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THE COURAGE TO BE INVOLVED: A MOVEMENT MODEL OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Social movements are exemplars of the courage to be involved. They exemplify a kind of leadership that we don't often talk about. We usually speak of positional leadership, about the kind of leadership that people can exercise from within the power structure of institutions. But we talk very little about a kind of leadership that is equally important, namely non-positional leadership, the kind that arises from within the human spirit especially under conditions of severe oppression.

It is precisely those conditions of oppression that inspired my quest to understand movements. Traveling the country in recent years and in a variety of circles—educational, social change, liberal religious action—I have increasingly heard the following voice: "These are splendid ideas for change, but every one of them will be defeated by prevailing organizational conditions." It is a voice I hear often among faculty. Faculty culture seems to me to partake of a kind of mythology of powerlessness that suggests there's no way to have leverage on or access to those institutional constraints that seem to stand in the way of all these good ideas. Having heard that voice increasingly in my travels, I felt a need to respond to it in new ways, a need to study some specific instances in which human beings have faced and overcome organizational obstacles far greater than those we face in higher education. I have been particularly interested in broad-based historic movements... in women's liberation, in black liberation, and in the movements for liberation in Eastern Europe. Hence my insights come from those cases and will make reference to them as I move along.

I want to begin with a crude but, to me, helpful image of how the movement model of social change works. This image will give us a frame in which to place our thoughts. Having laid out that image, I then want to detail what goes on within it in terms of four developmental stages that a movement typically goes through.

In considering the organizational model of change, the image that presents itself of organizations and the barriers that they erect is one of tightly constructed and interlocked boxes—well-defined, with sharp edges, sharp corners, closed and locked doors—with each box being a place where power is constellated around certain needs, conditions, or trajectories. This model is very valuable, and in no way do I mean to dismiss it, only to present an alternative to it. The organizational model essentially asks questions about how the power within those organizational structures can be reconstellated and redirected—how some power might be moved from here to there, and how the issues that people care about "over here" might get cared about "over there." The people I work with tell me they are in despair about those

questions. They find themselves saying, "I've tried all that and there's no place left to go."

Where many of them seem to be going is into a kind of retreat or disengagement from the very issues they care about, partly because this is the only map or model of change they think they have. But I sense that something deeper and more subtle is going on. It seems to me there's a kind of seductive sweetness about despair, a certain comfort that comes from being able to say, "There's nothing more I can do. They defeated me. Let them have it." It sounds like an expression of human anguish, but in a perverse way it becomes a source of human comfort. Some call it the culture of complaint—it wraps itself around the sweetness of despair and wants to stay there forever. But even given another model of social change, there is no guarantee we will choose the alternative path. There is a deeply spiritual mystery in how we get wedded to despair and to death and find it more comforting than hope and new life.

What happens in movements is that somebody comes to symbolize the trajectory and the power of that movement. Somebody who is feeling trapped and isolated within certain institutional structures finds a way to locate a new center for his or her life outside those structured institutions. Empowered by the new center, he or she gathers other people and forces along the way, spinning off from the organization and gathering power eventually returning to transform the nature of the organization itself. What happens in the organization thereafter is shifted and redrawn by the movement: once the movement has done its work, the boxes of power get redesigned and reconfigured; some of them get drawn in dotted lines to indicate a semi-permeable membrane where rigid boundaries had existed before.

There's a continual dialectic between an organization and a movement: when a movement has finished its work and redrawn the boxes of power, it sets the stage for a new movement to emerge. What's important here is the inherent paradox of movements, a paradox of great power and truth. What happens in a movement is that people abandon the logic of organizations in order to find a new center for their lives so that they can return to alter the logic of organizations. That is a very different image of movements than the one we had in the sixties when the organization was the enemy and the movement spent all its energies throwing rocks at the organization.

There is a dance that goes on between movements and organizations. A healthy movement has within it a profound respect for the fact that our lives are sustained by organizational forms. It has within it the profound respect for the fact that none of us would be here today were it not for the nurturing provided by the organizational matrix. But the respect for organizations that is at the heart of the movement is so profound that the movement wants to call

an organization to its higher self, to some deeper version of its authentic values, rather than allow it to indulge in the kind of perversions that often set in when organizations are not challenged by movement energies.

Working with this image, and thinking in these terms about what is going on in higher education, I want to consider four stages of development that movements seem typically pass through. It is important to keep in mind, of course, that stage designations are always inadequate, and mine are no exception. They are ideal types; they freeze certain moments in an artificial way; in real life things don't happen with such neatness and order. But these stages still have the virtue of teasing out for us critical events that occur in a flow that would otherwise seem undifferentiated.

The first stage I call "divided no more." Of all the stages it fascinates me most. In this stage, individuals make a deeply inward decision to live a life that is no longer divided between external behavior and internal truth. Typically, they feel very isolated in making that decision. I call it the "Rosa Parks decision" to honor the remarkable woman who made the decision, at a critical point in our country's history, to live divided no more. Rosa Parks had lived a divided life for a number of years until that day in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 when she decided to sit at the back of the bus no longer. She decided to stop behaving on the outside in a way that was profoundly inconsistent with the deeper truth she knew on the inside. The outside behavior of sitting at the back of the bus said, "If I sit at the back of the bus I'm less than a whole person." The inner knowledge was, "I'm a full human being and no one can take that away from me." The decision to live divided no more, which seems to be the initiating decision of all great social movements, is that moment at which you refuse to collaborate any longer with a structural system that defies or denies a deeply held inner truth.

Of course, Rosa Parks didn't make that decision in strict isolation. She was the secretary at the local NAACP and had studied at the Highlander Folk School, where Martin Luther King, Jr. had also been learning non-violent tactics. However, when you reach the point in life of confronting that decision and taking the concrete step that manifests "divided no more," you really do not know whether anybody is going to be with you or not. There is a deep sense of existential aloneness in that moment. The movement begins when the decision of such a person comes both to exemplify and spark similar decisions by a whole range of people in that environment, on that terrain, at the same time.

A very similar story can be told, for example, of Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia. He decided to write an open letter to Gustav Husak, the communist chief, declaring that he could no longer pretend to believe in the inhuman rules, norms, and values of Husak's regime. As Havel might have put

it, "I am going to declare myself publicly, in much the same way Rosa Parks did, as a person who is unwilling to live this divided life any longer. I am no longer going to walk my daily route as a Czechoslovakian civilian pretending that all of this is acceptable with me when fundamentally it is not."

What intrigues me about the existential decision to be "divided no more" is this: How do people find the courage to make that decision when all of society is organized around the notion that the divided life is the safe and sane life? How do people find the courage to bring outward behavior and inner truth together when the culture insists that the smart way to live is divided, that we shouldn't make a "federal case" out of it, should keep it private, ignore our real feelings, wear the mask, pretend that all is well? What has been enormously enlightening to me is this simple realization: People who reach the point of deciding to live divided no more are those for whom the whole notion of courage has been transformed by the knowledge that no punishment a society can lay on them could possibly be greater than the punishment they have laid on themselves by conspiring in their own diminishment.

Rosa Parks's story is rich with this insight. After she had sat on the bus for several hours, the police approached her and said, "You know, if you continue to sit here we're going to throw you in jail." She is reported to have looked at them and answered, "You may do that." This is an immensely polite way of saying, "Who gives a...? Who cares? How could jail possibly be worse than the self-imprisonment of the last X number of years of my life, pretending that I was not a full human being?"

Years later a scholar came to Rosa Parks and asked, "Did you sit at the front of the bus that day to start the Civil Rights Movement?" She replied, "No, I sat there that day because my feet were tired." It is a powerful image. What she was saying, of course, was "My soul was tired, my heart was tired, my whole being was tired, of living a divided life and diminishing myself thereby." The Vaclav Havel case is almost identical. When historians asked him if he wrote his open letter to start the liberation movement in Czechoslovakia, he had a very powerful answer: "I wrote it to keep from committing suicide." The letter was not a political act but an act of auto-therapy, a symbol of Havel's refusal to conspire any longer in his own diminishment.

What characterizes great social movements is that they begin with people who no longer blame the institution for all their problems but accept responsibility for having collaborated with that structure. Instead of complaining and blaming, the individual looks around and says, "Every day of my life I have been making choices that contribute to the power this organization has over me. So ultimately it is not the organization's power over me, it is my own collaboration, my own power over myself. I have been a self-oppressor." It is that insight that brings people into a humble and respectful yet empowered

posture, a co-creative relationship with the organizations and institutions on which we depend. It is much different from a blaming posture, which simply wants to dynamite all institutions as though we could start over and do a better job.

Movements start with the stage called "divided no more," and the Rosa Parks and Vaclav Havel's of the world are emblematic of lots of other people feeling the same way, snapping under the same tension, wanting to overcome the same death, and they serve somehow to constellate and crystallize those energies. And although they have communal support in making these decisions and training that prepared them for that moment, I do not know of any movement leaders who did not also experience absolute loneliness and isolation in making their decision. You can never know whether all those people who have been urging you on are going to be there the next morning. The question becomes, "Have I really blown it this time, or what?" One prays for the courage to say, "It doesn't really matter because there's no punishment worse than that which comes from conspiring in my own diminishment."

The second stage of a movement involves the formation of small communities. These communities come into being, in part, because people who have made the decision to live divided no more become like magnetic poles, attracting others who are on the verge of making a similar decision but do not know how to proceed. These "magnets" become very powerful personalities, exerting a kind of gravitational pull on those who need to be near them and who need to be near each other. This was the case in the civil rights movement, which was greatly facilitated by the black church structures that were available throughout the South. In the case of the revolution in Czechoslovakia, which was ten years in the making, the movement was facilitated by cell groups that gathered underground to read Vaclav Havel's open letter as though it were a sacred text, which in fact it was.

In this way, the decision to live divided no more constellates a certain kind of community whose function is to provide support on several levels. The most essential line of support is to convince people who have made this decision that they are not crazy. The women's movement is a classic example of how small grassroots support communities had to be at work for years to help women understand that it was not mental pathology that produced the feelings they were having about their lives, but the conditions of the social structure that generated those feelings. The movement from Freud to feminism—Freud being a symbol for the notion that middle-class women have pathologies that should be taken into the privacy of a therapist's office to work out—is a movement from the privatization of personal problems to the communalization of social problems. In community we learn that this isn't just my private experience, that lots of other good, thoughtful, bright, and experi-

enced people are struggling as well. The community has the very simple function of saying to me, "You're not crazy to feel this way, despite all the stuff in the world that says the divided life is the only way to go."

These support communities also function to give people an opportunity to use a language, a symbol system, a set of concepts and ideas that in its infancy feels extremely fragile. In small communities this language is used and refined in ways that allow it to start going public, the next stage—and absolutely critical one—in a movement's development. The language and symbol systems undergo a kind of body-building, a gaining of musculature, an empowerment, so that they can survive beyond the private realm. It's fascinating to hear people in movements talk about how fragile their own language feels to them, how they are able to say things to each other that they couldn't possibly say to the larger world. Then it's fascinating to watch that language go public as it gains power through communal discourse.

As a young, white, middle-class male in America in the 1950s and 1960s, I remember the profound impact of suddenly hearing the language of black religion, which the black community had known for decades within the privacy of its own church life. It was a galvanizing moment for all of us. Although we rarely all agreed with it, this language became the coin of the realm, the focus of a public discourse. So these communities of support enable language and symbol systems to gain enough musculature to start going public.

They also offer leadership experience to people who would never otherwise in this society have a chance to be leaders. In absolutely amazing ways, such people are empowered to perform the leadership role by having that experience in small communities of support. I will always remember when I was involved in some demonstrations in the American South in the 1960s and had an opportunity one Sunday to attend an adult Sunday School at a small black congregation in Georgia. The only other participants were three members of the congregation, and they operated the class by Roberts Rules of Order. One of the three was presiding clerk, the second was recording clerk, and the third was the member of the class. Afterward I visited the pastor; since he was a friend of a friend of mine, I could frankly express my white puzzlement. "Why are they doing this strange and seemingly silly thing when they could just sit and talk to each other?" I asked. He said, "You don't understand. Roberts Rules of Order is leadership training for these people. What is important in that Sunday School class is not the kind of conversation that might be important in your Sunday School class because you already feel able to lead. What is important is getting familiar with the rules of the larger society, with how institutions and organizations work. Every one of those people has an equal opportunity to cycle through the roles and become empowered." That's what these small communities of support do for movements. The language of

change gets more muscular, and leadership is learned by people who wouldn't otherwise have a chance.

"Going public," the third stage in a movement's development, is an absolutely critical moment not only in terms of the movement's capacity to persuade other people to adopt a new way of thinking and acting, but also in terms of the larger society's opportunity to critique, refine, and check a movement's excesses. Going public is a two-way street. It is the point at which a movement starts to consider that no matter how noble its vision, there is a real danger in building a wall around itself that separates the "ins" from the "outs." When a movement goes public it opens itself up to that kind of critique, to the kind of challenge to its core assumptions in ways that can often be very healthy.

People ask me sometimes, "Isn't this model value-neutral? Couldn't it apply to almost anything?" Part of my answer is, "Yes, I think any model has that danger; any process can be used for good or for ill. But if you look at movements that we would regard as genuinely pathological and dangerous, they are often ones that have devoted a lot of energy to finding ways not to go public in open dialogue and discourse." An example is what the radical Christian Right openly calls its "stealth candidates" for public office. Almost brazenly they say, "You know, we're sneaking all kinds of people into positions of influence on your school boards and in your city councils because we've carefully instructed our people not to talk about their real values until they get elected." What they are really saying is, "We're going to skip stage three because there's a danger that we might learn something." If my assumptions are true, I think it's a sign of pathology in a movement when stage three is delayed or avoided altogether.

The fourth stage in a movement's development is the creation of alternative rewards. It is at this point that the movement begins to return to alter the logic of organizations. Organizations maintain their exclusive power when they offer the only reward system in town. If the only way to be rewarded as a scholar or a teacher is through the reward system of a university, then most scholars and teachers will find themselves dancing to the university's tune. But if alternative routes exist, there will be a much more complex and ultimately more interesting environment where scholarship and teaching take place. As long as an organization controls the reward system, very little change is going to happen within the work that is claimed and named by that organization.

What's fascinating about movements is that they generate new structures and new rewards of a very tangible sort. The civil rights movement, for example, generated organizations, some of which still exist, in which activists were able to make a living that they might otherwise have had to make in

shoeshine stands or bus stations. The civil rights movement generated alternative structures that harbored, and still harbor, careers involving salaries, retirement benefits, a sense of social purpose, and feelings of self-esteem. In addition to those practical rewards, the movement itself becomes an alternative reward system. Participation in the movement carries its own deep forms of social, personal, psychological, and spiritual reward, as well as economic and quasi-profession rewards. I know great numbers of faculty who are participants in the educational reform movement who do not find their rewards coming from the university by which they are employed. They find it coming from the national networks of change they're involved with.

Let me wrap up with this observation. If stage one involves the realization that no punishment could possibly be greater than that which comes from conspiring in my own diminishment, then stage four concerns the realization that no reward can possibly be greater than that which comes from living by my own integrity, my own identity, my own sense of vocation, my own best lights. In this way, then, the paradox of a movement becomes complete, returning to the organization with new values and thus transforming, healing, and empowering the structures of our common life.

THE COURAGE TO TEACH: ON LEADERSHIP FOR COMMUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Our earliest and most persistent models of leadership in this society are those given to us by our teachers—from kindergarten and public school up through higher education. As teachers we are constantly forming or deforming young people's vision of what it might mean to be a leader in this society.

What is striking, then, is that college and university faculties typically spend very little time sitting down with each other and talking about the art or the art of teaching and learning. There is a lot of talk about curriculum structures, about budgets, even about parking. But there is very little talk about teaching. Across the country I ask faculty, "When was the last time you sat down to reflect on this daily professional activity of yours?" and the answer often is, "We can't quite remember." I am puzzled by this fact since we, as professional academics and intellectuals, are accustomed to being very public people in certain aspects of our lives. If you write, if you publish, if you are engaged with a professional association, if you argue ideas with colleagues, indeed if you stand in front of classes of students, you are in some sense a public person engaged in public dialogue and discourse. But when it comes to teaching, we have one of the most privatized of all the professions.

There is no surgeon in this country who can do her work without being routinely observed by people who know surgery, and then sitting down to discuss the sponges that got lost and the cuts that were made on the wrong side of the body. There is no trial lawyer in this country who can do his work without regularly being observed by people who know the law, and then engaging in some kind of public dialogue about the doing of the craft. And yet as faculty, we close the door on our classrooms. We privatize the act of teaching in a way we would never think of doing in our research or publications; that would be a contradiction in terms. But we regard the classroom as our castle and we get very offended if someone tries to invade it.

It is a complex and difficult subject and I truly do not understand all of it. I know, for example, that around the country a lot of faculty are in pain about how teaching is evaluated in the American academy, where the tendency is to hand out questionnaires at the end of the term and ask students to respond on a five-point Likert scale to ten different qualities that allegedly measure good teaching. These faculty protest and rightly claim that such modes of evaluation force us into a Procrustean bed as if all good teaching took the same shape when in fact we know it doesn't. I, too, think this is wrong, and that the pain is rightfully felt. But I ask this question, "If we are going to privatize the profession and decline to have ongoing dialogue with each other