

## TO BUILD THE NOC WE NEED "SPIRIT POWER"

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We know that the current objective situation is ripe for a spontaneous revolutionary movement. This is the new quality that has been discussed in Rally Comrades for several years (especially see the articles in Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution by Nelson Peery). At present, people are coming forward in struggle after struggle by ones, fives, and tens. Peoples are reaching out to the NOC, mainly through the press, in search of organization and a higher quality of united action. We are confident that people fighting for justice and economic security will come forward in waves, by tens and even hundreds. The NOC must prepare for rapid growth.

As the NOC has quantitative expansion it is important that attention is paid to the qualitative transformation of new members. On the one hand there is a need to consolidate new members through political education that begins with the NOC program, is rooted in the summation of our practical struggles, and guided by programmatic agitation. This is the rational side of the equation, but there is another side. We have to bond with people and sustain them with emotional attachment, sustain them with the energy of our emerging revolutionary political culture. This can be summed up as "spirit power!" In fact, it is this very spirit, our emotional attachment and cultural energy, that can be the basis for the rebirth of experienced veterans as well. This is a new period and all of us need to be reborn as "born again revolutionaries!"

The history of every important movement fighting on behalf of the exploited and oppressed has harnessed the "spirit power" of their people to build, grow strong, and to march into battle. Group singing has always harnessed the "spirit power" of a group. The abolitionist sentiments contained in the song "John Browns Body" were taken up as the theme song of Black soldiers marching into battle during the Civil War. The theme song of the labor movement is "Solidarity Forever," of the civil rights movement it was "We Shall Overcome," and of the international communist movement it is "The Internationale."

Most of the songs of the protest movements in the US, especially the civil rights and trade union movements, have been taken from the church and rewritten to reflect the content of the movement. Movements also borrow songs from each other. The civil rights movement was able to harness the "spirit power" of the Black community and the entire population in part because it did this. The old church song "I'll Overcome Someday" had words like "I'll be all right...I'll be like Him...I'll wear the crown." It was first rewritten by Black textile workers, and eventually became "We Shall Overcome" with words like "We are not afraid...We are not alone...We'll walk hand in hand." Another example is how James Farmer took the labor song written by Florence Reece for the mine

workers "Which Side Are You On" and rewrote it for the civil rights movement. He put words like "Oh people can you stand it, tell me how you can, Will you be an Uncle Tom or will you be a man? Which side are you on boys, which side are you on?"

Spirit power is expressed in our collectivity, it is based on active cultural participation and not passive cultural consumption (a la television). In a forum only one person can speak, even on a panel. However, everyone can sing together, and when people sing together they can grow strong and can be reborn in the heat of the culturally based "spirit power" of the collective.

Another way that spirit power can be released is by people bearing witness through testifying. As people come forward they carry with them the psychological burden of their misery and suffering. The church has been very successful with using the testimonial as their way of allowing people to share their story, to unburden themselves, to bond with others who have been through similar experiences or who simply empathize. As we gather new forces we need to open our meetings up to their testimony, to their story of suffering and their rebirth in the struggle. Each story is our story and we need to tell each one over and over until we are bonded in the particularities of each other, and on that basis we respect each and every member of the NOC.

Another way that spirit power is generated concerns symbols of identity. Take articles of clothing for example. Fanon points out how in Algeria revolutionary women at first rejected traditional dress in their fight for gender equity, but when the French colonialists tried to destroy traditional dress the revolutionary women reversed their position in order to fight them. Everyone in the world can recognize the dress code of the Black Panther Party, the scarf of the Palestinian struggle, and now most recently the ski-masked warriors of the Zapatistas.

In sum our spirit power can be summed up as the emotional content of our collective identity, as the cultural glue that holds us together through symbols and rituals of membership in the movement, as the optimistic attitude that we will win regardless of the immediate odds we face, and finally, as the love we have for our fellow revolutionary fighters, our class, and all of humanity. Our spirit power is summoned and becomes a revolutionary weapon when we collectively express our spirit.

The NOC program presents a clear and rational understanding of how the emerging revolutionary motion is taking place. We need this weapon, but we need more. Consciousness must be ignited and sustained by our spirit power. We are giant killers come to challenged the cyclops of a decadent moribund system. We have to sing and use all other cultural practices that unleash our energy to heal us, bond us together, and stimulate the optimism and fearlessness that we need. Comrades, be creative, take our culture and transform it within the struggle! With our program and our spirit power nothing can stop us. Forward!