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Jean Anyon

radical possibilities

public policy, urban education, and a new social movement

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How Do People Become Involved in Political Contention?

Preceding analyses of federal and metropolitan barriers to the opportunity of urban low-income people of color suggest that, if we are realistic, we will acknowledge the plethora of policy changes that must be accomplished in order to provide meaningful life chances for poor families and neighborhoods. These new opportunities—and their ultimate actualization by residents—will be crucial to the sustainability of urban school reform: Economic access and the improved social standing its fulfillment provides parents, students, and communities will be prerequisites to full funding and other educational opportunities in urban districts. But economic justice, this important precursor of systemic urban school reform, will not be achieved without concerted, sustained political struggle. Although activism for economic opportunity is necessary, educational reform must be a target of sustained contention, as well. As civil rights veteran Bob Moses has argued, urban students and communities will have to demand what many people say they do not want—quality education (2002, p. 20).

How do we carry out the political struggles that are needed? Where can we look for guidance?

My reading of American history, as I have stated throughout, is that social movements are catalysts for the enactment of social justice legislation, progressive court decisions, and other equity policy. In order to think deeply about how we might mobilize a unified force for economic and educational opportunities, I therefore turn to history. We can learn from stories of the past how

people developed social movements, and what encouraged actors to get involved. History also reveals relationships between public policy, equity, and contention. In turning to history for assistance, I could have chosen to study the labor movement, women's movement, or other social struggles. Because of my personal involvement in civil rights, I look there.

Recent historiography of African American protest during the first half of the 20th century has led me to two heartening conclusions. First, this early civil rights activity was incredibly important "spade work" that prepared the ground for the mass flowering of protest in the 1950s and '60s. The modern civil rights movement did not spring from untreated soil, as most schoolbooks imply. Rather, it grew slowly, developing roots and branches, over the years.

That this long development proved necessary prompts me to view optimistically our own future activity. Since the mid-1980s, a largely unpublicized building of protest for economic rights has taken place in America's cities. This has already prompted new policies—for example, Living Wage laws in 120 cities and counties (with over 70 more campaigns in progress). Organizing for educational justice in urban neighborhoods has grown, as well. This campaign is also bearing fruit. These burgeoning movements for minority rights will be described in the next chapter, along with three others that have recently illuminated the urban landscape. Civil rights history prompts us to understand these campaigns as the continuation of a long-term project.

The second conclusion I have come to is that even before a mass civil rights movement prompted far-reaching federal legislation like the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the dialectic between social activism and the promulgation of social justice policy was apparent. This, too, inspires confidence. Early protest for Black rights produced new, more equitable policy even in early decades of the 20th century, which led to an increase in activism and, in turn, additional equity policy. There were of course multiple causes of the ascendance of both protest and better policy, but the dialogue between them stands out clearly.

For example, activism by middle-class Black women's civic groups and the newly formed NAACP in the first decades of the 1900s led to the unconstitutionality of the "grandfather clause" as an exemption from literacy tests for voting, and led as well to the end of legal apartheid (legally defined Black and White zones of residence) in the Supreme Court decisions *Guinn v. United States* in 1915 and *Buchanan v. Warley* in 1917 (Fairclough, 2001, p. 82).

Black veterans returning from World War I angrily transgressed the Jim Crow strictures during the 1920s, and in the decade of the 1930s, public protest was continuous, as the Communist Party organized Black industrial workers in cities of the South and sharecroppers in the rural counties (Kelley, 1990). After numerous voter registration drives by African American civic leagues and radical youth groups like the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC) in this tumultuous decade, as well as three lawsuits by the NAACP, the Supreme Court declared all-White primaries unconstitutional in 1944 in *Smith v. Allright*. As a result of this decision, Southern voter registration drives increased many times over, and by the early 1950s the number of Black voters in the South had gone from a few thousand (in 1940) to about a million (Fairclough, 2001, p. 204). The symbiotic relationship between protest and good policy revealed in this early civil rights history should clarify the efficacy of public contention, and give us hope that our own efforts will yield results.

But how do we get people involved? How did Black Southerners come to the decision to take part in protest—despite frightening White reprisals? What social processes helped them to build a movment? And in our own time, what strategic, conceptual decisions and processes prompt people to engage in movement-building?

To think about these questions, I turn to social movement theory. The rest of this chapter appropriates new developments in the field, and uses examples from civil rights history to illustrate the theoretical constructs I develop. In this, I add my own effort to those of youth and adult organizers and activists who continually develop and utilize theoretical and historical concepts in their work.

Theoretical Constructs

Following the tumultuous 1960s, social movement theorists utilized several major concepts to explain how the social movements of that and other decades originate:

1. Changes in the economy or political system provide resources that can be mobilized to develop social movements.

2. Organizations offer insurgents valuable assistance in mobilization of available resources. A large body of evidence finds that organizational strength is correlated with challengers' ability to wrest concessions from governing elites.
3. Framing, a collective process of interpretation, links opportunity and action. Movements frame grievances within collective action frames that lend dignity to claims, connect them with other struggles, and help to produce a collective identity among participants.
4. Repertoires of contention (strikes, marches, sit-ins) are the means by which people engage in contentious collective action. The forms these actions take are a resource that actors can use to press their claims.

This classical approach yielded a research agenda that produced a large body of empirical evidence correlating the factors listed above with increases in activism (see Gamson 1990; Klandermans, Kriesi, and Tarrow, 1988; McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984; Snow et al., 1986; and Traugott, 1995).

However, classical social movement theory left individual actors out of the equation—and did not ask the question of how individuals actually get drawn into contentious politics. The role of personal agency remained unexplored: What allowed people who have (for years, perhaps their whole lives) been accommodating in their daily resistance to decide to participate in direct challenges?

Finally, classical theory did not assess interactions between the various factors it identified as leading to social movements, and did not identify component mechanisms and processes that might make up each category of explanation. The theory was a rather static chart of what happened in the various episodes and movements studied.

In 2001, Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly published *Dynamics of Contention*, which unpacked the classical concepts of social movement resources and "mobilizing structures." They identified constitutive mechanisms or processes of these and other theoretical constructs, and argued that these interact with one another in any number of ways to produce contentious politics. In this approach, the role of human agency is paramount, and explanations focus on the question of what social and cognitive processes involve people in protest.

I have engaged their theory, changed it some, and use the result in combination with several still relevant categories of the classical approach, to attempt to identify personal and social processes that assist people in producing sustained public contention. I have recast one other assumption of social movement theory, as well. Most scholarship on political movements partitions social protest into discrete "waves" of contention: Movements emerge, run their course, and abate. Long periods of quiescence or contention contained within the system follow months or years of overtly transgressive protest. This theoretical chunking captures an obvious truth. However, a different truth also characterizes movements for personal rights in the U.S., and that is their extremely long run. African Americans' political protest against segregation extends over the entire 20th century, and stretches ahead of us now—as do the struggles of Latinos, workers, and women. While various time periods witness more legally contained than socially transgressive activity, both kinds are present in most decades.

This continuity of protest over the long haul demonstrates that social movements do not necessarily die. They change and persist. Civil rights struggle, for example, continues—both quietly in courtrooms (regarding affirmative action, a living wage, urban education funding, immigrant and voting rights) and more noisily in transgressive public protest by community groups, parent and education organizers, faith-based organizations, and progressive labor unionists. Movement activities continue in organizing by the Industrial Areas Foundation and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, in outreach by the New York Center for Immigrant Rights, and in the cross-country freedom ride from California to Washington, DC, sponsored by immigrant-based progressive unions.

The following theoretical constructs attempt to capture personal and social processes and mechanisms by which people come to public protest and movement building.

Attribution of Opportunity

The first process I apply from *Dynamics of Contention* has to do with how people interpret changes in the political economy. For such change to encourage social protest, people must view developments as presenting opportunities for waging struggle (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001, pp. 58–59). The suburbanization of minority poverty, the deterioration of wage and job

opportunities and of the rewards for educational attainment, even the 2004 election of George W. Bush, need to be seen as openings through which to push for equity. This cognitive apprehension of new opportunities sometimes helps people see old arrangements in a new light: Situations that were previously understood as oppressive but immutable, can be re–imagined and viewed as useful.

Historical examples of this process include the use of the 19th Amendment, which extended the right to vote to women, to attempt to register Black women in the segregated South in 1920, although it was clear that most Whites did not interpret the suffrage amendment to include Black females. As I noted in the first section of this chapter, protest in each decade led to new policy, and each decision by the Supreme Court or Presidential Proclamation set people to work to take advantage of the new mandate.

There are less obvious examples of the process of attribution of opportunity, as well. In the 1930s and '40s, Blacks were becoming consumers as the cotton economy ailed and more farming families moved to Southern and Northern cities. Many realized that they had new leverage over businesses where they shopped. "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns of the 1930s, and sit-ins and boycotts of restaurants and other public facilities by Black college students in the 1940s, as well as 1947 Freedom Rides to test interstate bus segregation—all took advantage of the economic changes affecting African Americans (for descriptions of these activities see Fairclough 1995; Olson, 2001; and Payne, 1995).

Later, the mass boycotts of White-owned businesses and Southern bus companies—whose profits depended on Black ridership—were an opportunistic appreciation of the companies' dependence on Black ridership. Economic pressure on Southern Whites—through boycotts or sit-ins, for example—often brought quicker results than dealing with city politicians, or long, drawn out legal challenges (Payne 1995, pp. 328, 484; Raines 1983, p. 152; see also Fairclough, 2001; and Morris, 1984).

Occasionally governing groups are destabilized by world or domestic events. This weakening of the legitimacy of the government can be appropriated for ways it might enhance the possibilities of social protest. Most U.S. labor history exemplifies such decisions to understand crises as opportunities for mobilization: Workers and allies responded to the economic and social crises produced by industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries—and again during the Great Depression—and successfully organized for new laws that benefited labor, urban education, and women's suffrage.

The converse occurs as well: Concerted protest can foster the destabilization of elites and thereby stimulate change: Think of the movement against the Vietnam War and how this broad-based effort destabilized President Lyndon Johnson's administration, the ruling political and economic coalitions, and increased the pressure to end the war.

Indeed, it is sometimes necessary for social activists to decide they must create a crisis in order to force concessions from governing groups. The following description of civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham in 1963 illustrates this choice:

The strategy of the civil rights campaign in Birmingham was to paralyze the city through massive direct action. The plan was to bring out enough demonstrators and create mass arrests that would fill the jails. "The mobilization and deployment of thousands of protesters was key; without them social order could be maintained and the movement would fail" (Morris and Staggenborg, 2002, p. 38). At a crucial stage, movement leaders were not able to bring out enough demonstrators to fill the jails and the campaign seemed to be in jeopardy. Strategists decided to mobilize thousands of youth to engage in demonstrations. "The children filled the jails, clogged public spaces, and provoked the use of attack dogs, billy clubs and fire hoses, thereby precipitating the crisis needed to win the struggle" (p. 39). Political pressure caused disorder, destabilized the governing regime, and achieved massive social change in Birmingham.

Appropriation of Existing Organizations, Institutions, and Cultural Forms

Closely related to attribution of opportunity is the process whereby people actively appropriate existing organizations, institutions, and cultural forms. In this expression of personal agency, social institutions become more radical; change their function, purpose, and manner of operation; and are useful for transgressive politics. (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001, pp. 47–48).

The Southern Black church during the 1950s and 1960s is a salient instance of this process. Until the 1950s, most Black church leaders in the South (but not all congregants) saw their churches as preparation for salvation, not as a way to change the

present. In the 1950s, urban (and then some rural) congregants and pastors appropriated the church and transformed it into a major tool of the civil rights struggle. The extensive committee structure and community activities of women members were appropriated by congregants for civil rights; the format and activities of the Sunday service were altered somewhat by pastors to provide the structure and tone of mass political meetings; extensive, widespread church networks were energized and organized for planning and sharing protest information (see, for example, Morris, 1984).

Cultural forms such as music can be appropriated, as well. In 1946, the African American gospel song, "I'll Overcome Some Day," (the melody of which derives from the older 19th-century spiritual, "No More Auction Block for Me") was sung by several hundred Black employees of the American Tobacco Co. in Charleston, SC, when they were striking. One day a woman on the picket line, Lucille Simmons, changed the pronoun "I" to "We," and the singing continued using the plural. When a group of the strikers visited the Highlander Folk School, Pete Seeger heard them sing the song, and taught it to Guy Carawan and Frank Hamilton, who—almost three decades later—introduced it to the founding convention of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in North Carolina. The song, "We Shall Overcome," became the familiar anthem of the civil rights movement (Payne, 1995, p. 71; and Candovan and Candovan, 1983.)

These institutions and cultural forms were already part of Blacks' experience. Only minor, but crucial, alterations in focus, purpose, or mode of functioning needed to be made by individuals and groups.

Outsiders and Bicultural Brokers

Exogenous organizations can be appropriated for political mobilization, as well. This personal and social process is exemplified by Black Southerners' early use of the Communist Party. The U.S. Communist Party was an organization that originated outside the South. When it moved into Southern cities and rural areas in the 1930s, it brought resources to Black workers and farmers that they did not have: It provided a place and a forum for discussion, and a framework for understanding the roots of poverty and racism and for placing these in larger perspective. It assisted members in challenging the hegemony of White supremacy and Black elites, and created an atmosphere in which people could analyze, discuss, and criticize their society. The party offered an assurance of support and protection for transgressive activity; the presence of an organization engendered a sense of power (Kelley, 1990, pp. 93–94, 100, 108).

Southern Blacks appropriated the U.S. Communist Party and made it into a "race organization." The party was composed mostly of poor Blacks, rather than Whites from the North. The party and the CIO unions they organized became broad-based movements with a strong civil rights agenda, saturated in Black local culture, paying little heed to national or international Communist Party dicta (ibid., p. 151). Most of the members were semi-literate and devoutly religious, and long before congregants in the 1950s were appropriating aspects of the Black church to the political struggle, Southern Communist Party members were doing so. They developed strategies such as disguising political meetings as church meetings, and keeping minutes by underlining pertinent words or phrases in the Bible (p. 45). They transformed church songs into labor songs. "Give Me That Old-time Religion," for example, became "Give Me That Old Communist Spirit" and later was transformed into a song about the Scottsboro Boys (pp. 94, 105, 107).

In the 1930s, Black college students in the radical Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC) and later in the 1960s Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who traveled into the farm country of the South to organize sharecroppers and tenant farmers were "bicultural brokers" who brought perspectives gained from city living and higher education to the support of local people.

Many important and well-known events in later Southern civil rights history were brokered by bicultural men and women with Northern experience—A. Philip Randolph, SNCC convener Ella Baker, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Bob Moses, James Farmer, Andrew Young, and Martin Luther King, Jr. had all lived in the North.

Aldon Morris and Suzanne Staggenborg make a related point when they argue that outsiders (e.g., African American leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr.) who were relatively new to a city could be more effective than local leaders in pulling people together because they were not entrenched in any one faction in the city or area (2002, p. 43).

Creation of Regional Organizations

The role of organizations in social movements has been hotly debated. Piven and Cloward, for example, contend that organizations weaken social movements, because political insurgency tends to be abandoned as groups build hierarchy and procedure, and cooperate with government bureaucracies in attempts to further the interests of their members (1997). Aldon Morris, on the other hand, demonstrates that without the strength and reach of the well-organized Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) and its ability to bring local groups together in the South, the civil rights movement might have faltered (1984). Most likely, successful social movements need different kinds of organizations at different times, and even different kinds of organizations contemporaneously. But an umbrella group is crucial. Series of protests do not become a movement without some form of organization to coordinate and create synergy and overall direction.

The analysis in Part II of this book demonstrated the importance of regions in the maintenance of inequity in the U.S. The civil rights movement in the 1950s and'60s in the South was prescient in its regionalism. One of the most important features of the movement in those decades was what Morris calls "movement centers"—civil rights organizations made up of other organizations. These were more than coalitions: They were formally organized but partly autonomous; regional, yet rooted in localities. SCLC, formed in 1957 by groups that had collaborated to guide the Montgomery bus boycott, may be the best example. This regional organization was able to provide strength to local struggles by sending in resources, and acting as a "rudder," as King put it, to the movement. Regional groups connected local problems to state and national issues, and were crucial in creating a national movement (see Fairclough, 1995, pp. 319, 379; also Morris, 1984).

Other regional organizations (Congress of Racial Equality or CORE, SNCC, and the Council of Federated Organizations or COFO, a coalition of all the civil rights groups in Mississippi) were less formally structured than SCLC, but their spread over wide areas gave them a broad reach and allowed them to create a synergy between small groups of civil rights workers.

Leadership Development

The development and role of leadership in social movements is not well theorized (Aminzade, Goldstone, and Perry, 2001; and Morris and Staggenborg, 2002). Scholars debate what kind of leadership works best—individual or group, hierarchical or democratic, indigenous or exogenous, or a mix (Ganz, 2000; Marx and Useem, 1971; an d Morris and Staggenborg, 2002).

But one thing is certain: Civil Rights leaders in the 1950s and'60s did not drop from the sky fully formed. They emerged out of participation in the struggle. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, emerged as a leader during the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–56, as the following account of this process makes clear.

E.D. Nixon and fellow civil rights leaders in Montgomery had been examining the backgrounds of people arrested for refusing to give up their seats on city buses for several years, and finally found a perfect candidate in NAACP activist Rosa Parks (Raines, 1983). Until her arrest and the resulting boycott, most Black ministers of Montgomery had shied away from public attempts to fight segregation (Olson, 2001, p. 114). But at Parks' arrest, the riders of Montgomery's buses—mostly women, going to and from their jobs as maids, cooks, beauticians, and cleaning ladies—erupted with fervor, and seemed ready to boycott the buses with leadership from the ministers or without them (ibid., p. 114.)

At Dexter Ave. Baptist Church, newly arrived, 26-year-old Martin Luther King, who had not yet finished his doctoral dissertation, resisted the attempts of his friend Reverend Ralph Abernathy to get involved. King refused, saying he was not ready to take on a commitment to social protest; he wanted to dedicate himself to developing his preaching and prove himself to his well-educated congregation. But he did agree to open his church to a planning meeting (pp. 113–114).

When King and Abernathy arrived at the church for the meeting, they were met with hundreds of women (and some men) who were ready to go ahead with a boycott. In the wake of their enthusiasm, Montgomery's Black leaders formed a new group to develop the boycott (the Montgomery Improvement Association), and Abernathy was astonished when newcomer King accepted the presidency.

The boycott lasted over a year, and would ultimately involve the vast majority of Montgomery's 50,000 citizens—not only maids and cooks but beauticians, janitors, teachers, doctors, and college professors. It was the largest prolonged defiance of racial discrimination in the country's history (pp. 116, 118). And it was from his work during those turbulent days that Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged as a civil rights leader.

King and other well-known leaders who traveled the country generating support for civil rights were dependent on the organizing work of local leaders, most of whom were neighborhood women. The process of establishing links and connections with grassroots organizations provided the mass support for the large protests. The women formed "bridges" between regional and local groups (Collier-Thomas and Franklin, 2001, p. 3; see Barnett, 1993; and Robnett, 1997).

Most of the participants in mass mobilizations in the South were not well educated or middle class. They were working class and poor. As Charles Payne demonstrates, they were sharecroppers, day laborers, laundresses, and cooks. They were "yardmen and maids, cab drivers, beauticians, barbers, custodians and field hands" (1995, p. 133). It was these people who made up the mass of the movement, and from whom local leaders emerged as the struggle progressed.

Over the many decades of civil rights history, participation in Citizenship Schools developed activist leaders. Begun by African American women's groups in the 1920s, utilized by the Communist Party and SNYC in the 1930s and early 1940s, then picked up by Septima Clark and Ella Baker in the '50s, Citizenship—or Freedom Schools, as they came to be known—not only taught civics and literacy for voter registration but discovered and developed local community leadership (Kelley, 1990, p. 213; Collier-Thomas and Franklin, 2001, p. 112). Citizenship Schools were highly successful, and were subsequently developed by CORE, NAACP, and SNCC. Almost 900 of the schools operated in the South between 1961 and 1970 and many women (and a few male) leaders emerged from those schools. Teachers frequently became grassroots leaders, and in many cases they replaced local clergy as community leaders. Andrew Young and *Sweet Honey in the Rock* singer Beatrice Reagon got their start in the movement in this way (Rouse 2001, pp. 113, 115, 117).

Other leaders emerged from their participation in more confrontational protest: Fannie Lou Hamer, for example, a challenger

of Lyndon Johnson and leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964, had a sharecropping background, and developed leadership skills through immersion in the struggle to develop an alternative political party to the Democrats in Mississippi (ibid., p. 139).

It is entirely possible that without the movement, many local women would not have had a forum through which to develop as community leaders; and it is probably true that without their leadership, the movement would not have developed the mass base that it had. Many experienced activists argued that "[voter] registration drives were more successful to the degree they could be locally organized and staffed, which [the activists] attributed to the importance of 'intimate knowledge of [the] conditions, psychology and people' involved" (quoted in Payne, 1995, p. 247).

Centrality of Youth

A crucial process in the development of the civil rights movement was the active participation of youth. James Farmer and other CORE activists in the 1940s were graduate students in their 20s, as was Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1954. The 400,000 American Blacks who fought in World War I and their descendants in World War II were most likely in their late teens or early 20s (Vincent, 1972, p. 33; Cronon, 1955, p. 28). Most members of SNYC in the 1930s, and SNCC in the '60s were college students. Indeed, throughout the 20th century, sit-ins, boycotts, and "freedom rides" were planned and carried out primarily by students and other youth. High school girls and boys often took part—and sometimes played leadership roles in—civil rights activity in Southern cities and farmlands (see, among others, Chafe, Gavins, and Korstad, 2001; Olson, 2001; and Payne, 1995).

Writing about Greenwood, MS, Bob Moses argued: "We can't count on adults. Very few who 'have the time' and are economically independent of the white man are willing to join the struggle, and are not afraid of the tremendous pressure they will face. This leaves the young people to be the organizers, the agents of social and political change. . . . [I]t is a sign of hope that we have been able to find young people to shoulder the responsibility for carrying out the voting drive. They are the seeds of change" (quoted in Payne, 1995, p. 250).

Student movements in the U.S., France, Italy, Mexico, and Spain in the 1960s, and in Tiananmen Square in 1989 China

attest to the importance of youth leadership in the struggle for social justice. Indeed, it is doubtful that social movements would develop at all without central participation of the young. As I will discuss in detail in Chapter 10, the crucial role played by youth is one of the reasons that concerned U.S. educators should be at the center of efforts to build a social movement.

Many educators comment on the widespread anger of urban youth today. Some theorists argue that anger can be politically mobilizing. Social movement scholar Sydney Tarrow, for example, reasons that emotions like anger, love, loyalty, and reverence are clearly more mobilizing than others, such as despair and resignation. Anger can be 'vitalizing' and is more likely to be present in triggering acts of resistance, whereas other emotions, like resignation or depression, are 'devitalizing' (1998, p. 111; Gameson, 1992; Melucci, 1996). Chapter 10 provides concrete suggestions for how we can appropriate the anger of youth to constructive political ends.

Community Organizing

Although the fact is not often acknowledged, one of the most important strategies of civil rights work throughout the 20th century was community organizing (see Payne, 1995, for full development of this theme). Working in neighborhoods, using local networks and contacts to urge residents to participate in resistance activities, was central to civil rights protest both North and South. Barely past her teenage years in 1916, Septima Clark taught and organized rural families on St. John's Island in North Carolina; Ella Baker mentored a Socialist group in 1920s Harlem; Socialist A. Philip Randolph and other union organizers went door to door for the Pullman Porters in 1920s Chicago; the Communist Party organized men, women, and families in communities North and South; SNYC college students registered sharecroppers to vote in the 1930s and organized Southern farm workers; and Robert Moses and other young SNCC workers lived and worked in rural communities in the 1960s. All of these activities were part of the tradition of community organizing.

Experienced community organizers describe the strategies they used to "open up a town" to voting drives. One registration worker "frequently found that the real leaders were not the people in places of position. An elderly woman of no title and with no organizational support might be highly influential simply

because she was noted as a kind of personal problem-solver. Sometimes, such a person, because of her effectiveness in small matters and the trust consequently built, could be a key figure in efforts to persuade people to register to vote in a difficult area" (in Payne, 1995, pp. 248–249).

Another community organizer said he would go for the persons who were economically independent of Whites and their reprisal: " . . . the undertaker, the grocers, the preachers. Then he would go to the school principal. . . . Having made contact with these, he would assume that he had discovered the . . . community leaders. . . . He would regard the deacons of the churches . . . as very important to anything he undertook" (Payne, 1995, p. 249).

In other cases, neutralizing Black middle-class leaders was an important first task: "I would do this to neutralize them. They do not usually oppose having the job done—they want it done, but they don't want to be embarrassed if someone else does it and they are left out. After seeing [the middle-class leaders] I would find people prepared to work hard for recognition. Then I'd try to wed the two together and monitor the group" (ibid., p. 250). The process of community organizing, not often thought of as part of civil rights movement-building, was in fact an important strategy throughout.

Social Construction of New Identities through Participation in Transgressive Politics

Re-imagining economic developments, institutions, and cultural forms as potentially oppositional does not by itself bring social change. And developing "critical consciousness" in people through information, readings, and discussion does not by itself induce them to participate in transgressive politics—although it provides a crucial base of understanding. To activate people to create or join a social movement, it is important to actually involve them in protest activity of some kind (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly, 2001, p. 62; see also Meyer, 2002, and Payne, 1995 among others).

To make this point, the authors of *Dynamics of Contention* argue that people do not "become political" and then take part in contention; rather, participation in contention creates new, politicized identities: "*[I]dentities modify in the course of social interaction*" (p. 126). In other words, shifts in political identity do not so much *motivate* contentious political action, as develop as

a logical *consequence* of it (p. 320). One develops a political identity and commitment—a change in consciousness—from talking, walking, marching, singing, attempting to vote, "sitting in," or otherwise demonstrating with others.

Not only do personal identities change as people become involved in protest, but gradually new categories of social actors emerge from the process: Participation by individuals over time in concerted struggle creates new political categories and groups. The rebellions that created the French Revolution also created the "sans-culottes," (who refused to wear the pants of elites as a protest) and ultimately produced the "French citizen" as a class of political actors (pp. 55–63). Indeed, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly argue that "contentious politics always involves the social construction of 'politically relevant categories' such as (for example) feminists, civil rights activists, or 'suffragettes' (p. 58).

As Southern sharecroppers began to register to vote, and continued in this politically contentious activity, a new collective identity was constructed by them individually and as a group: They came to see themselves, and they became—individually and as a "class"—a new category: Black citizens who were entitled to representation, entitled to their rights.

Such "signifying work" was evident at the close of the successful Montgomery bus boycott in 1956. As Martin Luther King noted, the courageous, organized, successful actions of the participants in the boycott "had rendered the conventional identities—members of this or that congregation [or] 'our Negroes', for example—inadequate descriptors" of the celebrants (p. 319). After the boycott, King described the "new Negro:" "[W]e walk in a new way. We hold our heads in a new way" (p. 319). The boycott not only changed the laws in Montgomery but helped to create, and became an expression of, "a new collective identity among Southern blacks generally"—a result of mass participation in the 381-day protest (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001, p. 320).

Creation of Innovative Action Repertoires

As people participate in contention, they develop new strategies of action out of everyday activities, routines, and cultural forms. During the French Revolution, for example, barricades—which were originally erected to protect neighborhoods from thieves—were turned into protection from authorities trying to quell the

neighborhood rebellions (ibid., p. 41). Sit-down strikes from the labor movement in the 1930s became sit-ins at lunch counters and other public facilities throughout the South in the next decades.

This creative process of turning everyday activity into strategies of rebellion over the centuries has included effigies, boycotts, and nonimportation; petitioning, attacks on a wrongdoer's house, assaults on a miller's grain store, collective use of public space; occupation of buildings; songs, industrial sabotage, legal action, violent encounters, organized public demonstrations, rent strikes, refusal to pay taxes, interstate bus rides and "die-ins" (by gay activists). Clothing has been used as a form of protest—the sans-culottes of the French Revolution, and women's bloomers, for example (ibid.).

Strategic repertoires are often created "on the spot," in the heat of action. They include slogans and symbols that resonate with the protesters' demands, and have powerful connotations. For example, the call for "Black Power" was coined in 1966 during a march to protest the killing of NAACP activist James Meredith in Mississippi. One of the SNCC marchers, Willie Ricks, shouted "power for black people." Shortened to "Black Power," it was picked up and chanted by other marchers, and ultimately made famous by Stokeley Carmichael and the Black Panthers (The Staff of Black Star Publishing, 1970, p. 44).

We see that as political identities emerge from participation in protest, repertoires of action and altered cultural forms develop concurrently, as people take part in contentious politics.

Appropriation of Threat

The infamous Bull Connor—who began his crusade against integration and civil rights activists as Birmingham city commissioner in the late 1930s—was but one of tens of thousands of Southern officials who for many decades attempted to intimidate Blacks and ward off protest with violence (Fairclough, 2001, p. 276). Television transmission of this violence in the 1960s helped to delegitimate such tactics in the mind of the nation. Civil rights demonstrators learned how to make use of the violence by kneeling in a prayerful position in the face of it—not only as a means of protecting themselves but as a way of highlighting a peaceful posture and the unfairness of the officials' behavior. In this strategic mechanism, protestors were appropriating Connor's violence for their own ends.

Nonviolent civil disobedience was a process long used by Black activists. As Adam Fairclough reminds us, "the practice of staging nonviolent protests in the hope that the oppressor would react violently [and thus discredit himself] was fundamental to the Gandhian concept of *satyagraha*, or civil disobedience (2001, p. 277). Martin Luther King, Jr., described this concept and his and the SCLC's use of it in his "Letter from Birmingham City Jail:" "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create . . . a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue" (p. 276). When the SCLC launched demonstrations in Bull Connor's Birmingham in 1963, they were using this tactic, and appropriating official violence. To do this, they needed to attempt to appropriate the media. Andrew Young explained, "We wanted the world to know what was going on in the South. We had to craft a concise and dramatic message that could be explained in just sixty seconds. That was our media strategy" (p. 278). Blatant provocation of violence by the protestors would have destroyed the sympathy of television viewers.

Members of SNCC in 1964 appropriated the social status of White college students from the North in order to obtain federal protection for civil rights workers. SNCC invited 1,000 students from elite colleges to Mississippi to participate in extremely dangerous rural voter registration drives during the summer of 1964 (see Carson, 2001; McAdam, 1988; also Fairclough, 2001; and Payne, 1995). The federal government had not fulfilled the promise of the 1957 Civil Rights Bill to protect civil rights workers, and the murder and beatings of Black civil rights participants continued.

As SNCC executive staff meeting minutes reveal, members knew that the death of a White college student would attract national attention. One staff member argued, "We must bring the reality of our situation to the nation. Bring our blood to the White House door" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 285). The disappearance and ultimate death of three civil rights workers—two of whom were White Northerners—created a national uproar, and forced the FBI into supporting protestors in the South (ibid.).

Appropriation of Social Networks

Doug McAdam analyzed the applications of the Northern college students who applied to be part of Freedom Summer. He found

that of the 1,000 applicants accepted into the program, those who came South to participate "were more likely to be members of civil rights (or allied) groups, have friends involved in the movement, and have more extensive histories of civil rights activity prior to the summer . . . in fact nothing distinguish[ed] the two groups more clearly than this contrast [in 'social proximity' to the project]" (1988, p. 65; see also McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, 132).

McAdams's analysis suggests that belonging to a social group or network increases the chances that a person will decide to participate in contentious politics; and in this phenomenon we also find important evidence that initial participation makes *further* participation more likely.

In the South, leaders of civil rights groups used local networks to publicize and implement transgressive activity. They found that the best way to spread the word about upcoming demonstrations was to request that ministers announce it at Sunday morning services. During bus boycotts in Baton Rouge in 1953, and later in Montgomery, dense networks of residents provided carpooling for people to get to work (Morris, 1984, p. 58). Later, networks of Black college students in campus NAACP chapters were behind the rapid spread of sit-ins to cities throughout the South in 1960 and '61 (p. 198).

Cross-class and Cross-generation Alliances

Although it is the case that, generally speaking, social groupings make their own movements—workers, the labor movement; middle-class White women, the feminist movement; gays and lesbians—their own sympathizers from other groups are often involved, as well. Civil rights struggles throughout the 20th century have involved the participation, to varying degrees, of Whites and Blacks of all social classes. Consider the African American and Caucasian professionals in the 1900s NAACP and Black women's civic organizations; the middle-class pioneers such as A. Philip Randolph in the 1920s and '30s; middle-class Black college students of the 1930s and '40s, and Black and White college students of the '60s; consider White elites who "defected" to enter the struggle full time (Allard Lowenstein, Anne Braden, Bob Zellner, for example).

Civil rights history was also blessed by a number of family activist traditions. Longtime activist Ella Baker was inspired by her mother's involvement in the Black Baptist women's mis-

sionary movement of the early 1900s; 1960s radical Angela Davis learned social justice from her mother, a 1930s SNYC member and teacher who was close to the Communist Party. Malcolm X's father was an admirer of Separatist Marcus Garvey in the 1920s; Martin Luther King, Jr., Septima Clark, and many others had parents who were social activists (Collier-Thomas and Franklin, 2001, p. 44; Kelley, 1990, pp. 203, 234; see also Olson, 2001).

Charles Payne notes that many of the core activists in Mississippi came from families with traditions of overt defiance or activism: James Meredith, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Robert Moses (1995, pp. 233–234). Discussing the movement in Greenwood in the 1960s, Payne remarks,

> The people who formed much of the core of the movement . . . frequently came from families with similar traditions of social involvement or defiance, subtle or overt. These were the people who joined earliest and often the people who worked hardest. In [some] cases defiance takes the form of explicit political involvement pre-dating [the arrival of civil rights workers]. In other cases, it takes the form of self-conscious attempts to shape the way in which children thought about race and in ways that go beyond the familiar custom of telling children that they were just as good as whites. . . . The common thread is a refusal to see oneself as merely acted upon, as merely victim. (ibid.)

There are certainly many activist families whose history we do not yet know. But these examples suggest that a good deal of political learning and development takes place outside of educational institutions, and is an important resource for movement building.

Communities have memories, as well, and these can be an important source of support. In the 1960s, young Stokely Carmichael and a handful of other SNCC organizers moved into the Black belt Lowndes County where in the 1930s SNYC and the Communist Party had worked. To Carmichael's surprise, poor farmers of all ages, especially older ones, came to the first meetings "enthusiastic and fully armed" (Kelley, 1990, pp. 229–230). Some of the residents had been participants in battles in Lowndes County 30 years before, when SNYC and the Communist Party had organized there. Charles Smith, one of the 1960s Black leaders in Lowndes County, was a former party member active in

1935, and had been a labor organizer on the docks in Mobile. He turned his home into SNCC's living and working quarters and offered sustenance and leadership. As Robin Kelly notes, "The radical thirties were part of the collective memory of the [Lowndes] County's families" and facilitated the protests of the 1960s (ibid.).

Social Contradiction as an Impetus for Radical Action

The ghetto explosions in American cities of the late 1960s were in part a result of dashed expectations of the millions of Southern Blacks who had fled Jim Crow hoping to find freedom and jobs in the North and were dearly disappointed by what they encountered. This profound disappointment is an example of the power of social contradictions to stimulate revolt. Other contradictions have also stimulated activism.

Rising education levels have often been associated with rebellion against social strictures—as, for example, when the preprofessional training that became widely available to women in college courses in the 1960s bumped up against corporate hiring procedures and the "glass ceilings" that well-educated women experienced upon their arrival in business and professional life. This contradiction between their preparation and lack of opportunity motivated many to join the modern women's movement. The influx of Black Southern college students in the 1930s and '40s, emboldened by new knowledge, were motivated to participate more fully in civic and economic protest against a society that would not acknowledge them.

The labor movement, too, has been informed by contradictions: the contrast, for example, between the ideology and practice of democracy in the civil sphere versus the loss of personal rights in the workplace. This has long been a source of frustration, and has certainly motivated workers over the years to take part in labor union organizing.

War, as well, will point up contradictions in American society. In 1919, Du Bois explained the consequences of fighting for the freedom of others when one's own was not assured. He argued that this experience in World War I would change forever the consciousness of the Black soldiers: They would "never be the same again. . . . You need not ask them to go back to what they were before. They cannot, for they are not the same men anymore" (in Bates, 2001, p. 28).

The contradiction between U.S. rhetoric of freedom and the reality of brutal oppression of Black citizens in the South haunted U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War that dominated foreign relations by 1947. Federal officials were caught in the contradiction of criticizing the Soviet Union for oppression that was becoming more and more evident at home as protests grew in number. This contrast certainly contributed to the relatively strong support of civil rights by Presidents Truman and Eisenhower (Dubziak, 2000, p. 11).

The Process of Legitimation

As news of the mass mobilizations grew in the 1950s and'60s, and especially as television stations broadcast pictures of Whites beating and hosing Black protesters, a national consensus formed that the goals and values of the protesters were legitimate. The overwhelming size of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom—250,000 strong and the largest demonstration in the nation's history at the time—lent moral backing to the civil rights movement and forced the active support of President Kennedy and other federal officials for congressional civil rights legislation—namely the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and, later, the 1968 Fair Housing Act (Williams, 2003, p. 25).

The process of federal government certification of the legitimacy of the civil rights crusade had developed slowly—beginning with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's edict #8802 in 1941, which outlawed the discrimination of Black workers in the military (Bates, 2001, p. 10). The *Brown* decision's rejection of the "separate but equal" doctrine in 1954 put the U.S. government on the side of public integration, and legitimated the intense political struggle for equal educational and other public rights that followed.

An important federal acknowledgment of the movement itself came in the form of the 1957 Civil Rights Act, which made interfering with a person's right to vote illegal. This act empowered the Justice Department to investigate the harassment and murder of activists (although, as we have seen, it was tragically slow to do so) (Fairclough, 2001, p. 240).

Without national consensus, and without certification by a federal authority—and the protection this would provide—White Southern violence and the states' rights that allowed it would probably have escalated to the point where Blacks would have

found it difficult if not impossible to maintain the struggle. National consensus and ultimate certification by authorities are important if movements are to reach their national potential (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001, p. 158).

Social movement theory and the history of political movements—in this case civil rights—provide a rich tapestry of possibility. Images of suffering, rebellion, and victory grace the walls of the American past. If we are willing, we can appropriate this brocade, and design the future with it.

Knowledge of history and theory, in other words, should give us hope, and could provide confidence that, with appropriate effort, we can lift economic and educational burdens that oppress the U.S. poor. But, you may respond, we live in a conservative time, with government suspicion of protest heightened, motivated by terrorism and war; the current landscape is not hospitable. History reminds us, however, that rarely does the status quo seem to invite rebellion. It takes the active appropriation of whatever conditions exist to begin transforming the present. The next chapter argues that the present is, in fact, rife with radical possibilities.

9

Building a New Social Movement

I have argued that federal and other public policies severely delimit educational opportunity in urban school systems. I have also argued that even when school reform succeeds it fails—as there are few, if any, positive consequences for students' futures. The analysis suggests that solutions to the problems of city schools should not be limited to reforms addressing class size, standardized testing, and small schools. We need solutions to the problems of urban education that are considerably more comprehensive—that provide foundational support for the schools and their reform. We need policies that deal with the complex causes of the poverty of the schools in which teachers and students, neighborhoods, and families are caught. Joblessness, low wages, and concentrated segregation of poor families all create formidable barriers to urban educational equity and reward.

How are we going to obtain policies that will help us to remove macroeconomic and regional barriers to systemic school change and economic access? We need to double the minimum wage, create decently paying jobs in cities, and provide transportation to where suburban jobs are located. We need to tax great personal and corporate wealth to pay for this public investment and share proceeds among rich and poor municipalities in U.S. metro areas. Most of these programs would threaten America's corporate elites and the politicians dependent on their largesse, and may indeed appear impractical to sympathetic readers.

Critical social scholars on the left usually end their books with a list of policy recommendations, but rarely risk putting forth strategies for the policies' realization. Authors may feel there is too much risk involved in charting a path that may appear incendiary to elites, or unrealistic to others.

I am taking this risk. I have been arguing that to obtain policies that could set the stage for economic and educational justice, we need to apply the pressure that a social movement can provide; this and the final chapter make explicit suggestions for implementing that goal.

Consider that before the civil rights movement, many Southern Whites said that sharecroppers and tenant farmers did not *want* to vote—they were "apathetic"; or they were "content"; and some Black farmers told Robert Moses and other civil rights workers that they had not wanted to get involved in "dat mess" (Moses, 2001, p. 17). Yet sharecroppers and tenant farmers were central to the mass movement that emerged in the 1950s.

Interestingly, the decade of the 1950s was not a radical time. McCarthyism and the prosecution of former radicals certainly must have given would-be activists pause. Yet a mass movement did develop in that decade, and in a little over ten years wiped away the most egregious racist policies and practices. It is true that the civil rights movement did not eliminate all barriers to voting (think of Florida in the 2000 presidential election); and it failed to remove basic determinants of racial injustice such as lack of jobs, poverty wages, segregated housing, and underperforming city schools. But the primary goal of the civil rights movement was voting and citizenship rights, and in that it was, in the main, successful. The movement ultimately changed federal and state laws, American mores of acceptability, many institutional practices, and U.S. culture. To argue that the civil rights movement failed is to trivialize the mass oppression that went before.

It is our turn now, and we can move the task forward. Many millions of African Americans, Latinos, and immigrants continue to suffer from economic and educational injustice. We could certainly increase the radical outcome of this moment in history by working to create a social movement that would force the issue on education, jobs, and housing. Building a social movement is, of course, a monumental task, but I would argue it is no greater a task than that faced by our compatriots in 1950.

Indeed, the beginning years of the 21st century are—at least in regard to civil rights and education—not unlike the 1950s, with both times being ostensibly conservative while at the same time having potentially revolutionary legal structures at the ready. By 1954 and the *Brown* decision that separate public facilities are unconstitutional, over 30 years of effort had resulted in significant Supreme Court and presidential policy providing legal ground for Black citizenship—and an impetus for further activism.

Similarly, the year 2000 brought with it 25 years of legal battles at the state level to remove urban educational inequities. Over 70% of these court cases have been successful and many new state mandates have been written by the courts; more than a few await full funding. The passage of the federal "No Child Left Behind" legislation in 2002 gave further legal grounding to equity demands, despite the many limitations of the act. In regard to jobs and housing there are multiple antidiscrimination laws on the books (most resulting from the civil rights movement), which have not been fully enforced, but the very existence of which could provide important leverage for new demands.

Other similarities between then and now include the fact that in 1950 there was a stable urban Black working class at the same time that a much larger group of Black farming families had been made economically redundant by the industrialization of agriculture, the demise of labor-intensive cotton farming, and the absence of protective federal or state policy. These millions of displaced workers—and their urban working-class peers—formed an important constituency of the mass insurgency. Today we are in an analogous period of the Black political economy: A small group of Blacks are in middle-class positions—one result of the civil rights struggle and resulting progressive policy—while the vast majority have again been economically disenfranchised, this time by policies that regulate the terms of an information economy and remove opportunity from urban communities. These millions, too, could provide a mass base for a new social movement.

It may seem that the despair and sense of futility alleged to characterize America's current urban poor are similar to the fatalism that was said to keep earlier rural Blacks from mass rebellion in the segregated South. Even if this is the case, it is also true that fatalism provides but a fragile dam against the onslaught of a mass social movement. We can, like organizers of earlier

decades, mobilize the underlying rage, and channel the energy that is released.

Indeed, there are already a number of existing, smaller, social movements in urban areas—constituted primarily by people of color who live there. There is more activism in 21st-century urban neighborhoods than at any time since the Black Panthers and Young Lords of the 1960s. This chapter will describe five current but not well-known movements, and will then suggest, using lessons from a theorized history, what we could do to build a unified and strengthened movement for social justice. The final chapter puts urban education at the center of this effort.

Already Existing Social Movements

We do not have to build a social movement for economic and educational rights from scratch. Five separate but interrelated movements have been growing rapidly since the late 1980s. They are renewed community organizing for economic justice in cities, an increasingly sophisticated movement of education and parent organizers in urban neighborhoods, an active group of progressive labor unions whose members are immigrant and other minority workers, a living wage movement in municipalities across the country, and an emerging movement of organized inner-city youth.

Community Organizing

A good number of the 7.5 million grassroots groups in this country advocate for progressive causes; and most of the 3,000 Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are politically liberal as well. Many grassroots groups and CDCs organize residents in their neighborhoods. But the community organizing movement has been led by two large, well-established progressive groups—the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). Both of these engage in not only local but regional and state struggles against the underlying "rules of the game." Both have a national presence.

ACORN is the nation's largest organization of low- and moderate-income families, with about 150,000 member families organized into 750 neighborhood chapters in 60 cities across the country (http://www.acorn.org). ACORN has been organizing low- and moderate-income communities for over 30 years around such issues as affordable housing, public safety, predatory lending, living wage, community reinvestment, and most recently, education.

ACORN activists are skilled at public demonstrations that call out parents and community residents in high-profile, media-covered events. The *New York Times* gave extensive coverage to ACORN's successful 2002 effort to organize Brooklyn, NY, parents to vote against privatization of a local school by Edison, Inc. Acorn and the parents then began pressuring the Board of Education to provide increased resources to the school. ACORN has recently launched ambitious political campaigns aimed at state legislatures, including a press for $10 million from the state of Illinois to increase parent engagement in Chicago school reform.

Since 1999, ACORN has been engaged in a major effort to protect urban neighborhoods from predatory lending by companies such as Wells Fargo. Predatory loans are made in concentrated volume in poor and minority neighborhoods where better loans are not readily available. The loss of equity and foreclosure when the loans cannot be repaid at the high interest can devastate already fragile communities. ACORN has been campaigning to stop these abuses by promoting state legislation and federal regulation, putting pressure on particular offenders, and education and outreach in communities.

They have played a leading role in passing city and state legislation to restrict this practice, winning reforms from federal regulators, and waging an ongoing fight to block a bill in Congress aimed at preempting state and local protections. ACORN has organized thousands of victims of predatory loans to tell their stories and to get involved in efforts to keep others from encountering the same problems. These ACORN members have protested at lending company offices and the homes of CEOs, rallied outside legislative sessions, and testified in city, state, and federal hearings. At the same time, neighborhood actions have prevented foreclosures and forced lenders to repair the worst loans, empowering ACORN members to keep pushing for bigger victories.

The other community organizing group with a national presence is the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The IAF is an organization of organizations, primarily of churches in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. IAF employs about 150 full-time professional organizers. There are about 60 IAF locals in 20

states and Washington, DC. These groups are made up of nearly three thousand congregations and associations and tens of thousands of ministers, pastors, some rabbis, women religious leaders, and state and metropolitan lay and civic leaders. Between three and four million Americans are members (Gecan, 2002, p. 4).

The IAF is descended from the organization of the same name started by Saul Alinksy in 1940 in Chicago. The IAF does not organize around issues until it has organized a neighborhood. They begin by meeting with leaders and members of churches and associations that reflect the racial and religious diversity of a community. They are financially independent: Local leaders and institutions must commit their own dues money of $250,000 for organizing projects before they may pursue foundation money. The IAF trains neighborhood residents and leaders from local congregations in 10-day institutes that develop residents' skills of organizing, writing petitions, negotiating with city hall, and public speaking. The "iron rule" of the IAF is "Don't do for others what they can do for themselves" (p. 10; see also Shirley, 1997 and 2002; and Warren, 2001).

Member congregations of the IAF are organized in a federated regional and state structure that gives them power on a larger level without abandoning the priorities and ultimate authority of local organizations (Warren, 2001, p. 74). State IAF networks cannot dictate to local affiliates. Leaders from local organizations develop state policy, as they meet to build relationships or social capital, bridging across localities and local racial groupings (ibid., p. 75). With its federated structure, the IAF overcomes the limitations of local organizing, and yet does not become a national or regional organization that has no real ties to its local constituents.

The IAF used this strategy with success in Texas in its school reform efforts—the Alliance Schools program. By 1999, the program covered over 100 schools, and had pressured the state legislature to substantially increase the funding, resources, and technical expertise of each school. There has been improvement in test scores. However, the main success of the Alliance Initiative is the development of a culture of engagement, protest, and organization among the parents and communities in which the schools are located. IAF affiliates in Albuquerque, Tucson, Phoenix, and Omaha, in addition to the rest of the Southwest, have joined the IAF in these efforts (ibid., p. 85; see also Shirley, 1997 and 2002). In Brooklyn and Bronx, New York City, IAF founded three public

high schools; two are among the highest performing schools in the city (Gecan, 2004, p. 8).

Education Organizing

The second already existing movement, part of and yet distinct from community organizing, is organizing specifically for school reform, or education organizing—which describes the actions of parents and other community residents to change neighborhood schools through an "intentional building of power" (Mediratta and Fruchter, 2001, p. 5). Larger groups doing education organizing are part of the IAF/ACORN universe described above, but many additional groups are involved as well (Brown, 2003, in Lopez, 2003, p. 1). Education organizing aims to create social capital in communities, and to encourage parents and other residents to utilize their collective strength to force system change (Giles, 1998, p. 2). Education organizing attempts to build leadership in parents by providing skill training, mentoring, and opportunity for public actions (Lopez, 2003, p. 4). Parents conduct community and school surveys, speak at rallies, mobilize other parents and community residents, and plan and enact campaigns aimed at school and district personnel and practices (ibid., p. 4; see also Collaborative Communications Group, 2003, p. 17).

Because education organizing gives parents a base outside of school—typically in alliance with other community groups—parents are not dependent on school personnel for approval or legitimacy (Lopez, 2003, p. 2; see also Zachary and Olatoye, 2001). When successful, parent organizing in poor communities yields the clout that parents create among themselves in affluent suburbs, where, with their skills and economic and political influence, they closely monitor the actions of district educators and politicians.

Several studies of parent organizing groups in low-income neighborhoods around the country document their rapid increase in number and influence, especially since the early 1990s (Mediratta, Fruchter, and Lewis, 2002; Gold, Simon, and Brown, 2002; and Collaborative Communications Group, 2003; see also Beam, Eskenzai, and Kamber, 2002). Moreover, 80% of 66 parent organizing groups studied by the Collaborative Communications Group are working not only in local neighborhoods, but in regional or state coalitions formed to improve district or state education policy. One such group is Mississippi-based Southern Echo,

which has grassroots community organizations in Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina, Kentucky, Florida, North Carolina, and West Virginia (Collaborative Communications Group, 2003, p. 34).

Southern Echo is an exemplar in several ways: It is regional, multigenerational, and led by former civil rights and labor union activists. The group describes itself as a "leadership development, education and training organization working to develop new, grassroots leadership in African American communities in Mississippi and the surrounding region" (p. 27). Until 1992, their work focused on jobs, affordable housing, and rebuilding community organizations. When they shifted their attention to education in the early 1990s, they began to organize around minority rights.

Southern Echo worked to create a force that could put pressure on state education officials. They provided training and technical assistance to help community groups carry out local campaigns, and created residential leadership schools for parents and community members that lasted two days or more; they published training manuals, and delivered hundreds of workshops in communities (p. 29). One result of the work of Southern Echo and an affiliate, Mississippi Education Working Group (MEWG), is that on October 23, 2002, the Mississippi State Board of Education agreed to fully comply with federal requirements for providing services to special education students—for the first time in 35 years. Echo leaders report that this was "the first time the community came together to force legislators, the state board of education, superintendents, special education administrators and curriculum coordinators to sit down together" (p. 33).

A particularly impressive education organizing group in the North is the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in Chicago—founded in the 1960s to work with the variety of problems local residents faced in their community. In 1988, when the Chicago School Reform Law created local schools councils, LSNA began to assist parents and community members to work to improve their schools (Mediratta, Fruchter, and Lewis, 2002, p. 27). Among the accomplishments of LSNA and parents are construction of seven new school buildings, evening community learning centers in six schools, mortgage lender programs to offer incentives for educators to buy housing in the area, parent training as reading tutors and mentors, the establishment of bilingual lending libraries for parents, a new bilingual teacher-training

program for neighborhood parents interested in becoming teachers, and collaboration with Chicago State University to offer these courses at the neighborhood school at no cost to participants (p. 28). Mediratta, Fruchter, and Lewis report that the extensive parent engagement and LSNA's other initiatives "have contributed to achievement gains at its member schools. In its six core schools, the percent of students reading at or above the national average in 1990 ranged from 10.9 percent to 22.5 percent. By 2000, the percent of students reading at or above national average ranged from 25.4 to 35.9 percent" (p. 28).

The final example of education organizing comes from South Bronx, NY. This group, Community Collaborative for District 9 (CC9), is an important instance of coalition building—between parents, community-based organizations, the teachers union, and a university partner (Mediratta, Fruchter, and Lewis, 2002, p. 29). Organizational members include ACORN (which has been organizing parents in Districts 7, 9, and 12 for a decade); the New York City American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Citizens Advice Bureau (a local CBO providing educational services to residents for 30 years); Highbridge Community Life Center (a CBO providing job training and educational services since 1979); Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council (one of the largest CBOs in the South Bronx); parents from New Settlement Apartments; Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (which unites 10 neighborhood housing reform groups); and New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy (which conducts research and evaluation and provides other technical assistance to community and education organizing groups).

The CC9 coalition researched educational best practice to determine what reform they were going to pursue. They decided that stabilizing the teaching force in their low-income schools was critical, and that increased staff development and lead teachers at every grade level in the schools would give teachers skills to be more successful with their students and thus encourage them to remain in district classrooms. The coalition then organized residents, petitioned, demonstrated, and engaged in other direct action campaigns to obtain New York City Department of Education funding to pay for the reforms. At every step, neighborhood parents were in the forefront. In April 2004, New York City provided $1.6 million for the first year of lead teachers and staff development throughout the 10-school district. Efforts are being made to create a coalition of community groups, parents,

teachers, and progressive labor unions to push for the lead teacher program in low-income schools throughout the city.

Progressive Labor Unions

The progressive wing of the labor movement is the third of the already existing movements. Overall, U.S. labor unions count a membership of about 16 million (of which 51% are women and minorities) (LeRoy, 2003, p. 11). Although many unions have traditionally maintained an exclusionary stance toward minority workers, it is also true that others have worked strenuously for social justice. Organized labor was instrumental in the passage of major civil rights legislation, the abolition of child labor, the establishment of the 40-hour week and the eight-hour day, the minimum wage, Social Security, occupational safety and health standards, higher wages for industrial and other organized workers, and protection from business abuses that are allowed by federal law.

Minorities are an increasing percentage of the labor force and of unions. Between 1976 and 1988, while the nation's overall labor force grew by 26%, the percentage of Black workers rose by 38%, Asian American workers by 103%, and Latinos by 110%. The concentration of Black workers in public sector jobs partly explains why the unionization rate of African Americans is relatively high (Kelley, 2002, p. 1). The public sector is about 37% unionized (LeRoy, 2002, p. 12).

Unions with large numbers of minority workers, the more progressive unions, have begun collaborating with community organizations in large urban centers, and have experienced a good deal of success. Justice for Janitors, launched in 1985, has become in many cities "a civil rights movement—and a cultural crusade" (Kelley, 2002, p. 17). Justice for Janitors has been deeply committed to mass mobilization through community organizing and civil disobedience (ibid.). Utilizing sit-down strikes, members have waged militant, media-covered campaigns in major cities. In Los Angeles, for example, Justice for Janitors is largely responsible for a stunning increase in unionized custodial employees: The percentage of janitors belonging to unions rose from 10% in 1987 to 90% in 1995 (p. 18). As Robin Kelley remarks, "Justice for Janitors succeeded precisely because it was able to establish links to community leaders, to forge an alliance with Black and Latino organizations, churches, and progressive activists from all over the

city. They built a powerful mass movement that went beyond the downtown luxury office buildings and the [local union] headquarters into the streets and boardrooms" (2002, p. 18).

In Washington, DC, the group led the struggle of Local 82 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in their fight against U.S. Service Industries—a private company that used nonunion labor to clean downtown office buildings. In March 1995, Justice for Janitors organized several demonstrations in the city that led to over 200 arrests. The protesters blocked traffic and engaged in other forms of civil disobedience, demanding an end to tax breaks to real estate developers as well as cutbacks in social programs for poor people. In December 1995, the National Labor Relations Board concluded that the janitorial company USSI had "a history of pervasive illegal conduct by threatening, interrogating, and firing employees they deemed unacceptable, especially those committed to union organizing" (ibid.). African American workers, in particular, were the subject of firings. The Board's decision against USSI was a significant victory for SEUI because the company could no longer discriminate against the union (p. 18).

Other progressive unions include the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE), American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and various locals of other unions.

Living Wage Movement

The fourth already existing movement is the national campaign for a living wage. In 1994, an alliance between labor (led by AFSCME) and IAF religious leaders in Baltimore launched a successful campaign for a local law requiring city service contractors to pay a wage that brought workers above the poverty level. Since that time, community, labor, and religious coalitions have won similar ordinances in over 100 municipalities including St. Louis, Boston, Los Angeles, Tucson, San Jose, Portland, Milwaukee, Detroit, Minneapolis, and Oakland, and in 15 states. Syndicated columnist Robert Kuttner has described the Living Wage Movement as "the most interesting (and underreported) grassroots enterprise to emerge since the civil rights movement . . . signaling a resurgence of local activism around pocketbook issues" (cited on http:// www.acorn.org).

Typically, living wage ordinances cover employees of companies holding large city or county service contracts or who receive substantial financial assistance from the city in the form of grants, loans, bond financing, tax abatements, or other economic development subsidies. As I noted earlier, the concept behind living wage campaigns is that limited public dollars should not subsidize poverty-wage work. When employers receiving tax dollars or tax breaks pay their workers less than a living wage, taxpayers end up funding not only the initial subsidy but then the social services low-wage workers may require to support themselves and their families. Public tax dollars should be reserved for those employers who demonstrate a commitment to providing family-supporting jobs. Increasingly, living wage coalitions are proposing requirements in addition to raised wages—such as health benefits, vacation days, community hiring, public disclosure, community advisory boards, environmental standards, and language that supports union organizing.

Scholarly assessments of the economic impact of living wage laws demonstrate that in many localities where these ordinances were passed, between 40% and 70% of the jobs did not pay enough to support a family of four without subsidies or a single parent and child above the poverty line. In many cases, the raises are small but important (average living wage raise is to $8.74 without health benefits and $9.53 with health benefits, for ordinances passed in 2002). Research has found that raising wages above poverty levels does not increase prices or local unemployment, as employers typically predict (see Bernstein, 2002; Need, Christopher, et al., 1999; Pollin and Luce, 1998; and Weisbrot and Sforza-Roderick, 1998).

An important goal of the Living Wage Movement is that of extending the living wage to all businesses with at least 25 employees—including hotels, shops, fast-food restaurants, and discount stores. Such an ordinance was passed in March 2003 in Santa Fe—the only municipality in the country with this regulation. Business interests are actively attempting to discredit the law, by arguing that it will force them to move, and there is a possibility that the ordinance could be defeated at the polls, as occurred in Santa Monica in 2002 by a narrow margin of voters. This defeat reminds us that as long as there is no federal mandate for decent wages, pay increases are vulnerable to local employer campaigns.

Youth Organizing

Contradicting popular stereotypes of inner-city youth as dangerous and uninterested in education is the last of the existing movements. Increasing numbers of African American, Latino, and Asian teenagers in cities across the country have been organizing for the right to courses that prepare them for college, for better educational funding, and for a resolution of other social justice issues like an end to police violence and mass incarceration of their peers. In the 1990s there was a surge in youth organizing. In 1992 in Chicago, for example, there were no political youth organizations. By 2002, there were 14 large, well-established progressive youth groups in the city, and several in suburbs as well. Over 500 well-established politically progressive youth groups are active in urban areas around the country (Wimsatt, 2002, 3–4).

Brief descriptions of three groups follow. *Boston Area Youth Organizing Project* (BYOP) is an organization of youth led by teens and supported by adults. They are notable for their regional reach. According to their Web site, their goal is "to increase youth power and create positive social change" (http://www.byop.org). To do this, they develop countercultural values, build relationships across differences, train and develop leaders, identify key issues of concern, and take action for justice. BYOP is partnered with an adult group, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, which began in inner-city Roxbury in Black churches, and now includes metro-area chapters and at least one synagogue. Among BYOP's successes are the following: They pressured the Boston mayor and City Council to add $1 million for textbooks and to extend students' public transportation passes from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.; they successfully lobbied for the first legislation in the country to lower the local voting age (this legislation is pending at the state level).

Schools Not Jails, a group based in Los Angeles, is one of the many youth organizations that engage in direct action to support their demands. Here is a short description of one such action: "The train was packed with dozens of high school students who had walked out of classes and jumped onto the BART subway without paying. They came from San Francisco, Oakland, Daly City, San Leandro, Hayward, Richmond, and Pittsburg. Many had never participated in a protest action before, and the level of excitement ran high. They were on their way to Concord,

another Bay Area city, to demonstrate against miserable conditions in their schools as well as the statewide attacks on immigrant rights, affirmative action, and now bilingual education" (http://www.schoolsnotjails.com).

The final youth organization, the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP), stands out because of its extensive collaboration with other progressive groups. SLAP links high school youth and college students to economic justice issues. In 1999, unions involved in Jobs with Justice campaigns and the United States Students Association joined together to create the Action Project to support and advise student-labor work that has been emerging in communities across the country. SLAP facilitates networking, training, material-development, and technical assistance for student activists in communities and on campuses.

SLAP along with other youth groups—United Students against Sweatshops and the Prison Moratorium Project—work together to help organize actions on high school and college campuses in support of immigrant workers' rights, living wage jobs and the right to organize, and an end to sweatshops and youth incarceration (http://www.jwj.org/SLAP/slap.htm; for other groups see *What Kids Can Do* (http://www.whatkids cando.org); and *Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing* (http://www.fcyo.org).

The five movements described above each have different foci, although their goals are closely related. There is some overlap in personnel, and occasional collaboration. But the five movements are largely distinct and have relatively few members overall. New York University activist/scholar Norm Fruchter, for example, estimates that even though there may be a hundred education organizing groups in New York City, it is likely that only 10% of New York City students are directly affected by their programs and campaigns (personal communication, August 25, 2004).

Given that these movements are small, we need to think about how we could get more people and groups involved. Given that the movements are not conjoined, we need to think about how to unify them into one large force.

Lessons from History and Theory

To consider these strategic problems of movement building, I apply lessons extracted in the theoretical exposition of the last chapter. Initial theorizing yielded a set of categories—Attribution

of Opportunity; Appropriation of Existing Organizations, Institutions, and Cultural Forms; etc.—and these constructs should prove useful for thinking about the present. Here I will add my suggestions to those theories of practice already developed by organizing groups in communities across America. Following the application of theory, the last and final chapter of the book will place education—and concerned educators—in the center of attempts to build a movement for social justice.

Attribution of Opportunity

We can view current confluences as presenting multiple opportunities for radical political intervention, even when it may not seem that they do.

The new geography of minority poverty—covering central city and segregated suburbs—is one development that can be utilized strategically. This demographic offers possibilities for cross-place collaboration that potentially involves almost two-thirds of the poor people in large U.S. metropolitan areas. There are already a number of organizing efforts that are regional in scope (see Chapters 5 and 6) but very few that take an explicit city-suburban focus. One that does is the *Gamaliel Foundation*—a multiracial, city-suburban church-based alliance centered in Chicago. Gamaliel is constituted by a network of ministers, professional community organizers, and community groups working to "rebuild urban and older suburban communities" throughout the nation. Their regional networks include over 40 grassroots organizations in 11 states—including every major metropolitan area in the Midwest, western New York and Pennsylvania, and Oakland, CA. They have successfully organized around issues of regional tax equity, land use, transportation, and governance. This organization certainly provides a promising model for regional mobilization (http://www.gamaliel.org).

Urban-suburban coalitions of distressed, segregated school districts could force the issue of equitable funding in metro areas and the many states that have had legal challenges to the constitutionality of existing school finance. Comprehensive state education reforms already on the books (e.g., Kentucky and New Jersey) or in process (e.g., New York and California) demand, for their ultimate success, that urban communities and supporters organize around them and get people "in the streets" to demand

passage and full implementation. Lawyers can win legal mandates, but only demonstrations and public outcry can obtain full implementation.

The New Jersey funding equity court case, *Abbott v. Burke,* for instance, which mandates extensive state investments to compensate for economic disadvantage, has not been fully implemented by the state legislature in over 25 years of continual litigation on the part of lawyers for the states' urban school districts. There has been no organized constituency of urban residents to press for full enforcement of the law. In 1991, by contrast, well-organized and highly vocal middle-class and affluent taxpayers massed at the state capital in demonstrations against a proposed tax hike to pay for the court's education mandate. The governor responded by repealing the tax increase (Anyon, 1997, p. 204; see also Dumas and Anyon, 2005).

An economic development that has potentially powerful consequences for progressive organizing is the collapse of the traditional well-paying working-class job. As chapters in Part I document, an increasing percentage of jobs available to low-income workers pay poverty or poverty-zone wages. This development provides a rationale for organizing for better economic policies, as well as for low-income student access to college preparation courses and funds to complete college. The collapse of working-class job opportunities could also provide a basis for organizing for meaningful programs of vocational education for the noncollege-bound student. As I have noted, figures demonstrate that most jobs in the U.S. do not require college, but rather on-the-job training. Public schools could become a meaningful part of the preparation for these positions if they offered programs combining academic study with realistic vocational training and job placement—combined, crucially, with union support for minority workers and better starting salaries. All these could be strategic organizing goals among low-income students and families.

There are technological developments that could also be appropriated for mobilization in urban communities. In late 2002 and early 2003, the Internet-based group, Moveon.org, successfully utilized the Internet to organize demonstrations in cities across the country against the invasion of Iraq. During the 500,000-strong demonstration against the Republican National Convention in New York City in early September 2004, activist groups coordinated over 150 protests using cell phones and text

messaging. As other authors have pointed out, Internet access, E-mail, and cell phones have enhanced movement building by increasing the networking and communication capabilities among groups (see Castells, 1996 and 2000; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001; Melucci, 1999, and Rheingold, 2002). The World Wide Web and cell phones are increasingly utilized by urban residents, especially youth, and could be appropriated to political ends.

Appropriation of Existing Organizations, Institutions, and Cultural Forms

As the next chapter illustrates in detail, public educational institutions in the U.S. can be sites of appropriation as movement-building spaces. Education in the U.S. has always had a contradictory nature. On the one hand, schools have been primary agents of social control and the reproduction of class, gender, and racial advantages and disadvantages. However, education also has had—and continues to have—potentially liberatory, egalitarian, and transformative possibilities as well. This contradictory nature of schooling holds out promise that concerned educators can make central contributions to the transformation of society through their work in schools. Many authors have developed extremely important ideas about ways in which teachers can utilize critical pedagogy and create democratically run schools (Ayers, Hunt, and Quin, 1998; Bigelow and Peterson, 2002; Darder, Torres, and Baltodano, 2002; Delpit, 1997, Fine, 1994; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McLaren, 2002; Perry, 2003; Sleeters and McLaren, 1995; and Shor, 1992, among many others). I will add to this rich tradition in Chapter 10 with activities educators can use to engage students in public contestation and political campaigns, thereby increasing the appropriation of classrooms and schools as movement-building spaces.

Outsiders and Cultural Brokers

Residents of urban neighborhoods—low-income youth and beleaguered poverty-wage workers—should not be expected to organize a movement alone. Bicultural, bi-class brokers such as progressive teachers, social workers, and other minority and White professionals concerned with social justice need to take

advantage of their own relatively privileged status to provide spaces and opportunities for low-income urban residents to air grievances, discuss and strategize, and—most important—to engage in contentious politics.

Groups can also act as brokers. Groups already active in existing movements can broker relationships, coalitions, and convenings that could get people talking about uniting for social justice. Called intermediaries, such brokers as Local Initiatives Support Corporation in the community development field, Center for Third World Organizing in the community organizing field, and Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform and Southern Echo in education, could perhaps play these roles. Well-regarded unions like SEIU and HERE, or groups with a national base like IAF and ACORN, could act as intermediaries to call people to conference to discuss a united movement for economic and educational opportunity.

Creation of Regional Organizations

As Chapter 7 suggests—and as the civil rights movement confirms—groups that work on a regional level are more likely to make inroads on injustice than groups that work only in their neighborhood.

And larger, umbrella groups (like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) that can pull people and organizations together over large geographical regions can reach national audiences. Without an umbrella group, there can be a cacophony of messages and dissipation of effort.

Intermediaries and their representatives could form an umbrella group to assist smaller movements to coalesce and reach scale. An umbrella group should have its own funding: It might obtain money from Hip Hop moguls, progressive unions, church groups, established civil rights organizations, or liberal foundations. Five separate movements would be stronger and more forceful as one.

Leadership Development

As I argued in Chapter 8, leaders emerge from the struggle itself. Those who work with adults and youth need not only to involve them in contentious politics, but should set up situations where leadership can emerge, be nurtured, and developed. Nascent

leaders can be identified in neighborhood and church-based organizations and after-school groups. As in the civil rights movement, if we involve current youth in political struggle, and if we support them in opportunities to lead, they will develop leadership abilities, skills, and experience. These acquisitions constitute social *capital* in the best sense of the word: skills and knowledge that will assist people in making changes to society from which they will truly profit.

Centrality of Youth

Urban youth have a powerful critique of education and White society. Hip Hop lyrics express their complaint: The group Dead Prez states that minority youth are urged to stay in school and get a job, but are not told that "the job gonna exploit you every time." Hip Hop icon Tupac Shakur wrote that Whites would "*rather see us locked in chains*" than in school or decent jobs.

Most Hip Hop lyrics are replete with violent epithets, and words and phrases—like nigger and bitch—that many adults find offensive. But until its commodification and spread to White suburban teenagers in the late 1990s, when it lost some of its political edge, this language—that is, Hip Hop discourse—was a form of overt rebellion and transgression against mainstream White and Black middle-class America. It expressed the anger, angst, and frustration of many young people of color (Kitwana, 2002; Dimitriadis, 2001, among others). Hip Hop, however, as Todd Boyd remarks, "is a testament to overcoming the obstacles that American life often imposes on its Black and Latino subjects, and in this, it is a model of what 'we shall overcome' means in the modern world" (2002, p. 152).

The rebellion in Hip Hop also gives the lie to any stereotype of universal fatalism among young people in cities. The lyrics reveal instead an angry, broad-based rebellion that is now finding a political voice in the emerging youth movement.

The youth organizations described previously are examples of how some in the "Hip Hop generation" have appropriated this cultural stance, and the music, to work for social change. Nascent political attitudes embodied in this cultural form are crucial tools for any social movement that could be developed in the foreseeable future. To build a movement, adults both inside and outside of schools need to assist youth in turning this rebellion into informed, organized resistance.

Social Construction of New Identities through Participation in Transgressive Politics

Let me reiterate this important point from Chapter 8: As people march, sit-in, prepare petitions and speeches, meet with politicians and school boards, and otherwise engage in contentious politics, they typically develop identities as activists and, ultimately, if a movement develops, identities as part of that movement. As I have argued, we do not typically get people involved in activism or social movements through exposure to critical pedagogy, social justice curricula, or books like this one, although these are crucial to providing information and analysis. Rather, as labor movement, peace movement, and civil rights activists will tell you—people are radicalized by actually *participating* in contentious politics.

Robert Moses describes how involvement in civil rights work changed him: "... I was a 26-year-old teacher at ... an elite private school in the Bronx.... It was the sit-in movement that led me to Mississippi for the first time in 1960. And that trip changed my life. I returned to the state a year later and over the next four years was transformed as I took part in the voter registration movement there" (2002, p. 4).

The power of participation to encourage activism implies that an initial component of building a social movement is to personally involve students, other youth, and adults in public protest and other strategic activities with which they can advocate for better opportunities.

The final chapter works at length with this understanding. It provides a variety of ways in which participation in social movement organizing can teach urban youth not only that they can improve their communities but that they are persons of worth, quality, and intelligence. Through political participation, youth become enmeshed in constructive social networks, and develop positive personal identities.

Creation of Innovative Action Repertoires

The repertoire of activities expressed by social movements develops over time, with each generation utilizing strategies of those who went before them and creating new ones out of their own experiences.

As the previous chapter demonstrates, community organizing was an important strategy in the repertoire of civil rights activists throughout the 20th century. The five movements already existing today also utilize community organizing as a central method of building power. Without a constituency, based in actual neighborhoods, towns, and cities, there is no movement. And without organizing, there is no constituency.

Even though masses of people across the U.S. demonstrated against invading Iraq in early 2003, and many activists fought the "Battle of Seattle" in 2000, these campaigns were not part of sustained community movements with organized constituencies; and they will not be, unless time and effort are spent to build bases in towns and cities around the country. Community organizing is a strategy that must remain central to any attempt to build a social movement.

Action strategies that might be useful in urban education struggles today include sit-down strikes of families and children in school buildings until demands for funding are met; "sick out" strikes, where students and families boycott schools until the threat of government withdrawal of funds because of absenteeism leads officials to meet demands; and picketing school, district, and political leaders at their homes. Or, students and community members could chain themselves to the metal fences surrounding urban schools. Hunger strikes may be necessary.

We could emulate the Freedom Rides of the civil rights movement and of minority unions in 2003—when a coalition of Black and immigrant workers hired buses to drive from California to Washington, DC. They stopped in cities along the way to bring attention to the problems workers face. They achieved much media attention and may affect pending legislation affecting the rights of immigrant workers.

We could appropriate this strategy, filling yellow school buses with students and families and driving through the city stopping at schools and neighborhoods that need urgent attention. We could organize street corner discussions and rallies at each stop, highlighting what needs to be done.

In the theoretical discussion of Chapter 8, I noted that civil rights history demonstrates that economic pressure has typically been a potent strategy in struggles against more powerful groups. Urban education is big business. Expenditures in each city for school district payrolls, purchases, facilities and maintenance,

technology, and other goods and services are paid by taxpayers and keep hundreds of thousands of people employed nationwide—and keep many business owners solvent. Perhaps there is a way to learn from the civil rights movement about the power of the economic boycott. Perhaps new strategies will emerge that threaten recipients of district monies with loss of income, and taxpayers with wasted resources, unless community demands are met. Useful, additional actions will arise during contestation, and urban youth will no doubt be instrumental in creating starkly expressive strategies.

Appropriation of Threat

Most urban youth do not engage in violence; and most violent acts that are carried out by Blacks and Latinos involve other residents of low-income communities. But the "thug" stereotype follows urban males throughout the media, and many Whites fear them. We could appropriate this perceived threat. Political organizing in the youth movement demonstrates that urban teenagers can move from anger, despair, and street life to well-informed resistance and organized political campaigns for equity. We would be remiss if we did not point out to Whites the diminution of the threat of violence by these youth that such politicization embodies.

Appropriation of Social Networks

This theoretical construct asks us to consider the power that would be generated if even half of the 7.5 million grassroots organizations and the several thousand Community Development Corporations were aligned together, acting toward the same goal. Linked by a common agenda, these groups would constitute a vast national network. Such a network would be a significant strand in a social movement.

There are other networks that could constitute other strands: The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), a venerable organization of 180 civil rights groups, represents the older generation of activists. Members have vast accumulated experience. They have produced a *Handbook for Activists* and a *Grassroots Tool Kit*, and maintain active student chapters on college campuses. The Leadership Conference has authored two prospective legislative bills that could lay the foundation of a

platform for educational and economic justice (http://www.civilrights.org).

As we know, the African American church has long provided networks supporting social justice mobilizing. Some argue, however, that the church may not be able to play a similar role today. Sociologist Omar McRoberts studied a low-income section of Boston, and found that, in contrast to the past, African Americans in the congregations of churches in that area do not typically live in the neighborhoods where they worship; they merely rent the buildings for services (2003, p. 4). Therefore, they are not as available or concerned about "social uplift" in the neighborhood where the church is located. McRoberts argues that Black churches therefore are not likely to take part in sustained political struggle to improve the inner city.

But as Andrew Billingsley demonstrates in *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform*, there also exist well over a thousand mostly large, well-established African American churches in U.S. cities, and a majority of them are deeply involved in community outreach (2002, p. 88). Billingsley argues that among Black churches, "community outreach activities are much more common than is generally believed, especially in urban areas. . . . [A] majority of contemporary Black churches have not abandoned community issues since the civil rights era" (p. 89).

Indeed, some of the most productive CDCs and community-based organizations today are part of, or offshoots of, religious organizations. Faith-based organizing (e.g., in the IAF, PICO, and GAMALIEL) is an important part of movement building today (see Freeman, 1994; Jacobson, 2003; Rooney, 1995; Shirley, 2002; Warren, 2003; and Wood, 2002).

I noted when discussing social networks in Chapter 8 that the civil rights movement was blessed with many family activist traditions. However, indications are that there is little agreement between members of old and young in the African American community today. There is often distance, suspicion, and even hostility that builds up between the generations around social goals and means. As in the 1960s, when White activists expressed contempt for people over 30 years old, today African American youth are often estranged from their civil rights "elders." The young define themselves against the old.

But it is crucial for movement building today that we overcome the boundaries of age, because men and women who

fought the battles of the civil rights, labor, and community development movements in the 1950s and '60s have much to teach those who would be political today. And the organizations these elders built over the years could provide a network of "safe houses" and operational nodes in a national movement.

Social Contradictions as an Impetus for Radical Action

The penultimate theoretical construct I apply is the role of contradictions in stimulating political contention. Social justice teachers know that political and economic contradictions can be a fecund source of ideas for discussion, political education, and consciousness raising. However, contradictions can also catalyze action.

As I pointed out in Part I, for example, African Americans and Latinos are obtaining more education than ever before, but their situation in the economy has deteriorated in the last 15-20 years. This highlights the new truth that an historic faith in education as the path to middle-class status is no longer assured. This contradiction is anger-producing, and may be catalyzing—if we appropriate it as such.

Another contradiction of urban schooling that could be mobilizing is that even though society urges low-income minority youth to "stay in school," perseverance (unless one has the funds to complete college) is likely to provide very little reward to graduates. Many students are aware that without the availability of jobs and decent pay, lacking a college degree, and in the face of employer discrimination, the promises of education are severely compromised.

These and other contradictions plaguing folks day after day, if used strategically, can become mobilizing points for youth and their families. I will demonstrate in the final chapter numerous ways educators can assist youth and families to move from knowledge of the social traps they experience to concrete political contention to change the situation.

The Process of Legitimation

As I argued in Chapter 8, for success, the goals of a social movement should ultimately appear legitimate to a broad swath of the public. There may not be wide acceptance of the idea of, say, a wealth tax on the super rich. However, if people were made aware

of how much wealth a very few have, how much more relative tax they paid in the past, and how much money equitable taxing might produce, a consensus for a wealth tax might develop.

But I do believe that there is a consensus among Americans that urban students deserve quality education. As I have noted, the NCLB lends federal legitimation to this goal. Moreover, the repeal of welfare and the "discovery" by policymakers that the jobs former recipients can obtain do not provide funds sufficient to support a family has created the basis for another emerging consensus—that full-time work should bring a person a living wage.

For maximum power, the various movements today—and the many grassroots and social justice groups that constitute them—need to unite, and acknowledge that the problems they tackle can be best resolved if they are tackled as intimately interrelated issues. For as I have been at pains to point out, the obstacles that urban residents face are complex and interrelated. The problems of urban education, jobs, lack of transportation, housing segregation, police brutality, and incarceration are tangled together in the fabric of everyday living in poor neighborhoods. These issues create a formidable knot of many tightly wound strands. Only when the knot itself is undone will the threads come free.

10

Putting Education at the Center

There is no [social] movement.
There needs to be a movement.
—Marion Bolden, District Superintendent,
Newark, NJ Public Schools. June 20, 2004

Why should we put education—and concerned educators—at the center of efforts to build a unified movement for social justice? Other analysts might place progressive labor unions, immigrant rights, activist church groups, or the national living wage campaign at the center. But I believe there are compelling reasons that urban education—and urban educators—ought to be a fulcrum of movement building.

A most important reason is the theoretical location of urban education. Urban schools are at the center of the maelstrom of constant crises that beset low-income neighborhoods. Education is an institution whose basic problems are caused by, and whose basic problems reveal, the other crises in cities: poverty, joblessness and low-wages, and racial and class segregation. Therefore, a focus on urban education can expose the combined effects of public policies, and highlight not only poor schools but the entire nexus of constraints on urban families. A well-informed mobilization centering on education would challenge macroeconomic federal and regional policies and practices as part of an overall plan to improve local educational opportunity.

Moreover, even though education is not guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, it is often construed as a civil right, and can be located ideologically in the long and powerful tradition of civil rights struggle (Moses and Cobb, 2001, p. 1; see also http://www.civilrights.org). This legitimacy may lend movement building through education an acceptance that could affect public attitudes toward new policies regarding the need for jobs, decent wages, and affordable housing.

Further, many people involved in the movements described in the last chapter live in low-income urban areas and have children in underfunded and underachieving city schools. Like other adults, they are often willing to bear substantial hardship without fighting back; but, as parent organizing in cities across America reveals, they will "go to the mat for their kids" (Leigh Dingerson, Center for Community Change, personal communication, Aug. 25, 2004). This willingness to fight for the rights of their children means that putting education at the center may be a good mobilizing tool with which to attract parents' involvement in other issues as well.

Indeed, educators are in an excellent position to build a constituency for economic and educational change in urban communities. Teachers and principals have continual access to parents and urban youth. If they are respectful, caring, hard-working educators, trusted by students and parents, they have a unique opportunity to engage residents and youth in political conversations and activity.

A final reason to center movement building in education is that there is a rich tradition of liberal/left advocacy to build on. I, like many others, entered teaching "to change the world" (Oakes and Lipton, 2002). There are teachers in every city today who teach a critical, thought-provoking curriculum, and who utilize the classroom to discuss issues their students face. Hundreds of scholarly books and articles have been written offering insight and inspiration to teachers who concern themselves with social justice. In addition, there exist widely read progressive publications like *Rethinking Schools*, proactive organizations like National Coalition of Educational Activists and Educators for Social Responsibility, and professional conferences that enrich critical teaching. There is possibility here, and great promise in the work of these educators. We can take this work further in our appropriation of the institution for radical purposes.

For all these reasons, I believe that those of us in education who

have social justice as a goal can play a crucial role in movement building for economic and educational rights of the poor. We can do this in our daily lives, as we "cast down our buckets" where we are. We can commit to the radical possibilities in our everyday work in schools, despite the onslaught of institutional mandates. To assist in this effort, the present chapter supplements existing critical pedagogical work with strategies used by community and education organizers.

Student Self-esteem and Politicization

As I noted in Chapter 8, social movement theorists argue that fear, despair, and negative valuations of self can be immobilizing, and may keep social actors who have cause to get involved in political contention from participating. Feelings of efficacy, righteous anger, and strength, on the other hand, are more likely to lead one to activism. A first step in movement building in urban schools, then, is to help students appreciate their own value, intelligence, and potential as political actors.

African American and Latino scholars write tellingly about the fears harbored by many students of color that they fit the stereotypes White society has of them—that they are incapable of high academic achievement, not interested in education, and to blame for their lack of advancement (see Boykin, 2003; Hale, 2001; King, 2002; Perry, 2003; Steele, 2003; Suarez-Orozco, 2002; Valdes, 1996; and Valenzuela, 2001). An important mechanism is that this "stereotype threat" can prevent students' full engagement in academic work, as they fear failure and fulfillment of the stereotype (see in particular Steele, 2003). This is tragic in and of itself. But I want to point out that blaming oneself, rather than locating causes of failure in the wider structure of opportunities, has another consequence: It can also mitigate against a perceived need to change the system.

Theresa Perry argues that in order to undermine ideology and practice of victim blaming, educators need to create a *counter narrative* to the story of failure and low intelligence of students of color. She notes that we could learn from successful all-Black schools in the antebellum South, where teachers emphasized the relation between education and freedom: "Freedom for literacy, and literacy for freedom" (2003, p. 92). Perry exhorts teachers to counter the damaging dominant social narrative by building an intentional classroom community spirit of education for "racial

uplift, citizenship and leadership" (p. 93). In order to demonstrate to students that they are capable and worthy, "teachers must explicitly articulate, regularly ritualize, and pass on in formal public events the belief in minority students as scholars of high achievement and as of social value" (pp. 99, 100). A supportive and trusting environment provides "identity security" to students, who are then emotionally more ready to challenge the stereotypical myths (Steele, 2003).

As Lisa Delpit reminds us, however, we must also teach minority students the culture and knowledge held by powerful Whites and the middle and upper classes (Delpit, 1997). They need to understand this coded cultural capital and be able to parse it—just like affluent White students are taught to do (Anyon, 1980, 1981).

A healthy education of this sort would urge minority students toward a stance of *entitlement* regarding the responsibility of governments to provide equal opportunities; and this would encourage them to hold the system accountable. Thus, a politically energizing education for African Americans must explicitly recognize and acknowledge with students that they and their families are *not* free—and that social change is necessary. This is one reason a history of both oppression and resistance is so important. Students who are knowledgeable about dominant forms of power and how this power affects them can better move from self-blame to informed efforts at change. Teachers and administrators who would assist students in this development could begin by working with the community of which the students are a vital part.

Working with the Community

Teachers, administrators, and other professionals in urban public schools are not usually from the neighborhood. Their social class and often their race differentiate them from students, families, and other residents. In this sense, many of those who work to appropriate the educational institution for social justice are outsiders and bicultural brokers. They can contribute important resources and knowledge to that which students and families already possess. In education organizing across urban America, educators are increasingly playing a brokering, bridging role, as they join with parents and communities to combat policies that oppress.

When educators work with community residents as equals and as change agents to organize for better education, movement building is taking place; and as a not inconsequential outcome, schools typically improve and student achievement increases. Research suggests that there are several reasons for this raised student achievement, including community pressure for more resources and district accountability, increased parental engagement, and improved staff development and pedagogy (Gold, Simon, and Brown, 2002; Henderson and Berla, 1994; Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

I would like to highlight two other causes of the increased achievement. First, education organizing has been shown to lower the rate at which students move from one school to another (mobility), sometimes by as much as 50%. Studies show that in schools where educators work closely with the community as partners in change, parents and students often report that they do not want to leave the school because of their involvement in and satisfaction with the activities (Vail, January 4, 2004, p. 2; Hohn, 2003; Whalen, 2002).

Another reason for increased achievement in schools where parents and educators work together as change agents may be an increase in trust and respect between the parties. Tony Bryk and Barbara Schneider have demonstrated convincingly that trusting relationships in daily interactions in low-income urban schools are correlated with raised achievement over time (2002, pp. 98–99, 120).

Community and parent organizers regularly utilize several strategies that teachers and administrators might incorporate to work for change and build personal relationships and mutual trust. Teachers can involve parents and other residents in one-on-one conversations designed to identify their concerns, can hold meetings in parents' homes where groups of residents address these concerns, and can engage parents, other community members, and educators in "neighborhood walks"—during which participants tour the area around the school and reach a common understanding and vision of what changes are needed (Gold, Simon, and Brown, 2002, p. 22).

School principals who work with the Industrial Areas Foundation say that "an angry parent is an opportunity"—an opening to organize the community for increased accountability of officials and politicians (IAF Principal Claudia Santamaria, Cambridge, MA Conference, February 20, 2004). A major

strategy utilized by the IAF that educators could apply is what organizers call "accountability sessions"—meetings to which district and elected officials or candidates for office are invited and asked to give their opinions on important issues. Candidates are asked to respond to yes/no questions, without speeches. Local media are invited, and report on the official and candidate responses, thus providing a public record to which the officials can later be held accountable (Gold and Simon, 2004, p. 2).

Some education organizers also work with parent groups and teachers to monitor district and state programs and policies by carrying out research that identifies discrepancies between stated goals of district, city, or state policies and programs, and the actual experience of students and teachers. These can also be useful as the basis for calling officials to account (for examples, see the Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access at http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/, the National Center for Schools and Communities at http://www.ncscatfordham.org/pages/home.cfm, and the Institute for Education and Social Policy at http://www.nyu.edu.iesp).

Acquiring Community Organizing Skills

The foregoing strategies provide an introduction to working with parents and communities as partners for change. This section provides suggestions for organizing parents in extended issue campaigns.

Chicago-based Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform (Cahill, 1999) and the Institute for Education and Social Policy in New York (Zimmer and Mediratta, 2004) have prepared advice (based on many years of organizing experience) that is useful for educators interested in carrying out issue campaigns with community members.

A short summary follows:

1. Choose issues from the bottom up. Issues to pursue should come from parents, students, and other residents. Knock on doors in two-people teams (for example, one parent and one teacher or principal) to identify issues important to the community; and recruit people for home meetings to discuss the issues they feel are important and what to do about them. Visit area congregations to discuss local problems, and develop

relationships with members and clergy. Systematic personal contact and the building of personal relationships are key to successful engagement of residents. Keep parents in forefront.
2. Begin to build a community constituency for long-range reform through immediate, specific, and winnable issues. Frame broad demands like "better schools" more specifically to attract particular constituencies: bilingual programs for Latino parents, and after school job training and placement for parents and high school students. Building a base among parents and community members will provide a force and legitimacy to the demands you will make. Because you also want to develop working relationships with other educators, it may be best to start with a neighborhood issue rather than one that directly targets problems in the school.
3. Locate key school and district personnel who can assist you in gathering data to document the problems you want to address. Work with local community-based organizations to see what system information they already have. Collaborate with them in writing and disseminating a report, if possible.
4. Develop a program of needed changes and present this to authorities. Plan demonstrations and other activities that attempt to obtain concessions, promises, and behavioral responses from those in power in the district and city (I would add that one should attempt coalitions of organizing groups across the city, region, and state).
5. Develop a plan for what to do when people in power ignore you, refer you to others, delay you, or try to placate you. Officials may try to discredit you. Or they may attempt to buy off your leaders, or propose a substitute that does not meet your needs. Some of the strategies you could consider when this happens may be cooperative, like setting up meetings; but some may be confrontational—like pickets, demonstrations, political theater, press conferences, etc.
6. Keep the pressure on administrators and officials by demonstrations and actions of various sorts. A "presence in the streets" is necessary to hold their attention and get results (Zimmer and Mediratta, 2004, p. 3).

I want to emphasize that, whenever possible, link educational issues to community issues regarding jobs, housing, transportation, and investment. Education organizing by itself can improve schools in low-income areas to the point that housing values rise, businesses increasingly invest in the neighborhood, and low-income residents are pushed out by higher rents. This creep of gentrification is occurring on two blocks in Chicago's Logan Square area, in part because of the success of education organizing by LNSA. In response, LSNA has intensified its lobbying at the state level for housing reform (Hohn, 2003; Halsband, 2003). Gentrification resulting from education organizing and improved local schools is a reminder that without other public policy changes (in this case, housing policies to maintain low-income housing or policies providing better-paying jobs), successful school reform in low-income urban neighborhoods can have unfortunate, unintended consequences for residents.

Collaboration between Mainstream School Reformers, Community Groups, and Education Organizers

One way to increase the breadth and depth of school reform is for mainstream school reformers to collaborate with those working to provide resident services and neighborhood development. The following two project descriptions are examples of how vital the synergy could be if curricular and pedagogical reforms were coupled with financial and social support of students outside of school.

In Washington, DC, Othello Poulard and the Center for Community Change created such a system of outside student support. With foundation funding, they provided extensive programs for 8th through 12th graders living in five local housing projects. Poulard and the Public Housing Graduates Demonstration program (PHG) built a system of daily after-school tutoring in each project building. They hired skilled, long-term tutors. Poullard provided emotional support and guidance with trained neighborhood residents serving as "Mighty Moms" or "Mighty Pops," hired as long-term mentors. These mentors kept an eye on the students and helped them with personal problems. "Big Brothers" and "Big Sisters" were provided and offered emotional and academic support. PHG exposed the students to colleges as well as middle-class culture, and trained them to use computers; the

program provided computers for the students' homes. PHG offered athletics, and taught the youth how to avoid pregnancy and deal with violence. They provided health care, and financial support. As in middle-class and affluent families, youth were paid an allowance. They received $100 a month in 10th and 11th grade, and $200 a month in 12th grade. To qualify for the allowance they had to participate in almost daily after-school activities, along with weekend college readiness sessions and field trips. They also had to produce journals and detailed time sheets. They lost money every time they did not fulfill requirements (Center for Community Change, 2001, pp. 1–4).

The results of this extensive support system were extremely encouraging. Whereas before the program, only 40% of the public housing students who entered the 8th grade ever graduated from high school, 89.6% of PHG's students graduated by the end of a three-year evaluation (compared to 63% of students who attended the same schools but who were not in the program). PHG participants had a significantly higher grade point average and higher test scores than a control group; 70% of PHG students applied to college or trade school; all were accepted and everyone who applied for financial aid received it. Over three years, only one 12th grader failed to graduate because of pregnancy or incarceration (ibid., p. 5).

The second example is of school reformers linking with community developers to fight gentrification. The LEARN Charter school, serving a low-income population in a community in Chicago, partnered with a local community developer who helped revitalize the neighborhood by building over 1,600 affordable housing units and a major shopping center. Wanting to "keep people in the neighborhood," the developer also became involved in a $6.6 million project to build a major campus for the local public school. As a testament to the increasing strength of the neighborhood, the city decided to invest millions of dollars to rebuild local transportation lines—which would increase residents' access to jobs outside of the community (Halsband, 2003, p. 37).

As important as these connections between school and community can be, educational reform groups do not typically work with community organizations to create or link to programs providing external student and family support. School reformers and community organizers, in fact, rarely talk to each other; they typically operate in different social circles. Most school reform

groups are from university, funding, or government arenas, and community organizers are usually from the neighborhood or political activist spheres. There is little communication or cooperation.

Educational reformers (especially equity-seeking groups like New Visions and Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools) and education organizers could teach each other important strategies, to the benefit of each. Organizers could teach school reformers about the power of public constituencies, about the power of an inflamed, informed community to demand and obtain programs from governments and school boards. For example, New Visions in New York City, a school reform group that obtained funding from Bill Gates and Soros Foundations to develop new small schools, was unfamiliar with existing community groups and parent organizing in the city. The New York City district had not informed parents in low-income neighborhoods that their high schools were about to be disbanded, and there was considerable community anger and resistance. Wisely, New Visions hired a doctoral student of mine, Madeline Perez (who has extensive experience organizing parents in Oakland, CA, and New York) to facilitate outreach and community meetings with residents in areas where new schools are to be developed. New Visions has also begun to develop relationships with strong faith-based organizations in New York City's neighborhoods. This school reform group may find that the understanding and increased trust that accrues from such overtures will be crucial to the success of the new schools.

We know all too well that over the last few decades, traditional school reform in U.S. cities has shown considerably less success than hoped for. One important reason for disappointing results is that most urban school reforms are not successful in part because the community is not behind them, and often actively mistrusts them. Community organizing can create the political will to implement reforms. Indeed, success would most likely be assured if politicians and education reform groups were to work with community members to come to a consensus as to what changes are needed.

One way to reach this consensus is for school reformers and politicians to create proposals for change on the basis of recommendations made by community research. Such research typically documents inequities in a powerful, personal manner, and highlights inadequate provision for low-income students and schools.

For example, in the mid-1990s, ACORN carried out and published three studies documenting that Black parents were not told about kindergarten gifted programs when they inquired of school personnel, while White parents were. These reports also demonstrated that the vast majority of students in New York City's three competitive high schools came from three White, middle-class districts, and that almost no low-income districts sent students to the special schools (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, 1996). These powerful reports could have been the basis for meaningful, community-backed school reform if taken up by mainstream educational groups and politicians.

It is also the case that education organizers have much to learn from school reformers. As political activists, education organizers typically are not trained in education; however, they need to know more about curriculum and pedagogical best practice, how public schools work internally in order to know what classroom reforms to advocate for, and how to work with administrators once they get their attention. Community pressure is not always enough (Mediratta and Fruchter, 2004, p. 4). Moreover, in order to work with school boards, mayors, and state legislatures, community organizers must be knowledgeable about educational research, practice, and jargon.

In order to facilitate exchanges between networks of school reformers and organizers, the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO), a national network of community-based organizations, held two multiday meetings of 100 educational researchers working on school reform issues and organizers from established community groups (Corbin, 2003, p. 3). The organizers learned from educational researchers about effective education practice, principles and tools for analyzing classrooms and schools, and ways that districts operate internally. Other such meetings need to be organized.

Any effort to create a social movement with potential to affect current policy and practice regarding urban schools and economic access must get concerned actors together, working in concert. Equity-seeking school reform networks and community activists advocating for school and neighborhood improvement are usually on the same side; they should acknowledge their commonalities and collaborate in the interest of increased opportunity and change.

Importantly, politically progressive classroom teachers are central here. They are in a position to work with both kinds of groups as they mentor youth activism.

Classrooms as Movement-Building Spaces

Middle and high school teachers, in particular, can make a powerful contribution to movement-building by engaging students in civic activism. Both the civil rights movement and successful youth efforts to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 (legalized in 1971) demonstrate that activism by young people can make a huge impact on American society. The activities in this section provide teachers with strategies to assist urban youth in moving from self-blame or angry rebellion to well-informed political engagement.

But, you might respond, urban students are not interested in political activity. To that I reply that behavioral resistance to typical methods of teaching does not necessarily transfer to alternative, more appealing methods. Moreover, I believe it is the case that most urban teens *want* an education—a high *quality* education. College readiness is the top priority of urban youth who are involved in organizing. A comprehensive assessment of 49 youth groups in 18 states found that the issues youth most frequently address have to do with education. Most (61%) want college preparation from their high school; the next issue is criminal and juvenile justice (49%), and then economic justice (18%) and immigrant rights (14%). Indeed, programs run by organizations in urban communities that promote teenage activism typically attract youth who are alienated from school. Teachers, then, may not find it difficult to interest students in political projects; and they may find that through such activities, students who are dropping out can be brought back in (Mattie Weiss, 2003; also Wheeler, 2003, available at (http://www.theinnovationcenter.org).

Numerous benefits accrue to youth who work for increased opportunities in their communities. Studies have documented that civic activism by low-income students of color typically fosters teenagers' positive personal development, and improves their academic engagement and, therefore, achievement (see, for example, Benson and Leffert, 1998; Forum for Youth Investment, 2004; Ginwright and James, 2002; Hilley, 2003; Lewis and Charp,

2003; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, and Murray, 1997; and Zeldin and Price, 1995).

There are several other benefits, as well. Organizing urban youth to work with others to improve their schools and neighborhoods gives teenagers *connections*, embedding them in constructive community networks. This connectedness is a worthy alternative to that offered by most street gangs (Hilley, 2003).

In addition, by organizing others to work responsibly for social change, minority youth counter the view that they constitute a social "problem." Teens also are encouraged to understand how the poverty of their families and their peers arises from systemic rather than personal failings. And it provides them with the concrete lesson that they can bring about changes in society, giving them a foundation for pursuing this kind of activity as adults.

A final benefit to working with students on political projects that aim to achieve youth and family rights puts educators and students on the same "team," and increases trust between them, which, as we have seen, has been found to increase academic achievement (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

An example of teachers organizing students demonstrates several of these positive outcomes. In 1995, youth at Gratz High School in Philadelphia started the first chapter of what became a citywide Student Union (PSU). The original impetus for organizing was students' complaints about inadequate textbooks and dirty bathrooms. When the students asked administrators why there were no new textbooks, they were told it was their fault because "students tear them up." When students complained about the bathrooms, they were told "students mess them up." Students' first reaction was to agree with school administrators that they were themselves to blame. However, with their adviser's help they were encouraged to ask themselves the following questions: "Why didn't they consider it their school and their property? Why did they deface their school as if they didn't respect it or own it? Why didn't they feel comfortable at school?" After years and years in a failing system, the students were frustrated and self-blaming. Their adviser assisted them as they got to work to advocate for improvements in the school.

Since 1995, many changes have resulted from PSU's activism in Philadelphia high schools, including new student governments,

creation of school ombudsmen to stop the harassment and abuse by school security officers, a district-level student platform on planned school reforms, a rally of 2,450 students at City Hall, which helped to defeat planned privatization of Philadelphia high schools, new networks of organized students in multiple city schools, and a statewide campaign to increase school funding to the level of nearby affluent suburbs (American Youth Policy Forum, 2002, p. 103).

As shown in research studying the benefits of youth organizing in Los Angeles, many of the Philadelphia students who became involved as activists and leaders had been on the verge of dropping out, but remained in school when it became clear that they had a voice. A number of teachers reported that these new youth leaders became academic "stars." Teachers and administrators reported respect for students who organize (Hayasaki, 2003, May 30, p. 4).

The following classroom activities can develop in students many of the skills utilized by community organizers in their movement-building work. The activities begin with research in the neighborhood, and lead to the development of issue campaigns to bring about new policy.

Mapping Community Assets

Finding and documenting community resources that could be useful for making the neighborhood a better place to live and work is an important first step. The classic source for asset mapping is Kretzman and McNight (1997). These activist-scholars point out that a thorough map of community begins with an inventory of the "gifts, skills and capacities of the community's residents . . . few of which are being mobilized for community-building purposes. . . . " (p. 5).

In addition to identifying the gifts and skills of individuals, households, and families, student researchers will compile an inventory of formal and informal institutions. These include churches, ethnic and religious associations, tenants groups, political organizations, advocacy and activist groups, among others. Politicians and political parties should be included, as should local branches of corporations, the chambers of commerce, and other interest groups. Mapping should also include businesses such as banks and restaurants, and public institutions such as libraries, parks, community colleges, and other types of schools; and non-

profit institutions such as hospitals and social service agencies. Physical characteristics, as well, are part of a community's assets—vacant and occupied land and buildings and other infrastructure such as streets and transportation systems.

Students travel in pairs or small groups to catalogue these assets. Then, the class as a whole raises important questions: How might the assets held by individuals, associations, institutions, and the physical environment be connected to each other? How might the community begin to imagine and institute new uses for these strengths? Mapping the environment means looking carefully at the political and cultural resources that can be mobilized to solve the particular problems faced by the community.

Teachers could focus the mapping on locating "opportunity structures" within the neighborhoods. These comprise an interrelated and interdependent web of systems (such as education and health care), markets (such as employment), and structures (such as transportation) (Powell, 2003, p. 1). Maps can be made of the locations of jobs and day care providers, the availability of transportation, and access to a variety of social services. Maps can reveal key demographic information such as poverty rates, race/ethnicity, age, language, employment status and rates, the cost of land development, who develops it, levels of criminal activity, school achievement levels, the price of housing, and the location of any job-training services. The spatial depiction of these systems provides a useful tool for students and teachers who want to identify impediments and assets related to solving problems that people in the community face (http://www1.umn.edu/irp/programs/oppmapping.html, pp. 1–3; see also http://www.communityyouthmapping.org/Youth/).

Power Analysis

Asset mapping is not an end in itself. It should be the basis for a "power analysis." Such an inquiry assesses the causes and solutions of current problems—whether these extend from the neighborhood and city to the metropolitan or federal levels.

A power analysis identifies a problem faced by students or other community residents and asks the following kinds of questions: Who is impacted by the problem? Who makes the decisions that affect the immediate situation? Who makes decisions that determine what those individuals or groups do and say? What kinds of informal influence or formal power do they have? What kinds

of informal influence or formal power do community residents have over the situation? Whose interests are affected by decisions that have been made? Who are potential allies in an attempt to solve the problem?

To the asset map a group has made will be added specific individuals and organizations that could work together to solve the problem. When the map shows assets that are actual people with names, work, interests, and relationships to others, it becomes a *power* map (Bass and Boyte, http://www.cpn.org/tools/manuals/Youth/rules5.html, p. 6). As described below, the power map becomes a basis for political campaigns to improve the community.

After teachers and students map and analyze community issues and resources, they share their analysis with other community residents, to begin to build a base of support. They could share it with school and government officials, as well, in initial attempts to obtain improvements.

In general, students' research can be disseminated in any number of ways. For example, in Oakland, CA, a group of teachers, students, parents, and community members prepared a report that compared state spending on education (proposed cuts) and prisons (proposed increases). After confronting officials with their data, they put their report on the World Wide Web (http://www.may8.org; see also Bloom and Chajet, 2004, and http://www.whatkidscando.org/studentresearch).

Upon completion and sharing of research reports, students and teachers should not end their involvement in the issue. Indeed, they are just beginning. Movement building requires an ongoing relationship with the community. Students should continue their engagement with community issues by using their research to assist in developing issue campaigns with residents.

Developing an Issue Campaign

As I will describe in more detail below, activities teachers utilize to develop skills of political analysis and activism in students typically involve well-regarded pedagogical strategies. The process involves techniques of *problem-solving, data collection and analysis, and reflective action* (taking some action to learn about and communicate findings through writing, graphing, etc., and reflection on what has been accomplished in order to continue) (Youth Organizing, 2002, p. 10).

One key to developing an issue campaign with students is to break the overall task—say, a campaign for immigrant students' rights—into manageable pieces, and to obtain a student to take responsibility for each piece (Bobo, Kendall, and Max, 2001, p. 124). It is also a good idea to set up structures like committees with student leaders, to facilitate many youth having chances to develop skills. Have older teens teach younger ones. In some cases, college students help high school students plan issue campaigns (see http://www.publicachievement.org, in Schutz, 2004, p. 19).

In all organizing work with youth, make use of their own cultural modes. For example, my niece, who is a youth organizer in Oakland, CA, took a group of her students to a concert by the Hip Hop group Dead Prez, a politically progressive group (that does not utilize egregious sexual imagery). She reported that attending the concert was an "incredible political education" for the students because they related so well to the medium in which the political message was delivered (Yolanda Anyon, personal communication, February 25, 2004).

The following description of how to develop an issue campaign with students is taken from an interview with experienced youth organizer Kim McGillicuddy, one of 13 founding members of Youth Force in the Bronx. McGillicuddy now works with Youth Justice Coalition to Free LA. This group was formed to deal with what they call "California's undeclared war on youth," and is led by youth aged 8–24 who have been arrested, detained, incarcerated, or put on probation or parole.

McGillicuddy advises that a successful campaign with young people has a number of steps: It starts with identifying the students' constituency. Who do they feel they represent—immigrant students, families, all community residents? The youth then conduct a strength and needs assessment, identifying and mapping constituents' needs, skills, resources, and vision for change. Youth can develop, conduct, transcribe and assess surveys, interviews, and personal stories. Next, youth scan existing research in relation to concerns or issues identified in their community. They obtain demographic data, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, and evaluate research done by others. Often, their research requires investigating primary sources, something few schools teach or expect from urban students.

With the teacher's help, the class analyzes the data that surfaced from research activities—looking at everything they have found.

They use their asset and power maps. Through discussion, they decide whether they want to act on the concerns. If so, they begin to identify the specific issues the class will take on, and determine short- and long-term organizing goals. The goals may be worded as a youth platform or campaign demands.

Base-building is the next step. Youth determine what sort of organizational structure will best serve that goal. Base-building means creating and implementing recruitment and communications strategies in the neighborhood, creating informational curriculum, debating whether decisions will be made by majority rule or consensus, facilitating meetings, and recording and communicating decisions.

After researching the problems, identifying the issues, sketching out demands, and beginning to educate the larger community, youth now further develop the campaign's power analysis, including researching targets of the campaign. They ask who is the person or group that has the power to give us what we want and what do they believe. How have they voted in the past? From where do they gain their strength—financial resources, advice, support? Where are they vulnerable? Who are their allies, and ours—and who can we move? The answers to these questions, combined with the other analyses already done, should produce a short-term strategy, a long-term vision, and a final list of demands—all of which should be used to measure the group's success.

Teacher and students then develop their campaign action plan—including selecting tactics that will most effectively impact targets. Full debate is necessary to choose tactics, and the pros and cons of everything from taking one's demands to the target with an appointment, if possible, to civil disobedience, if necessary. Invite community-based organizations to become involved. If the issue has to do with education, invite both education organizers and school reform groups to join in.

Students may want to support their platform, or those of others with which they agree, by demonstrating publicly. The following anecdote is of a demonstration in Chicago in which teachers and students took part, although they did not plan it together. The target of the demonstration was the board of education, and the point was to publicize how the U.S. military budget supporting the war in Iraq was depleting money available for public education. The report conveys the excitement and potentiality of public political action with students.

> The May 12 Rally at the Board of Education was excellent! Starting a little before 4PM, we teachers had about 35 spirited picketers in front of the Board, with our bullhorn, chants, and "bake sale" as we tried to raise enough funds to "compete" with the military budget. . . . We carried home-made "Victim of the War" posters of blown-up [disguised] photos of students . . . with words written below each such as "Dropped Out," "Homeless," and "Inmate."
>
> THEN, the youth came charging down the street, 50 or so Youth First! members who had been rallying at [offices] up the street to demand equitable funding for education. They joined in with us (eclipsing us for a moment with their energy!), but we recovered and marched together for a while, waking up the Chicago Public Schools brass upstairs . . . in a loud and angry (but peaceful) picket.
>
> [Significantly], this was teachers and students together, supporting each other. What was striking was that so many students commented how much they appreciated that the teachers were there, and that the teachers were so impressed by the Youth First! activists. (http://www.teachersforjustice.org/rallyupdate.php)

During demonstrations and other activities that develop a political campaign, youth build strong communications and media skills. The details, responsibilities, and opportunities are enormous—organizing community forums and school assemblies, educating residents door-to-door, writing stories or creating media such as newsletters, CDs, and videos, educating and cooperating with journalists, organizing meetings with city officials, testifying at public hearings, and integrating cultural expression into outreach (through open microphones, spoken word, slap tags, etc.); all these develop student communication skills.

Even the rallies and marches that the class may undertake involve lots of duties: deciding when, where, and why to rally; getting speakers and helping them to develop effective messages; setting up a sound system; getting permits from police, sanitation, and the parks department; handling security and negotiating with police; training people as marshals, coordinating legal support if there's a chance of arrests; and coming up with chants and posters.

The group is writing constantly: producing research reports, newsletters, Web sites, curricula, petitions, education guides, scripts for popular education skits, grant proposals, speeches,

dialogue for videos. And because the youth are writing for a public audience, they are more concerned about getting it right; they are learning about the power of words well expressed. They learn math: They produce grant proposals and budgets, order supplies, fill vouchers, make requisitions, create estimates, enter data, crunch numbers, and prepare for reviews of their figures. And they practice critical thinking—learning to ask hard questions, make connections, and gather evidence. They learn tolerance for others while discovering and coming to appreciate their own identity and agency.

McGillicuddy notes that many urban youth "struggle with the oppression that they have suffered as well as the hurt that they have caused others, and gain the understanding that their own liberation is dependent on the liberation of other people." She reports that "many of the youth who become involved in organizing are not just leaders, but local heroes." Few other "youth development" activities offer young people the chance, for example, to help rid their community of a toxic waste site or a corrupt police chief. "What better way for youth to overcome the isolation and anger they feel in communities where too many people clutch their bags and cross the street to avoid [them]!" (Interview of Kim McGillicuddy by What Kids Can Do staff, May 2003, available at http://www.whatkidscando.org/feataure stories/YOinterview.html; for other resources, see http://www.innercitystruggle.org and Goldwasser, 2004).

Most teacher-led activities will take place at the local level, in schools and communities. As Chapter 8 suggested for the civil rights movement, without *local* organizing there would not have been a mass movement. And so it is today. However, it is also true that without connection to citywide, regional, state, and national momentum and groups, many of the "wins" resulting from neighborhood organizing can be easily overruled by local officials. So, collaborations are crucial.

The next section asks education organizers to take the lead in pulling together not only progressive teachers and youth, but all others engaged in struggles for economic and educational opportunities in U.S. cities.

Regional and National Convenings

The education-organizing field is an increasing presence in U.S. cities. Sizeable numbers of groups are active, and many are part

of regional and national networks like ACORN, IAF, and PICO. Yet the effect is not national. We need to find a way to use these networks to challenge policies and practices at the metropolitan and federal levels—since these are where underlying determinants of urban poverty and poor schools originate. Because of the intricate connections between urban education and these deep structural issues, moving to scale in educational organizing and reform will require collaboration with the already existing political movements for economic rights I have described—for jobs and housing, a living wage, and progressive union and immigrant concerns.

It is also the case, moreover, that collaboration with educational campaigns would strengthen these other movements. The Immigrant Freedom Ride in 2003, for example, was an exciting collaboration of progressive labor unions and other immigrant groups; and the tour across the country may have an impact on federal legislation regarding immigrants' wages and civil rights. But the campaign could have been considerably stronger if children of immigrants and their exclusion from an education that allows them access to jobs with decent wages had been linked.

How do various campaigns obtain unity of purpose and coordination of activity—these important prerequisites to a large-scale movement? One lesson of the civil rights movement is that "umbrella groups" are essential to coordinating those involved in local activism, and in bringing the struggle to regional and national scale. Currently, there are groups in each of the existing movements that function somewhat like proto-umbrella groups. As noted in chapter 9, the entities are called intermediaries and offer a wide range of supports to local organizations. They assist with research, policy and organizational development, training, legal assistance, alliance-building, and fundraising (Moore and Sandler, 2003, p. 4).

Among the intermediaries in the education organizing field that I believe have the capacity to join together to call others to the table are the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy, the Washington, DC-based Center for Change, the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools in California, Chicago's Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, and Southern Echo. Intermediaries that would be able to attract youth groups include LISTEN, the Movement Strategy Center, Youth Action, and The School of Unity and Liberation (HoSang, James, and Chow-Wang, 2004, p. 8).

As a new organization representing the youth and education movements, this umbrella group could reach out to unions, living wage proponents, and other community organizations, and begin a process of conversing that could lead to national conferences—the goal of which would be to discuss a national movement to unify the various campaigns under one banner with a common agenda.

Long ago, community organizing icon Saul Alinsky pioneered the use of conventions to establish unified agendas and strategies among groups (Shaw, 2001, p. 258), and such an approach seems crucial to the creation of synergy and impact today.

CONCLUSION

When I was a child, I listened to my parents' stories of organizing in factories and of being harassed by the police. One time, a sympathetic news reporter agreed to announce falsely that my father had been killed to waylay police efforts to find him. Growing up in the household of former 1930s radicals, I got my politics with mother's milk. Over the years, it seemed natural to get involved in social movements to right the wrongs I saw around me.

But most Americans do not have family lessons in organizing and political transgression. The majority of people who come to politically left beliefs have had to acquire them on their own, many through exposure to movements already in progress. Moreover, the ideological battering most people receive as school children, the mangled news they imbibe from newspapers and television, as well as racial and class distortions pouring from the media, make the chances of developing a faith in transgressive equity politics relatively small.

We can change the odds. My argumentation has aimed at a more radical consciousness in readers, particularly regarding poverty and urban education. I tried to develop an analysis that would explain how macroeconomic and regional policies and practices create conditions in urban areas that cannot be overcome by school reform alone. Several chapters delineated how public policies regarding jobs, wages, taxes, public transportation, housing, and investment prevent even equity-seeking educational policies from having a sustained positive effect and consequence. I argued, as a result, that public policies regarding

economic and social equity ought to be among the strategies we propose in our attempts to increase urban school quality.

Following this explication of the power of macroeconomic policies and regional arrangements to trump urban school reform and conventional educational prescriptions, I presented an array of theoretically and historically derived processes whose enactment could involve increasing numbers of Americans in movement building.

Finally, I offered suggestions specifically for urban educators, whose position in city schools yields a strategic theoretical and practical advantage in organizing youth and communities. I took the liberty of suggesting that education organizers should instigate national unity by calling the various smaller social movements together.

The consequence of my overall analysis for the ways we conceptualize education policy is fundamental. Governments and corporate elites depend on education to deflect the pain inflicted by the economy. That cover does not work any longer for larger percentages of the population. The discovery by urban students as early as the fifth grade (Anyon, 1997) that education does not "matter" has a chilling effect on motivation; rightly contextualized, however, this realization can ultimately be politically activating.

To be adequate to the task of relevant prescription—as well as political mobilization—education policy cannot remain closeted in schools, classrooms, and educational bureaucracies. It must join the world of communities, families, and students; it must advocate for them and emerge from their urgent realities. Policies for which we press would therefore take on a larger focus: Education funding reform would include the companion need for financing of neighborhood jobs and decent wages. Small schools would be created as an important part of the coordinated efforts at neighborhood revitalization for low-income residents. Lawsuits to racially integrate districts will acknowledge housing segregation as fundamental and target legal challenges appropriately.

Policies that set the standards schools must meet would identify the money, materials, teachers, courses, and neighborhood needs that should be fulfilled in order to provide opportunities to learn at high levels. Educational accountability would be conceived as a public undertaking, centrally involving families,

communities, and students, in consultation with district and government officials. And college would be understood as a continuation of government's financial responsibility for public education, thus providing a material basis for motivation and effort on the part of K-12 students and educators.

In this new paradigm of educational policy, the political potential of pedagogy and curriculum would be realized. Critical pedagogy would take to the streets, offices, and courtrooms where social justice struggles play out. Curriculum could build toward and from these experiences. Vocational offerings in high school would link to living wage campaigns and employers who support them. And educational research would not be judged by its ostensible scientific objectivity, but at least in part by its ability to spark political consciousness and change—its "catalytic validity" (Lather, 1991).

In this approach to school reform, "policy alignment" does not refer to the fit between education mandates issued by various levels of government and bureaucracy. The fit we seek is between neighborhood, family, and student needs and the potential of education policies to contribute to their fulfillment.

This reorientation of education policy is unabashedly radical, and brings me to a final point. Whether one is born to radicalism or acquires it along the way, the premises on which it rests affirm the deeply rooted connections and disjunctures between democracy and capitalism. A radical frame provides the understanding that, for example, economic exclusion and educational underachievement flow fundamentally from systemic causes, even in the face of what appears to be democratic process and individual failure. And a radical analysis points toward concrete, long-lasting solutions.

In 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King, Jr. argued that civil rights, poverty, and war are all part of the same problem. He preached that Americans need to fight these as part of the same struggle. But, he said, in order to do that we must "recapture the revolutionary spirit" of freedom and equality which defines true democracy.

If those of us who are angry about injustice can recapture this revolutionary spirit of democracy, and if we can act on it together, then we may be able to create a force powerful enough to produce economic justice and real, long-term school reform in America's cities.

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