

Summary of the EIGHT STAGES of the MOVEMENT ACTION PLAN

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See Bill Moyer's book *Doing Democracy*

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Stage 1: Normal Times

The public does now know the problems exist. Powerholders keep things covered up.

Opposition: Few people oppose the unjust conditions and policies. A few national and local organizations research and try to publicize the problems, but with little effect.

Powerholders: Privileged and powerful people maintain their own interests, keep the problems hidden, and proclaim official statements that sound nice while actually violating society's values and interests.

Public: Without knowing about the problems and how the powerholders abuse public values, the public accepts the status quo. Perhaps only 10-15% of the public disagrees with the powerholders' policies.

Goals: (1) Document that a serious problem exists. (2) Maintain active opposition, no matter how small. (3) Plan to move to next stages.

Pitfalls: Feel powerless. Get stuck because of political naiveté and not knowing how to change the status quo.

Conclusion: Problems can go on forever if the powerholders keep covering up the realities and if the opposition feels hopeless or doesn't know how to change the status quo. However, by exposing the contradictions in the powerholders' position the opposition can sow seeds for popular discontent and start to change things.

Stage 2: Prove the Failure of Institutions

A strong, effective movement for social or political change can't form until more people are outraged at the powerholders' hypocrisy in violating the public's interests and values. We need to show that "working within the system" is not enough, because "the system" fails to provide redress and actually is part of the problem.

Opposition: We must prove that the problem exists and that the official powerholders and institutions perpetuate the problem. Research the problems. Prove that the official doctrines and institutions violate the public's interests and values. Seek redress through the official bureaucratic systems (public hearings, courts, local governments, legislatures, etc.). Don't expect to win now, but document what happens and show that the system is stacked against the public's interests and values.

Powerholders: The official powerholders will win easily on their own turf. They'll keep the public from finding out what's really going on.

Public: The news media and public opinion generally accept the powerholders' positions on the issue, discount the opposition, and keep the issue out of the news. But public opinion against the status quo rises to 10% or 20%.

Goals: (1) Document the problem and what the powerholders are doing. (2) Document citizens' attempts for redress through normal channels and prove that the normal channels don't work. (3) Become experts. (4) Start small new organizations.

Pitfalls: Assuming that existing organizations and official channels can solve the problems without a new mass movement and additional methods. Feeling powerless and hopeless.

Conclusion: This stage can last a long time, and people can lose hope because progress can be slow. Solid documentation and organizing now lays the groundwork for later progress.

Stage 3: Ripening Conditions

Before a movement can "take off" in Stage 4, the groundwork must be laid in Stage 3. Historical and social forces underway might help "ripen" the time for change on this issue. If conditions get worse, more people can be recruited to get active.

Opposition: Over time, more victims and allies expose the problems, become discontented, raise visions and expectations for change, and empower themselves to act. More people change their consciousness. New autonomous grassroots groups arise – and they organize and act locally, often with demonstrations. New leaders emerge with information, training, visions of building a stronger movement, etc. Sympathetic groups provide solidarity, network with these groups, etc.

Powerholders: Official policies persist. Powerholders still think they can control dissent by managing mainstream political and communications institutions.

Public: The issue is not on society's agenda, so the general public still doesn't know the truth and supports the status quo. Nevertheless, local organizing does inform more people and raises opposition to about 30%.

Goals: (1) Create the conditions for a new social movement that can "take off" in Stage 4. (2) Recognize relevant historical conditions making a new movement possible. (3) Stimulate new groups and networks. Develop and share expertise and leadership. (4) Reach out to existing networks, resources, etc. (5) Personalize the problem. (6) Start small prototype nonviolent action projects.

Pitfalls: Failing to recognize the ripening conditions for a new movement. Allowing existing organizations to squash the creativity, independence, nonviolent methods and spontaneity of new grassroots groups.

Conclusion: Although conditions might be worse, the powerholders are still firmly in control. A lot of grassroots activity is happening, and the stage is set for a movement. Yet nobody – not even the new wave of activists – recognizes that a new movement is ready to be born.

Stage 4: Social Movement Take-Off

A shocking and highly publicized "trigger event" bursts into the news, and suddenly everyone recognizes that a long-ignored social problem exists. The "trigger event" is followed by a nonviolent action campaign, typically including big rallies and civil disobedience. These are repeated locally across the country. The public recognizes that the powerholders have failed, so the public demands answers and solutions from the powerholders.

Opposition: A dramatic nonviolent action campaign immediately after the trigger event shows a new social movement has been born. Nonviolent actions are dramatic and exciting, keep the public spotlight on the problem, expose the powerholders' hypocrisy in actually violating the public's interests and values, and create a social and

political crisis for the powerholders. Nonviolent actions are dramatic, exciting, and clearly support society's interests, values, symbols, myths and traditions. Strategies must elicit public sympathy. They create dilemmas for powerholders, who can't simply repress them, but can't allow them to prevail. Local communities nationwide may repeat these actions. New local groups spring up in a tidal wave of strong new grassroots activism.

Powerholders: They're upset and angry at being exposed for hypocrisy and losing control. They take a hard line and denounce the new movement. Mainstream institutions and both big political parties support the status quo.

Public: The public sees what the powerholders are really doing, and opposes the hypocrisy of official positions vs. actual reality. Within a year or two public opinion reaches 30%-50% support for the movement.

Goals: After movement "take-off," now we need to: (1) Get the whole society to deal with the social problem. (2) Create a new grassroots movement. (3) Shine a bright spotlight on the powerholders' actual policies (in contrast to their official positions) and educate the public about the reality vs. the powerholders' position. (4) Win public opinion away from the powerholders' position. (5) Become recognized as the legitimate opposition.

Note that at THIS stage we focus our energies on winning public opinion, NOT on getting powerholders to change their minds and policies! (That comes in Stages 6 and 7.)

Pitfalls: Political naiveté assumes we can achieve final victory during the "take-off" stage and fails to appreciate the progress we make even without an immediate victory. Burnout from overwork. Arrogant self-righteousness and counterproductive radicalism.

Conclusion: The "take-off" stage is exciting! The trigger event, dramatic actions, passion, new social movement, publicity, high hopes, and high energy. This stage should be short and progress to Stage 6. If people are disappointed that victory is not immediate, they could bog down in Stage 5.

Stage 5: Identity Crisis of Powerlessness

After 1 or 2 years the high hopes of "take-off" can turn to despair if activists feel frustrated that they have not yet won the final victory. Ironically, the movement has made enormous progress and is on the path to victory, but the road is longer than people might assume during the high energy and high hopes of "take-off" Stage 4. **Better work at Stage 4 can help activists skip Stage 5 and move directly to Stage 6.**

Opposition: Many activists feel frustrated that the movement has not achieved its goals. They overlook all the progress that has been made in Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4. They may feel that the powerholders are too powerful and the movement is losing. Actually, we need to remember that the powerholders will be the **last** to change. Putting the powerholders on the defensive and seeing them lash out at us shows that they feel threatened. After the "take-off" stage, the movement will look and function differently. We don't need the same kinds of large national demonstrations and the same kinds of civil disobedience. Focus moves from giant national media events with big turnouts to small local grassroots organizing that actually involves more people in personal, face-to-face interactions. Although the powerholders and media report the movement is dying, we are actually growing in grassroots people power. Some activists get stuck in protesting against the powerholders, when we really need to reach out and welcome more ordinary people into a much broader movement. Some frustrated activists abandon nonviolence and take militant, macho actions that actually undermine the movement's growth. Organizations that arose with spontaneity and very little structure or formal process have difficulty reorganizing themselves for the long haul. We need to help organizations and activists through social change models grounded nonviolence and empowerment. We need to help activists and organizations move from protest toward actual social change so we can move into Stage 6.

Powerholders: They continue a hardline strategy, including escalating policies and denouncing the movement. They might also infiltrate the movement to get intelligence and to confuse, disrupt and discredit the new activism. Agent provocateurs promote violence, disorganization, rebelliousness, machismo, etc.

Public: The general public doesn't know who or what to believe. More people distrust the powerholders, but some are reluctant to give up the status quo and side with the dissidents. The public is divided about 50-50. A movement that appears violent or anti-American frightens people into staying with the status quo.

Goals: (1) Help activists become empowered and effective again so they can move on to Stage 6. (2) Appreciate all that has been accomplished and envision the steps ahead. (3) Use a framework such as the Movement Action Plan. (4) Commit to nonviolence and appropriate forms of activism and leadership. (5) Form political and personal support groups. (6) Move from protesters to life-long social change agents.

Pitfalls: Disempowerment – feeling the movement is losing when actually it is succeeding. The “tyranny of structurelessness” and anti-leadership. Rebellion, machismo and violence. Despair, burnout, and dropout.

Conclusion: Stage 5 – the crisis of identity and powerlessness – is a personal crisis for activists. After the exciting “take-off” in Stage 4 they developed a new view of the world and themselves. They see that the problems are bigger, more deeply rooted and more complex than they had seen at first. If they don't recognize the progress we have already made, they can fall into despair. But if empowered, they can catch up with their movement, which is already moving into Stage 6.

Stage 6: Majority Public Support

Now the movement must consciously change from spontaneous protest and short-term crisis orientation into a long-term struggle to achieve positive social change. It needs to reach out to the general public, win an increasingly larger majority of the population, and involve ever larger numbers and varieties of people in opposing the status quo and changing to the movement's position. There are roles for the new grassroots organizations and also for established national and mainstream political organizations – and for ordinary people who are newly concerned. This can be a long process of eroding the social, political and economic supports that allow the powerholders to maintain their policies. Grassroots empowerment and smart strategies are crucial.

Opposition: We need to develop and wage a Stage 6 strategy. This is not just a string of disconnected events. It's very different from the Stage 4 protest activities. We need a grand strategy with strategic programs including ongoing local organizing (face-to-face outreach and organizing, public speaking, leafleting, etc.), massive efforts to educate and convert all segments of the public and bring them into the movement. Show how this issue affects them personally. Build a broad-based and very diverse movement. Use mainstream political and social institutions (city councils, political candidates, public hearings, etc.), nonviolent rallies and events at specific times and places, a variety of methods to involve ordinary people to challenge the status quo and practice the new alternatives in various ways without waiting for the powerholders to change the official policies. Strengthen local organizations to organize effectively and responsibly for the long haul. (See MAP's extended discussion of Stage 6 for many more suggestions.)

Powerholders: Expand hardline efforts to defend their policies, demonize and discredit the movement, co-opt or preempt the movement by adopting “new” policies that fail to really solve the problems, create the image that it is reforming or negotiating while actually continuing the status quo. Powerholders say they are winning and the movement is losing. They try to prevent some powerholders from splitting away from the hard line.

Public: Over a few years public opposition to the powerholders' policies grows to perhaps 65% and may continue up to perhaps 85%. However, half of the public fears the alternatives more than they oppose the status quo.

Goals: (1) Keep the issue and the powerholders' values violations in the public spotlight. (2) Switch from crisis protest to a long struggle for positive social change. (3) Strategize and organize to win bigger majorities of public opinion. (4) Involve more people at the grassroots level. (5) Propose alternatives, more demands, and a new paradigm. (6) Help people understand and use a strategic model such as MAP. (7) Strengthen and empower organizations and leaders.

Pitfalls: Get stuck in the protest stage. Movement violence, rebelliousness and macho radicalism. Believing we're losing and local efforts are futile. National organizations dominate the movement and local grassroots efforts. Powerholders co-opt the movement, and/or the movement compromises its goals. Political sects dominate movement organizations.

Conclusion: Over many years, perhaps decades, up to 85% of the public comes to oppose the powerholders' policies. Almost every sector wants to end the problem and current policies – but strangely, nothing seems to change. Congress can't make decisive votes, and the top powerholders continue their policies, although with cosmetic changes. The movement appears to be in a lull, with the appearance of mechanically going through the motions. Most of the society agrees with the movement. Powerholders have to pay a political price for their untenable policies.

Stage 7: Success

Stage 7 begins when a new social consensus turns the tide of power against the powerholders and begins **an endgame process** leading to the movement's success. The Stage 7 process can take the form of either a **dramatic showdown** (stemming from a new trigger event), a **quiet showdown** (in which powerholders realize they have lost and launch a face-saving "victorious retreat" in which they claim victory even though they are yielding), or **attrition**, which is a long (perhaps decades-long) process in which the social and political machinery slowly evolves new policies and conditions. In any of these three forms, even when the endgame process starts, success is not guaranteed, so Stage 7 does involve continuous struggle.

Opposition: The movement has led us to this point, but now the success is guided by traditional progressives, the "nonpolitical" majority of the population, and mainstream political, social and economic groups and institutions. Many mainstream entities defect from the status quo to protect their self-interest, because defending the status quo is more costly and risky than accepting alternatives. MAP explains the movement's role in each of the three possible endgame forms.

Powerholders: Their policies are eroded, so most powerholders abandon those policies, and some of the powerholders are isolated and politically defeated. Some who still have power some are thwarted in various ways, and some make risky, fatal mistakes.

Public: The public demands change and recognizes the issue in terms of "the good guys vs. the bad guys." People who had been standing on the sidelines because of fear, confusion, etc., now join the new majority and are willing to take risks for the new alternatives.

Goals: (1) Wage a successful endgame strategy to achieve our demand(s). (2) Have activists recognize the success and our own roles in it. (3) Create new decentralized centers of power based on participatory structures and an empowered public. (4) Continue the movement.

Pitfalls: Compromising too many values and key demands. Achieving minor reforms without building toward basic social change. Having activists feel dismayed and powerless because they don't recognize success and the movement's role in it. Letting the movement end with the apparent final victory.

Conclusion: When achieving our demand(s), we need to ask, “What is success?” and “What do we need to do next?” We need to recognize successes, follow up on the demands we’ve won, raise larger issues, focus on other demands that are in various stages, and propose larger alternatives and a new paradigm.

Stage 8: Continuing the Struggle

Achieving Stage 7 success is not the end. It’s a basis for continuing the struggle and creating some new beginnings.

Opposition: (1) Celebrate success and our role in it. (2) Follow up through national and local organizations to make sure the new promises, laws and policies are actually carried out. Be alert to a backlash that might reverse the new gains, and resist the backlash. (3) Focus attention and efforts to achieve other demands that are probably at earlier MAP stages. (4) Be alert to new social consciousness, issues and movements that emerged during this movement. Go beyond reform to more fundamental structural change by: empowering people to become life-long social change agents, not just one-issue protesters; creating ongoing grassroots political organizations and networks; broadening and deepening the analysis, issues and goals of movements; and proposing new alternatives and worldviews or paradigms that advance new political and social systems, not just oppose symptoms.

Powerholders: Governmental bureaucracies could drag their feet and fail to follow through with the new laws and directives. Some powerholders might try to roll back the successes.

Public: A new social consensus of about 80% supports the change. Now we can go back to the public with new demands that are at various other MAP stages with about 10% to 80% of public support, and organize until we succeed at those.

Goals: (1) Make sure that the good new changes are implemented and not rolled back. (2) Identify other demands that the movement could advance.

Pitfalls: Inadequate implementation of the new successes. Backlashes reverse the new successes.

Conclusion: There is no end. Social movements can repeat the cycles, create new levels of citizen consciousness and empowerment, and generate new issues, new demands and new movements. We want to meet humanity’s various needs. People-power movements are growing all over the world. Long-term impacts of social movements far exceed their immediate successes, because they ripple onward.