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# Using Community Organizing Best Practices to Redesign the DART Organizers' Institute

Anna Long

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**Using Community Organizing Best Practices to Redesign the DART Organizers' Institute**

Anna S. Long

August 9, 2023

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Peacebuilding & Conflict Transformation at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT, USA

Advisor: Dr. Bruce Dayton

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Date: August 9, 2023

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### **Abstract**

This Training-of-Trainers Course-Linked Capstone project explores three approaches to community organizing from three different scholar-practitioners. It begins with the father of grassroots organizing, Saul Alinsky's, neighborhood-based and congregation-based approach. Alinsky's approach is followed by Alicia Garza's approach; Garza is the founder of the international Black Lives Matter movement. It ends with author and organizer adrienne maree brown's Emergent Strategy approach. This paper will synthesize all three approaches, ultimately identifying four recommended approaches to community organizing: power, motivation, emotion, and centering impacted voices. The four recommended approaches will be used to evaluate the new organizer training (Organizers' Institute) for the Direct Action and Research Training (DART) Network, and then to redesign the initial week of the Organizers' Institute.

### **Acknowledgments**

To my SIT colleagues-turned-friends: when I finished my coursework in 2018 I never thought that it would be years before I finished my degree. Sophie, thank you for your endless encouragement and ever-present willingness to talk through capstone ideas. Katie, thank you for always believing in me, and for always being able to make me laugh even when I'm at my most stressed. Maggie, thank you for hosting me during capstone week. Bruce, I am forever grateful to have had you as my advisor. I can't thank you enough for your patience, support, and wisdom.

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### **Background & Rationale**

In August 2018, I was hired to work as a community organizer for Justice Matters, an interfaith organization that is part of the Direct Action and Research Training (DART) Network. The DART Network is composed of 31 congregation-based, grassroots community organizing nonprofits in eight states throughout the Midwest and Southeast United States (“The DART Center: Where We Work,” 2023). I had long been driven to be a part of transforming the powerful, deadly systems in our communities that cost people their lives every single day, so I was excited about the opportunity to organize for structural change around serious problems in Douglas County, KS, where Justice Matters is based. Beginning a career as a community organizer, where I would be working to build the people power necessary to push for systems change, felt like a dream come true. And as someone who grew up in East Tennessee, where churches set the rhythm of many peoples’ daily lives, I found the idea of faith-based community organizing to be particularly compelling.

However, I soon realized that the job I had signed up for was drastically different from the one I had been promised by the DART Network’s recruitment and hiring team. I had been sold a diverse, inclusive interfaith organization that was at the forefront of challenging the dangerous ideologies so prevalent in communities across the United States: capitalism, racism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. However, during my initial week-long training through the DART Organizers’ Institute, I realized that I may have chosen to work for an organization whose very foundations, practices, and training materials were rooted in the same *-isms* that they claimed to be fighting against.

During my time in the DART Organizers’ Institute, I found myself continuously shocked that I was given corporate bestsellers like Jim Collins’ *Good to Great* (2001; as cited in *DART*

*Institute Manual*, 2021) and John Kotter's *Leading Change* (1996; as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021) to read as a part of my training. I was shocked that the majority of the sources that we were given to read were written by white men, and that only the Christian perspective was included in the faith-based sources (DART Training Staff, 2021). I was shocked that many of our trainers insinuated that we should sweep our theological and political differences under the rug for fear that they would divide our organizations' coalitions, rather than using them as opportunities for education or to strengthen relationships. And I was shocked that, during my initial weeklong training, I was instructed that my ability to do my job as an organizer successfully would depend on my ability to keep my queer identity a secret in my professional life.

I have now worked in the DART Network for five years, and I have witnessed that the red flags that I saw during my initial training through the DART Organizers' Institute persist across DART training not only for new organizers, but also for experienced organizers and volunteer leaders. After getting to know organizers at other DART organizations, I learned that many of my colleagues—particularly people of color, queer people, and non-Christians—had also been surprised that they had not seen their identities and experiences represented in our training materials. I have witnessed organizers and volunteer leaders leave their organizations and the justice work that they care deeply about because they have not felt seen or heard within their organizations. It is clear that the DART training curriculum and approach is due for an audit and overhaul.

For this Training-of-Trainers Course-Linked Capstone project, I redesigned the first week of the DART Organizers' Institute (OI). The Organizers' Institute is a six-month training for new DART Associate Organizers that includes an initial week-long training followed by monthly



training webinars; it aims to introduce new organizers to basic community organizing pedagogy and concepts, give background and training on the DART model of community organizing, and teach basic organizing skills including one-on-ones. This paper begins with a detailed explanation of the problem, followed by a literature review that I used to identify four recommended approaches to community organizing. After laying out the four recommended approaches, I then conducted an analysis of where DART's Organizers' Institute is congruent with these approaches and where it is lacking. Finally, I used my analysis to redesign the DART Organizers' Institute, keeping original elements that were in alignment with the recommended approaches and adding new ones that were missing.

### **Problem Statement**

The DART Network's Theory of Change is built on people power: the larger an organization can build its network of people—organized and united around a common goal—the more power the organization will have to fight for systemic changes that its members want to see in their community (“The DART Center: About Us,” 2023). Paid organizers play a significant role in building and maintaining their organization's grassroots network; without an organizing staff, DART organizations would not exist at the scale to which they do today. However, many organizers have negative experiences with DART's training services (or lack thereof) that cause them to quit before their three-year contracts have ended—some within just months of coming on board. For example, at Justice Matters alone, three out of four Associate Organizers quit before their contracts ended. Two of these three Associate Organizers left with no alternate job lined up, choosing unemployment as preferable to continuing their work at Justice Matters (K. Hobson, personal communication, October 2020). This high turnover rate has a detrimental effect on organizational growth. If DART organizations are constantly having to train new staff

members they are not growing their people power, which means they are not growing their ability to transform the life-threatening power structures and systems that govern in their communities.

Additionally, the organizers who do stay tend to be those who fall in line with the dominant organizational culture, who do not share their negative experiences, and who do not speak out about how the DART Network's approach to organizing and training often allows DART organizations to perpetuate the very same systems and structures that they claim to be working to dismantle. I believe that, if the DART Network truly wants to live out its mission to bring justice to communities, it needs to do its best to live out that mission internally. So, for my Training-of-Trainers Course-Linked Capstone project, I will redesign the first week of the DART Organizers' Institute, the initial training for new organizers. My redesign will be rooted in up-to-date teachings from diverse and contemporary scholar-practitioners.

## **Methodology**

### **Positionality**

I approached this project first and foremost as a DART organizer. I have worked in the DART Network for five years. I started in 2018 as an Organizing Fellow and worked my way up to my current role, Lead Organizer, in 2022. While I worked hard to remain objective in my evaluation of DART's Organizers' Institute, I want to acknowledge that my own experiences within the DART Network and my professional relationships with DART training staff are unavoidably reflected in my project. My project is also influenced by my personal and professional relationships with other DART organizers, some who have since left the Network and some who are still a part of it. Much of my background and rationale for this project is rooted in my relationships with these organizers—some of whom have become dear

friends—particularly those who have left the DART Network due to negative experiences. I care deeply about the wellbeing of all DART organizers—past, present, and future—and this project is a labor of love for all of those who have left, all those who are still here, and all those who have yet to join us. It is my sincere hope that my project will lead to helpful changes in the DART Network that will help them to better retain organizers. I also bring my experience as a white person and a queer, non-binary person to this project.

### **Sample Strategy**

My project began with a literature review where I summarized three distinct community organizing schools of thought developed by three well-known scholar-practitioners: Saul Alinsky, Alicia Garza, and adrienne maree brown. I selected these three authors through an evaluation of many different criteria, including but not limited to: race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, ability, and the impact that they have had on community organizing. After compiling my initial list, I then used the snowball method to identify additional sources, looking at my initial sources' bibliographies and using them to fill in any gaps in my source list.

It is deeply important that diverse voices are included in this literature review. Much of the first written literature about community organizing is written by people who identify as cisgender white men. However, the very premise of community organizing is that, if diverse groups of marginalized people and their allies can unite around their common interests and values, they will have enough power to transform the systems in our communities that keep people oppressed. This means that, in order to be effective, community organizers must have the ability to build relationships with people from all walks of life. If a foundational training for community organizers is rooted in sources written by people from only one race, one religion,

one *anything*, it will leave out valuable lessons and knowledge from people who have different identities and lived experiences. Doing so might inadvertently exclude those groups from joining or staying in the movement, limiting the strength of the movement's people power. Additionally, if the sources chosen are written primarily by people who belong to identity groups that have more privilege and power, it is more likely that their methods and content for training will inadvertently mirror the same oppressive structures that community organizers are working to dismantle.

Using the information from my literature review, I then synthesized Alinsky, Garza, and Brown's main teachings to identify several recommended approaches to community organizing. I conducted a systematic evaluation of the DART Organizers' Institute training materials (*DART Institute Manual*, initial five-day training agenda, and training notes) through the lens of these recommended approaches. My evaluation includes a summary of each of the recommended approaches, an analysis of where the DART Organizers' Institute is embodying these approaches, and an analysis of where the DART Organizers' Institute is not embodying these approaches. I then took my findings and redesigned the initial five-day DART Organizers' Institute training and curriculum.

## **Literature Review**

### **Approaches to Community Organizing**

Throughout my literature review I found that there are as many approaches to community organizing as there are community organizers. In other words, community organizing is a deeply personal and relational approach to social change, and so every organizer brings their own perspective and approach to the table. However, for the purpose of this project, I am going to focus on three main approaches to organizing. The first approach is Alinskyism, which is rooted

in the theory and practice of Saul Alinsky who is considered by many to be the father of grassroots community organizing. Alinskyism, unlike the other approaches I will use, relies heavily on faith-based organizing. The second approach is what I will call the Garza approach to organizing, which is rooted in the new school of thought pioneered by Alicia Garza, the founder of the Black Lives Matter movement. The third approach is author and organizer adrienne maree brown's Emergent Strategy approach. While I will refer to other authors and organizers throughout my literature review, I will focus my summary and analysis on Alinsky, Garza, and brown.

### **Alinskyism**

Saul Alinsky, author of the handbook *Rules for Radicals* (1971), is considered by many to be the father of grassroots community organizing. Alinsky's (1971) approach to community organizing is to aid communities in actualizing their potential for power—when organized effectively, people have the power to change the way that harmful institutions function, moving away from the idea that individual people can make institutional change and focusing instead on building powerful networks and organizations. He also introduced the idea that there are two main sources of power in communities: organized money power and organized people power (Alinsky, 1971). He operated under the assumption that most communities would never have the money power to take on the powerful systems in their communities, and so he taught people to organize their communities to create change (Alinsky, 1971).

Alinsky initially put his theories into practice by engaging neighborhoods in organizing that would better their circumstances. Then, in 1940, he founded the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and shifted his focus to organizing faith communities. The IAF was the first faith-based and community-based community organizing network in the United States—and it remains the

largest in the country today. Dennis Jacobsen (2017), a Pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) and Director of the Gamaliel National Clergy Caucus, applies Alinsky's principles for grassroots organizing to faith-based communities, explaining why they provide a uniquely effective foundation for community organizing work: they are already organized with an operating infrastructure and guiding value system, and they have the trust of and are an active part of the communities that they serve (Jacobsen, 2017). It is this values-based foundation that is most important for Jacobsen. He writes,

Congregation-based community organizing is rooted in the faith and values of the local congregation. It is the building block of the organization. Organizing must be linked to the faith and values of the local congregation, to its self-interest, to its needs for leadership training, to the realities of its neighborhood. (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 41)

Jacobsen (2017) also argues that Alinsky's ideas were revolutionary because, rather than blaming community problems on community members, he believed that problems stemmed from "the outsiders who profited from and abused the community" (p. 33). While much of Alinsky's legacy is rooted in faith-based community organizing, his framework focuses largely on basic grassroots organizing principles that can also be applied to secular community organizations (Alinsky, 1971).

Alinsky's ideology is also deeply rooted in the belief that people hold their own answers; in *Rules for Radicals* (2017), he emphasizes the core conviction that all community organizers must hold: "a belief that if people have the power to act, in the long run they will, most of the time, reach the right decisions," (p. 11). Both the IAF and DART's community organizing models operate under this assumption: that the people living in the community know best both the problems that the community faces and how to transform those problems. However, DART organizations differ from IAF organizations in two significant ways: 1) DART organizations are structured around religious congregations while IAF groups build coalitions of religious

congregations and civic organizations, and 2) IAF groups depend more heavily on grant funding, while DART organizations take a grassroots approach to finances and ask members to invest financially in their organization, with an ultimate goal of being entirely member-funded (“The DART Center: About Us,” 2023).

Alinsky’s (1971) approach to organizing also explains that people should become involved in movement work out of their own self-interest. Alinsky (1971) explains that, if an organizer can help someone uncover their deepest motivations and connect them to being involved in justice work, their commitment to it will be deeper and more long-lasting than if they get involved without much thought. This may be a simpler task when organizing someone who has a very obvious connection to a campaign that an organizer is working on; for example, if a renter lost their job during the Covid-19 pandemic and could no longer pay their rent, they would have a direct self-interest in organizing for a temporary rent freeze or eviction moratorium. For those who were housing-secure during this time, however, organizers would need to work harder to help them connect their own self-interests with the goals of the campaign.

Organizing around self-interest is perhaps the most prolific contribution that Alinsky made to modern-day organizing. It has become common organizing lingo and is taught in many basic organizing workshops. It is used in nearly every single kind of organizing. In their article “Organizing All People” (2022), Erica Smiley and Sarita Gupta give an example of how organizers use self-interest in labor movements: “Clarifying workers’ shared self-interests against common corporate exploiters is the only way to motivate white workers who have legitimate worries and fears to act in their shared interests with workers of color,” (para. 48). Helping people to see their connection to why liberation for one group benefits all groups—or why it is in their self-interest—is crucial to a movement’s success (Smiley & Gupta, 2022).

A final key tenet of Alinskyism is that its theory of change is rooted in pragmatism (Alinsky, 1971). Alinsky (1971) guides organizers and organizations to get behind a-political, single-issue campaigns that will be palatable to a majority of community members regardless of their political leanings. As such, Alinsky-style campaigns are inherently anti-revolutionary; Alinsky (1971) does not encourage working to dismantle and rebuild current, oppressive systems. Instead, he calls organizers and organizations to work on winnable, single-issue campaigns that will make small—but impactful—incremental changes to reform the systems that govern our communities (Alinsky, 1971). Alinsky’s emphasis on pushing for moderate, palatable change is one of the most criticized facets of Alinsky-style organizing. In a recent article in *Jacobin* magazine titled “The Problem with Saul Alinsky” (2017), Aaron Petcoff, a socialist activist who lives in Brooklyn, NY, writes:

Alinsky’s rejection of radical politics does not free organizers to be “flexible,” in other words. Instead, it limits them to a relatively constrained field of vision in which the rank and file appears hopelessly disorganized and conservative. They have no particular political aspirations of their own. Instead, the organizer must come from outside to encourage them to make “winnable” and “realistic” demands to improve their conditions. (para. 28)

According to Petcoff (2017), when organizers work to stay inside of all of the guidelines that Alinsky-style organizing professes, it has the potential to stunt creativity and quash any desires for bigger, bolder campaigns.

Many prolific organizers have practiced Alinsky-style organizing: the United Farm Workers’ founders Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Fred Ross; former President Barack Obama; Co-Director of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) Martin Trimble. And while Alinskyism remains one of the most widespread approaches to grassroots organizing in the United States today, Petcoff is not the only contemporary organizer who is raising the question of what Alinskyism is missing. Charlene Carruthers, the founder of the Black Youth Project 100



(BYP100), a national community organization for African-American youth, joins Petcoff in critiquing Alinsky. In her book *Unapologetic: A Black, queer, and feminist mandate for radical movements* (2018), she describes the emergence of what she calls her Black queer feminist (BQF lens), which she defines as

a political praxis (practice and theory) based in Black feminist and LGBTQ traditions and knowledge, through which people and groups see to bring their full selves into the process of dismantling all systems of oppression. By using this lens [...] we can more effectively prioritize problems and methods that center historically marginalized people in our communities. (p.10)

Carruthers' (2018) approach, which informs her organizing with BYP100, mirrors Alinskyism in that she, too, emphasizes the importance of rooting all organizing work in personal stories and experiences. However, the BQF lens means that her approach differs from organizations that are loyal to a classical Alinsky approach: Alinsky (1971) believes that reforming corrupt and violence systems is possible; Carruthers' (2018) approach calls for dismantling violent systems and replacing them with something new.

Like Petcoff and Carruthers, organizers Rev. Alexia Salvatierra, an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and former organizer for the congregation-based community organizing group CLUE (Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice), and Peter Heltzel, the director of the Micah Institute and New York Theological Seminary, believe that Alinsky's methods and ideology are not without critique. In their book *Faith-Rooted Organizing* (2013), Salvatierra and Heltzel unpack Alinsky's approach to faith-based organizing and, like Carruthers, posit that all community organizing work must actively and intentionally be anti-racist work. The danger to Alinskyism, they state, is that it can lead to organizations who are building power for power's sake with little intention about how that power is built (Salvatierra & Heltzel, 2013). When organizations do not self-interrogate, they may end up using their power to

unintentionally replicate the racist and white supremacist structures that they are actively trying to dismantle (Salvatierra & Heltzel, 2013).

Salvatierra and Heltzel (2013) also critique Alinsky's reliance on organizing around what they see to be a shallow view of self-interest. While they acknowledge that self-interest is an effective tool, they believe that the way Alinsky approaches it relies on the idea that organizers have to agitate people in order for them to get in touch with their anger, which can lead to an overreliance on engaging people around stories rooted in pain, anger, and suffering, which can lead to burnout (Salvatierra & Heltzel, 2013). Their approach, which they named *faith-rooted organizing*, builds on Alinsky's approach and makes adjustments that they believe will lead to stronger and more sustainable movements (Salvatierra & Heltzel, 2013). A core principle of Salvatierra and Heltzel's (2013) faith-rooted organizing approach is thus that organizers also need to engage people around their hopes, dreams, and vision for their community. They write,

By focusing on our dreams and visions, rather than our common problems, we also evoke a different spirit. A focus on common problems can be cathartic as well as bonding, helping people who have experienced the violation of invisibility to see and respect the importance of their own suffering and hence their own wellbeing. But it has been demonstrated that constant emphasis on remembering pain and agitating anger in community organizing wears people down physically. Counterbalancing pain and anger with faith and hope, prophetic imagination, inspiration, and spiritual refreshment rejuvenates us as individuals and communities. Organizing around common dreams and visions refocuses our unity—long-oppressed and hopeless people are freed to be more positive and empowering, strengthened in faith and sustained for the struggle. (Salvatierra & Heltzel, 2013, pp. 37-38)

At its heart, faith-rooted organizing is an interrogation of what it takes to create a lasting organizing movement. Salvatierra and Heltzel (2013) believe that, in order to engage people over time, those people must see and believe in a future that is worth fighting for.

### **The Garza Approach**

Alicia Garza is perhaps the most prolific community organizer of the 21st century. She is best known for co-founding the international Black Lives Matter movement. She currently works as the Founder and Principal of Black Futures Lab, a national organization that is focused on training Black folks to build Black power. In her book *The Purpose of Power: How we come together when we fall apart* (2020), she defines community organizing as:

[...] the messy work of bringing people together, from different backgrounds and experiences, to change the conditions they are living in. It is the work of building relationships among people who may believe they have nothing in common so that together they can achieve a common goal. That means that as an organizer, you help different parts of the community learn about one another's histories and embrace one another's humanity as an incentive to fight together. An organizer challenges their own faults and deficiencies while encouraging others to challenge theirs [...] Organizers are engaged in solving the ongoing puzzle of how to build enough power to change the conditions that keep people in misery. (Garza, 2020, pp. 57-58)

While there are parallels to Alinskyism in Garza's (2020) definition—that organizing is about bringing people together around a common goal—her assertion that organizers should “[challenge] their own faults and deficiencies” (p. 57) adds something new: a belief that organizers must be self-reflective and invested in their own personal development.

Also like Alinsky, Garza (2020) believes that people hold their own answers to the problems that they are facing, that those who are impacted by community problems should be centered in organizing work, and that the job of an organizer is to train communities to build enough power to be able to create enough public pressure to solve their own problems. She states,

Right now, too many people are very, very far away from the decisions that are being made about them every day. If we want to change conditions in our communities' lives, it's not going to be sufficient to wait for somebody else to do it and it's certainly not going to be sufficient to wait on the good will of people to include Black people. In that vein, we must train our communities to be powerful and to be a model for building a democracy that we all deserve. (Garza, 2020, p. 13)

She diverges from Alinsky in her human-connection-centric approach to movement building. Alinsky defines a movement's success by winning policy victories; Garza (2020) sees the feat of building the movement as a victory in and of itself (p. 48). As such, for Garza (2020), the process—or the *how* of movement-building—is equally important to the movement's victories. For example, if a movement organized and won a campaign for affordable housing, but did not include any people directly impacted by the lack of affordable housing in decision-making and leadership roles along the way, the Garza approach would caution naming such a win a true victory. As such, a large part of Garza's (2020) organizing approach concentrates heavily on investing resources into training local community members in the work of organizing.

Garza is not alone in counting the building of a movement as a win in and of itself. Like Alinsky, she continuously reminds her readers that the focus of community organizing is not about developing individual activists, but about building powerful organizations and networks of organized people (Garza, 2020). Dr. Hahrie Han, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and the Inaugural Director of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins, expands on this idea. Her book *How Organizations Develop Activists: Civic Associations and Leadership in the 21st Century* (2014) spells out an approach to organizing that closely mirrors Garza's approach. Han (2014) agrees with Garza's assertion that training and developing civic leaders is a key part of any community organizing. She even breaks down the distinction between organizers and two other figures often seen in social movements: mobilizers and lone wolves (Han, 2014). While organizers are truly dedicated to capacity-building, Han (2014) defines mobilizers as people who can turn out a significant number of people for a single civic action, but who do not spend any time training them to engage others in movement-building. She defines lone wolves as those who “choose to build power by leveraging information—through

legal briefs, public comments, and other forms of research advocacy” (Han, 2014, p. 10). While mobilizers and lone wolves can play important roles in movements, Han (2014) asserts that it is organizers who are truly responsible for a movement’s success.

Garza’s approach is also rooted in an acknowledgment of the power of Black imagination, which she asserts “is what has kept Black people alive,” (2020; as cited in Woods, 2020, para. 9). In an interview with journalist Lisa Insana Woods for *Black Ballad Magazine* titled “Alicia Garza on Power, Futures, and Imagination” (2020), Garza tells Woods that her organizing work is inspired by an imagined future where Black folks are “powerful in every aspect of our lives, whether it be in our workplaces, in our homes, in our communities, inside of government” (para. 3). An integral part of Garza’s organizing work at Black Futures Lab happens through their Black Imagination Incubator project. Garza explains:

We [Black folks] can’t afford to simply rely on a system that was actually built to exclude us, so what we do at the Lab is we innovate on new ways of governing, and we experiment with new waves of engaging our communities,” she says. “Imagination allows us to start to see, smell, touch, taste and feel the world that we long for and then it gives us a compass to determine how close we’re getting. (2020; as cited in Woods, 2020, para. 12)

For Garza (2020), imagination is a vital organizing tool that allows people to take the first step towards dismantling the current system and building something new.

### **adrienne maree brown’s Emergent Strategy Approach**

Author, organizer, and emergent strategist adrienne maree brown joins Carruthers and Garza in rejecting the belief that the violent systems in our communities can be reformed, a belief that is directly in contrast to Alinsky. Instead, brown’s approach to community organizing is rooted in systemic transformation. She explores this idea in her book *Pleasure Activism* (2019), where she writes, “I believe that all organizing is science fiction—that we are shaping the future we long for and have not yet experienced,” (p. 10). For brown, this future she longs for is

not just about making life easier for people who have been long tortured by oppressive systems. It is about what she calls pleasure activism: “learning to make justice and liberation the most pleasurable experiences we can have on this planet,” (brown, 2019, p. 13). For brown (2019), the absolute cornerstone of all organizing work must begin with an internal shift—the belief that a radically-different world is possible—and then an external shift—the ability to bring other people along in imagining a radically-different kind of world where all human beings are given what they need not only to survive, but to thrive.

In her book *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2017), brown—like Garza, Salvatierra, and Heltzel—emphasizes the importance of imagination in movement work, this time reminding readers that it is important to have imagination because the people who are upholding the powerful systems and structures in our community, be it racism, white supremacy, homophobia, ableism, or a myriad of other harmful systems, have imaginations too. Brown (2017) writes:

We are in an imagination battle. Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown and Renisha McBride and so many others are dead because, in some white imagination, they were dangerous. And that imagination is so respected that those who kill, based on an imagined, radicalized fear of Black people, are rarely held accountable. Imagination has people thinking they can go from being poor to a millionaire as part of a shared American dream. Imagination turns Brown bombers into terrorists and white bombers into mentally ill victims. Imagination gives us borders, gives us superiority, gives us race as an indicator of ability. I often feel I am trapped inside someone else's capability. I often feel I am trapped inside someone else's imagination, and I must engage my own imagination in order to break free. (p. 19)

brown’s (2017) inspiration for her imagination battle is deeply rooted in the ways in which transformation—or what she calls emergence—show up in the natural world. She finds inspiration in examinations of fractals, or small, seemingly-simple, never-ending patterns, which can be found in the branches of a tree or underground mycelium networks. She also looks to how animals organize within their environment to create the conditions that they need, whether it is a

flock of birds migrating south for winter, or a group of ants working together to build a home (brown, 2017). Brown's (2017) overarching conclusion from observing the natural world is that, like plants and animals, humans have the ability to adapt, adjust, and band together to create change.

For brown (2017), natural observations are proof that interconnectedness and interdependence are vital to the success of life. Her approach to organizing is thus built upon an acknowledgment that human beings need each other not only to survive, but to thrive. brown's (2017) claim that we need each other to survive is a rejection of the rugged individualism that is the very foundation of American (and most Western) cultures. As such, her nine principles of Emergent Strategy for social change are all centered around the idea that systemic change begins with small but significant changes to how humans live their daily lives (brown, 2017). The nine principles of Emergent Strategy are:

<b><u>Emergent Strategy Principle</u></b>	<b><u>Explanation</u></b>
1. Small is good, small is all. (The large is a reflection of the small.)	Pay attention to small details and patterns for meaningful insights about larger patterns.
2. Change is constant. (Be like water.)	Change is unavoidable and should be expected and anticipated. brown's suggestion to "be like water" reminds organizers and movement workers to be malleable, to be open to change, to—like water—fill the cracks and crevices where there is a need.
3. There is always enough time for the right work.	This principle reminds organizers and movement workers to keep their values, and the values of the movement, centered in their organizing. It can be easy to get caught up in the culture of urgency and let things slide; brown reminds us that there is always enough time to slow down and do things intentionally.

4. There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.	Everyone has something to offer. It is the organizer’s job to help facilitate an environment where this is possible.
5. Never a failure, always a lesson.	Things not going as planned is inevitable in any organizing work or movement work and should be expected. What may seem like a failure is actually an opportunity to learn and improve for your next attempt, so long as there is intentional debrief and conversation after.
6. Trust the People. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy.)	Trust is the most important currency in organizing. Building trust will be the single most impactful action in your organizing.
7. Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass — build the resilience by building the relationships.	This tenet pushes back against Alinsky-style organizing, where the number of people engaged in a movement is the most important measure of the movement’s success. brown’s principle to “move at the speed of trust” encourages organizers to focus on building strong relationships with the community, asserting that building strong relationships will lead to a more sustainable and lasting movement.
8. Less prep, more presence.	Too much preparation can lead to an over-reliance on an agenda and a lack of agility to adjust to the needs in the room.
9. What you pay attention to grows.	We have a limited amount of attention, so choose what you want to be attentive to wisely.

While brown’s (2017) Emergent Strategy principals focus are drastic departures from Alinsky’s purely-systemic approach to organizing, they align with Nick Montgomery and carla bergman’s rejection of what they call *rigid radicalism*. In their book *Joyful Militancy* (2017), Montgomery and bergman (2017) write,

There is something that circulates in many movements and spaces, draining away their transformative potential [...] It nurtures rigidity, mistrust, and anxiety precisely where we are supposed to feel most alive. It compels us to search ourselves and others ruthlessly for



flaws and inconsistencies. It crushes experimentation and curiosity. It is hostile to difference, complexity, and nuance. Or it is the *most* complex, the most nuanced, and everyone else is simplistic and stupid. Radicalism becomes an *ideal*, and everyone becomes deficient in comparison. (p. 20)

This *rigid radicalism*, explain Montgomery and bergman (2017), is a kind of internal policing that happens within movement spaces that discourages people from showing up authentically and as they are. Frances Lee, a Spiritual Director, organizer, and MDiv student from Seattle, WA, writes about a similar phenomenon in their 2017 article “Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice.” In their article, Lee (2017) equates the ideological rigidity of many right-wing, evangelical churches with the rigidity of left-wing social justice movements. Montgomery, bergman, and Lee’s writings all show that there is often fear brimming under the surface in movement spaces—fear of saying the wrong thing, fear of offending someone, fear of making a mistake. And while all three authors emphasize the importance of taking accountability when harm is caused, they call to attention the important point that many organizing and movement spaces do not allow any space for such accountability and learning to happen.

### **Summary of Organizing Approaches**

My own community organizing has been deeply influenced by Saul Alinsky, Alicia Garza, and adrienne maree brown’s approaches to movement work. All three have contributed to my understanding of how to approach community organizing in a way that is both ethical and effective. Through their collective bodies of work, I have developed a framework of four main approaches to community organizing. In this section, I will summarize each of these approaches, give an explanation of the DART Organizers’ Institute, and then describe where the DART Organizers’ Institute is adhering to these approaches, as well as where it is lacking.

The following are my four recommended organizing approaches:

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Power</b>	At its core, community organizing is about building power. Organizers must understand power, how to build it, and how to use it. However, when building organized people power, quality is as important as quantity. How we build the movement matters; the process of building is a victory in and of itself.
<b>Motivation</b>	Effective organizers motivate and engage people around their self-interest and help them to unpack the idea of interdependence.
<b>Emotion</b>	Effective organizers motivate and sustain people’s engagement in movement work through helping them to access their anger, joy, imagination, and understanding of liberation.
<b>Center impacted voices</b>	Training should center the voices of impacted populations, and training material and sources should reflect the diversity of the community you are organizing.

### **DART’s Organizer Training Approach**

**Organizational structure.** The DART Network is a national network of 31 congregation-based community organizing groups throughout the Southeast and the Midwest United States (“The DART Center: About Us,” 2023). Each DART organization is independently funded and operated by their own local Board of Directors and paid organizing staff. DART organizations pay an annual affiliation fee to the DART Center in exchange for consulting, training, and organizer recruitment services (J. Aeschbury, personal communication, August 2018). My training redesign focuses on one of the many training services that the DART Center provides to DART organizations: the DART Organizers’ Institute.

**The DART Organizers’ Institute.** The DART Organizers’ Institute is a six-month training for new Associate Organizers who are hired into the DART Network. New organizers are placed into a cohort of other new hires from their sister organizations across the country who participate in relationship-building and training activities together. Most importantly, each cohort participates in the Organizers’ Institute, which consists of the following: a week-long intensive

organizer training that combines online presentations and skill-building sessions with in-field training, monthly webinars with their cohort on training topics not covered during the first week, and monthly one-on-one check-ins with the DART Training Director

### **Analysis**

#### **Power**

**Approach Summary.** At its core, community organizing is about building organized people power. Organizers must understand power, how to build it, and how to use it. Alinsky, Garza, and brown all share the belief that, in order to effectively organize for change, our communities need the power of organized people. For all three—and likely for any organizer—a key way to measure the strength of an organization or community’s power is by counting how many people are organized and engaged in the movement.

However, when building organized people power, quality is as important as quantity. How organizers build the movement matters, and, when done correctly, the process of building the movement is a victory in and of itself. This is where Garza and brown differ from Alinsky—in the assertion that, when measuring power, the sheer quantity of people does not matter to the exclusion of other factors, namely: how the organized people power was built and who it includes. For Garza and brown, attention must be paid to the *how* and the *who*. The *how* is rooted in the idea that organizations and movements must be intentional to not internally perpetuate the same harmful systems that they are trying to dismantle. In *Emergent Strategy* (2017), brown reminds us that organizing people may not always happen on the organizer’s desired timeline; instead, it is important for organizers to place more emphasis on building trust with the community, which may lead to fewer people being involved in a movement at the outset, but more involved over time. Additionally, being intentional about the *how* can

sometimes be at odds with efforts to turn out as many people as possible to an action. For example, oftentimes the people who are most impacted by a community problem are the people who have the most barriers to involvement such as: lack of time, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, or more serious consequences if there is retribution from those in power (i.e. losing their house or job). Conversely, people with fewer marginalized identities often have more time and resources to be able to participate in movement work. Garza and brown both caution that, if organizers are hyper-focused on numerical turnout, they may spend their time and resources in communities that have fewer barriers to involvement and thus are often easier to organize.

Organizers who are not always attentive to the *who* are more likely to fall into this trap.

The *who* is rooted in the idea that power is not only measured by the number of people, but also by the diversity of the group of people that is coming together. In a world where the powerful systems at play often effectively pit marginalized groups against one another in an attempt to divide their power, Garza and brown assert that the simple act of building a diverse, organized coalition is a victory in and of itself. Organizers must thus pay special attention to who they spend their time organizing. For example, for Garza and brown, an action with 1,000 people who are all white and upper-middle class does not hold the same weight as if 500 people from all different races, religions, socio-economic statuses, and other identities turned out to the same action.

**DART Training Analysis.** The DART's Organizers' Institute provides strong, if one-dimensional, training on building power. The majority of the Organizer's Institute's written sources and presentations are focused on teaching new organizers to understand power, how it operates, and how to build it. The presentation *Values, Justice, Power* (DART Training Staff, n.d.) outlines three main categories of relationships that define our lives: personal relationships

(such as with family or friends), voluntary relationships (such as with clubs, teams, congregations, or other social groups that you do not depend on for survival), and necessity relationships (such as with your landlord or mortgage company, electric company, or other institutions that you depend on for your basic survival). The presentation unpacks how individuals interact with all three of these types of relationships, ultimately helping the audience learn that, while you can act as an individual on your values in the first two types of relationships, you cannot do so in the third category. Instead, in order to be taken seriously by the third category, you have to build power.

This relationship-based framework is the foundation for all of the other presentations and sources that cover the concept of power, including but not limited to: *Prophetic Call* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Public and Personal Relationships* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Purpose and Description of 1-1s* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Competing Cultures* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Reflections on Power in the DART Network* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Organizing in an Oppressive World* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), and *History of DART and 3 Annual Processes: How We Fight and How We Win* (DART Training Staff, n.d.). These presentations help new organizers understand the DART Network's understanding of what power is—the ability to help or hurt, or the ability to give something or to take it away—how to use power, and what to think about when building power. Even presentations with a less-obvious emphasis on power touch on its importance. In skill-building presentations such as *Scheduling 1-1s* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), and *Note-Taking After 1-1s* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), presenters are instructed to remind new organizers that 1-1s are a tool for power-building, and thus the most important skill that they will learn in their organizer training.

Nearly all of these presentations assume a very Alinskyist understanding of power: that the more people your organization has, the more power it has. While some presenters may build in examples or comments about the importance of building diverse power (in the vein of Garza and Brown), such examples are not guaranteed to be a part of the training material. The written source material also heavily relies on emphasizing quantity over quality; there is little attention paid to *who* makes up the organized people power that organizers are supposed to be building. For example, the presentation *Inspired Standards for DART Organizers* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), coupled with the written source *DART Standards (Updated 10/12/17)* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), each lay out power-building standards for DART organizers that are purely based on numerical turnout. While the *DART Standards* document does include a note that individual organizer goals may differ based on the congregations they are working with, there are no measured standards that take into account the diversity of the people that the organizer is organizing. Additionally, in “Excerpts from Notes on Organizing,” author Marshall Ganz (n.d., as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021) dives into the role that organizers should play in guaranteeing that community members show up for actions: they should take full responsibility for turnout. To drive this home, he quotes Fred Ross, who once stated, “It’s not their fault they didn’t show up. It’s yours. You either didn’t do a good enough job inspiring them, or you didn’t follow up and let them off the hook. Either way it’s your fault.” While there is truth in Ganz’s and Ross’ sentiment—organizers should be prepared to inspire urgency and action in their community and hold people accountable when they do not follow through on their commitments—their take on failure is overly-simplistic and does not account for the barriers that some folks, particularly people who are most impacted by community problems, may be facing in order to participate in an action.

DART's numerically-focused approach to power is rooted in their adherence to and admiration of the corporate growth model. Other OI written sources include excerpts from corporate bestsellers *Good to Great* by Jim Collins (2001; as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021) and *Built to Last* by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras. (1994; as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021). Collins and Porras are both corporate executives, and their books walk through lessons for corporate success that are largely rooted in financial and numerical growth. Collins' and Porras' influences are evident in the OI source *State of the DART Network: 2020*, a speech delivered by DART Executive Director Rev. John Aeschbury. In just one excerpt from his address, Rev. Aeschbury (2020) states,

The way to build a community of hope, promise and abundance is to have enough people power to counteract Pharaoh's story of fear, scarcity and despair. Organizers in this network are serious about making that shift in our cities, so DART has a long-range strategic plan to have 30 organizations produce an average of 3,000 people to each Nehemiah Action. We plan to hit this goal by 2027. (p. 3)

Like the goals set out for organizers in *Inspired Standards for DART Organizers* (n.d.) and *DART Standards* (2017), Rev. Aeschbury's vision is rooted in numerical growth; there is no acknowledgment of growing organizations to engage new populations or religious denominations that could benefit from organizing work but that are currently excluded.

Rev. Aeschbury is not the only person in DART leadership with this view. A piece written by Holly Holcombe, the former Associate Director of the DART Network, titled *Reflections on Power in the DART Network: November 2020*, is also included in the OI source materials. Holcombe's (2020) reflections on power are largely numerically-based, falling in alignment with Rev. Aeschbury's understanding of power. However, the end of her article includes short reflections from 14 organizers on what they learned about power during their time organizing in the DART Network. While many of the organizers spoke mostly about power in

the content of quantity, two of the organizers gave answers that also spoke to the importance of quality. Camille Bradford, a Senior Organizer at the DART-affiliate CLOUT in Louisville, KY, reflected:

I think one of the great obstacles we face is the fatigue that can come with long-term issue campaigns and putting focus primarily around issue campaigns. I think it is important for organizers and leaders to remember it is a long road to justice, but there are victories all along the way. We need to learn to look for them and see them. There are intermittent issue victories, and there are wins in terms of personal growth, ministry growth, and the relationships that we build and share. Celebrating these victories is important and helps us learn/remember that we can get energy from one another. (p. 7)

Brandon Buker-Henshaw, former Lead Organizer of DART-affiliate SURE in Sarasota, FL

reflected:

I think that often my own insistence on a linear model of organizing can keep people from feeling a deeper sense of ownership and urgency around our shared vision, or altogether alienate them from the process entirely. Who do we include in this work? Who do we exclude? What voices do we prioritize? What does that say about our values? Who do we ask to lead? Who do we ask to follow? Who is doing the asking? What is their background? How do they relate to the community? (p. 8)

Bradford and Buker-Henshaw's reflections on power-building in their respective organizations show that, while an importance on quality as well as quantity is not explicitly stated in the DART Organizers' Institute curriculum, there are organizers in the DART Network who are approaching building power in ways that align with Garza and Brown. In particular, Bradford's attention to celebrating victories rooted in personal growth rather than campaign wins, and Buker-Henshaw's attention to asking questions about who the DART process includes and excludes, give examples of how some seasoned DART organizers are paying attention to the *who* and the *how*. Much of the Organizers' Institute presentations and source material, however, does not include nuance.

## **Motivation**



**Approach Summary.** Effective organizers motivate and engage people around their self-interest and help them to unpack the idea of interdependence. Saul Alinsky, who coined the term self-interest, defines it as what people want for themselves and their communities. According to Alinsky, effective organizers should uncover peoples' self-interests and then, ideally, connect them to whatever movement work the organizer would like to engage them in. This nuance is important—often, in Alinskyist organizing, the organizer is often making the decision about how to engage the community members around their self-interest. In other words, the organizer has an agenda and often uses self-interest as a tool to get to a predetermined result. For example, the organizer might need more people to work on the organization's affordable housing campaign. In this scenario, they would think about how a certain community members' self-interest connects to joining the affordable housing campaign and direct the conversation that way rather than engaging in a free exploration of how the community member wants to act on their self-interest.

Like Alinsky, adrienne maree brown (2017) agrees that it is important for organizers to engage people in justice work around their motivations. However, unlike Alinsky, she does not believe that organizers should have an agenda when they tap into community members' self-interest. For brown, organizers should use self-interest to help community members hold a mirror up to themselves and see how they are acting on their values; a person's decision of what to do after seeing their reflection is up to them. She also encourages organizers not to rely solely on self-interest, but to help people understand the idea of interdependence. brown (2017) defines interdependence as the idea that:

we can meet each other's needs in a variety of ways, that we can truly lean on others and they can lean on us. It means we have to decentralize our idea of where solutions and decisions happen, where ideas come from. (p. 87)

For brown, acknowledging the interdependence of all people is a rejection of Alinsky's sole reliance on self-interest; in her eyes, a failure to help people involved in a movement to see how one community's liberation will benefit all communities will lead to more of the rugged individualism that perpetuates many of the problems that movement work is trying to address.

**DART Training Analysis.** The DART Organizers' Institute curriculum provides strong training on self-interest. The entire DART model is based on the Biblical story of Nehemiah, which is the emphasis of the 11th unit of the OI curriculum. During his time in Jerusalem, Nehemiah organized regular people to successfully take on the powerful, corrupt moneylenders who had unjustly seized their land, possessions, and children to pay debts that should have been forgiven according to the law of that time. In the story, Nehemiah was able to uncover peoples' self-interests—largely to get back what was owed to them—because he built relationships with them and asked questions to better understand their situations. DART teaches that, like Nehemiah, organizers must immerse themselves in their community and build strong, trusting relationships with people in order to uncover their self-interests (Linthicum, 2003; as cited in *DART Institute*, 2021). Organizers then must be able to use their knowledge of community members' self-interests to engage them in their organization's justice work.

The Organizers' Institute curriculum emphasizes the importance of organizing around self-interest. The presentations *Self-Interest* (DART Training Staff, n.d.) and *Purpose and Description of I-Is* (DART Training Staff, n.d.) introduce organizers to the concept of self-interest, how to conduct one-on-ones with community leaders to uncover their self-interests, and how to use their self-interests to engage them more deeply in justice work. There are additional presentations that focus on the practical skills necessary to have a one-on-one; they include: *Note-Taking after I-Is* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *I-Is: What to Do and What Not to*

*Do* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Scheduling 1-1s* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Opening and Closing Initial 1-1s* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), and *1-1 Evaluations and Notes* (DART Training Staff, n.d.). There are also opportunities for new organizers to practice 1-1s with each other, as well as with clergy and leaders in their respective organizations. Finally, the OI builds in time for new hires to shadow Senior Organizers and Lead Organizers.

These presentations are accompanied by several articles and DART-authored sources to help new organizers understand the importance of self-interest and 1-1s. In the training handout *Relationships and 1-1s*, (n. d.), DART staff member Ben MacConnell gives a summary of the importance of one-on-one conversations (1-1s) in all organizing work. MacConnell (n.d.) names two main objectives of all 1-1s: genuinely connecting with the person you are meeting with, and uncovering something about that person’s self-interest to get engaged in justice work. MacConnell’s (n.d.) training handout includes strong suggestions for how organizers can uncover others’ self-interests including: asking “why” questions to get at the person’s values, asking for examples and stories of where the person has taken action to show the strength of their values, sharing of yourself to help create a sense of connection and trust, and taking a moment for a self-evaluation after the 1-1 to reflect on future opportunities for probing questions.

While the DART Organizers’ Institute curriculum includes powerful articles and training for organizers on how to uncover peoples’ self-interest in relation to justice work, there are far fewer resources that speak to the importance of helping people understand the concept of interdependence. Another training handout titled *The Myth of Individual Empowerment* (n.d.) begins to touch on the idea of interdependence, stating that people are unable to create change all by themselves, but instead have to work with others to do so. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (1963; as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021) also speaks to the idea

of interdependence, reminding readers that people from diverse backgrounds need to work together in order to create a community that will benefit everyone. However, neither of these sources explicitly names the concept of interdependence. If organizers and organizations fail to help people understand interdependence it can lead to problematic internal dynamics such as white saviorism, a lack of solidarity, and a lack of personal investment in the movement.

### **Emotion**

**Approach Summary.** Effective organizers motivate and sustain people's engagement in movement work through helping them to access their anger, joy, imagination, and understanding of liberation. This approach is rooted in Alinsky, Garza, and brown's organizing approaches; however, it is most closely in alignment with Garza and brown. Alinsky emphasizes that organizers must be effective in helping people to uncover their anger in order to fully engage them in justice work. While, like Alinsky, both Garza and brown acknowledge the importance of anger in organizing work, they also urge organizers to tap into people's imaginations, hopes, and dreams for the future. Garza and brown assert that a sole reliance on anger as a motivator can lead to bitterness, resentment, and burnout among people who may otherwise be motivated to participate in movement work for the long haul. Their conversations around anger are also rooted in an intersectional framework; they acknowledge that community members with more marginalized identities are often in touch with their anger, and that bigger blocks to getting them engaged in organizing are their feelings of hopelessness or apathy. Conversely, community members with fewer marginalized identities may be less in touch with their anger around community problems because they are less likely to be personally impacted. Thus, organizers must be trained to help community members tap into a wide array of emotions—and to know

when to use each one—including but not limited to: anger, hope, joy, a sense of belonging, excitement for the future, and possibility.

**DART Training Analysis.** DART’s training materials include materials that discuss the importance of helping people get in touch with their emotions in order to motivate them to take action to improve their communities. However, across the Organizers’ Institute source list and presentations, there is a specific emphasis on helping people to express their anger, sometimes to the exclusion of other emotions. In a training handout titled *Introduction to Organizing in the DART Network* (n.d.), which is meant to be read during the initial weeklong training, an unknown DART staff member writes:

Anger is a very important tool in organizing. As an organizer, you want to work with people who are angry about the injustices they see around them. Once you engage them, people who are angry will be serious about doing something about their problems. However, many people are not in touch with their anger and feel very uncomfortable talking about anger. (p. 5)

After this quote, this handout continues to unpack the necessity of organizers helping people to get in touch with their anger.

Subsequent DART training handouts and articles continue to emphasize the importance of relying on anger to organize effectively. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (1963; as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021), Dr. Obery Hendricks Jr.’s “Which Jesus Shall We Teach” (n.d., as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021) and Robert Linthicum’s “Nehemiah and the Iron Rule of Power” (2003; as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021) give Christian-focused examples of how Jesus and the Christian tradition call their followers to act with righteous anger when they see an injustice. These articles are strong sources of inspiration for organizers—particularly Christian organizers. In another DART training handout

titled *Relationships and 1-1s* (n.d.), which directs new organizers in how to conduct initial one-on-one conversations with community leaders, DART staff member Ben MacConnell writes,

The most useful emotion question that I have ever heard has earned its own title in the organizing world. It's known by most as the Anger Question ["What community problem makes you angry and why?"]. The Anger Question is bare, straight-forward, elicits the type of emotional response sought after, and focuses on an emotion that tends to spur people into action. You can bet if there is something that people grind their teeth at when they think about it, they will take an opportunity to work with others to do something about it [...] Every organizer should ask every person they do an initial 1-1 with this question – no exceptions. (p. 9)

While MacConnell does briefly acknowledge that other emotions can be helpful for organizers to tap into in one sentence at the end of his article, he shows DART's commitment to a reliance on anger as the most important emotion for organizers to elicit.

Training sources such as "Why Stories Matter" by Marshall Ganz (2004; as cited in *DART Institute Manual*, 2021) speak to the necessity of helping people feel emotionally connected to movement work through the use of storytelling. This, combined with MacConnell's comment that other emotions may be useful for organizers to use, indicates that there is a willingness to help organizers engage with other emotions in their organizing. However, the majority of the DART Organizers' Institute's written curriculum indicates a sole reliance on anger as *the* emotion that organizers should be tapping into in order to inspire people to take action for change. This overreliance on anger fails to take into account that many community members, particularly those with marginalized identities, may already feel anger all the time. Some of these people also may not feel safe displaying their anger for an organizer (particularly at the beginning of a relationship). It is important for organizers to be trained to recognize that a person's identity will impact their emotions, how they express them, and their experience of the world. Organizers should thus be given tools to approach conversations around self-interest with nuance and care.

While DART's written training sources rely almost exclusively on the supremacy of anger, several of their training presentations speak more deeply about the importance of using a wide array of emotions in organizing. In particular, the presentation *Envisioned Futures* (DART Training Staff, n.d.) helps organizers dream of a different world, one without all of the poverty, death, and suffering of our current world. It helps organizers tap into creating their vision for a new world, and begins equipping them with questions to ask leaders to help them dream too. Other presentations, such as *Values, Justice, Power* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), *Prophetic Call* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), and *Purpose and Description of I-Is* (DART Training Staff, n.d.), and the daily reflections allow opportunities for presenters to bring a wide ray of emotions into their presentations. However, opportunities to do so are largely provided through personal examples that differ depending on the presenter, so the content of the presentation and the degree to which the presenter is in alignment with this recommended approach will change from presenter to presenter.

### **Centering impacted voices**

**Approach Summary.** Alinsky, Garza, and brown all agree that successful community organizing movements should center the voices of impacted populations, and that organizer training should center the voices of impacted populations. Where Garza and brown diverge from Alinsky, however, is in the assertion that the training sources themselves should also reflect the impacted population and diversity of the community that you are organizing. A failure to do this may result in building an organizing ideology that inadvertently perpetuates the same harmful systems—white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, etc—that you are trying to dismantle or reform.

**DART Training Analysis.** This recommended organizing approach is the least reflected of the four in the DART Organizers' Institute. The *DART Institute Manual* (2021) includes 38

required written sources. Out of these sources, 24 of them have known authors. The remaining authors are unnamed DART staff members; the remaining articles are internal DART handouts and materials. Out of the 24 known authors, 75% of them are men and 67% of them are white. The average age of these sources (based on publication date) is 28 years old; the median age is 24 years old.

DART organizations state that they value organizing in diverse communities—most, if not all DART organizations are composed of a minimum of 50% non-white congregations and 50% low-income congregations (T. Williams, personal communication, December 2020). It is clear that the sources in the *DART Institute Manual* (2021) do not match the demographics of the people being organized. While there are several sources that are written by people of color and women; the majority of the sources are written by straight, cisgender, white men. The training materials themselves also do not specifically speak to centering impacted communities in organizing work. While several indicate the importance of including diverse voices in organizing, such as Senior Organizer Clarissa Epps' quote in *Reflections on Power in the DART Network* (Holcombe, 2020) and *Winning an Affordable Housing Trust Fund* (Doyle & Ruglio, n.d.) these sources do not explicitly state that impacted voices should be placed in decision-making roles or other roles where they can exercise their agency. If organizations do not directly center impacted people in decision-making roles, then, at its best, the organization is not fulfilling its mission to give those who are impacted by community problems a seat at the table where decisions are made. At its worst, it is replicating the very types of institutions that it is trying to reform or revolutionize.

In terms of training presentations, the OI's only training that hints at the importance of centering diverse voices in organizing work is their newest presentation, *Organizing in an*



*Oppressive World* (DART Training Staff, 2020) which was added to the OI curriculum in 2020 (K. Powell, personal communication, January 2021). This presentation, which is usually co-presented by a Black organizer and a queer organizer, runs through stories of encountering racism, homophobia, sexism, and other oppressive systems while out in the field. The presenters share stories from their own experiences and ask the new hires to reflect on their own. While this presentation does not explicitly advise new organizers to center impacted voices in organizing work, it does speak to the identity-based challenges that organizers face, particularly those who have marginalized identities. However, *Organizing in an Oppressive World* (DART Training Staff, 2020) primarily aims to give organizers personal strategies to deal with their identity-based challenges rather than outlining the benefits that come from building power with people of diverse identities and teaching skills on how to do it. A skilled presenter may be able to relate some of the content in this presentation to the challenges that come with building diverse people power but, like with the other recommended approaches, it is not guaranteed that this will happen.

### **Recommended Training Design**

This recommended training design outlines the first two weeks of the DART Organizers' Institute. It is a redesign of the current Organizers' Institute's first week. I made four key changes to the current DART training design: I lengthened the initial weeklong virtual training to make it a two-week training, allowing for more time to process and practice complex training topics; I added new presentations to fill the gaps that I identified in the original curriculum; I removed irrelevant presentations and condensed repetitive presentations; and I created a list of recommended written sources to add to the curriculum that represent identities and perspectives not included in the current curriculum. The training redesign is included below.

**Recommended Curriculum for the DART Organizers' Institute**

* denotes original DART Organizers' Institute Presentation (may not be on the same day)				
<b>Week 1</b>				
<b>Monday: <i>Who are we?</i></b>				
<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-9:20	Welcome to the DART Network & Overview of the Organizers' Institute*	DART Training Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To welcome new organizers to the DART Network</li> <li>To prepare new organizers for what to expect during the Organizers' Institute</li> </ol>	
9:20-10:20	Relationship -Building	DART Training Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For new organizer cohort to begin building rapport and trust</li> <li>For new organizers to share what brought them into organizing work</li> <li>For new organizers to share their excitement, hopes, reservations, and initial questions</li> </ol>	motivation
10:20-10:35	<b><i>Break</i></b>			
10:35-11:30	Prophetic Call*	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To give new organizers the scriptural foundation for the DART Network's organizing method</li> <li>To introduce new organizers to a systems-thinking lens</li> </ol>	power, motivation
11:30-12:45	<b><i>Lunch with local staff</i></b>			
12:45-1:45	History of DART and Three Annual Processes*	Senior Organizer or Associate Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To give new organizers context for the DART Network's history, mission, and vision</li> <li>To teach new organizers the DART organizing process and explain their role</li> </ol>	power, motivation

			3. To prepare new organizers for DART-specific questions they may encounter in the field	
1:45-2:30	Building Powerful Justice Ministry Networks*	Senior Organizer or Associate Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To teach new organizers how congregations are organized in the DART Network</li> <li>2. To give new organizers context for their role in building powerful justice ministry networks</li> </ol>	power, motivation
2:30-3:00	<i>Break</i>			
3:00-4:30	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Debrief the day and answer any questions</li> <li>2. Review turnout goals and objectives</li> <li>3. Review "soft" goals and objectives (ask new hire about their goals for the job, etc)</li> </ol>	power, motivation

**Tuesday: *What are we building?***

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-9:30	Overview of Day and Reflection*	Associate Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce new organizers to other Associate Organizers in the DART Network</li> <li>2. To inspire new organizers and set the tone for the day</li> </ol>	motivation, emotion
9:30-11:00	Relationship-Building with Cohort (Values Exercise)	DART Training Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To continue building relationships and trust among the new cohort</li> <li>2. To give new organizers an opportunity to reflect on their values, which they will share during 1-1s</li> <li>3. To give new organizers an opportunity to reflect on personal stories they can share that show their values</li> </ol>	motivation, emotion

11:00-11:15	<b>Break</b>			
11:15-12:15	Values, Justice, Power*	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To deepen new organizers' systems-thinking lens</li> <li>To teach new organizers about the three circles of relationships (personal, voluntary, and necessity) and how power operates in the context of each of the circles</li> <li>To show how building the power of organized people through the justice ministry can allow for ordinary people to enter into the necessity-relationship circle</li> </ol>	power, motivation
12:15-1:15	<b>Lunch</b>			
1:15-2:15	Envisioned Futures*	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To introduce organizers to the concept of visioning</li> <li>To teach organizers how to engage community members in imagining a different world</li> </ol>	motivation, emotion
2:15-3:45	Visioning Exercise	DART Training Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To give new organizers an opportunity to reflect on their own envisioned future</li> <li>To deepen relationships among new organizers by allowing them to share their envisioned futures</li> </ol>	motivation, emotion
3:45-4:00	<b>Break</b>			
4:00-4:30	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debrief the day and answer any questions</li> </ol>	
<b>Wednesday: Diverse Coalitions</b>				
<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>

9:00-9:30	Overview of Day and Reflection*	Associate Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce new organizers to other Associate Organizers in the DART Network</li> <li>2. To inspire new organizers and set the tone for the day</li> </ol>	motivation, emotion
9:30-10:30	Competing Cultures*	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce new organizers to the idea of consumer culture and how it is at odds with community organizing/building a justice ministry</li> </ol>	power, motivation
10:30-10:45	<b><i>Break</i></b>			
10:45-11:30	Guided Discussion on Competing Cultures	DART Training Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To give new organizers an opportunity to discuss how consumer culture shows up in their communities</li> <li>2. To give new organizers an opportunity to discuss how consumer culture may show up in their congregations and organizations</li> </ol>	power, motivation
11:30-12:30	<b><i>Lunch (suggested with local staff)</i></b>			
12:30-2:00	Building Diverse Coalitions: Why It Matters	Co-Presented by DART LGBT Caucus, Black Caucus, and Hispanic Caucus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To deepen new organizers' understanding of organized people power</li> <li>2. To help new organizers understand how and why a diverse coalition is more powerful than a homogenous coalition through a case study on the Justice Matters Jail No! Campaign</li> <li>3. To give examples of what building a diverse coalition looks like in DART Organizations through an organizational mapping activity</li> </ol>	power, motivation, centering impacted voices
2:00-2:15	<b><i>Break</i></b>			

2:15-4:45	Building Diverse Coalitions: Challenges	Co-Presented by DART LGBT Caucus, Black Caucus, and Hispanic Caucus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To unpack the challenges that come with working in diverse coalitions</li> <li>2. To give organizers tools for dealing with the challenges that come with working in diverse coalitions</li> </ol>	power, motivation, emotions centering impacted voices
4:45-5:15	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Debrief the day and answer any questions</li> </ol>	

**Thursday: *Time for Practical Application***

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-9:30	Overview of Day and Reflection*	Associate Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce new organizers to other Associate Organizers in the DART Network</li> <li>2. To inspire new organizers and set the tone for the day</li> </ol>	motivation, emotion
9:30-11:00	Introduction to Self-Interest and Interdependence	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce new organizers to the concept of self-interest</li> <li>2. To introduce new organizers to the concept of interdependence</li> <li>3. To begin the conversation about how to use self-interest and interdependence in organizing</li> </ol>	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
11:00-11:15	<b><i>Break</i></b>			
11:15-12:00	Purpose and Description of 1-1s*	Any Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce new organizers to the concept of 1-1s</li> <li>2. To teach new organizers the role of 1-1s in organizing</li> </ol>	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
12:00-12:30	Note-Taking After 1-1s*	Any Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To teach new organizers how to take effective notes after 1-1s</li> </ol>	power, motivation

12:30-1:30	<b><i>Lunch</i></b>			
1:30-4:30	Practice: Cohort 1-1s with Interruptions *	DART Training Director, Senior Organizers, and Lead Organizers facilitating practice groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To give new organizers an opportunity to deepen relationships with one another</li> <li>2. To give new organizers an opportunity to practice 1-1s</li> <li>3. To help new organizers understand how to ask good questions in 1-1s</li> </ol>	power, motivation, emotion
4:30-5:00	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Debrief the day and answer any questions</li> </ol>	

***Friday: More Practical Application***

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-9:30	Overview of Day and Reflection*	Associate Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce new organizers to other Associate Organizers in the DART Network</li> <li>2. To inspire new organizers and set the tone for the day</li> </ol>	motivation, emotion
9:30-11:00	1-1 Tips	Any Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review how to open and close 1-1s</li> <li>2. Review best practices for 1-1s</li> <li>3. Review common mistakes in 1-1s</li> </ol>	power, motivation
11:00-12:00	Vision Presentation *	Associate Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review content and purpose of the Vision Presentation</li> <li>2. Share different revisions to the Vision Presentation for different faith traditions</li> <li>3. Discuss when and how to use the Vision Presentation</li> </ol>	power
12:00-1:00	<b><i>Lunch</i></b>			

1:00-4:00	New Associates should use this time to: 1. Conduct 1-1s (Lead Organizer/Senior Organizer shadowing when possible)* 2. Shadow Lead Organizers/Senior Organizers on their 1-1s*		power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
4:00-4:30	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	1. Debrief the day and answer any questions

**Week 2**

**Monday: *Scheduling and practicing 1-1s***

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-10:00	Relationship -Building with local staff	Local staff	1. To give the new organizer a time to deepen their relationship to their local colleagues	
10:00-11:00	Calls to Schedule 1-1s*	Any Organizer	1. To teach new organizers how to make effective phone calls to schedule 1-1s 2. To role play common scheduling scenarios	power
11:00-12:00	Practice: Calls to Schedule 1-1-s (Lead Organizer or Senior Organizer shadows)*	Local staff	1. To have new organizers practice making calls 2. To have new organizers schedule 1-1s for the following week	power
12:00-1:00	<b><i>Lunch</i></b>			
1:00- 5:00	New Associates should use this time to: 1. Call people from their lists to schedule 1-1s* 2. Conduct 1-1s (Lead Organizer/Senior Organizer shadowing when possible)* 3. Shadow Lead Organizers/Senior Organizers on their 1-1s*			power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices



End of day	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	1. Debrief the day and answer any questions	
<b>Tuesday: <i>What we're up against</i></b>				
<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-10:30	Organizing in an Oppressive World: Part I	Co-Presented by DART LGBT Caucus, Black Caucus, and Hispanic Caucus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To acknowledge that racism, sexism, white supremacy, homophobia, and other forms of systemic oppression will show up in our organization</li> <li>2. To unpack the ways that the systemic oppression that may show up in your organization</li> <li>3. To discuss how these examples of systemic oppression could negatively impact community members in your organization</li> <li>4. To give strategies for how organizers can deal with instances of systemic oppression in their organization</li> </ol>	power, motivation, centering impacted voices
10:30-10:45	<b><i>Break</i></b>			
10:45-12:15	Organizing in an Oppressive World: Part II*	Co-Presented by DART LGBT Caucus, Black Caucus, and Hispanic Caucus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To prepare new organizers for prejudice that they may personally encounter in the field, including but not limited to: racism, sexism, white supremacy, homophobia</li> <li>2. To give new organizers strategies for how to deal with these instances</li> <li>3. To give new organizers the opportunity to ask questions</li> </ol>	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices

12:15-5:00	New Associates should use this time to:		power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call people from their lists to schedule 1-1s</li> <li>2. Conduct 1-1s (Lead Organizer/Senior Organizer shadowing when possible)*</li> <li>3. Shadow Lead Organizers/Senior Organizers on their 1-1s*</li> </ol>		
End of day	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	1. Debrief the day and answer any questions

**Wednesday: *Emotions and Ethical Storytelling***

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-10:30	The Role of Emotions in Organizing	Any Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To help organizers understand how to help community members surface emotions in a healthy way</li> <li>2. To give organizers examples of how different emotions can serve different purposes in organizing through a scenario-based activity using relevant examples from the field</li> </ol>	power, emotion
10:30-10:45	<b><i>Break</i></b>			
10:45-12:15	Ethical Storytelling in Organizing	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To teach organizers how to thoughtfully elicit stories from community members</li> <li>2. To open the discussion around what telling a story ethically means</li> <li>3. To unpack the possible consequences—positive and negative—that a person may experience from sharing their story using scenarios from different DART affiliate organizations</li> </ol>	power, motivation, centering impacted voices

12:15-5:00	New Associates should use this time to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call people from their lists to schedule 1-1s*</li> <li>2. Conduct 1-1s (Lead Organizer/Senior Organizer shadowing when possible)*</li> <li>3. Shadow Lead Organizers/Senior Organizers on their 1-1s*</li> </ol>		power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
End of day	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	1. Debrief the day and answer any questions

**Thursday: *Measuring Success***

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
9:00-11:00	How to Measure Success	Lead Organizer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To discuss goal-setting in the DART Network</li> <li>2. To talk about the different types of success, including but not limited to: meeting turnout goals, seeing a leader transform their thinking, a campaign win, an exciting committee meeting, a deepened relationship with a leader, etc</li> </ol>	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
11:00-5:00	New Associates should use this time to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call people from their lists to schedule 1-1s*</li> <li>2. Conduct 1-1s (Lead Organizer/Senior Organizer shadowing when possible)*</li> <li>3. Shadow Lead Organizers/Senior Organizers on their 1-1s*</li> </ol>		power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices	
End of day	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	1. Debrief the day and answer any questions	

**Friday: *Initial training wrap-up***

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presentation title</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Presentation Objectives</u>	<u>Alignment with Recommended Approaches</u>
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9:00-10:30	Cohort Debrief	DART Training Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To celebrate new organizers finishing their initial training</li> <li>2. To give new organizers the opportunity to ask questions and process anything that's come up in their first two weeks</li> <li>3. To discuss what's next in the Organizers' Institute</li> </ol>	
10:30-5:00	New Associates should use this time to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call people from their lists to schedule 1-1s*</li> <li>2. Conduct 1-1s (Lead Organizer/Senior Organizer shadowing when possible)*</li> <li>3. Shadow Lead Organizers/Senior Organizers on their 1-1s*</li> </ol>			power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
End of day	Individual Lead Organizer Check-In	Lead Organizer	1. Debrief the day and answer any questions	

**Recommended Additional Sources for the DART Organizers’ Institute**

The following written sources should also be added to the DART Organizers’ Institute curriculum in order to diversify the voices that the current *DART Institute Manual* (2021) includes, and to include sources that will better reflect the four recommended approaches

<b>Recommended Additional Sources</b>		
<u>source</u>	<u>author</u>	<u>alignment with recommended approaches</u>
<i>The Purpose of Power</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction</li> <li>● Chapter 3</li> <li>● Chapter 8</li> <li>● Chapter 9</li> </ul>	Alicia Garza	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices

<i>Alicia Garza on Power, Futures, and Imagination</i>	Lisa Insansa Woods	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
<i>Emergent Strategy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction</li> <li>● Chapter 1</li> </ul>	adrienne maree brown	power, motivation, emotion
<i>The Problem with Saul Alinsky</i>	Aaron Petcoff	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices
<i>Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction</li> <li>● Chapter 1</li> <li>● Chapter 2</li> </ul>	Alexia Salvatierra & Peter Heltzel	power, motivation, emotion
“I am your sister: Black women organizing across sexualities,” (from <i>Mouths of Rain: An anthology of Black lesbian thought</i> )	Audre Lorde,	motivation, centering impacted voices
“A Ratchet Lens: Black queer youth, agency, hip hop, and the Black ratchet imagination,” from <i>Mouths of Rain: An anthology of Black lesbian thought</i>	Bettina Love	motivation, centering impacted voices
<i>Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction</li> <li>● Chapter 4</li> </ul>	Nick Montgomery & carla bergman	motivation, emotion
<i>How Organizations Develop Activists</i>	Hahrie Hahn	power, motivation
<i>The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House</i>	Audre Lorde	power, motivation, emotion, centering impacted voices

“The Impact of Culture in Multicultural Teams,” from <i>Effective Multicultural Teams</i>	S. Aqueel Tirmizi	power, motivation
<i>Teaching to Transgress: Education as the practice of freedom</i>	bell hooks	motivation, centering impacted voices
“Strengthen the Story” from <i>Creative Community Organizing: A guide for rabblers, activists, and quiet lovers of justice</i>	Si Kahn	emotion, centering impacted voices

### Conclusion

Recently (in June 2023), several of my DART colleagues and I had the opportunity to speak with a group of clergy, lay leaders, and community organizing staff who work with congregation-based community organizing organizations on the East Coast. Their respective organizations had started off as members of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the original congregation-based community organizing network founded by Saul Alinsky. My colleagues and I were meeting with this group to share our stories and grievances about racism, sexism, and homophobia in the DART Network, as laid out in the background and rationale for this project. In the meeting, over 10 DART organizers shared stories about their disheartening experiences during their time organizing in the DART Network, as well as their overall disillusionment with movement work. After listening to the DART organizers for nearly an hour, one of the former IAF organizers—Amy—raised her hand and expressed sympathy and anger on our behalf; she also stated, “Every story that you’ve shared about your experience is true for our experiences in the IAF, too,” (A. Vruno, personal communication, June 2023).

Hearing Amy's reaction was jarring. The issues with damaging organizational culture, the use of outdated organizing pedagogy, and internal hypocrisy were not unique to the DART Network. They were also happening in the largest congregation-based community organizing network in the country, where the problems were serious enough that 10 IAF organizations, including Amy's, recently chose to disaffiliate from the IAF and begin building a new organizing network (T. Williams, personal communication, February 2023).

I believe in community organizing. I have seen what is possible when ordinary people band together, setting aside their differences in pursuit of a common goal. In Charleston alone, my DART-affiliate, CAJM, has organized the faith community to win victories including the dedication of over \$20 million to affordable housing in Charleston County, hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in mobile health units, the implementation of racial bias audits of the Charleston and North Charleston Police Departments, and more. I find myself asking: If we were able to achieve all of this even in the face of all of our problems with organizational culture and training, what would we be able to achieve if those problems did not exist—or, at the very least, were less severe? What could be possible if we leaned in and embraced growth and change? It is my hope that the DART Network, and other community organizing networks, will use these findings to make their organizer training more meaningful, relevant, and effective—because movements are our future.

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