

# PAMPHLET 28

## MOVEMENTS

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In the article *Divided No More* Parker J. Palmer distinguished between an organizational and a movement approach to change. Each method has its appropriate applications and often a symbiotic relationship between the two will order the chaos of transformation.

In our organizations we are most familiar with the organizational approach to change: a top-down, mandated, mechanical, bureaucratic effort to control the direction of the enterprise. With the paternalistic approach a few dominant personalities and their rules, beliefs, and relationships define the limits within which change must occur.

Change (or the illusion of change) takes place and goals are achieved by a rearrangement of the power of the organization. Resistance is overcome and resistors are punished. Fragile innovation is often overwhelmed and molded to fit and repeat a past already lived.

The new usually isn't new--it just looks different. Those interested in true change are left disillusioned and marginalized. The repeated cycle of promised change, frenetic activity, and disappointment may perversely satisfy some in power. They blame employees and feel self-righteously superior. This cycle can also be comfortable for employees fearful of taking responsibility for the creation of new ways of working together. They blame those more powerful than they and feel cynically superior. In the end, fear wins and all lose. The organizational approach to change does not fit the movement sensibilities of the times in which we live when a dynamic reordering of life is taking place.

The movement way begins when a repressed need awakens, chooses

courage, is energized from within, and surges forward without regard for artificial boundaries. The movement's creative energy rises,

relationships are formed, connections made, and information exchanged. The movement grows and self-organizes around an inspiring identity, and, in the process, rewrites the rules of life.

Resistance from the dominant culture validates the need for change and strengthens the resolve of the movement's members. The black liberation movement and the woman's movement would have died quick deaths if early leaders allowed their opponents to define the rules of engagement. The alcoholic's anonymous movement, inspired by the vision of one lost and hopeless drunk, would not have begun if the belief that alcoholics were doomed had not been resisted.

Parker Palmer described four stages in the unfolding of a movement:

1. Isolated people choose authenticity.
2. These people discover each other and connect for mutual support.
3. Empowered by their collective energy, they learn to translate private dilemmas into public issues.
4. New reward systems emerge to sustain the movement's vision.

A movement begins when a person chooses authenticity over compliance. We are familiar with the dramatic examples: Rosa Parks felt scared that day in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, but she said no. She wouldn't stand so a white person could sit. Her feet were tired. Her soul was tired. She had endured enough. She would no longer live a divided life. She would not collaborate any longer with those who denied her humanity. She didn't care what they did to her. She stayed seated. And a movement began.

Bill Wilson was a hopeless, defeated, and hospitalized alcoholic facing imminent death. His elemental need to live rose from the deepest depths of his soul. He had a powerful spiritual experience that reordered his psyche. He never drank alcohol again, and began, from that place of despair, a movement that is worldwide and has saved unknown millions of lives. These and others are dramatic stories, but movements do not require heroes, celebrities, or identified leaders.

We know, in our lives, what this choice of authenticity means. In organizational life we often choose to comply, be politically correct, or say what the other person wants to hear instead of telling our truth. One day we see how we collude with this dynamic that denies our soul. When this aspect of the human condition becomes intolerable for us we make a deeply personal decision and claim our truth. No punishment for our authenticity can be worse than the punishment that results from conspiring in the denial of our own humanity. Our authenticity will no longer be denied, and we join or begin a movement. As these inner decisions are made from person to person, across organizations and continents, tremendous energy is generated. Change from the inside out begins.

The second stage of a movement begins when these lonely, solitary people, who fear they are crazy, find one another, connect, and provide mutual support. These relationships help us realize that we are not crazy--seeking integrity is always sane. In the organizational world we see these relationships formed at conferences, in discussion groups, and on the internet. (I see less of this connection within organizations themselves where trust is low and fragmentation high.) What is common in these groups and discussions is the energy, the honesty, the mutual support, the feelings of community, and an emerging worldview that feels real.

The third stage of a movement begins when private concerns become public issues. People find language for their insights and emotions. They see the interconnectedness with what they believed were personal matters with large and systemic public issues. Going public is to put one's authenticity and beliefs into the mix of public discourse.

In the organizational setting people speak to small groups for little or no payment, people give support and share experience via the internet for no cost, people share their thoughts via essays and pamphlets. People meet and talk over coffee and go out of their way to help and support others. Names are passed around and connections are made. People do not fight the dominant world view; they abandon it. Change happens one conversation at a time, and the learning and language begin to permeate the social, cultural, and philosophical systems. People begin to live what they believe and bring congruence between their inner and outer lives. Movement members realize the insanity is in the dominant system, not in themselves.

As a movement evolves people are first rewarded by the emotional

satisfaction of living their values, the joy of creation, the mutual support and affirmation of others, and the excitement of being part of something greater than themselves. But the rewards for new ideas and new behavior must become tangible. This is the only way for the movement to be kept alive, viable, and sustainable. This is the fourth stage of a movement.

Members of movements hire one another. They buy one another's books and other publications. Work not found in the traditional organization is formalized in the movement itself. Those who work within organizations create space for movement work within their enterprises. Tangible rewards for movement members seed the dominant culture and establish, formalize, and institutionalize the movement itself. Gradually the dominant culture will embrace the movement and they will transform symbiotically.

The planet is in the early stages of many simultaneous movements. Technology connects people globally in a new and powerful way. Together the movements form a whole and will bring forth a world vastly different than today. All people, organizations, and institutions are impacted by these global dynamics. None are unique; this is about the human condition and transcends the fragmented subject matter of bounded institutions.

The stages of a movement overlap and emphasis shifts back and forth between stages as the whole of the movement moves forward unstoppably. Each of us is in a slightly different place in the movement positioned to make our unique and authentic contributions. If we are mindful of the stages, we can take responsible actions and accelerate the movement's emergence.

What have we done today to keep the movement toward authenticity, truth telling, and a new, living worldview alive and creative?

**RECOMMENDED READING:** "Divided No More: A Movement Approach to Educational Reform." Parker J. Palmer. Change Magazine. March/April, 1992.

Beyond Civilization: Humanity's Next Great Adventure by Daniel Quinn.

**RECOMMENDED WEBSITE:** <http://www.winwinworld.net>