

HANDOUT:

Transformative power

Power is also a positive and regenerative force for change that centres around an alternative ethic of caring and interdependence – personal, social, political, and organisational. It can be experienced as a sense of one’s dignity, empathy, and belonging and an ability to imagine alternatives to the status quo, and expressed in creative and collective work to forge a different path and make change happen.¹

- : *Power within*: self-worth and self-knowledge
- : Grounded in a belief in inherent human dignity, power within means self-esteem and the ability to challenge assumptions, value interdependence, feel empathy, and seek fulfilment. Grassroots organising, leadership development, and joyful connection help people affirm their personal worth, tap into their dreams and hopes, and discover their
- : *power to* and *power with*.
- : *Power to*: the potential to speak out and take action
- : Leadership for social justice involves new skills, knowledge, and awareness that taps into the sense of hope and possibility for change. It opens up possibilities for individual and joint action or *power with* others. Nurturing our *power to* is a critical antidote to resignation and fear.
- : *Power with*: collective strength and action
- : Finding common ground and community with others to work together for change, *power with* is expressed in collaboration, alliances, reciprocity, belonging, solidarity – and collective action. It multiplies individual talents, knowledge, reach, and resources, all of which are essential for transformational change.
- : *Power for*: combined vision, values, and demands
- : Orienting our change strategies and practices, *power for* is the vision, values, and propositions that steer and inspire action and connections and that move us toward the change we seek to create and practice. *Power for* provides the guiding star of transformative power, shaping our proposals, initiatives, agendas, and demands.

Transformative power grows from respect for self and interconnectedness with others – in all our diversities. It is the power inside us (*power within*), collective power together with others (*power with*), our power to speak out and act (*power to*), and power to articulate the change we want (*power for*). Transformative power can be identified, practised, and cultivated intentionally and serves as a guiding star for organising, leadership development, and strategy processes.

Oppressive actors and groups create their own forms of *power within*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power for* to pursue their agendas or obstruct change. Articulating our vision and values as change makers – our *power for* – is therefore essential in building transformative power. The power of collective imagination is a cornerstone of movement-building.