

Four navigational tools for moving forward in a polarized U.S. – George Lakey

For decades the United States has been polarizing. During the 2016 election campaign it got scarier. Some say this is reason to hunker down, cover our heads. Others want to go on the offensive and tackle issues of justice and climate. How to do that?

*Here are four tools adapted from polarized societies
that reached a high level of justice and peace.*

Work toward a vision that can gain broad support. The Movement for Black Lives already proposed a vision on Aug 1, 2016. It is stimulating wide discussion. Vision shifts energy from protest (reactivity) to action for what we want (pro-activity, creativity). Vision supports working together instead of splitting. Vision tells bystanders what we are *for*, attracting them to something larger rather than mainly calling attention to our own selves.

Strengthen and re-brand the infrastructure of civic organization and co-ops. Polarization does stress those who are grounding society in the day-to-day work of mutual aid and support. Co-ops and new economy institutions are growing. As legitimacy of government declines further, grassroots infrastructure becomes more important and deserves validation from the movement.

Build inclusivity; tap the dynamic of expansion. Activists need to give up marginalization, within movement circles and outside. Othering people who are not “cool,” or are from a different class, reinforces the isolation of the politically correct, which is dumb and maybe suicidal. Polarization *is* the time to reach out and expand.

Use strategy: wage nonviolent campaigns. Venting through protest is not enough -- campaigns pack more power. Historically, campaigners that commit to nonviolent struggle have doubled their chance of winning. Campaigners who plan, and create a learning curve, improve those chances still more.

RESOURCES:

- The story of using these tools to move from oppression to societies that reached the highest level of justice and individual freedom in modern history is told in “Viking Economics: How the Scandinavians got it right and how we can, too” by George Lakey (Melville House, 2016).
- The Movement for Black Lives vision: <https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>
- Facilitation for campaign strategizing is offered by Training for Change, <https://www.trainingforchange.org>.