Your Role in the Movement for Single Payer

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Single Payer Movement Swells
Basic Conflict

Powerholders vs People Power

**Powerholders** - The elites, through their dominant control of the state, institutions, laws, myths, traditions, and social norms, serve the interests of the elites, often to the disadvantage of the whole society. Power flows from the top to bottom.

**People Power** - The powerholders' power is dependent on the cooperation, acquiescence, or support of the mass public. This model is represented by an inverse triangle, with the people at the top and the power elite at the bottom.
What the powerholders do

Task: Maintain the status quo

- Keep the issue out of sight and off the table
- Control information
- Deny the issue exists
- Create myths and threats
- Discredit the opposition
- Appear to take action
- Make minor reforms
- Co-opt the opposition
What the social movement needs to do

Task: Show that the social movement upholds values and the powerholders violate them

- Keep the issue in the spotlight
- Counter the myths
- Eliminate the threats
- Organize and mobilize people
- Refuse to compromise too soon
- Support grassroots action
- Avoid focus on electoral, partisan politics
- Reject co-option
How we win

- Build a diverse movement of movements - solidarity
- Become a mass (not a fringe movement)
- Achieve national consensus
- Mobilize at least 3.5% of the population
- Maintain flexibility (not a POO)
- Hold position of principled dissent
Pillars of Power

Our task is to draw people from the pillars that support the power structure, building a broader mass movement and weakening the powerholders.

The pillars* are:

- Police and military
- Civil servants
- Media
- Businesses
- Workers/unions
- Students/Youth
- Religious institutions
- Non-profits

*From Robert Helvey, On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict, Albert Einstein Institute
8 Stages of Successful Social Movements

Bill Moyer’s Movement Action Plan

- Stages 1 - 3 - Percolation
- Stage 4 - Take off
- Stage 5 - Let down
- Stage 6 - Building consensus
- Stage 7 - SUCCESS
- Stage 8 - Defending gains and moving on
Stage 6: Building consensus

Public must understand:

1. There is a problem.
2. The current system can’t fix the problem.
3. There is an alternative solution that will fix the problem.
12 Phases of stage 6

1. Keep the issues on the political and social agenda;
2. Win majority support against current conditions and policies;
3. Cause powerholders to change strategy although they do not solve problems;
4. Counter each change in strategy by showing it is a gimmick, not a solution;
5. Push powerholders to new strategies that take riskier positions and make it harder to hold old positions;
6. Create strategic campaigns that erode support for the powerholders;
7. Expand policy goals as the movement realizes the problems are greater than was evident;
8. Develop stronger and deeper opposition to current conditions and policies;
9. Promote solutions and a paradigm shift;
10. Win majority support for the movement’s solutions;
11. Put the issues on the political and legal agendas;
12. Finally, the powerholders change positions to appear to get in line with public opinion while attacking the movement and its solutions.
Crisis point

Opposition to current policies grows quickly.

Support for alternative policy rises (movement helps this process)

Everyone wants the issue resolved, but government is unable to take action.

At the end of Stage 6, many powerholders begin to join the calls for change.

As elites defect to support majority opinion, the political price paid by those who want to maintain unpopular policies exceeds their benefits and creates a political crisis that leads to resolution.
Stage 7: Success

**Dramatic showdown** - something triggers another “take off” moment and the public mobilizes in mass numbers.

**Victorious retreat** - the people in power realize they can no longer continue the status quo and launch a face-saving endgame, changing their policies and taking credit.

**Attrition** - where the social, economic and political machinery slowly evolve to new policies and conditions.
Where do you fit in?

Bill Moyer identifies 4 roles of social change.

All are necessary.

A person can play multiple roles but often one role is suited for our personality and strengths.

Which role is best for you?

Think back to a time in your childhood when you faced a problem - how did you handle it?

Did you turn to authority, take personal initiative, turn to others to work collectively or raise a ruckus?
The Advocate (Reformer)

Childhood - sought out authorities to solve problems.

Transmits movement analyses and goals to authorities.
Performs legal efforts - lobbying, courts, etc.
Works to create and expand new laws and policies.
Acts as a watchdog to ensure the new laws and policies are funded and carried out.
The Helper (Citizen)

Childhood - works to solve the problem through personal efforts.

Upholds a widely-held vision of the democratic, good society.
Demonstrates ordinary people support social change.
Gives the movement legitimacy.
Makes it harder for authorities to discredit the movement.
Reduces the potential for violent attitudes and actions.
The Organizer (Change Agent)

Childhood - works to solve the problem collectively.

Supports the involvement of large numbers of people in the process of addressing social problems.
Promotes a new social and political majority consensus favouring positive solutions.
Promotes democratic principles and human values.
Supports the development of coalitions.
Counters the actions of authorities.
Moves society from reform to social change by promoting a paradigm shift.
The Rebel

Childhood - raises a commotion to pressure powerholders to act.

Puts issues on the social and political agenda through dramatic. Nonviolent actions.
Dramatically illustrates social issues.
Shows how institutions and official authorities violate public trust by causing and perpetuating critical social problems.
Forces society to face its problems.
Promotes democracy.
Positive and negative roles

Citizen

**Ineffective**
- Naive. Believes “official policies.” Does not yet realize that powerholders and institutions serve elite interests at the expense of less powerful minorities and the general welfare.
- or-
- Super-patriot. Blind obedience to powerholders and the country.

**Effective**
- Promotes positive values (democracy, freedom, justice and nonviolence).
- Grounded in center of society.

Reformer

**Effective**
- Uses mainstream institutions to get movement goals/values adopted into laws, policies and conventional wisdom.
- Uses variety of means: lobbying, lawsuits, referenda, media advocacy, etc.
- Serves as “Watchdog” to ensure enforcement and protect against backlash.

**Ineffective**
- Promotes minor reforms that are more acceptable to powerholders.
- Patriarchal/hierarchical organizations; organizational needs replace movement needs.
- Co-optation: Staff identify more with official powerholders than they do with the movement’s grassroots.
- Does not advocate paradigm shifts.

Rebel

**Ineffective**
- Anti-American, anti-authority, anti-organization.
- Uses “Any Means Necessary.”
- Employs tactics without conscious strategy.
- Isolated from grassroots.
- Victim behavior: angry, aggressive, judgmental, domineering, powerless...
- Absolute moral superiority.
- Acts out strong personal emotions and needs, regardless of movement’s needs.

**Effective**
- Uses nonviolent direct action, including civil disobedience.
- Targets powerholders and institutions.
- Puts problems in public spotlight and agenda.
- Develops clear strategy and tactics to achieve goals.
- Exciting, courageous, risky.

Change Agent

**Effective**
- People Power: Educates, convinces, involves ordinary people in change process.
- Puts issues on political agenda.
- Promotes strategies for long-term social movement.
- Nurtures and empowers grassroots.
- Creates permanent organizations and supports activists.
- Promotes alternatives and paradigm shifts.

**Ineffective**
- Utopian
- Promotes only minor reform.
- Advocates single approach while opposing those doing all others.
- Patriarchal and oppressive organizations and leadership.
- Ignores personal issues and needs of activists.
A few words about conflict

Conflict can take a stagnant group and move it to a stronger level.

Three phases of groups:
1. Honeymoon - superficial polite efforts to get the job done.
2. Chaos - fighting.
3. Community - creates a high-performance team, which happens when members accept on a deeper level the diversity of who they are.

From George Lakey: https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/building-our-muscles-for-conflict/
Now that you understand movements, what will you do?