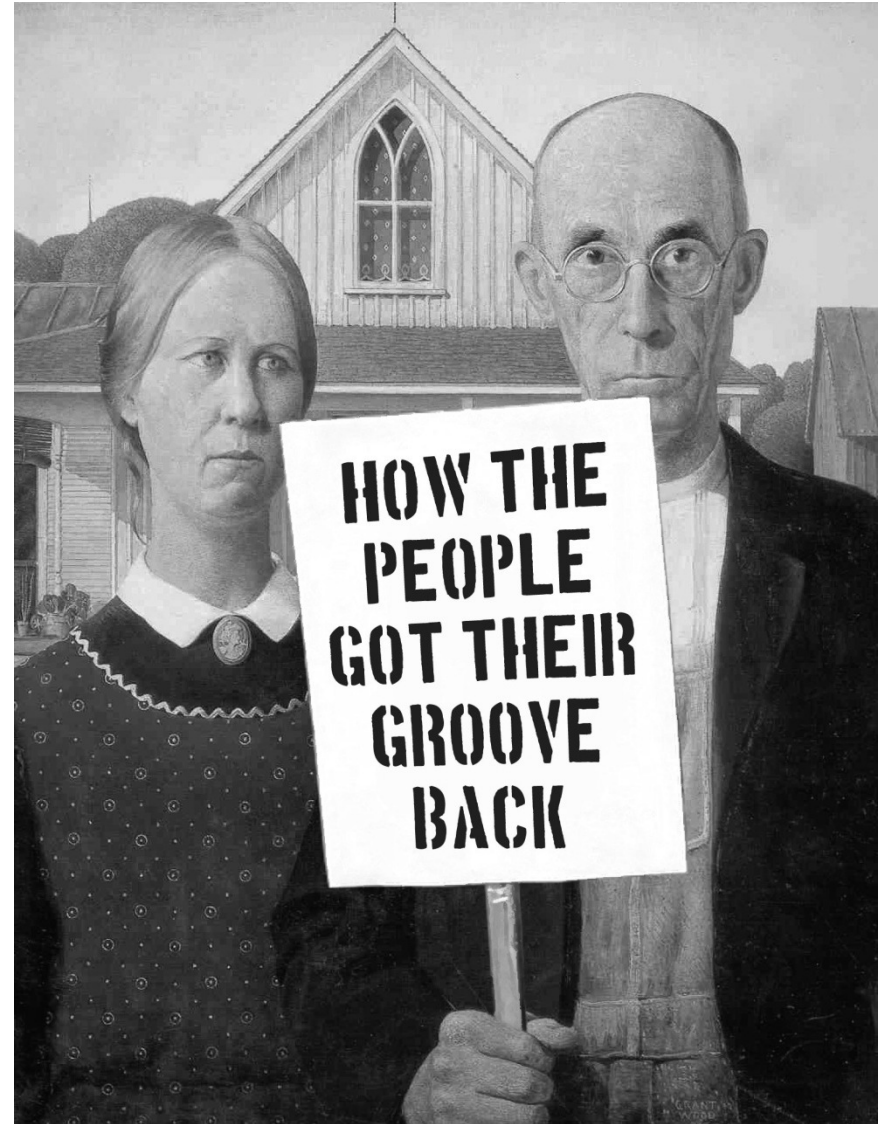




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**The Populist references in this book come from Lawrence Goodwyn's The Populist Moment.*



{ What a Bunch of Farmers Can Teach a Bunch of Occupiers About How to Keep on Going }

HOW THE PEOPLE GOT THEIR GROOVE BACK: WHAT A BUNCH OF FARMERS CAN TEACH A BUNCH OF OCCUPIERS ABOUT HOW TO KEEP ON GOING

Not so long ago, Americans witnessed the beginning of a mass democratic uprising. Thousands of average people, disgusted by greedy elites and corporate control of government, launched a movement that spread to almost every state in the nation. They did it to reject debt. They did it to fight foreclosures. They did it to topple a world where the 1 percent determined life for the other 99. And they did all of it against incredible odds, with a self-respect that stymied critics.

The year? 1877. The people? Dirt-poor farmers who would come to be known as Populists.

Now it's 2011, and the People are stirring again. It's been over two months since a few hundred dreamers pitched their tents in Zuccotti Park and stayed.

These people weren't Populists, but they had the same complaints. They couldn't make rent. They had no future. They lived in a nation with one price for the rich and another for the poor. And they knew whatever anyone said that they didn't have real democracy.

Okay, and so what? What do a bunch of century-dead farmers have to do with the Occupy movement? Well, quite a lot, actually.

You see, the Populists came within an inch of changing the entire corporate-capitalist system. They wanted a totally new world, and they had a plan to get it. But as you may have noticed, they didn't. And now here we are, one hundred years later, occupying parks where fields once stood. We're at a crucial phase in our movement, standing just now with the great Everything around us—everything to win or everything to lose. It's our choice. And that's good,

and sometimes, shouted. It's been killed and resurrected, celebrated and spurned. It's suffered with aplomb, and so it's ragged-beautiful. Sometimes it seemed so far, and we were in the dark. And other times we were sure it was just around the corner, right up against our skin. Always it's been a world we made with voices, heads, and hands.

This wagon train is long, and it doesn't stop. It loses people, wheels—re-finds them. We die on the march, mostly, and often the point is marching. But there is always the mountain, and still the other side. We are pulling toward it, all of us. And we are pulled by one great question: What would it look like to win?

This is the question you must ask. You ask it for yourself, and for your children. You ask it alone, and we answer it together. But you must ask it, and not let anything get in the way of the answer—not your ego, not your assumptions, not your weary, tired heart.

Because democracy is not an idea, a monument or a building. Democracy is nothing short of being fully alive and defending the fully living.

So write your lists and make your map. Have a plan and damn The Man. Because populism isn't dead, you see: it's marching.

where so much more happens than the tasks at hand. As my friend bemoaned: “I don’t want us to go back indoors to meetings only ten people attend, only to go back out and find all the people who gathered once but then dispersed.” And that is a real concern. On the other hand, occupations can become mired in problems of self-defense, and the occupation itself can supersede the work that needs doing. We need to regroup our local Occupies and ask ourselves some serious questions. First, what are the pros and cons of a centralized, physical occupation? What are the most pressing needs in our community and are they met better by one occupation, many small and targeted occupations, or another route altogether? If our occupations went dark or indoors, would we lose a certain magic and hutzpah that we need? If yes, how can we best defend or reclaim an occupy space, and what skills do we need to do that? How can we get those skills, and how can we divvy up our energies to meet both the needs of the occupation and its purposes? What are our goals and how do we meet them in the style and spirit of the Occupy movement? And finally, how do we keep the magic alive? That last question might sound silly, but it’s the most important. Because the Occupy movement didn’t invent the grievances its making or the problems it’s fighting. Most of these problems have existed for decades or even centuries, and have been fought for just as long by devoted dissidents. What Occupy has brought to this mix is radical hope and the magic of gathered imagination, gathered rage, gathered force. It’s brought possibilities so fast and thick they feel like the new texture of reality. And that’s what we cannot afford to lose.

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Those are my lists. I’m done, and we’re just starting. I have only one brain, and this is just one way forward. Probably there are as many ways as hearts, and we’ll need every beating one. But there are two things for sure: All the ways are steep, and some of them are worth it. There’s another side to this mountain, and it’s lovely and shot with light. Like the bear, we’re going over to see what we can see. We’ll know when we arrive, because we’ve carried the idea of this place for lifetimes, centuries. Sometimes it’s whispered

because the choices we make next will echo, not just for scholars and bored kids in history class, but in the lives we do or don’t get to have. The good news is this: the Populists traveled in wagons and left us their wheels. We don’t have to reinvent them. We’re going in a new direction, but I have a feeling they can help us get there.

Occupy has done a lot of things right, and even more things beautifully. But strategy has not been our forte. That was okay at first, even good. We didn’t have one demand, because we wanted it all. So we let our anger grow, and our imagination with it. We were not partisan or monogamous to one creed. That ranging anger got 35,000 people on the Brooklyn Bridge last week, and hell if I’m not saying hallelujah. But winter is settling now, and cops are on the march. Each week we face new eviction orders, and wonder how to occupy limbo.

It’s time for a plan, then, some idea for going forward. This plan should in no way replace the rhizomatic-glorious, joyful-rip-roarious verve of the movement so far. It can occur in tandem. But we need a blueprint for the future, because strategy is the road resistance walks to freedom.

In that spirit, I sat down a few years ago and devoted myself to studying social movements of the past. I wanted to see what I could learn from them—where they went wrong, where they went right. I didn’t trust this exercise to random musings. No, like a good Type A kid, I made butcher paper lists of past movement features and mapped them onto current ones. I asked: What is the revolt of the guard for the climate movement? What’s the modern anti-corporate equivalent of the Boston Tea Party?

As I read, I learned a lot about the phases movements go through as they form, what common features they share, and what often breaks them apart.

I could name these phases myself, but it's already been done. And no one has named them better than historian Lawrence Goodwyn, a thinking human if there ever was one and a student of the Populist movement.

Goodwyn said that successful movements go through four stages:

- 1) First, the **movement forms**. This happens when people acknowledge oppression and defy it. They create physical and psychic spaces where they can cast off conventional modes of deferment, reject resignation and start acting with radical self-respect. This self-respect involves speaking with the tongue of truth, in the language of radical experience. Millions of people acting with self-respect become a body collective self-confidence, reordering what is politically possible.
- 2) Second, the **movement recruits**. It finds a way to attract masses of people while sharing its message of resistance. Radical recruitment is done systematically and strategically, and recruiters attract people in two ways: they promise tangible relief and provide a motive and blueprint for action.
- 3) Third, the **movement educates**. It articulates the ideology of the movement. It offers an analysis of power that liberates folks from past thinking patterns, renames what is possible, and unveils a plan to make the possible plausible. It names both the enemy in power and how to get power back. It's a murder mystery: It gives folks a suspect, a motive, and a scheme for restoring justice.
- 4) Fourth, the **movement politicizes**. The movement politicizes when its alternative solutions run up against the powers that be. It admits that power must change for change to work, and it ousts old regimes through direct confrontations with power. Having created alternative economies, practices and paradigms, it creates an alternative political structure—laws, government, and process—to protect its brave new world.

can't find a way to coordinate efforts. So far, individual Occupies can throw out ideas or even call for actions, but it's very difficult to organize around something massive or share crucial information. In a leaderless movement, it can be difficult to know where to go to share or get a question answered. It is good to keep in mind that democratic movements often require more structure than hierarchical ones, since in hierarchies you ask the person in charge and in democracies you ask *the structure itself*—a committee whose membership is always in flux. This makes it more important than ever to identify a clear process of getting information, making decisions, and federating to make large decisions. The Populists had a system of sub-alliances that each had their own flavor and attitudes, but they coordinated through a system of trained lecturers and annual convergences. In between big events, they communicated through their own Reform Press Association, a collection of local, regional and national papers that communicated key ideas, agreements and perspectives to farmers all over the country. Occupy Nashville has met this need by reviving the Revolutionary-era Committees of Correspondence, using these working groups to communicate throughout the state. Others have suggested an Occupy news network or a kind of informational Pony Express where appointed people travel to share critical information. Whatever the solutions are, Occupy must create a centralized virtual and physical space to share and plan together or we will fight too much alone.

Second, as I finished this essay, the evictions started. One by one, Occupies faced police in riot gear solving 'public health threats' with tear gas and pepper spray. Some of us held our ground, some were routed but regrouped and reclaimed, and others are in limbo, wondering what to do next. There are signs at most evictions that say something simple and profound: You can't evict an idea. That's true, and the idea of an occupation is capable of outlasting a centralized physical occupation, going forward to occupy homes against foreclosure, occupy classrooms, occupy elections, whatever. But this is an uncomfortable stage because the magic of Occupy has been the centralized physical occupation, a place

awareness, intimidate the powerful, and make people feel empowered and important. Mass action stops the machine.)

- Create People's Laws. This could be coordinated on a national level or done to suit each particular Occupy, but the idea's the same. Come up with a law that dramatically shifts power (for example abolishing corporate personhood) and run it as a ballot initiative—a form of direct democracy. Use the ensuing organizing drive to educate and recruit people into the movement, then fight like hell to pass the law. Remember, though: This is municipal civil disobedience, so prepare to escalate in court.

QUESTIONS

You might not agree with my suggestions, but you've got to answer my questions. First, what kind of government do I want? (Because a government is, at its core, a decision-making process and body. Everyone has a government. They just have to say what kind it is.) For the Occupy movement, this will probably involve describing both an interim government and an ultimate government. What do we want while the current system exists, and what do we want when we've won? Then ask: Do I want to replace, transform, infiltrate or abolish the government? If I do not want to engage in conventional politics, then what is my plan for confronting existing power?

TWO LAST LAST THINGS

First, Goodwyn names four movement phases, but he also names a movement necessity: internal communication. Successful movements, no matter how far-flung and rhizomatic, find ways to communicate their ideas, their methods, their models and their plans. Movements that don't do this form pockets of intensity or slump into irrelevance. The genius of the Occupy movement is leaderless, local autonomy, but that genius is also a pitfall if we

Occupy Wall Street is by and large in phase one. Fair enough; it's been only two months. Building a movement took the Populists ten or twenty years, so we could easily rest easily. But for most people I know, there is a deep, darkening sense that we do not have that kind of time. We've got to change it all, and we've got to do it before the ice caps melt, before that python, global finance, dies and squeezes its victims one last and lethal time. We are on the edge of history. We are urgency embodied.

And so we learn from that history. We must. We've got to get serious, and fast. We've got to make a plan. This plan has to give masses of Americans new paradigms, concrete alternatives, something to join, a way to join it, and a political insurgency to protect it. Along the way, we'll have to keep a grip on the slippery soul of democracy, practicing consensus and conversation while developing a system of internal communication.

So I'm here to publish my lists. In what remains of this essay, I'll chart a sample way forward. I'll take you through each phase of movement building, and make suggestions and critiques. I'll show how the Populists approached the stage; I'll say what Occupy's done well; I'll dig into dangerous attitudes we should avoid; and I'll offer suggestions for effective actions. Finally, I'll close with questions we must answer as a movement whatever methods we decide to use.

But first, let me tell you where I'm coming from. I am not a pure -ism or -ist, but a mutt: part anarchist, part green, part interim socialist. This is no screed for a certain sect, or the fancy footwork of a shill tripping on a movement I don't move to. This is an essay written by me, a complicated person who desperately wants a complicated movement to succeed in desperate times. Because I care, I critique. A movement is always a bag of new thinking, old thinking, dangerous and helpful ideas. In this mix I am a free agent. I tell the truth as an act of love. This truth-telling should not be confused with the snark of the bourgeois press, who use

condescension as credentials and write dismissive missives to fall asleep at night. There is no snark here. I am no reporter, except in the basic sense: I report what I see, what I observe. Call me an embedded editor-anthropologist—someone who tries to understand the culture of a big idea, then challenges it to be bigger, bolder, more beautiful. And of course, I speak as an occupier, not for the occupation. My observations come from my limited experience and my limitless desire to experience more. It's in that spirit I write today, straight from the hum of perpetual noticing.

So let's begin.

MOVEMENT FORMING

POPULIST EXAMPLE

In the late 19th century, farmers everywhere lived on the brink of total poverty. All across the South and West, furnishing merchants gave them credit in exchange for exorbitant interest rates and the claims to their cotton harvest. These farmers were the ultimate throwaway people: poor, uneducated, desperate. And yet they built a mass insurgency movement that nearly transformed the agrarian system into a series of cooperatives. They did this by forming the Farmer's Alliance, an institution that functioned on the state, county and local levels to benefit, radicalize and defend the poor. The Alliance experience let farmers use their own language to throw down on corporations, capitalism and false democracy. Within a few years, these same farmers were calling for a whole new economy based on new ideas that they had developed themselves. And for a movement that began with poor white southerners, they were astoundingly democratic, defying social censure to include Blacks, women, and immigrant workers in the movement. What's more, the Alliance had style and knew how to occupy. When they called for mass education or decision-making camps, alarmed townspeople reported wagon trains stretching as

what works most radically in a given situation. If, for example, your goal was ensuring food justice for millions of people, you could grow a vast network of gardens without anyone's say-so. But if you are trying to stop a foreign war, there aren't a lot of alternatives available. In the former case, you drop out. In the latter, you engage. This engagement can take the form of direct action. It can take the form of a third party. It can take the form of people's laws. What it can't do is confuse confrontation with complicity, or else it will fail. If we want to win, we must find a way to challenge political power without compromise.

SUGGESTIONS

- Delegates return from the national convention and use the demands and grievances to start an Occupy Party. This party wouldn't join power, but confront it. It would exist to change the system, but also to recruit masses of people to the Occupy movement and get working for a new world. The candidates would not be leaders but conduits, wearing Everyone masks and refusing to reveal their identity. They could literally change with every debate, every interview, physically embodying the diversity they represent. Yard signs wouldn't have names but manifestos: "I Am Everyone and I Want _____." And the name on the ballot? The 99 percent.
- Engage in massive, coordinated direct action. Delegates at the Occupy convention could also decide priority targets for direct action, then organize local Occupies to coordinate simultaneous actions. With only a few thousand people well-organized people we could shut down, say, the banking system in the United States. We just need to pick a goal and get the numbers. (Direct action is an especially good tactic for people who don't like to mess with electoral politics. But if it's to be effective, it has to be massive and it has to be coordinated. Creative actions get publicity, raise

The Complicity Complex. The politicization of the Populist movement appears to be a simple moral tale: the Populists got political and so got coopted. The solution is, of course, to not engage in conventional politics. But the real lesson is actually double-edged. Because it is just as true that the Populists failed because they *didn't engage enough*, believing they could do radical economics without radical politics. In reality, though, noncooperation can't work without transforming power at the level of government. The Populists didn't fail because they got political; they failed because they didn't organize enough before they did. This statement will be controversial to some Occupiers, many of whom reject conventional politics because the system has failed. And they're right. The two-party capitalist system *has* failed. I am not advocating a return. But consider this: If we don't confront political power directly—replace it, dismantle it, infiltrate it, whatever—then we actually depend more on it than if we did. Up until now, the Occupy movement has focused on reclaiming space, direct action, and noncooperation. But that doesn't mean we're politically independent; it simply means we depend on politics indirectly. That is being co-opted by default. As my friend likes to say: “You may not believe in the State, but the State believes in you.” You can ignore it and avoid it, and for some goals, that works. But any successful alternative will fail precisely by being successful unless it finds a way to confront and change the law. If, on the other hand, you say what you want and how you want it, then form an autonomous group to get it—and if what you want scares the powerful and improves material realities for millions of people—that's independence. Now, there are lots of ways to build political power besides running for office, some of which I will list below. But we shouldn't confuse a slicked-out politico pawning our movement with creating populist political force. Remember: radical change is not action-specific. Actions are radical when they challenge the balance of power. A strike could be totally symbolic if it's not well-planned, while a legal strategy that questions the legal structure can be quite radical indeed. In other words, an action is radical if shifts power to the oppressed. The question should not be what appears most radical; the question should be

far as the eye could see, festooned with signs, banners and evergreen boughs.

WHAT WE'VE DONE RIGHT

On my second day at Occupy DC/Freedom Plaza, I looked around me and thought, “Someone needs to do more outreach.” And then it hit me: Someone else didn't have to. *I* did. All I had to do was form a committee and decide a time to meet. So I did. It felt so good to act, to move instead of freezing in despair, to be a real human solving real problems. When I left the Plaza, I was a different person, too. I picked up trash instead of balking at the Entire Trash Problem. I spoke to homeless folks instead of retreating in overwhelm. I was that buzziest of activist buzzwords: I was empowered. And I had discussions, too. I talked to a woman who'd walked hundreds of miles to be with us. I talked to a kid who'd walked out of his movie theater job and never looked back. Some of those conversations were gorgeous, and some were the goddamned hardest, most frustrating talks I've ever had. Some had me waving my ego like a badge until finally, hours or weeks later, I'd drop it. I realized I was not nearly as democratic as I thought. But it was good to come alive, to see myself as I actually was: a human being amongst human beings, all capable of great goodness and great failure. And I knew this was what corporate reporters could not understand. They wanted our demands. But our first demand was simple. We wanted to come alive. We were there to *be somewhere fully*, maybe for the first time ever. The media wanted headlines, but we were starting from our toes. What they could not see was this: the dark, fungal growth of decomposing, of old things dying to nourish a new world.

ATTITUDES TO AVOID

Aesthetic Anarchism/Damn the Plan. I am all for mass democratic, non-hierarchical movements. I am in favor of taking down the system. I want to work from an outsider position of independence

and autonomy. But I have noticed in many occupations a pernicious spirit of aesthetic anarchism. When I say aesthetic, I'm not talking about looks. I'm talking about image. I'm talking about when the form of an idea replaces its substance, or when the rituals of belief replace the point of believing. Aesthetic attitudes prevail when our motive is not to change power, but to be right, fashionable, or cool—a perfect -ism. And since aesthetic beliefs are more about approval than victory, aesthetic believers spend very little time thinking about what victory means or requires. Every movement has its aesthetics (think hippies) and that would be fine if they didn't disrupt the entire point, which is to win. Because in order to win, you need a plan, and to plan you must consider an array of ideas, challenging conventional wisdom to get at effective action. Radicals say: 6,000 people lost their homes to banks today. Did we help them? What would it take to help them? Then they go from there, letting the need dictate the action. Aesthetic anarchists, however, are content to wait for the word from their chosen Sinai, saying, "If New York does it, we do, too," or "so sayeth the man in punk-rock black." They are inheritors of a received culture of ideas—a splinter culture, but a shallow one nonetheless. Their goals are purity and counter-cultural conformity, a strange form of leftist fundamentalism. One of the worst forms of aesthetic anarchism confuses having a plan with being The Man. Aesthetic anarchists equate all structure and strategy with fascism, defining 'true' actions as spontaneous and random. Similarly, they see radicalism in terms of approved actions rather than methods. But this Ivory Gutter Attitude gets us nowhere. So let's be clear, then. Having a plan is not being The Man. It's not selling out. It's not fascist. Having a plan means deciding how to engage with power, and how to make power engage with you. Going forward, let's do less Damning the Plan and more Damning the Man. Let's decide what we want and create a plan to get there, choosing our actions to fit the problem, not the fashion. So far our movement's a radical noun; let's strategize to make it a radical verb.

Party. These demands called for the abolition of national banks, reclamation of corporate land for use by the People, a graduated income tax and the prohibition of agricultural speculation. Populists once again mobilized their massive, educated and organized base to run third party and fusion candidates for every level of office in the land. In states like Kansas, they won straight tickets. Railroad magnates wrote letters to colleagues, invoking God to spare them a Populist legislature. In other states, the party did not fare as well. Rampant election fraud and vigilante action stymied campaigns in the South; two-party emotional appeals leveled the rest. Despite its real success, the People's Party imploded for several reasons. First, it didn't organize urban-rural coalitions soon enough. Second, Alliance members split over the politics, many preferring alternatives to confrontation. And third, the movement's failure to create co-ops in key states led to lack of organization, recruitment and radical education. This, in turn, produced the shallow analysis and lack of self-respect that make movements ripe for accommodation. Within four years, the movement caved to the comfort of received culture and nominated William Jennings Bryan—a Democrat—as their presidential candidate. With that move, America lost one of the most inspiring democratic movements it has ever seen.

WHAT WE'VE DONE RIGHT

We've rejected the two-party system and refused to pander to politicians. Screaming fire couldn't clear an Occupy faster than a Democratic operative, and that's good. This time around, we're insisting on autonomy first and demands second. This is the opposite of 2008, when so many auctioned off autonomy to buy futures in the grossly inflated hope and change market. But that bubble crashed, too, and promises are no longer worth what we've got to pay for them. Now we're wiser. Now we're the ones making promises—this time to ourselves.

ATTITUDES TO AVOID

up with these documents would itself be revolutionary and would deepen our understanding of each other and our fight, and the finished product could be used to educate, agitate and get started on a new world.

QUESTIONS

Who are our friends? Who are enemies? What do we want? What is the main obstacle that keeps us from getting it? How have we tried to fight that problem before? Did it work? Why or why not? What would it take to be successful? Even with diverse opinions, what are a few things we agree on? What solutions already exist, and what solutions do we need to invent? What is uniquely ours to give in the long fight against elitism? What are our weaknesses and how might they be exploited? What education do we need to act successfully? How do we get it to them? How do we come up with demands, and how will we disseminate them?

MOVEMENT POLITICIZING

POPULIST EXAMPLE

The Populists made every attempt to create a new world through non-cooperation—functioning as if the State didn't exist. But the State did exist, and it combined with corporations to control everything the Populists needed: credit, land, a fair currency. The Populists realized they had no choice. In order to operate their co-ops and implement their new Treasury program, they had to change the law. And to change the law, they had to confront power. So radicals within the movement pushed a new plan. They urged the agrarian movement to form a political third party, a militant coalition of rural and urban workers that sought to transform the very foundations of government. The bulk of the movement responded in kind, and farmers met en masse in 1892 to fashion the Omaha Demands—the foundation of The People's

SUGGESTIONS

- Practice democracy *fairly*. Hold ongoing teach-ins on racism, classism, and patriarchy developed by the vulnerable and supported by their allies.
- Practice democracy *fully*. Most of us weren't taught how to make decisions together, so we need to learn. Invite professional facilitators to do trainings on true consensus. Pinpoint places where democracy is breaking down and find solutions.
- Know your neighbor. Set up a storytelling tent by the info booth. Talk to people about why they are here, what they're angry about, who they are, what solutions they have. Record the sessions and screen them for the camp at night.
- Heal. We're all coming to this with emotion and history. Some of us are new, and impatient. Some of us are old, and can't bear to fail again. A lot of infighting is the result of unspoken despair and disillusionment. The 'real' world silences those emotions, but Occupy is an opportunity for voice. Have a therapist or healer lead the group through grief work—for example, Joanna Macy's *Work That Reconnects*.
- Strategize. Take Goodwyn's four phases of movement building and brainstorm ways to make them flourish. Challenge cavalier assumptions about what does and doesn't work. Merge this into a multi-day, consensus-based visioning session and come up with concrete goals and strategies for your local Occupy.

QUESTIONS

What inherited cultural assumptions am I bringing to the Occupy movement? How do dominant societal narratives on race, class, gender, resistance and revolution impair my organizing? How do fashionable resistance models inform my work, and do they help or

harm? And finally: How bad is x problem, how long do we have to fix it, and what would it take to win?

MOVEMENT RECRUITING

POPULIST EXAMPLE

The Populists did not confuse action with aimlessness; they were radicals with a plan. Being destitute, they understood the need to create economic alternatives that immediately relieved other poor people and brought them into broader struggle. They began by identifying their central problem: They needed credit to get farming supplies, but the furnishing merchant controlled credit and exploited them. So they created the Farmers Alliance Exchange, a cotton co-op that pooled resources to buy equipment, market the harvest, and sell in bulk to foreign and domestic buyers. This system allowed the farmers to depend less on the merchant for credit and to sell their crops at better prices. It also served as a powerful recruitment tool: the co-op attracted recruits and showed them through their own experience how and why the dominant economic system failed them. Two millions farmers joined in a matter of three years, forming thousands of sub-alliances—each with their own cotton buying agent and farmer-lecturer. The Alliance would eventually mobilize this massive and structured base to break up farming monopolies, push for a new financial system, and create a formidable third party. Participating in the co-ops gave average farmers a sense of dignity, greater economic independence, class consciousness, and experience solving complicated problems together.

WHAT WE'VE DONE RIGHT

My first day at Freedom Plaza, I lost my wallet. The weird thing is, it didn't matter. The communal kitchen gave me breakfast, lunch and dinner. Concerned people offered money. The after-dinner

plan for fighting it. An ideology sets goals and decides how to engage with the enemy. Ideologies can be developed democratically, with input from all affected parties. They flag common mistakes and build cohesion. They are the basis for radical demands. Without ideology, you can be highly aware but have no plan for political action. In other words, you're easily co-opted. A rigorous ideology guards against co-optation by showing people why they're acting and what they're acting for. That's why radical ideology must lead to radical recruitment. This process is not accidental and doesn't remotely resemble awareness-raising. Raising awareness is a piecemeal act that does not provide people with an analysis for action. To illustrate the difference: a lot of people who opposed neoliberal nation-building voted for Barack Obama in 2008, despite the fact that he fully intended to continue the same. This occurred not because these people were stupid or needed one more teach-in on Afghanistan; it happened because the left did not offer clear reasons and means to do anything else. The Occupy movement needs demands, especially now that many Occupies are facing eviction. It needs to spread them systematically, giving everyone who is discontented a mandate and method for change. This is not presumptuous if we do it together. If we do it together, it's called democracy. Let's not raise awareness. That gives us grief but nothing to do. Let's educate toward action. Let's rise up.

SUGGESTIONS

This one's going to be hard, but worth it. Let's use our General Assemblies to develop an ideology, then federate to hammer out demands. Each occupation takes the next month to democratically develop their top three grievances and demands. (There are many consensus models available for developing ideas and solutions that go beyond the scope and format of a General Assembly.) After they're done, they send two delegates to an Occupy convention, where we'd come up with a declaration (our grievances) and a new constitution (our demands and solutions). The process of coming

WHAT WE'VE DONE RIGHT

At every Occupy I've been to, I've seen folks in the grip of democratic discussion. In one corner, a vet teaches military counter-recruitment tactics. A suited woman talks foreclosures and how to fight them. Paul-ites speak of fiat currency while a mohawked kid hands out 'zines. After a whole lifetime of trusting experts, people are waking up to the value of their own experience. They are starting to believe in what they know. And they are sharing it with each other. They didn't get us into this mess, but hell if they don't believe we can get ourselves out. It's like a light went on in one person's head, and then another and another. All these problems, all these intractable problems we've suffered so long—well, they aren't intractable! Capitalism is not inevitable. Poverty is not inevitable. In other words, they're fallible. They can be fought, resisted. In that sense, Occupy is not an occupation, but a giant exercise in decolonization. It's a battle to oust the false masters of our minds.

ATTITUDES TO AVOID

Raising Awareness, not Rising Up. For the last decade, I've had my awareness raised so many times my brain should have popped. And when each successive awareness-raising moment ended, a bunch of newly brain-pained people asked what to do next. The answer? Raise more awareness. Of course, Occupy has done much more than raise awareness—we have taken the streets and stayed despite rain, snow and fatigue. But our default stance on ideology is still quite liberal: people talk and their minds change; changed minds change society. More important is the thorny issue of demands. In the beginning, we had none, which was cunning. But the persistent refusal to create any highlights a mistake that democratic movements often make: that forming clear analyses and demands and agitating around them is necessarily presumptuous, invasive, and authoritarian. That's not true, though. An ideology is, at its most basic level, a description of power and a

dance party and discussion were way better than seeing a movie, and if I'd needed it, there were blankets, sleeping bags and tents for those without. That's when I realized it: Right there in the capitol of capital, I was in a money-free zone, in a community that met both my physical and emotional needs. When I met an exile from Katrina-era New Orleans, I could invite him to the plaza. He got some pasta and a rousing discussion on the Fed; we heard from him on FEMA, poverty and homelessness. Occupy's genius is combining what is normally separate. We were meeting our immediate needs while preparing for long-term resistance. We created alternatives that got people involved, then involved ourselves in creating alternatives.

ATTITUDES TO AVOID

The Rhizome Religion. Biologically, rhizomatic organisms send out roots underground that pop up as random shoots above. Each root, if cut in pieces, can regenerate the whole plant. Politically, a rhizomatic movement has no leader, no main branch, and can reproduce anywhere. The good thing about rhizomes is they're essentially unstoppable (when was the last time you fought an aspen grove and won?). The problem is they're random—bad for recruitment. Right now, Occupy may represent the 99 percent, but in reality we're our least favorite number: the 1 percent. To really get people involved, we can't ask people to come to us. We have to come to them. We have to diligently and deliberately reach out to those most affected by our rapacious financial system: people of color, the poor, immigrants and women. And we should do this by working with established community groups and individuals, radically listening to what folks really want and need. Some Occupies have done a great job reaching out to unions, community groups and regular folks, and the rest of us are trying. But by and large we've been practicing the rhizome religion, believing that good ideas will spread spontaneously and recruits will pop up accordingly. In ten years of organizing, though, I have learned one thing for certain: recruitment is not an accident. It takes planning

and dogged determination. It takes humility and a high tolerance for discomfort. And it takes realizing that most people are busy trying to survive and need solutions that will tangibly improve their lives. There is magic to any movement, yes—that soul that makes it sing—but in organizing no rabbits pop out of hats. If you want to reach the people, you have reach out, one hand in welcome and the other in offering. You do this door by door, neighborhood by neighborhood, church by church, until you’ve not just imagined the 99 percent: you’ve met them.

SUGGESTIONS

Occupy (your) neighborhoods! Find out where people in your Occupy live. Form neighborhood councils in those communities. Go door to door, meeting people you live by and asking them how the economy’s treating them. Talk to them to learn what skills, needs and interests they have. Ask what organizations are helping already, and talk to those folks, too. From these discussions, create a People’s Map of needs and assets for each neighborhood in the city. Form a spokescouncil of neighborhood representatives to discuss the map, then use this information to keep organizing those communities. Each neighborhood starts creating alternatives that meet their specific needs and the needs of the whole city, growing food, making clothing, or building shelters. Teams of emergency responders could fight foreclosures and feed the hungry. There could be neighborhood-level, worker-owned co-ops and health care clinics. We could disappear from the corporate economy and make wealth where we live.

QUESTIONS

What are the most pressing needs in my community? What tangible solution would address them? Do I know my neighbors, and if not, why not? What groups are already working on these problems, and what do they need from me? If the economy tanked tomorrow, what would my community need to survive? How can

we start to meet those needs? What assets do people on my block have? What assets do I have?

MOVEMENT EDUCATING

POPULIST EXAMPLE

Ironically, it was the failure of the cotton cooperative, the Populists’ economic alternative, that pushed them toward their radical ideology. As brilliant as it was, the co-op effort stalled on bare fact: they needed money to function, the farmers had none, and bankers had lots but hated co-ops. So try as they might—and they tried, raising thousands of dollars from penniless farmers and swaying small landowners to co-sign loans with landless tenants—farmers could not get the credit they needed. But instead of letting that daunt them, they let it move them from economic cooperation to social and political insurgency. They used the co-op failure to teach people about power. If bankers had power, and their power was political, no alternative would be safe until the People got enough power to change the law. This cold truth led to a fiery ideology: a whole new Treasury and currency system tied to a radical third party that called for land reform, socialization of major industry, and better conditions for millions of industrial laborers. But by far the most impressive thing about the ideology was the way the Populists spread it. In less than two short years, they democratically developed their power analysis and relevant solutions, trained 40,000 uneducated farmers to convey the message, then sent them fanning out across the South and West. These lecturers helped start thousands of new sub-alliances and cooperatives, radicalized rural America economically and politically, and paved the way for coalitions with labor, urban immigrants, and Black sharecroppers. They also formed the Reform Press Association, a massive network of radical agrarian presses that challenged the corporate political perspective and disseminated declarations and agreements.