

# PRINCIPLE

## CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT

It's not just the status quo that needs to change, but the status quo inside our own heads. How can we expect to change the world without also changing how we change the world?

### CONTRIBUTED BY

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## "THIS ACTION-REFLECTION PROCESS IS AN ONGOING JOURNEY OF LEARNING THAT, LIKE A CIRCLE, HAS NO BEGINNING OR END."

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"Nothing endures but change."

—Heraclitus

Activists seek justice under circumstances of tyranny, truth under circumstances of domination, and freedom under circumstances of oppression. We seek change because we deplore the status quo — but also because we recognize the need for continuous improvement. Yet, when it come to ourselves and the ways we've grown accustomed to doing things, we often enter a stage of forgetfulness about the most obvious and basic thing we know and call for: change.

Change begins with self. Not only must our social, political, environmental, and economic circumstances change, so must we be the change you want to see in the world. In order to be effective, our approaches and methods must always be reviewed, assessed, and adjusted. We must be willing to recognize and shift our own obsolete mindsets and abandon all constants. If we truly want to change the world, we must recognize that change is the only constant.

Acting from the premise that change is the only constant, you soon realize that there is not a single "right" way to engage in collective action, but rather many right ways. For change to materialize, such action must remain in a state of continuous development. This action-reflection process is an ongoing journey of learning that, like a circle, has no beginning or end (see: PRINCIPLE: Praxis makes perfect).

For example, when a movement or campaign is first launched, it may start with a group of five and a particular decision-making process. Over time this group becomes comfortable with their mode of operation, but when your group grows to 50 organizers,

### POTENTIAL RISKS

When applying this principle, organizers must be conscious of three risks: *tyranny of the majority*, *groupthink*, and *the hermeneutic circle*. Groups characterized by groupthink and a tyranny of the majority tend to marginalize the voices that do not align with the majority. And yet it's these dissenting voices that are often the ones that offer the most insightful perspectives or that tend to avoid collectively earned disasters. (Studies have shown that groups dominated by men are particularly prone to this risk.) Groups stuck in a hermeneutic circle tend to indulge in endless theoretical discussions and feedback sessions. If the improvements, ideas, and possibilities being discussed are not applied in practice, then the discussion itself will be no more than ink on paper.

### RELATED TOOLS

**Stories**

your situation will be drastically different, and you need to accept the fact that your decision-making process will need to change. This applies to many elements of campaigning, from recruitment to tactics to organization and more.

Embracing the principle that change is the only constant helps us be more open to others' feedback and ideas. Just because a new perspective is not in accord with your own, or even if it negates a deeply held belief by the larger group, this does not mean it should be discarded. On the contrary, it is in this moment that the group must pause and rethink their mindsets. Let go of your ego, be humble and appreciate others' insight and perspectives. Look for new and effective approaches to your campaign.

Also, just because a tactic works once, that doesn't mean we should use it over and over (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't fall in love with your tactics). We should become comfortable with experimentation and the possibility of failure (see: PRINCIPLE: Fail forward); only in this way will you enrich your learning and improve.

Finally, be aware of your broader context (see: PRINCIPLE: Know your cultural terrain) as well as your local circumstances (see: PRINCIPLE: Know your community). The socio-political dynamics of our world today are vibrant and complex, requiring us to always be on the lookout, analysing what's happening and understanding how such changes in dynamics might affect our campaigning.

## LEARN MORE

How Diversity Makes Us Smarter

Katherine W. Phillips, Greater Good Magazine, 2017

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_diversity\\_makes\\_us\\_smarter](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_diversity_makes_us_smarter)

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Paulo Freire

[https://files.libcom.org/files/Paulo%20Freire,%20Myra%20Bergman%20Ramos,%20Donald%20Macedo%20-%20Pedagogy%20of%20the%20Oppressed,%2030th%20Anniversary%20Edition%20\(2000,%20Bloomsbury%20Academic\).pdf](https://files.libcom.org/files/Paulo%20Freire,%20Myra%20Bergman%20Ramos,%20Donald%20Macedo%20-%20Pedagogy%20of%20the%20Oppressed,%2030th%20Anniversary%20Edition%20(2000,%20Bloomsbury%20Academic).pdf)

Concepts Used

Paulo Freire

<http://www.freire.org/paulo-freire/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire>

- Angola 15+2

## Tactics

- Forum theatre

## Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Consider your audience
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Enable, don't command
- Fail forward
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make new folks welcome
- Praxis makes perfect
- We are all leaders

## Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Framing
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- People's "Shock Doctrine"
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle
- The tactics of everyday life

## Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Story of self, us, and now
- SWOT
- Theory of change

## TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Democracy, Gender and sexuality, Movement building