



# **So That We May Soar**

*Horizontalism, Intersectionality, and Prefigurative Politics*

*"In the poetics of struggle and lived experience, in the utterances of ordinary folk, in the cultural products of social movements, in the reflections of activists, we discover the many different cognitive maps of the future, of the world not yet born."*

—Robin D. G. Kelley

One of the things current realities can take from us is our ability to dream big and imagine the future we want to live in. We feel it's critical to ground our political work in our vision of a better world in order to move forward in ways that are strategic, experimental and transformative. In these pages we will try to share with you our ideas, our practices, our vision in the hopes that they will be an affirming echo, or even inspiration, for your work and daily life.

## A LIBERATORY VISION

What is your vision of a different world? In this vision, how do you imagine people relating to each other as individuals, as communities? How do you see resources being distributed? How do you envision our daily lives, our workplaces, our families?

The writers of this zine are people who are also asking ourselves these questions. We are involved in struggles for justice in Los Angeles, in New York and in places in between, and we are writing this because we hope the thoughts and

experiences we share here will help to spark dialogue about how to build the world we all want.

We offer our vision of a different world, not as a promise of a place that is far off in the distance where one day we hope to dramatically arrive, but rather as a set of principles and values that guide us in our practice of liberation now. We want to talk about how to build movements and organizations that both challenge current conditions and practice liberation. We practice liberation now in order to build experience with holding power differently in our own lives and communities, to reclaim our agency, creativity, humanity, dignity and our capacity to love and be joyful.

We want to build movements that are capable of interrupting existing systems of oppression, exploitation and domination, and radically shift the ways that we think, relate and live. We understand revolution as a process rather than an event and are working to build movements that transform power, rather than merely seizing or democratizing power in its current forms.

## WHAT WE VALUE AND ENVISION:

### *Creativity*

We have seen how joyful, transformative and humanizing it is to unleash creativity. We believe it is a necessary and integral part of revolutionary practice and process.

In South Africa the liberation movement fought against apartheid not only through taking collective direct action, but also by building a counter-culture based in pride and creativity. Black Consciousness battled against internalized racism, creating a new grassroots psychology of self-respect and community power. Through song, Black South Africans fortified their movements with humor and imagination, even in the most extreme conditions. The first protestors to die fighting the pass laws in the 1960s found strength in music. During the 1976 student actions against Afrikaners in black schools, protestors faced police attacks with live ammunition by singing together. Hugh Masekela, a musician exiled from South Africa, said: "We will go down in history as an army that spent a lot of time singing, rather than fighting." But this people's army, in which everyone was a musician, triumphed against an apartheid system that many believed was unshakable.

### *Collective Care*

*"These are the times to grow our souls. Each of us is called upon to embrace the conviction that despite the powers and principalities bent on commodifying all our human relationships, we have the power within us to create the world anew."*

—Grace Lee Boggs

We teach ourselves how to have ethical relationships, developing the practices and models that help us to create and sustain them. We center supporting each other in building our resilience, processing the traumas we experience and stopping cycles of violence. We forge new social relations that are non-capitalist, that recognize strength in difference and build our capacity to hold that difference.

In 1871, Parisians rose up against France's national government to establish an independent commune. The Communards organized local self-government, neighborhood assemblies and workers' councils to redistribute wealth, manage workplaces, and much more, including the hundreds who worked to create collective childcare spaces so that women could participate fully in decision-making and other aspects of public and political life. Today in Kolkata, India, DMSC—a union of 65,000 sex workers—have purchased farmland near the city, where retired sex workers can care for each other and the children of working women.

### *Cultivation of Mind/ Body/Spirit*

We learn to embrace ourselves in our wholeness. Education and healthcare are integrated into our everyday lives and based on skills and knowledge which allow for us to develop the ability to constantly learn, grow and maintain our health as our bodies change and our environment and needs change. We support curiosity in children, and in ourselves, by sharing a respectful, participatory, playful, and loving way of life.

### *Shared Work, Responsibility and Solidarity*

Prioritizing creativity supports a meaningful relationship to the 'wholeness' of our labor. We seek to build an economy that provides for our basic needs, and that is constructed in relationship and in communication with the desires of everyone who will utilize and benefit from what is created. Time dedicated even to work for basic needs can be joyful and meaningful when connected to our relationships, collective lives and the well-being of our communities.

### *Living in Harmony with the Earth*

Defending, sustaining and restoring the Earth are essential if humanity is to have a future. Many of us are in the process of recreating a mutually sustaining relationship to the rest of the living and non-living world. Societies that have survived and lived for thousands of years with this balance are showing us the way. This conception is central to many of the indigenous, urban and campesino movements now transforming America and the world—from the water wars of Bolivia and today's growing climate justice movement to the tens of millions of campesinos who united across the planet in La Via Campesina to defend the land we live and work on from the giant agribusiness corporations.

### *Sympathetic and Mutually Beneficial Global Ties*

We can share resources and distribute and build in ways that are mutually beneficial across all land masses and transcend the oppressive borders of the nation-state.

## *Another World Based on Solidarity, Autonomy, Equity, Difference and Self-Management*

The past and present are full of examples of the possibility of another world. Some are small, others extend to whole towns and cities; some span months and others years and decades. From the Haudenosaunee or Six Nations Confederacy from whom Ben Franklin and the Framers of the U. S. Constitution found inspiration and the Seattle General Strike of 1919, which organized the city under worker-control, to today's autonomous communities throughout Mexico from Maclovía Rojas just across the border of California in Tijuana down to the Zapatistas' Councils of Good Government and Caracoles in Chiapas, and as far South as Argentina's occupied factories *sin patronos* (without bosses): Another world is not only possible, but is under construction.

## **A CLEAR VISION MEANS WE DO OUR WORK DIFFERENTLY**

The vision laid out above is, of course, not comprehensive, but gives hints of the elements of the different kind

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of world that we can build together. Keeping this vision in mind while we organize, practice and reflect means that in our political work today we are planting the seeds of the future society for which we are striving. Some people call this prefigurative politics. The way we organize our resistance, practice leadership and build power now are the kernels of the society we are creating.

The most central things we think will help us hold pre-figurative politics are

- Putting into practice the lessons of intersectionality and b) striving toward non-hierarchy and collective leadership and care in our relationships, organizations and movements.

## **MAKING AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS CENTRAL**

*"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not lead single-issue lives."*

—Audre Lorde

We all live at the intersection of multiple identities, privileges and oppressions. As a result, radical politics that rank oppressions or attempt to identify a "primary contradiction" all too often end up addressing one aspect of domination while reinforcing

others. We see this in the history of movements and governments that have attempted to focus on class exploitation without challenging patriarchy, or those that have framed struggles solely in terms of race or national identity without addressing class divisions. As activists and organizers we experience hierarchical and patriarchal patterns of behavior emerging in our own organizations when we do not take into account the intersecting identities and oppressions embodied in each of us as we do the work. We may end up feeling isolated or disconnected from movements for liberation, experiencing racism or heterosexism in organizations and groups devoted to social justice.

Since the ways we experience oppression are intersectional, our resistance must be as well. In the same way that we use the term "intersectional" to describe the mutually reinforcing ways in which different systems of oppression interact in our lives, we think about "intersectional struggle" as a way to describe the complexity of understanding, methodology and vision we use to conduct our struggle so that we are profoundly taking on a simultaneous struggle for liberations from all forms of oppression because we see that they are intimately intertwined. Movements and organizations might focus on a particular issue, such as

housing rights, or highlight a certain strategic demand, such as classroom size, in a particular moment. But waging an intersectional struggle means keeping the interrelationship of all forms of oppression at the center of our analysis and vision.

## **EXAMPLES OF HOW WITHOUT INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS AND STRUGGLE WE DON'T CHANGE THE ROOT:**

**Anti-Colonialism: A 'Manly' Fight?**  
Often one form of violence is used in the service of other forms of domination. For instance, as activist and scholar Andrea Smith has extensively documented in the United States, gender violence is a primary tool of colonialism and white supremacy. The goal of colonialism is not just to kill colonized peoples, but to destroy their sense of being people and their ability to care for themselves and one another. It is through sexual violence that a colonizing group attempts to render a colonized people, in Smith's words "inherently rapable, their lands inherently intractable, and their resources inherently extractable." One cannot end colonialism and white supremacy without ending heteropatriarchy, and vice versa.

**War an Answer For Violence Against Women?**  
Some anti-violence against women groups supported the bombing of Afghanistan in 2002. Invoking reasoning that said they thought it was necessary in order to save women from the Taliban. It is hopefully

clear to many now that the invasion and bombing of Afghanistan has not only directly resulted in violence against Afghan women, but also created conditions for many other forms of oppression to flourish. The concern for one type of violence but not another has characterized liberal and conservative responses to violence against women abroad and at home.

Many of these same groups support fighting violence against women in the United States by relying on criminalization as their primary strategy for ending domestic and sexual violence. In fact, increased criminalization has built up the prison-industrial complex. This has meant an increased incarceration of women as well because often police arrest 'both' parties. This has contributed to increased state violence against women of color by police and in prisons, and contributed to mass incarceration of communities of color without appreciably increasing safety for women or helping to transform the perpetrators.



## MY STRUGGLE IS YOUR STRUGGLE

Although there are some very real things to be lost for those who are privileged by systemic oppression, there is a great deal more to be gained through collective liberation. When we think of challenging heterosexism

and heteronormativity (the assertion that being heterosexual is the only acceptable way to be), we think of the countless ways queer people are targeted, from patronizing comments that degrade our relationships to diminished access to healthcare and other social services, to the knowledge that every trip outside the house could end in physical violence. For all people, however, heteronormativity also serves to enforce and limit the roles we play in our lives. It creates rigid notions of "family" for everyone who is trying to figure out the best ways to be in intimate, caring relationships with each other or to access support around raising children. Heteronormativity throws up obstacles to the free development of emotionally healthy human relationships, the inability to show, express and engage emotions in a deep way is a common, debilitating problem in many intimate relationships between people of any gender(s). The resistance of our heteropatriarchal society to emotional intelligence as positive and important comes from its relationship to what is considered 'feminized' behavior.

One of the most confrontational and beautiful voices belongs to Pedro Lemebel, a gay communist from Chile. In his poem *Mani-festo (Hablo por mi diferencia)*, excerpted below, Lemebel directly addresses—and critiques—the "revolutionary" Left parties of Latin America with a radical vision of his own.

Still active in the autonomous Chilean left, Lemebel has found a way as a writer and radio/television personality to make his experience and politics accessible to ordinary Chileans, including older working class women like his mother and my grandmother. He speaks of everyday struggles of everyday folks as political, reaching many more people than the official Left parties ever could. Like Lemebel, many activists realize that this hierarchical and male-dominated model of being a revolutionary ultimately fails to address the concrete experiences of oppression in everyday life.

(from Paula X. Rojas, "Are the Cops in Our Heads and Our Hearts?" in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*)

...But don't talk to me about the proletariat because being poor and gay is worse...

What will you do with us compañeros?

Will you tie us up by our brads

Desired for a Cuban sidario

Will you put us on a train to nowhere...

Are you afraid of the homosexualization of life?

And I'm not talking about sticking it in and pulling it out

I'm talking about tenderness compañero...

I'm not going to change for Marxism

That rejected me so many times

I don't need to change, I'm more subversive than you...

—Pedro Lemebel



Socially, there is an attempt to squash emotional richness in many people but it is particularly attacked in men (same-gender-loving or not, effeminate in their behavior or not).

Relatedly, we see the need for those of us organizing against the prison-industrial complex and war to also prioritize ending violence against women within our own organizations and communities. The joint statement issued back in 2001 as a collaboration by *INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence* and *Critical Resistance* on 'Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex' is particularly illuminating around these connections.

The grassroots work done at the Garment Worker Center is centered on workers and their workplace issues. Yet when we didn't give room to create a location for full richness of emotional feelings for men, we saw and heard from families that the men who were members were abusing alcohol, carrying out emotional violence and control of their families. It meant their involvement with the organization was re-enforcing patriarchal violence at home and a re-enforcement of what is considered 'masculine' or 'tough' behavior. Whereas, when we made room within for men to discuss their emotions beyond anger and when we discussed workplace oppression and how it triggered issues around their own experiences of abuse as children, many of the men were able to participate more con-

sistently in meetings and able to obtain deeper involvement and support of their families.

In December of 2001 the economy of Argentina collapsed and a general reaction supported them began. There was the rejection of the political sectors, against financial power and against judicial power. Out of this came the building of new social relations partly through the take-over of factories, restaurants, and hotels and use of these for the needs of people.

The book *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* interviews people about their experiences:

*Neka from the MTTD Solano reflects:* "For example, with me, it wasn't that I was at all machista before, but it was assumed that the woman in a relationship would wash the dishes, or cook and serve, and clean the clothes. But now there are changes in this, and we're more conscious of these sorts of dynamics. I believe we're taking steps forward. Before, if a couple was in the movement, it was the woman who stayed home with the children while the man went out into the streets. There has been a change in this—now there are both compañeros and compañeras who look after all the children. I believe this is a real transformation. We talk a lot about all

of this and feel we are collectively taking charge of our history, doing so in solidarity with one another. Another thing that is discussed a lot is that we see the children as all of ours, and not so much belonging to anyone; they're all of our responsibilities. Before we came to these sorts of conclusions, if a baby was fussing in meetings, someone would say, "Take care of your child." But now, whoever is closest and most able helps the child."

## INTERSECTIONALITY IN ACTION

In organizing around public education, some of us have tried to push for an intersectional understanding of both the crisis and the shape of the resistance. Working within the Los Angeles teachers union we have pushed to expand often narrowly defined union struggles around budget cuts that focus on jobs, salaries, and healthcare to further incorporate the concerns of students or communities. These struggles have meant we needed to educate ourselves and others about how the education crisis intersects with immigration, race, language, and historic denial of access to and control over educational institutions. We and others pushed for the union and ourselves to take responsibility for the quality

of education as well as to address the devastation of budget cuts on other parts of the public sector. Otherwise, we believe we will be unsuccessful in building allies and in organizing a vigorous defense of public education in general.

We work within the Los Angeles Teachers Union today because we believe it's important to build a sense of collective investment in a shared future, and to counter the trend of low-wage workers and families fighting one another for crumbs. We raise questions that urge union members to discuss and better understand how we can stop reproducing exploitation, gain consciousness of ourselves as members of the working class and to fight for material gains for the entire working class. Through this we can move the work of the union beyond a focus on bread & butter issues to a bigger vision of solidarity and liberation.

We talk about how as public sector workers, the resources needed to improve education will be taken from other social services such as public health care, and that therefore we must demand more funding for all public services from the state. Addressing how hierarchical and bureaucratic unions are often helps point to the ways in which their purpose is to negotiate with capitalists for better deals for subsets

of workers promoting the idea that all workers can move into the middle class, propagating the myth of the American dream.

We organize with our co-workers for contracts that include not only pay and benefits, but also gains to support our students and their communities, through demands around smaller class sizes and bilingual education. We've seen how powerful organizing with teachers in a union context can be when directly linked to organizing with students, parents, and communities to transform the whole educational system.

On the other hand, well-intended struggles in education that don't center an intersectional analysis and engage struggle intersectionally can have devastating effects for communities and organizations. We see this clearly in the United Federation of Teachers' successful opposition to the establishment of community control over the New York City public school system in 1968. As recounted by Richie Perez, "Responding to growing militancy in communities of color, a plan to 'decentralize' the New York City school system was drafted by the Lindsay administration; it called for the establishment of local community school boards with limited powers. This was not the 'community control' that our communities had fought for; and ultimate power remained in the hands of the central Board of Education, and the teachers' and supervisor's unions. Despite this, the United Federation of Teachers, led by Albert Shanker,

bitterly opposed any “civilian interference” in the running of the schools. The UFT called a teacher’s strike which lasted 90 days. During this time, the city was polarized even further with charges of “anti-Semitism” being launched against Black and Puerto Rican community control advocates and “white racism” being charged against the teacher’s union. Centers of community control activism were located in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Harlem, El Barrio, the Lower East Side, and the South Bronx, where United Bronx Parents (led by Evelina Antonetty, Dona Rosa Escobar, and others whose roles must be documented) played a pivotal role in organizing parents and students.”

Both groups ended up losing—the community was left with no voice and little meaningful reform; and the union became more alienated from the community and was unable to protect or push for meaningful advances for members, much less for students.

“Many of us were active in those movements (Civil Rights, Black nationalism, the Black Panthers), and all of our lives were greatly affected and changed by their ideologies, their goals, and the tactics used to achieve their goals. It was our experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements, as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left, that led to the need to develop a politics that was anti-racist, unlike those of white women, and anti-sexist, unlike those of Black and white men.”

—Combahsee River Collective

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## HORIZONTALISM AND A NEW KIND OF LEADERSHIP

*“Strong people don’t need strong leaders.”*

—Ella Baker

Ella Baker serves as an example from history of how an organizer with a liberatory political practice engaged non-hierarchy. Baker worked in the cooperative movement in Harlem in the 1930s, was a field secretary and director of branches for the NAACP in the 1940s, worked alongside Dr. King in setting up the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the 1950s, and was the intellectual and spiritual force behind the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed in the 1960s.

In the words of Ella’s Daughters, a contemporary network of women inspired by Baker’s legacy: “Ella rejected the idea that any single charismatic leader can save us. ‘Strong people don’t need strong leaders,’ she insisted.” The book “Ella Baker & The Black Freedom Movement” points out “Neither of them [White or Du Bois] was the kind of organizer Baker modeled herself after; such high-profile, public figures did not draw her ... it was the brave and unheralded local people.” “In Baker’s political philosophy, personal relationships were the building blocks that led to solidarity and collective action.” “A fundamental commitment to democratic practice distinguished Ella Baker’s progressive politics. She despised elitism and placed her confidence in the many rather than the few; however, talented and enlightened they might be. Moreover, she had come to recog-

nize that the bedrock of any serious social change ... lies ... in the commitment and hard work of the rank-and-file membership and willingness and ability of those members to engage in vibrant and reciprocal process of discussion, debate and decision-making.”

Our current capitalist society is built on entrenched hierarchies that train us to accept top-down models of leadership as natural. We come to believe we need to look outside of ourselves towards someone else to do the real work of changing society; to look outside of ourselves to make the big decisions because someone else, some ‘expert,’ knows more; to look outside of ourselves because we fear making mistakes and we can’t imagine it any other way.

In our organizing experience, we have recognized how deeply we have internalized the notion that social hierarchy is natural and inevitable and therefore within our organizations we often take top-down approaches that replicate the structures of domination that we seek to eradicate. If our vision of a different world is truly radical and transformative, why would we want to continue to employ the very same hierarchical systems that we seek to dismantle? By developing

nonhierarchical practices we hope to lessen the hold that capitalist/imperialist heteropatriarchy has on us and begin to develop ways of organizing that model how we want to live in the world.

In our study of the lessons taught to us by radical feminists, women of color in the U.S. and women of the global south who were involved in struggles with roots in Marxist-Leninist organizations, anarchists and others, we see the importance of centering non-hierarchy in our practice by deliberately cultivating non-traditional ideas of leadership and making the personal political.

We believe the concept of horizontalism points towards a different way for creating radical social change.

Horizontalism challenges each individual to break out of the patterns of allowing others to be the agents of change, and to begin to trust, grow and develop ourselves, politically and personally, alongside others. It means working together in and with solidarity, autonomy, equity, self-management and mutual cooperation for mutual benefit.

Many people may confuse participation, inclusion and voice to be the same as horizontalist practice. Horizontalist practice is not simply the sharing of space and time. It is about investing the time and energy in education, support, and encouragement in order to allow for

full participation and decision-making. Crucial to this process is allowing time for practicing new roles, ideas and ways of thinking while nurturing a collective experience. This requires the development of structures that truly embody collective work, collective leadership and decentralize power.

## LIBERATORY PRACTICE AND NON-HIERARCHY

Structures and discipline are necessary for horizontalist organizations to remain actively committed to a horizontalist leadership model and to avoid creating a default centralized leadership. Without discipline or clear structures, collective agreements become loose promises and unspoken hierarchies emerge based on leadership styles, race, and gender or class privileges, creating an unspoken structure for the group. Decision-making, holding others accountable and the responsibility of strategic thinking remains in the hands of few, undercutting the goals of building a participatory democratic organization where everyone decides and creates together. When we decide and practice our collective agreements about how we will operate, how we will evaluate, what is expected of us, how we will build

the leadership of every member of the organization, how every person will at many points hold the responsibility of moving important pieces of the work forward, and establishing a basic set of principles to guide our work to which we are all accountable to, the cohesiveness and efficiency of our organizations is greater.

While we may not need individual "strong leaders," we do need strong relationships. Relationships are at the center of our work. The style and practice of leadership that we foster impacts the relationships and cultures we develop. Saying we don't need a few strong leaders to be effective is NOT saying we don't need leadership or coordination. We need a different type of leadership, one that sees all of us as "ready" and draws upon the multiplicity of strengths, skills, and experiences. Directly addressing and holding power differently within an organization is only possible through the development of new social relations and therefore we need to practice different ways of being with each other and caring for each other.

### *Non-Hierarchy and*

### *Power*

Horizontalist organizing also does not mean a disavowal of power dynamics. On the contrary, ensuring that we

are not replicating the exact power dynamics we wish to undo actually requires deep consciousness of power, a whole lot of structure, internal work, self-reflection and openness to critique. On an individual level, upon honest reflection, many of us will likely see our own tendencies toward not sharing power, and in this reflection, we can be reminded how much our own internalized patriarchy has conditioned us.

On a group level, it requires intentional structure and coordination to directly address the different experiences and knowledge that people bring with them. We do this by sharing knowledge & experience between people, and encouraging people to take on new roles & responsibilities. We do this by creating collective structures where we can practice systematic, constant, and uncomfortable accountability with each other. An alternative practice of leadership can be one that is shared, that emphasizes deep listening and caregiving, promoting a culture of participation in which everyone feels that their voice is valuable, and a consciousness of how power dynamics impact participation and emotional well-being.

The Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico provide some reference points for building whole

movements and transforming societies in ways that mirror our values. With no need to idealize or decontextualize their struggle, we can say that there are many decisions they've made that inspire us. The Zapatistas rose up in arms in 1994 in order to end the over 500 years of oppression they experienced as indigenous peoples. They were also seeking "democracy, liberty and justice for all Mexicans." In that uprising they sought to minimize violence, asking "that international organizations and the International Red Cross watch over and regulate our battles, so that our efforts are carried out while still protecting our civilian population. We declare now and always that we are subject to the Geneva Accord..." Living in conditions of desperate rural poverty, they destroyed the land deeds of the hacienda owners and redistributed the land not only to themselves, but also to the indigenous peasants of many different organizations throughout Chiapas. Seeing that the rest of Mexico was calling for a peaceful path to change in the country, the Zapatistas stopped fighting with their weapons and continued fighting with their words just weeks after the uprising, and have been doing so ever since. Since those early days, countless local, regional, national, international and, as they jokingly say, "intergalactic," organizing initiatives have been launched or inspired by the Zapatista movement. Within their own territories, they continue to build innovative and autonomous political and judicial structures and educational, health, communication and economic development programs. They have separated their political and military organization from the civilian institutions of their roughly 1,100 communities grouped into twenty-nine autonomous municipalities and five regions known as "caracoles." Their



radical democratic vision, with frequently rotated positions of authority in the committees, that emphasize leadership as a labor of service, that prioritizes listening, accountability, and consensus-building, and that joins ethics with politics, continues to shine a light on this other way of doing politics we seek to build and practice.



## GROWING OUR WORK

We have tried to illustrate the importance of a politics that is prefigurative, horizontalist, and intersectional. This work is happening in big and small spaces, and through groups we build and groups we seek to transform. These spaces include our workplaces, our schools, our neighborhoods, our communities, our built and born families, and more....

Our work will only grow, and we will only grow in our work if we have places to practice different ways of being with one another. Experiential glimpses of holding and creating new social relations are and have been important to this process. One example comes from Chile in the early 1970s when the democratically elected government of Allende pushed through a series of progressive reforms, including nationalization of some key industries

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and limited land reform. During this time, powerful movements in communities and workplaces began creating their own prefigurative institutions that included regional networks of workers' councils that started to take over and run the factories without government permission as well as neighborhood associations that seized vacant land to build new communities. While Allende was trying to contain these mass movements within the legal and economic boundaries of the state, the grassroots leadership was pushing beyond these boundaries. They used these new spaces to practice how society could be run without bosses, without landlords, and with new kinds of horizontal relationships between people and within communities. By shifting the texture and quality of their relations—which included but was not limited to how resources were distributed—the dimensions of the dreamscapes of what could be changed, and reclaimed, also widened.

We need places in our lives where we can practice different ways of being with each other. We not only need to learn how to undo racism, patriarchy, and all kinds of internalized power and oppression, we need to learn how to do—how to give feedback, how to push and motivate each other without using shame or power plays, how to feel good about ourselves (like we're important

enough to have ideas and share them). Many of us may know about this stuff in our heads, but most of us know we need an organization in which to practice, learn, and in Grace Lee Boggs' words, "grow our souls" together.

It's really hard to hold onto our politics and our commitments living in the world in which we live. Every message we get is about individualism, giving up, accepting the way things are. Our dreams often get tied up in making it or sacrificed for practicality. Even though we might feel excited and committed to our political work, it is easy to feel worn down and burnt-out. Community and essentially organization, is a fundamental system of support that can help us remember our commitments and practice mutual support and responsibility towards one another and our shared work.

## THE HORIZONTALIST MOVEMENTS WE BUILD CAN BUILD POWER

We also need organizations to build our strategy, resistance, power and impact, not only amongst a select few who might be "turned on/tuned in," but amongst critical masses engaged in broad-based

work. In order to maintain the gains that are possible through collective structures it will require that resistance is more widespread and more consciously spread. We believe horizontalist movements can grow beyond a city or even a country to challenge and transform nation-states and international systems/institutions. It will also require great commitment and understanding to resist the military forces employed by capitalism against the liberatory zones we might create. Though we have not explored the dimensions of the state deeply in this pamphlet, we do think it is ultimately necessary to overthrow the state for our liberatory vision to be fully realized.

We believe that we also need another level of organization: radical collectives where we can deeply and clearly think through what and how we build, and why. We need spaces where we can come together with others committed to deep and broad economic and social transformation. We need to grow our collective knowledge, analysis, experience, and strength—and numbers. We don't expect any one organization to have all the answers, have *the* right plan or strategy, or have everything figured out. We don't think there is only one organization that all revolutionaries should be a part of, and can see the destructive effects of this type of functioning in multiple historical

moments. We also know that the form of organization will be different at different moments of movement activity.

For us the historical resistances that started by expressing the needs and desires of the many are examples from which we can draw inspiration and lessons as we work to build our own projects and organizations. From these we find the foundations for the use of collective practices as our horizontalist movements grow ever larger and more powerful and work for greater transformation. We also learn from when power has ended up in the hands of a few, as in the Soviet Union and China. Where there were not sufficient safeguards and practices in creating participatory structures, the power structures that movements worked to get rid of ended up being replicated, becoming some of the most oppressive bureaucracies within capitalism.

*If you're interested in finding out more, contact us at:*

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or

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We believe that we can build interconnected and interdependent communities that can count on each other to share resources, knowledge and share responsibility to build a better world together; a world free of the interlocking and mutually re-enforcing oppressions of capitalism, colonialism, racism, heteropatriarchy and ableism. A way of life centered on the value of all life forms and the home from which we gather life—the earth. We believe this requires a different way for creating radical social change that grows new ideas from the rich soil left by those who came before us. We believe it can create a participatory and inclusive forum for experimentation that requires the practice of building our organizations while demanding that structures inside our current society work towards participatory democracy and people-controlled economies. This means working together in and with solidarity, autonomy, equity, self-management and cooperation for mutual benefit. We believe this vision must be built as we walk.

