

TRAINING FOR CHANGE *HANDOUT*

WWW.TRAININGFORCHANGE.ORG

Four Roles in Social Change

Helper

EFFECTIVE

- ▶ Assists people in ways that affirm their dignity and respect
- ▶ Shares skills and brings clients into decision-making roles
- ▶ Educates about the larger social system
- ▶ Encourages experiments in service delivery which support liberation

INEFFECTIVE

- ▶ Believes charity can handle social problems, or that helping individuals can change social structures
- ▶ Focuses on casualties and refuses to see who benefits from victimization
- ▶ Provides services like job training which simply give some people a competitive edge over other people, without challenging the scarcity which gives rise to competition

Advocate

EFFECTIVE

- ▶ Uses mainstream institutions like courts, city hall, legislatures to get new goals and values adopted
- ▶ Uses lobbying, lawsuits, elite networking/coalition-building for clearly-stated demands, often backed by research
- ▶ Monitors successes to make sure they are implemented

INEFFECTIVE

- ▶ “Realistic politics”: promotes minor reforms acceptable to power-holders
- ▶ Promotes domination by top-down professional advocacy groups
- ▶ More concerned with organization’s status than the goal of their social movement
- ▶ Identifies more with powerholders than with grassroots
- ▶ Does not like paradigm shifts

Rebel

EFFECTIVE

- ▶ Protests: says “no!” to violations of positive American values
- ▶ Employs nonviolent direct action and attitude, including civil disobedience
- ▶ Targets power-holders and institutions
- ▶ Puts problems & policies in public spotlight
- ▶ Uses strategy as well as tactics
- ▶ Does work that is courageous, exciting, risky
- ▶ Shows in behavior the moral superiority of movement values

INEFFECTIVE

- ▶ Promotes anti-leadership, anti-organization rules and structure
- ▶ Attached to an identity as lonely voice on society’s fringe
- ▶ Uses tactics without realistic strategy
- ▶ Has victim attitude, behavior: angry, judgmental, dogmatic
- ▶ Uses rhetoric of self-righteousness, absolute truth, moral superiority
- ▶ Can be strident: personal upset more important than movement’s needs

Change Agent

EFFECTIVE

- ▶ Believes in people power: builds mass-based grassroots groups, networks
- ▶ Nurtures growth of natural leaders
- ▶ Chooses strategies for long-term movement development rather than focusing only on immediate demands
- ▶ Uses training to build skills, democratize decisions, diversify and broaden organization and coalitions
- ▶ Promotes alternatives and paradigm shifts

INEFFECTIVE

- ▶ Has tunnel vision: advocates single approach while opposing those doing all others
- ▶ Promotes patriarchal leadership styles
- ▶ Promotes only minor reform
- ▶ Stifles emergence of diversity and ignores needs of activists
- ▶ Promotes visions of perfection cut off from practical political and social struggle

From Bill Moyer’s Doing Democracy

