



Herding Cats: Marshalling The Power of Social Justice Activists

By: Ray Pensador – April 26, 2013

The odious right wing is marching in lockstep, displaying an incredible high degree of discipline, focus, unity of purpose, vision, and strategy, just like former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr.'s memo "Attack on American Free Enterprise System," suggested.

Historian Kim Phillips-Feind describes how "many who read the memo cited it afterward as inspiration for their political choices." In fact, Powell's Memo is widely credited for having helped catalyze a new business activist movement, with numerous conservative family and corporate foundations (e.g. Coors, Olin, Bradley, Scaife, Koch and others) thereafter creating and sustaining powerful new voices to help push the corporate agenda, including the Business Roundtable (1972), the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC - 1973), Heritage Foundation (1973), the Cato Institute (1977), the Manhattan Institute (1978), Citizens for a Sound Economy (1984 - now Americans for Prosperity), Accuracy in Academe (1985), and others.

And we know that much of it is being funded by billionaires, like the Koch brothers. This type of disciplined approach, practiced in earnest during the last 40-plus years, is the reason we have lost the Republic to an increasingly oppressive plutocracy. Hence, the erosion of constitutional rights protections, the dismantling of the social safety net, the pillaging and looting of the national treasure, the wars of choice for the benefit of war profiteers, the war crimes, the incredibly powerful Orwellian-like propaganda machine in the form of the U.S. mainstream media, and the sense of impotence and despair by many on the Left.

You can't fight that type of highly organized cartel unless you are able to align your forces in similar lock-step fashion, with a high degree of cohesiveness, unity of purpose, strategic approach, with short-, mid-, and long-term goals and objectives.

It is said that doing so with liberals, progressives, with social justice activists, is impossible; that it is like "trying to herd cats." That people on the left are too smart, too diverse in their thinking, too intellectual, to follow "simplified" approaches to "complicated social issues." That that is the purview of the shallow right-wingers, with their black-and-white, good-and-evil simpleton view of the world (because of their lack of intelligence).

And yet, they are *eating our lunch* (and breakfast, and dinner), when it comes to strategic organizing and effecting change at a massive scale.

I've been thinking about this issue, this dichotomy, for many years now. I've debated it with countless people, both online and face to face, and I've learned quite a bit from

those debates. Some are concerned about "charismatic leaders;" others don't believe that there is anything that can be done to take on the system; others are uncomfortable with the idea of marching in lock-step to anything; others seem to think that we still have a fairly good functioning political system; others have been co-opted by the establishment.

After years of thinking about this, and especially, of considering the challenges of trying to organize the Left into a powerful cohesive, strategic, goal-oriented, and focused movement, I've come to the conclusion that the answer is right there in front of us: we can keep our diversity of thought, and interests, and focus on our causes as long as we are willing to collaborate at the root level.

Hence, here's my proposal:

The first root cause of most of the problems we are facing, I think most people are coming to understand, is the corrosive influence of billionaires' (and the wealthy ruling elite) money on our system of government.

The second root problem is the mind-numbing effect the U.S. corporate media conglomerate has on the population.

And so, I call on all concerned citizens, all social justice activists, all behind-the-keyboard activists, to collaborate in anyway they can in order to address those two root issues, in the following fashion...

Make an assessment about the level of participation you are willing and able to get involved with. I'm interested in the following profiles:

1. Hard-core boots-on-the-ground activists: These are the people who would be willing to participate in street-level activism, including picketing, protest rallies, flash mobs, and the like.
2. Bloggers and writers: Some people may be constrained in getting involved in street-level activism because of concerns about their jobs, etc., but they are very smart, very observant, and like to keep track of the corruption and malfeasance that's engulfing the country. You too can contribute a great deal, and remain anonymous.
3. Retired people, and seniors: If you are retired on a fix income and have a little extra time, I'd like to hear from you.
4. Young people and students: This fight is in essence about you, about your future. Join it. There will be specific proposed tasks for you.
5. Clergy: For generations clergy and social justice have marched forward hand on hand. Let's continue that march.
6. Unions: For obvious reasons...

Okay, so I think all the "cats" are listed above.

Taking Action

1. Nationwide network of activists: Connect with other activists in your zip code, and try to meet face to face at least once a month. Focus your discussions on the cancer eating away at our democracy: moneyed elite influence peddling corruption on our government. Also, focus on the propagandist effects of the U.S. media conglomerate. And of course, make friends, and talk about your interests, etc. I'm just suggesting that the focus be on the two root issues.

2. Research: Bloggers, writers, academics, journalists, let's build a very powerful database containing as much information as possible about every single member of Congress, and of the Executive, and identify who their funders are. Let's keep track of how much money they are giving, of every single meeting, fundraiser. Let's connect the dots when it comes to special favors, revolving door corruption. Also, let's study very carefully how the exact way in which the U.S. media corporate conglomerate operates as a powerful propaganda machine.
3. Counter-attack targeting corruption: We use the results (findings) of the research to launch a multi-faceted and relentless attack on the corruption. Letters, emails, and calls to each and every one of the corrupt politicians and their staff, with very detailed information about the corruption (companies involved, bills introduced, etc.). Also, follow up with press releases, social media campaigns, and boots on the grounds, following them (and shaming them) at every fundraiser, etc., with picketing, protest rallies. Do this constantly, and relentlessly, for ever, no time limit, until we win.
4. Counter-attack targeting the U.S. corporate media conglomerate: Use the information gleaned from the research to understand how exactly the media deceives the entire population with corporate-designed false narratives, lies, and misinformation. Check out this diary I wrote: "How Billionaires-Funded Propaganda is Unraveling The Country." Then let's engage in a relentless campaign against the media, sending letters exposing their lies and false narratives, telling them how much on the take they are, contacting individual reporters and journalists, picketing their headquarters nationwide, informing the general population about the deception, through social media, email newsletters, advertising and marketing campaigns, rallies. Do this relentlessly, nonstop, until all media conglomerates are broken down and we the people reclaim the airwaves.

Don't worry about your initial assessment of whether something like this will be effective, or whether there is anything we can do against these seemingly all-powerful forces. Think of this: The mere presence of injustice demands a reaction opposing it, regardless of the chances of winning.

Also, we don't need a huge amount of people to get this going. You will be surprised at how influential a few hundred highly-organized and focused people can have on an entire society, especially if that organizing happens in the name of justice.

So far I've been able to get over 300 people to answer my call to form a nationwide network of activists (see this map). If you are interested in participating, please join my email list. In my next newsletter I'm going to suggest three things: If there are clusters being formed in different cities, let's start making plans to hold regular meetings (at least once a month); I will start segmenting the group to identify those who would be willing to participate on street-level activism, and those who can contribute by doing research; and then, as the groups takes shape, we'll start planning on coordinated actions.

Finally, as I've mentioned before, know that there will never be anything remotely illegal, violent, or unethical being suggested by me in any of the activities I'll be proposing. I don't even think is necessary to get involved in civil disobedience campaigns. I argue that the biggest threat to the corrupt ruling elite is the formation of a highly cohesive and strategic-minded resistance movement capable of coordinating action nationwide.

And so, I'm seeking to connect with regular folks, with teachers, union members, clergy, retired people, students, and anybody else who cares about this country, and about the rule of law, and about justice.