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Is Freedom on Our Horizon? New Imperatives for Community Organizing

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Abstract

This is a narrative essay written by Francis Calpotura, an experienced community organizer reflecting on lessons from his career, his family's migration experience, and his assessment of what future successful organizing will require. Calpotura's focus is an underlying tension in democratic organizing praxis: the tradeoffs between the work required for immediate issue actions, that engage and train members, and systemic transformation for durable social equality. Drawing from the works of Norma Wong and Doug McAdam, Calpotura proposes that organizations collaborate on emergent "horizon-conscious" strategy: a theoretical framework and tool for how organizers can work towards a co-created future, beyond the wins and losses of particular campaigns. In confronting this tradeoff, his approach honors the organizing profession's cultivation of both individual liberation and shared political empowerment.

Keywords: field theory, horizon-conscious organizing, migration, immigration, remittances, transformative organizing

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Introduction

It's true for many of us. We christened ourselves as "organizers" after a certain period of activism (sometimes it takes years) of responding to issues and causes that hit close to home. For me, I became a young leader in the anti-dictatorship movement that eventually toppled Philippine President Marcos in the mid-1980s. That movement showed me that my experience as an immigrant to the United States was directly linked to a century of colonial arrangements between the United States and the Philippine elite, rapaciously exploited by the Marcos regime. What I also learned is how freedom felt and tasted, and the magic (and messiness) of what a people, united by a core demand, can achieve. I was hooked.

It wasn't until I worked for the Center for Third Organizing (CTWO) in late 1984 that I was exposed to the rigor of community organizing. And I ate it up. I began to understand the science behind social movements, but also the primacy of proximity to a base of people that's necessary for any lasting change to materialize. And the more I felt comfortable with being an organizer, the more I began to deeply appreciate the feeling and taste of freedom I derived from my anti-dictatorship days: it is rare and ephemeral, but it sticks to the bones.

I lament the fact that organizing is in decline. Organizations have been finding it difficult to recruit organizers, or to retain the ones they have. A phenomenon that I've encountered with increasing frequency in the past decade or so is attribution of the title of "organizer" to those whose core job is to attend coalition meetings, or run leadership development programs, or canvas during elections, or promote events and mobilizations in social media. Organizers are urged to cultivate their own personal narratives, rather than cultivating the ability of others to do the same in service of a campaign. Organizing has been de-linked from base-building—developing an ever-increasing corps of grassroots leaders, members, and organizers committed to fundamental social change.

I will not go through its causes (there are now numerous studies and papers that you can search and read¹) but can't help but feel some responsibility for it. I did dedicate my professional life in applying and promoting the craft, so to see its diminution hurts.

My hope is that this paper can resuscitate our love for organizing, with a newfound appreciation for the long game. At the very least, I hope that it can spur conversation, even debate, among organizers. Since the more we talk about our beloved vocation, the less it recedes into darkness.

In Search for an Organizing Path to Freedom

Organizing is obsessed with the specifics. It is our vocation's application of the "science" of making change happen. We apply "organizing math" to turnout goals based on the quality of "yesses" in the recruitment process—we learn not to rely on impersonal and shallow engagement to tell us how many people would actually show up at a meeting or event, for example. We learn

1 Here are a few examples: "Fighting Shape: An Assessment of U.S. Organizing" (2024); "Reckoning with Sustainability: Black Leaders Reflect on 2020, the Funding Cliff, and Organizing Infrastructure," Building Movement Project (2024); "The Future of Nonviolent Resistance," Erica Chenoweth (2020); "The Case for an Organizing School," Libero Della Piana, unpublished, 2021.

how to assess motivations of members and allies and know that our success depends on whether we've aligned those with the goals of the campaign. We make contingency plans, taking into account every conceivable twist and turn that may make Plan A inoperable. We study and learn how systems operate, the jurisdiction of each decision-maker we target and the factors that influence their actions, and we account for external variables of the historical moment that can either impede or facilitate our campaign goals. We work with our leaders to make specific and realizable demands on decision-makers in order to move the campaign to the next phase. We are ruthless in evaluating our relative power, our internal capacities and external influence, on how we can affect the terrain we're trying to shift.

Finally, we understand that winning material benefits that matter in the lives of our base teaches folks that change is possible if and when you apply the science of organizing well.

This approach to organizing has been maligned as too pragmatic by those clamoring for "transformative organizing". It is too preoccupied with short-term wins without, and sometimes anathema to, a longer-term vision of more fundamental societal transformation. These critics also claim that the organizing practice becomes too transactional, i.e. come win this campaign because it can yield material benefits for you and your family, and not guided by a more critical analysis of the "root causes" of these problems and the need for a more fundamental re-ordering of society. It is impossible to strike down systemic racism and the logic of capitalism when the "win" is narrowly framed as the passage of a Soda Tax, or gaining free bus passes for young people, upping the minimum wage, winning affordable housing set-asides from local developers, preventing eviction from a single landlord, winning a collective bargaining agreement, or even getting someone elected into office. What we have learned as organizers is that the system is able to absorb these reforms without fundamentally altering its course. So we may win these campaigns, but our communities never seem to get out of a shithole in the long term.

I agree with much of this critique. But I think it also has failed to give organizers a guide or playbook on how to help realize more systemic changes. It fails to bridge the gap between where we are now and how to get to this more transformative vision—with a level of rigor and precision that good organizing yearns for.

Organizing is about Systemic Change, not just Winning Campaigns

As newbie organizers in this work, we were addicted to campaigns—those time-defined, intense periods when you go all in to win demands on an issue, or get an ordinance passed or an ally into office during an election. We were adrenalin junkies. And when we won, it's hard to describe the exhilaration of a collective victory. This is why we became organizers, we thought.

But campaign victories are fool's gold if disconnected to a long-term strategy of systemic change. Kim Fellner and I posed a similar challenge to the organizing community in 1996:

"...do fights for incremental changes necessarily contain, or even lead to, a critique of prevailing social and economic structures, or do they only re-divide the same pie in other ways? ...while this approach can change the location of a highway or give parents a greater voice on their local school board, it alone is insufficient to build a truly equitable,

multi-cultural larger society—or even a progressive movement” (Calpotura and Fellner 1996).

When genuine social change does indeed happen, inspired by our collective will and vision, key institutions that govern people’s lives produce outcomes that benefit constituencies, those who were once directly affected by systemic injustice, *as a matter of course*. Over the course of many decades, our campaigns and initiatives will make the once subversive agendas and narratives popular and mundane. Therefore, it will become common sense that the Department of Labor actually protects workers and their communities, or the Health Department holds themselves accountable to lowering indices that produce diabetes, strokes, and loneliness. Our institutions will be guided by the values that prioritize people’s well-being and aspirations of a good life.

Let me give you an example. The civil rights movement took 100 years, from the end of slavery to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, to codify anti-discrimination laws in public and private spaces. It took multiple campaigns over this long arc of history to strike down Jim Crow laws that allowed racial segregation that generations of Black people experienced. If the movement stopped when they won local hiring practices of businesses, or desegregation of public schools and buses, or the integration of the military, then our collective vision of racial justice would have been stunted. But folks persevered because of a dream of a society that doesn’t ascribe well-being based on skin color.

But as you know, even this dream remains unfulfilled and needs to be defended and advanced much further. And during these times when the backlash to these modest gains is ascendant, we need to thank the generations of freedom fighters that came before us that our efforts are not starting at the same place, since they were able to codify these values in our institutions and in the popular discourse.

Norma Wong and The Horizon

The ideas and spiritual activism of Norma Wong, more popularized by the release of her book “When No Thing Works: A Zen and Indigenous Perspective on Resilience, shared Purpose, and Leadership in the Timeplace of Collapse” (2024), has deservedly attracted many organizers. Wong served as a state legislator, on the policy and strategy team for Governor John Waihee, and has done community organizing and policy work in her Native Hawaiian (indigenous) community. As an 86th generation Zen Master, Norma has helped name the dissatisfaction that gnaws at the pragmatic organizer’s core during moments of reflection (i.e., *Is this all there is? Because even if we win, we seem to not have changed very much*), and gives us permission to dream.

The concept of “horizon” is radically important. It’s far away but still within gaze. It resides in the sky but still tethered to the earth. Most importantly, our imagination can “see” what’s on the horizon and we can make affirmative steps to get there. But it’s not enough to envision what awaits us on the horizon, Norma challenges us to “feel” what it’s like and embody it. That way, we can fully describe a future experience in the here and now, developed with those in proximity of us. She writes, “These are human endeavors and, therefore, no strategy moves from paper to action without humans speaking to other humans. The art of strategic communication begins

with relationship, not with messaging. We need people...to understand, to buy in, to stand aside, to bring their energy and to execute" (Wong 2024, 69).

I find this "horizon-focused" practice indispensable to organizing. It demands clarity of destination in terms that are experiential, emotional, tactile...material...and therefore accessible to anyone. And the story of our horizon can only be written in community with others—those who have shared their individual pain to make a collective story of hope that they choose to pursue together. It's a practice tailor-made for organizers, and helps address the overly cerebral ways we tend to talk about "root causes" or our "North Star" or the "revolution".

Norma warns us that "No strategy is possible if we are mired in weeds and mud, or chasing the emotive pull of our amygdala, or especially if we do not know the answer to why, otherwise known as purpose" (Wong 2024, 67).

Norma's work with Move to End Violence inspired the creation of a "Strategic Thinking Tool" that I found useful in clarifying purpose.

- Can you clearly articulate the problem? Is this really the problem, or a symptom of a problem?
- Can you name the strategic purpose or "North Star" that you are working towards by solving this problem?
- If you can't name your strategic purpose, then there's a much bigger issue at hand. You need to be able to understand and name the big overall reason you're doing everything. Reflect some more and then come back to this problem.
- Does solving your named problem actually get you closer to that strategic purpose?
- If you solve this problem, what opportunities will be created to get you closer to your strategic purpose?

However grounded our collective aspiration might be under Norma's horizon-defining methodology, as an organizer, I am still at a loss to know what strategy to employ that may get me from here to my horizon. Logically, the experiences of loved ones in our imagined horizon are manifestations of new priorities of institutions, governments, and social actors that produce those outcomes. And if those outcomes are the norm and not the exception, then we must have achieved a popular consensus that those are the outcomes worthy of our priorities and resources that guide the workings of institutions. In our horizon, systems produce these desired outcomes *as a matter of course*.

In organizing, we are used to making demands from institutions and governments in order to produce new outcomes for our constituents—lower rent, better working conditions, police out of schools, language translation in hospitals, etc. That's our jam. But they very rarely lead to the type of systemic change—wherein the values behind our demands become the norm that guide the workings of institutions and the dominant frame of our public discourse.

How would we know that we're moving closer to the horizon of our dreams?

Doug McAdam and Field Theory

I met Doug McAdam sometime in 2017 at a coffee shop outside of Stanford where he was a distinguished professor of Sociology. I had just read his book “A Theory of Fields” (Fligstein and McAdam 2015), emailed him out of the blue, requesting a conversation. I wrote “I think I understood what you are saying and I think it can have practical applications to current-day organizing practice. Wanna talk?” (What I told him later, once we’ve become better acquainted, that reading his book harkened back to my college days studying Philosophy and reading Heidegger, Sartre, etc. and later on Gramsci, Bourdieu and others. You read each line over and over again, nod your head thinking you got it, but admittedly fog-brained on what’s really going on!)

Doug and I have become better acquaintances since—developed a module on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, wrote an unpublished article on the relevance of his Field Theory to organizing, and discussed and debated the flowchart tool presented below. Working with Doug, I have found useful language to bridge the impact of campaigns with our vision of systems transformation.

What is Field Theory?

“Systems” are a crazy quilt of loosely coupled decision-making arenas, or what have come to be known as strategic action fields. A strategic action field is, “a constructed meso-level social order in which actors are attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field, and the rules governing legitimate action in the field” (McAdam and Calpotura 2022).

McAdam gives a mundane example to illustrate his point. “So, for example, all of the many offices in a large for-profit firm are strategic action fields. But offices are typically embedded in larger divisions within the firm, with each division constituting a field as well. And all of those divisions compete with one another for influence and resources within the overarching field of the entire firm. Finally, the industry in which the firm is located constitutes yet another field, comprised of all those companies competing for market share” (McAdam and Calpotura 2022).

If a union begins an organizing drive in offices with the most vulnerable division, then it will affect workers in other offices from other divisions within the firm. If resonant demands with workers in the first organizing drive are about expanded family leave and gender and racial diversity in management positions, then these will be felt by others in other divisions as well. And if the unionization campaign deftly exploits the vulnerabilities of the firm, then the effort not only wins changes within the division but also lays the groundwork for others. Over time, with skills and some luck, the entire firm adopts these new standards. And because the “horizon” is not just to change the working conditions for one firm but for a whole industry, then the movement towards systems change within that industry moves forward with wins from this organizing drive as precedent for others.

The key insight for me as an organizer is that I cannot change the system with one campaign. But with persistent interactions with as many vulnerable “fields” within this system, we can disrupt this “shared understanding” (I tend to call them “scripts”, written and unwritten assumed behavior, that govern the operations of a system) and over time imbue the system with new scripts on how

the various fields interact with each other. The end result of these strategic interventions are institutions delivering new outcomes that reflect a new purpose.

There is another organizing lesson in the application of field theory that is in seeming short supply in the sector these days. It demands clarity of systems change goals in order to identify the vulnerable fields from which you can wage battle. It also demands a commitment to a long game and an abiding persistence to engage through many years (even decades) of work. One campaign or one policy will not change the system. As we know in our experience, the system has an uncanny ability to accommodate and quietly usurp our wins without fundamentally altering its strategic course.

Because what we have signed up for in this work is to fundamentally alter the “purpose” of systems in order for it to deliver new outcomes that benefit the folks we care most about, as a *matter of course*. For this to happen, our insurgent ideas of justice, solidarity, care, self-determination, liberation, etc. have to become “common sense” and our current alternative narratives become dominant narratives—the new scripts that guide the working of fields and the dense network of institutions that comprise systems.

Application To Our Current Historical Moment

Clarifying our horizon and a strategy to get us there is imperative in our current moment when even the modest gains we’ve achieved in civil rights, gender, queer and environmental justice are being dismantled by the Trump Administration. But even as we play defense, our vision cannot be just to maintain the status quo, since these modest achievements do not reflect our desired horizon. We have to frame our response to advance what we truly want, and be able to tell the story of a society that values our linked humanity, and demand that our institutions produce outcomes based on those values.

Ironically, the all-sided assault of the Right can produce a more conducive environment to expand the audience who may be attracted to our horizon stories. We’re already witnessing Trump’s overreach that will likely disappoint, even enrage, those who aren’t in our current limited orbit of influence. Trump’s Executive Orders, Musk’s dismantling of public institutions, and the austerity of municipal budgets are also forging tactical alliances between labor, immigrant rights, civil rights, CBOs, and elected officials on the ground. What has been missing in reactive fights thus far is an assertion of what we want, not just what we want to defend and protect. As organizers, we have to continue to believe that our vision of an alternative society is more compelling than the status quo. But it starts with being clear about our horizon.

The Horizon Beyond Corporate-Driven Globalization

At the turn of the century, after spending 16 years at the Center for Third World Organizing, I was tired and frustrated. We were helping groups win campaigns, but could not impede the forward march of neoliberalism—privatization of public services and safety nets, starving of municipalities, deregulation of everything, and the restructuring of economic relationships towards the globalization of labor, manufacturing and finance. Freedom was receding from view. I needed a break.

In the early aughts, I helped my mother move back to the Philippines after 28 years in the United States. She spent her first 10 years as a domestic worker and a nurse's aide at a convalescent hospital in San Francisco, until she got her license as a registered nurse. She was one of 354,987 Filipinos who migrated to the United States that decade, part of a global exodus of 154 million who left their homelands to work in the global North. They left to flee violence or natural disasters, but the main motivation of most is to work abroad and send money back to their families in the form of monthly remittances.

In 2005, international migrants sent \$232 billion to their families back home (Ratha 2005). An average remittance amount is \$200, sent 1.16 billion times that year, to pay for their children's education, a roof above their heads, care for ailing parents, food at the table, contribute to a community well project to access clean water, and help underwrite a clan celebration or two. Each transaction became the lifeblood of millions of families in the global South, that made migration a necessity for their economic survival.

Migration and remittances are clear by-products of corporate-driven globalization that tethered domestic economies to serve global markets and satisfy voracious consumerism in advanced capitalist countries like the United States. Countries in the global South, with domestic economies in shambles and intoxicated by the lure of billions in remittances shoring up their GDP, became employment centers for low-wage labor needs across the world—construction workers in the Gulf states, domestic workers for households in East Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States, workers in cargo ships and hired hands in luxury cruises, and health care workers all over. In the Philippines, 1 million remitters leave the country to work abroad each year.

Of course, foolishly, I thought this terrain is ripe for organizing! The notion that millions of people with so much economic leverage on countries and industries can mess with the rapacious logic of global capitalism. In our horizon, migration is considered an option and not a necessity to thrive. When conditions in our communities can support families to live a good life. And when government and industry stop taking advantage of acts of love, which is what each remittance transaction signifies.



So, in 2005, I started an organizing project on remittance justice. We organized Million Dollar Clubs (300 people who understand their economic power) within immigrant organizations and communities across the United States, formalized into the Global League of Community Sustainers (*La Liga de los Sustentadores Mundial*) in a founding convention in Mexico City on May 2008 attended by organizations from 23 countries. We launched a boycott campaign against Western Union, the largest remittance

company at the time, with demands to lower their fees, transparency in their pricing, and contribute to a Fund that will invest in community-based development projects in remittance-receiving countries. The strategy here was to popularize the campaign by going after the most public target, win benefits agreements, and build a strong global constituency that can negotiate with governments and other international entities like the World Bank on community-driven development.

The campaign momentum after the Mexico City launch was shattered by the hammer of the Great Recession. Organizations scaled down commitments and others shuttered. Understandably, families hunkered down to more immediate concerns of mere survival. The dream of a grassroots intervention to slow the march of neoliberal globalization ended. The initiative went on for a few more years, experimenting with new approaches with partner organizations in El Salvador, Bangladesh, India, Mexico, the Philippines, and in the United States. But the campaign never recovered from the setbacks of its early years. A small consolation is that Western Union, quietly, re-oriented their corporate giving to support immigrant groups and partnered with governments and migrant-sending communities in small-scale projects (Western Union 2013).²

When I reflect on what TIGRA³ launched 20 years ago, its most significant accomplishment isn't the re-orientation of Western Union's philanthropy or its influence on the global policy conversations on migration and development to recognize the experiences and aspirations of remitters and their families. It's the forging of a new collective identity of globally-displaced low-wage workers with a generational purpose, i.e. that we can change the dominant scripts of globalization with the power of our remittance practices. A taste of freedom.

This process of personal transformation was captured by an Gabriel Thompson, an organizer for the Fifth Avenue Committee in New York at the time and an aspiring writer, of one of those early community meetings (Thompson 2006).

... a dozen shivering Mexican immigrants seated in the basement of Saint Agatha's Catholic Church in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. People break into small groups and discuss how much money they have sent home the previous year. Together they discover that the amount comes to nearly \$65,000.

An hour later, at the conclusion of the meeting, Candelario was smiling as he pushed open the basement door and headed into the bustle of Brooklyn's Fifth Avenue. He was still an "unskilled" laborer, with no bank account or line of credit to his name. But now, he was also something new, something just a bit exhilarating. He was an economic force to be reckoned with.

Leading with a history-altering horizon, rooted in the everyday experiences of regular people, compels organizers to dream big changes. Armed with the rigor and discipline of organizing traditions, we can develop strategies that can move us closer to changing the course of history and closer to freedom that we all seek. These are the core lessons I took from this bold, ambitious, and deeply personal endeavor.

² Global remittances are projected to reach \$5.4 trillion in 2030, spurred by the digitalization of remittance flows (International Fund for Agricultural Development, "Global remittance flows expected to reach US\$5.4 trillion by 2030 spurred on by digitalization", June 16, 2022). Widening income gaps between developed and developing countries are expected to drive migration for work, thereby increasing remittance flows. The expansion of internet and mobile platforms, digital wallets, and easier access to online marketplaces will further boost remittances. The horizon for making migration an option and not an economic necessity for hundreds of millions, the vast majority coming from the global South, still lives, waiting for younger organizers to take up the challenge. If you are so moved to push towards this horizon, let me know. I still have some game left in me.

³ TIGRA is the Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action. See Calpotura (2007).

Towards a Horizon-conscious Organizing Approach

This emergent framework, tentatively called the “horizon-conscious organizing approach”, has been largely inspired by the works of Norma Wong and Doug McAdam. Not coincidentally, both challenge us to adopt a more expansive vocabulary on how we conceive of systems transformation and a fundamental re-orientation of the workings of institutions to address the well-being of the many and in right relationship to Mother Earth. The combination of Norma Wong’s exhortation to envision the horizon that we yearn to realize and the courage and discipline it takes to embody that vision in the here and now, along with Doug McAdam’s “theory of fields” that provides a practical framework on how we can transform systems to move us closer to the horizon we seek, has been, for me, the analytical bridge between the narrowness of “pragmatic organizing” and the nebulousness of “transformative organizing” frameworks.

How then can you ensure that there’s alignment of campaigns to our vision of systemic change? I offer you this tool (Figure 1) for developing a coherent strategy for long-term systems transformation, aligned with values that motivate these transformations. It forces organizers to be precise and rigorous about our vision of institutionalizing our victories that can produce outcomes that our base desires in 25-, 50-, and 100-year increments.

100+ Years	50+ Years	10-25 Years	Months-Few Years
Horizon	Systems Transformation	Field/Terrain of Contention	Campaign/ Key Program
People First Investments Of Public Resources	Equitable Investments of Municipal Budgets	Expanded Municipal Investments in Communities	<i>Designated Soda Tax</i>
The Community Becomes The place for Restoration	Abolitionist framework in criminal justice system	Municipal Budgets prioritize restorative justice principles	<i>Police Out of Schools</i>
Global Citizenship	Expanded Pathways to Residency & Citizenship	Decriminalization of Citizenship Status	<i>Drivers Licenses to all state residents</i>
Multilingual Society	Multilingual Practices of All Public Institutions	Language Access of Key Institutions	<i>Multilingual notices and interpreters in Schools</i>
Socialist Economic Relationships	Community Control of Local Economic Relationships	Transfer Key Private Assets into Public Ownership	<i>Community Land Trusts, Rent Control, etc.</i>

Figure 1. Horizon-Conscious Organizing Approach

Framing our campaigns within a long-term horizon of systemic transformation fundamentally shifts our organizing calculus from the traditional accountability framework (i.e. making demands on a decision-maker to fix the problem) to a governance agenda (i.e. codifying the changes we want into the institutional sinews that produce desired outcomes as part of its course thus making it difficult to reverse or dismantle). A governing agenda demands the nurturing of a whole ecosystem of players (from people’s organizations who set priorities, to legal and policy outfits who can help write

the codes, to administrators within government who interpret and implement those codes, to politicians who can help popularize the values and ideas behind those codes, and even to service providers who can embody those values as they interact with the intended beneficiaries of this new dispensation, etc.).

It makes intuitive sense that the horizon is what anchors our work as organizers. We agitate around an immediate injustice and help develop winning strategies with folks that are ready to move to resolve a specific dispute with targets. Whether we win or not, the leaders and allies we develop become motivated by something bigger than the issue at hand. A deeper sense of community. That it is possible to address historical roots of problems that produce misery for generations. That change is within our grasp. When folks can feel and see a future when individuals and communities thrive. Freedom in our horizon. Organizers can be an indispensable participant in crafting a new society we all yearn to realize.

Identifying strategic action fields that can lead to long-term material outcomes for our base also demands a certain rigor (and imagination) in crafting effective strategies over time, and not just for a single campaign. It also makes us accountable to delivering changes to material conditions in people's lives (i.e. new outcomes on how institutions deliver the goods, repeatedly). At the end of the day, we should be able "to count" our success – have we reduced the poverty rate, diabetes in poor communities, housing insecurity, etc.? And have we increased a sense of hope, purpose, and a collective recognition of linked humanity in people?

Another consequence of this horizon-conscious organizing framework might come as a shocker—however hard we work, and however many campaigns we win, the systems change we seek will likely not come in our lifetime. Consider our sacred vocation as organizers with a long view. Our contribution while we walk this earth is to advance the life-affirming vision of a horizon and show and inspire others that change is possible. With every effort, we push further into the horizon, since no one knows when the "tipping point" arrives that accelerates the change that we seek. But it will come. That's what we've learned from other social movements. Take comfort from the perspective of the long arc of history, so we can pace and take care of each other in the process.

Be assured of one thing: during this process, we will what taste and feel freedom is. It is when you hug the stranger next to you, tight, and say "We did it!" When everything just "feels" different. The air is crisper, sunlight glows a bit brighter, and the bounce in people's steps seems...happier. It is when we envision friends who didn't make it to this day, though it wouldn't have been possible without them, smiling at us, contentedly. There are few vocations in life that afford us this experience. Enjoy it. Never forget it. Teach it to others.

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