

EVALUATION OF BASE-BUILDING COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS: A Tool with Nuts & Bolts for the Job*

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Evaluating the practice of community organizers, as professionals who often work alone in a challenging mix of settings and situations, takes a lot of a supervisor's time and effort. The task calls for an assessment that's unbiased, accurate, comprehensive, detailed, and designed to improve the organizer's performance.

This evaluation tool assesses the performance of community organizers working within the type of practice referred to as *base-building community organizing* (BBCO). The categories proposed here identify areas of practice to be evaluated; the examples propose objectives and content of education and training to help organizer's meet performance standards.

The purposes of evaluations, both for the organizer and the organization, include:

- Understanding about the organizer's current performance in meeting the organization's and the profession's requirements for the work
- Expectations regarding areas that need improvement
- Plans for education, training, and supervision to upgrade the organizer's knowledge and skills
- Anticipation of consequences from making or not making improvements

An organizer's performance should be rated "Outstanding" when above-average in virtually all areas, with at least several being exceptional; a "Good" rating should reflect acceptable performance in virtually all areas; a "Fair" rating should reflect deficiencies in many areas but continued improvement and promise for acceptable performance within a reasonable period of time; and a "Poor" rating should reflect a failure to satisfy the essential demands of the work and a lack of progress toward improvement.

ESSENTIAL PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

We define the following performance characteristics as *essential* because they should be satisfied by the end of a new staff member's first year.

S/he works to understand and master the model:

First and foremost, mastery of knowledge and skill for organizers in base-building practice concentrates on the *model*. Typically, competence in working the model comes about through reading case studies of base-building practice; formal training, which includes role-playing and Socratic questioning; observing experienced organizers by shadowing them on the job; and supervision of the organizer's initial practice by more experienced staff.

S/he consistently meets one-to-one targets:

The BBCO model relies on a face-to-face, one-by-one method of building organizations, predominantly in neighborhoods, faith communities, and workplaces. The one-to-one may be with prospective members or with leaders, other staff, outside consultants, press and media representatives, foundation officers, etc. This method builds the power of the powerless based on well-known strategic assumptions and well-tested models.

Paradoxically, an organizer's character and personality may be more determinative than issues or causes during an initial one-to-one with any individual. In evaluations, we assess an organizer's receptivity to others' feelings and beliefs, which has a positive effect when forming relationships. This is true even when major differences in cultures, locales, issues, and interests exist, because the emotional and intellectual openness to the organizer by potential participants or supporters depends in significant measure on their experience of being empathetically heard. In the absence of such experience, we encounter rigidity, often apparent in body posture and hostile questioning, which signify distrust and distancing.

We set one-to-one quotas for staff with fewer to start but increasing in number according to experience and performance progress. Our evaluations consider not only the number of one-to-ones completed, but also their outcomes, as evidenced by recruitment and participation of new members, commitments of granting agencies, support by other organizations, etc.

S/he listens and comprehends well:

During one-to-ones with prospective members, the organizer must demonstrate empathic understanding of their experience, views, and interests. This includes the organizer's ability to convey recognition of the need for empowered action, typically by storytelling about past successful organizing. As Fred Ross, Sr. (1910-1992) taught, "To win the hearts and minds of people, forget the dry facts and statistics; tell them the stories that won you to the cause."

My most painful lesson in "empathic understanding" as a would-be community organizer came at the beginning of my first MSW student field placement, while doing community research in a neighborhood located under the LAX flight path. Based on my academic reading, I witlessly approached my first one-to-one with a neighborhood leader, one who had been fighting for years to reduce the aircraft noise, as if I knew everything about organizing and he knew nothing. Within moments of starting our talk, he told me pointedly that he wouldn't work with anyone who didn't respect him. Unsurprisingly, he saw right through me. My humiliation and shame that day became an unforgettable lesson on lack of empathy and smug superiority. Reflecting on the experience always reminds me of Jose Carrasco's teaching: go in smart, come out stupid; go in stupid, come out smart.

S/he engenders trust:

Our ability to establish productive relationships relies on engendering trust, which we do mostly by living up to our claims and assurances. BBCO calls upon its participants to make considerable investments of their time, resources, and spirit over an extended period. They must be able to rely on their organizers if they take costly risks. They must be confident that our behavior will be trustworthy far into the future because we share moral and ethical convictions, such as our explicit dedication to justice and compassion.

Examples of trust range from something as simple as the certainty that if one shares personal information with the organizer that is relevant to the organizing but embarrassing if revealed publicly (even in the distant future), the organizer will honor that confidence and never betray it by thoughtless gossip or the like. It may be something as significant as the certainty that, for the sake of an organizing objective, even one of great importance, the organizer will never put the life or well-being of others at risk without their prior assent.

S/he engenders confidence:

Organizers engender confidence in their practice by demonstrating their knowledge and skill. That benchmark can be counterproductive, however, when its effect is to reinforce the belief of members and leaders that they will always be dependent on staff to achieve the objectives of their organization. To the contrary, a basic principle that was taught by Warren Haggstrom (1925-1986) is that organizers should convey to the leaders and members of their organizations as much of their commu-

nity organizing (CO) knowledge and skill as possible, because the organizer's job is to empower people individually and collectively, not to use power for them. Organizers should remain tenaciously unwilling to encourage or support any dependency.

It's not difficult to displace the tendency of members and leaders to become needlessly and unproductively dependent on their organizers. Organizers must simply refuse that role. For example, while doing a one-to-one with the father of a teen who had begun using drugs self-destructively, he asked what we should do about the drug problem. He was humble about his own abilities and respectful of what he imagined his organizer's expertise to be. I admitted to being ignorant about such matters but that, as an organization, we would do "research actions" in which groups of our members would meet with experts in the field and with policy-makers. Then, when we have learned a great deal, we would meet within our own organization, share what we have learned, agree on the action we want to take, and act together to influence the relevant decision-makers. That brief explanation gave him an entirely different and more productive understanding of both the organizer's role and his own in the organizing.

Our best means as organizers to engender confidence in ourselves, in our leaders, and in our members is to continuously identify the strategic, tactical, managerial, and administrative challenges facing the organization in order to raise them with the appropriate leaders. The leaders, properly prepped, can figure out their answers by themselves. When they discover that they don't need us to lead them around like their keepers, they increasingly become inspired by what they accomplish. In this way, they become inspiring to others.

S/he works well "on the street" with all constituencies:

We evaluate whether an organizer responds well to meeting and getting to know a variety of individuals and their cultures. The organizer should know better than to ever slam the door prematurely on new contacts who fail to meet conventional norms (e.g., having a job and an education). We rarely know at the outset from what life-experience our best members and leaders will emerge as uncommonly courageous, insightful, or dedicated, or which of them may eventually become important sources of intelligence and/or information about decision-makers, media, etc.

The organizer should convey to prospective members and supporters that the organization's strength reflects its diversity—ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, socio-economic, etc.—because one and all are valued and welcomed.

Diversity within organizations produces tensions based on differences of culture, history, ideology and interest. Organizers should understand that staff working behind the scenes are not effective "fixers" of internal conflict; they only postpone its resolution, which must be achieved by the leaders and members themselves. We teach that differences and disputes must be openly

acknowledged in appropriate settings, along with the recognition that, by meeting and talking, the members can work out their commonweal and agree on mutually acceptable ways of achieving it. In Orange County, agreement on commonweal by a diversity of members led to getting public funding for in-patient detoxification beds, when there were none at the time; in Baltimore it led to keeping an elementary school open, when the Board of Education had decided to close it; in Jersey City it led to getting better neighborhood police protection.

S/he establishes productive and cordial relationships with leaders, members, and staff:

One of the shortcomings of base-building CO has been the tendency of its organizers to see themselves as solo performers, individually responsible for producing all the desired outcomes of their work. But the approach that will achieve the highest levels of professional performance relies on team-building and team participation, which at a minimum calls for developing working relationships with all members, leaders, and staff, regardless of whether we like them, agree with their opinions, or approve of their performance. We evaluate organizers on this standard.

When I went to work for OCCCO under the project direction of David Mann, I knew nothing about him. But it soon became clear to both of us that we didn't like each other. We failed to evaluate our relationship to understand one another's thinking and feelings, but we did act professionally toward one another. The upshot was that I learned an extraordinarily amount about faith-based organizing and team-building, and came to respect David as the best project director I've had the privilege to learn from. For my part, with David's training and supervision, another organizer, having seen David's overly generous evaluation of my work, remarked: "The only thing he said you couldn't do is walk on water." We both knew that establishing productive and cordial relationships with everyone is not only desirable but also indispensable to the success of our organizing mission.

S/he mentors and develops leaders:

The daily work for most base-building organizers is represented by the items they check off on their to-do list or calendar. Having identified what needs to be done, sometimes a task that's going begging, they look for a member or leader willing to do it. With this mindset, the priority is getting the task done. Our approach views the primary, day-to-day mission as the promotion of individualized leadership development. Focusing on tasks doesn't necessarily strengthen leadership; but focusing on the development of leaders also results in the completion of essential tasks—and much more.

An effective organizer will consider an individual's potential for various degrees of leadership responsibility in whatever activity requires support. Based on our experience with the individual, we can ask a simple yes-or-no question, such as: "Would you be willing to do the press release?" Or we can ask a question that offers optional

choices, such as: "Which job—the press release, the turnout phone calls, or the dues collection—would you be willing to take on for next week's meeting?" Or we can ask a completely open-ended question, such as: "What do you think are the priority items that we need to handle for the meeting?" We ask the question that's gauged to have the member take as much analytical and action responsibility as possible.

Mentoring leaders in this way demands not only a shift of organizational priorities, but also sharing the nuts and bolts of organizing, sharing the wisdom the organizer may have from decades of experience, and extending sincere offers of support whenever needed, such as, "When in doubt, call, text, or email—I'll get back to you ASAP."

S/he encourages leadership unity and discipline:

Base-building community organizations abhor authoritarians in leadership positions. When they become the sole power brokers for their organizations, it can result in significant organizational vulnerability when they stand down due to career ambition, poor health, family demands, etc.

Thoughtful organizers concentrate on leadership development that looks beyond individuals who already have a following. When we focus only on those high-performing individuals, it's easy to overlook aspects of their personality and character that turn out to be deeply troubling. So-called natural leaders often have a passion to monopolize power and the ability to captivate others with glib talk and facile but shallow solutions to difficult challenges. It's essential to counteract their negative effects by investing staff time in individuals with desirable personality and character traits who we can help to become effective leaders in a culture of shared, unified leadership.

Disciplined leadership follows from an organizer's cultivation of a leadership team that adopts a culture of constructive debate, consensus-building, and shared decision-making. Certainly, the organizer must form supportive relationships with the leaders to achieve that discipline; but equally important, the organizer should promote relationship-building *between the leaders*. When a leader asks about the pros and cons of a policy or decision, for instance, instead of offering an answer, it's preferable for the organizer to suggest that the leader talk with other leaders and to ask the leader whether it would be useful to convene a leaders' meeting, even informally, to consider the question. When the organizer has an opportunity later to talk with the other leaders, the topic raised by the first leader is shared with them. The ability to foster leaders' unity and discipline is a critical aspect of organizing, which we consider when evaluating staff.

S/he analyzes and conceptualizes:

It's common for organizers working within well-defined models not to conceive of options that go outside of the model and not to use the assets of their organization as fully as possible—in effect, to be boxed in by the model they work to implement. We expect organizers to be

guided by the model but not to the extent that they give up their ability to analyze situations and conceive of innovative responses to them.

Organizers should also know that in campaigns, we're not only interested in winning victories to solve an external problem or condition—say, getting a commitment to build 25 new low-income housing units. We're also interested in improving some aspect of our organization's internal capabilities, like developing new leaders, improving fundraising, or recruiting new members. It's a two-track endeavor and the organizer's analytical and conceptual abilities need to be running wide open on both tracks.

S/he studies and understands power and politics:

Some organizers may have begun to understand power and politics as students from class lectures or by reading, say a book like *The Power Broker*; or by a personally punishing experience, like being insulted and humiliated by elected officials while testifying during the public comment time of a city council or county supervisors meeting.

But whatever one's introduction, organizers must be able to discern the cynicism inherent in the relationship between wealth and the morally perverted exercise of power, beginning with precedent-setting historical instances, such as when "One of J.P. Morgan's railroad schemes ran into problems. Morgan asked his lawyer, Judge Ashbel Green, how it could be worked out legally. The judge said that it couldn't be done legally. 'That is not what I asked you to do,' said Morgan. 'I asked you to tell me how it could be done legally. Come back tomorrow or the next day and tell me how it can be done.' Which he did, and it was." Cornelius Vanderbilt once admitted, "What do I care about the law? Hain't I got the power?" And Collis P. Huntington bragged, "Everything that isn't nailed down is mine, and anything I can pry loose isn't nailed down." These "robber barons" of the past set the stage for today's billionaire brotherhood.

An effective organizer develops the lifelong habit of paying close attention to how realities are shaped and resources flow in the political and economic organizations and institutions that have abandoned the commonweal or have become adept at exploiting it. This includes a nose for self-empowering and self-enriching ideologies that drive events but remain camouflaged behind performative patriotism, and an ability to "follow the money."

While we were organizing the Marin Congregational Organizing Project (MCOP), we learned the cost of failing to pay close attention to how communal realities are shaped and how resources flow. MCOP was opposed by the Marin Community Foundation (MCF), which had a half-billion dollars in assets and was the main power player in Marin county, distributing about \$20 million a year within the county, which then had a population of less than 250,000. We built a strong leadership group with a self-authored, unifying moral vision. And we had a founding meeting with a turnout of 800. But the MCF would not tolerate the formation of a new power player

on its turf, and we had failed to fully appreciate the kind of juggernaut we were up against with a fledgling organization that had just had its founding meeting. We were not in a position to challenge the key Marin power player. Moreover, even if we were to challenge the MCF, it would have meant asking the member-churches of the project to organize against the institution that was giving them substantial amounts of money. Our initial leaders, mostly clergy, were co-opted by the MCF's carrots (like promising to pay for a new \$60,000 roof of one of the churches) and sticks (like telling the clergy they would no longer receive any benefits from the MCF). And although we had received small grants from religious denominations, the absence of MCF support killed the project within two years, because we had already been told by officers of other foundations that, in light of the MCF's huge assets, they would be ridiculed by their peers and confronted by their board members if they funded an organizing project in Marin County.

MCF decision-makers, through their unrivaled co-opting largesse, were uniquely powerful in shaping the political-economic realities and resources of virtually every important organization and institution in Marin. More commonly, however, organizers face opponents with less all-encompassing power and thus they should teach their members the importance of targeting not only *direct* decision-makers but *intermediate* targets too, those that transmit proposals to the decision-maker, and *indirect* targets, such as individuals and organizations that influence or control direct targets, such as well-heeled contributors to an elected representative's campaign.

Our organization in San Bernardino hit a brick wall trying to get the state assemblyman to co-sponsor legislation that would give a tax break to seniors. Based on our analysis of the financial support for his reelection campaign, gleaned from the publicly available campaign contribution reports, we identified a couple of dozen donors who were community leaders and professionals who would not want to be identified as opposing a tax break for seniors. We circulated that information widely and, shortly afterwards, the assemblyman met with us and agreed to co-sponsor the legislation we supported, presumably because he had heard from his contributors.

While the foregoing suggests that we had a positive experience of power and politics, the outcome taught a less gratifying lesson. As a small organization without allies, we lacked the wherewithal to successfully follow up and build support for state legislation. As the organizer, I had no supervision and was in way over my head. It was my first solo CO and I had a great deal to learn about politics and power, specifically that elected representatives placate the demands of their constituents by signing on to legislation they have no intention of actively supporting.

It's easy to mistakenly believe that in seeking the support or participation of other organizations in our campaigns, all that matters is that we agree about issues and action styles. At the outset, however, the more politically astute may see our organization as unknown and

inexperienced, with inflated rhetoric but without a track record. Here's where relationships count for everything. Potential allies want to know who we know and who knows us. This always reminds me of the story told by Abner Mikva (1926-2016). During his first year of law school, he walked into the Chicago storefront office of an Eighth Ward committeeman. He wanted to volunteer on the campaigns of Adlai Stevenson and Paul Douglas. The committeeman took the cigar out of his mouth and asked gruffly, "Who sent you?" "Nobody," Mikva replied. The committeeman growled, "We don't want nobody that nobody sent."

Experienced organizers teach members and leaders how politics and power can also affect *appointed* officials, who have been thought by some colleagues to be immune to social action. I came to better understand the possibilities during a one-to-one in the office of a small-city planning director. He told me that a group of a half-dozen residents had recently met with him to demand that he support their position on some issue. He added, candidly, that he was cordial but ignored their demands because he doesn't jump up for a half-dozen aggrieved residents. He also said that he's genuinely concerned about the well-being of the city and its residents, so when a grassroots organization like ours invites him to an evening meeting for which they expect several hundred to attend, he goes and listens carefully. He knows they wouldn't come to a week-night meeting if not seriously concerned about a problem. He pays attention and responds not only because he cares about their well-being but because, if he doesn't go to the meeting and commit to dealing with the problem, it won't be long before he gets a call from the president of the city council, demanding to know, "What's going on down there in planning? Why haven't you taken care of this problem? That's what we pay you for! At the council meeting last night we were made to look like apathetic idiots to all the media! So fix it!" The planning director added in a low-key voice, "I don't like to get those calls."

Perhaps, one of the most important organizer assets is the know-how to assess the power of one's own organization and that of potential opposition. There are myriad considerations, far too many to review here; but minimally it requires gathering intelligence and information (I & I), cool-headed analysis, and the advice of more experienced organizers and consultants.

Such assessments make numerous action-principles accessible. For example, knowing the experience of decision-makers, it's possible to go outside of it when confronting them. When the largest crowds that had confronted the mayors of two Orange County cities was 250 in their council chambers, our objective was to get a meeting with them in an auditorium that seated 2500 and fill it to SRO. When we did that, it produced an obviously unnerving, mind-bending impression on them as they first glimpsed what must have seemed an extraordinarily large crowd of demanding citizens, most of whom were "respectable" members of mainline churches. It earned us a seat at the table where decisions on our issues were being made.

S/he understands issue development:

Base-building organizing, unlike other forms of CO that emphasize mass mobilizations, protests and demonstrations, generates issues from the bottom up. Whatever the organizer's ideology or preconceived ideas of issues that should be taken up by the organization, issue development in this genre of CO is understood by members, leaders, and staff to be organically driven by the demos.

The organizer needs to understand and competently work the method. It begins when individuals who share social space—in a neighborhood, faith community, or workplace—become conscious of a *condition* that causes them to suffer injury or injustice, such as residents being charged with crimes reported to have occurred *after* the police were called and arrived. The organizer's initial one-to-ones may prompt broader awareness of the condition, which becomes defined as a *problem* when the residents informally begin to talk with one another about the situation and how it affects them, when it becomes their shared concern.

When key leaders in the neighborhood organization get together to consider what they might do about the problem of rogue police, the organizer's role is to pose questions to help them think through their next steps. Initial questions might be: Do you think it's worthwhile to see how many residents in the neighborhood might want to do something about the problem? How could you confirm that? What options do you have and which do you think might work best?

As the organization's members and leaders confirm that police misconduct is a widely shared concern, they may learn that it has led to the injury of innocent residents, false arrests, distrust and disuse of the police, and expensive lawsuits against the city. They can then begin to question who's responsible to correct the poor police performance and to consider what they can do about it. At that point, the organizer helps the leaders prepare for research actions with experts and decision-makers who can help them to understand the problem and options to tackle it.

As their research progresses, they should be able to identify the "causes and cures" that will ensure the greatest organizational mileage. They will also need to identify the constituencies and decision-makers who are likely to support or oppose them. At this point they can begin to cut the *issue*, which will define the pivotal question, the answer to which resolves the problem. It will also bring to light the players in the action field who support and oppose the organization's proposed solution to the problem. The issue, framed as text in a press release, might be: "Will councilman Fnork [the swing voter on the council] stand with the people and vote to establish a civilian police commission to ensure accountability for the wrongdoing of the city's police officers or will he continue to hide behind the claim that the city already has a great police force?" Having cut the issue, the members and leaders of the neighborhood organization may feel ready to go into action.

But a competent organizer will ask them to assess their political strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the

councilman, and to consider alternative action strategies, such as reaching out to other grassroots organizations in low-income and working-class neighborhoods in the councilman's district, to learn about their experience with the police and to ask if they would join an alliance that could have more impact on him and the city council. They would probably describe to other residents how they had become aware of the condition, how they had talked together and discovered it to be a widely shared problem, how they had looked at the criteria for defining issues and, finally, how they had done their own research that led them to define the issue.

S/he moves actions and campaigns:

The organizer should understand that ideally our organizations serve primarily to launch campaigns and actions that resolve issues in ways that improve people's lives both materially and spiritually. It's important not only that police misconduct no longer subjects members of the public to physical injury and false arrest, but also that citizens in their day-to-day lives are free of the fear that, at any moment, and without just cause, police, paid with their taxes, will upend their lives or their children's with harassment, false charges, or violence.

The organizer should have done the groundwork to be confident that the organizing will be successful. But inexperienced leaders and members may imagine that bad things will happen to them, such as physical injury, arrest, public identification as a "radical," job loss, etc., if they're involved in social action. The organizer should not try to talk people out of their fears but instead rely on an empowering alternative. The method is to teach leaders and members to ask themselves the same questions we organizers ask ourselves to reach our conclusions about how to deal with the challenges confronting our organizations.

In our tax relief campaign for seniors, we wanted the support of our state senator, but our calls to arrange a meeting went unanswered. If, as the organizer, I had proposed that we stage even a small-scale protest, our leaders would have rejected the idea as too radical. Instead, I asked them what their options were. They proposed making more phone calls to the senator, writing a letter to him, starting a petition, and asking the local newspaper to cover the story. But one of the leaders said they could go to the senator's office and wait until he came out and agreed to talk with them—and that was their preferred approach. I asked, what if he refuses to come out? Another person said they should be prepared to wait indefinitely—and everyone agreed. Then someone asked, what if they call the police and have us arrested for trespassing? Several people spoke up then, saying they had a right to meet with their representatives, and they wanted to insist on that right, even if it got them arrested. More talk convinced them it would only be a misdemeanor and they would be released on their own recognizance. So that's what they decided to do. Relying on their own wits and self-confidence, without any undesirable dependency on their organizer, they had thoughtfully talked out their concerns and decided to confront

their senator directly, which eventually resulted in gaining his support.

Such discussions can also go haywire, leading to failures of one kind or another. But it's not the job of the organizer to prevent that possibility at all costs. Instead, it's to help them use all their personal and organizational resources effectively and, when they don't, or if they fail for other reasons, to help them learn important principles and methods from the experience through rigorous evaluation—because they will never learn to succeed for themselves as long as their organizer succeeds for them.

S/he shows commitment in practice:

We value an organizer's commitment, as shown by a spirited attitude and behavior, because often it reveals one who values learning from every source and teaching at every opportunity. Such commitment or the lack of it can have a significant effect on creating productive organizational culture, which in turn can dramatically improve organizational performance.

Organizers who look for what needs to be done and do it, in contrast to others who, when unoccupied, wait to be assigned a job, make themselves indispensable. Those who are ready, willing, and able to work when called upon for whatever needs to be done, add to organizational momentum. And those who do not have a proprietary attitude about their own knowledge and skills but instead share what they know with others, become informal educators and trainers.

S/he self-manages morale and energy:

There are many signs when organizers are not self-managing their own morale and energy. It's disheartening when an organizer comes to work with a hangover or exhausted. Individuals who are wedded to unhealthy lifestyles—drinking and drugging, eating toxic foods, squandering money, etc.—tend not to meet the demands of professional CO reliably.

Another aspect of self-management is how we handle personal rejection, which may come unexpectedly and be undeserved. Decades ago, Mike Miller wrote: "My own ego for organizing 'on the ground' is now too fragile to take its continuing rejection which is why I prefer to work with people I've known for a longer period and/or people who clearly want to know what I may have to offer them." Undoubtedly, CO requires a thick skin; but our being rejected doesn't hold a candle to what IRS examiners, lawyers, and used car salespeople endure. Regardless of the pain one feels, the standard of practice demands that we cool down our reactions, maintain our emotional balance, and learn how to avoid or minimize our disabling feelings of rejection.

When engaged in political action, where the stakes often prompt our opponents to morally and ethically outrageous behavior, organizers are confronted by crises of every variety. Sad to say, the reactions to crisis, even by those who should know better, include losing one's head, wanting to "wait and see" what will happen next, failing to act out of fear of attacks, focusing single-mindedly on who's at fault for the crisis, and claiming

without analysis that it's only necessary to do more of what we've been doing and do it better. These reactions make organizers contributors to the crisis and fail to unify members and leaders in common understanding and action.

The well-balanced organizer in such situations will not promote a personal point of view or recommendation for action. The organizer will instead calmly ask: What information and intelligence do we have? What options for action do we have? Which might be the most effective? Do we have the necessary resources?

Organizers should remove themselves from direct responsibility for resolving a crisis, because their misguided leadership has the effect of disrespecting, infantilizing, and undermining leaders. The organizer's job is to teach the members and leaders not to become invested in their personal ideas of what's to be done but to focus on their working together as a team to multiply their alternatives for action, together analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of each, to ensure they're unified when they decide to act.

S/he has physical and spiritual stamina:

The *physical* demands of base-building CO may at times include working long hours—from eight or nine in the morning until eight or nine at night and on weekends—with significant amounts of driving and walking for meetings, doorknocking, and one-to-ones. We want to weed out those who have the desire but not the physical stamina for the job, or who lack commitment to build the needed stamina by changing their lifestyle.

Some would-be organizers lack *spiritual* stamina for the job. An amusing example was a young woman at a party who asked about my work. I answered, “community organizing.” She said that she too had been a community organizer but “it didn't work.” She explained that she had worked as an organizer for three months but that it wasn't possible to make any meaningful changes in people's lives with community organizing, so she moved on to public relations work. It seems she didn't have the faith or the spirit to stick with CO for more than three months.

S/he learns from mistakes:

Organizers shouldn't be expected to be mistake-free in their work, but they should be expected to avoid repeating their mistakes. One of the hallmarks of a professional is unstinting commitment to one's own growth in knowledge and skill. Thus we expect organizers who make a mistake to take the initiative to report the mistake to others, to analyze the circumstances of the mistake, and to seek whatever support, training, and supervision is needed to avoid repeating the mistake in the future.

Parenthetically, when a supervisor explains the consequences for an organizer's failure to make needed improvements, it's helpful to avoid soft-soaping the situation or using harsh language that triggers the organizer's anxiety. Ideally, we want to convey the consequences of failure in a neutral tone of voice, and then follow up with as much support as possible.

S/he masters methodologies:

To meet the minimum requirements as a professional base-building organizer entails mastery of several basic methodologies, including one-to-one meetings to recruit new members; conducting workshops; role-playing to prepare for research actions, actions, and negotiations; planning, managing, and following up on meetings of members and leaders; and organizing actions and campaigns (that are basically planned and supervised by more experienced project directors and lead organizers).

DESIRABLE PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

We define performance characteristics here as *desirable* because their mastery fulfills many of the requirements for promotion to lead organizer. In addition to the abilities noted above, these include the know-how to build teams and healthy team culture, to plan and supervise workshops, major actions, campaigns, and negotiations, to educate and train other organizers, and to conduct in-depth evaluations of performance. Withal, a lead organizer must have a strong sense of personal responsibility for the outcomes of the organizing.

S/he is self-initiating and directing:

A competent lead organizer adds little to the supervision overhead costs of a project. Given an assignment—say, a voter registration drive—a lead organizer shows uncommon initiative and judgment in planning, carrying out, and evaluating the campaign.

A lead organizer is self-reliant and largely self-directing but nevertheless reports weekly plans and outcomes to the project's senior staff and leaders, and proactively seeks the feedback and support of other staff, leaders, trainers, and consultants.

An effective lead organizer deserves much of the credit for the success of the organizing, but the best of these professionals credit everyone else for their organization's accomplishments, downplaying their own importance as they praise others who are growing into leadership roles through their mentoring.

S/he thinks and acts strategically:

A lead organizer makes thinking and acting strategically habitual. It's not an occasional activity but an internalized inclination to continuously assess the resources of one's own organization and others in the action field, focusing on their clarity of mission, their ideologies and definitions of reality, their depth of broad-based, experienced leadership, their allies and opponents, their numbers of mobilized members in past actions, their turnover of staff, their swelling or waning of budget, and their ability to wage increasingly far-reaching campaigns.

When considering actions and campaigns, the strategically minded lead organizer looks to reliable sources of intelligence and information about potentially targeted decision-makers, recognizing the danger of contingency confusion in the absence of I & I—that is, drawing mis-

taken conclusions about the contingencies of opponents' behavior, and, consequently, reaching mistaken conclusions about their strength or weakness.

The strategic-thinking lead organizer, calculating from solid evidence, isn't sidetracked by ideological rhetoric or the claimed power of political, economic, or social theory or philosophy.

S/he sets and meets goals:

While the leaders and members of our organizations have their roles in setting and meeting overall organization goals, lead organizers, assigned tasks as professionals, such as an organizing drive in a neighborhood or an issue campaign that brings together multiple faith communities, must map out all the necessary aspects of their assignments and then set and meet their own daily, weekly, and monthly goals.

This is not a solo responsibility. In a well-managed organizing project, staff meetings at the beginning of every week will review each organizer's plans for the week, and at the end of every week will review the outcomes of those plans. Even though in a physical sense a lead organizer may be working independently, the planning for and evaluation of the organizer's work becomes a team effort, drawing on the experience and know-how of the entire staff.

No small part of successfully meeting the goals we set for ourselves involves our level of inspiration, faith and hope. Whatever a lead organizer's other resources might be, the support, encouragement, and esprit de corps of building a well-oiled organizing team that's working to empower the powerless can play a significant role in maintaining morale.

S/he creatively develops and uses action tactics:

Lead organizers teach that, tactically, we should always go outside the experience of our opponents and always stay within the experience of our members and constituency. Both of these rules were used effectively by a neighborhood group fighting to keep their elementary school open, in response to their Board of Education's plan to "economize" by closing it. The parents, along with other residents from their neighborhood who valued the school as a community center, had convinced the Board to have one of their committees hold an evening public meeting at the school to hear testimony for and against the closure.

I was asked to meet with the parents to help them organize to save their school. In our first meeting, the parents said they were sure that the Board would ignore the majority public opinion against closure at the public meeting and, nonetheless, publicize the claim that they had listened to both sides and decided that closure would be in the "overall public interest"—because the Board had already released a report recommending closure. My role was to raise questions that would encourage them to consider strategic and tactical options. They decided their best hope to throw a monkey-wrench into the Board's anticipated decision was to turn out the media in large numbers to the public meeting and to shift their

focus from the Board members' economic arguments to the parents' demands for justice.

During their talk about ways to do that, one of the parents exclaimed, "I'd like to flush that Board report down the toilet." When I asked how they felt about that image, they said it was wonderful—exactly how they felt about the report because it was so one-sided and unfair. So they decided to find an unused toilet, a piece of black cloth, and a child's wagon on which to drape the cloth and mount the toilet. Their plan was to bring the toilet into the auditorium with fanfare at the point in the meeting (according to an agenda already distributed by the Board), when the Board report would be presented, presumably as a *fait accompli*. The leaders of the parents' contingent would enter the auditorium from the rear, pulling the wagon with the toilet mounted on it, yelling "this is where we want to put your report." When they would reach the stage, one of them would, with great ceremony, drop a sheaf of papers titled "BOARD REPORT" into the toilet.

The humorous tactic discombobulated the Board committee on the stage. They tried to regain control of the meeting, but the local TV and print-press reporters who were present were amused and engaged by the tactic. They turned their attention from the Board committee to the neighborhood group, asking who they were, why they were protesting, and what they wanted from the Board. The TV news coverage that night and the media coverage the next day, made for a surprisingly easy win, which was a quick decision by the Board for at least a one-year shelving of their plan to close the school.

S/he defines roles and directs people into them:

Sometimes during actions and campaigns, leaders and members may become flummoxed by events and ask their organizer, "What should we do?" The lead organizer's reaction should not rely on conventionally defined positions, roles, and formal responsibilities within the organization. Instead, he or she should raise analytical questions that will help the leaders to define their objectives, clarify what needs to be done to achieve them, define the roles that need to be filled, and identify the members who would benefit most from leadership development. If the situation calls for an instantaneous response, the lead organizer should ask the senior leader(s), what do *you* think we should do? If in the unlikely event they're stumped and there is even a slight threat to life or limb, the organizer should not hesitate to assert leadership.

The lead organizer teaches that such situations offer a chance not only to achieve outcomes that will benefit the organization's members and constituents but that will also increase the number and capabilities of the organization's leaders. Organizers should understand and take every opportunity to ensure that everyone in the organization understands that the foundational goal and the primary method of base-building community organizing is leadership development.

S/he knows rules of action and inaction:

Organizers must know when *not* to act. Ironically, non-action is most critical when leaders or members seem about to make a mistake. Organizers may think they know the best decision or action in a particular situation, which is not necessarily true. They may also fail to consider when it's best to allow others to make mistakes and learn from them, not calculating the ultimate costs of preventing them from doing so by playing staff-fixer or know-it-all. The lead organizer teaches that the need for intensive leadership development in all our organizations is sidetracked when organizers take unacknowledged leadership by using their credentials and influence to make decisions that short-circuit the growth of members as leaders.

Lead organizers teach that, given our experience, the *action*-rule for organizers, as noted above, is to know the strategic, tactical, managerial, and administrative challenges and questions facing the organization, and to raise them in a timely way with the appropriate leaders. This posture does not preclude supporting members and leaders in other ways. The organizer's basic job includes communicating our knowledge and skill to our members and leaders, but purposefully minimizing what we do for them so they can learn to do for themselves—in other words, making ourselves dispensable.

We know from experience that a group of “ordinary” citizens, once they have learned the facts, the analytical questions, and democratic decision-making, make better decisions than their organizers—which is understandable because their combined intelligence is far greater and because they're the ones who live with the consequences of the decisions.

S/he takes responsibility for time management:

Beyond people and funding, *time* often turns out to be our organizations' most valuable “asset.” Often, we have a limited window of time to access the people and funding that allows us to mount successful campaigns. And whether our organizations meet the demands of limited time, in turn, often depends on how lead organizers manage their time.

Organizers in leadership roles, including project direction, team leadership, training, and supervision, should model efficiency in the management of their time. We expect them to delegate to others what others can learn to do. We expect them to accurately calculate the time needed for planning and preparation before meetings, actions, negotiations, etc.

S/he masters methodologies:

The evaluation of lead organizers should include their ability to master more complex methodologies, such as negotiations, media/press management, research, and fundraising, which are not single events but major phases of organizing. Mastery of these methodologies includes the challenge of teaching them to members and leaders.

Moreover, the preparation of others for their roles is not limited to teaching recipe knowledge (like learning

how to combine specified ingredients to produce a desirable dish) but includes out-of-the-box situations and role-play exercises that teach how to conceptualize a response to an unexpected challenge or threat, analyzing its elements and drawing on available resources to define a solution strategy and related tactics.

For example, the instinctive approach of novice organizers and leaders to the circumstances that arise in negotiations with decision-makers may prompt them to argue the advantages of their proposals, trying to talk the opposition into submission. They may give little thought to the relative power positions of the parties, their values, ideologies, and interests, the demands of their constituents and overall needs in the negotiations. But that kind of information is essential to devise a successful negotiating strategy and tactics, and it's virtually all learned not by arguing one's own position but by asking questions and listening carefully to the answers—for which they need to be prepped by the lead organizer, primarily by role-playing and Socratic questioning. The lead organizer must not only manage a team effort but oversee the training and education of each team member and provide individualized supervision and support.

It's also the responsibility of lead organizers to carry out in-depth evaluations of meetings, actions, negotiations, campaigns, etc., teaching that ability to others as well, as one of their highest priorities; because, regardless of any instance of organizational success or failure, the evaluations are fecund opportunities for *organizational learning*. This practice can create a culture of unified, socially constructed meanings among members and leaders.

For instance, when we bring together leaders after they have confronted a decision-maker, the social construction of their shared reality is led by the organizer who helps them to understand their previous social experience as often biased against their interests and helps them to create new ideological realities that serve their commonweal. It requires them to keep track of and retell organizational history, identify potential causes of important events, and consider which provide the most organizational mileage. The process shatters the ideological meanings of opponents and validates their own meanings, which boost the movement and progress of their organization. It's simpler in practice than it sounds.

The organizer asks those who stay for an evaluation to form their chairs in a circle. They go around the circle and briefly describe one or two *facts* of what happened during the action, such as who came with the decision-maker, who said what, what was the affect of the key players (e.g., relaxed, angry, arrogant, etc.)—taking not more than 30 seconds each. As each person listens to all those who describe the evolving “facts,” a consensus definition begins to take shape; so that by the last individuals in the circle, the so-called facts are “objectified,” and virtually everyone agrees with them. Then they go around the circle again, but this time each person very briefly describes the *meaning* of what happened. Did we win or lose, did we make more allies or opponents, did we demonstrate competence or incompetence, etc.? Here

the participants conclude whether the decision-maker's comments showed if she's potentially an ally or an opponent, whether her aide is covertly critical of the government's policies, who was lying and who was telling the truth, etc. By the time we reach the end of the circle, each person subscribes to their shared meanings of the event—what everyone comes to regard as “reality.”

This construction of a shared, unified social reality is the lead-in to more substantive discussion of our mistakes in the action, what we learned about our opponents, who the MVPs were on both sides, how we could be better prepared in the future, and next steps. The newly constructed social reality serves as a unifying base on which to define future issues and develop campaign strategies and tactics.

His/her written expression is clear and concise:

My advice to organizers who lack the ability to communicate in writing on a professional level has been that, regardless of the reason—say, one went to low-quality schools, had alcoholic parents and a horrible childhood, came to the country as a child and had to work to support the family, was caught up in teen drinking and/or drug-ging, whatever—each of us adults must take responsibility for ourselves and our shortcomings. The good news is that there are unlimited resources, virtually all free or very low-cost, available to help us learn how to write.

The teachers can be our own family members. I was a high-school dropout with no writing skills when I started college. The first semester's requirement to take English composition was daunting and inescapable. I called my cousin who was two years ahead of me in college. He looked at the assignment, asked me what I wanted to say in the composition, and told me to write a sentence to that effect, which I did. We were off and running with one sentence after another, getting corrections and suggestions—learning to write word by word, sentence by sentence, punctuation mark by punctuation mark, paragraph by paragraph.

My cousin helped me and I've helped others, and virtually every community college has a remedial writing program available by extension enrollment to members of the public.

What we don't do is ignore or make excuses for poor writing skills. Professional organizers, especially in leadership roles, must be able to write convincing grant applications, training documents, agendas and reports. We don't assign one staff member to carry the water of another.

His/her oral expression is clear and well thought out:

Although the bread and butter of base-building organizing is the one-to-one, not speech-making before larger audiences, the ability to present new and complex ideas to a range of people in small groups, such as committee meetings and housemeetings, is indispensable to base-building organizers. The lead organizer teaches this skill to others.

In addition to careful preparation of remarks and readiness to answer questions that may be raised when talking to a group, the organizer should learn to scan the participants' affect and posture to recognize those who may have *unasked* questions, which nonetheless need to be answered. This aspect of organizers' work requires socio-emotional competence as well as language skills. Knowing what's what is important, but knowing what to say, who to say it to, when to say it, and how to say it, is another matter entirely. It requires an ability to remain unrattled by “dead air” and deadpan expressions, and the wherewithal to empathetically read one's listener(s).

S/he has a sense of humor:

The abiding principle of humor in organizing to be taught by the lead organizer is that humorless people are a drag. They're a downer to be around and they literally drag down the organization.

The necessity for humor in professional practice is proportional to the costs and risks of the mission of one's organization. Combat soldiers would find it ludicrous if told that the seriousness of their job demands that humor be stifled; but I've heard as much from leaders and organizers who thought that humor was out of place at a formal meeting or action. Humorless organizers and leaders often discourage participation because of their dour and dreary approach to the work. On the contrary, all our organizing has a place for humor, because humor helps to make activity that can be exhausting, punishing, and frightening bearable, sometimes even enjoyable. Perhaps, the most entertaining organizer-humorist of our era was Tim Sampson (1935-2001), who had a talent for writing politicized, satirical lyrics to sing with popular tunes during actions, which made them much more fun and probably increased turnout.

On the other hand, the lead organizer builds organizational culture that openly rejects humor which purposely or inadvertently dehumanizes others, including the opposition, camouflages bigoted opinions, belittles the mission of our organization, ridicules our values, principles, and practices, or denigrates the hopes and fears of the people we're working to empower. Sad to say, I've heard all those misguided examples of humor over the years.

S/he shows appropriate leadership at all levels:

Leadership by a base-building lead organizer differs from that of members and leaders. The lead organizer focuses mostly on process rather than product, on the means and methods to consider questions and make decisions rather than the specifics of the decisions and their outcomes. It's the job of the members and leaders to decide on *instrumental objectives*, such as winning a campaign for the affordable housing they need. The lead organizer is focused on advancing their capability for action research, strategizing, democratic decision-making, media relations, actions, negotiations, fundraising, etc.—all of which form the basis of a successful campaign.

In addition to asking questions, the lead organizer should consciously model desirable behavior, always aware that modeling works both intentionally and unintentionally. Losing one's temper as a lead organizer, for example, unwittingly sets the stage for others to abandon their self-control. So it's not just a bad look; it's bad modeling, with potentially far-reaching consequences.

The lead organizer should mostly stand aside from the organization's internal fray of differing opinions and, instead, promote conditions that enable constructive resolution of disputes and conflicts, thus fostering shared realities which unify and strengthen the organization.

The lead organizer should also teach staff not to become triangulated or designated as a "fixer" by those engaged in internal organizational disputes. Staff organizers should learn to shun the role of arbitrator or mediator in such conflicts. If the conflict can be satisfied by existing organization policy or procedure, it's brought to bear by the senior leadership. If such policy or procedure is lacking, the insufficiency is handed off to the appropriate committee within the organization to rectify. If the matter is entirely personal between individuals, the organizer may direct them to meet face-to-face to work out their differences and may assist them by inviting one or two leaders to be present as disinterested observers and referees when they meet.

In those rare instances when the lead organizer believes that failing to act directly could doom the organization, the correct response is to raise that concern immediately with any accessible leaders. Rather than arguing for a position or action, even in an existential crisis, the appropriate role ensures that, insofar as possible, discussion and decision-making will be fair, that all relevant facts and arguments will be heard, and that the potential consequences of any possible decision will be fully considered. The rule, taught by Burt Housman (1927-2019), is that it's the organizer's job to multiply alternatives. This includes the lead organizer who fosters the conditions that will prime others to do so as well.

S/he is a non-ideologue:

Base-building organizing, which is a directly democratic process, necessarily works as a non-ideological form of social-change practice—with one exception, which has been articulated in numerous ways but generally has been regarded as "Jeffersonian."

Jefferson thought that the power of the state should not be concentrated in a national government but that it should instead be divided between national, state, and local governments. Moreover, he proposed that the local governments should be anchored in directly democratic assemblies in which the people govern themselves. He recommended that the people should have the right to prevent higher governments and private wealth (e.g., corporations now) from "infringing on their liberties." He believed that the rights to be respected by the state were God-given—not subject to weakening by the state—although he unreservedly favored "a wall of separation between Church and State."

Jefferson also believed that public education, a free press, and the ability of the citizenry to call to account the forces of institutional corruption, which he associated with aristocrats and would-be tyrants over the people, were all required to ensure the continuation of a republic that serves the commonweal.

We expect lead organizers and other senior BBCO staff to recognize Jeffersonianism as our only ideology because its essence is to empower the powerless directly, which is fundamental to our dedicated mission and the most reliable means to end corruption and serve the commonweal.

EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

We expect *exceptional* performance from organizers who manage projects or desire to do so. In our experience, the most effective managers in faith-based organizing, where advanced religious education can be a significant asset, not only have undergraduate degrees but professional ones as well.

S/he knows and uses community organizing theory:

Organizers can't fully make sense of their day-to-day experience without placing it in a larger conceptual framework, which is the role of theory.

In addition to the moral and ethical guidance of our faith traditions, we rely on a "Unified Community Organizing Theory" which is based on social science. It's a unified *practice* theory, which integrates empirically grounded theories of social learning, social exchange, social construction of reality, and social development. It allows an organizer to see, prepare for, and influence that which is not visible but which inevitably will be encountered. The theory defines the *field of action* in which our organizing takes place, and the main players and the forces that govern their actions. It allows us to understand why things have happened in the past, why they're happening now, and how to make them happen in the future by defining roles for our day-to-day work in the action field.

The usefulness of practice theory in BBCO is realized by internalizing those roles. That requires (a) studying the theory sufficiently to understand and mentally incorporate the concepts into one's view of the world, and (b) then using the theory by acting on the theoretical knowledge. The idea is suggested by a Buddhist teaching: "To *know* and not to *do*, is *not* really to know."

While many other theoretical ideas may be useful, we evaluate staff leaders on their use of unified CO practice theory as the lens through which they see and interact with the field of action because, in effect, it takes off our blinders and gives us a broadly based map to navigate the world in which we live and work. It's the project director's job to ensure that the entire staff understands and can use the unified practice theory.

S/he knows own strengths and weaknesses:

As our professional responsibilities and authority increase in scope and effects, it becomes increasingly important that we know, or better yet, remediate, our own weaknesses and help others to overcome theirs, so to better exercise our collective strength.

Weaknesses may be professional or personal—for example, a failure to improve one-to-one performance or drinking too much, too often. The “weakness” may be psychological or emotional. It may be based on intellectual or ideological misunderstandings. In any case, whether the subject is oneself or others, it’s grist for the project manager’s mill.

S/he accurately reads the character of others:

Exceptional performance of top staff leaders depends fundamentally on their ability to read the character of others, because titles and job descriptions often tell us little about the moral and ethical values or their absence that account for the behavior of the people we encounter in the action field. And that skill must also be taught to staff and leaders, because CO beginners tend to be misled by the self-descriptions of potential adversaries and allies. They need the ability to probe below the surface to discern character which drives behavior.

For example, when I was working under the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer of L.A. County, a time of my wet-behind-the-ears CO, I was assigned to convene and chair a group to recommend to the Board of Supervisors, the replacement of Olive View Hospital, which had been damaged beyond repair in the 1971 earthquake. About 15 “community members” attended the dozen meetings I staffed. After much deliberation, they recommended an option supported by most experts, which was to provide coverage for the Valley not with one multistory building inaccessible to most residents but three kinds of facilities: a central center that would care for the most serious and costly medical conditions by specialists using the most advanced equipment; two or three more accessible regional centers that would deal with serious medical conditions by regular physicians; and numerous neighborhood offices staffed by nurse practitioners who would deal with minor medical issues, referrals to more advanced care, and public health education. Everyone was pleased with the report and they sent it to my boss.

A few days later, as I was walking past the open door of his office, I saw him sitting at his desk reading the report. I stopped and asked what he thought of it. Without hesitation, he laughed, reached over to his trash can, and dropped the report in it. I asked him what he planned to recommend to replace the hospital. Without missing a beat, he said, “We’ve already given a contract to an architectural-engineering firm to replace the building using the same basic design.”

The intense feelings of betrayal experienced by the committee members hardly compared to my own remorse for naïvely leading them down a primrose path, believing in the good faith of the CAO. I didn’t know enough then to ask myself why the CAO would assign

such responsibility to a low-level staffer rather than a professional hospital facilities planner, or to see that the citizens committee was a PR exercise for the CAO. It taught me that the ability to analyze both the institutional and the personal character and interests of others—to always look at the world through their eyes—is invaluable when dealing with other players in the action field.

S/he is actively invested in own professional growth:

Experience has taught me to value “learners” out of proportion to their experience. It doesn’t take long, rarely more than a year or two, to discover that the learner who arrived with little experience but energetic desire to keep learning, breezed past many experienced organizers who took too much pride in what they had already learned. So it makes sense to expect that project directors and other senior staff will model this characteristic.

What they demonstrate for others is that the organizer who wants to grow professionally observes everything and asks a lot of questions of senior staff, consultants, and other organizers, listening analytically to their answers. This organizer volunteers or takes the initiative to do whatever job needs to be done, with no embarrassment when asking for help to do the job competently. The organizer committed to growing professionally reads movement history, analyses of government and corporate structures and operations, political and economic theories, studies of human behavior, and participant and scholarly accounts of base-building organizing.

A project director should teach that the organizer who wants to grow professionally never stands still in the organization. This individual is always learning, moving laterally or upward, and contributing more and more to the analyses and action plans of the organization—before long, moving into a position of leadership. The driving principle is that the most important activities of existing leaders have the effect of widening and deepening the circle of leaders.

S/he actively supports development of the profession:

As a professional movement, the scattered initiatives of BBCO pale by comparison to the unity of the last century’s base-built labor movement, women’s suffrage movement, and civil rights movement at their height, all of which had historic national impact, despite their internal differences and disputes.

The most appalling demonstration of BBCO dereliction has been the absence of a unified nationwide response to the right-wing anti-masking, anti-vaccination campaign, which has probably cost hundreds of thousands of lives and remains a major factor in the nation’s inability to end the pandemic for the millions of immunocompromised and elderly, especially those with comorbidities, which requires the same level of herd immunity we have achieved with several other communicable diseases. Hundreds of base-building organizers and thousands of leaders in their organizations have failed to use their intelligence and initiative to get themselves

together into an organized, coherent national movement to take on the death-dealing COVID enablers.

One credible explanation of this inadequacy is that CO disdains *professional education* in favor of short-term *job training*. Professional education reaches beyond basic principles, methods, and lessons from past actions, campaigns, negotiations, etc. to encompass the study of history, social movements, biographies, national development, democratic theory and institutions, public administration, and unified practice theory. A professional education in BBCO can instill analytical, conceptual, and creative thinking and problem-solving to meet changing conditions and the unknown challenges they present. Moreover, it can produce organizers sufficiently educated and visionary to help leaders produce compelling strategic moral visions that inspire, unify, and mobilize large BBCO constituencies on national issues.

But BBCO does not have an active group of senior organizers who support the advancement of the profession by introducing professional-level education, which is a hallmark of almost all other practice professions, including accounting, architecture, journalism, law, medicine, religion, social work, etc. Although CO is a young profession, there is no excuse for this shortcoming. So we expect senior staff to support advanced professional education for community organizers.

S/he articulates a strategic moral vision:

Although the director of an organizing project is unlikely to be the author of the strategic moral vision that guides every dimension of the organizing, the director must be thoroughly familiar with that vision and committed to it in practice, both strategically and spiritually.

Practically, the project director should articulate the vision, whenever and wherever appropriate. He or she should promote policies and practices that are prompted by the vision, should incorporate it into the organization's culture, say as a benchmark in evaluations, and should model behavior that honors and directly supports the vision, especially for leaders and staff.

The desired effect is that it's apparent to everyone that the values, principles, objectives, and methods of the organization are driven by a strategic *moral* vision, one that accords with six shared values of the Abrahamic religions—namely: *righteousness*, which is the foundation of truth; *truth*, which is the foundation of justice; *justice*, which is the foundation of freedom; *freedom*, which is the foundation of peace; and *peace*, which is the foundation of compassion—all of which, in all our organizing, we work to uphold as the life-sustaining mission of humankind.

* Although this version of the article is complete, it will be published in two parts in *Social Policy*, with the second part appearing in the Summer 2023 edition.

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