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Planetary Science Talk
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I. Introduction:

- A. Good Morning
- B. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you this morning
- C. Asked to speak with you about leading change, organizing, action.

II. After visiting the United States in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: “in a democracy, knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all forms of knowledge: on it depends all others.” Attending to the role of civic groups, churches and political parties he argued association could draw people out of the kind of narrow individualism that he feared into construction of common interests required for democracy to work. The fact these associations were voluntary meant they could be a source of renewal of civic values on which a healthy polity depends. The democratic promise, in turn, is that the combination of equal voices can, to some extent, command political resources to balance domination by those with greater economic resources. Making democracy work, in other words, requires not only the protection of individual liberties, but also the creation of collective capacity.

This is what organizers do. Rooted in an understanding of leadership as “enabling others to achieve shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty”, they ask three questions: who are my people, what is the change the need, and how can they turn their resources into the power they need to achieve that change. It is not about providing services to grateful clients nor marketing products to paying customers, but about turning communities into constituencies, - from the Latin, “con” “stare” – to stand together. It is about VOICE. And this tradition is as old as the story of the Exodus, the day Greeks decided they no longer needed kings, and a way that Irish tenant farmers discovered to hold back their produce from their landlord until he made promised repairs – a landlord who was named Captain Boycott

III. In the US, in particular, organizing has driven the great social movements which have been ongoing, if episodic, sources of accountability, renewal and change – whether from the left, from the right, or in between. Crippled by fragmented public institutions, a result of a need to protect slavery in one part of the nation and foster freedom in another, and a very limited majoritarian democracy, government its has rarely been a source of change. On the other hand, the impulse for change, ever since the Great Awakening of the 1840’s, has played out as movements of moral reform. They are not random, but emerge from the efforts of purposeful actors (individuals, organizations) to assert new public values, form relationships rooted in those values, and mobilize political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action. They differ from fashions, styles, or fads in that they are collective, strategic and organized. They differ from interest groups in that they not only reallocate “goods” but also redefine them. Not content with winning the game, they try to change rules of the game.

So since the Revolution itself, organized by the Sons of Liberty, temperance, abolition, suffrage, agrarian reform, labor reform, racial reform, gender reform, environmental reform, and, yes conservative reform, have been driven by social movements. They begin as insurgents, they influence the parties, and they shape public policy. Because social movements are strategic they structure their efforts uniquely in both space and time.

In space, the combine local action with national purpose. Schattschneider wrote that elites always try to localize conflict, insurgents have to redefine the turf, often in ways the require support from others. Civil rights was not won only in the cities of the south, but in the north. Farm worker struggle not won only in the fields, but in the cities. Participation rests on moral suasion more than on economic or political coercion so the outputs depend on voluntary, motivated, and committed participation of members and supporters. Their authority structure is thus based more on leadership that can motivate commitment than exert control.

In time they find way to make use of our scarcest resource, time, thru the mechanism of the campaign. Time as an arrow, not time as a cycle. A campaign is a way to initiate change without the resources one will ultimately need to make change, for the simple reason that the status quo always has more resources. By focusing time we can build capacity over time, usually as peaks in a campaign, that allow us to make the most of limited energy.

IV. Leadership at the heart of the movement: who accepts responsibility to enable others to achieve purpose under conditions of uncertainty. Organizing, in turn requires asking 3 questions Who are my people? What is the problem? Who can use resources to create the power to solve the problem? And this, in turn, requires mastery of 5 practices:

A. Building relationships to create shared commitment to common purpose.

It is the process of association – not simply aggregation - that can make a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Though association we discover ways in which individual interests can become common interests, interests on behalf of which we can commit to using our combined resources. Although relationships involve elements of exchange – ways my resources may serve your interests and vice version – their significance is in the mutual commitment, rooted in shared values, that give them a future that enables learning, growth, and development – endowing a transaction with the possibility for transformation. This also points to the difference between mobilizing, aggregating individual resources, and organizing, creating collective capacity. The core skill is that of the one on one meeting, and intentional conversation in which we learn of each other's values, interests, and resources on the basis of which we can decide to commit to working together or not.

B. Motivating engagement by articulating the challenge to shared values as a shared story..

Narrative is how we learn to make choices – it is how we learn to engage with urgent challenges (when habit is breached), by accessing moral resources (hope, empathy, self-worth) we need to respond mindfully, with the courage to act. Because values are emotional commitments, they serve as sources of motivation. As St. Augustine observed, it is one thing to “know” the good, but another to “love” it – and loving it calls forth action. But learning to tell the story of our calling, we can communicate our values to others By attending to the stories of others, we can experience values we share, a story of us. And by articulating the stories of challenge to those values, we can inspire others to act. As a practice, public narrative can be structured, learned, and shared. Training offered by the Obama campaign was not built around learning Obama’s story, but, rather, learning to articulate one’s own story – not simply as a form of “self-expression” but, rather, as a way to engage others, at a deep level, in participating. By learning the art of public narrative, we can articulate the core values of our organization, encouraged trust among

participants, and enhance their efficacy.

C. *Translating shared values into action requires focus on strategic objectives – the art of strategizing.*

Power – the ability to achieve purpose as Dr. King put it – is central to organizing, to leading change. So how does power work? If you need my resources more than I need your resources, who's got the power? And if it's reversed? But if we both have an interest in the same kind of change, and our needs of each other are balanced, we may collaborate to create more power with each other than we can on our own like a cooperative. But if I have a greater interest in change than you do, but I need your resources, including decision making authority, more than you need mine, I need to figure out how to give you a greater interest in accepting the change I want than in resisting it: which is what the people in Montgomery figured out how to do. Since most institutional resources are usually committed to the status quo, those seeking change must compensate with greater resourcefulness, which is what strategy is all about. It is more possibilistic than probabilistic.

And when it comes to organizing this often means figuring out how to mobilize the kind of resources that are widely held, such as time, over those more narrowly held, such as money. Just as feet were the key to the Montgomery bus boycott, tea was the key to the New England colonists' victory, salt was a key in Gandhi's campaigns, and grapes were a key for the California farm workers. Power resting on the resources of the many, empower the many. Power resting on resources of the few, empower the few. So conflict is often the midwife of change.

D. *Action (outcomes) must be clear, measurable, and specific if progress to be evaluated, accountability practiced and strategy adapted*

The impact of an organizing campaign is measured by counting votes, people, events, clear, measurable, observable change. It is real to the extent it elicits commitment of real resources – time, money, effort - to the task, and deploys those resources in ways in which they can be counted. So one challenge is to determine the right metrics for real, on the ground, results, to assess progress – or lack of progress - toward our goals. This is not only for purposes of accountability, but of equal importance, for recognition, and most of all for learning – if we don't know what we're doing how can we do it better. So organizers have to become experts in asking for and getting commitments, on the one hand, and designing the kinds of action that generate the motivation for greater commitment. Because we actually take our commitments rather seriously, we often resist making them. The solution is not to make things easier and easier, but, rather to make them valuable, efficacious, so that my commitment could really make a difference.