3 Circles Strategy Tool

Create
Codify
Govern
Oppose
Expose

Real Solutions: What we know we really need.
Politically Realistic: What we know won't work.
False Promises: What we know won't work.
MG notes on the 3 circles strategy tool (Feb 2017)

1. Introduction:
   - Tool called “3 circles.”
   - Illustrates a theory of how change happens.
   - We use this tool to ID what is materially and culturally necessary to survive/thrive, what is politically realistic at any given moment, and what false solutions are being advanced.
   - With this in mind, we can better align our formations, alliances, and movements to realize our visions.
   - We hope this tool can both help BLLI deepen our analysis on land & housing, but also that this is a training/tool that you can yourselves train on and employ in other spaces/movements.
   - We have copies of the tool and how to use it, which we’ll make available.

2. What We Really Need
   - Our friends at the Center for Story-based Strategy say, “People will not go where they haven’t first been able to imagine in their minds.” Robin Kelley talks about how his mother was always living in a liberated zone ((get HIS language!)). She nurtured a compass in her children that set that free world as their true north. They could taste it, feel the texture, hear the sounds because she helped nurture their radical imaginations.
   - If we never talk about the world we really want and don’t start building it, it will never become reality.
   - Platform of Movement for Black Lives moved us from body cameras to housing and work for all ((get specific))
   - We have to ID what is materially and culturally necessary to ensure ecological, economic, and racial justice. What is the world we want to live in? What are OUR solutions? We have to name and assert those solutions. We then have the invest time, resources, infrastructure & energy into actually building what we want.

3. False Solutions
   - To any given problem, a range of ‘solutions’.
   - Some so-called solutions will move us away from liberation—we call these false solutions.
   - These ‘solutions do not advance ecological justice.
   - Being advanced by those opposed to our liberation (but sometimes mistakenly advanced by our friends).
   - We know it is a false solution if it: creates new, or exacerbates existing, ecological, economic, racial, or social inequities.
   - Billions are invested in false solutions that are not politically realistic in the current culture. Take synthetic biology for example. If people actually knew about them, they would be horrified. But they are realized without permission, they become normalized. GM mosquitoes were suddenly available and introduced in West Africa before any public discussion or debate. ((Did this end up happening?? They stopped it in Florida??))
   - If we don’t regularly & rigorously look out at the right wing horizon...and look at the ‘solutions’ agendas being cooked up by Big Capital...it will likely be too late to stop these once they fully land in the mainstream.
   - The false solutions and what we need NEVER overlap. Why? We seek to push the red out and completely overlap the black and green.

4. Politically Realistic
   - This is dotted. Why do you think that is? Because what is politically realistic at any given time depends on a lot of things, including:
   - Depends on conditions, political climate: What is politically realistic is constantly changing and depends on the conditions and the relative power of forces (capitalists, liberals, visionaries).
   - Shocks and slides create openings for shifts:
     Recall the discourse before and after shocks like Hurricane Katrina—the right framed it and then seized the opening to move a neoliberal agenda quickly through New Orleans.
     And of course, how Black organizers seized the ground in the wake of the murders of Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Sandra Bland, Philando Castille, Alton Sterling to first frame it—using the hashtag—and then to build the Black Lives Matter movement.
     Massive economic slides made room for Occupy, Bernie, Trump which were unthinkable just a few months earlier.
   - Depends on arena of struggle: What you could win in Nashville is different than what you can win in Oakland, win in Kansas City, win in Washington DC. Richmond used eminent domain to stop foreclosures. CA passed $15/hr.
At the federal level, we see the red and black are more overlapped. Locally, maybe on particular struggles in some places, can imagine green and black overlapping more.

- No one knows til you play at the edge: Nobody actually knows where the boundaries of what’s politically realistic actually are. The only way to find the edge of what is possible is to play on the outside of it – to win something that everyone says is not possible.
- This middle bubble is a minefield of false solutions. Have to as a movement be aligned enough and building together enough to enter into the center arena clear on what our bottom lines are, and grounded in the communities most likely to be impacted so that we know what compromises we can make and what we can’t.

5. Strategy

The goal is not just to categorize, but to align our movement strategies to realize our visions and win what we really need. It is the role of organizers and social movements to move what is materially and culturally necessary into the politically realistic. And to push false solutions out of politically realistic. How?

- CREATE – Not as “alternatives” but as imperatives.
  - If it’s the right thing to do, we have every right to do it. By direct action, we don’t mean protest and civil disobedience, but people directly acting to meet their needs. Not as “spectacle” or “demonstrations” or even “alternatives” but as imperatives – we must do it to win, even if we know that winning in the longer arc will look like being knocked down over and over again.
  - What the hands do, the heart learns: We have, as a movement, put our hands to work primarily in oppositional campaigning. If all we do is fight against what we don’t want, we will come to love the fight and only have longing for our dreams. We must change that equation by creating what we know we really need now – in a way that creates the space for our people to take agency over their own lives, communities, and ecosystems. We have to liberate our revolutionary imaginations from the constraints of the politically possible to know what we’re ultimately fighting for. We have to know what we’re steering toward, not just what we’re running away from. If we do not define our visions, we will get stuck in a defensive or reactive posture.
- CODIFY – in LAW and POLICY and CUSTOM. This is where we have to win what is politically realistic and consistent with what we know is needed. If we do not, that is ground we simply stand to lose. And that is also ground from which we can recruit and deploy into the edge. And even if we win in the center circle, we can lose it – so we can never cede that territory or take it for granted. We have to actually remake the rules so that it is easier to create, expand, protect and defend what we know we need. WE ARE SEEKING THE EDGES OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE: through the dynamic relationship between the what we create with our own two hands, that we can then CODIFY in law and policy. NOT by simply changing rules – WHY – because the realm of the politically realistic is a minefield of false solutions.
- OPPOSE – politically realistic false solutions – from offsets to tax loopholes. Always a day (or a decade) late on opposing these.
- EXPOSE the false solutions that are on the horizon – that get two tons of funding from the other side long before anything hits the world of policy. They invest in research, development, framing, inoculation – all in the interests of making it okay in the public imagination. SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY (e.g. creating custom human beings or novel life forms that have never existed in nature before. If you tried to get permission to do it, ou wouldn’t get it, so you don’t ask, you just do it).
- GOVERN – A key way to shift what is politically realistic is to actually GOVERN. If we are not prepared to govern, we are not prepared to win.
  - Get our folks elected: And that doesn’t mean just getting folks we like elected. It means getting our own folks elected – while maintaining the accountability to the organizations, communities, etc. that put them there. We need to take school boards, rent boards, transit boards, and water boards. We need to take Council Seats and Senate Seats.
  - And we need to engage in the “remaking of governance” through the process – so it is more democratic, more accessible. This is the realm of both leadership development AND policy work to remake governance towards democracy. We talk about Govern last and it is a different color because it is a different kind of strategy. It is a strategy not to move more of our agenda into the realm of the politically realistic, but to re make the very nature of politics. To both practice governance, and to remake it. THE VERY SHAPE OF GOVERNANCE CHANGES TO MAKE THE SPACE HARDER TO NAVIGATE – THIS IS KEY to understand. That the Rulers make the rules and the rules serve
the rulers – so until the people rule – we will have to be willing to break the rules (e.g. civil disobedience at the scale of governance).

- What the right fights for and wins, is not simply more policy. They fight to change the very shape of governance itself by giving corporations personhood and making money into speech. Citizens United is not a policy win, it is a reshaping of governance. When we win what we need, it changes the shape of governance as well. What we’re fighting for - rights of natures. We have to be willing to practice self-governance in a different kind of way. It’s not just about winning what you can win. Put more power in the hands of the people so that people are in control of the decisions that affect their daily lives. Decisions aren’t being made by those far from the consequences of those decisions but by those who have to live with them. Not developers but community residents. Not energy companies but workers and community members who are impacted by the pollution from power plants and oil refineries.

6. Questions:
- Any questions?
- Where do we play most of the time? As a movement? Why?
- And with what consequences?
- Over the course of this week, What is the role of BLLI in shifting this landscape? What strategies are we employing?