

Crisis is the new normal

This is a time of poly-crisis. Climate and ecological crises. A democracy crisis. A crisis of inequality. To build and transform power amid these and many other, simultaneous crises, movements can keep six priorities in mind.¹

Be nimble: Crises open windows for change, but those windows don't stay open forever. Prepare organisations to be nimble so they are ready to adapt as a crisis unfolds.

Go bold: In moments of crisis, it is more possible to advance bold demands for structural reform than it is in normal times. Millions of people go through intense struggles in moments of crisis, and their immediate needs mandate solutions that go beyond what established mechanisms can address. As a result, bold demands often make more sense than incremental reforms in moments of crisis.

Make meaning: In moments of crisis, people need to be able to make meaning out of their changing reality. Because the old ways of understanding are inadequate to explain peoples' lived experiences during a crisis, we have openings to challenge dominant narratives. But we can only do that if we have clarity on the story we need to tell and clear ways to get that story out to the people who need to hear it. That story needs to connect to the ways in which people are experiencing the crisis and offer a narrative that connects those experiences to the bold reforms that we are advancing. If we miss this opening to consolidate a new story to make meaning of the moment, people will fall back into old narratives based on fear, scarcity and division.

Build power: During moments of crisis, our organisations can grow much more rapidly than in normal times. In a crisis, huge numbers of people are open to stepping out of their daily routines and getting involved in social change efforts. We need a plan to quickly build mass mobilisations so we can both inform what happens and absorb the individuals who become involved.

Build a bigger 'we': In moments of crisis, our organisations can quickly move into much stronger positions of leadership. Changing circumstances can

¹ Harmony Goldberg, Grassroots Power Project: [Stepping into the Moment: The Corona Crisis](#) in Convergence, April 8, 2020. The final point on backlash, safety, and risk is the authors' addition.

⋮ encourage us to build alliances with other organisations that had previously been
⋮ distant or even antagonistic to us. We can also move beyond primarily leading our
⋮ own communities to leading much broader sections of society.

⋮ **Plan for backlash and heightened risk:** When we challenge power structures
⋮ and the status quo, we need to expect backlash in the form of threats, hostile
⋮ narratives, criminalisation and repression. It is vital that we integrate strategies for
⋮ safety, both individual and collective, physical and digital, into our organising for
⋮ social change. The toll and strain of pushing for change, also requires attention to
⋮ care for our hearts, minds and bodies.

See JASS' toolkit on collective protection and wellbeing: [Our Rights, Our Safety](#).