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TO: Leaders of Minnesota Alliance of Peace Makers (MAPM)

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RE: Some unsolicited and unrefined thoughts about organizing within the Peace and Justice (P&J) movement.

(This draft is intended to be shared. I'd like to hear suggested revisions, and feedback.)
These thoughts are simply observations. If only a single person picks up a single insight from this paper, I will be pleased. Frankly, if even one sentence of this piece makes you uncomfortable or even angry ("he doesn't understand", etc...), a main objective will have been accomplished - and a place for your personal reflection has been identified - because often those things which most anger us are close to the truth.

Briefly, about me: I am fairly new to the organized Peace & Justice movement, but very old to organizing - having spent most of a career in assorted full-time organizing endeavors with employees in various places/circumstances. I have not filled any leadership role in any P&J group, which has its own advantages and disadvantages in making observations. I do not know how the MAPM leadership umbrella operates or interacts internally. I view the P&J world from within the ranks. I am retired, a parent and grandparent, with deep concerns about the future of the world we are leaving behind to those who follow us..

A RECOMMENDATION (If not already being planned): There needs to be a "summit conference", soon, of all of the leaders of all of the organizations within MAPM to connect, reconnect and/or regroup, especially given events of the recent and coming months.

A major **CAUTION**: It is paradoxical but true that movements which grow too fast can easily implode and disappear, regardless of the legitimacy of the cause. The reasons are many: one of the primary is that the organizations have no mechanism in place to mediate and resolve conflicts between often-very strong-willed and intense people whose priorities differ.

Two reasonable objectives: 1) Resolve to set good roots first, rather than trying to create a tree without roots; and 2) acknowledge and deal with how to address the inevitable crises of internal conflict, which will happen, regardless of how "holy" the cause.

OBSERVATIONS for your consideration:

1. **We need to move beyond Discussion Societies**, where people of like-minds get together to lament how awful it is, whatever "it" happens to be. (See #7). The problem is that Discussions and Meetings by themselves have no impact; there needs to be engagement, including with people of unlike minds - through debate and deep listening to not only clarify arguments, but to tell our world that we exist as people with ideas...and openness to listen. . We have to take a very serious

look at what we are and what we stand for. Most important of all: Listening to others. As Stephen Covey teaches, "the secret of being understood is to understand." Marilyn Manson, the hard-rocker many parents and ministers love to hate, and who is often accused of being the root of teen violence, is asked, in the outstanding anti-violence movie, "Bowling for Columbine", what he would say to teenagers. His answer: "I would say nothing. I would listen to them." We can learn something from that. Having said this, there is a dilemma here, in that those in opposition seem to not be hindered by listening or hearing other points of view (see #2 - Ignorance). Still, we need to seek to understand, and listen, even if they won't.

2. **We need to redefine our notions of Weaknesses and Strengths** - we have to make our Weaknesses into Strengths, and the oppositions Strengths into Weaknesses. Too often, we try to play by the opponent's rules, and we almost always lose in this scenario. To illustrate, there are many different kinds of **POWER**: I can exert power over you if I am your Boss; or if I possess more Information than you do, and/or restrict your access to Information; or if I have more Money than you, or control your access to Money. You can make a long list of such "powers". Paradoxically, a great "power" many people exercise is the power of Ignorance: "I don't care what the facts are". What ordinary P&J people have, which they too seldom exercise confidently or effectively, is something called **REFERENT POWER** (think "personal reference", or the likeability factor.) If people like you, they will tend to follow you even if you don't have access to all of the money, or information or other non-Referent powers. Peace and Justice people by their nature are likeable and caring people, but we don't seem to exercise enough this major power. Rather we seem stuck in trying to play by the others rules, to their strengths, and on their court, which is self-defeating. We need to define the conversation more on our terms. Never forget, until it's repealed, our nation still operates under the rule of one person, one vote.
3. Directly related to #2, **we need to recognize the many "people" assets in our assorted "circles"** - family, friends, churches, etc., etc., etc. These folks are too often unrecognized and unacknowledged by us. Spend some time drawing your relationship circles. You might be surprised at how broad and truly rich your contacts and "referent" relationships are.
4. **We need to accept that people tend to gravitate to Power** - that's just how it is...it's played out all the time...we tend to move in the direction of whoever seems to be strongest. Few want to challenge the bully; the boss is the boss, etc., etc., etc. A friend says this: "remember - all the majority means is that most of the fools are on the same side at that moment. Of course, that can also be the case when you prevail." Again, see #2.
5. **We all need to lighten up!** Yes, our issues are critical, but we need to have some fun, too. There is an old organizing credo: "food, fun, family builds community". We can't be serious, all the time, especially when together.
6. **We need to broaden our vision of the value of communication**, even if it seems like it is going into the "round file". People in our circles are likely listening to us, even if they may say nothing in response. Politicians and journalists do read what is submitted, especially if it seems personal and is reasonable in length and not personally attacking. Sometimes a thought in a letter might appear in a column, an editorial, or even in a policy we never hear about. We need to think

- like National Geographic photographers: perhaps at best, one of 100 of their photos will actually see ink on the printed page. Especially we need to thank columnists and editorial writers and others who write or say good things, even if we don't agree 100% with their points. They're human too, and need acknowledgement...and get plenty of brickbats. ("Real" notes are great, and great writing practice besides).
7. **We need to deal constantly with the "Problem of Purity".** There are many branches to this P&J movement, niches, where groups of people flock together in a common cause, be it the issue of Colombia, Palestine, etc., etc., etc. All this is fine, but there seems to be too little sense of community between the organizations. A good definition of community: "Community means accepting that we belong together." There needs to be more than occasional rallies. We cannot afford to be fragmented. We must accept that we all can belong, equally, though our specific causes might differ. We need to come to consensus on what we all stand for, and then stand for that, respecting and valuing our different niches. We need to bring to this rag-tag bunch a sense that united we stand, divided we fall. MAPM leadership seems to have well sown the seeds of this unity, but it needs to actively and continuously percolate this idea through the ranks. After all, there are new participants joining this movement every day.
 8. **We need to change our collective liability of being "Peace-filled and Tolerant" into our greatest asset.** We are tolerant to a fault; the opposition is not bothered by this problem. We need to look at our positive tendency to be tolerant and how that trait might impede us. It is a great asset, but it can be a great liability. Turn this tendency over and look at it as a weakness, and then return it into our greatest strength.
 9. **We need to recognize that, in many ways, we are exactly like our adversary..."look in the mirror".** We of Peace and Justice and they of War and Survival of the Fittest are really identical twins in many ways. We simply see our issue precisely the opposite of them. Whatever we dislike about them, they dislike about us. Both Far Left and Right are fringe groups. It is likely that people in the middle dislike the same traits of both "sides". We need to learn about ourselves from observing how our opposites behave. We will never win them over, but we will better understand our own liabilities, which will help us more effectively work with the people in the middle - which is almost everyone.
 10. **We need to consider that our opponents seem to be more pragmatic in their idealism.** They will overlook many sins to achieve their goal; we seem to engage in negative campaigning, even against our allies. We expect purity (see #7). When President Jimmy Carter won the Nobel Peace Prize recently, people of both the left and the right were finding ways to diminish the huge accomplishment. We will gladly blame even our political friends because they were involved in some way in some things we disagree with. So, when President Clinton is involved in the NATO bombing of Kosovo and Serbia, we accuse him of the deed; likewise, the sanctions against Iraq, which didn't begin on Clinton's watch, and which would have been political suicide for him to end, become his fault as well. We seem to lack perspective on this, and this lack of perspective helps to diminish our effectiveness as advocates for positive change.
 11. **We must build staying power: if things go wrong,** as they always can, we seem to have more of a tendency to quit than the opposition. We need to ask over and

over "Do we want community? Do we accept that we all belong together?" If the answer is "yes", we need to dust ourselves off and act on our answer to these questions..

12. **We must overcome our tendency to "Fear of Success".** We can become so accustomed to being underdogs, that we have trouble knowing what to do if we are finally placed in power. This is by no means a frivolous concern. Subconsciously we may do things to assure our failure. People sabotage success all the time, because they aren't sure what personal cost success will bring. It is less "expensive" to complain about how badly someone else is doing the job, than to actually do the job. We need to overcome our Fear of Success.
13. **We need to recognize the grim reality that if you are about implementing change, almost invariably things will get worse before they get better.** There are lots of good reasons for this phenomenon. If you don't believe this, think of someone who has tried to quit an addiction, say smoking, whose demonstrated long term benefits far outweigh the short term costs (of months, and maybe a year or more). Most people don't succeed, because the change is very uncomfortable at first for lots of reasons. This is as true in a political movement as anything else. In fact, in a political movement it is even worse, because there can be a literal chorus of reasons why some strategy won't work. We need to be in this for the long haul.
14. **We need a long term Perspective.** We have to be able to plot our movement against previous movements which took time to jell. For example, the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements took years to develop, and didn't really jell until years after the defining moment. The Gulf of Tonkin resolution requested in 1964 by President Johnson and granted by Congress right away, was followed by a landslide victory by President Johnson in 1964, and it was almost three years before protests began to be noticed, and four years before they had an effect. By this measure alone, we are far, far ahead of the most recent protest movements.
15. **We need to measure our successes by inches rather than miles.** It's a long haul and not an event. We define success too grandly, often in terms that seem beyond our reach and leave us frustrated and angry. Better that we make a series of tiny moves forward, than seem to fail in making a big move. The big successes follow many small ones, almost always. Actually, we needn't measure anything but our commitment and our focus. The rest will take care of itself if we are correct. Remember always - we could be wrong! Remember also that the opposition will never admit we succeeded.
16. **We need to release ourselves from the need to be Perfect** - if it isn't done right, we don't do it. This especially applies to things like writing and speaking. Most (including the author of this paper) don't know all the rules, and tend to fear risking because of this. Truth be known, most people don't write (talk, etc) any better than we do, and aren't obsessed with errors, if they even noticed them! Give up the Fear! Write. Talk.
17. **We must not diminish our success.** There are many examples: one of the losing candidates in the recent Minnesota election, Walter Mondale, got 48% of the vote after only five days of campaigning and extremely heavy turnout. Under the most awful circumstances, he polled over 1,000,000 votes in Minnesota, and was completely true to Paul Wellstone's commitments, including the anti-war stand.

Yes, he lost, but 1,000,000 votes is 1,000,000 votes. We need to remember that, for example, that last fall, only 6% of America's adults protested the bombing of Afghanistan; many, many more are in that cohort now, and we need to celebrate this as a success, not a failure. Perhaps we have a fault of over-analyzing what votes mean - rather than accepting the results as they are and moving on. We really don't need to keep score at all. This is not a contest, it's a commitment. It's not about winning, it's about stating a set of principles - regardless of their popularity. A minority is correct first. We can only build to a majority when the time is right. Patience and persistence are the keys.

18. **We need to constantly reflect on our principles to make sure they are really what we stand for.** We must remember who we are and what we stand for - whether in or out of power.
19. **We need to share our wealth** - information, money, time, other resources, etc., so that we can all succeed. Especially we need to share our perspective in order to strengthen our resolve and clarify who we are and what we stand for.
20. **We need to acknowledge each others gifts and contributions constantly.** It is a simple reality, that even the most wonderful ideas from the ranks of subordinates (peasants) are rarely acknowledged and immediately implemented by the power structure. The process of adopting the changes is usually more delayed and covert, and credit is not given to those who caused the shift. Even MAPM has a "power structure", and needs to be very attentive to this characteristic of power.

A final point: the author of this modest paper had the great, and completely unintended, good fortune of growing within a movement which began as a group of essentially powerless small and isolated entities, which today is a large organization viewed by many as too powerful, recently meriting a long front-page "expose" in the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

It could be argued effectively that the collection of small, frustrated, groups of essentially powerless people one of whose locals I first joined in 1963, were actually more powerful - at least in their potential - than the resulting large and well-organized and highly visible organization of today. This is a major paradox in groups which has to be acknowledged and talked about: the more powerful and well organized you become, the less powerful you may be since the essential strength of the initial movement, the individual person, is replaced by consolidation of power and control to leaders, with highly sophisticated and well-funded strategies, etc. The huge potential loss is the energy and commitment of the little people like myself, who, after all, make the movement strong in the first place.

Best wishes for great success. Those who follow us need us to succeed.

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