

## What to do in an Uprising

It is stating the obvious to say we are in a movement moment in this country. People are rising up to condemn police murders, camping out at Standing Rock and engaging in mass solidarity actions in support of indigenous rights. And now, hundreds of thousands of new people are taking to the streets to protest the Trump election. While we cannot predict the potential repression in a Trump administration, we do know that the President cannot stop all voices at once, and we expect more disruptions moving forward, both offensive and defensive.

We also want to say that this is in no way a definitive document. What happens in uprisings and movements is that there are so many things happen no one person or group of people can track them. These are merely a few stories and observations that hopefully serve as a frame for thought and discussion.

Let's start with some definitions for the purposes of this document.

**Movement or movement moment.** Folks who have done organizing know that most things that happen have to be organized. For every 100 folks who say they are coming to a meeting or a protest, only half show. In a movement moment, two things happen. First, many more people turn out to things than would have been expected given the organizing work put in. For example, a Facebook event can move hundreds, or even thousands. Second, there is a diverse array of things happening that are somewhat unexpected. For example, a friend of mine told me that the owner of his neighborhood gay bar held a meeting to talk about a response to Trump, and this bar has never been political about anything.

**Uprising.** An uprising is when people are resisting and permanently occupying space, usually in opposition to some event, such as a corrupt dictator in power or a police murder. In an uprising, a large number of people disrupt their daily lives to join the protest in the city center or in the streets. People might be shot at, arrested by the dozens, or attempted to be controlled by chemical agents such as tear gas or pepper spray.

Whether you agree exactly with the definitions or not, we are defining them as such for the purposes of this piece, so that we can focus on how to support an uprising. There have not been enough uprisings in the United States to know all the best practices, but we hope you'll get the picture here.

And, here are some principles to think about when organizing in an uprising or movement moment:

First, do what you think is necessary for the struggle, not what everyone else is doing. Know that you will have to use your own agency, no one else will tell you what to do during an uprising.

Second, find your crew. Whether you are in the streets or doing jail support, you will rapidly need people you can count on. With Trump in the White House and police forces about to become even more brutal, the resources of the state will be moving against us, and we will need affinity groups for support.

Third, you are making history! We all are, but you are going to be part of something that is changing this country, and maybe the world. Leave it all on the table, appreciate it, and be glad that you are on the side of freedom.

### How to Start an Uprising:

Most of the time uprisings just happen. New York, Charlotte, Ferguson, and Baton Rouge are all examples of responses to cold-blooded police murders of unarmed black men. People just rose up and did not take it anymore. We saw this in Tunisia as well, when a vendor self-immolated, leading to the Arab Spring. However, sometimes uprisings are organized. A group of people, along with a call to action from Adbusters Magazine, gathered at the bull at Wall Street to start Occupy Wall Street. And sometimes uprisings are a combination of events.

For example, protests in Ferguson grew to the scale they did for two reasons. First, when people were peacefully protesting Mike Brown's body being left on the ground for over four hours, police brought out dogs to try to "manage the crowd"—provoking huge outrage. On the second night of full protests, some people (actually white insurrectionists), smashed the first windows. The police once again overreacted, creating a full-scale military occupation of Ferguson which led to increased turnout and "turn-up" of protestors.

At Occupy Wall Street, there were some good plans in place, but also some lucky outcomes too, including Zucotti Park's unique role as a 24 hour gathering space. But the occupation was small and potentially a niche event, until the police went over the top, arresting hundreds in a march over the Brooklyn Bridge that provoked widespread outrage and a huge spike in participation.

Dakota Access and its recent victory is another example state repression leading to the opposite of the desired outcome. The more police brutalized indigenous folks at Standing Rock, the more people will come to put their bodies on the line.

Sometimes we think we need to plan everything, including strategic actions that last exactly 90 minutes, planned arrests, or tight campaign plans. But often what we need is courageous people with a lot of time to give. who are willing to hold down some space. If people are willing to hold space, all-night if necessary at Canfield Green or the streets of West Florissant, occupy Tahrir Square, or sleep in a park, then, if they succeed, you have an uprising. Like all organizing, only 1 in 10 of these attempts is actually going to result in an uprising, but such actions are worth the trouble.

The other issue here is the response of the state. By brutalizing or showing up in a brutal way, often times more people take to the streets, protecting their friends, families, neighborhoods and self-respect. We need to have faith that people will often take the greatest possible risk, and not patronize them and make decisions about what they will or won't do.

### How to Maintain an Uprising:

Maintaining an uprising entails providing for people's basic needs so that they can be out in the streets holding space. This includes:

#### **Jail Support:**

A major reason why Ferguson was successful was jail support. As funds were being raised online, there were also organizations willing to draw down all their cash reserves to bail everyone out of jail. They did so for three reasons. First, for the most part folks arrested in Ferguson were not taking part in planned civil disobedience. They were not expecting to get arrested and had many reasons why they needed to get out (getting to a job, attending a child's first day of school, needing medication, etc.), so it was important to use every tool to do so.. Second, arrests were very complicated. Most folks had a whole bunch of warrants

based on spurious municipal charges, and so they were being held unfairly by a system of structural racism. Third, if courageous young folks on the front lines knew that there was a jail support program that had their back and could get them out, people were much more willing to stand on the front lines facing down the cops. Finally, jail support built relationships and trusts between existing organizations and newly politicized unorganized people on the streets

Two notes on jail support. First, while it was helpful in Ferguson that there was an organization that had engaged in a lot of non-violent direct action before and knew how jail support worked, it was not necessary. Black brown and poor white people get arrested all the time and their friends and families know how to bail them out. It is just about getting a group of people together and figuring it out.

Second, do not worry about paying down yours or your organizational savings. In uprisings, people contribute to jail support. You will get your money back. Take the risk.

One other note: you do not need to be a lawyer to do jail support, and you often do not need to listen to lawyers initially. In some places there are movement lawyers who can be trusted. In other places, lawyers can act like they know more than they do. Folks engaged in uprisings are doing extraordinary things, and the regular rules of attorney/client work do not apply. For example, folks working jail support in Ferguson knew about the situation with people having multiple warrants for ridiculous reasons, such as jaywalking, having expired tags or even not returning videos to Blockbuster. Jail support asked protestors if they wanted to tell their stories to a national and even international audience, using the press. Most protestors wanted to tell their stories and were excited to get a platform, while also setting the stage for a much larger national conversation about the jail system in general. However, some “well-meaning” lawyers, such as the Director of Washington University’s juvenile justice clinic demanded that Ferguson Jail Support not let “clients” talk to the press, as it could put their entire case at risk and people would risk felony convictions and jail time. Despite the chain of email flames, and the pulling out of the Washington University corporate lawyer establishment, people told their stories, they were heard by the world, and no one is risking serious jail time over talking to the press, the moment was too important for that.

**TRUST YOUR GUT!**

### **Safe Spaces:**

The Dakota Access struggle has three camps which are on either federal or private land. Occupy had Zuccotti, and later other public parks. Ferguson initially had St. Mark’s Church. All of those were safe spaces where a protestor could get nourishment, water, and a place to decompress from the front lines. In Ferguson and Standing Rock, there were medic spaces where folks could get tear gas or pepper spray washed off. Holding down a safe space is vital work. You have to organize supplies, medics, and in the case some nights in Ferguson, worry about keeping the cops out, while also de-escalating tensions among people who are coming to start trouble. Safe spaces are places for trainings, discussion and planning. They do not merely exist, but they take people pouring their heart and soul into maintaining them.

For urban uprisings, churches will generally work, and police heretofore have been unwilling to enter churches, though in Ferguson they were often in the parking lot and around the church. In Standing Rock, sheriff’s deputies have at different times attempted to block entrance and exit from the camps.

There should be a team that does daily orientations in safe spaces, gets training and most of all, has lists of things for people to do. In Ferguson, most people used St. Mark's to go into the streets every night, but also wanted to participate in meetings during the day, unload and purchase supplies, get trained, and make plans.

### **Money:**

This will lead to much heartbreak and strife, but uprisings need money, and trying to sort through the complexities of money is not easy. It might make sense to start with a lesson from Hurricane Katrina.

Post-Katrina, there were three separate grassroots hurricane relief funds and projects. They each raised money separately, and never coordinated. While each was able to raise millions of dollars and were potent forces on the ground, separately they were unable to fight corporate profiteers that gentrified New Orleans, chartered all the public schools, and displaced half of the Black population. Perhaps they would have lost to market forces anyway, but separate money and lack of coordination did not help make for a more robust fight.

In Ferguson, Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment (MORE) and the Organization for Black Struggle (OBS) set up an unrestricted movement infrastructure account. This account, which had accountability (as people from each organization had to sign a check) went towards cash for protestors who needed food and transportation, supplies, Ferguson October expenses, churches and other safe spaces, trainers to come into town, and a variety of other costs. The money got messy at the end, but without it, key protestors would not have had places to stay, or food to eat. Safe spaces would not have held up for three months, and many groups would not have worked together.

There was much drama about Occupy money, but certainly money moved in many ways. In addition to the contested money that went directly to Occupations, there was money that went to trainers who helped new Occupies, and Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry fame set up a working group of Occupiers to test out ideas for funding.

There will always be money that seeks out movement or uprising, so we will always have to contend with that.

Setting up a bank account with multiple signers that is unrestricted is fairly easy. Attached to this document are a couple of paragraphs on how to do that.

### **Training, Containers and a Culture of Yes**

The recent uprisings discussed in this piece have had a significant training component, which often happened a little bit post-uprising. Nonviolent Direct Action Trainers were and are in Standing Rock. There were crews of trainers wandering throughout Occupy World, and there were a whole bunch of trainers that came to Ferguson in different ways.

Good training adheres to three basic principles:

- 1) Respect for and lifting up of the amazing and courageous uprising and leadership of folks who have been on the ground.
- 2) Skills that everyone can use immediately. For example, daily trainings at Red Warrior Camp in Standing Rock have led to actions the next day and finding risktakers

immediately. Demystifying direct action is key; just get together with your comrades and put your bodies somewhere where they are not supposed to be. There is nothing magical about it. We all can do actions.

- 3) Creating open-source containers where people can use their training. For example, at Ferguson October, we encouraged people to form groups and take action immediately. There were 13 separate self-organized actions organized that weekend.

The culture of yes is important both in message and the work. Let us be totally honest here. If someone had not smashed windows during the early days of Ferguson, the police would not have overreacted, which led to the massive outpouring of folks into the street. Armed struggle is a legitimate tool throughout the world, and though we are not advocating it here, as folks in Baltimore said, “Broken windows are less important than broken spines.” There are no good and bad protestors, we cannot let the power structure divide us. In many cases, veteran organizers or activists try to use the same old “tried and true tactics, they have also always use, and believe that the newly mobilized will mature and adopt those tactics. But, we know that those often simply do not and have not really worked to change the country.

Additionally, uprisings happen because they happen. Sure, there are sometimes small groups of folks who plan things, but they can never know that those small actions will become uprisings. So who are we to judge whether an action is smart or stupid. The containers we build, at a time of uprising, need to encourage all forms of action that move people. See the Ferguson Action Council booklet for more examples of how these structures should work.

### **Communications:**

There are two kinds of communications needed, the most important is internal communications to the movement. In Ferguson, most people had texted a shortcode (when you text your name and zip code to a six digit number) and were on a text loop. Any organization organizing a protest could spread the word and have people show up immediately because they were part of the text code. Hundreds of people really did show up on short notice. There were of course multiple group text loops for people involved in different groups. A system like Slack would work very well for jail support, as one could send out a note to a large volunteer list asking who could go to the jail immediately, and those with availability could respond.

There is also external communications. There is more to be said about the brilliance of the Ferguson Comms team, and their ability to lift up the lived experiences and stories of those in the streets and help the most affected folks tell their stories. Savvy communicators who listen first and talk second are the most useful here, but just creating spaces where people who might be talking to the press can roleplay and help with their story is something most of us can help with.

### **Police Liaisons:**

While not a requirement, sometimes police liaising is useful and often vital towards keeping people safe. In uprisings, police liaising does not happen on the ground, but rather through contact with police leadership and protestors on the ground, often not the leaders. In Ferguson, obviously the police conduct was pretty deplorable, but getting information from the police was useful in terms of what they were thinking. Long negotiations with the police, including publicly training 600 people on non-violent direct action, prior to the non-indictment, was a key in ensuring that the no one was killed on the night of the non-indictment.

Police liaisons in Ferguson were veteran police accountability activists, so they had been talking to the police for years and were credible voices in the room. If there is a sustained uprising, information is often critical, as well as telegraphing intentions, despite the enmity and brutality of the police.

### **Research:**

In an uprising, our ability to win depends on our ability to make those in power fearful. In order to do that, we need to research and publicize individuals, corporations and politicians who have power. This is something many people can do, not just those with Ph.Ds. In Ferguson, for example, folks created a map of potential protest targets just by googling offices and then using a google map:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1AwxwncOK-vk7ACHKpdEiBuYGW3g&ll=38.69560702220744%2C-90.336098699999998&z=11>

Most corporations on that map were scared and the organizers even had to take hospitals off the map, because the hospitals were worried there were going to be targets of protests, whereas those who made the map put them on because they were worried police overreactions and people needing to be treating police violence and chemical weapons.

LittleSis.org is an easy to use website, and anyone can find out about rich people, their boards, affiliations, campaign contributions and many other things to create a target map for an individual or corporate “evildoer”. There was a large crew of volunteer researchers in Ferguson, many of whom were folks looking for a role besides protesting.

### **Undergirding and Coordination:**

Sometimes in uprisings like Occupy and Dakota Access, there is a common space or spaces, such as the parks or the camps. There can be a myriad of meetings that coordinate. In Ferguson, the SEIU Healthcare office hosted a standing morning meeting pretty much daily for three months. There was a 9 am meeting of a handful of movement elders who had critical roles in the infrastructure, and a 10 am meeting of folks doing support work, legal, jail support, safe spaces etc. The 10 am meeting was both a way for national folks to plug into the work, and an open space so that folks who were more in the streets could come as well. Twice a week, the 10 am meetings also included groups that formed the Don’t Shoot Coalition, which included a lot of groups not involved directly in supporting the uprising.

At Standing Rock, there has been a different kind of connective tissue, as folks from the Indigenous Environmental Network have shuttled back and forth among the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the radical protestors, and the various camps, in an attempt to keep everyone moving more or less in the same direction despite the wide variety of tactics.

InterOccupy sprang up during Occupy, and became an important part of creating communication between the various Occupations, using what was then an unknown tool, the Maestro call, a conference call where everyone could be muted and people could raise their virtual hands for poll questions.

### **Groups not in the Streets:**

It is also important to engage community organizations, labor unions, faith leaders and sympathetic and often unsympathetic politicians in a variety of ways. Where the police are committing acts of brutality, it is sometimes possible that some group of people will try to use their influence to de-escalate the police, or those who are over the police.

Those organizations are a source of money and are often connected and can help find safe spaces. They might also echo the demands of those in the uprising in a different forum. They can help get wins, if that is a goal, by pushing on levers of power (more on that later). It is important to not worry about who gets credit.

By engaging more mainstream environmental organizations over time, Dakota Access resisters were able to move Senators and operate inside the Beltway, so that ultimately the Washington consensus of climate organizations used their heft to help the struggle at Standing Rock, a helpful intervention that was one piece in ensuring so that the Army Corps of Engineers would to grant access to the pipeline.

There were a couple instances at Occupy Wall Street during which turnout in the thousands from labor organizations and community groups stopped police from evicting the protestors.

In Ferguson, there were many behind the scenes meetings, including quite a few attended by Senators and Mayors, that tried to find creative solutions to keep people safe and get at the root of the structural racism. In the early days of Ferguson, there were groups that engaged in daytime actions at the Governor's office to demand he stop teargassing people. While those actions were unsuccessful, they created a place for folks to go who were not comfortable in the streets at night, and also highlighted particular people and issues. For example, 89 year-old Holocaust survivor and Palestinian rights activist Hedy Epstein was arrested. Hedy got international attention, and was one of the key pieces of the Ferguson to Palestine story. Hedy agreeing to take an arrest is also a part of trusting one's gut. One of the action's organizers saw Hedy as part of the group assembling downtown and asked her if she was willing to be part of the crew that risked arrest. While this is the 10<sup>th</sup> time we are reiterating it in the document, good organizing principles are universal, whether in a strategic campaign or the head of an uprising.

While mentioning it is not about the credit it is also important to be realistic about other groups that might try to co-opt the movement. Some groups will use uprisings to raise money for their own programs and undermine the movement. Others will try to take credit. Any organization or politician who hoards information or relationships, qualifies their support of the uprising, or refuses to take financial or political risks to support the uprising is not to be trusted.

Two Ferguson examples are: The Urban League, other than a few photo ops, never supported the uprising, but did raise millions of dollars to rebuild the Quick Trip and support its own job training programs. Legal Services refused to let its lawyers support jail support, but was happy to raise money for its nonexistent Ferguson work.

### **Nationalizing the Movement:**

Uprisings make the news, and people want to help. The best thing we can do is to make what is happening a national and international story as quickly as possible, and then give people things to do.

The first national Ferguson conference call was organized on the Tuesday after the uprising began, and began to connect the dots, including working with groups from Ohio that were fighting back around John Crawford's murder as well as Michael Brown's. The nationalizing of the struggle continued. In fact, during the non-indictment, there was a room in St. Louis filled with 10 top-notch organizers who did not go into the streets, but rather fielded calls from across the country and advised people how to organize protests, highway blockings, and student walk-outs all across the country.

Standing Rock was strong because it was a destination of resistance. And there was a lot for people to do once they came back, including the over 400 actions (so far) across the country against the banks financing the pipeline. People could lockdown to banks, putting their bodies on the line, in support of the sacrifices the water protectors were making.

And of course Occupy needs no explanation, it was a replicable thing tactic that every town square could host.

### Organizing:

We are saying this for the third time, and it bears repeating, organizing principles are organizing principles no matter an uprising or not. Supporting leaderful work, being low ego and high impact, and supporting a wide array of voice and tactics is a vital function. A few examples of successful organizing from Ferguson include:

*Organization for Black Struggle:* There was no organized group of Black youth in the St. Louis region before Ferguson, and the only recognized Black led organization that had been fighting the police was the Organization for Black Struggle. Early on, as tens of veteran organizers poured into town, they gravitated to OBS. OBS leadership could have easily gotten a big head, and thought of themselves as leaders of the movement. However, OBS knew organizing basics, and were completely devoid of ego. Not only did they continue to keep the focus on the frontline protestors, they also ensured that money went out more broadly in the movement. They tried to get people the resources they needed, whether or not they agreed with what OBS was trying to build.

While Occupy Wall Street was contentious, it also lasted as long as it did because there are many voices. Yes, there was leadership conflict, but there was general consensus that as a horizontal space many voices needed to be lifted up and speak for Occupy.

*Communications:* In Ferguson, The Center for Media Justice floated the first piece of money to send in a skilled Black communicator. That comms person spent their first week just listening and hearing the stories and voice of the frontline protestors, which both helped shape the national narrative around police violence and led to the creation of Blackbird, an organization that provides general support including communications infrastructure for the Movement for Black Lives generally.

*Community Organizing:* Long-time community organizers put together a meeting of frontline protestors and some arrestees a couple weeks into Ferguson. Those organizers prepped protestors to lead their own meeting, even though none of them had led meetings before. That was the first in a series of planning meetings and helped solidify those who stuck around. People from five major groups that formed in the wake of Ferguson ended up being present at the first meeting.

One other note about this meeting was that it took four attempts to make the meeting happen. Many national organizers who were more experienced ended up taking over meetings that were held in main safe space, St. Marks church. This first meeting was offsite, at a different church, and pretty much only had local folks at it. Organizers were right to keep trying, rather than believing that protestors were not ready to have a more thoughtful structured forum to meet as well.

As organizers we also need to be mindful of when movements or uprisings come to an end, and it is time to go back to organizing. There is no exact science for knowing when the circumstances change. MORE, for example, made the mistake of hiring five protestors to do



community organizing in late August, believing that the movement would dissipate. Those protestors walked away from the work, going back to the streets and founding their own organizations. Trial and error is never a bad thing, and the frontline protestors were incredibly principled, walking away from paid work to follow their passions. Also, not everyone can do everything. Sometimes having distinctive organizing groups and uprising support groups makes the most sense.

### Out-of-Towners

Standing Rock exemplifies the question about outsiders. At times the Tribe or other camps have asked for white folks to come and put their bodies on the line, and at other times requested that people stay away. Many white folks have come correctly, while others thought Standing Rock was another Burning Man.

Many delegations have come and been useful, like the Black Lives Matter delegation or the Veterans delegation. Others have brought real resources. And other delegations, white and POC alike, have come and taken selfies. This is complicated. A few obvious points below:

*Orientations:* Different camps at Standing Rock had daily orientations and trainings. The safe space at Ferguson did the same. People are coming and looking for something to do, and we need to supply that, or else folks will disorganize things. Even though it's a pain in the butt, we need some of our best people orienting folks daily and giving them something to do. The cultural aspects are critical as well, and some of the best decolonization trainings were taking place on a daily basis at Standing Rock

*Multiple Spaces:* As much as we often think everything should be at the hub, that is often untrue. Jail support should be offsite, often for protections against raids and provocateurs. For daily meetings in Ferguson, SEIU was great because it was not a place with a million distractions, it had a dedicated conference room, rather than an open space where anyone could walk in and anything conversation could get derailed at any moment.

*Written Guidelines:* It seems small, but having a written list of guidelines and tasks or schedules is a big deal. People coming in from out of town are dealing with sleep-deprived incredibly frantic local organizers, and having some North Star of written norms, guidelines and even to-dos is incredible helpful. Orientations can only capture and do so much.

We need to recognize that people in motion is a good thing. We hope each uprising sparks national and international resistance, but we also recognize that each uprising is a flashpoint. People want to go the Ferguson and go to Standing Rock, it is important to them to have been part of a struggle. This often inspires better local actions and support, and also if we can plug people in a much more dynamic local movement.

Again, the rules of organizing apply. Make a phone call. The people who came to Ferguson knowing what was needed and how they could plug in are the same organizers that are the core teams of Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives today. And if you are local, pick up the phone--you never know what skills someone has and what they are willing to do.

### Healing and mental health:

No one can foresee the effect of an uprising on their mental health. Facing water cannons in subzero temperatures, staring down armed police, being uncertain and fearful, and not having any answers of what to do are wearing. In longer-term uprisings people have put it all

on the line, often sacrificing their housing, jobs, and in the case of Standing Rock, potentially their freedom for the cause.

Those who have slack to give should give it freely. Oftentimes one bad encounter with someone can send us into a tailspin or provoke us to anger or snark or creating division. We need to be our better selves as much as we can. We need to figure out as best we can how to ground ourselves.

We also need to actively encourage self-care. People need to take breaks, go home, get some sleep, eat a good meal. No one person's individual actions will make or break an uprising, so there is no need for martyrs. We need to encourage mental health professionals and those who do body work and Somatics to be around and work with folks.

We need to let folks be creative in other ways as well, through art and song. The Artists in Ferguson not only were at the forefront of some of the most creative protests that happened, they were also a vital outlet for so many people who needed to use different muscles.

We need to understand that the PTSD might manifest itself months later, and be mindful and careful of that as well.

#### Resparking an Uprising:

Uprisings wax and wane. Generally they just wane because people get tired, the fight is long and everyone needs to go back to their actual lives. The federal government conspired to evict key Occupies. Standing Rock kept growing because there was a base of millions of people who wanted to go, and more and more people felt compelled to go as they watched the brutality of the sheriffs. Also, those who have a personal connection to the camps were the ones organizing the strongest actions in their hometowns against the banks financing the pipeline.

Outside energy can spark a flagging movement. In Ferguson, there were two critical revivals of energy. First, about three weeks into the uprising, Black Lives Matter organized the Ride for Black Lives, during which people got on buses and traveled from as far away as California to participate in the Ride. Hundreds of folks in the streets of Ferguson provided energy and a boost to exhausted local protestors.

Five weeks later was Ferguson October, a national gathering that again brought people back out into the streets, and also created the container for groups to form, and large numbers of organized actions to take place. Many people who had not come before felt welcomed at either convening, as most people do not simply show up places.

#### How to Win Things:

The question of how to win and what to ask for is significant. Occupy had no demands, Standing Rock has a clear one. Ferguson was a little more muddled. People wanted justice for Mike Brown and Darren Wilson held accountable, while also knowing it was about white supremacy, the lack of education and jobs for Black folks in St. Louis and the need to either abolish or hold the police accountable. There is no clear blueprint on this, so this is worth putting some thought into.

During Occupy, the Working Families Party was pushing hard for a millionaire's tax and Governor Cuomo was an unrelenting no. Because of the narrative shift during Occupy, folks at the WFP began calling him out as Governor 1%, he relented, and the millionaire's tax passed in New York State. This was a great example of an existing organization using the Occupy

messaging to move a win forward. The WFP was not co-opting Occupy, nor encouraging the Occupy Encampment to jump on the campaign. Additionally the WFP provided some resources to Occupy, both letting its organizers participate in Occupy, and simultaneously helping to turn out thousands to support it when the encampment was in danger of eviction.

For 16 years the Organization for Black Struggle and the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression had been pushing for a citizen oversight board of the St. Louis police. Using the tailwinds of Ferguson, those organizers finally won the Citizen Review Board. To some, this was a rather modest win, and while true, it was a pre-existing campaign, a tangible win, and again, neither of those groups used the win to either attempt to defang the protest movement or agree to stop pushing in the streets.

In the wake of the murder of Kajieme Powell by the City of St. Louis, which was the next in a long line of police assassinations post-Mike Brown in the City of St. Louis, MORE, in a meeting with the Mayor's people shortly after the murder, asked them to forgive all the outstanding arrest warrants in the city for traffic and municipal offenses. The Mayor agreed. 270,000 arrest warrants were forgiven and future warrants did not contain punitive cash payment requirements. MORE continued to be in the streets; the wins were simply using a combination of power, organizing, fear from the power structure and moral asks to achieve some wins. These kinds of victories may be possible in many places and can in many cases come from the movement, more so than from sellout elected officials or organizations that do not actually support the uprising.

The most obvious use of an uprising to win something is simply to make the uprising about the demand at hand. At Standing Rock the demand was clear, folks were camped to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from being built, and while not thought possible, the size and courage of those uprising made the Obama Administration delay and possibly kill the pipeline. The simple is often the most effective.

### **Power:**

There is much to be said about power; the most crucial part is to be aware of it. In other words, we should know who really is in charge of a situation, who is giving orders to the police, who owns elected officials, and who makes the decisions, or at least consults on them. Often our fights become fights with those directly in front of us, rather than those who are calling the shots. Power often has multiple levels.

In North Dakota, the clear local power is the Sheriff's office, and they are of course bought and sold by Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the pipeline, which is also making liberal use of their resources to hire private security. Often retired and current police make money doing private security, so many overlapping economic interests are at play. The Standing Rock protestors realized that there were two significant folks with power. First, the Obama administration, which could delay the permit, and second, the financiers of the pipeline, like the big banks. There were two solidarity strategies across the country. First, there was a group of folks who played the inside and outside game with the White House, inundating it with letters, calls, emails and big rallies. Second, there were many solidarity groups across the country that engaged in direct action against the banks. Over 400 actions on financier targets have been launched so far.

In the Ferguson moment, there was an offer on the table from some in the power structure to attempt to reach a negotiated settlement with the street protests. The Mayor of St. Louis, with support from his patrons and funders, made an offer to the Ferguson protestors in

October 2014. In exchange for the ending of nighttime protests, they offered to deliver the following: resignation of Ferguson police chief Tom Jackson, \$100 million in community development money, body cameras on all police in the region, citizen oversight boards throughout the region. The Presidents of the NAACP and the ACLU jointly presented that offer in a meeting attended by a cross-section of about 60 frontline protestors. The protestors were principled, and thought they might be willing to negotiate, but demanded preconditions for negotiations. The preconditions were dropping all protest related charges and abstaining from using chemical weapons against protestors in a proposed non-indictment scenario. The power structure, and most likely the police, scuttled the potential negotiations by refusing to meet what were fair preconditions.

What this example shows is that those who run a region, both politicians and CEOs alike, are interested in peace, and may be willing to negotiate. Protestors in Ferguson were also right to generally reach consensus around the value of winning substantive changes through negotiation, but only at a fair table. But those in power are often only willing to negotiate if they meet one of two conditions, either they are fearful of their homes, families and ability to do commerce, or whether they believe their region's reputation is significantly at stake.

After the non-indictments came down, and there were not buildings burning throughout the St. Louis region, the power structure decided it could ride out the wave of protest and maintain the status quo. There were many signs of a police crackdown designed to end the movement rather than deliver justice. St. Louis City Hall was locked down and peaceful protestors were pepper-sprayed on the steps outside. Tear gas canisters were lobbed inside of Mokabee's, the coffee shop of the movement. There was no further contact around negotiations.

A few groups launched an effort called Power behind the Police ([powerbehindthepolice.com](http://powerbehindthepolice.com)), which attempted to call out the real power structure—the CEOs that ran the region, and the power structure they maintained. But people who had been in the streets for months were exhausted, and the power structure was too strong and too entrenched to be moved.

Occupy Wall Street also failed to rattle powers that be on Wall Street, as occupiers were too busy maintaining the encampment to seriously disrupt the power and business of global financial capital, either in downtown New York, or elsewhere in the country.

Regardless of some of the failures, both Ferguson and Occupy Wall Street changed the narrative in the entire country, a huge feat. People understand the class war and who has the money like never before, and while black folks took to the streets in unprecedented numbers, millions of white folks understand that their lived experience with law enforcement and every other facet of their lives was different than that of an African American.

These movements galvanized, agitated, and mobilized, which brings us to one thing left to do: organize.

### The Need to Organize:

Well, you've read this far, so you must have been interested enough. So, we will take some license and be pedantic about some necessary next steps. We have touched on the questions of when there is an uprising, or a movement moment, and when we need to organize—that is go out and proactively talk to folks. And that is the simplest definition of organizing. Are we knocking on doors, making phone calls, and engaging in large scale one-on-one conversations with folks? After that are we asking them to get involved? If the answer is yes, and we are doing the work in a systematic way, then we are organizing.

It seems that there would be a strong correlation between uprisings or movement moments and the ease of organizing folks. In St. Louis, some months after Ferguson, traditional organizing groups put 1000 people in a room. A year later, 400 folks showed up for a debate among the chief prosecutor candidates. These are unprecedented numbers for turnout, and mostly with basebuilding groups not actually doing a higher level of outreach and recruitment than they had previous to August 9<sup>th</sup>.

Movements and uprisings go in cycles. People who dropped everything to go to Standing Rock, or occupy the streets of Ferguson, or camp out in a park are generally exhausted once that movement cycle comes to an end. Additionally, the people who were skilled uprising leaders, for example, may not inherently be the most patient people for the conversations needed to organize. They dropped everything to join a movement, so they may not be best qualified to do the hard listening and the reminders needed to move newer folks to action.

In a place with diverse movement infrastructure, there need to be new folks who are ready to pound the pavement. Traditional groups may claim this is their purview, and we should support community organizations doing that work, but not cede the whole arena to them. There are a huge number of innovative groups that have come out of Occupy. There is lots of local resistance to pipelines on indigenous land in places other than North Dakota. We should figure out how to support, with resources like training and real money, incorporation and legal issues, campaign strategies, and many other skills, those who want to do the basebuilding work over the long haul. We should also not expect that the same people who were front of the line are the ones who will want to do the basebuilding. And, for those of us more seasoned, we should always be thinking about how to offer up a range of skills at any moment to those who need them.

Occupy Our Homes grew out of Occupy and took advantage of the opportunity to organize at a time of uprising. In Minneapolis, one of the first places to organize Occupy Our Homes, organizers affiliated with unions and community groups doorknocked homeowners facing foreclosure, brought them to the general assembly, and immediately got occupiers to camp out on their lawns. Some parts of the progressive infrastructure not only put home defense materials up on-line, but also purchased delinquent homeowners lists and put trainers on the road who were able to teach occupiers how to organize home defenses. There were dedicated staff for on-line work as well, and Occupy Homes, and later the Home Defenders League, was one of the best examples of moving from an uprising to cutting-edge organizing.

It is also important not to be dogmatic about what is and is not organizing strategy. Uprisings change the complexion in a region. What seemed impossible one day is possible the next. And of course the entire political complexion of this country has changed over the last year and will change by leaps and bounds in 2017. Does it make sense to work on naming power, like the powerbehindthepolice.com? Or to consolidate local wins? Fight for a utopian vision? Make a long-term plan for structural change and power? Who knows? What we do know is that organizing is about the rigor of the work. Are we talking to folks? Are we counting number of conversations held, asks made, yeses gotten and people, doing work, in a room or in the streets? Some people can organize for a living, or make it a large commitment, while others consider it their political work. All of it is equally valuable.

We would end with this on the organizing front, be bold. Life is too short to not fight for the world in which you want to live.

Almost 7000 words later and we feel like we have barely scratched the surface of what is possible in an uprising. There are an infinite number of things to do and endless possibilities. We would like to end with three thoughts.

First, do what you think is necessary for the struggle, not what everyone else is doing. Know that you will have to use your own agency, no one else will tell you what to do during an uprising.

Second, find your crew. Whether you are in the streets or doing jail support, you will rapidly need people you can count on. With Trump in the White House and police forces about to become even more brutal, the resources of the state will be moving against us, and we will need affinity groups for support.

Third, you are making history! We all are, but you are going to be part of something that is changing this country, and maybe the world. Leave it all on the table, appreciate it, and be glad that you are on the side of freedom.

