term, each most likely will fail to provide the progressive movement with a common ideological and programmatic agenda in the short term. Instead, it is far more likely that, despite its fragmentation, the movement will rebuild incrementally—step by step. Our continuing long-term search for a unifying vision should not overshadow the important

work being done right now to *rebuild* the progressive movement.

That work is visible everywhere in the day-to-day work of the progressive movement—in all the discussions of strategy, organizing of defensive campaigns, mounting of strikes, and building of educational programs. A critical review of some of that work paints a profile of how the progressive movement is indeed rebuilding.

STABILIZING THE MOVEMENT'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Though the progressive movement may lack a unifying vision, it does have its own movement infrastructure, made up of political organizations that cover the broad spectrum of progressive issues, and are experienced at promoting and defending those issues. These organizations are, in activist Jeff Faux's words, "...institutions with a longer-term perspective for whom the goals of politics go beyond the next election."²⁷ They are the stable, usually larger organizations that make a movement viable by consistently providing the basic resources—including research, publications, training, funding, legal work, media work, strategic planning, and analysis—needed for the movement to survive and prosper. Examples include the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, Oakland's Center for Third World Organizing, the National Council for LaRaza, The National Network of Women's Funds, and Washington, DC-based People for the American Way. Rebuilding the progressive movement should start with an assessment of its infrastructure. If it is not stable, well-funded, and internally coordinated, it cannot serve its role as the movement's support structure.

Many of the organizations that make up the progressive movement's infrastructure were in serious financial crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The crisis eased slightly after the 1994 elections and the resulting Republican Congressional takeover. At that time, many people who opposed the right, including foundation staff and individual funders, became alarmed by such a show of "new Republican" strength and paid new attention to the

weakened state of the progressive movement. As a result, there is now a broader appreciation of the importance of strong infrastructure organizations, as well as increased financial support for them.

Though we need a thoughtful assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the progressive movement's infrastructure, several factors make that difficult. Because the movement is fragmented, "infrastructure organizations" exist for each of the identity movements, as well as those that function across identity movements and across single-issue movements. Of the organizations cited above, the NOW Legal Defense Fund serves the women's movement, and The Center for Third World Organizing focuses on communities of color, while People for the American Way is a back-up center for a range of identity groups and issue areas. These organizations need to be assessed within the context of the work they do, rather than by an abstract yardstick that does not reflect their actual role. Further, we must honestly confront the fact that infrastructure organizations are often weakened by turf wars, internal power struggles, and rifts over competition for funding—not surprising during a time of political defeat and scarce resources.

Nevertheless, the movement rebuilding process has begun. An increasing awareness within infrastructure organizations of the importance of their work to the movement as a whole is leading to better communications among them. Innumerable conferences, "alliances," and coalitions have sprung up to facilitate better coordination among activists. In many cases, these are an opportunity for very diverse sorts of progressive organizations, from smaller, local fight-the-right groups to multi-million dollar think tanks, to meet and get a better understanding of each other's work. Even mainstream social service, religious, and humanitarian aid organizations seem more aware of the role their "movement" colleagues play in their mutual defense from attack by the right.

But every infrastructure organiza-

tion doesn't deserve our support as we engage in the movement's rebuilding process. Some signs of organizational ill-health deserve a negative assessment. Certainly ideological groping and a lack of programmatic clarity are understandable at a time when, as a movement, we are working through honest political differences. But if there is no internal power-sharing, or too much time is spent on egos, grudges, opportunism, or posturing, we should question the usefulness of particular infrastructure organizations.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

Many progressives agree that we need to rebuild support for the movement from the bottom up. This is an enormous task, and one rife with difficulties. Among the problems that have hindered progressive grassroots organizing are: the project or coalition collapses when outside support (funding or personnel) is withdrawn; the agenda of the organizers takes precedence over the needs and desires of the community; or at the end of a campaign organized to address a specific goal, there is neither a standing coalition left behind nor an increased consciousness of progressive principles and values among those who participated.

Grassroots organizers in the 1990s are confronting these shortcomings, debating the best ways to avoid them,

and groping for new approaches and strategies for more effective organizing. Much of this debate is over how best to conduct grassroots organizing that is responsive to the needs of communities, while recruiting community members to the progressive movement. Organizers also are turning their attention to constituencies not traditionally targeted by progressives, especially religious people and youth.

THE DEBATE OVER ORGANIZING STRATEGIES

For the sake of simplicity, imagine that there are two approaches to a particular organizing challenge (say, to defeat a toxic dump permit, or to expose a right wing "stealth" school board member): one that focuses exclusively on winning, or one that aspires to win, but is equally interested in movement-building.

The former style is usually more effective in the short run. Often, a local electoral race, a media campaign, or a campaign that targets an issue or a piece of legislation uses shrewd political strategies—clever and catchy political ads or well-crafted opinion pieces strategically placed to reach opinion-makers—that may carry the day, but leave behind no coalition, no momentum toward other issues or causes, and no raised consciousness or expectations. This task-oriented approach could be called "instrumental"



organizing. It focuses on strategies that will assure victory. But a short-term victory may be gained at the expense of a missed opportunity to bid for the long-term political "transformation" of those organized.

Transformative organizing avoids working strictly according to the laws of expediency—that is, basing organizing on shifting power from one group to another or on winning one individual fight. Rather, it redefines "winning" as achieving a shift in consciousness among those who have been mobilized.²⁸ Ideally, this transformation is the first step in a strategic recruitment process designed to achieve the twin goals of increasing the real power of the community and its members and building the base of the progressive movement.²⁹

During the 1980s and 1990s, the right has demonstrated the effectiveness of transformative organizing in movement-building. Many of the right's campaigns targeted issues that were long-shots. If they were not doomed to failure, they were at least unlikely to succeed. The multi-city protest against the photographic exhibit of Robert Mapplethorpe's work titled "A Perfect Moment" is a good example. Although it was unlikely that local right wing organizations would be able to close the exhibit in cities where it was already booked, mobilizing a coalition to protest it was an effective movement-building exercise. It brought like-minded people together, not for a short-term victory, but in order to allow them to identify each other. It built bridges among Catholic conservatives, Protestant fundamentalists, and secular rightists, and activists got experience with media and with public protest. This in-your-face political move demonstrated that it was politically possible for cultural conservatives to take forceful action against cultural expressions that offended them.

CONFRONTING COMMUNITY BIGOTRIES

Progressives are also debating the role of "identity" concerns in community organizing. Many who believe that organizing must in-

corporate consciousness-raising about racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and other fault lines of bigotry, see themselves as practicing a "new" form of community organizing. The term "new" is misleading in this context, because this organizing style has been used in various settings in the past, including organizing by socialist feminists, many women of color, and rainbow coalition activists. While it is not "new," it does stand in contrast to a number of the practices of the more traditional community organizing style developed by Saul Alinsky in the 1960s,

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and most often used by the labor movement and the New Left.

In their influential pamphlet "Square Pegs Find Their Groove," Francis Calpotura (Co-Director of the Center for Third World Organizing) and Kim Fellner (Director of the National Organizers Alliance) argue that if *all* the people targeted for bigotry and excluded from power are to achieve real self-determination, progressive organizers must insist on the true integration of "identity" concerns, even if these are not directly germane to a specific organizing goal. People from marginalized, despised groups, the "square pegs" of the pamphlet's title, are sources of strength, who bring to movement organizing a wide range of experiences, talents, and resources.³⁰ An uncompromising solidarity with marginalized groups is the bottom line of this "new" grassroots organizing.

Potentially, however, identity concerns and agendas may themselves be

suffused with classism, racism, sexism or simple arrogance. Organizing by the women's movement in support of abortion rights, and by the l/g/b/t community to promote AIDS education has often suffered from all these problems. Further, identity concerns will very often impose "outside" values on a community, rather than relying exclusively on supporting the values and concerns indigenous to that community. An organizing style true to progressive principles, one that values multiculturalism, for instance, may very well be an *imposed* organizing style.

But these very considerations separate apolitical organizing from progressive organizing. A movement cannot build its base with integrity if it fudges its values and doesn't challenge the anti-democratic prejudices of its potential recruits. Discussing the concept "empowerment," political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr., says: "As any decent organizer knows...people can sense that they're being sold a bill of goods, and the result is further discrediting of the left. Our only hope is to hold firmly and self-confidently to our politics, approach others as equal citizens, and stand or fall on the strength of our analysis and practice."³¹ While organizing must be sensitive to the cultural norms of a community and respectful toward community members, to be transformative it has to be very straightforward in taking unpopular positions when those positions are central to the movement.

The great danger in these debates is that they will devolve into a battle over which groups or which individuals are more oppressed. Should homophobia be overlooked if it is of little consequence when compared with the gross injustice currently agitating the community? Or the debates might break progressives into "idealistic" and "practical" camps. The more "practical" organizer might adjust her position on choice in deference to the religious norms of the community. Although both dangers are real, the debate between those who support "instrumental" and "transformative" organizing must continue as a means to clarify the goals of progressive organiz-

ing. Though I am biased in favor of transformative goals, that I feel distinguish progressive organizing from less political forms of organizing, I know that progressives are far from agreed. In fact, it may be that this debate cannot be resolved, but will persist as a permanent difference of opinion within the practice of progressive grassroots organizing.³²

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZING

Many evangelical or fundamentalist Christians are not ideologically aligned with the Christian right. Nevertheless, organizations like the Christian Coalition—headed by Pat Robertson and run by his junior partner, Ralph Reed—claim to represent the Christian perspective on all political and social issues. The Christian right's narrow reading of Christian tenets and its aggressive organizing style, within both the religious and political spheres, exclude non-Christian religions and have left mainstream and liberal Christian denominations on the defensive. The conservative takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention, the attacks mounted on the National Council of Churches by The Institute for Religion and Democracy and other right wing groups, and the demonization of feminist and New Age spirituality, all signal the Christian right's intention to dominate Christian religious practice.³³

Until recently, mainstream and progressive religious groups seemed unwilling to confront the religious right head on. Although Jews are one of the groups most threatened by the rhetoric of the Christian right, the leadership of the largest Jewish organizations has seemed cautious and accommodating in its critique of this intolerance. But the dramatic success of the right in the 1994 Congressional elections awakened even the most complacent liberal religious groups to an understanding of just how serious the religious right is about implementing its agenda. At the same time, the agenda itself has become more subtle, as religious right organizations reach out to recruit new constituencies towards whom they have expressed hostility in the past. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention in June, 1996 approved a resolution calling for Baptists to direct



their "energies and resources toward the proclamation of the Gospel to the Jewish people."³⁴ Both the Christian Coalition and The Promise Keepers—two huge Christian right organizations—have launched campaigns to promote "racial reconciliation." Religious progressives are now confronting the religious right's aggressive (and even predatory) style, though without an impressive level of success.

The work of Jim Wallis and Michael Lerner, discussed above, are examples of religious organizing that explicitly addresses the Christian right, though that is not its central mission. The Washington, DC-based Interfaith Alliance, however, was formed by mainstream Christian and Jewish activists after the 1994 elections, specifically to defend mainstream religion from attacks by the right, and to promote a more tolerant, less exclusionary reading of Christianity. It provides an alternative voice to the literal reading of the Bible promoted by the Christian right. Through its national office and local chapters across the country, the Interfaith Alliance is struggling to become a strong voice, able to forcefully denounce the intolerance and stealth political ambitions of the Christian right.³⁵

A handful of Jewish organizations also have taken up the challenge of the Christian right. The most outspoken

has been the explicitly progressive New Jewish Agenda (NJA), which opposed the right vigorously but was unable to survive at the national level and closed its national office in 1994. A few NJA chapters still exist at the local level. Currently, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, a local organization based in New York City, incorporates a fight-the-right agenda. Within mainstream Jewish organizations, such as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee, there are pockets of progressive thinking. For the most part, however, the Jewish leadership has not aggressively confronted the Christian right, in part because the right has been (for its own political and theological reasons) extremely supportive of the state of Israel.³⁶

There is a desperate need for the mainstream and progressive religious communities to show political will and backbone in confronting the right's appropriation and perversion of religious values. Sitting on the political sidelines is not an option. We need a forceful, self-confident, and defiant voice from religious communities—in defense of lesbians and gay men, immigrants, welfare recipients, women who have had abortions, and all the others slandered regularly by

the Christian right. While the right's vituperative Institute for Religion and Democracy attacks nearly all mainstream Christianity, especially that labeled "liberal," no correspondingly clear voice is coming from those best placed to trump that message and play a crucial role in rebuilding the progressive movement—religious defenders of inclusivity and justice.

YOUTH ORGANIZING

The right has long understood the importance of winning over young people. Its systematic recruitment and grooming of conservative campus activists could accurately be described as a courtship. The right's infrastructure of movement organizations has funded not only campus organizing, but the subsequent careers of conservative students who want to become movement professionals. Right wing youth activists are nurtured and cultivated like rare flowers, though they are, in fact, no longer rare.

The success of the right in recruiting young people is a buffer against the aging of its movement leadership. It is also a buffer against any future waning of the right's dominance. The right has always understood that investing in youth is their movement's social security plan.

For over 15 years, progressive youth on campus have been put on the defensive time and time again by right wing campus newspapers (with funding and articles supplied by the larger, off-campus movement) and by right wing student groups. Using words and images designed to shock, and sometimes using physical violence, these right wing students are applauded by their movement elders, published by movement presses, and assured of movement jobs. This activism finds an increasingly hospitable environment on campus, as the country moves to the right and students grow up experiencing liberalism as a discredited, out-of-favor ideology. Faced with a tightening job market and the pressures of an unpredictable economy, young people are less open to principles of social justice.

Despite these barriers, students

and other young people have organized around progressive issues—most notably in their opposition to apartheid in South Africa and, more recently, their protests against the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in California. There are many terrific progressive projects and organizations that are driven by youth or that target them. Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender young people of color are particularly active, taking the lead in much of the thinking on gender identity and on mixed race identity. In fact, queer youth have blazed the trail in youth organizing for the last several years.

Liberal funders and adult activists understand the importance of support for young people, but at present most of that support is targeted to keeping teens off the streets, preventing teenage pregnancy, or saving teens from drugs and gangs. These projects are not seen as "political," but rather as an extension of the social safety net. Much of the more political work done by and with young people is underfunded. Progressive teenage girls' magazines like *New Moon*, *HUES (Hear Us Emerging Sisters)* and *Teen Voices* must constantly struggle to meet their budgets. Despite this struggle, they have formed a collaborative called Sister Press, to better share resources and information. The Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program (MAAP) of Oakland's Center for Third World Organizing, the War Resisters League's YouthPeace program, a national program with local initiatives that promotes nonviolence and social justice among youth, and the Third Wave Fund, a youth-based progressive fund are just three examples of youth groups that deserve recognition and replication. A few youth organizations, such as the Center for Campus Organizing and Boston's YouthBuild, and a number of individual projects mounted by larger organizations (most recently the AFL-CIO's 1996 "Union Summer" program) have been able to break through a lack of proper support for progressive youth work.

It is crucial that the progressive movement allocate more of its scarce resources to develop its future leaders and activists. Young women of all races

and male students of color are being harmed by attacks on affirmative action, poor students and immigrant students are losing access to scholarship money to attend college, and increased living costs make it more difficult for students to work as volunteers in movement organizations. These material conditions are more daunting than those faced by the campus activists of the 1960s and 1970s. There is no Vietnam War to catalyze students, no civil rights or Black Power movement to draw out their idealism, and no Great Society programs where students could find work after graduation.

Only a commitment of resources by every progressive organization will make it possible for large numbers of young people to find their voices, start their own organizations, and get the experience they need to move into leadership positions within the progressive movement. We cannot expect young people to buck the conservative tide without encouragement and concrete assistance from the movement that needs them and would like to claim them.

MEDIA WORK

One of the right's most successful strategies has been to force its way into mainstream media outlets while simultaneously creating alternative media of its own, with particular attention to building religious TV and radio networks. Increased access to the public, coupled with a style of simple, short, media-friendly messages, has been crucial in the right's recruitment and in spreading its message.

Until 1980, centrist and liberal positions were well-represented on TV and radio. The right has exaggerated that presence by labeling it "leftist domination" of the airwaves, a distortion that progressives have not debunked successfully.³⁷ The right's accusations of media bias—often coupled with boycotts of advertisers on programs deemed "too liberal" or films deemed "immoral"—have intimidated programmers and narrowed the current spectrum of opinion in mainstream TV, radio, and newspapers. That spectrum

now ranges from centrist to right wing.

The right also has benefited from a wave of right wing talk shows, primarily aired on a.m. radio stations. Angry venting of anti-government themes on these shows attracts a wide audience and provides a forum for right wing populist ideology. The talk show rhetoric is often laced with ill-disguised racism and undisguised homophobia. Even when not affiliated with New Right organizations, these talk shows are doing the recruitment work of the right.

Progressives are now scrambling to strengthen our media organizing in order to fight for access to mainstream media. In the late 1980s, progressive media work was so slight that even alternative publishing outlets were neglected, and some were unable to survive financially. The closing of *The Guardian*, *Gay Community News* (a weekly now reopened and published quarterly) and *New Directions for Women*, as well as many progressive and women's bookstores, indicated the serious erosion of the influence of alternative news sources and the decline in support for them.

Effective use of the media has now become a central strategy of progressive organizing. Alternative newspapers and magazines seem slightly stronger, as readers and funders increasingly appreciate the important role they play. Larger, single- and multi-issue organizations within the movement are giving more time and attention to packaging their messages for easy access by journalists. Smaller organizations are being trained in media access and learning to refine their message for easier media consumption. Newer organizations and projects, such as the Wisconsin-based Progressive Media Project, which distributes progressive opinion pieces through Reuters and other news services, or The Advocacy Institute's Certain Trumpet Program, which offers guidance and advice on effective media strategies, are now increasing the effectiveness and impact of progressive media work. Although the infrastructure of progressive media organizations is still relatively weak and underfunded, the pro-

cess of fighting our way back onto the mainstream screen is well underway.

BUILDING COMMUNITY/CIVIL SOCIETY

Journalists and academics often refer to the current "breakdown of civility" (in its ugliest form, the use of racist and other stereotyping, scapegoating, and intimidation) as "a crisis of democratic values." In response to that crisis, there is a great deal of discussion about building a more civil society and finding common ground among those who think of themselves as on opposite sides of the

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EDUCATORS.**

fence. These efforts often seek a mode of interacting that will allow us to move beyond political stand-off, and in general restore the sense of community that, according to the nostalgic myth promoted by the right, characterized the post-WWII period. They go by the names "community building" (bringing together the members of a community so that they know, understand, and support each other) and "building civil society" (encouraging adherence to norms of common courtesy in public discourse).

This definition of the term, "civil society" is one of two definitions that are sometimes confused and sometimes used interchangeably. In its more popular usage, a *civil* society would be one in which debate over important political and social issues occurs without resorting to demonization,

scapegoating, and disinformation. In its second definition, "civil society" refers to the self-organized parts of society, those not connected to the state. These are associations that are connected from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. Examples are independent labor unions or self-organized street vendors. "Civil society" used in this way can also refer to independent organizing that is political. Though it is an important and powerful concept within the left in Latin America, this second use of "civil society" has not been widely understood or promoted by progressives in the US. To the extent that it is used, it refers to a notion of public-spirited voluntary associations among citizens and is presumed to promote health within a democracy.

Commentators who discuss "the crisis of democratic values" seldom lay the blame where it belongs— at the feet of the right, even though most efforts to seek a solution address the specific damage wrought by the right. Its use of hate language, intolerance, bullying, and self-righteousness has created a climate in which dialogue is impossible. The right's hard-edged style has sown such widespread venom and division that it is now widely discussed within foundations, in print, TV and radio outlets, and among activists and educators.³⁸

Programs to oppose the hatred and division promoted by the right are proliferating. Anti-hate advertisements on television and billboards appeal to the spirit of more civil interactions among racially and ethnically diverse citizens. Elementary and high school curricula, designed to build more tolerance and a greater understanding of democracy among young people, include the "Teaching Tolerance" curriculum of the Southern Poverty Law Center, the "World of Difference" curriculum of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and *The Holocaust and Human Behavior*, the primary resource book of Facing History and Ourselves, as well as its study guides such as "Participating in Democracy."

Another answer to the "crisis of democratic values" is the Communitarian movement. Begun and

still largely led by sociologist Amitai Etzioni, it aims to lead the way from individualism and isolation toward community and connection. Communitarians emphasize responsibility, traditional values, and tough anti-crime legislation that caps individual rights. It is, at best, a centrist movement that attracts both liberals and conservatives. Perhaps for this reason, communitarianism has received attention from Senators, Representatives, and even President Bill Clinton.³⁹

"Community-building" is a more local response to the rancor of the current "crisis." It refers to the need for members of a community to circumvent the forces that divide them by knowing each other better. Community-building as a political strategy is based on the belief that knowing your neighbors makes it less possible to demonize or scapegoat them. Also, the act of knowing a person as an individual can interrupt the blanket demonizing of that person's hated identity.

Community-building is not a prominent progressive theme. More often, progressives talk about grassroots movement-building, which is usually done by organizers. But lesbian civil rights activist Suzanne Pharr, a member of the Women's Project of Little Rock, Arkansas, writes eloquently about community-building as a progressive goal:

...the difficult part is learning how to honor the needs of the individual as well as those of the group, without denying the importance of either. It requires a balance between identity and freedom on the one hand and the collective good and public responsibility on the other. It requires ritual and celebration and collective ways to grieve and show anger; it requires a commitment to resolve conflict. Most of all, it requires authenticity in relationships between and among whole people.⁴⁰

Progressives have largely rejected Communitarianism, seeing it as too compromised by its anti-crime and pro-traditional values positions. Those pro-

moting civil society have also come under fire. Benjamin DeMott, writing in *The Nation* magazine, argues that the very phrase "civil society" blames those whose civility has broken down for good reason. Seeing the public's current cynicism as the justifiable result of political and economic scandals revealed by both left and right, DeMott views the "fad" of civil society as a cover-up for the abuses of power that have led people to incivility.⁴¹

DeMott is right. Civil society is *not* the answer to social injustice and the right's drive to restore white, male, hegemony. Nevertheless, in the current political climate, defending democracy and pluralism are important to fight-the-right work. We have to defend those political bottom lines. However, if progressives are drawn too far into finding common ground and building civil society, we will have compromised everything that makes us politically progressive. The political "center" sought by promoters of consensus and civility is now far to the right of its location 20 years ago. Because the right has done its job so well, progressives will have to fight their way back into the debate, rather than seeking acceptance within an increasingly conservative political center.

GAINING ELECTORAL STRENGTH

Progressive analysis of the resurgence of the right often places electoral gains at the center of a comeback for both the Democrats and the larger progressive coalition. Long shut out of electoral politics, even leftists now pay attention to electoral races. The right has vividly demonstrated that the mainstream route of electoral politics can be the vehicle for radical political change.

Identifying effective and appropriate strategies is a critical challenge for those specifically concerned with the loss of progressive electoral power. The central questions are: What is possible in the current political climate? What practical and workable electoral plan can reinvigorate the progressive movement, and move it from its current position as an electoral shut-out to a dynamic political force that shrewdly and effectively competes for real political power?

In The Institute for Effective Action's 1995 report, "American Progressives at the Crossroads: A Challenge to Lead and Govern the Nation," Donald Cohen, Paul Milne, and Glen Schneider propose just such a plan. Their strategy for the progressive movement's return to power focuses on both movement-building and capturing electoral power. Their call for "determined action" consciously mirrors the boldness of the plans proposed in the 1970s by the New Right's young leadership.⁴²

Other progressive strategists focus on the Democratic Party. Jeff Faux, for example, in his widely-read book, *The Party's Not Over*, approaches the challenge faced by the Democrats from the perspective of a party loyalist. Pointing to the Democratic Party's roots in the New Deal, he argues for a return to its advocacy for active government—one that intervenes in the marketplace when the free-market system violates standards of morality and decency. This intervention, he says, represents the *real* values question. Implicitly rejecting identity politics, Faux argues that the Democratic Party can return to its roots only if Democrats are willing to return to "majority" themes of economic security and rising living standards, create a new political "story" that captures the ideal of an activist government working for the common good, and reform government to free it from the corruption of big money.⁴³

Calls of this sort are pleas for the stiffening of the political will of a party moving rapidly from the center/left to the center/right. Despite the existence of a caucus of Congressional Democrats known as the Progressive Caucus, the Democratic Party's leadership has chosen to compete with the right by embracing its ideas.

THIRD PARTIES

For many progressives, the Democratic Party has drifted too far to the right to legitimately carry the progressive banner. So, much of the progressive electoral strategizing of the 1990s focuses not on the Democratic Party but on developing third parties. Although there are no structural barriers

against independent or third party candidates in non-partisan elections, for the most part, only local-level elections are non-partisan. At the state and national levels, the winner-take-all nature of the US electoral system has made successful third parties implausible.

Nevertheless, third parties do form, as an expression of voter dissatisfaction with the two major parties. The most successful recent third party has been Ross Perot's Reform Party, which is tinged with right-wing populism and, if led by a more skillful leader, could have represented a serious threat to democracy. Also gaining prominence is the Libertarian Party, which has grown largely as a spin-off of the right's political success. Progressives have mounted several third parties: the New Party, the Labor Party, the Green Party, and, sporadically, a Women's Party. The Communist Party, the Workers' World Party, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and others still run candidates in some venues.

The most successful progressive third party has been the New Party, whose candidates have done surprisingly well at the local level, serving as an alternative to conservative Democrats. In the past, the New Party was a predominantly white, middle-class effort in which women were underrepresented. It has now become more representative of the diverse bases of the progressive movement.

One of the New Party's most important contributions may be a structural reform known as "fusion politics." Fusion voting allows a minor party to ally with one of the major parties behind a joint candidate, so that people can support the third party without "wasting" their vote.⁴⁴ Fusion voting is allowed now in only a few states, but a New Party lawsuit, arguing that fusion voting should be legal in all states, is being considered in the 1996/97 session of the US Supreme Court. Though fusion politics does not abolish the structural barriers to third party emergence, it can enable a third party to gain initial strength and eventually become an electoral contender.

Another notable development in third party politics is the Labor Party's



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broadening of the definition of its labor base from the traditional one—working-class workers—to include all people who have to, or are expected to, work for a living. According to political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr., "This is an explicit attempt to project a collective identity that can help to break down the ultimately artificial distinction between 'economic' and 'social' issues; it's an attempt to establish a broad and inclusive definition of the working class."⁴⁵ If this broader definition sticks, it provides labor with a larger constituency for its recruiting and organizing.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Many progressives think that the only guarantee of real competitive status for third parties would be to change the US electoral system from a single-party, simple-majority system to a proportional representation system, similar to that of most European countries. A multi-party electoral system would be a radical institutional reform that could mean a more democratic form of government. In contrast with the current system of winner-take-all plurality voting (which makes it difficult, or impossible, for a third party to win seats), proportional representation divides the seats according to the percentage of votes received by any one party. Thus, those not on the winning side are still represented. Because it is unlikely that any one party would capture a plurality, coalitions become nec-

essary. No one's voice is silenced in a system of proportional representation, with the exception of those who do not win an adequate number of votes to gain even a single seat in the representative body (usually a Parliament).

A national organization pursuing this option, The Center for Voting and Democracy in Washington, DC, supports a San Francisco ballot initiative that would change the system of electing the Board of Supervisors to one of proportional representation. This system is currently used to elect the City Council and the School Committee in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Many progressives cling to the compromised politics of the Democratic Party, assuming that victory through third party politics is too distant a possibility and preferring to practice "reality-based" politics. For others, the only viable, long-term solution available now is the uphill struggle of third-party work. I think it is likely that, were proportional representation better understood, it would hold enormous appeal for large numbers of progressives and other voters. It would, of course, require a huge public education campaign to overcome the bitter opposition that would be mounted by the entrenched interests of the two-party system. Nevertheless, the inherently more democratic nature of a proportional representation system just might prove compelling in the current populist electoral mood.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The 1996 elections, which set new spending records in local, state, and national races, were a crash course for the public on the need for campaign finance reform. The power of money in politics is now clear to all, and people widely acknowledge that it represents a threat to democracy. Without genuine campaign finance reform, the corrupting influence of campaign fundraising will continue to dominate US politics. Every European democracy imposes curbs on campaign fundraising, understanding that it represents the reality, not just the appearance, of influence peddling.

The political power of money is a stable feature of US politics, not a new problem. For many progressives working in electoral politics, it is *the* single most important systemic reform, holding the promise of wrenching control of elections away from corporations and wealthy individuals.

The 1974 Electoral Reform Act set limits on campaign donations and set caps on the expenditures of candidates in their campaigns. Unfortunately, that second provision was overturned by the Supreme Court (*Buckley v. Valeo*) as a violation of individual free speech, and the first provision has proved no match for those willing to use loopholes and third parties to exceed allowable limits.

The right opposes campaign finance reform, arguing that the reforms would be more damaging to "freedom" than campaign finance abuse. Another factor hindering reform is the self-interest of sitting Congressional legislators, who are unwilling to legislate reforms that would damage their own fundraising efforts.

However, some state-level efforts have been effective. California mounted two initiatives in 1996, one (Proposition 212) more far-reaching than the other. The milder initiative passed. Maine Voters for Clean Elections also managed to get a campaign finance reform proposal on the state ballot in 1996, which was approved by the voters. It provides a public financing option for candidates, as well as setting restrictions on those who opt for private campaign financing. The initiative resulted from a coalition

effort by state and national organizations, and a base-building process that recruited people from various sectors throughout the state. It is designed both to level the playing field within politics and to address people's cynicism about the corrupting influence of money in politics.⁴⁶

After campaign financing abuses received widespread media coverage during the 1996 elections, public support developed for campaign finance reform. In this rare instance, a progressive reform is popular with the public. Perhaps more importantly, a public debate over campaign finance reform represents an opportunity for public education about the corruption of democracy when public servants are "bought," and the need for the average person to organize in order to begin a clean-up of electoral politics.

ATTACKING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Many progressives consider the dramatic and alarming growth of economic inequality in the last decades to be the single most absorbing challenge to progressives. As political scientist Sheldon Wolin argues: "strategies that look to third parties or proportional representation to provide the momentum for regaining control over the federal government are hopelessly inadequate. The power of wealth is too highly organized and the morale of the citizenry too low to enable reformers to compete for control of the centers of power... Corporate power has managed to tailor representative government to its needs."⁴⁷

The standard progressive response to growing inequality is a program of aggressive redistribution—including high employment policies, progressive (rather than regressive) federal and state tax structures, industrial policies to promote economic activities that result in lessened inequalities, higher minimum wages, strengthened unions, improved public services, and direct cash subsidies.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the sentiment for income equality is so eroded in the US that there is virtually no political support for policy responses of this sort. In the current political context, such policies

would have little chance of being enacted.

Before a progressive program can succeed, the public must be re-educated. Despite the dramatic growth of economic inequality during the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton Administrations, the right's campaign to convince people that liberalism is responsible for their economic insecurity has been remarkably successful. Fortunately, progressives have been doing public education on the injustices and inequities inherent in capitalism for decades. However, much of that work assumes a public that is open to government regulation and other liberal policies as antidotes to capitalism's unchecked profit motive.

Anti-capitalist militancy is muted in the current political climate. Many progressives have been forced to fall back to a position less explicitly critical of capitalism and less aligned with powerful government intervention in the economy. This results in somewhat anemic themes, such as the message that domination of the economy by large, private corporations is creating an alarmingly unfair distribution of wealth. Opposing unfettered free-market capitalism on the basis of its lack of "fairness" is one of several messages that have a chance of slipping under the public's current anti-liberal screen. Other messages include: large corporations do not deserve government "welfare" in the form of subsidies, tax breaks, and deregulation; and GATT and NAFTA agreements are US capitalism's grab for low-cost labor and international domination.

So far, these themes have not been successful in blunting the right's drive to eliminate all constraints on free-market capitalism. The trimming of the progressive income tax, the campaign to eliminate the long-term capital gains tax, and the attack on corporate taxes, federal regulations, and unions—all rely on a public that identifies with free-market forces. The right has created just such a public.

Nevertheless, the unfairness of an unchecked free market remains the single most powerful message in the progressive ideological arsenal. It has

practical, common sense appeal, as well as tapping powerful populist instincts that, for better or worse, run throughout US culture. Organizations such as Share the Wealth, a project of a Massachusetts-based organization called United for a Fair Economy, are developing public education programs that unmask the rapacious nature of free-market capitalism without using anti-capitalist rhetoric or socialist undertones. In Share the Wealth's self-description— "a national organization that draws public attention to the growth of income and wealth inequality in the United States and to the implications of this inequality for America's democracy, economy, and society"— it limits its appeal to *fairness*, an unthreatening, all-American concept. Using a variety of public education techniques to spread its economic message, including a participatory skit that uses a "musical chairs" format to illustrate the concentration of 70 percent of US wealth in the hands of the top 10 percent of the population, Share the Wealth is an example of the careful, small-scale work that may, over time, refine the progressive economic message to maximize its effectiveness in the current conservative political environment.

MOVING BEYOND INCLUSION AND TOLERANCE

Progressives like to think that our leadership style— egalitarian, more or less— is morally superior to the right's pattern of hierarchical leadership. Further, because progressive principles include explicit opposition to racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, classism, and homophobia, progressives are more likely to demand that their leaders adhere to these principles. In fact, attention to these bigotries has earned the movement a reputation for "political correctness"— a pejorative label applied by the right that simultaneously makes fun of progressives and panders, for example, to the resentments of those white people who feel left behind by an increase in social justice programs and anti-racist consciousness.⁴⁹

However, for the progressive movement to truly reflect the principles it promotes, it will have to address several disturbing patterns within it that require

self-criticism and struggle. For instance, in innumerable instances progressive leaders have been racist, sexist, homophobic, or anti-Semitic, been called on it, and still failed to learn from that experience. Another troubling pattern within predominantly white organizations is the tendency for the race, class, and gender of the movement's leadership to look much like that of any mainstream, apolitical, or even rightist movement. White, middle-class men and women disproportionately occupy positions of power, and people of color, especially women of color, are underrepresented and frequently

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marginalized. A third pattern is that many organizations whose membership is predominantly made up of people of color find themselves marginalized within the movement. And finally, progressives who are privileged by the dominant culture— white people, middle- and upper-class people, and heterosexuals— all too often feel they are qualified to speak for those who are underrepresented or absent within the movement.

Predominantly white and middle-class organizations have attempted to grapple with such contradictions, often by adopting an agenda of "outreach" and "inclusion" to achieve various forms of diversity. Outreach and inclusion, however, are insidious goals. They often result in changes in style, rather than substantive content and behavior, leaving the movement's internal power structure unchanged. Even if "outreach" (to those whose political interests are

claimed by an organization, but who are not present in it) accomplishes inclusion, inclusion does not necessarily lead to power-sharing or a change of consciousness within an organization.

When the right uses the label "political correctness" to ridicule such concerns, it attacks both the progressive movement and the concept of multiculturalism itself. Progressives, in an attempt to buy political space for people of color, lesbians and gays, immigrants, welfare recipients, women who have abortions, and others under attack from the right, often fall back on the liberal concept of "tolerance," arguing that tolerance for difference is important in a pluralistic society in order to temper the urge of the majority to dominate and exploit minorities.

But "tolerance" does not necessarily lead to real equality, just as inclusion does not guarantee true diversity. These goals may sound progressive, but fall far short of the movement's stated principles. Actual power-sharing does not occur when one group allows another to have a bit of power or when the powerful tolerate the presence of the less powerful. It cannot be an afterthought. Those with less power know this, but those with more often have trouble seeing it.

A number of progressive organizations have met the challenge of building truly multiracial, pro-gay, pro-women programs and membership. In *Beyond Identity Politics*, editor John Anner of the Center for Third World Organizing collects and expands stories of successful organizing in communities of color previously told in the Center's magazine *Third Force*. The story of Providence, Rhode Island-based Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) is typical of the success stories in Anner's collection. Realizing that DARE was not attracting Latino members with flyers in Spanish translations, the organization created *Comite Latino*, a membership committee that conducted monthly meetings (in Spanish) and developed its own organizing campaign to galvanize the Latino community. Only when DARE's membership was one-third Latino and two Latino representatives served on the Board of Directors did *Comite Latino*

disband.⁵⁰

It is worth noting that DARE spent five years and over \$100,000, including the cost of a multi-channel translating machine that allows simultaneous translation from English into several other languages. Many predominantly white organizations struggle to be truly multi-racial, but must do so with limited resources. Smaller organizations often exist in an almost permanent crisis mode, stretched so thin that there is little room for organizational strategizing or planning. Many organizations of color that might be elevated as models of truly inclusive organizing are small, underfunded, and understaffed. They do not attract media attention and remain "off the screen" of the larger organizations that could learn from them.

The progressive movement need not remain caught in its shortcomings and continue to fail to adhere to its own principles. But how to assess the movement's weaknesses in a fair-minded way—without conducting a "witch-hunt"—is a profoundly difficult challenge. The first roadblock may be the arrogance that pervades the leadership of *any* established movement. In the face of our current losses, it is tempting for those of us who are white and middle- or upper middle-class to dig in our heels rather than engage in a difficult and threatening political self-criticism. But I would argue that this exercise is not only appropriate, but necessary to the movement's rebuilding. In the current period of weakened movement effectiveness, achieving real consistency between the movement's goals and the composition and actions of progressive leaders and activists is key to a successful rebuilding process.

LISTENING FOR LEADERSHIP

The right has modeled the art of listening to the fears and insecurities of the average person, but it has done so cynically and opportunistically. In the 1970s, the leadership of the New Right identified several fears expressed widely—especially the fear of crime and the fear of rapid social changes in sex roles and sexual behavior. They then spoke to those fears with simplistic answers that provided a target

to blame (liberals) and a solution (the restoration of "family values"). Progressives were unable to hear the same widespread fears and respond to them. Certainly, one reason is that they sounded reactionary. The fear of women's equality and the changes in sexual behavior associated with the birth control pill and abortion rights, for instance, sounded to progressive ears like code for simple sexism by defenders of patriarchal dominance.

But it is not only reactionary-sounding messages that have been dismissed by the progressive movement. Frequently, messages from constituencies it

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claims have been dismissed because they were at odds with a particular progressive analysis. For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s, when women of color demanded that the largely white feminist pro-choice movement pay attention to how abortion is understood in communities of color, and asked that the pro-choice agenda expand to include sterilization abuse, they often went unheard. For many white women, especially those in the larger, mainstream reproductive rights organizations, staying the narrower course seemed the more practical way to save women's right to abortion. Too little dialogue went into this decision. In this way, the progressive movement has lost many potential allies because of its neglect of their agendas and an unwillingness to

thoroughly debate their criticisms.

In fact, people who have had trouble being heard may be the very people who hold the key to new visions, new ways of formulating solutions, or new views of equality in post-industrial capitalism. The current leadership of the progressive movement won't hear those ideas if it thinks the movement already has the answers or it doesn't recognize the value and legitimacy of those promoting them. Only a full understanding that the movement must look for new leadership and new ideas (or old, unrecognized leaders and unheard ideas) will open us to hearing ideas that challenge dominant movement thinking.

Take the voice of women, for instance. Women of all races and ethnicities, but especially women of color and working-class women, have complained about being unnoticed in the progressive movement, of having to struggle to make their voices heard, often to no avail. Yet women have an enormous amount to bring to any movement. As a group that has been subjected to sexism, often compounded by racism, poverty, and homophobia, our history is full of the experience of organizing, of developing coping strategies, of hidden patterns of strength, courage, and resistance. Women's political work is often characterized by a collaborative leadership style, a problem-solving orientation, and a talent for making connections among individuals and groups. These resources are not the exclusive preserve of women; they can also be found in men. But because they are so closely associated with women, they are often dismissed or denigrated, especially within progressive groups dominated by male leadership.

The resources of poor communities often face a similar fate. Middle-class and/or white progressive leaders sometimes fail to appreciate that poor communities—white, of color, or racially mixed—are the sites of greatest struggle and the places where people devise strategies for survival on a daily basis. Many of the progressive activists within these communities are women who have the sharpest view of the realities of the community's real problems. We have no better example than the envi-

ronmental justice movement, a multiracial movement that grew out of low-income communities of color and represents a direct challenge both to the corporations that pollute them and the "Big 10" environmental organizations that seldom speak for them.

After decades of claiming to speak for poor and working-class people of all races and ethnicities, the progressive movement must look to the same people for leadership, in the form of individual leaders within those communities and/or ideas that come out of them. Many poor and working-class people are also women, and a progressive consciousness should have a third ear for the special double or triple nature of poor women's oppression.

This means that we don't just follow the leadership that climbs to the top and captures the megaphone. As civil rights activist Mab Segrest, speaking about the gay and lesbian community, has said:

As we go on the defensive, state-by-state, fighting the Right, we should seriously consider the possibility that it's not the men who can write the checks for \$100 thousand, \$500 thousand, \$1 million, who know most strategically how to spend that money. Maybe acquiring that much money has numbed these people, or at least buffered them from the need to come together with the most possible people in strategies of empowerment. Perhaps one of their secretaries knows more than I do about the needed strategy. As we walk the corridors of power, it may be not our lobbyist, our congressmen, the queer members of the Democratic administration who carry the real secret to our success. It may be the unseen lesbian secretaries and gay janitors, the homeless queer men and bag ladies who try to get in from the cold, who are as much the source of our power.⁵¹

Sadly, it is far from clear that the current progressive leadership, with long-standing habits of power, would take the steps necessary to recognize the other sources of leadership Segrest is discuss-

ing, and step aside to allow that leadership to emerge. It is even less certain that they would then follow it.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the near future, liberals and the left are unlikely to work in a unified movement with a shared vision, as they have at times in the past. It is also unlikely that progressives will see major victories, a dramatic turnaround of the right's dominance, or a substantial change in the globalization of the economy and the stranglehold of free-market capitalism. In the current political climate, we can anticipate only small victories, achieved as the progressive movement rebuilds.

It is probably a mistake to chase the notion of a single political strategy—a magic bullet—that will turn the political tide. We are living in a time when governments will no longer take responsibility for the liberation of marginalized people or for their incorporation into the larger society. But the work of rebuilding is a vast project and should not be undervalued. To rebuild does not mean giving up the goal of radical social change. It is a response to the reality of the moment. Understanding this, Pete Seeger has said: "It won't be one leader or one party or one cause that turns this situation around. It will be all the small little victories."⁵²

We can rebuild the progressive movement only within an accurate reading of reality, one that acknowledges the current grim picture of right wing dominance. Bold, brash responses to that dominance are entirely appropriate. In-your-face organizing and larger-than-life political plans are all part of movement-building. But we must understand bold, brash actions, or "magic bullet" thinking in the context of a realistic assessment of current conditions. They cannot substitute for the small-scale, everyday work of careful, thoughtful movement-building.

This movement-building may involve a process of "falling back," engaging in self-examination that results in confronting the movement's problems. Women's organizations dominated by white women will have to confront their own racism, homophobia, and anti-

Semitism. Lesbian and gay rights activists will have to confront their class biases. Correcting such biases should be our central political concern. Leadership that proposes to skip this step should be rejected.

At Political Research Associates, we have not taken all the steps recommended here. We are very aware that we are not adequately multiracial, and that our leadership is white, middle-class and upper middle-class, and middle-aged. We have not perfected listening skills; we struggle against being the "experts." But we are taking it step by step—striving to correct these weaknesses, maintain accountability to the organizations we serve, stay true to our progressive principles, and play a constructive role in a long-term rebuilding process. Indeed, "step-by-step" might be an appropriate motto for the progressive movement as we approach the end of the millennium.

Jean Hardisty is Executive Director at Political Research Associates. She would like to thank Elly Bulkin, Ruth Hubbard, Rosario Morales, Denny Bergman, Sunny Robinson, and Suzanne Pharr for assistance with this article.

PRA invites your comments and feedback on this article. Please submit comments (limited to 500 words) to The Public Eye, 120 Beacon Street, Suite 202, Somerville, MA 02143 or email to publiceye@igc.apc.org.

END NOTES

1 Anner, John, *Beyond Identity Politics: Emerging Social Justice Movements in Communities of Color* (Boston: South End Press, 1996): 1.

2 Four general critiques are: Michael Tomasky, *Left for Dead: The Life, Death, and Possible Resurrection of Progressive Politics in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); E. J. Dionne, Jr., *They Only Look Dead: Why Progressives will Dominate the Next Political Era* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); and Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1995). Further contributions have been made by those who are discussing and critiquing the right: Suzanne Pharr, *In the Time of the Right* (Berkeley: Chardon Press, 1996); Chip Berlet, ed. *Eyes Right: Challenging the Right-wing Backlash* (Boston: South End Press, 1995); and by those who propose a paradigm shift in order to bring the left off its ashes: Loretta Ross, "Practicing Freedom: Human Rights Education" *Sojourner: The Women's Forum*, 22, no.1 (September, 1996):7; Michael Lerner, *The*

Politics of Meaning: Restoring Hope and Possibility in an Age of Cynicism (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1996); Jim Wallis, *The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change* (New York: The New Press and Maryknoll: Orbis Books [co-publishers], 1994). Some advice is straightforwardly practical: S. M. Miller, "Equality, Morality, and the Health of Democracy" *Myths About the Powerless: Contesting Social Inequalities*, ed. M. Brinton Lykes et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996): 17-33; Daniel Levitas et al., "Philanthropy, Electoral Advocacy and Citizen Participation: Lessons for the Next Decade" *Network News* (Wash., DC: National Network of Grantmakers, Summer 1995): 1-2,7-8; Jeff Faux, *The Party's Not Over: A New Vision for the Democrats* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Robert S. McElvaine, *What's Left? A New Democratic Vision for America* (Holbrook: Adams Media Corporation, 1996). And some is practical but with an inspirational tone: Gary Delgado, *Beyond the Politics of Place* (Oakland: Applied Research Center, January 1994); John J. Sweeney, *America Needs a Raise: Fighting for Economic Security and Social Justice* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Mickey Kaus, *The End of Equality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Jim Wallis, *The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change* (New York: The New Press and Maryknoll: Orbis Books [co-publishers], 1994). Some focuses on analysis: Holly Sklar, *Chaos or Community? Seeking Solutions, Not Scapegoats for Bad Economics* (Boston: South End Press, 1995); Manning Marable, "A New American Socialism" *The Progressive* (February, 1995): 20-25; Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Other books address the state of particular sub-movements, such as Christopher Bull and John Gallagher, *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, and the Politics of the 1990s* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1996) on the future of the gay movement. Other writers have discussed the progressive movement in the context of identity politics, such as Adolph Reed, Jr., "Token Equality" *The Progressive* (February, 1997): 18-19; and Salim Muwakkil, "Identity Crisis" *In These Times*, (November 27, 1996): 14-17.

3 For a while, the term "populism" had a run as a popular alternative, but now is used nearly as often by the right as by liberals and leftists.

4 Jean Hardisty, "The Resurgence of the Right: Why Now?" *The Public Eye*, IX no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 1995).

5 People For the American Way, *Buying a Movement: Right-Wing Foundations and American Politics* (Wash., DC: People for the American Way, 1996); David Cantor, *The Religious Right: Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1994); Leon Howell, *Funding the War of Ideas* (Cleveland: United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1995).

6 Fred Barnes, "The Conservative Revolution Marches On." *The Weekly Standard* (August 19, 1996), 25-26.

7 Tomasky, *Left for Dead*, 36-43.

8 See the large percentage of women who voted for the anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 in California.

9 Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz at Jews for Racial and

Economic Justice Annual Conference (1996).

10 Tragically, there is an increasing tendency for the crucial distinctions between the ideological bases or the anti-government positions of the right and progressives to become blurred, leading to anti-government "collaborations" between left and right. See Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Too Close for Comfort*, forthcoming from PRA and South End Press.

11 See Robert H. Weibe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 244. Also see Sheldon Wolin, "Democracy and Counterrevolution" *The Nation* (April 22, 1996): 23.

12 The right applies the dismissive term "special interest" to all these single issue groups.

13 Gitlin, *Twilight*, Tomasky, *Left for Dead* and Lind, *Next American Nation*.

14 bell hooks, *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 29.

15 Two such activists are Loretta Ross, Executive Director of the Center for Human Rights Education, Atlanta, and Charlotte Bunch, Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University.

16 See Ross, "Practicing Freedom", 7. Also see Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Women Reshaping Human Rights: How Extraordinary Activists are Changing the World* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996).

17 See Gitlin, *Twilight*, 214-215.

18 Chip Berlet and Margaret Quigley, "Theocracy and White Supremacy" *Eyes Right: Challenging the Right-wing Backlash*, ed. Berlet (Boston: South End Press, 1995), 15-43.

19 Lerner, *Politics of Meaning*, 66.

20 Wallis, *Soul of Politics*.

21 *Ibid.*, xvi

22 *Ibid.*, 147.

23 This progressive populist economics should not be confused with the right-wing populism of the armed citizens' militias. Among other things, right-wing populism's use of scapegoats (usually groups thought to be people of color, such as welfare recipients or immigrants) as a substitute for analysis distinguishes it from progressive populism.

24 Sklar, *Chaos or Community*.

25 *Ibid.*, 171-176.

26 Faux, *Party's Not Over*, 173. Also see Sweeney, *America Needs a Raise*; and McElvaine, *What's Left*.

27 Faux, 173

28 Pharr, *Time of the Right*, 96-97.

29 See Stephanie Riger "What's Wrong with Empowerment." *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 21, no. 3 (1993), 279-292. Riger discusses the difference between community members feeling more empowered and their actually having more real power within the larger system.

30 Francis Calpoutra and Kim Fellner, *Square Pegs Find Their Groove*. Available from The Center for Third World Organizing (Oakland, CA) or the National Organizers Alliance (Washington, DC), 1996.

31 Adolph Reed, Jr. "Kiss the Family Good-Bye" *The*

Progressive (February, 1996), 23.

32 See Delgado, *Beyond the Politics*, and Mike Miller, "'Beyond the Politics of Place.' A Critical Review." Published by ORGANIZE Training Center, San Francisco, no date, for an example of two activists in debate over this issue.

33 Howell, *Funding*, 36-37.

34 Jeffrey Goldberg, "Some of Their Best Friends are Jews" *New York Times Magazine* (March 16, 1997): 42.

35 Robert Parry, "The Lord's Work" *In These Times* (November 27, 1995): 14-18.

36 The right's support for Israel has a great deal to do with the belief by Christian apocalyptics that the existence of Israel is essential in order for the Second Coming to occur. Before the "end" of the Cold War, the right also supported Israel as a Middle East bastion against communism. In short, its support for Israel has virtually nothing to do with an independent commitment to the survival of Jews. See Ruth Mouly, *The Religious Right and Israel: The Politics of Armageddon*, monograph published by Political Research Associates, 120 Beacon St., Somerville, MA 02143 (1985). Another part of the explanation may lie in the conservative nature of the leadership of mainstream Jewish organizations, as opposed to the generally liberal politics of many Jews. See: J. J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1996).

37 Despite the important work of Fairness and Accuracy in Media (FAIR) and its excellent newsletter *Extra!*.

38 Two examples of efforts to promote civility are found in Massachusetts. The Institute for Civil Society is a new funding organization and think tank based in Newton, MA and funded by a \$35 million grant. According to its mission statement, the institute exists to "research and promote those breakthroughs within civil society which address the most problematic and pressing issues of our day. Our intention is to help build civil society where it has failed to gain a foothold and rebuild its foundations where they have crumbled." The Public Conversations Project, based in Watertown, MA works to "foster respectful and productive conversation among people who have opposing views on polarized issues of public significance." (Public Conversations Project Mission Statement, 1996).

39 Michael D'Antonio, "I or We" *Mother Jones* (May/June, 1994): 20-26. Also see: Amitai Etzioni, *Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1993).

40 Pharr, *Time of the Right*, 97-98.

41 Benjamin DeMott, "Seduced by Civility" *The Nation* (December 9, 1996): 11-19.

42 Donald Cohen, Paul Milne, and Glen Schneider, *American Progressives at a Crossroads: A Challenge to Lead and Govern the Nation* (San Diego: Institute for Effective Action, 1995).

43 Faux, *Party's Not Over*.

44 Joel Rogers and Bruce Colburn. "The Promise of Fusion Politics" *The Nation* (November 18, 1996): 16.

continued on page 27

THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The roots of a remarkable number of myths, metaphors, images, symbols, phrases, and icons used by many mass movements are contained in the pages of prophecy in Revelation. The themes in Revelation influence diverse current right wing movements such as the new Christian electoral right, Protestant and Catholic theocratic groups, survivalism, the patriot and armed militia movements, Christian patriot constitutionalists, and the Christian Identity religion.



SIX WAYS REVELATION INFLUENCES POPULAR CULTURE

Omens and Signs of the Times: Revelation predicts the beginning of the end times will start a series of signs warning that judgment is at hand. Believers watch for the signs of the times and seek significance and meaning in natural events including comets, meteorite showers, alignment of stars and planets, floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes.

Apocalyptic Doomsday Cataclysm: Revelation predicts the end times will include great apocalyptic tribulations and the wrath of God, causing much destruction including famine, natural disasters, and plague. Some believers expect all is pre-ordained and they can only live out their fate; others prepare by collecting food and water, fortifying their homes, buying guns, and moving into communities of other believers.

Subversion and Countersubversion: Revelation predicts the betrayal of humankind by a world leader who unites all nations in the end times before being exposed to Satan's agent. There will also be a false prophet who spreads a global religion that supports the world leader. Believers look for treason and subversion, paying special attention to those who call for world cooperation and international intervention by groups such as the United Nations.

Armageddon and Holy War: Revelation predicts a great final battle between good and evil with troops clashing on the plains of Armageddon in the Middle East. Some believers are prepar-

ing for this battle. Some have already fired the first shots.

Reign and Rule: Revelation predicts the faithful will experience a millenium of living in God's kingdom, the new Jerusalem. Some say Christ will return at the beginning to reign and rule, but others argue that the godly must reign and rule for one thousand years before Christ returns. Believers argue it is their duty to attack

the forces of evil and clean up secular society to prepare for the return of the Lord. Much of the violence against reproductive rights clinics and attacks on gay rights is based on this interpretation. These ideas are called dominion theology, with its most theocratic and authoritarian version called Christian Reconstructionism.

Transcendent Ascension and Rapture: Revelation predicts that some of the faithful will be "raptured" by God in a transformational ascension into the heavens where they will miss some or all of the tribulations on earth. Some millennialist movements in the past have set the date for rapture, and some have sold their possessions and waited on mountaintops for the rapture to free them from their earthly bodies.

NEW CONSERVATIVE PAC

Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council (which is not legally permitted to participate in partisan political activity), has registered a new political action committee with the Federal Election Commission. Called the Campaign for Working Families (CWF), it has one central purpose: "to elect pro-family, pro-life, pro-free enterprise candidates to the House and Senate every two years, and to the White House in the year 2000." CWF executive director Connie Mackey served as finance director of Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign.

EDUCATION REFORMERS

Milton Friedman and his wife, Rose, have started a new foundation: The Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation

for Educational Choice. The foundation will promote "reform of elementary and secondary education by increasing competition through parental choice." Headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, the foundation will sponsor research to increase public awareness about alternatives to public education. Friedman was one of the first advocates of vouchers which allow parents to use public funds to send their children to private schools, taking much needed money away from public school systems.

PREVENTING HOMOSEXUALITY

The American Family Association and Virginia-based Kerusso Ministries have launched Hope '97, a year-long project "bringing the message of hope in Christ across America." Scheduled events include rallies in 15 cities: Phoenix, Dallas, San Francisco, St. Louis, Chicago, Ft. Lauderdale, New Orleans, Memphis, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Washington, DC. The tour will offer seminars on "how to minister to individuals struggling with homosexuality and how to counter the homosexual agenda."



"Modern liberalism, the descendant and spiritual heir of the New Left, is what fascism looks like when it has captured significant institutions, most notably the universities, but has no possibility of becoming a mass movement or of gaining power over government or the broader society through force or the threat of force."

— Robert H. Bork in *Stouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline*. ReganBooks. 1996

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Building a Movement



Suzanne Pharr

In the Time of the Right: Reflections on Liberation

Chardon Press: Berkeley, CA, 1996, 122 pp., \$10.95 PB.



John Anner, editor

Beyond Identity Politics: Emerging Social Justice Movements in Communities of Color

South End Press: Boston, MA, 1996, 188 pp., \$14.00 PB.

Reviewed by Eleanor J. Bader

Writer and long-time peace, gender and economic justice organizer Suzanne Pharr knows that we are living in grim times. "We are witnessing a sweeping effort to eliminate taxes for the rich, to deregulate business, to privatize public lands and services, to eliminate the separation of church and state, to demolish the Bill of Rights for the sake of 'law and order,' to eliminate civil rights and civil liberties, to increase numbers of police, border patrols, and prisons, and to eradicate programs that attempt to equalize opportunity and to provide a safety net for basic human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education and safety," she writes in *In the Time of the Right*, an excellent, albeit brief, introduction to the right-wing backlash movements that currently hold sway over much of the American public.

With insight and wit, Pharr documents the myths perpetuated by the right and contests allegations that indi-

vidual merit—and not race, class, or heterosexual privilege—is responsible for the social order. Indeed, as her examples indicate, one needs but scratch the surface to see a body politic riddled with fallacies about equal access to achievement, as if it is only by nose-to-the-grindstone work that one achieves status and wealth. Clearly, America loves its Horatio Algers and seems never to tire of rags to riches stories. But there is a cost for this folkloric delusion.

"In this country," Pharr writes, "domination politics are founded on the belief that the rich are superior to the poor, men superior to women, white people to people of color, Christians to Jews and other religious minorities, heterosexuals to lesbians and gay men, able-bodied people to people with disabilities." This concocted hierarchy, coupled with the fabricated "myth of scarcity"—the belief that for someone to receive something someone else must lose out—pits disenfranchised groups against one another and for the most part stymies rebellion. We've all seen it: "If women and people of color are brought into the workplace, then white men won't have jobs. If lesbians and gay men receive civil rights protections, then people of color will lose them. If undocumented immigrants are provided services, then citizens will lose money. If children receive bilingual or special education, then other children will receive inadequate information," she writes. Meanwhile, what Pharr calls the "real problem," the loss of jobs and an ever-shrinking tax base to pay for essential human services, gets scant attention from politicians, press or public.

Still, Pharr is an optimist and fervently believes that people can conjure up a vision of justice that links economic and human rights. She believes that

community organizing and education can move people from self-interest to interest in the world around them. And, she believes that ethical—dare I say moral?—reasoning can sway the nation from its belief that competition, inequality and hatred are endemic to the human condition.

Her strategy requires organizers and teachers to eschew identity politics and make economic equity the centerpiece of every project. This, she writes, will smash the stereotypes that allow divisions between people to flourish. "Without work against economic injustice there can be no deep and lasting work on oppression...All oppressions run on an economic wheel; they all serve to consolidate and keep wealth in the hands of the few, with the many fighting over the crumbs," she writes.

Pharr names names and casts a bright light on the few and their foot soldiers. She also offers a cogent analysis of various players within contemporary right-wing circles. In addition, her strategic look at racism and homophobia as tools to keep people separated makes *In the Time of the Right* essential reading for everyone interested in understanding America's political pathology. Furthermore, her deep commitment to democracy—and to creating organizations that contest business-as-usual and that simultaneously pay attention to interpersonal dynamics and power among group members—makes hers a potentially transformative, if somewhat sketchy, blueprint for organizing.

While Pharr's book frames the big picture and maps the overall political landscape, John Anner's *Beyond Identity Politics* looks at the minutiae of organizing on a day-to-day level. The two are a perfect complement to each other and will be useful guidebooks for those

new to social change work—as well as long-time activists.

Like Pharr, Anner and the contributors to his anthology believe that identity politics can be a tactic in the struggle for liberation, but can never lead to true emancipation. As Pharr writes, "We do not have to work on 'everybody's issue'—we can be focused. But how can we achieve true social change unless we look at all within our constituency who are affected by our particular issue? ...People cannot single out just one oppression from their lives to bring to their work for liberation; they bring their whole selves."

Beyond Identity Politics provides detailed descriptions of specific struggles—and what worked and didn't work—waged during the early-to-mid 1990s; previously published as separate articles in *Third Force*, the magazine of The Center for Third World Organizing, the nine essays included in the book offer inspiring examples and give readers a window into particular campaigns for justice. The book also offers a clear reminder of something we often forget: that even in periods of incredible political reaction and repression, progressive work continues.

Gary Delgado's "How the Empress Gets Her Clothes," for example, chronicles the efforts of 12 Asian immigrant seamstresses against fashion designer Jessica McClintock. Initially sure that they could appeal to McClintock's sense of fairness, the women began by writing a public letter asking her for the back wages they were owed. When that failed, the group organized a rally, and later picket lines outside McClintock Inc.'s tony San Francisco boutique. They also did outreach to campus activists, the Voluntary Services Network of the United Methodist Church, and a host of Asian American organizations. Eventually, 150 groups got involved in the anti-McClintock campaign. McClintock, for her part, responded by taking out newspaper ads contesting the women's claims, appearing on radio talk shows, and writing op-ed pieces for the Asian press. But the seamstresses persisted and with organizing back-up from Asian Immigrant Women Activists [AIWA], finally got McClintock to concede to their

demands. Each woman has received \$10,000 and McClintock has agreed to fund a workers' hotline and contract only with fully bonded factories. What began as 12 meek women asking for retroactive earnings became a nationwide campaign against the resurgence of sweatshops. It was, Delgado writes, a battle "about power and precedent."

Other chapters tell of other victories: Native Americans organizing against toxic dumping; Mexican immigrants organizing for workplace safety and adequate wages; students organizing to close a prison camp for HIV-positive Haitian refugees; New York City parents, teachers and students coming together to promote tolerance and respect in the curriculum; and the building of a multiracial, and multilingual, community-based organization to improve neighborhood safety, clean up abandoned lots, and address educational inequality in public schools in Providence, Rhode Island, among them.

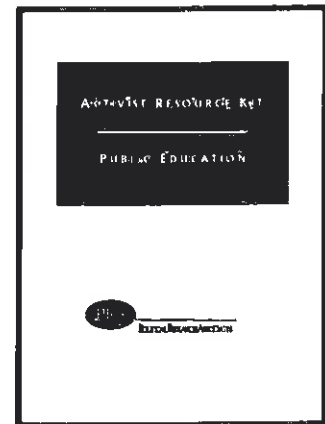
The organizing documented in the book, Anner writes, "models new ways of thinking and acting...[and is being] incubated in the places where direct experience of oppression and injustice is fresh and raw, among people without political turf to defend who are willing to try new ideas and experiment with new strategies." *Beyond Identity Politics* depicts the creative, militant, and usually successful, work that is going on in communities of color across the US and is much needed balm for the burned out and dispirited. It will have you cheering aloud.

"Circumstances create heroes," writes journalist Clarence Lusane in the book's Foreword. "In the end, *Beyond Identity Politics* (re)teaches us the great lesson of history: that there is always hope because there is always resistance."

Suzanne Pharr agrees. "Working together," she asserts, "we will build a movement that makes real our dream of justice, equality, and freedom."

Eleanor J. Bader is a teacher and freelance writer who frequently contributes to progressive and feminist publications.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

*A Selected, Annotated List**Chester, Eric Thomas***Covert Network, Progressives, the International Rescue Committee, and the CIA**

Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995. 265 pages, index, sources and bibliography, organizational glossary.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and cold war liberals trod the path thinking they could reform the State Department establishment by creating or joining humanitarian groups, knowing the CIA and other intelligence agencies used such groups for covert operations. Chester shows how "Instead of transforming U.S. foreign policy, Cold War social Democrats were themselves transformed as their organizations were absorbed into the establishment." Exceptional original archival research coupled with a flint-eyed analysis.

*Corn, David***Blond Ghost: Ted Shakely and the CIA's Crusades**

New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. 509 pages, index, notes.

Corn plows the fields of covert action, and turns up the larger-than-life operative Ted Shakely, whose actual escapades are far more horrifying than the many rumors about him that circulated during the Iran-Contra investigations. A dispassionate voice and careful wording makes this a more powerful indictment than any polemic.

*Ward, Eric, ed.***Conspiracies: Real Grievances, Paranoia, and Mass Movements**

Seattle: Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment [Peanut Butter Publishing], 1996. 217 pages, no index.

This collection of papers, from presenters and respondents at a symposium,

provides a tantalizing glimpse of new research into the titled topic. Articles by our own Chip Berlet, as well as Kathleen M. Blee, Abbey L. Ferber, S.L. Gardner, David Helvarg, Tarso Ramos, Jeffrey Ross, Loretta Ross, Steve Wasserstrom, and Leonard Zeskind. Forward by Kenneth S. Stern.

*Blanchard, Dallas A.***The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiery Protest**

New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994. 177 pages, index, references, notes, appendix of key organizations and publications.

A straightforward overview of how the movement was transformed by resurgent Christian activism in the public sphere. Blanchard has done prodigious homework, as evidenced by the complexity of the descriptions of various sectors of the anti-abortion movement and the multiple sources of their motivations. An important book for the reference shelf and for pro-choice activists.

*Rowell, Andrew***Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement**

London: Routledge, 1996. 476 pages, index, notes, illustrations.

Demonstrates how corporations, their allies in government and politics, industrious public relations propagandists, and the political right have cobbled together a loose coalition with the goal of undermining the credibility and effectiveness of the ecology movement around the world. A sobering look at how rhetoric can facilitate demonization and violence.

*Helvarg, David***The War Against the Greens: The "Wise Use" Movement, the New Right, and Anti-Environmental Violence.**

San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994. 512 pages, index, bibliography.

The first book to systematically chronicle the pattern of harassment of, and violence against, ecology activists and their organizations. An important resource, this book stands out for its rich detail drawn from interviews with activists on both sides.

*Martin, William***With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America**

New York: Broadway Books, 1996. 418 pages, index, notes.

Written as a companion volume to the six-part PBS series, this book stands on its own as a detailed history of the growth of Christian Evangelical political activism from the 1960s to the 1990s. A crisp and accessible style full of quotes and anecdotes, yet with a solid academic framework. Readable, reliable, and relevant.

*Switzer, Jacqueline Vaughn***Green Backlash: The History and Politics of Environmental Opposition in the U.S.**

Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997. 321 pages, index, notes, timeline, acronyms.

A look at the anti-ecology empire in the US, with sections on the historic roots of the issue, conflicts over land rights and resource exploitation, the mobilization of the business community, and the grassroots backlash movements. Well-researched and informative.

RESOURCES

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is not the volume of the grant money, great as it is, but the strategic way in which they have invested their grants to build the right's political power and influence.

ON THE WEB:

<http://www.hatewatch.org>
HateWatch, started in 1995, monitors the growing threat of hate group activity on the Internet. It provides on-line resources to keep abreast of and counteract hate activity and is noted for its objectivity, currency and bibliographic completeness.

www.publiceye.org

PRA has many new features on our Web page including a link to the Oklahoma City Bombing trial that offers a social science perspective on the ideologies of the various social and political movements involved in the patriot and armed militia movements and the neo-nazi underground. It also has a section on apocalyptic millennialism titled, *From Heaven's Gate to the Devil's Door*.

END NOTES

continued from page 22

45 Adolph Reed, Jr., "Token Equality" *The Progressive* (February, 1997): 19.

46 See Joel Bleifuss, "Reforming the Beast" *In These Times* (June 24-July 7, 1996):12-25; and Ronald Dworkin, "The Curse of American Politics," ad run in the *New York Times*, (Oct. 28, 1996): A9; and "Democracy vs. Dollars: Talking Back to Money in Politics," a Talking Back Advisory (no. 6) published by the Certain Trumpet Program, Washington DC, July 1, 1996.

47 Sheldon Wolin, "Democracy and Counterrevolution" *The Nation* (April 22, 1996): 23.

48 S. M. Miller, "Equality, Morality": 21.

49 Ironically, the term "political correctness" originated as an internal, self-mocking slang, used by progressives to joke about the complicated process of changing language and habits to conform to a broad definition of equality that included all marginalized groups.

50 Mark Toney, "Power Concedes Nothing Without A Demand," *Beyond Identity Politics*, ed. John Anner (Boston: South End Press, 1996), 17-28.

51 Mab Segrest, "A Bridge, Not a Wedge." Plenary talk delivered at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change Conference, 1993. Reprinted in *When Democracy Works Resource Packet*, available from Aubin Pictures, 22 Prince Street, Suite 427, NY, NY 10012.

52 Christopher Lydon's "Connection" talk show, WBUR-FM, Boston, 10/4/96.

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<http://www.igc.org/ctwo/>
The Center has a number of great training and leadership development programs for people of color. In-

cluded are the Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program (MAAPS) which provides young organizers with introductory training, field experience and a political context rooted in the history and current situation of people of color; and Winning Action for Gender Equity (WAGE) which focuses on expanding gender analysis and equity campaigns in economic justice and safety/physical liberation.

National Youth Advocacy Coalition
1711 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 206
Washington, DC 20009-1139
202.319.7596
NYouthAC@aol.com
The coalition advocates for and with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) youth through the collaboration of a broad spectrum of national and community-based organizations. Among other functions, it acts as a clearinghouse for information on programs, trainings, funding, bibliographies, policy papers, information packets and referrals for GLBT youth and their allies.

Center for Campus Organizing
PO Box 748
Cambridge, MA 02142
CCO has published a new edition of "Uncovering the Right on Campus" which is a hard-hitting critique of the right's campus activism that also provides resources for fighting back. A mix of original and reprinted material, it is a treasure of important facts about the right's campus infrastructure. In addition to giving practical advice on how to respond in a principled manner to right-wing attacks, it includes tips about researching right-wing connections, tracing the money trail, and where to go to learn more.

National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
2001 S Street, NW, Suite 620
Washington, DC 20009
202.387.9177
NCRP has recently released a study entitled, *Moving a Right-Wing Agenda: the Strategic Philanthropy of Conservative Foundations* that documents the role and work that key institutions and groups have played in developing the institutional base of American conservatism. What is most striking in the report

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The Public Eye

NEWSLETTER

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