



## 2019-2022 LIBERATION ROAD STRATEGIC ORIENTATION DRAFT

### KEY TERMS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT OUR STRATEGY:

#### A. **New political subject:**

This is a concept derived from Chantal Mouffe's book *For A Left Populism*. The creation of a new political subject is creating an "us" (the underdog/the neglected) versus "them" (those in power/the elite). The "us", for Liberation Road's strategy, is the organizing of the strategic alliance and other left progressive forces into a self-conscious force that has a political program (in the strategy document we will discuss the mechanism for building this subject and by extension its political program) which is in stark opposition to the "them". The "them", in the context of Liberation Road's strategy, is the New Confederacy and their political instrument the Republican Party, who are working to continually execute their political agenda of austerity, reactionary white supremacy, and cisheteropatriarchy. One of the goals of the new political subject is for it to be both maximally inclusive, while at the same time, speaking to the individual needs of the constituencies that will come to make up the subject.

1. There are four characteristics of the new political subject (also known as the "forged self-conscious bloc"):
  - The strategic alliance and the left progressive forces have a common identity that is brought into being in the shaping and defining of the "us".
  - The constituencies have a shared political program that is in opposition to the New Confederacy's political program.
  - Among the various constituencies exists deep, mutual solidarity for one another's issues, even if the impact and subsequent resolution of the issue does not directly have an effect on all of the constituencies.

- The constituencies have broken their world view alliance and allegiance to other political force(s) or bloc(s) in order to share the world view alliance with and have allegiance to the forged self-conscious bloc.
2. The new political subject does not currently exist, though the objective conditions for it to exist are present. Just like the strategic alliance and the united front against the new confederacy, the new political subject needs to be constructed through independent political organizations and other forms of organization. Our strategy document will explain our thinking on how that can be done.
  3. The forged self-conscious bloc does not include the neoliberal hegemonic coalitions of the Democratic Party. Though they have a vested interest in defeating, or at least subordinating, the New Confederacy, they also have an interest in denying the needs and aims of the new political subject's program.

**B. There are three kinds of power: political power, governing power, and state power. Our strategy concerns the first two, but not the latter, since it is the culmination of the other two.**

**1. Political Power:**

The power to interrupt and reorganize peoples' collaboration with, obedience to, and identification with an existing regime--and to forge new social & political blocs and identities; i.e., the power to construct a new subject. Political power allows a given social force or bloc to contest and disrupt existing hegemonic narratives, cohere social blocs and forces in organizational forms - and subsequently articulate a common program to struggle for. That is, *the creation of a new political identity happens through struggle*. Markers of political power include, as a cohering or coherent political force, ability to: influence who governs and how, at varying levels of government; articulate demands on existing governing powers and have those demands met and responded to; and create meaningful legal, economic, and social change, *at least temporarily*, as agents positioned outside of, if not in opposition to, a governing regime, or a non-ruling minority in that regime.

*Political power is the foundation on which all other forms of power are ultimately achieved.*

*Only* through political unity - i.e., organization - and protagonism - i.e., struggle - can governing power and state power be won.

## **2. Governing Power:**

The power of a given social force or bloc to *be the governing force* in the predominating institutions of the society - especially government. This is distinct from *political power* inasmuch as *governing power* is the social force itself occupying government seats and contesting for its program against other forces - and the class(es) those forces represent. As conceptualized by Richard Healey, this would represent power in executive, legislative, legal, and bureaucratic arenas. And building on the work of Marta Harnecker, we understand that *governing power* and *political power* are deeply interconnected: political power of the people allows for governing power of the people allows for the expansion of political power of the people allows for the expansion of governing power of the people... toward the ultimate ends of *state power*. Governing power helps expand the realm of the possible for a force or forces to wield ever increasing political power; it is an expansion of democracy and decisions which are popularly made. Governing power allows a class or political bloc - a subject created through the struggle for political power - to effectively move a program of legal reform, to reshape state bureaucracy and institutions, to alter existing social contracts, and so on.

## **3. State Power:**

State power is when all the levers of power are consolidated in one frame or paradigm: police (what is the basis of how we handle crimes and infractions—restorative justice or punishment for example), military (who are our friends and enemies and how through force we engage them), courts and legal system (what is considered a crime and the penalties), and the economic system (like capitalism or socialism or a mixed economy), legislature (the ability to pass and enforce laws). The three forms of power are inter-related.

## INTRODUCTION

This document, divided into five sections, presents Liberation Road's three-year (2019-2021) strategic orientation, as well as the analysis and strategic thinking upon which the plan is based. Its purpose is to translate our 2019 Main Political Report's general analysis of conditions into a specific plan of action. It should be read by every member of the organization and discussed by every district.

### Section 1. Overview of 2019-2022 Strategy

#### 1.1 OUR STRATEGY RESTS ON TWO KEY TASKS

1.2 The MPR argued that the united front we need to build is composed of three layers: the advanced, intermediate, and backwards forces with the strategic alliance at the core.

1.3 **Task 1: *As in the 2016-2018 strategy, we still hold that the key intervention for continued advancement of the struggle and building the united front is developing the strategic alliance through the building of independent political organization.***

1.4 **Task 2: *Additionally, given the presence of the Left electoral trend we should commit to an effort to further cohere and consolidate that trend.***

1.5 In order for both of these to happen, we must continue to broaden and deepen our theory and practice around building independent political power and organization. A crucial aspect of this is providing training and support to districts that have struggled to implement our strategy.

1.6 These two key tasks are essential for building the united front against the New Confederacy (NC). Doing both of these things will allow us to expand and develop the united front, with the strategic alliance *as an integral component*, needed to defeat the main enemy and win over critical progressive and tactical allies. In the past three years, there has been growth in the number of individuals and organizations that agree with our line: “. . . without an independent political instrument it would be impossible to lead the struggle through its various twists and turns and at the same time maintain initiative and carry out struggles against neoliberal Democrats within the united front. Building this independent political organization is essentially building the capacity of the strategic alliance to assert its leadership.”

## 1.7 RED MASS WORK REMAINS OUR FOUNDATION

**1.8** The engagement of districts in red mass work is still foundational to the organization and our districts' ability to implement the strategy. Red mass work--or work carried out by multiple cadres together with a strategic collectivity--is the basic unit on which political independent political organization will lack a basis in advanced political forces, and connection to movements and dynamics outside of the electoral arena.

**1.9** Therefore, each district should continue building units and establishing mass work. The establishment of red mass work does not automatically mean that every district will be poised to build an independent political organization in short order. The ability to build an IPO is still largely dependent on the local material conditions in which work is being carried out, the district's comprehension of what is meant by IPO, and the district's competency in creation and implementation of an IPO.

## 1.10 MOVING FORWARD ON TASK 1:

**1.11** *Our central task, for the previous 3 years was uniting the advanced around the NEED for independent political organization and power. Given the progress made on that, we are now moving to BUILDING independent political power and independent political organization with the advanced fighters from our mass work and the rest of the left. Not only has our own work born fruit, but other forces on the left – Left Roots electoral lab, DSA, and Grassroots Policy Project—have also seized the political moment allowing us to move forward.*

**1.12** As noted in the MPR, socialism is a more visible and accepted term in this period. Many forces within the advanced started to embrace the need to build independent political power and the idea of independent political organization. We now need to engage with the advanced in political projects that build IPP and IPOs. Therefore, it remains important for us to link building political power with building a movement towards Socialism and to let our Socialist flag fly as a beacon to attract the growing number of radicalized individuals and organizers. Because of this (re)opening towards Socialism and Socialist ideas, it is even more important for us to promote on the Left and among progressive forces our particular vision and program for political power, led by the

strategic alliance and rooted in the South. This is one of the things that distinguishes us from other Socialist organizations and formations and provides the type of vision and roadmap that organizations and movements are looking for.

### **1.13 TASK 2 FLOWS FROM TASK ONE:**

**1.14** The current opening towards socialism and a coalescence around the inside/outside strategic orientation in relation to the Democratic Party and electoral arena-gives us room for the establishment of a national left formation that is explicitly revolutionary socialist. The election and experience of Trump has lit a fire under revolutionary left forces, propelling most of them in a similar, though not the same, strategic direction. For these reasons we find ourselves in a political moment where the revolutionary Left could meaningfully enter into principled struggle and unite around a common vision and project that looks to strengthen the Left, ideologically and organizationally, and meaningfully build political power among the masses.

**1.15** A national left formation is needed now because revolutionary socialists are facing existential considerations regarding organizational form and strategy during a time when the stakes are high (ecological, economic, and political crises abound) and our level of organization and relative power is low, organizations are disparate, and a collective Left strategy is non-existent.

**1.16** This document serves as a deepening of our strategic orientation based on the summation, experiences, and practices of districts, units, and other Left electoral formations. There are two factors that continue to define the political moment and determine the duration for the strategic orientation established in 2016 and being deepened in this document. The first factor is external and is defined by the main enemy: the New Confederacy. The second factor is internal and is defined by the need to build independent political organization.

### **1.17 HOW WE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL MOMENT:**

During this three-year period there are three ways that our organization can make decisive contributions that move this work forward:

**1.18 At the national level** we need to unite the advanced at our broadest national levels around this orientation.

**1.18.1** Unite with the people already doing this type of work – the inside/outside project being a small example and the State Power Caucus being a more important formation but with a less clear electoral orientation

**1.18.2** Begin laying the foundation for a national left formation. This would need to be a joint endeavor of Liberation Road and other revolutionary Left organizations and formations. There are some line differences, amongst the various ideologies and political tendencies on the Left, that need to be principally struggled through in order to create and sharpen a common vision and strategic orientation. This venture needs to be explicitly non-sectarian and allow for us to build the broadest level of participation and buy-in among the Left. Our organization's responsibility and goal would be to play a central role in building this national left formation.

**1.18.3** Create training and study opportunities for cadre and other activists. Training and study have become increasingly important and sought out these days by organizers in social movements. Many movement leaders and activists are exposed to numerous training and study curricula, which are key mechanisms of ideological and political education in this moment – a reflection of the lack of hegemonic left organization; the promulgation under neoliberalism of “retreats”, “seminars”, etc., especially in the corporate world; and an elaborate media environment in which anyone can publish, regardless of their credentials.

**1.18.4** Therefore, training curricula, programming, etc., as well as a clear communications strategy are a critical intervention in the contemporary political landscape. Options include but are not limited to:

1. A book
2. Webinar/seminar training series
3. Leadership academy
4. Strategic entry in to training departments and programs

**1.18.5** Create a formal alliance between Liberation Road and NAPO, that creates space for a sharpening of each of our theory and practice. Engaging with them may result in embarking on a joint electoral project towards the critical election year 2020.

**1.18.6** Increase promotion of and attention to our IPO work in the South, including through broader Solidarity Brigade Programming

1. The organization should also invest in at least 1-2 solidarity brigades for cadre and our periphery to learn and share in our work and theory. Coordinating to do at least one with Left Roots (maybe even DSA) in a strategic Southern location for the 2020 elections

**1.18.7 In North Carolina and Tennessee**, we have made great strides in implementing our strategy with the use of similar but different models. In North Carolina and Tennessee, this period will be marked by an expansion of their work to maintain and grow the established IPOs. These projects are also important in planting seeds for the types of effective models for constructing a new political subject. These projects have and will continue to allow for the organization's deepened understanding in the relationship between political, governing and state power.

**1.19.1 At the district level** we should focus our attention and resources on cadre, unit, and district development in the domains of leadership, theoretical, and application (praxis) training and support. This will allow for struggling/stagnant and nascent districts to get to a place of more effectively carrying out the strategy and central task of the organization in their cities and states. Furthermore, cadre will be better equipped to connect current struggles and tactics for political power to a vision for socialism. As a result, there will be an increase in the ability and competency for districts to engage the periphery in their mass work towards the promotion of our political line and program. *The main mass work of the organization is to build IPOs and cadre should contribute to that where appropriate.*

- a. Districts should assess their opportunity to connect with, where possible, existing IPO efforts and join them
- b. Districts or comrades interested in creating or initiating an IPO should be supported by a national taskforce ("workteam")
- c. Comrades in mass work, *whether it is within an independent political organization or not*, should identify opportunities for orienting toward electoral work – through



targeting government/state actors; engaging in referendum organizing; attempting to elect leaders who typify the work; etc.

- d. We need to develop our thinking on the application of our line in the Blue states. The challenges are different there, as we have learned, and we can't simply replicate the work in Tennessee and NC.

**1.19.2** While we have a relatively high level of organizational unity around the theory this strategy is based on, that has not translated to districts outside of Massachusetts, Tennessee, and North Carolina being able to apply the theory. Given this fact, one of the first steps in our plan is to focus on intensive development in the domains named above for cadre and districts in order to strengthen our work at the national level and bolster the work in Tennessee and North Carolina.

#### **1.20.1** MARKERS OF SUCCESS:

**1.20.2** There are several outcomes that will serve as markers of success in carrying out this plan:

- a. Growth in the organization's membership and participation of cadre in having clear roles to actualize the strategy. Goals and targets will need to be set by the new NEC or Policy Committee.
- b. An entrenched sense of collective work and orientation among cadre and districts
- c. A nuanced and sharper political program that can be more broadly understood and applied internally and externally
- d. Reassertion of our presence and importance in a saturated Left as a key movement player

**1.20.3** Our strategy document should do two things: (1) claim the most pressing political task(s) of the moment, and (2) develop a plan for the organization to develop that task to the best of our ability. This document will essentially maintain the basic political outlook of Liberation Road expressed in our 2016 strategic resolutions. We will continue to develop some of the main ideas (and observe where those ideas have developed through practice) and offer some further developed thinking based on the experience of comrades'

work, and on achievements, innovations, and insights from the work of other organizations.

**1.20.4** To accomplish our two goals, we will lay out a general strategic logic about the tasks of socialists today, and demonstrate how this logic is applicable for the broader left. Then we will talk specifically about work we might be able to implement and work we should continue to prioritize in order to best accomplish those tasks.

**1.20.5** The following sections will expound upon the points presented above:

**Section 2: 2016-2018 Strategy Recap** provides a broad overview of the main points from our previous strategy to set the stage for how and why we have updated and advanced our thinking.

**Section 3: The United Front, Defeating the New Confederacy, and the Role of Political Struggle** explains what the role of the united front against the New Confederacy is and why it is important. Additionally, we explore examples of how political struggle can be used to construct this united front.

**Section 4: The Mechanisms to Construct A Subject, Build Independent Political Power, and Win Governing Power** lays out the relationship between political power and political organization in the building of a new political subject and the construction of a broad united front. This section also explains the link between political and governing power.

**Section 5: National Left Formation** puts forth our current thinking on the purpose and aims of a national left formation.

## **SECTION 2: 2016-2018 STRATEGY RECAP**

Our central task from 2016-18 was to unite with and unite the advanced around the need to build independent political power and independent political organization. This section will provide a brief overview of the primary pieces of our 2016-2018 Strategy because they are essential to set the context and foundation for our updated strategy that follows.

### ***2.1 The Immediate Enemy: The New Confederacy***

The 2016 strategy defined the New Confederacy as the white united front, that includes the most reactionary capitalists, that has a pro austerity, white supremacist, and cisheteropatriarchal agenda that uses the Republican Party as its political instrument. These forces have managed to seize power in the form of trifectas<sup>1</sup> and triplexes<sup>2</sup>. As of this moment (2019) the New Confederacy remains the immediate enemy.

## ***2.2 Focus at the State Level***

Under the US system of federalism states are the basic political unit with some of the most concentrated power. They have many powers that are independent of the Federal Government in the judicial and legislative realm while also sharing some powers with the Federal Government. States have, and exercise the power to, set the conditions and parameters for smaller units of government (i.e. cities and counties, including drawing lines for voter districts, the subject of many gerrymandering challenges) to operate. Through laws they control public education, law enforcement, voting rights, and criminal law to name a few. Power at the state level also has the ability to impact and organize “up” within the federal government through elected US Senators and House of Representatives which impacts the US Congress’ political leanings and by extension the types of political programs that are fought for and carried out. They have the power to determine how federally mandated programs are implemented, which can make it easier or harder for people to access them. Additionally, because of the New Confederacy’s dominance at this level of government and the level of polarization and struggle for power at this level, it remains the important scale and scope for us to build Independent Political Power (IPP) and IPOs at the state level.

## ***2.3 The Electoral Arena as the Key Site of Struggle and the United Front***

2.3.1 In early 2016, we adopted a Main Political Report and a Strategy that largely focused on the electoral sphere, in part because of the clear and present electoral danger which those documents anticipated. The Trump disaster in some ways confirms the underlying warning in those documents’ assessments of the momentum of the allied

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<sup>1</sup> Trifectas are when the same party occupies the governorship, the majority of the state house, and the majority of the state house of representatives

<sup>2</sup> Triplexes are when the same party occupies the governorship, the attorney general, and secretary of state

politics of white supremacy and austerity, their strategic entrenchment in state governments, and the impossibility that the neoliberal mainstream of the Democratic Party could offer an effective alternative. In 2016 we assessed that while our political enemies were both powerful and cunning there was also the emergent possibility of a progressive united front that could and can win.

2.3.2 Then (as now in 2019) the Electoral Arena was identified as the key site of struggle, Here is where power is continually contested on all levels across various issues and where many important decisions get made. Given the role of the states within the US political system, we assessed the need to enter into the state-level electoral arena to faceoff with and fight the New Confederacy, and in so doing *enter into a tactical alliance with the Democrats that would require us to discern when to work with, isolate, or fight them*. Later in this document we will address some of the nuances we have learned about what's possible depending on the region of the US and political conditions unique to those regions.

2.3.3 Additionally, through navigating and leveraging the electoral arena we saw we could access thousands of people through various electoral or electorally minded institutions (i.e. Democratic Party or Unions) and databases (i.e. Voter Action Network - VAN)<sup>3</sup> toward three different ends. First, we could identify, engage and build alliances with key progressive and tactical allies within and outside of government and the Democratic Party. Second, we could raise the political consciousness of people through having to see and contend with all of the tensions, contradictions, and contests for power that happen in the electoral arena. Finally, we could facilitate the creation of a new relationship between government and our communities; create a new definition and function about what it means to govern through the work of the strategic alliance and its united front allies; and stop, mitigate, or reverse various aspects of the New Confederacy's agenda.

2.3.4 We identified the key progressive forces to be those that actively fight against the New Confederate agenda of austerity, cisheteropatriarchy, and white supremacy. The

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<sup>3</sup> Voter Action Network (VAN) is a licensed voter database that has the voting history and information of registered voters in the US. It is used by the Democratic party and other progressive campaigns and organizations

elements that make up the strategic alliance are rooted in the working class and/or ON struggles which include New Working-Class Organizations<sup>4</sup>, particular locals or sections of unions, and community organizations. Ultimately, the strategic alliance an integral part of our united front, a core which promotes a progressive, and in some cases a revolutionary, agenda.

2.3.5 We stated that only a *united front* led by *the advanced* would be capable of defeating *the New Confederacy*. To create such a united front, and to win advanced leadership, those forces would need *independent political organization* and would engage in struggle for *independent political power*.

2.3.6 An underlying rationale of that argument was that struggles waged in the electoral arena best enabled us to connect the array of social forces that we suggested should be united in order to defeat our enemy. Many events at that time encouraged us to develop our work in uniting with the advanced in fights for leadership over intermediate and even some neoliberal forces against that enemy: critical referenda fights that led to re-enfranchisement; successful progressive alliances to elect criminal justice reform candidates and policies; major labor mobilizations to defeat right-to-work referenda; public union mobilization and teacher strikes that challenged sitting governments and began to electorally defeat opponents; and a groundswell of progressive and Left people, especially women of color, candidates for every level of office-holding.

2.3.7 We assessed that the Democratic Party was (and remains) a part of the united front against the New Confederacy because the latter have a vested interest in taking away the Democratic Party dominance. Given the predominance of the neo-liberal wing of the party we assessed it was imperative to “sleep with one eye open”. We recognized that, as part of the backwards sector in our united front, they would actively oppose us when it came to economic programs that would challenge neoliberalism (as an example) but would play an enthusiastic or vacillating role in isolating and defeating the NC. Therefore, we needed to be in tactical alliance with them, employing them for specific moments,

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<sup>4</sup> New Working-Class Organizations are the Social Justice non-profits that look to organize the working class within other community institutions or places instead of the workplace e.g. Workers Centers, Right to the City groups fighting for affordable or public housing, good schools etc.,

issues, etc., when we needed to, while isolating or combatting them by contesting them for leadership *of the front* or by taking counterhegemonic measures and actions.

2.3.8 Even then (2016) we recognized possible limitations and pitfalls to our emphasis. Seemingly the vast majority of progressive, politically activated people identify with the Democratic Party, which is compromised and divided in its direction. Victories meet the limitations imposed by still more powerful forces: pre-emption laws, or the recent experiences in North Carolina and Wisconsin, where Right Wing legislators rewrite laws quickly to undermine the electoral gains of the people. Then there are the experiences of the whole global socialist history—the counter-revolutions and the coups.

2.3.9 Nonetheless we still believed that the electoral arena was (and remains) the most urgent and present opportunity for organizing the advanced and cohering a united front to defeat our enemy. The global political crisis, initiated by the collapse of Left political opposition under neoliberalism and now the subsequent crumbling of institutional neoliberal regimes to largely right-wing populist movements, both invites and demands intervention.

2.3.10 Some political theorists important to us talk about a political **subjectivity** or **protagonism**, similar to the subject or protagonist in a story; they are talking about the creation of a *new political subject (the expression of a collective will) which can lead the united front that will vanquish our common enemy.*

2.3.11 *We believed that protagonism existed objectively in embryonic form, given the political context of 2016, in the united front against the New Confederacy. The united front gave it the best chance of being born.* Put another way, the strategic task for the Left is to *create a new political subject capable of contesting for leadership of the united front to defeat the New Confederacy while offering an alternative to neoliberalism, which it must do in order to win.*

2.3.12 Our assessment was that the struggle against the New Confederacy would overwhelm our forces and subordinate them to the neoliberals *unless and until* we developed independent political organization--the concrete expression of the strategic alliance *and its allies*. IPOs are the way that we build unity in action among the advanced

and contend for leadership inside a united front against the New Confederacy that is broader than that alliance, and which contains powerful countervailing forces. And yet, paradoxically, it is a united front that contains all those forces which is the only thing capable of defeating the New Confederacy--even in an immediate sense. The neoliberal wing needs the advanced to be united in action against our common enemy, just as our forces need them.

2.3.13 One strategic consequence of this assessment was the necessity and urgency of an “inside/outside” strategy: we must operate inside and outside the electoral arena. Additionally, to be effective, we must operate inside and outside the Democratic Party--where we come into contact and coalition with neoliberal and intermediate forces. The inside/outside strategy is about building power outside of the Democratic party, e.g. through the use of base building campaigns and inside the Democratic Party, e.g. by running or endorsing a candidate on the Democratic Party line. We do not seek to *reform* the Democratic Party but rather to use it for whatever tools and opportunities it will present due to its structure, tensions, and contradictions that will allow us to build more political power.

2.3.14 In the 2016 strategy, we outlined our thinking on what the two political parties, Republicans and Democrats, are and are not.

The political parties are:

- ❖ Broad coalitions made up of smaller coalitions that are in a constant struggle to maintain or fight for hegemony of the party.
- ❖ Each coalition or alliance of coalitions being the political expression of various economic and social bases with class interests playing a central role. For example, the leading coalition of the Democratic Party is an expression of the interests of sectors of capital like the Tech Industry and parts of Finance Capital
- ❖ Have contact with the broadest sectors of the population and capture their attention, and sometimes their imagination, through the various electoral cycles

- ❖ Take a political subject, that is otherwise disparate, and mobilizes that subject to move in coordinated political action (voting) for a specific set of time (election season)
- ❖ Are entities that, in general, offer a level of legitimacy, visibility, and resources (in the form of infrastructure or money) to organizations, groups, or formations that could not otherwise get an audience with the broader population and would not have the same level of resources to build their organizational brand, power, and infrastructure. This is true despite the crisis of political legitimacy of governance in the US and the reduced numbers of people who identify strongly with either party
- ❖ Are entities that have a low bar to be affiliated with them. You register as a Democrat or Republican, then you have joined the broader coalition. And in 22 states the bar is even lower because a person registers to vote with no party affiliation or designation.
- ❖ Are entities that have the ability to flex political and governing power, and depending on the type of dominant or hegemonic coalition that is leading them, that holds potential to drastically shift material conditions
- ❖ The neoliberal coalition of the Democratic Party created and maintains hegemony in the party in this current political moment.

The political parties are not:

- ❖ Monolithic or static entities. The hegemony held by the leading coalition(s) within it would have us think differently but our experiences in being a part of, or observing other coalitions within the broader coalition, tell a different story
- ❖ Organizations in and of themselves. While they do possess some level of organization (i.e. the Florida Democratic Party), and in some states it is clearly more defined than others, the Democratic Party itself is not an organization.

**Now, in Sections 3 - 5 we move to our strategy for the current period 2019 – 2022.**

**As you will see, it is built upon the principles and assessments we recapped above from the 2016 – 18 period.**



## **SECTION 3: THE UNITED FRONT, DEFEATING THE NEW CONFEDERACY, AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE**

**3.1 Right now, there is no actual organized force capable of defeating the New Confederacy.** While the Democratic Party remains the dominant organized alternative to the white nationalist, right wing populist politics that the New Confederacy represents, the internal predominance of the Democrats' neoliberal wing provides no meaningful alternative to the ongoing crises—in the economy, in politics, and most alarmingly in the environment. (In fact, neoliberalism and its political agents are in some ways the explanatory and exacerbating factor.)

**3.2 This is increasingly a global phenomenon,** as political parties ranging from liberal to “left” (social democratic and in some instances even nominally communist parties) have acquiesced to or been taken over by neoliberalism, devastating traditional working-class bases, aggravating contradictions around nationality and immigration, and so on.

**3.3 We contend that it is only a united front led by an advanced layer of forces in opposition to white supremacy, austerity and cisheteropatriarchy that can defeat this enemy.** A politics that both rejects and challenges—that offers a genuine alternative—to white supremacy, austerity, and cisheteropatriarchy is the only durable solution, and a united front must lead with those politics.

**3.4 The clearest path to organizing that united front is through engaging *in the electoral arena*.** Why do we place so much emphasis on the electoral arena in this moment? Because we believe this is the arena of struggle in which we are most clearly presented with the opportunity to *construct the united front*—to bring together social and political forces across and beyond self-interest.

**3.5** Our 2016 Strategy observed that much of the Left organizing happening then—as now—was confined to resistance and reform, around specific issues. We understand the essential role that this level of struggle plays; as the strategy said, it brings people into motion and radicalizes them.

**3.6** But while these struggles are essential, they are also only able to be *initial step* toward the construction of a united front capable of winning power and defeating our enemy. It is

only when these struggles become *generalized* beyond the specific sector that they create the potential for a united front broad enough to become capable of being the new political subject—the collective will.

**3.7** Struggles become generalized when they enter into the broadest arena of politics—when they become an issue which poses a choice *to the broadest possible constituency* and transcend the relative autonomy and isolation of belonging to a single constituency, and become a matter deliberated about in all of public life. The clearest and most practical way to do this is through elections, which necessarily involve and implicate the entire public.

**3.8** Some of the most exciting examples of this include the struggles for re-enfranchisement in Florida, against Right-to-Work referendum in Missouri, teachers' strikes which called for broad public support in West Virginia and Arizona. By moving from an approach that specifically organized *just* affected workers to one that mobilized mass public support, these efforts became generalized and cohered a constituency that transcended any single one.

**3.9** These struggles can also take the form of a specific campaign for an elected official who represents in their candidacy and in their core base the interests of a movement as well. The most significant example of this tendency is the many races for District Attorneys, Sheriffs, and Judges by Black-led organizers and reformers. By putting a candidate on the ballot who symbolically represents the struggle for criminal justice reform, police oversight, etc., these organizers move from a specific constituent-based struggle to a general one—creating the possibility for a broad united front.

**3.10** In this way, specific, constituent- or issue-based struggles can enter into the broad political sphere and help create the conditions for a new, mass political subject—importantly *under the leadership of advanced progressive forces*. This is how, most especially in the electoral arena, the united front, which we envisaged and argued, necessary to defeat the New Confederacy can be formed.

**3.11** But there is another way that the electoral sphere can, *already does, and is*, creating the possibility for the united front we have talked about through transformative campaigns:

that sphere both suggests and creates new political possibilities and movement toward realizing those possibilities through scrambling old alliances and forming new ones in the electorate. There is Bernie Sanders of course, but more excitingly Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Stacy Abrams, and Andrew Gillum. Through these campaigns, and the powerful symbolism of their candidates (a disheveled and angry septuagenarian Brooklyn democratic socialist, a twenty-something Boriqueña socialist bartender, a young single Southern Black woman, an unapologetically Black southern democratic socialist mayor and so on), new coalitions form which contest for representation and power *on the basis of imagining new politics*. These coalitions are temporary because they are organized as electorates, but they demonstrate that such alliances—the kinds of alliances which may cohere into *a political subject and more broadly into a united front*—indeed cohere in the electoral sphere.

**3.12 But the advanced forces, united in political struggle, are far from capable of defeating the New Confederacy alone.** A united front that includes intermediate and even some backward (neoliberal) elements remains necessary. While we struggle for leadership in that front—and believe that it is only the vision, program, and unity of the advanced that will create the possibility to defeat our main enemy—we will not in every instance lead. Many on the Left will argue that we should maintain no alliance with neoliberal forces inside the Democratic Party: we reject this moralistic perspective for a strategic and tactical one. Everywhere we should be clear about the program we want and the leadership we need; nowhere should we abandon an alliance against the New Confederacy.

**3.13** Our approach is distinct from the Popular Front policy of the Communist Party prior to and during WWII, when it was a non-critical junior partner in the broad front of Left and center forces against Nazism and Fascism. That is, we are *not* calling for a political program that is *just* about electing any Democratic politician. Instead, we are calling for a clear progressive program that we fight for, through primaries, non-partisan races, and outside struggles; *and* commitment to a fight against our common enemy. This will look different depending on conditions: in Blue states, it may be the case that the advanced forces could struggle to a position to play a decisive leading role in a united front against

the New Confederacy; in purple and red states, we may play secondary roles as we develop our forces and build organization and strength to ultimately contest for leadership in that front.

#### SECTION 4: “FOR ALL” - THE FRAME FOR THE UNITED FRONT

Now we turn our attention to the mechanisms that will allow us to construct a broad and powerful enough united front to defeat the new confederacy. Here we focus on what will allow us to successfully build the new political subject in a way that expresses the “us” (the people’s united front) versus the “them” (the New Confederacy).

Theory note: For there to be an us, there also has to be a them that we can define through relation to us. This is why it’s critically important to have an *enemy*—the racists-billionaires, the New Confederacy, and their political organization, the Republican Party. The naming of an enemy gives us the narrow target needed to direct the united front forces against. This in turn sets the foundation to define the lines of demarcation between the enemy and the people’s united front.

**4.1** Who is the us? An us must also be imagined, one with which the broadest section of the advanced can identify and on the basis of which they can also win and lead in a united front *against* the New Confederacy. The “us” thus has to be something that can contain *within it* the specific subjects of oppressed nationalities and the multinational working class, but *also* transcend it enough to unite people *across* these subjects. There is, therefore, a need for a mechanism that speaks to the particular interests within the collective will, but that is also general/universal

enough to be an identifier and move people into political action through emotions and feelings of those whose interests are not being directly spoken to.

**4.2** What is this us? We believe that the way to build the “us” is the ***For All***. This represents a unity of the advanced and the link between the particular subjects of the united front.

**4.3** Here we propose that the For All frame be the generally adopted one for our organization, and that our work engage in the struggle for political power. We suggest that it is on the basis of *For All* that we can facilitate a broad unity on the foundation of the *specific* grievances of oppressed peoples that also invites a generalized public support and participation.

**4.4** Let's reflect on the powerful rhetorical and political intervention of our Durham comrades on this question. The political program—Homes for All, Economy for All, Education for All etc.—*rhetorically includes everyone* but of course speaks to the specific position of those people who are *excluded* from housing access, good jobs, good schools, and so on. That is, while the frame of the *us* is broad and unifying, the *content* speaks to the specific experience of those who we already place at the center of our united front schema.

**4.5** Similar narratives by Memphis for All are already also gaining traction among advanced activists. By providing an umbrella for a broad set of interests that can be identified with on a particular and general level. In a growing political and economic crisis of this moment, For All allows for people's feeling for things to be more fair to be addressed.

**4.6** There are other frames as well: New Majority, the 99% (despite its racialized baggage), and OurRevolution also gesture toward political subjectivity. Additionally, there is the UK Labor "For the Many, Not the Few" which we like because it actually says that it is *not* for something, that is, it brings in the rhetorical guillotine and cuts the elites out altogether. Leaving no room for ambiguity of who the "us" and "them" are.

**4.7** While there is probably a lot to be gained by debating the rhetorical merits of these various options, the "For All" frame is undeniably associated with two of our most successful projects in the south: Durham For All and Memphis for All. A dramatic departure from that does not make a tremendous amount of sense. *And* it allows for clear connection to DSA and its Medicare for All campaign and Right to the City's (RTTC) Homes for All campaign<sup>5</sup>, both of which are fantastic examples of the kind of counter hegemonic political struggle that we should be interested in joining and helping lead.

**4.8** "For All" can speak to issues that do not have a generalized enemy, like in the workplace. We should talk about workplace democracy *for all* and argue that any struggle to win power in the workplace is part-and-parcel of a struggle to create an *economy for*

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<sup>5</sup> Focuses on putting housing and land into entities of public ownership and control and by engaging in fights that increase housing access to working class, ON folks, and the dispossessed.

*all.* We should always and everywhere attempt to connect our struggle to the broadest possible subject even while attending to the sensitivities of its potential specificity.

**4.9** For All becomes the dividing line between the “them” (the New Confederacy) and the “us” (the People’s United Front). But *For All* is just a rhetorical frame and a basic principle.

***For All as a material force: Independent political organization and the struggle for independent political power***

**4.10** Here, we reaffirm our objective as the creation of independent political organizations, as suggested in our previous strategy. Organization represents the formal process of embodying/creating subjectification—a transition from an objective to a subjective force.

**4.11** This is somewhat akin to Marx’s notions of “class in itself” and “class for itself”—i.e., when the working class becomes the proletariat, recognizing its common interest and fate. We are talking in some ways about “the united front in itself” (i.e., the objective array of forces that *could* defeat the New Confederacy) becoming “the united front for itself” (i.e., the subjective alliance of forces that *can* defeat the New Confederacy).

**4.12** The IPO is a way to construct the political subject as well as a key form necessary to vanquish the New Confederacy. By political subject we mean the movement of forces to consciously seeing themselves as actors/force in defeating their enemy: here the New Confederacy. The form of the IPO which is both independent and flexible in nature, can become the vehicle for the collective will to define its own identity, build its political power, and wield that power in the fight against the immediate enemy. *Ultimately, IPOs will need to link up nationally, in order to contend with Democrats; but for now, building up well-rooted state-level IPOs is the key task.*

**4.13** When we are speaking about IPOs, we mean:

**Independent** - our base understands itself as *electorally, legislatively, etc distinct from:* the Democrats (even if/when we work with and collaborate with them); the ruling class; and other neoliberal political forces.

**Political** - we engage in *generalized social struggles for power* (see above) *that centers on using the electoral arena as a tool and a strategic terrain.*

**Organization** - formal, long term infrastructure with a division of labor and a mechanism for developing strategy, prioritization, and resource deployment.

**4.14** *Political power is the power to interrupt and reorganize peoples' collaboration with, obedience to, and identification with an existing regime--and to forge new social & political blocs and identities; i.e., the power to construct a new subject. Political power allows a given social force or bloc to contest and disrupt existing hegemonic narratives, cohere social blocs and forces in organizational forms - and subsequently articulate and implement a common program for the organization of society in the face of competing alliances and programs. That is, the creation of a new political identity happens through struggle. Political power is at the basis of all other forms of power—governing, state, etc.*

**4.15** Already we have suggested that *the* way to create a political force capable of defeating our enemy is *through* political struggle (above); and in part it is the contest for governing power that will allow us to grow our political power, by creating clear divisions and organizing people to our side—and by using governing power in turn to grow our political power

**4.16** Independent political power allows us to create a common critique of the existing social order among a broad array of social forces that we are always cohering into a political subject, through forging common identification against a common enemy.

**4.17** What about governing power? This is a place where we have learned the most since our last Congress, and where we can contribute to the inside/outside trend we are constructing.

**4.18** Governing power is always a consequence of political power—including in compromised democracies like the US, where the rulers do not need a *majority* to win—and is an index into the degree to which political power has been won by our forces.

**4.19** Governing power ought to be used to grow our political power, which in turn should be used to expand our governing power. A wonderful example of this the Lynn wage theft policy, which empowers their movement organization to enforce wage theft laws, which in turn grows the identification with New Lynn, thereby expanding its political power—its power to say, “this is us” vs. “this is them” (i.e., wage thieves). In another example, the

local labor council worked with union teachers and immigrant parents to improve the food in the schools, and also to force the School Committee to use training time to train teachers to deal with the problems facing undocumented students. Following through, the council, teachers and parents organized a tasting night for parents to check out food options. And, also, worked their way into the content and format of the in-service training for the school system. Political power built governing power and contributed to the new political subject (a specific example of the strategic alliance, teachers' unions and immigrant parents) and helped create the consciousness of the new political subject we want to create.

**4.20** Another way to use governing power is to *organize social forces*. When we campaign for and elect leaders into office, a political program and struggle becomes symbolically embodied by that person: their message is amplified through becoming representative of a broader public and constituency. This should and is used to move a political agenda; we should fight to ensure that this is also used to *organize* the united front. Our *elected* representatives should be capable of naming all the constituencies of a united front and creating a public narrative and agenda that unites those constituencies.

**4.21** Moreover, the politicians should be organizers themselves, and understand how to build a coalition and move a Left program in government. (As an example, the comrades in NC understood that the school board in Durham could be *organized* to a progressive program if there was an *organizer* on the Board itself. This should always be our strategy.)

**4.22** So, in all of these ways, elected leaders organizing social forces and organizing within the bodies on which they serve, we will re-define the nature of our electoral work and, especially, building governing power. We do not simply seek to “hold elected officials accountable”; that is necessary but insufficient for creating the new political entity we seek to create. We seek not to elect legislators, but to elect, directly from our social movements, organizers who legislate.

**4.23** Additionally, we want to transform the function and relationship of elected officials and their constituencies, individually and collectively, to a mutual working relationship where issues/programs/policies/etc. are discussed and decisions made. One way that this could be achieved is through co-governance models that create a “working with”



space, processes, and culture between those elected and the base that helped them win elected office. This effectively “lifts the veil” that shields governing institutions from public view and allows constituencies access to the some of the levers of power; it moves constituencies beyond just articulating a program to which an elected official would respond, towards being a part of shaping that program into policy and practices.

#### **4.25 *The struggle for political power by movement forces that aren’t IPOs***

**4.26** Many comrades, and largely our movements, are not immediately in a position to develop independent political organization. Often, we are organizing in social movements that are *specific* to a constituency or an issue. What then?

**4.27** The struggle for political power—the struggle to articulate the new political subject—is still central, and we should at every turn bring our work as much possible into a *generalized social struggle* (i.e., a political one; see above) that helps facilitate that subject. Here we return to the incredible work of Black organizers to lead both mass resistance against the police state and electoral efforts for re-enfranchisement, electing new criminal justice administrators, and so on; feminist organizers capturing #MeToo and pro-choice uprisings in the electoral arena; labor organizers leading efforts to defeat or overturn right-to-work referenda; etc. These struggles maintain the *particular* but appeal to the *general*—that is, they cohere a broad subject on the basis of a specific issue.

### **SECTION 5: NATIONAL LEFT FORMATION**

**5.1** The National Left Formation that we propose is not an electoral party or organization. We envision it to be a “pre-party” vehicle that is building up our capacity and coherence on the Left while awaiting both objective and subjective conditions that would support the establishment of a mass party towards socialism (party meant here in a non-electoral sense).

**5.2** This formation would serve as a place to:

- Provide guidance to the local and state-based IPOs and other forms of organizations that are building IPP;
- Create a national vision and political program that is grounded in and led by the needs and demands of the strategic alliance;

- Discuss and refine a potential strategy for the left as a whole;
- Continue to build out and foster the type of organizations in this political moment that can take initiative and independence at the scale of U.S. society; and
- Be a force that creates a significant left pole within the united front against the New Confederacy

**5.3** In summary, a new political subject *capable of leading the united front against* the New Confederacy does not yet exist, but there is an array of forces that if cohered together *could* defeat the NC and take on a vanguard role in transforming society. To create that subject, we must engage with the electoral arena, mainly at the state level—the broadest form of politics available to us—while also working to build national left organization which can help guide and bolster the political struggle of IPOs and all forms of independent political power. We should do so under the banner of For All—a frame which mainly benefits oppressed people, but which allows for a broad identification and allegiance. We articulate this through the creation of independent political organization, and generally through struggles for political power.