Paper Series on Bridging and Power Building

Organizing, Power Building, and Bridging

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IF PROGRESSIVES ARE TO WIN transformative change in the long run, we will not do so by achieving piecemeal policy victories for individual target groups. Rather, victory will be in shifting people's worldview about themselves and the kind of society they want, from one rooted in values and beliefs that are individualistic, cynical, and mistrustful of government and each other, to one grounded in our inherent interconnectedness, shared responsibility to each other, and collective capacity to effect change. To achieve a world where we all belong, movement organizing strategies must include the element of bridging across differences, a project aimed at crossing identity-based lines and creating shared identities.

The bridging-to-belonging model was developed by the Blueprint for Belonging (B4B) project of the Othering and Belonging Institute, UC Berkeley. B4B was initiated in 2015 by a team of OBI researchers and analysts—some experienced in community organizing and social movements—as a California-wide network of researchers, base-building networks, community organizing groups, faith-based initiatives, policy advocates, and labor organizations.

The consensus of the network is that power building and organizing must be rooted in bridging.To bridge involves two or more groups coming together across acknowledged lines of difference in a way that both affirms their distinct identities, and creates a new, more expansive identity. Bridging addresses tensions or "breaking" dynamics and narratives that sustain division in order to develop a new "we" that is not only more inclusive, but cohesive, durable, and consistent with bringing about belonging and

greater social justice. The new "we" that results need not agree on everything, or even very much; but its members should have a shared empathy and lasting stake in one another. Bridging rejects all strict "us-versus-them" framings, but without erasing what is different and unique in each party.

The outcome of this process should be the building of durable bridges between different identity groups. To be clear, bridging is not about "saming"—that is, subsuming or erasing existing smaller "we" identities as we create a bigger "we." Bridging creates a space that is larger than the sum of its parts, that honors and affirms the multiple identities that individuals and groups bring to the table. But it *also* values what can only come about when we extend who we are beyond our own identity group(s) and build something more expansive. And that is the possibility of the collective that we want to spotlight in a strategic narrative for belonging.

That narrative and other strategies that address "othering," especially anti-Black and anti-immigrant sentiment, will not only create stronger cross-group relations, but will also chip away at deep, strategically implanted prejudices that fuel resentment toward efforts to address poverty and inequality. Reducing racism and xenophobia means removing a barrier to addressing inequality—and this is true with respect to *both* whites and people of color.

A coalition of convenience, or temporary cross-group coordination to win a campaign, does not meet the bridging criteria. Bridging strategies require that organizers create opportunities for intentional

bridging encounters. Broadly speaking, an intentional bridging encounter is one that brings together community members across a recognized line of difference for the purpose of interacting in a way that increases cross-group empathy, mutual understanding, and a lasting stake in one another. Its purpose is also to counter breaking narratives and deprive them of their currency. Finally, the goal is to create a third space and shared identity that can be animated for the public good.

Bridging is not a new phenomenon. Drawing upon the history of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s when the terms "people of color" and "Third World peoples" signaled a common identity across communities in the struggle against racism, economic exploitation, and colonialism, this identity formation is an imperative for 21st century activists (See **"A 21st Century Movement Building Challenge: Forging A common Identity Among 'People Of Color"** by Gerald Lenoir).

There are many examples of bridging initiatives in today's context as well. Othering and Belonging Institute staff members have developed a **Bridging to Belonging Case Series** with podcasts and written studies that illustrate real world examples of bridging around different issues and in different organizations and communities across the country.

The aim of bridging is to challenge the dominant narrative, to change people's worldviews, and to build enough power to produce transformative changes in human relationships and in laws and policies to address inequality and political polarization. The end goal is a country and a world where we all belong.

The History of the Alinsky Organizing Model and Its Practice within Community and Organized Labor

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Background & History of Saul Alinsky

Saul Alinsky was a native of Chicago, a vital manufacturing and transportation hub for the country in the 1930s. Scores of meat packing companies, warehouses, and train lines converged on the Second City and employed thousands of working-class white ethnics and African Americans, all escaping poverty, violent oppression, and exploitation from somewhere else. While Alinsky was not a devout practitioner of religion, his Jewish identity served as an essential reference point for his work—dealing with discrimination, being forced to live in slums, and being paid low wages—within a multiracial context.

Jewish and a native of Chicago during a time of increased labor militancy in the late 1930s and the 1940s, Alinsky came to adopt an organizing approach that seemed to counter broader tactics of the Communist Party, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). He focused on developing local leaders to confront local decision-makers—the boss, the landlord, the politician—and extract concessions. Alinsky believed that this practical approach and emphasis on self-interests would empower and unify communities.

The Alinsky Model of Organizing

The Alinsky model of organizing centers on identifying and confronting issues within a community and addressing them in the public sphere through development and organizing. Community members participate, lead, and engage in change-making, rather than acting as observers. At its core, the model utilizes building relationships as central to building enough power to effect change.

The process starts with one-on-one encounters initiated by organizers, which are strategic conversations that begin relationship building and surface common issues. Then it moves toward issue research and community listening sessions. The final component is research sessions between elected officials and key stakeholders within a community. The goal is to understand how power moves, who may benefit from the status quo and to build relationships with those with enough power to make a change. At this point, the community is ready to move into action. Once a problem is identified during listening sessions and dissected into a singular issue via research, public action is taken to build power among leaders, present solutions, and build commitment to those solutions.

One of the first examples of this organizing model was the creation of the Back of the Yard Neighborhood Council located on Chicago's South Side. BYNC was a multiracial, multiethnic organization that fought for workers' rights in the meatpacking industry and tenants' rights. (Many years later, however, BYNC fought against housing integration.)

Not completely dismissive of broader issues, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) was created by Alinsky and others in 1940 to connect a network of community-based organizations throughout the nation. The structure of IAF is similar to a national union's relationship with its locals. In the end, Alinsky saw the development of local leaders confronting local decision-makers to win concessions that were

important to them as the best path toward a more just and fair society.

A contemporary example of the model at work within the PICO California organization, which follows the Alinsky model of organizing, is a community benefits agreement that was reached between the city of Sacramento and Sacramento Area Congregations Together (Sac ACT) in 2017. City officials ushered in the building of a new basketball arena in the downtown corridor that would cause further gentrification in the city. With housing costs rising rapidly, displacement occurring, and job loss increasing among the most marginalized residents, Black faith leaders were able to organize the community and contest with the owners of the Sacramento Kings, the Building Trades Union, and city officials so that the new development would not further exacerbate community suffering.

The community benefits agreement ensured a certain percentage of new jobs in the arena would go to individuals from the impacted communities. This course of action did not solve all of the issues plaguing the community. But it demonstrated how much power can be leveraged when a community is organized and deeply engaged in defining solutions. The faith leaders and community members involved built upon this win when the City Council passed an ordinance that an allotted percentage of jobs for impacted communities must be included in all publicly funded development.

Labor & Alinsky

Many unions throughout the decades have employed organizing approaches that came to define the Alinsky model. Furthermore, it is important to understand that labor organizing in the U.S. pre-dates the work of Alinsky. The history of unions typically began with a group of workers banding together to address problems specific to their worksites. Draymen (truck drivers who deliver beer) in San Francisco's fight for fair pay in the 1850s gave birth to the Teamsters Union. Electrical workers came together at the 1890 St. Louis Exposition to organize what became known as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

This practical approach dominated the national labor movement led by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), formed in 1886 to unite white laborers in local craft unions. While Alinsky had a relationship with John Lewis, the leader of the more radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which sought to organize workers by industry rather than just worksites, Alinsky seemed to take inspiration from the AFL's emphasis on localized workplace action.

However, this privilege to focus almost exclusively on local worksite issues was not a possibility for non-white and non-male workers. The exploitation of Black workers was and continues to be tied to a system of systemic racial exclusion. Therefore, when the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was formed in 1925, it was essential for the union to fight simultaneously to end racism and ensure its members fair wages and safe working conditions.

Success & Implications to Bridging in the Model

Success within the Alinsky model comes with a leader's ability to learn, understand, and practice the model, and move action through the cycles. This is as important as a policy win. This is also where bridging can take place. When leaders feel empowered through organizing, they are often put through an experience of building a sense of belonging to their community, organizations, movements, and ultimately themselves; and recognizing their connection to other communities, organizations, and movements. This awareness is then extended to others facing the same problems through their organizing journeys. Often, leaders discover that issues impacting their community also impact other marginalized communities, and when they join forces in addressing these issues, they build relationships across differences and shared identities.

The example of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters underscores the challenge to the labor of attaching the Alinsky model's "insistence on organizing around local interests," especially for those unions that organize women and men of color. A housekeeper who is an immigrant living in Los Angeles faces exploitation at the worksite and dangers related to

their citizenship status. An African American who works as a security officer in Atlanta struggles with low pay rates that are connected to the anti-Black racism pervading every institution in this country. Many unions in the modern day have decided to shift away from an exclusive focus on workplace fights and are dedicating time and resources to address broader societal issues like anti-Black racism, criminal justice reform, climate change, immigration reform, and health care access.

Though relationship building across differences can be a result of the relational nature of the model, some of its limitations to bridge more deeply stem from the model's origin. An explicit racial justice analysis is absent in the model, which leads to serious impediments to bridging differences. It promotes a color-blind approach that hurts those at the margins. A racial justice analysis allows space for the intersection of issues. While organizations and networks that ground themselves in the Alinsky model have made progress in addressing this, it's important to name the origins of the gap they're working to fill.

In 2014, The Raise the Wage Campaign fought to pass $15 minimum wage policies in Los Angeles City and County. While this union-led effort won historic victories that impact over 1 million workers in Los Angeles County, the vast majority of those benefiting are not members of unions. Contrary to the Alinsky approach, the campaign did not engage specific neighborhoods or conduct opinion surveys to drive the decision to act. Rather, the leadership decided to act and leveraged the power of the regional labor movement to successfully push elected officials to pass what was the largest wage increase policy in the country. The campaign helped to foster an identity as low-wage workers across the color line, while, at the same time, primarily benefiting those folks disproportionately at the very bottom, i.e., workers of color.

It should be noted that labor unions must continue to address local workplace issues experienced by members. Many unions do not approach their work in the way described above. Some unions, like those often found in law enforcement or industrial settings, reflect more conservative views and approach their work in a more Alinskian manner. These are tensions that have always existed within organized labor and will remain. But an increasing number of unions are adopting an organizing approach that is more national and international in scope, ideologically more progressive, and driven by the global realities of people of color and women.

So, it may be more accurate to state that Alinsky adopted a method of organizing based on what he learned from labor organizers in the first half of the 20th century. The approach of local entities bringing together self-interested individuals and organizing them around practical issues was the key lesson he learned from the labor movement.

Since the model originates from a local focus with a four-step formula for making change, it has been experienced by people as rigid instead of adaptive or emergent. This experience can reduce people's feeling of belonging because they are asked to adapt to the model rather than the model adapting to the people. This often results in a slower pace of organizing and leads to more incremental change. Over the past ten years, the PICO California Network has grown to be more engaged in movement strategies but there can still be a point of tension, i.e., when to use the tactics of Alinsky organizing and when to respond as a broader movement.

While federations in the PICO California Network have evolved to create more opportunities for learning that center people who are most directly impacted by inequality and injustice, this shift has resulted in slower paces of organizing and has not always translated to a policy win. Ultimately, lending itself to incrementalism. The expertise and authority come from people with experience in pursuing the model, not from people who directly experience the brunt of the problem in their everyday lives, and who want to try the innovation. The attributes contribute to a model that is unable to move from a rigid framework to a bridging and belonging model which centers on adaptation and evolution.

To continue building on the work and progress of both community organizing efforts and labor union organizing, a focus on bridging across differences and fostering belonging is necessary to center the

voices and needs of marginalized community members and workers. This necessitates an adaptation of an Alinsky model centered on belonging as both in the self-interest of communities and workers, and the broader collective interest.

The Center for Third World Organizing Model's Essential Components

Olivia Araiza, Othering and Belonging Institute

IN THE 1980S, Gary Delgado, an Alinsky-trained organizer, challenged the country's dominant grassroots power building model by asserting that 1) communities of color should be organized by young people of color; 2) organizations and campaigns should reflect the intersectional realities of communities of color, thus multi-issue, multi-racial organizations should be built; and 3) a racial justice analysis that interlinks the struggles of people of color here and across the "third world" should be centered in its "consciousness-raising" strategies. The Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO) was born and transformed the movement landscape by training hundreds of young people of color in the "art and science" of community organizing through its Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program[1] and by acting as an incubator for dozens of community organizing shops around the country.

Delgado's three assertions above were essential to the new model, and offered a stark departure from the traditional Alinsky model that dominated the field. Some of the remarkable transformations included a reinvigorated and explicit commitment to building the capacity of people of color to organize from a place of lived experience and authentic vision and values for their communities. The MAAP program was serious about developing a disciplined cadre of community organizers ready to hit the ground running on day one of finding a placement as a community or union organizer. Community organizing was largely perceived in the field as dominated by white males with the financial means to take on extremely low-paying positions in the broader organizing network landscape. CTWO established a pipeline of well-trained people-of-color organizers for the movement.

Another fundamental contribution was the assertion that our organizations should be multi-racial and multi-issue, and work to bring about racial justice addressing the intersections of race-, class-, gender-, and sexuality-isms. The traditional trajectory of moving from a "stop sign" campaign to a more sophisticated demand was insufficient, and in fact ran counter to our communities' interests, the CTWO model declared. New organizations were formed to build powerful organizing across racial groups—and the multiple issues facing their communities—to demand systemic changes. Building power across racial groups was essential for mounting successful campaigns that could withstand wedge-issue politics, while multi-issue organizations could deftly move across various interlinked systems to demand justice.

Finally, the founders of CTWO came out of the third world movement and brought an anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist analysis and worldview to the community organizing movement project. This created a central analysis that produced alignment across movements, organizations and leaders tied to grassroots-led, community-based organizations. Combined, these three strategic shifts away from the white

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1   Its name changes to match the day in the 2000s to the Movement Activist Apprenticeship Program.

male-dominated Alinsky model revolutionized the field of community organizing (and philanthropy) and built a POC-centered infrastructure for building community based power for racial justice. Forty years later, the CTWO model can be seen and felt in our modern day movements, and has fueled and brought about countless progressive policies and systemic changes.

CTWO and Bridging to Belonging

The CTWO model transformed core aspects of the Alinsky model by explicitly centering the leadership of people of color and a race, class, gender and sexuality analysis, and fusing these with a grassroot power building and political analysis. These shifts, however, may not be enough to meet the demands of today's issues and aspirations. There are two primary areas that should be reconsidered. One is the primacy of issue-based power mapping that guides campaign strategy; and the second is multi-racial organizing that rests on past generations' movement-based notions of who our communities are. Both of these areas are perhaps lacking in that they are two dimensional, or based too narrowly on a "power in numbers" framework to address the complexity of both the issues we're facing and the identities shaping who we are and our country.

The first area, issue-based power mapping, has two critical components that move us away from bridging and make it harder to define and bring about belonging: 1) This model inherently is based on an "us-vs.-them" dichotomy within the context or landscape of a single demand; and 2) It defines the win simply in terms of achieving the demand. Othering, then, is a core component in the strategies and tactics of issue-based campaigns—targets and all their related constituencies or allies become enemies, constituencies are animated by vilifying the target and its ecosystem. Agitation and fierceness undergird the energy that fuels recruitment, trainings, consciousness raising, and communications. This is embedded in the culture and other "soft" attributes of the model, and extends into internal movement politic, culture, and practice. It's hard to "turn off" the hard edge, and that comes into conflict with alliance building, bridging, and cross-group political identity formation.

The issue landscape is cut by who's our enemy, our ally, and often the perspective of "no permanent ally, no permanent enemy" is ingrained in fledgling organizers on day one. This undercuts longer-term relationships with individuals in positions of power (that we need) but also with entire communities. The framework also creates a laser focus on a specific policy or systems change, allowing organizers to lose sight of a broader or longer-term perspective. Finally, government is often seen (albeit not exclusively) as only a tool for addressing grievances and accountability; it is more often defined as an enemy by this framework, which implicitly positions communities of color outside of the domain of governor/ance.

The second area—people of color-led, multi-racial organizing—is an important and critical component for 21st century organizing. But this must address and be in constant relationship with the changing nature of identity, and a rigorous analysis of how our community-held values are susceptible to change by anti-liberatory and racist narratives. It's not sufficient to only name and declare our shared fate across communities. Rather, we must also confront head on the contradictory values, fears, and aspirations we may hold as individuals and as a collective. By bringing multiracial memberships together behind an issue-based campaign organizing model, we miss the undercurrents and profound dynamics that then translate (or not) into deep-seated, long-term trends shaping civic engagement, support for tax reform, or even immigration and refugee policy. Instead, we need a framework that just as elegantly shapes our ability to wage issue-based campaigns for building enduring relationships and identities that stand up for belonging structures, policies, and practices—for both our power building field and government.

Coalitions: Vision, Bridging, Belonging

Polo Morales, CHIRLA

COALITIONS, AT THEIR BEST, ensure that we are stronger than the sum of our parts. If a coalition is defined as a set of distinct groups joining together for a shared goal, we might expect that this, by its nature, involves bridging. Indeed, to win, coalitions should be based on inclusion and belonging. And when done well, they should center bridging communities that had not previously come together in order to create a larger base of support.

But coalitional work is not in fact synonymous with bridging. And though coalitions should aim to bridge communities in ways that go beyond the immediate goals of the campaign, they are not always successful in doing so. A coalition without bridging would be one that is sustained only for the strategic purpose of leveraging collective power toward a particular goal that may either be won or lost. Once the campaign has reached its outcome, the different groups that formed the coalition would not continue to be an enduring, meaningful "we." In contrast, where coalitions become instruments of bridging, it is because members form a longer-term investment in one another—and in one another's futures—and develop an inclusive, cohesive notion of "we" that is consistent with bringing about belonging and greater social justice.

For organizations and coalitions, bridging can be a time-consuming process, but the benefits outweigh the early investment of time. After years of coalition building—from organizing the annual May 1st march and rally in Los Angeles to CHIRLA's Statewide California Table for Immigration Reform—I have learned the value of working in coalition toward achieving not only a successful outcome, but also new sets of enduring relationships. This paper shares some of the challenges and questions that must be confronted in bridging across communities and organizations in coalitional work.

Building bridging relationships in coalitions can be complex, and often stretches organizations and communities out of their comfort zones. Each member is pressed to wrestle deeply with and answer these three questions: 1) Who are we? 2) Who do we become together? and 3) Who do we want to be moving forward? These are questions that carry a lot of weight, and require honesty and vulnerability. They can strain us because most organizations have their own mission, culture, and identity in which we are comfortable, not to mention different agendas, perspectives, and tactics. These are all destabilized when working in coalition. But when we are able to work through them together, the result can propel us one step closer to belonging by creating a shared sense of struggle and political identity.

So how do we, in a large coalition where we might not please everyone, create genuine experiences of inclusion and belonging that ensure we all come to a point of working together as equals on common ground? First, addressing any tensions or elephants in the room through clear communication at the outset is critical. To this end, much time is spent on laying down our collective values and overarching goals to ensure that we can indeed work together within a clear agenda that outlines our shared objectives. Through this process, we become clear about who each of us are, down group or organizational lines.

Sometimes though, vision is what carries the day.

This is another place where things can get complicated in a coalition.

It can be said that visionary ideas can—and often do—supersede political pragmatism. This is especially true in campaigns for transformative change. Vision creates political space. By presenting an image of where we're going, it opens up a new possible future. But organizing is what makes that possibility a reality—or at least one step closer to that reality.

The work of visioning and organizing can often be carried out separately from one another, however. This can cause problems, because, while a vision can be a powerful spark, it must be cultivated by a broad base of support that is built on relational trust. This is why a process of trust-building and bridging is fundamental and cannot be skipped.

In fact, to get closer to making a transformative vision a reality, an organizational base of support must be an integral part of the development of that vision. We can have as many grasstops leaders or influencers as we want coming up with great ideas, but without the backbone of a base of support, a vision can become hollow and flat over time. When the vision is being crafted in coalition, this often happens across a collection of such leaders in a way that can be yet another step removed from the bases that the leaders represent. This distance can lead to missing an opportunity for a transformational shift in defining who we are and who we want to become together. Often, what we see play out in different movement spaces is the idea that leaders know better and can speak for an entire community. When it comes time to take action, if we have gone down this road, we may find ourselves alone without having brought more people into our larger "we ." This is why a foundation of trust is essential, and why the input and decisions of our base is critical.

In a coalition, the process of building trust takes time especially between organizations who have no history with one another, or who have completely different philosophies or political frameworks. A "large tent" approach can include organizations who may or may not work with one another effectively. For this reason, building trust is much more difficult than

crafting a message and disseminating it through social media. Great ideas abound in our age of high-speed information technology, but their spread is often actually very thin in our collective discourse. With the rise of social media, people now have the capacity to subscribe to something without needing to be convinced or deeply integrating the ideas through ongoing conversation, debate or research for that matter. Those great ideas can appear to spread like wildfire in terms of "metrics," but without a true influential base of support. The check on making the idea a reality again comes when it is time to take collective action.

This is where a political reality check becomes important. The sum of our parts consist of varying degrees of community engagement, influence, and power. When we look at the process of power mapping through the SCOPE model, we can place individual organizations in relation to other organizations to gauge political spheres of influence on decision makers. This is an important exercise as power mapping can help drive what is politically feasible and still leave room for a longer term vision as part of a continuum.

But in addition to our traditional power mapping, we should engage in frank, strategic discussions about how to bridge across the lines of race, ethnicity, gender, political affiliation, ideology and other lines, both within our coalitions and outside of them. Forging consensus and trust, and bridging within a coalition requires us to engage in tough conversations about the different political stands, life experiences, and visions that may be at work. And beyond winning a particular issue or campaign, coalitions should be concerned about long-term narrative change strategies and organizing interventions that can affect the worldview of those we may consider "them."

And is that not the goal? To create a world where we all belong? From vision to bridging to belonging, we cannot do it alone. Even organizationally, we cannot do it alone. Our parts may be unique, vary in size, and carry more or less influence, but together we can craft and co-construct great ideas that resonate deeply across our bases of support, and put them into practice to get us closer to belonging. I'm quite confident that we can get there together.

The Strategic Implications of Mass Mobilization as a Tactic

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MASS MOBILIZATION AS A TACTIC—without linking it to community organizing, base-building, and civic engagement—has some very useful aspects and also some steep downsides. The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement illustrate the pluses and minuses of such an approach to social change.

OWS was able to mobilize tens of millions of people across the globe to challenge the 1% and to proclaim, "We are the 99%." It laid out in stark detail how a few billionaires dominate the world economy to the detriment of most of the people on the planet. It challenged the dominant narratives that wealth inequality is just the way the world works and there's nothing you can do about it, and that it's okay to have people who are super rich because they create jobs. The movement popularized a counter narrative that received widespread coverage in the mass media and on social media, a narrative that called for the democratization of the global economy. OWS maximized the number of people that were mobilized and built momentum for policy change.

However, the win was defined by the public disruption and consciousness raising. OWS was not able to sustain its base because it did not have a community-organizing orientation. Another downside of such a mobilization-only approach is that movement leaders did not link to a clear strategy and specific demands to challenge the power of the super rich and multinational corporations.

However, the momentum led to other movement leaders creating change by negotiating behind the scenes from a new position of strength. New organi-zations joined the cause and there was a new willingness to come together across organizational differences. But it was left up to individual organizations and networks to fashion strategies and demands. The result was a hodgepodge of strategies and demands.

Another challenge in the OWS mass mobilization model and similar efforts is that they do not distinguish the many fissures and breaks within the "99%." The simple promotion of the identity as the 99% presents no analysis of the class, race, and gender dynamics and stratifications in society, and the way that these reproduce in social movements. While there was a message that the 99% was being "othered," the mass-mobilization approach lacked structures or processes for bringing people into a deeper shared identity across differences and a shared strategic outlook. That is, there was no recognition of the necessity to bridge in an intentional way.

This same element of mass mobilization as a tactic is also evident in the Black Lives Matter movement. The power of this movement was phenomenal because of what it was capable of doing in such a short period of time. Its strengths include its racial-justice analysis, its attractiveness to young people, its deft utilization of social media, and its ability to mobilize thousands, and in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder by police, millions of people worldwide almost instantly.

However, the movement against anti-Black police violence, calling to "defund the police, invest in community," is running counter to the movement in Black communities calling for more police protection from violence within the community. The lack of an inclusive, long-term strategy has caused a somewhat

antagonistic relationship between organizations and between people with these different but complementary agendas. Live Free California and Empowerment Initiative are engaged in a statewide initiative in California to bring groups together to bridge their narrative and organizing strategies. The objective is to align the organizations around a common analysis of the root causes of both issues and to create synergy that can increase the effectiveness of the mass mobilization tactic.

These are powerful lessons about how new developments in social movements can create opportunities for power building and bridging across class and race lines and within communities.

Community Organizing, Electoral Work, and Bridging

Pauline Hassan-Burkey, PICO California; Ben McBride, Empower Initiative; and Polo Morales, CHIRLA

THE MOST BASIC PREMISE of electoral work is grounded in breaking. Campaigns must draw a line in the sand between themselves and their opposition, providing a firm "us-and-them" distinction that is crystal clear. In the elections themselves of course, there are winners and there are losers. The question is whether, within this "us vs. them" contest, those carrying forward electoral work can simultaneously create bridging that endures in the long run. Or does electoral work simply aggregate voters to win the campaign without anything deeper being built, and while encouraging a pattern of breaking? What are the bridging opportunities in electoral work that can build and sustain durable, inclusive "we" identities across and among communities, organizations, and social movements?

Bridging is defined as addressing tensions or "breaking" dynamics and narratives that sustain division in order to develop a new "we" that is not only more inclusive, but cohesive, durable, and consistent with bringing about belonging and greater social justice. It is distinct from simply winning over different demographics or constituencies to get to a 50%+1 "win number." While bridging can be important to winning elections, election campaigns can also be means for building bridges that are themselves "wins" of a much bigger kind.We believe that that should be an aim of community organizations' electoral work. But it is not always that way.

The Electoral Context, Breaking and Bridging

Sometimes we approach an electoral season in which we are set up to "break" (rather than bridge) by opposition campaigns that are grounded in de-humanizing and othering our communities. In 2003, for example, California had a recall election that removed then-Governor Gray Davis in a Republican power grab to take advantage of multiple fissures and wedge issues facing California. The Davis recall effort came on the heels of an explosion of private prison development and anti-immigrant ballot initiatives in the mid- to late-nineties. Republicans succeeded in promoting breaking narratives that pushed communities to divide against one another around ideas of who was deserving and who was not. Meanwhile, progressive organizers lacked a bridging narrative that could challenge this division head on, and unite communities around an alternative story of a broadly shared "us." After losing the recall, community organizing groups and organized labor responded strategically, with a massive push for citizenship and voter registration, as well as increasing focus on voter engagement, education, and mobilization in Latinx and Black communities.

We can compare this recall to the 2021 effort to recall another Democratic Governor—Gavin Newsom—which failed in epic proportions. The difference between 2003 and 2021 is substantial growth in electoral power in communities of color, and a major swing in voter sentiment. None of this was by accident. As the push to enfranchise communities of color gained traction, our state politics began to change, and conservative, nativist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Black elected officials began to be replaced.

The fundamental electoral logic of getting to 50%+1 can impede the work needed to bridge in a number of ways. One is that it can call on us to write off certain potential voters that prevailing campaign strategy says are not worth the investment. Voters today are assigned voting "propensity scores," and most politicos and consultants will tell you that you only win by engaging high-propensity voters, who skew whiter, more highly educated, with a higher income, and less likely to move homes than most Californians. Winning and winning quickly comes at the cost—so we are told—of leaving low-propensity voters behind.

However, strategies, like those of the Million Voter Project, CHIRLA, PICO California and other groups, reflect a commitment to turn out low-propensity voters across California.[2] This necessarily changes the way electoral work is done. There is a commitment to deep canvassing at the doors and through phone banking, as well as to moving slower in order to include more voices and draw in more voters.

Indeed, speed is another barrier to bridging across communities through our electoral work. Bridging takes care, intentionality, and with these, it can often be time intensive. This is a challenge for high-speed electoral seasons. Breaking can occur at the beginning of campaign and electoral work in coalition spaces where important and critical decisions must be made quickly. Stakeholders who are at the table are often thinking in terms of serving their own constituencies. So while those voices are represented, not all groups are directly involved or even considered in decision-making processes. This usually results in constituencies that are not plugged into civic infrastructure or organizations being left out of planning. Again, these constituencies disproportionately include people of color, younger or elder people, those who do not speak the dominant language, etc.

There are a number of ways to bridge to constituencies that are disconnected from civic infrastructure during campaign seasons. Community town hall gatherings, deep canvassing and qualitative research that includes listening sessions can help to include their voices. Additionally, campaign cycles are a time when compelling stories, language, and visuals that unite voters across differences might be seen and paid attention to, with lasting effects. Through storytelling and bridging portrayals, videos like "Can You See It?" allow people to identify across different communities to tackle the key issues that extend far beyond the campaign cycle. The conversations that can be sparked in the context of not only general elections, but also compelling primaries, can be the opening to creating shared identities as voters that expand what is possible.

California's Proposition 47 of 2014 provides a good example of the bridging that can take place in electoral work when people and relationships are put at the center. The purpose of this proposition was to reclassify a number of non-violent offenses (including drug charges) as misdemeanors rather than felonies, and to give individuals formerly prosecuted for said offenses the opportunity to no longer have felony convictions on their records. Through intentional relationship building, community organizations supportive of the initiative brought together people from different communities in spaces where they could share stories and experiences with one another on how the ballot measure could change their lives. As a result, these different communities voted not only in their self-interest, but also discovered their shared stake in one another, and acknowledged the interests of one another in thinking about how to vote. Achieving this required an intentional slowing down of the process, and a people-centered approach to organizing voters. The relationships are a strong example of bridging, as they have in turn outlasted the campaign season, and have led to deeper organizing work within and across communities.

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2   See also Michael McBride, "Ending Electoral Sharecropping: Black Legacy Institutions Win Elections," Othering & Belonging Institute, September 9, 2019, **https://belonging.berkeley.edu/ending-electoral-sharecropping**.

Bridging Lessons Through, and Beyond, Electoral Campaigns

Sometimes electoral seasons show us places that we didn't realize we needed to build a bridge, and expose inadvertent ways our organizing is breaking with parts of our communities. A case from Alameda County in 2018 offers an example. The county was facing a historic opportunity to elect a progressive district attorney, and part ways with a decades-long conservative prosecutorial culture that had led to mass incarceration of Black and Brown community members. The 2018 electoral season was a critical one because of the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. BLM and Movement for Black Lives organizers began strategizing about how to elect progressive candidates who would be responsive to the mass demonstrations across the country.

Organizers knew that the challenge in the DA race was that the position was a *county* position—not elected by residents of Oakland alone, where the largest footprint for DA activity occurs. Voters from less populated, suburban, and whiter communities would weigh in as well, though they were less impacted by crime. But what turned out to be most egregious was that the conservative DA campaigned to represent families impacted by community gun violence, pitting their interests against calls to defund the police and end mass incarceration.

At a candidates forum hosted by Faith In Action East Bay, the incumbent, conservative candidate asked for all the mothers impacted by community violence to stand. She messaged that her commitment, if reelected, was to partner with law enforcement to ensure their cases were solved and those guilty were punished to the full extent of the law. In doing this, she weaponized the pain of the Black mothers of murdered children against the pain of Black mothers of incarcerated children. This splintered our communities, and with them, the movement's effort to elect a progressive district attorney. While we had a well-developed civic engagement strategy, we did not have a narrative and messaging strategy that could build a bridge between two impacted constituencies in the Black community. Because our electoral strategy didn't include bridging these groups, the conservative DA won the election in the middle of an insurgent political season. But the loss taught a lesson by helping us identify this critical place where bridging was needed. It shone a light upon the need to bridge within Black communities, and we have taken up that challenge in our work ever since.

But also in 2018, the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition taught us a valuable lesson on how to build long bridges. FRRC accomplished what most people would have thought was impossible. Using a bridging strategy, FRRC organizers mobilized voters across political and racial lines to pass Amendment 4, a ballot initiative that restored the right to vote to returning citizens (formerly incarcerated people). Because it was a state constitutional amendment, the initiative had to garner 60% of the vote. The final tally was an amazing 64%. The victory was accomplished because the leadership of the coalition had a broad vision of the "we" that was impacted. The FRRC organized impacted Black, white, and Latinx people and reached out to a wide spectrum of voters—progressives, liberals, and conservatives. They were able to shift the narrative from an image of undeserving Black criminals to a narrative of people of all races who had served their time and deserve a second chance—and with it, full recognition of their rights. Furthermore, as they organized across all of these lines of difference, they cultivated a new political identity of "returning citizens" that has outlived the stunning Amendment 4 campaign itself. FRRC's organizing continues under this banner, putting at its center this new bridging identity.

The 2020 Presidential Election had some big ticket issues on the ballot in Los Angeles County. There was an attempt to replace District Attorney Jackie Lacey with a more progressive DA, George Gascon, and a County Supervisor race that had a status quo politician and a progressive named Holly Mitchell. There was also an initiative on the ballot, Measure J, which sought to allocate 10% of the county budget to direct services to invest in helping people and not merely incarcerating them. C4 community organizations and some labor groups collaborated on their get-out-the-vote efforts to get a win for everyone. The

electoral work came on the heels of the summer's Black Lives Matter protests. Street heat was thus parlayed into electoral power. The end result was that these progressive candidates won and the ballot initiative passed. The case was made, consciousness was raised, and all this activity set the foundation for the voter call to action. What was deemed impossible became possible.

The lessons from the last electoral cycles since 2014 is that a bridging strategy is essential for short-term electoral victories and for the longer term goals of creating momentum for transformative relationships, laws, and policies. If our organizations and social movements are to build power in the electoral arena, they must bridge across organizations, communities, movements and ideologies.

Concluding Thoughts on Bridging and Power Building

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AT THE OUTSET of the B4B working groups' journey, we envisioned a set of trainings, analytical and strategizing tools, and shared bridging tenets that shape our practice (toolbox), politics, and culture. If we are successful, we will see, emerging from a broad based collective effort, a new central component of our organizing. We will know what our organizations would look like, sound like, and feel like if we practiced bridging. We believe that it is time to critically interrogate what informs our organizing strategies, politics and cultures if we are to remain relevant and impactful in the twenty-first century. Bridging, we argue, should be part of a new "school of thought" that reimagines powerbuilding in ways that are aligned with what it will take to confront the forces we face and to align the values and aspirations of newer and older generations of Californians. In the end, we believe that bridging can support a shift in the culture and the balance of power.

In order to reorient our movements towards bridging, we need to say what it is and what it is not. First and foremost, it does not ask us to leave behind what makes us who we are, but rather, it asks us to consider who we want to become with others as a society? When we set off to fight for our rights, justice and values, who are we bringing with us and what will we give up if we continue to engage in an "us vs them" false binary? Finally, how do we strategize within our movements in ways that are compatible with both our visions of who we want to be and with our politics? What do we gain or lose if we *don't* bridge?

Some key questions include:

+ How do our models of organizing promote rigid-ity and incrementalism rather than adaptation and evolution?

+ Do our frames of analysis and strategy development rely too heavily on an "us vs them" dichotomy? Are these tools centering the win over the transformation that's needed?

+ "Vision creates political space but organizing makes it a reality..." are we creating the trust and bridge building necessary to move us forward across our varied movement landscape?

+ Do our mass mobilizations activate a bridging strategy that brings people into a deeper shared identity across differences and a shared strategic outlook? Are we defining an enduring, new collective "we"?

+ As more and more community organizations are establishing and flexing their 501(c)(4) capacity to build power and influence elections, how is space created for bridging to achieve long-term systemic change?

There are already many examples of how the movement is reorienting itself (with new and old ideas) to encompass and center a broader set of strategies, wellness, and ancestral wisdom. As we face our current era of prolonged uncertainty and calamity, characterized by unprecedented technological and corporate overreach, climate crisis, a rise in white supremacy and authoritarian movements, and the debilitating effects of disinformation on our own relationships within movements and across our communities, let's double down on the innovations and energy generated by mutual aid efforts, BLM, and Indigenous

rights movements among many many more efforts that are expanding the "We the People." We hope to support that continual reinvention and evolution with notions and values of bridging and belonging.

Peace and power to the people!

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