

What is power?



Different types of power:

Physical power



There are numerous forms of power, including (but not limited to) economic, technical, and military power. There is also the power of tradition, knowledge, persuasion, etc.

Different types of power:

Productive (economic) power



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Different types of power:

Disruptive power



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Different types of power:

Money power



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Different types of power:

Military force (coercion)



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Different types of power:

Persuasion



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Social power



The power to influence people and events, which stems from organized people using persuasion and (generally, but not exclusively nonviolent) social pressure.

Political power =
Legitimacy + coercion



The decisive means for politics is
violence.

— *Max Weber* —

AZ QUOTES



The capitalist system already uses force on us every day, and keeps us in line through the threat of force. For what ends? Primarily, for the purposes of protecting private property.

Is there a just use of power?



"Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Power allows us to advance our interests and protect our values



All power to the people



The people are the power: A relationship-centric approach to power



“In all times, and in all places, the only force which has transformed society has been the power of lots and lots of organized people.” (Xavier Hansen)

Social power stems from relationships between people



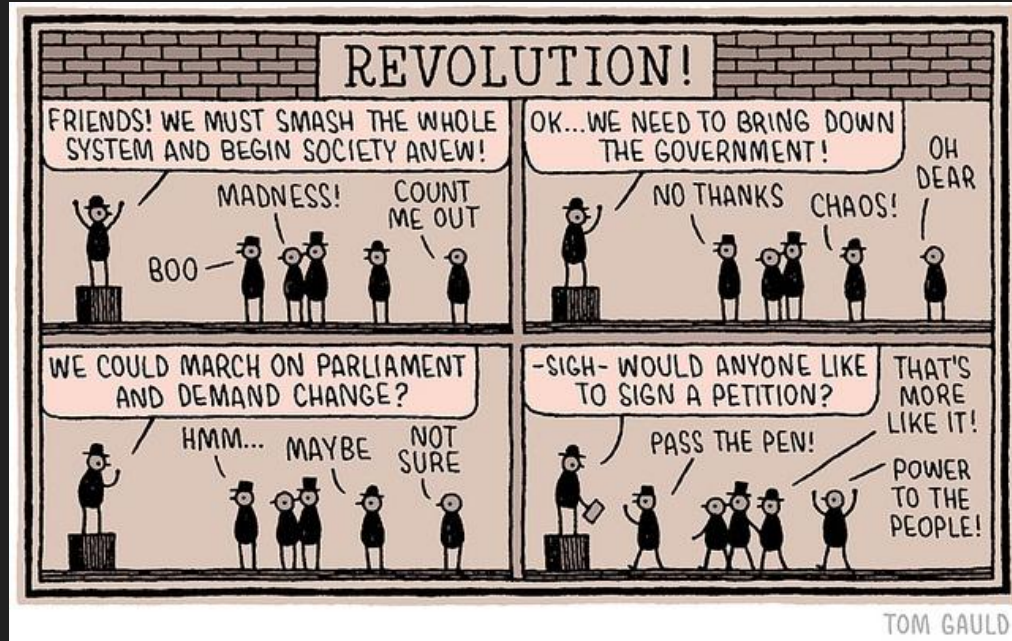
“Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.” — Karl Marx

The purpose of organizing is to build social power



"Organizing means building strong, lasting relationships between people based on concrete political work and shared values."

If you're not organizing, you're doing it wrong!



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Reformist conceptions of power: Tunnel vision on issues and laws



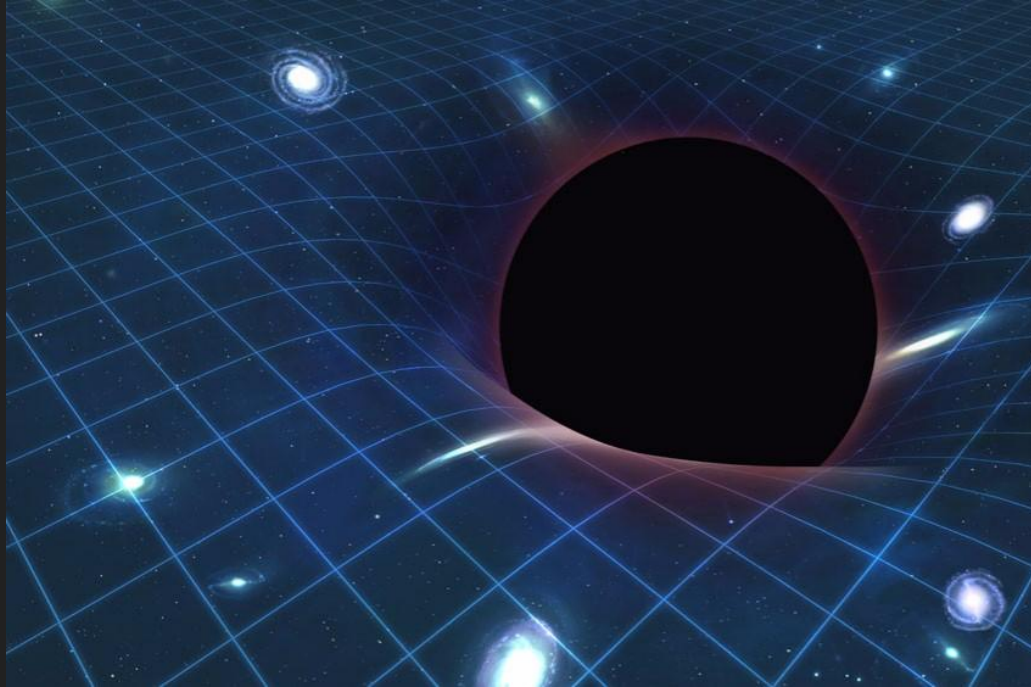
A party's connection with the masses is more important than any concession we can win

Base-building: Constituencies are more important than “issues”



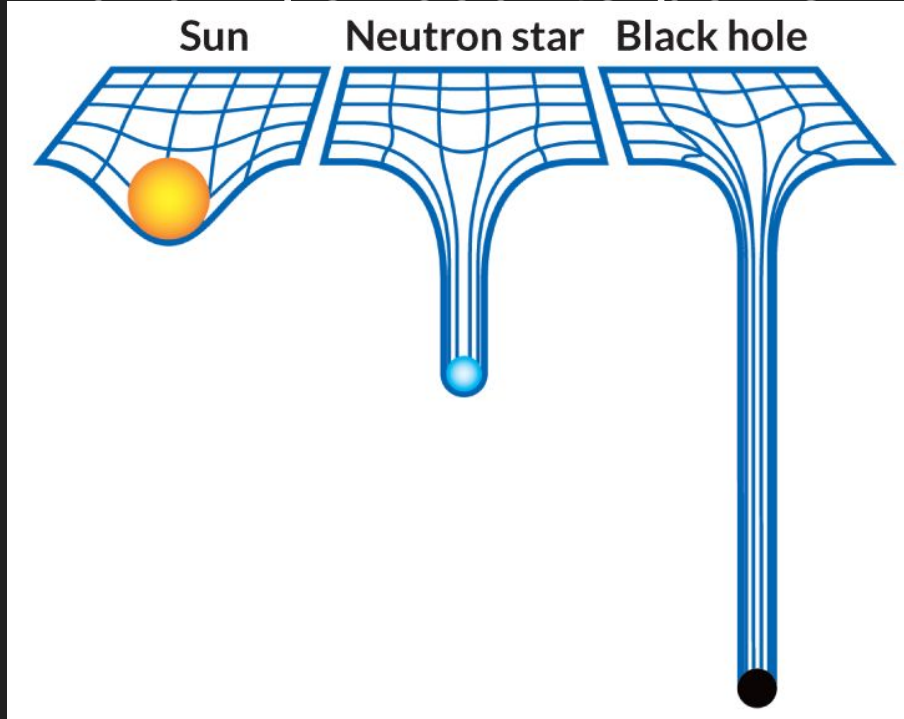
Ella Baker -- “Who are your people?”

Revolutionary strategy: Building a “counterpower”



When people organize and develop relationships, they build and consolidate a “counterpower,” a dense and growing social network which increasingly bends the system until it overcomes it.

Revolutionary strategy: Building a “counterpower”

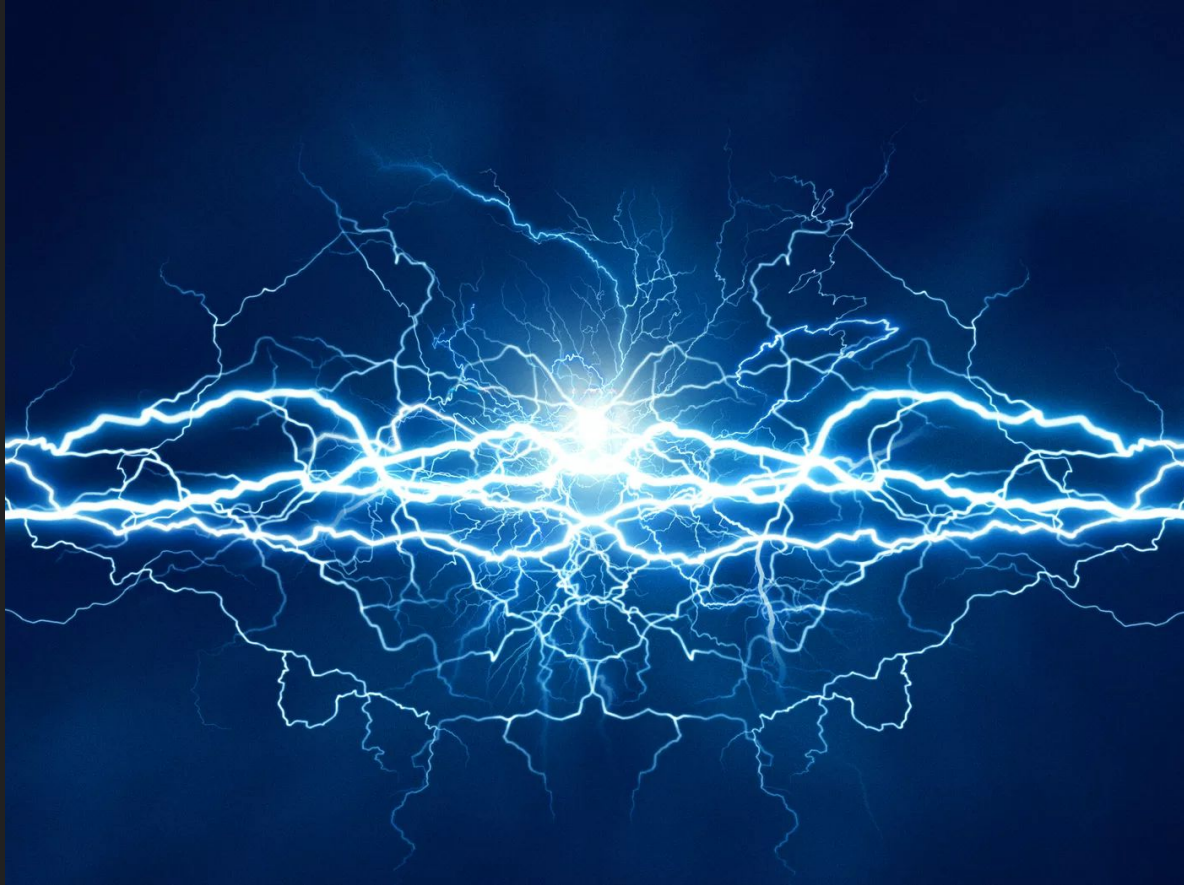


The transformation bends the "rules" of the system — what is possible and what's allowed — just as mass bends space in the universe. The more mass, the more bending.

Our strategy:
Building a revolutionary party over 40 years by
organizing the unorganized



Break



All reactionaries are paper tigers



“Strategically, with regard to the whole, revolutionaries must despise the enemy, dare to struggle against him and dare to seize victory; at the same time, tactically, with regard to each part, each specific struggle, they must take the enemy seriously, be prudent, carefully study and perfect the art of struggle and adopt forms of struggle suited to different times, places and conditions in order to isolate and wipe out the enemy step by step.”

All reactionaries are paper tigers



Imperialism and all reactionaries have a dual nature -- they are real tigers and paper tigers at the same time. In past history, before they won state power and for some time afterwards, the slave-owning class, the feudal landlord class and the bourgeoisie were vigorous, revolutionary and progressive; they were real tigers.

All reactionaries are paper tigers



But with the lapse of time, because their opposites -- the slave class, the peasant class and the proletariat -- grew in strength step by step, struggled against them and became more and more formidable, these ruling classes changed step by step into the reverse, changed into reactionaries, changed into backward people, changed into paper tigers. And eventually they were overthrown, or will be overthrown, by the people.

All reactionaries are paper tigers



The reactionary, backward, decaying classes retained this dual nature even in their last life-and-death struggles against the people. On the one hand, they were real tigers; they ate people, ate people by the millions and tens of millions...

All reactionaries are paper tigers



Imperialism and all reactionaries, looked at in essence, from a long-term point of view, from a strategic point of view, must be seen for what they are -- paper tigers. On this we should build our strategic thinking. On the other hand, they are also living tigers, iron tigers, real tigers which can eat people. On this we should build our tactical thinking.

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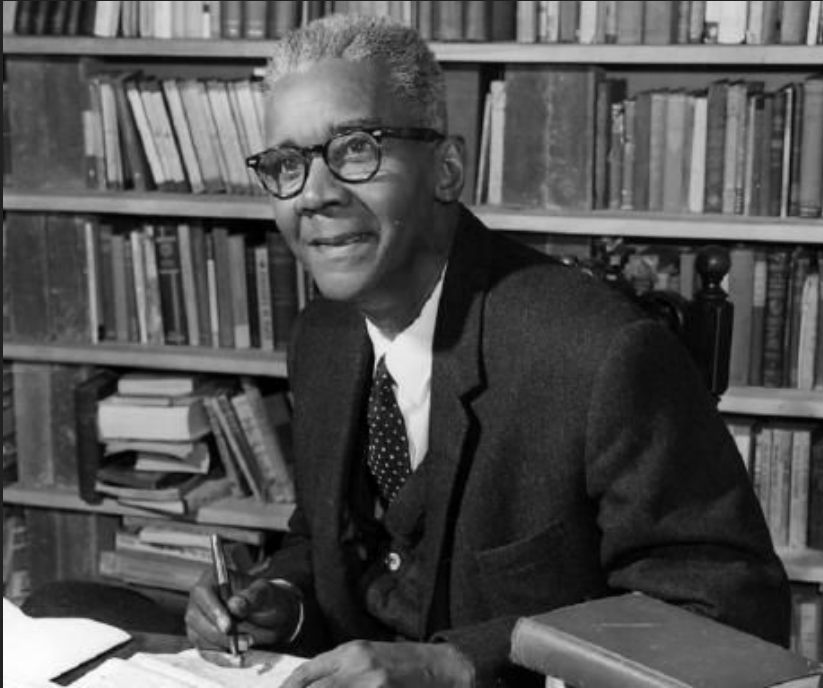
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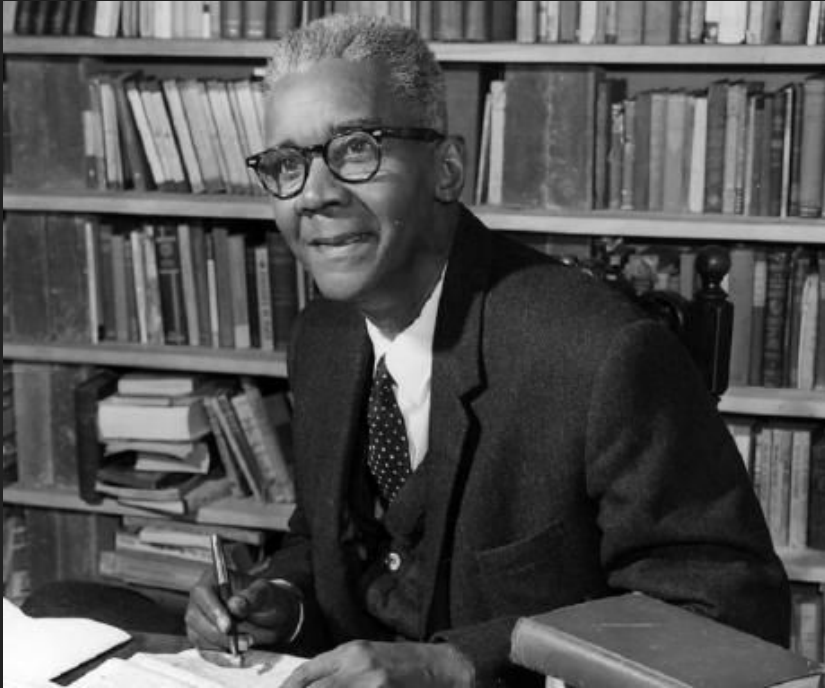


All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance, the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful. From a long-term point of view, it is not the reactionaries but the people who are really powerful.

C.L.R. James & Walter Rodney



C.L.R. James



- Trinidadian historian
- Author of *Black Jacobins*, *World Revolution*, *Minty Alley*, *Beyond a Boundary...*
- Black socialist intellectual
- Author of this piece!

Walter Rodney

- Guyanese historian
- Founder of the “Working People’s Alliance,”
- Black socialist revolutionary
- Assassinated by the Guyanese government in 1980



Walter Rodney and the Question of Power



Walter had not studied the taking of power. I am going to emphasize that because you have to do that. The taking of power has to become the common discussion among the Caribbean people and intellectuals so that all will know it; so that, as young people grow up and develop and begin to look at history, they begin to see not only what has been done to us, but what we have done, what we have achieved, and what we have to do. You begin to talk and to think about the taking of power, because that is what faces you now. I am serious about it. Some of you may think I am too serious about it. Let that be. History will decide.

Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

You cannot depend upon a party to seize the power. Not upon a party, “But upon the advanced class.”

What does this mean *to you*?

What is “the power”?

What is the role of revolutionary organizations, if not seizing power?

Who is the advanced class - how do they seize power?

Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

Three Points of an insurrection:

Firstly, there must be a clash, a revolutionary upsurge of the people.

Then, secondly, there must be a turning point, when the activity of the advanced ranks is at its height

Thirdly, the enemy must be vacillation

Why is this important?

Are there any moments (in history, in your experience) where we've seen all three?

When?

Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

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Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

A revolution is made with arms, but a revolution is made by the revolutionary spirit of the great mass of the population. And you have to wait for that. Lenin in 1917 in January did not know that it was coming two or three months afterwards in Russia. You have to wait. You do not know. There is no calculation. It comes, as Marx says, like a thief in the night. So you had better be ready. Walter saw that his WPA had many good things about it, but he realized that Burnham was ready with the police and the army. He had them to use against the revolutionary movement and against the people. And Walter became too nervous, too anxious about it. He did not wait for the revolutionary people and the revolutionary class to be in conflict with the government before he could start the question of the insurrection.

Josh's Favorite Quote From This Reading ;)

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**Revolutionary risk-taking - when you don't have power,
you can face intense retaliation at the hands of those
who do.**

Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

I hope somebody will make it his business to write a thesis on what happened in the Guyana revolution and the death of Walter Rodney, which is not just the death of a singular and remarkable individual. It is a whole political problem that is involved there, and I would like you to work at it that way.

Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

Building Power/Organizing

- Meeting people one-on-one
- Holding meetings about an issue
- Canvassing
- Political education/learning
- (Some) Protesting/Agitational Propaganda
- Jail Support

Using Power

- Strikes
- Shutting down eviction courts
- Blocking highways
- Burning police stations
-
- (Other) Protesting

Taking Power

- Revolutionary takeover of society
- Liberating prisons
- Socializing grocery stores
- Forming effective counter-government
- Etc...

Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

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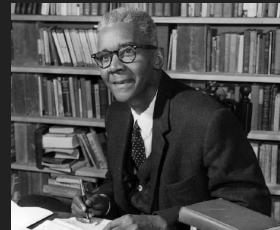


Using Power

- Strikes
- Shutting down eviction courts
- Blocking highways
- Burning police stations
- (Other) Protesting

Taking Power

“You cannot link the taking of power to organization in the sense that is at the back of many people’s minds, that is the question of the party. Lenin said specifically, not the party.”



Walter Rodney and the Question of Power

Breakouts!!

- How do we know when it's time to act?
- What can we do in times of unrest to seize power?
- What should our organizations be doing in these times (or even right now)?