

# COMMUNITY ORGANIZING & SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN CHANGING TIMES

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# Before There Were Other Forms of Professional Social Work...

There was Community  
Organizing &  
Social Activism

# Origins & Purposes of CO

- ▣ Community Survival & Protection
- ▣ Mutual Aid & Self-Help
- ▣ Community Building & Maintenance
- ▣ Social/Political Change: Advocacy & Reform

## Key Elements:

- ▣ Different Forms in Different Cultural Contexts
- ▣ Means of Protection Against State, Eco Forces
- ▣ Major Role Played by Churches & Other Orgs.

# Different Patterns of CO

- ▣ Geography: Neighborhood or Region  
(e.g., local community associations in Baltimore)
- ▣ Identity: Based on common religion, race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, or occupation  
(e.g., NAACP, Catholic Charities, NOW, unions)
- ▣ Issues: Those affecting community directly & about which it was concerned (e.g., child labor)
- ▣ Ideology: Secular & Religious (Social Gospel)

# Impact of CO on Social Work

- ▣ Spurred development of unique roles for non-profit organizations in U.S. society:
  - Complementary, Supplementary & Adversarial
- ▣ Evolved into three (3) overlapping models:
  - Community/Locality Development (e.g., SECO)
  - Social/Community Planning (e.g., United Way)
  - Social Action & Advocacy (e.g., ACORN, United Workers, Welfare Advocates)

# Key Periods in Evolution of CO

- ▣ **Progressive Era (~1880s-World War I)**
- ▣ **Depression/New Deal (1930s & 1940s)**
- ▣ **War on Poverty/Great Society (~1960-1975)**
- ▣ **Reagan/Bush/Clinton Years (1980-2008)**
- ▣ **Today**

# Progressive Era

- ▣ Formal Systems of Helping: Public & Nonprofit
- ▣ Mutual Aid & Self-Help (e.g., for immigrants)
- ▣ Increased awareness of poverty, child welfare issues, factory conditions, public health needs
- ▣ Assisted in organizing labor unions esp for women
- ▣ Advocacy for specific reforms: child labor, occupational safety, mothers' pensions
- ▣ Advocacy for civil rights: NAACP, anti-lynching campaigns, women's suffrage, immigration reform
- ▣ Advocacy for peace & anti-militarism

# Depression/New Deal Era

- ▣ Contributions of Harry Hopkins, Frances Perkins, & many women in FDR's Administration (relief, jobs, SS, labor rights)
- ▣ Neighborhood-Based Organizing (Alinsky)
- ▣ Impact of Rank & File Movement & Its Leaders
- ▣ Growth of Social Work Unions & Link to CIO
- ▣ Participation in Civil Rights Movement
- ▣ Concern Over International Issues (Fascism)
- ▣ Creation of Vital Services During/After WW II

# War on Poverty/Great Society

- ▣ Promoted Awareness of Extent & Multiple Dimensions of Poverty in the U.S. (MFY)
- ▣ Key Roles in Kennedy/Johnson Administration
- ▣ Policy Advances: SS Amendments, Medicare & Medicaid, Older Americans Act, Eco Opp. Act
- ▣ Work with Community Action Programs
- ▣ Work with NWRO, United Farm Workers, civil rights & peace/anti-war groups
- ▣ Creation of neighborhood organizations

# Reagan-Bush-Clinton Years

- ▣ Defensive Strategies to protect social welfare
- ▣ Promoted Awareness of Emerging Issues: e.g., AIDS/HIV, domestic violence, immigrants' and refugees' needs, homelessness, community mental health, international human rights
- ▣ Greater role of identity-based organizations
- ▣ Emergence of new issues leads to creation of new organizational forms & types of tactics
- ▣ Growing involvement in electoral politics

# And Today ...

- ▣ Growing Awareness of Local/Global Linkages
- ▣ Multicultural and Cross-National Coalitions
- ▣ Emerging Issues: Environment, Global Poverty, Civil Conflict, Trafficking, Economic Crisis
- ▣ Use of New Technologies & Their Implications
- ▣ Impact of 2008 Election & Its Implications

# Underlying Assumptions

- ▣ Role of Government in U.S. Society
- ▣ Homogeneity/Diversity of People Organized
- ▣ Nature of U.S. Economy and Ability of CO to Change It or Have Impact on Its Consequences
- ▣ Singularity or Complexity of Issues
- ▣ Local-Regional-National-International Focus
- ▣ Link to Social Movements/Other Organizations: How? For What Purposes?

**Key Q**: Are these assumptions valid in the 21<sup>st</sup> C?

# PART 2.

## CO & SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

What can scholarship on social movements tell us about working for social change during the Obama Administration?

# Today's Discussion

- Identify ways in which social movement activity has changed during the last century or so – “institutionalization”.
- Highlight an enduring debate about tactical efficacy.
- Examine social work's role in movements for change.
- Identify the various roles social workers can play in the current political context.

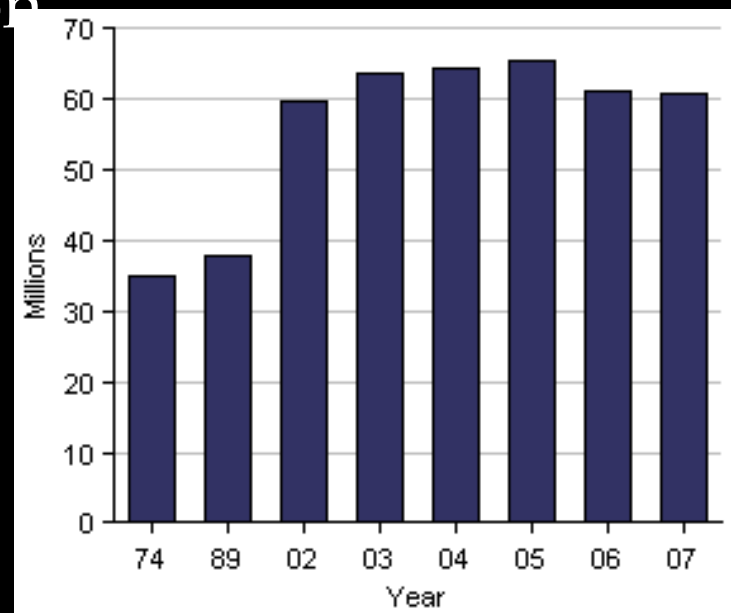
# Movement Trends

## (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998)

- Increase in contentious activity overall – “insiders” (interest groups, political parties, NGOs, human service organizations) are more willing to use advocacy and protest tactics
- Increases are greatest for the least contentious forms of collective action (lobbying, petitions, litigation, peaceful rallies/marches)
- Decrease in acceptance for highly disruptive civil disobedience or violence
- Rapid diffusion of protest tactics and symbols (media)
- Technology – rapid mobilization, virtual organizing

# Institutionalization & Professionalization

- Professional movement organizers/organizations
- NGO – “advocacy explosion”
- Consensus Organizing



# Protest Routinization

(McCarthy & McPhail, 1998)

**Public order management systems (POMS)** -highly planned interactions between police and protesters and a shift from “escalated force” to “negotiated management policing”

- Police are guardians of protesters’ right of assembly
- Use of protest “marshals” and police trainings for protesters
- Pre-negotiated arrests
- Advance permitting
- Time restriction - not during rush-hour
- Place restrictions – not at white house

# Loss of Novelty/Impact

“By informing police of planned challenges to the law – even asking lawbreakers to identify themselves with armbands – and agreeing to eschew violence, activists can make the experience of breaking the law safe and predictable. Police know what to expect, lay on stretchers and buses, and inform demonstrators how to avoid being hurt while they are carried off to be booked. Everyone can get home by the end of the day to observe the event on the evening news.” (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998, p. 24)

I DON'T HAVE OH, YES, SOR  
ALL DAY. YOU RY. I'LL BE  
WANT TO BE PASSIVELY  
ARRESTED OR RESISTING.  
/ NOT? /

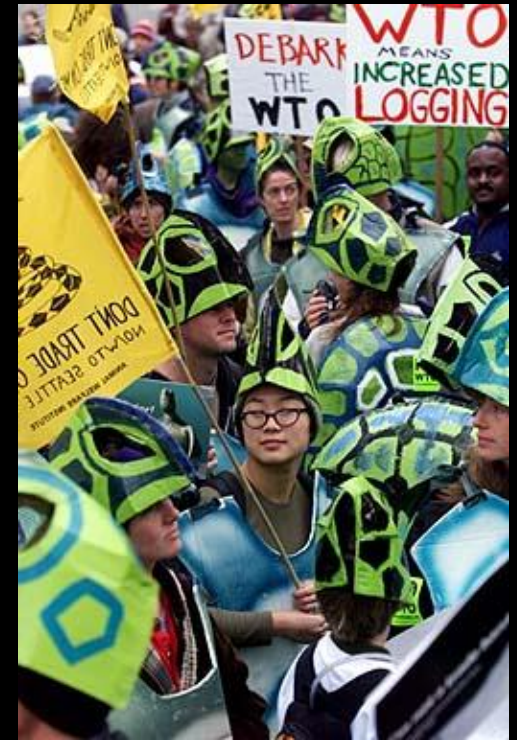


# Radicalization



# Fair Globalization Movement

“The traditional protest- the march, the rally, the chants – is just bad theatre” p. 155 (Boyd,2002)



“One of its greatest strengths – its plural character – is also one of its weaknesses” (Boyd, 2002, p. 156)



# Tactical Efficacy

- **Gamson (1975)**
  - “Unruly” groups – those that use violence or radical action have better than average success (recognition and advantages).
  - It is the “spice and not the meat and potatoes” – they use it in addition to nonviolent tactics.
- **Fording (1997; 2001) Civil rights riots**
  - Elite response in cities with a strong black voting block was to increase public benefits.
  - Elite response in cities with a weak black voting block favored incarceration.

# Radical Flank Effect

- A movement stands to benefit when there is a wide ideological spectrum among its adherents. The basic reason for this seems to be that the existence of radicals makes moderate groups in the movement more attractive negotiating partners to the movement opponents. Radicalness provides strong incentives to the state to get to the bargaining table with the moderates in order to avoid dealing with the radicals. In addition, financial support flowing to moderate groups in the movement increases dramatically in the presence of radicals (McAdam, 1992).

# Where are social workers?

- ▣ Some radical members/moments (Suffrage, Anti-war, Rank and File, NWRO).



Andrew Cloward and Frances Fox Piven

# Increasing Emphasis on Political Intervention

- CSWE – EPAS - “to pursue policies, services and resources through advocacy and social or political actions that promote social and economic justice” (CSWE, 2001, p. 4).
- NASW
  - 1971 Education and Legislative Action Network (ELAN)
  - 1976 Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE)
  - Social Work Reinvestment Act
- Increasing participation in electoral politics (Over 200 social workers in state and local offices in 2008; 2 in Senate; 6 in House)
- Social workers are more politically active than the general public (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Parker & Sherraden, 1991)

# Limited Education and Social Action

- 1996 survey of BSW and MSW programs (Wolk et al., 1996)
  - fewer than 20% of Bachelor programs and fewer than 50% of Master programs nationally provided practica on government relations, electoral politics, and policy advocacy
- 1998 survey social work 513 health care leaders (Domanski, 1998)
  - Over 90%: voted, talked about social and policy issues with their colleagues, families, and friends, and provided advocacy services to clients
  - Only 13% testified at public or congressional hearings
  - Less than 10% engaged in protest activities

# Current Context: Recipe for Resistance

- Depression conditions – Dominant ideology shifting?
- Tuesday Group - Framing/ Branding
- Youth mobilization – Obama campaign; Campus Compact and “Generation-S”; Young social workers
- Technology – mobilization and diffusion

## Political Opportunities: Funding and Allies

- White House Office of Social Innovation (civic engagement, volunteerism, activism)
- Serve America Act (education core, healthcare core, clean energy core, veterans’ core)
- Social Investment Fund (Replicate innovative programs; Combine public and private funds)

# Individual Roles in Movements

(Moyer, 2001)

- ▣ Citizen - an informed voter who legitimates the movement
- ▣ Change agent – nurtures grassroots mobilizing at local, state and national levels
- ▣ Reformer - political insider; lobbies, educates clients, electoral campaigns
- ▣ Rebel – reframes public discourse on social problems and engages in “outsider” tactics

# Questions for Discussion

- What level of radical behavior are we likely to see among progressive movements?
- What level of participation in radical actions, if any, will we see by social workers?

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Part 3: New Opportunities/  
Directions under the Obama  
Administration

# Joke:

- ▣ Question: How many stockbrokers does it take to change a light bulb?
- ▣ Answer: Two : One to remove the light bulb and drop it – and one to sell it before it crashes.

# I. The Economic Global Crisis

## ▣ A. Origins ([www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org))

1. Around the world, stock markets have fallen, large financial institutions have collapsed or been bought out, and governments in even the wealthiest nations have come up with bailout packages
2. Cause: “Casino capitalism”: the “betting” of practically anything helped create enormous sums of money out of almost nothing.
3. Unbelievably, \$14.5 trillion, or about 33% of the value of the world’s companies, have been wiped out by the crisis.
  - a. U.S. GDP only \$13.8 trillion
  - b. TOTAL of all U.S. mortgages \$10.5 trillion.
  - c. Will spend 9.7 trillion on the U.S. bailout

# Origins cont'd

## B. Bottom Line

1. Wall Street polluted our economy with toxic mortgages; it should pay for cleanup.

2. The socialization of costs with the privatization of profits

Shouldn't the bailout have helped people with failing mortgages, not the banks?

# Origins cont'd

## ▣ C. Effect on Rest Developed & Developing World

1. Iceland virtually collapsed
2. Rising food prices and unrest in the developing world
3. Europe and U.K. nationalizing banks
4. U.S. status decline – China emerging as new superpower?!

# Origins cont'd

## ▣ D. Globalization

1. Raises fundamental questions about globalization
2. America's failures spreading around the world
3. Poor countries will probably suffer the worst
4. Need to rethink international financial system.
  - a. Reform World Bank and IMF
  - b. Expand G7/8 to G 20, at least

## II. U.S. Response to “Economic Meltdown”

- ▣ A. First Economic Stimulus Package (Bush)
  1. Feb. 2008 – Emergency Economic Stabilization Act
    - a. \$168 billion over two years
    - b. Tax rebates to 128 million
  2. Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP)
    - \$700 billion to purchase distressed assets and infuse capital into banks

# Response cont'd

- ▣ B. Second Economic Stimulus Package (Obama)
  1. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act - \$787 billion
    - a. About 1/3 tax cuts (\$275 billion to 95% of filers)
    - b. \$550 billion new spending

# Response cont'd

- ▣ C. Things for Social Workers to Be Aware of
  1. \$87 billion Medicaid aid to states
  2. \$24 billion health information technology
  3. \$5.1 billion for community development grants to states and cities:
    - a. \$4.2 billion for Neighborhood Stabilization to help communities purchase and rehab foreclosed, vacant properties and to create more affordable housing and decrease neighborhood blight;
    - b. \$1 billion for CDBG grants

# Response Cont'd

4. \$4.4 billion for employment and training programs
5. \$200 million for AmericaCorps program to put 16,000 additional people to work doing national service

# Response Cont'd

## ▣ D. 2009-10 Budget

1. \$410 billion through this fiscal year
  - a. Universal Voluntary Citizen Service: Americorps from 75,000 to 225,000 slots
  - b. Expand service learning in schools
  - c. Social Investment Fund Network
  - d. Social Entrepreneurship Agency for Nonprofits
2. Over time, the above components of the new “National Service Plan” will cost \$3.5 billion

# III. National, State & Local Examples

## ▣ A. YouthBuild

1. Stimulus bill includes \$50 million
2. 2010 budget expand it from 8,000 to 50,000 young people annually

## B. Promise Zones

1. About 10 across the country
2. Modeled after Harlem Children's Zone
3. Baltimore high on list

# Examples cont'd

- ▣ C. ACORN's Anti-Foreclosure Campaigns
  1. Dozens cities across the country
  2. Six-month moratorium on foreclosures
  3. Moving people back into their foreclosed homes; risk CD and arrests

# IV. Conclusions

## ▣ A. Historical – FDIC (Great Depression)

1. U.S. government corporation created by Glass-Steagall Act of 1933
2. Provides deposit insurance, guaranteeing safety of individual deposits in member banks up to \$250,000

## **B. Current Ideas**

1. Home price insurance
  - a. Issue insurance policies to protect home if they lose their value
  - b. Uncle Sam would offer
  - c. “If you want to restart home sales, you have to deal with the biggest factor impacting sales today, which is the erosion of home values”
  - d. Cost: \$20 to \$50 billion

# Conclusion cont'd

- ▣ C. New idea: Retirement fund insurance