A Mile High Profile:
An Analysis of Community Power Building for Self-Governance

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Summary of Case Study

Our history paints a picture of resistance against oppression from our ancestors. Frederick Douglass famously stated, "power concedes nothing without demand." The global pandemic of COVID-19 has illuminated the magnitude of exploitation and extraction of our communities. This is the opportune moment for reflection and transformation. Will the people living among the margins rise united and demand racial and economic justice?

Curious of how to maximize the resources of progressive efforts, I sought to study the dynamics of community power building for structural change among progressive spaces in Denver, Colorado. This case study outlines the qualitative research conducted to evaluate the community power-building efforts and capacity for revolutionary governance in Denver.

This case study entailed extensive qualitative research of the Denver movement building spaces. Thirty interviews were conducted with elected officials, community leaders, and coalition organizational leaders.

Using the framework of the core tenets of leftist governance, the capacity of community power to govern in partnership with elected officials in Denver is evaluated. Below are the key findings:

- Lack of Coalition to Build Power
- Lack Multi-Layers of Accountability
- Lackluster Leadership & Exercise of Power
- Lack of Long-Term Vision & Strategy

Stepping-Stones to Liberation:
Movement Building

- Communal Healing
- Long-Term Vision & Strategy
- Holistic, Trauma-Informed Organizing

Revolutionary Governance

- Bold Radicals, Scrappy Campaigns
- Power Analysis to Wield Power
- Layers of Community Accountability

"Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence; to alienate humans from their own decision-making is to change them into objects."
~ Paulo Freire

Movement Building for Leftist Co-Governance

Co-Governance is the ideal demonstration of political power. A community's capacity for governance with their elected officials is dependent on the strength of the movement building in propelling its leadership into government. The contention between marginalized and the powerholders must be sustained with an elaborate network of social justice leaders and organizations to channel the collective power of community. Investment in the leadership development, healing, and collective power of a coalition is imperative to effectively lead radical governance throughout all branches of government.

This report outlines a nuanced political analysis of the power-building and movement building efforts in Denver, Colorado. In this case study of the emerging Denver progressive movement, organizing and coalition-building efforts are analyzed to understand the capacity for a movement using a proposed framework for leftist governance. In extensive qualitative research, I interrogate the surge of liberal electoral victories to assess the capacity for revolutionary leadership. Co- governance is analyzed to extrapolate themes of leftist governance within the existing power structures to identify reformist and revolutionary governance in local and state government. The community power building efforts of Denver are evaluated to propose recommendations to build upon current strengths and be more strategic with resources, energy, and our leadership.

Fundamentals of Leftist Co-Governance

Operating within the current political economy of the United States, co-governance could be achieved by progressives. This report explores the possibilities of governance when progressive social movement organizations are in partnership with elected officials. The proposed framework[41] of a leftist co-governance is reflective of changing the hands of power, merely shifting the disguise of the existing power structure. This framework[1] is best coupled with elements of a participatory democracy, such as participatory budgeting and community-driven city planning. It is important to note there is not a silver bullet, rather fundamental principles of a leftist governance. The core tenets include:

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[1] The core tenets of a leftist governance were co-developed by the graduate student co-governance section of Professor Saru Jayaraman's Social Movements, Organizing, and Policy Change course (PubPol 192AC).

- Coalition of Social Movement Organizations
- Mechanisms of Accountability
- Operationalizing Power
- Spectrum of Governance Leading Toward a Long-Term Vision

Coalition of Social Movement Organizations:

At the core of leftist co-governance is a coalition of social movement organizations. These organizations vary among political structures—all of which are fundamental to power-building. Ideally, they are democratic and held accountable by their member base. These social justice organizations recruit candidates from within their movement-building space and co-lead once elected to public office.

Mechanisms of Accountability:

Effective leftist co-governance has layers of accountability for elected officials and social justice organizations to stay grounded in shared values. There must be layers of accountability for endorsed elected officials. The first line of accountability should be the moral compass of the elected official. Therefore, it is ideal for community-cultivated leaders with a justice conscious to arise from movement-building spaces. Extending outward, elected officials are held accountable by their peers in office, endorsing organizations and their community member base. Similarly, organizations need mechanisms of accountability that ensure democratic decision-making and legitimate community-driven decisions to channel effective community co-governance.

Operationalizing Power:

The effectiveness of how a progressive wields their power while in office is dependent on the electoral strengths of the coalition and the savviness of the official. The legislative power of the progressive is dependent on the vote count of the legislative body. If there is a majority, then power can be wielded to enact progressive legislation. However, if progressives lack a majority, there may be a minority voting bloc to contest the status quo. Similarly, an isolated radical can wield their power as a single vote to expand transparency and amplify community voice, despite the inability to pass legislation.

Spectrum of Governance Leading Toward a Long-Term Vision:

A community's capacity for co-governance may vary along a spectrum of leftist governance. However, all communities ought to strive towards a structure of self-governance and envision a new political economy rooted in collective liberation and intersectional justice.

Analysis of Movement Building for Co-Governance

Overview of Electoral Progress

In the wake of the election of Trump, Denver progressives have gained momentum to shift the pendulum to the left. Progressive were inspired to elevate their activism and invested in electoral organizing. Liberals have seen electoral victories in the greater metro Denver area across local government and gaining complete control of the state government. In 2017, the metro Denver area began to reap the benefits of political mobilization with the election of progressive Crystal Murillo (and two other liberal women) to Aurora City Council and the DPS school board election splitting with two education reform victors and two elected teacher union endorsed candidates. The momentum spilled into the 2018 midterm with a complete sweep of liberal candidates winning all statewide offices and progressives gaining notable local and state races—like RTD Board of Director Shontel Lewis and Rep.

Serena Gonzales- Gutierrez. Throughout 2019, true progressives won seats on the Aurora City Council in the election of Juan Mercano and Alison Coombs, Candi CdeBaca on the Denver City Council, and Tay Anderson on the DPS Board of Education. However, this wave of political victories has internal tension brewing between pragmatic incrementalists and bold radicals. Democratic primaries are contentious battles between the two camps of leaders. The conflict resumes in legislative bodies when progressive ideals are debated until the early hours of the morning. The tension between incrementalists and radicals translates into different styles of governance.

Qualitative Research

This project entailed extensive qualitative research of the Denver movement building spaces. Thirty interviews were conducted with elected officials, community leaders, and coalition organizational leaders. Specifically, nine elected officials, six coalition leaders, and fifteen community leaders were interviewed for this case study. All interviews were conducted and recorded on the virtual meeting platform Zoom. The interviews were approximately two hours, though it ranged from one hour to three hours depending on the familiarity with the person. The standard interview was approximately two hours and entailed 30 questions about their leadership, analysis of the impact of gentrification on political power, analysis of electoral progress, interpretation and implementation of co-governance, and concluded with community power and visionary questions. Oppositional interviews were cut in half for brevity. Elected officials and community leaders of great familiarity agreed to an extensive three-hour interview.

2 Hours

30 Questions

30 Interviews

The list of interviewees is disaggregated by category below. Interviewed elected officials are: Councilwoman Candi CdeBaca (Denver District 9), Councilwoman Jamie Torres (Denver District 3), Aurora Councilman Juan Mercano, RTD Board of Director Shontel Lewis (District B), DPS Board of Direct At-Large Tay Anderson, DPS Board of Director Jennifer Bacon (District 4), State Representative Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez, State Representative James Coleman, and Joseph Salazar (executive director of Colorado Rising and former state representative). Interviewed organizational leaders from coalition include: Jessica Chauvin (field strategist), Kristen Sidel (campaign strategist), Ashley Wheeland (campaign strategist and former candidate for state house), Amy Schnieder (DSA-Denver Chapter Electoral Committee Chair), Wendy Howell (Executive Director of Colorado Working Families), and Carlos Valverde (Regional Director for the National Working Families Party). The community leaders who are interviewed are: Hashim Coates (community leader and political strategist), Manasseh Oso (Manual High School educator and activist), Radhika Nath (DNC member and former candidate for DPS school board), Hasira Ashemu (Executive Director of Our Voices Our Schools), Selena Pina (east side community leader), Brandon Pryor (Warriors for High Quality Schools), Miguel Ceballos (Protégete of Conservation Colorado and former candidate for city council),
Julie Bañuelos (community leader, educator, and former candidate of school board), Yessica Holguín (executive director of the Community Wealth Building), Annie Martinez (attorney, community leader, and former candidate for city council), Ean Tafoya (Colorado Latino Forum), brother jeff (community media reporter and anchor of the Free Think Zone), Nita Mosby Tyler (Executive Director of The Equity Project), and Justine Sandoval (NARAL-CO Community Manager and community leader).

Analysis of Community Power for Co-Governance

Using the framework of the core tenets of leftist governance, the capacity of community power to govern in partnership with elected officials in Denver can be evaluated. Each tenet is analyzed through the lens of an incremental and radical elected official. There are important distinctions in governance styles between an incremental and radical public leader.

Coalitions of Social Justice Players

Coalition building in Denver is a significant weakness that must be addressed to advance a multi-racial, intergenerational movement for intersectional justice. Currently, there is no coalition to build community power or coalition to advance a social movement. Coalitions of social justice players are formed to elevate a leader—not a vision for intersectional justice or collective liberation. Unity of social justice players is predicated on a leader's potential as candidate running for elected office—not shared values or vision. Consequently, there is always a divide splintering leftist coalition-building efforts that ultimately hinders electoral progress. Incrementalist candidates have a wide-ranging coalition of liberal organizations, including many social justice organizations. However, incrementalist candidates tend to have more organizational endorsements than community leaders. Whereas radical progressives have an extensive list of endorsements from social justice players and community leaders. The foundation of Denver coalition-building is weak because it revolves around a savior-complex centered on candidates which leads to a void of structure, a shared vision, and a common strategy. The strength of the coalition is dependent on the candidate and whether political players will endorse against the status quo.

Notable players in the left insurgence of electoral progress are the Colorado Working Families Party and the local DSA-Denver chapter. Their political prowess complements the politics of local radical organizations like Colorado People's Action and Warriors for High Quality Schools who lack the capacity of supporting candidates with independent expenditures committees, a war chest of funds, and a base of volunteers. The Colorado Working Families Party and DSA has brought balance to electoral politics with their expertise, funding, and field operations dedicated to true progressive candidates.

For Example:
In any election, Denver Area Labor Federation (DALF) is a key endorsement to secure. Unfortunately, DALF often is short-sighted in siding with political expediency in endorsing a safe candidate, often the incumbent. In the 2019 Denver municipal elections, DALF declined to endorse Candi CdeBaca and opted to stay out of council district 9 race, effectively choosing political expedience despite Candi being the better labor champion.

Multi-Layers of Accountability

Overall, the Denver movement-building space lacks a structure of multi-layered accountability. Without encouraging vulnerability and a commitment to support the collective revolutionary development of all members in the movement, there is no space for growth. Cancel culture has compounded the fear of mistakes. When one inevitably has a misstep, rarely is there space held for a learning opportunity. Yet, there are ample tongues to release criticism and countless hearts growing resentment. Consequently, this translates into bitter politicking with minimal space for accountability.

Incrementalists may have a laundry list of endorsements from social justice organizations, but they are selective to whom they listen. Accountability is often predicated on the tangible contributions to an elected official's campaign. Whereas radical elected officials listen to community, leaders, and social justice organizations. There is sincere respect for the community and those who have contributed to the campaigns that affords a listening ear. However, a radical is driven by a justice consciousness—not the urgency for re-election. A true radical is open to feedback, responsible for their actions, and is

accountable to community.

For Example:

During the 2019 DPS school board election, Senator Julie Gonzales chose to endorse an education reform candidate Alexis Menocal-Harrigan despite declarations of not being aligned to DFER during her campaign. Members of the coalition who endorsed her candidacy strategized outreach to her. Individually, members sent messages voicing our concern. Yet messages from us were disregarded, including notable activists and endorsing organizations. Months later in the campaign season did Senator Gonzales address the endorsement when publicly called out on social media.

Conversely, when Councilwoman Candi CdeBaca had a controversial hire, Vanessa Quintana among other leaders of endorsing organizations reached out for clarity. Candi immediately replied and had a lengthy conversation explaining her decision. Later, Councilwoman CdeBaca met with community and organizational leaders to discuss the hire and planned a future meeting for ensuing steps to remedy the situation. Accordingly, Councilwoman CdeBaca made a statement apologizing to community and the public. She explained her decision in detail on how it aligns with her values, but despite opposing views with public, Councilwoman CdeBaca would adhere to the public demands to earn public trust and ensure transparency.

Operationalizing Power

Generally, there is lackluster progressive leadership in Denver. Too often elected officials abdicate their responsibility to eradicate oppression to the excuse of their office lacking the authority to act. Similarly, elected officials frequently choose to sit on the benches of complacency in favor of political expedience, rather than lead to alleviate oppression. Be it a lack of will or lack of knowledge on the powers bestowed to the office held, elected progressives do not operationalize power for radical governance or policy. Consequently, progress is dependent on an unpromising vote count.

Depending on the potential of the candidate and strength of the social movement coalition, legislative bodies can be flipped to earn a majority vote to achieve basic progressive legislation. When there is a majority progressive council, the coalition's legislative agenda could be championed, and progressive policies would be enacted. It is more important to note the distinction between a simple majority and super majority to override a (republican or neoliberal) executive veto.

When radicals lack a majority vote in a legislative body, they can contest power as a disruptive minority or as an isolated radical. They must thoroughly understand the procedures of governance to strategically disrupt the status quo and wield their power for justice. The effectiveness of a minority of radicals is dependent on their power analysis of governance. Depending on the vote count for a piece of legislation, a minority voting bloc of radicals can wield their power to demand consensus. They must make their presence felt and their votes necessary for enactment. The effectiveness of an isolated radical is not only reliant on their power analysis of governance, but also their willingness to bear the brunt of isolation as the lone vote of justice consciousness. The powers of the status quo will be maximized to make their job difficult, lonely, and stressful. It is incumbent on the greater community to buffer the radical(s) with support for their efforts during this isolation until reinforcement is elected.

Example of a Majority Vote:

In 2019, the Aurora City Council was flipped from republican to democrat. The democrats have a majority six vote on city council, yet they are divided. Three council members believe in incrementalism, whereas the other three believe in radical structural changes. Where there is alignment in vision, policy change can be accomplished. Upon the return of Councilwoman Alison Hiltz, all the democrats will work to enact progressive election and campaign finance reform, but no consensus is assumed.

Example of a Disruptive Minority:

In 2018, the Colorado General Assembly flipped in a widely touted democratic "blue wave." As Tay Anderson advises, unifying the Black Caucus (eight members) and Latino Caucus (thirteen members), could be a powerful disruptive minority contesting neoliberal power in the state legislature. Both caucuses total 21% of the General Assembly – effectively possessing the potential to be a powerful voting bloc for racial justice. The passage of SB217 in the waning days of the 2020 session affirms the power of a united caucus in enacting the country's most radical bill in the wake of the George Floyd uprising.

Example of an Isolated Radical:

Councilwoman Candi CdeBaca is an isolated radical, but she has been able to wield power to amplify community voice and illuminate the corruption in City Hall. She uses her power to expand public comment and disrupt the rubber-stamp enactment of the mayor's neoliberal policies – such as paving way for multiple hours of community comment opposing the renewal of contracts for GEO. In bringing transparency to local government, she has deepened community and coalition trust in her leadership.

Long-Term Vision

The defining distinction between an incrementalist and radical is their vision. Incrementalists strive to enact policies that address symptoms of a problem, rather than address the root cause of oppression. They are well-intentioned leaders, but fundamentally lack a nuanced analysis of oppression and/or the imagination to use policy to target oppressive systems. Incrementalist liberal officials are preoccupied with re-election, whereas radicals are driven to shift power structures and redistribute resources. Radicals hold an ideal for collective liberation and are driven by a vision for intersectional justice.

Lessons Learned

Denver is in the beginning stages of a wave of radical elected leadership and governance. The past three years are a testament to the electoral strength progressives hold in the legislative branch, but it has also illuminated a weakness in executive office elections and short sightedness in judicial elections. Space must be held to address the tension between incrementalists and radicals because it compromises the alliance necessary for strategic action. Honest conversations are necessary to strength leadership and consolidate efforts to determine the direction of the movement.

Stepping Stones to Collective Liberation

Recommendations to maximize community power to achieve self-governance and transform the political economy of our society are targeted to strengthen current movement building work and build capacity for revolutionary governance. Community must foster communal healing, develop a long-term shared vision with a detailed action plan, and implement holistic, trauma-informed organizing within its movement building spaces to achieve a transformative restructure of society. The key elements to build capacity for governance are recruiting more bold radicals for elected office, ensuring community-endorsed elected officials operationalize their power effectively, and developing a multi-layered structure of accountability to keep decision-makers grounded in values of community liberation. Though these recommendations were proposed considering the extensive research on the Denver community, the proposed recommendations are applicable for all communities striving towards a promising future of collective liberation.

Movement Building

Often movement building spaces are siloed by issue and identity and divorced from the social- emotional development work that is essential to foster revolutionary leadership and liberatory changes in our communities. At the root of many of the challenges we face is our own shortsightedness and reluctance to commit to the laborious work of self-liberation that would allow space to manifest the possibilities to achieve collective liberation.

Communal Healing

Integrating healing practices into movement building work is imperative for the political and social advancement of a community. A commitment to personal and communal healing of individual and ancestral traumas is essential for the development of revolutionaries. Leaders with untreated traumas are easily triggered by the work, susceptible to burnout, vulnerable to complacency, and prone to seek validation of the oppressor. Revolutionary leadership is rooted in a deep ancestral connection that manifests healing from the suffering of colonization. It could not be understated the importance of ancestral connection in healing of traumas and the social-emotional development of each person in the movement.

Normalizing self and communal care are investments in our collective wellbeing. The movement building work must intentionally be driven to heal, grow, and build power collectively. In establishing the intention to heal community, communal care is purposefully interwoven in the organizing and coalition building work. Self-care and communal care routines must be intentionally integrated and adopted by the community in meetings, one-on-ones, and actions. Vulnerability is integral for creating and holding space for honesty and growth. Fostering deep connections of reciprocal respect, trust, and love is essential to develop healthy, transformative conflict resolution and decision-making processes that will manage ego when it inevitably arises. In addition, communal care is a preventative measure against burnout and complacency –additional lethal poisons to radical power building causes.

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." ~ Audre Lorde

Long-Term Collective Vision and Strategy

Each community should be led by the North Star to freedom. It is incumbent upon the community to envision a future of intersectional justice and collective liberation. A shared vision of freedom should

unify the people and organizations of the coalition and be the intrinsic motivator of the movement. This should translate into a long-term strategic plan spanning across years. The key to a revolutionary vision is a plan to uproot the causes of oppression—not solving symptoms to community problems. The plan cannot be centered on a single victory, rather numerous wins that would lead to the structural changes the community seeks in local, state, and federal government. It must be innovative, multi-layered, and ought to be complex in employing revolutionary work in all branches of government to truly achieve lasting systemic change.
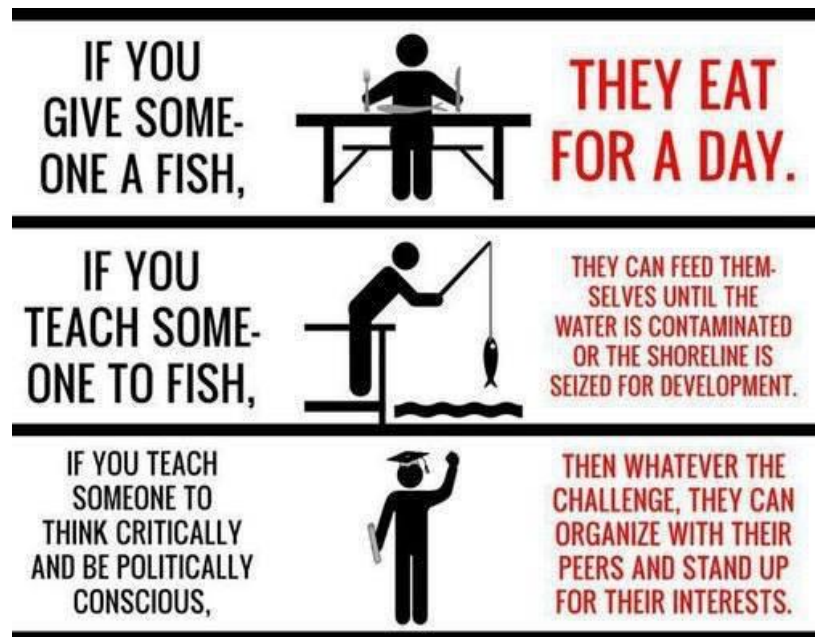
No vision or strategy is effective without the commitment and support of all members. Thus, it is imperative each member of the coalition must understand their role in executing the plan. The coalition should employ its members to utilize their strengths to execute this plan and seek to fill the gaps in their capacity with intentional skill building. Reciprocity of trust and respect among coalition members is essential for a productive, healthy relationship for long-term movement building work.

"To win any struggle for liberation, you have to have the way as well as the will, an overall ideology, and strategy that stems from a scientific analysis of history and present conditions." ~ Assata

Holistic, Trauma-Informed Organizing

Our communities live and thrive at the intersection of our identities. Our communities are greater and more complex than the simplicity of one-issue advocacy or siloed-identity campaigns. Movement building work must be centered in holistic organizing that honors the identity and experiences of the community. The collective experience of the most marginalized person in the community must be accounted for in the strategic movement building of the coalition. The movement-building work must hold all elected officials accountable and check injustice wherever it may ring. Note the distinction between a reactionary and strategic response to oppression. Thus, it is imperative to constantly build a community base and invest in leadership development to have the capacity to organize holistically towards a multi-racial, intergenerational, and intersectional justice-oriented movement.

Given the oppression of Black and Indigenous people spans across centuries in the United States, it is imperative for movement building work to employ trauma-informed organizing that centers the humanity and honors the expertise of the people with whom we build power among. Leaders must work from a place of self-liberation to hold space for other's pain and anger as they are guided through the journey of healing. However, it is equally important for community organizers to be mindful to not lead from a colonized lens of deficiency that limits sight to only one's oppression. Rather, we must organize to evoke the greatness within people, learn their gifts, and utilize

IF YOU GIVE SOMEONE A FISH, **THEY EAT FOR A DAY.**

IF YOU TEACH SOMEONE TO FISH, THEY CAN FEED THEMSELVES UNTIL THE WATER IS CONTAMINATED OR THE SHORELINE IS SEIZED FOR DEVELOPMENT.

IF YOU TEACH SOMEONE TO THINK CRITICALLY AND BE POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS, THEN WHATEVER THE CHALLENGE, THEY CAN ORGANIZE WITH THEIR PEERS AND STAND UP FOR THEIR INTERESTS.

their strengths to fill the gaps in our collective movement building work. Everyone has a role in the movement. Whether they are a culinary expert, technologically savvy, good with their hands, or a loving caretaker of children –everyone could contribute to the advancement of community. It is incumbent on us all to genuinely know every member of our community so we may all lead in accordance to our passion.

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"When a flower doesn't bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower."
~Alexander Den Heijer
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Governance

To build capacity for revolutionary governance in our cities, the movement must have strong community power to employ effective electoral strategies. Co-governance with community and social justice organizations is impossible with elected officials committed to preserving their security and privileges afforded by the status quo. Creative, bold thought leaders must convene to strategize a plan to elect and appoint radicals to revolutionize all branches of government in their cities and states. At the root of our inability to revolutionize governance is a lack of preparation to seize grand moments of dissent, the absence of a bold vision, and a collective will to uproot injustice.

Bold Radicals Running Scrappy Campaigns

Community power must be exercised regularly to hold the current power brokers in office accountable. Each elected official whom is out of alignment with community values and steering away from community's vision must be challenged by a community-endorsed candidate. It is unacceptable to have uncontested races in any local, state, or federal office given the magnitude of oppression. All should be held accountable at the ballot box. Therefore, it behooves the community to invest in revolutionary leadership development to create a bench of leaders for each branch of government. Leaders must be cultivated within the movement to have a justice consciousness and their feet firmly rooted in community. All candidates need be thoroughly trained on how to execute effective campaigns for elected office in the executive and legislative branch. Note the void of radical leadership in the judicial branch because of the lack of investment in a pipeline to judgeship. It is impermissible to continue to neglect the judicial branch and scour away from battling for justice in the courts.

Radicals running for office must be resourceful and courageously bold in vision, outreach, and execution. Radicals are against all odds. When competing against a well-financed machine, be creative in grassroots fundraising and resourceful with a shoe-string budget. Strive for in-house production and execution of campaign essentials to minimize costs and to avoid exploitation from electoral strategists seeking to make a profit. Too often first-time candidates are targeted by firms with costly proposals designed to operate within the current constructs of politics, completely disregarding the most marginalized. Radicals think beyond the typical operation of a campaign to design and execute an inclusive campaign.

Radical candidates must have a bold vision with radical ideas that excites community, evokes hope, and invites all people to engage. The candidate's vision must convey the oppressor is the same across communities to unify people of all backgrounds and walks of life. Run a campaign that creates space for everyone to contribute to the movement-building work. Allow community to uplift the candidate and advance the campaign with their strengths, skills, and expertise. Whether it is photography, graphic design, social media, culinary, printing, post card writing, hosting house parties, or entertainment, the passion and skills of others can creatively contribute to a well-executed campaign. Without expanding the electorate for down ballot races, there is no pathway to revolutionize governance. Grassroots campaigns must invest in political education and outreach to low-propensity voters in impoverished

neighborhoods of color. Invest time in developing relationships with these community members via intentional conversations at their doors. People are only willing to commit when they feel heard and feel cared for. Thus, radicals must lead a campaign that is rooted in love, embraces all people, and boldly champions intersectional justice.

"Dreams cannot be tamed. Dreamers cannot be ruled." ~Paulo Coelho

Power Analysis to Effectively Wield Power

Once elected to office, radicals must know how to wield their power along the arc of intersectional justice. To effectively wield power for liberatory change, a radical ought to know the powers bestowed to the branch of government at the level they seek to govern and know how to use their power to strategically uproot oppression. No significant structural change may occur without knowing the root causes of oppression, how oppression manifests in the system, and how it is protected by the actions of the governing body. Radicals must know the powers of the public office they occupy in order to redistribute power and expand rights. For example: a school board candidate ought to be familiar with the San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez Supreme Court case, have a vision to expand the rights of public education guaranteed by their respective state constitution, and partner with radical lawyers once the policy is enacted and a suit is filed. Radicals should have a thorough understanding of the levers of power bestowed to their public office and coordinate the pursuit of justice among the three branches to create lasting change.

In addition to understanding the levers of power for radical governance, leaders must understand the dynamics of power in their sphere among the players and within the processes of governance. Regardless of their positionality, a radical elected official will know how to operationalize power for justice. Legislators must understand the power brokerage that occurs throughout the policymaking process that includes, but not limited to, bill writing and vote counting, to meaningfully disrupt the status quo. Executives must understand the power of administrative law and appointments to lead accordingly to community vision. Judges must understand the crux of systems of oppression deeply to target specific cases worth overturning and to wield the power of the constitution to achieve such goals. Radicals must be ready to lead revolutionary governance upon entering public office.

"The revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it fall." ~ Che Guevara

Layers of Accountability from Community

Politics need to be reimagined to allow for vulnerability, transparency, and accountability. Election day cannot be the only moment of accountability for elected officials. Feedback must be continuous. There must be layered accountability throughout the duration of elected office. Accountability must stem from social justice organizations, activists, and community members alike. In addition, elected officials must be held accountable by their peers. Pressure must be applied collectively.

Without a strong relationship to the movement and a commitment to collective liberation, public officials are not accountable to community. Their interests and values are misplaced by internalized colonization. Consequently, neoliberal officials must constantly feel pressure from the movement. Thus, efforts should be coordinated to maximize community voice that is convenient and accessible to all marginalized people. Every oppressive action should be accompanied by a collective community response of opposition. Pressure must be applied and sustained.

"If you want to know who's in charge of you, just look at who you cannot criticize." ~Unknown