GTP ORGANIZER TRAINING

Training Guide #3
Grassroots Organizer's Roles

GENERAL CATEGORIES (University of Michigan)
1. Enabler-catalyst
2. Direction-giver
3. Expert, technical aid giver
4. Advocate-spokesperson
5. Activist, action leader
6. Broker-mediator
7. Coordinator, contact person
8. Expediter
9. Administrator-director
10. Educator, interpreter
11. Initiator-promoter
12. Motivator
13. Charismatic leader
14. Fact finder, problem solver
15. Problem finder
16. Observer
17. Bargainer-negotiator
18. Organization builder
19. Plan designer/developer
20. Consultant
21. Consciousness raiser

ORGANIZING TASKS (Burton Housman)
1. Increase understanding about society and positions of groups in it
2. Increase and strengthen communications between factions
3. Articulate vision
4. Discover and develop leadership resources
5. Risk involvement in visible leadership roles without becoming "fixer"
6. Encourage realistic goal-setting and initiative-taking (actions) for their achievement
7. Help define needed roles and direct people into them
8. Multiply alternatives at points of anxiety and crisis
9. Deliver selected, limited personal service
10. Plan for severing once-sustaining relationships as conditions change
11. Prepare for possible rejection in either organizer or leader role

TASKS FOR POWER-DIRECTED ORGANIZING (Mike Miller)

1. Listen carefully and ask questions to find out past experiences and problems
2. Agitate to generate issues and action on them
3. Educate others in processes and technologies that are essential for power-building, e.g., research, fundraising, strategy and tactic development, media, negotiations, etc.
4. Trust the people

THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZER ROLES (Moshe ben Asher)

1. Broadly skilled in organizational life:
   —Develops the conceptual model for starting a new organization
   —Brings the organization to life by face-to-face organizing (as in a membership drive)
   —Maintains the organization by supporting leadership development, campaigns, actions, and administration
   —Helps plan for "succession" into another form of organization or to consolidate with another organization when necessary or desirable
   —Serves as final "caretaker" of last loose ends when organizational termination is unavoidable or appropriate
   —Coaches to provide "locker room 'inspiration,' plays, and supervision of practice," but with the understanding that "the team elects its own captain and the coach stays on the sidelines during the action"
2. Theory-based roles are drawn from the four components of the practice theory for organizing social infrastructure—to wit: learning, exchange, reality-construction, and development
   —Learning theory prompts modeling, that is, teaching by serving as a model or presenting models:
      >models may be for organizational structure, processes, or instrumental objectives
      >models may apply to behavior or action on a micro level, say motivating people to pitch in on a project by setting an example; mezzo level, for instance using a role-play to illustrate negotiation techniques; or macro level, such as proposing a "small city strategy" as a statewide development model
   —Exchange theory informs the organizer's role toward identifying and influencing accumulations and flows of resources, with the following aims and tasks:
      > analysis, prediction, and intervention
      > pinpointing of and agitating around conditions of power, declining marginal utilities, and distributive injustices
   —Reality-construction theory centers the definition of the organizer's role on (a) facilitating understanding of reality as an ideologically-biased social construction and (b) orchestrating development of new ideological realities that serve the broad public interest and that aren't elite-dominated—suggesting the following tasks:
      > keeping track of and retelling organizational history
      > identifying potential causes of important events and focusing on those that provide the most organizational mileage
      > mediating the post-action consensual validation of ideological meanings that are critical to organizational decisions and movement
      > shattering the consensual validations of opponents

—Social development theory prescribes that organizers forego revolutionary and electoral strategies (using the latter only tactically) in favor of organizing social infrastructure—with the following aims:
> bottom-up-sponsored development that is permanently empowering, politically and economically, for the general citizenry
> removal of planning and service delivery from domination by top-down public and private bureaucratic interests that are inimical to redistribution
> redirection of organizational and community attention to (1) "socio-maintenance" (reality-construction and socialization) and (2) "socio-therapy" (flourishing of personality and social bonding or community-building) functions of infrastructure

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