

Poverty Scholars Program Strategic Dialogue #1
Re-Igniting the Poor People's Campaign:
Finishing the Unfinished Business of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King
September 18-21, 2008

ARTS OF LEADERSHIP: NEW STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZING

Saturday, September 20, 2008, 2 – 5pm

Introduction: The building of a broad social movement to end poverty led by the poor requires scholarship. Such scholarship must be based upon and emerge from the significant lessons of our experience (historical and contemporary).

Panel I: Individual Lessons

Panelists: Maureen Taylor, Colleen Wessel-McCoy, Nijmie Dzurinko, Willie Baptist

Facilitator: Alix Webb

Themes: (10 minutes each, 4 panelists)

How does your life experience and current organizational affiliation(s) suggest:

- the necessity of moving from an individual front of struggle to building a broader movement (and the challenges associated with this)
- that new times require new strategy/tactics

Small Group Discussion Questions: (30 minutes)

- What interested you most in the presentations?
- What questions did the presentations raise?
- How does your own experience relate to the presentations?

Panel II: Organizational Lessons

Panel A Panelists: Direct Action Welfare Group, Domestic Workers United, Philadelphia Student Union

(Panelists get 10 minutes each. Q/A for 20 minutes.)

Facilitator: Phil Wider

Panel B Panelists: Unified Taxi Workers Alliance-PA, Teen Direct Action Welfare Group, Tompkins County Workers Center, Restaurant Opportunity Center - NY

(Panelists get 10 minutes each. Q/A for remaining time.)

Facilitator: Joe Strife

Themes:

- How does your group's experience speak to the two strategic concepts and supporting quotes (see attached)?
- What are the major lessons from your group's organizing approach that you want to share?

Group Discussion Questions: (30 minutes)

- How does your group's experience shed light on the two strategic concepts?
- What other major lessons does your group have to share?

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Strategic Concepts and Supporting Quotes

1. Building a broad movement to end poverty led by the poor as an organized force united across color lines.

“The dispossessed of this nation—the poor, both white and Negro—live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize . . . against the injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty. There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life...”

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

2. “You only get what you are organized to take”

“At the banquet table of Nature there are no reserved seats, you get what you can take and you keep what you can hold. If you can't take anything, you won't get anything; and if you can't hold any thing, you won't keep anything. And you can't take anything without organization.”

---A Philip Randolph

“Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.”

---Frederick Douglas

Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

---Martin Luther King, Jr.