

❧ Welcome To The Beautiful Struggle! ❧

“I did not know then that this is what life is—just when you master the geometry of one world, it slips away, and suddenly again, you’re swarmed by strange shapes and impossible angles.” —Ta-Nehisi Coates

One of the consequences of living under a system of -isms and -ists is that there seems to be some injustice at every turn. Some of us have been intentionally lulled into reactive lifestyle instead of a proactive one while others of us bear the scars of battle internally and externally. As communities, usually marginalized in some way, it may seem difficult to think about the next twist or turn in the political games of power and hierarchies. When called to respond, we sometimes appear disorganized, chaotic, and not in control of our efforts. Our stress levels are high; we wonder which road to take and how far it will lead. We struggle to fight back in an effective way. Those who wish to maintain their power and control over us intentionally keep us confused, disoriented, and reactionary. We pose no threat to their power as long as we are solely reactionary.

On the other hand, our communities have had some great successes, mostly when we have adopted proactive and long-term commitments to struggle.

Proactive: serving to prepare for, intervene in, or control an expected occurrence or situation, especially a negative or difficult one; anticipatory

www.dictionary.com

¹ *Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood* is the title of journalist and activist Ta-Nehisi Coates’ 2009 bestselling memoir. Go get it. Read it. Enjoy it. Learn from it!

Examine the keywords in the definition of *proactive*: **intervene, prepare, expected, control** and **anticipatory**. These are very important words. To be proactive when faced with injustices, we must intervene in the situations that affect our lives, we must prepare ourselves and our organizations for success, we must expect a victory every time we organize, we must be in control of our responses, and to the best of our ability, we must anticipate our opponent's next move. Learning the major components of direct action activism and organizing is key!

Thinking about how we have responded to past social, political, or economic problems is a great place to begin, and it has the following advantages:

- (1) It helps us to identify what went well and what did not go well.
- (2) It creates a record. We can refer back to our records for future use. Also, those who will come after us may also use our records.

Hopefully you've already been part of some successful organizing or activism. If not, then that's ok too. Global injustices nearly guarantee that you'll have plenty of chances to get involved! Every now and then, it's important to evaluate how you or your organization have responded to challenges. Did you accomplish the goals you set? What changes did you notice? What would you do differently? Did you soar like an eagle or sink like the Titanic?

Evaluating past efforts can be a source of encouragement if we are willing to have open and honest discussions about our successes and failures. Successful activism and organizing requires practice, flexibility, and introspection. We must remain committed to revising our strategies and/or tactics and then get out there again!

Welcome to the beautiful struggle. Fasten your seatbelts; it's one heck of a ride!



Stop and Think

When was the last time you were involved in a social change event? Why did you get involved in the event? What was the goal of the event? Do you consider the event successful? What did you like about the event? What would you have done differently?