Solidarity Not Charity

Access: Slides, Polls and Chat

- Okay to not participate in polls
- I will read what is on my slides, and selections from polls, okay not to look
- Okay to not read chat (I will sometimes read things I see there for emphasis)
- Take breaks when you need to, this is being recorded

Agenda

- Background Assumptions
- Why Horizontal Organizations?
- Common Problems and What We Cultivate
- Organizational Culture
- Capacity
- Perfectionism and Procrastination
- Q & A

Who is here?

- Interactive polls!

Background Assumptions

- Social change comes from organizing by millions of people, not from charismatic leaders, corporate media coverage, elected officials, courts or legislatures

- Local, networked, autonomous projects grounded in local knowledges are better at responding to crises and building methods of collective self-determination than big centralized orgs

- Starting with the survival of the most stigmatized people is the most pragmatic approach

Why Horizontal Group Structures?

- Hierarchies invite abuse, reproduce racism, sexism, ableism, ageism and other patterns of oppression
- People generate more wisdom when they think of solutions and plans together
- People implement work more fully if they have a say in it
- We want more people to have more skills to take responsibility together for what is happening--to be active not passive
- We want all our orgs to be people-building machines

Bringing more people deeper into the work!
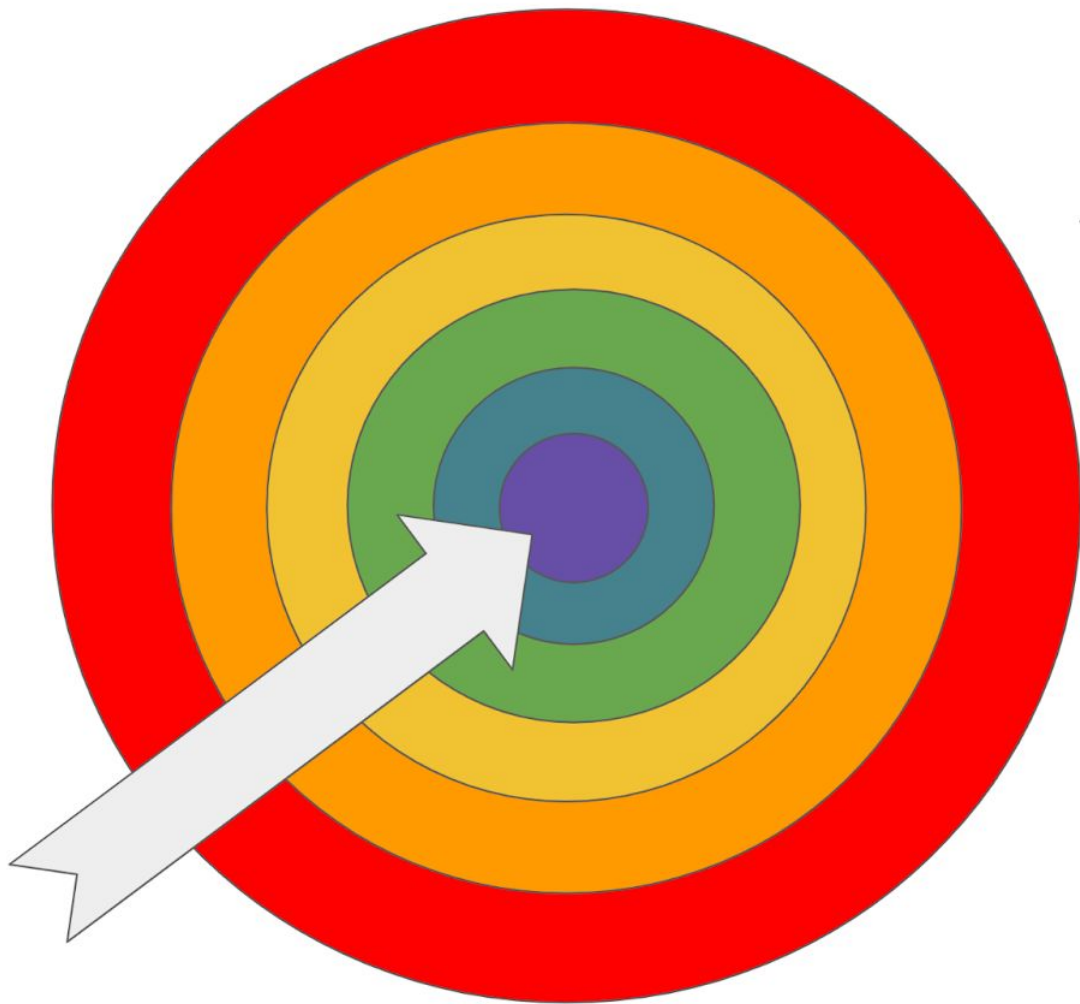
Common Problems in Social Justice Groups

- Secrecy, hierarchy, lack of clarity
- Overpromising and under-delivering, elitism, non-responsiveness
- Scarcity, urgency, competition (within group and with other groups)

What We Want to Cultivate Instead

- Transparency
- Accountability to community (not "selling out")
- Wise action influenced by many people's wisdom
- Caring about the most vulnerable first
- A sense of abundance and sharing
- Clear plans
- Clear boundaries about what a group does and doesn't do, how and why

Building Horizontal Groups

- Most of us have not been in horizontal structures—usually there is a boss, parent, principal or someone else deciding for us
- We are more wise as a group than as individuals
- We stick to our values more as a group
- We should all have a say in how the work happens
- We have skills from our friendships

Advantages of Consensus Decision Making

- Better Decisions: We heard everyone's concerns and tried to address them
- Better Implementation: We were all part of making the decision so we all want to implement it
- Better Relationships: Cooperative, collaborative group atmosphere fosters greater cohesion and connection, skill of wanting to hear each others' perspectives

Organizations Have Cultures

- Signals we give people when they first come in
- How it feels here
- Norms—punctuality or lateness, celebrations, singing, how we give feedback to each other
- Dominant feelings—warmth or coolness, urgency or spaciousness, scarcity or faith in abundance

Organizations Have Cultures

- Created by people who founded org and who come later
- Can change with intentional efforts
- Trauma, overwhelming community need, urgency, lack of resources influence the culture of many social justice orgs and impact people working in those orgs

Capacity

This group is amazing! Sometimes when get new opportunities to do cool work, we might feel:

- Excitement
- Purpose
- Vision
- Pressure to step up
- Overwhelm
- Fear of failure
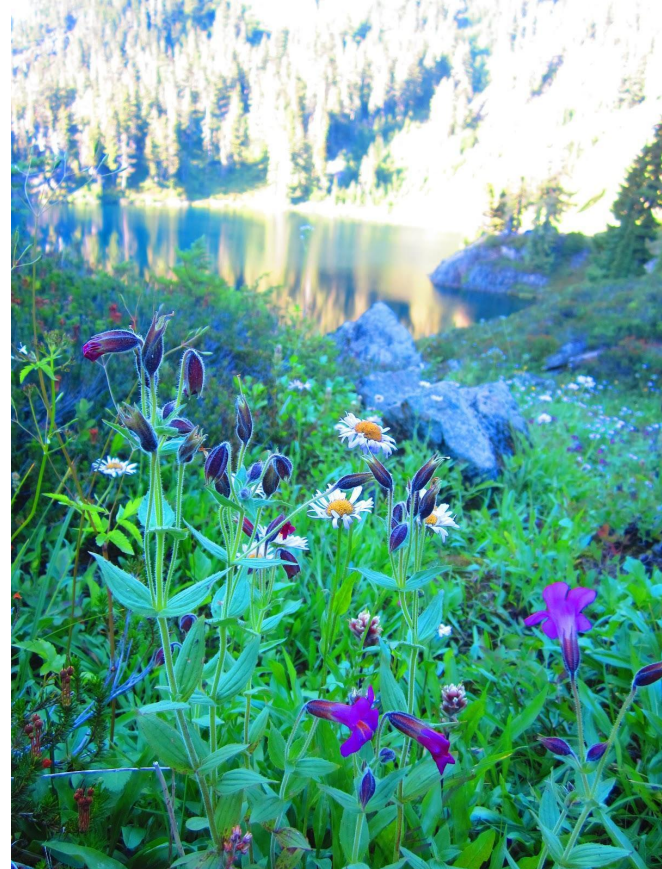
Capacity

This group does a lot! Sometimes when we consider it all, or look at our workplans, we might feel:

- Overwhelm
- Fear of failure
- Pressure to perform
- Imposter syndrome/self-doubt
- Excitement
- Purpose
- Imagining transformation

Group Culture around Capacity

- how do we say yes/no/maybe to each other & outside partners?
- how do we communicate when something changes and we can't do what we agreed to?
- how do we communicate when someone isn't doing what we thought they agreed to?
- how do we create a culture where we value people for being not doing?
- how do we create a culture where we are accountable for what we've said we'd do?
- how do we celebrate and experience satisfaction?
- how do we communicate when we want more support in our work?

- How do I want our group to communicate about work and capacity?
- How do I NOT want us to communicate about it?
- Interactive polls!

Internalized Cultural Messages

- how do we value ourselves for being not doing?
- how do we find ways to feel acknowledged, recognized and valued that isn't based on achievement/external approval?
- what comes up that drives us to over-commit?
- what does procrastination feel like? what is driving it?
- what does overwork feel like?

- What messages do I hear in my head when I am deciding to overcommit?
- Interactive poll!

What would make me feel like I could be direct and clear when I cannot take something on?

- Put your ideas in the chat!

- What does it feel like to feel *on purpose* rather than avoidant?

What gets in the way of me doing prioritized tasks?

- Put your ideas in the chat!

What would help me focus on prioritized tasks?

- Put your ideas in the chat!

Perfectionism and Procrastination

- Most of us live with one or both
- Perfectionism and rigid judgement in our movements, fear of being dragged or cancelled for mistakes
- Can impede our boldness
- Shows up differently for different people
- Can be related to roles--imposter syndrome, or feelings of obligation that emerge when we feel like people are relying on us
- Difficulty prioritizing tasks, feeling of chaos and spread thin

Other Capacity Clarifying Questions for Groups

- What can we do that isn't being covered by other groups?
- What can we do reasonably well with our current resources?
- What are we (any members) currently questioning about whether we should do it or not?
- How does each activity we are doing mobilize people and/or build our capacity to do more?

Facilitating Conversations about Capacity in Your Group

- Start with a conversation about group culture, how people want to feel when the conversation is over
- Use pair & shares so that everyone gets to process preferences
- Interactive slides or butcher paper
- Use go-arounds to maximize participation
- Don't have to decide it all at the meeting

Upcoming Workshops

- November 18: Workshop 2 – Decision-Making
- December 9: Workshop 3 – Skills for Abolitionist Practice (Feedback and Conflict)
- January 20: Workshop 4 – Leadership

Topics may change based on participant feedback.