

## 13 Rules For Radicals – Alinsky’s Guide For Activists

What follows is for those who want to change the world from what it is to what they believe it should be. The Prince was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power. Rules for Radicals is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away.

The first step in community organization is community disorganization.

The organizer... must first rub raw the resentments of the people of the community; fan the latent hostilities of many of the people to the point of overt expression. He must search out controversy and issues, rather than avoid them, for unless there is controversy people are not concerned enough to act. . . . An organizer must stir up dissatisfaction and discontent; provide a channel into which the people can angrily pour their frustrations... you must agitate to the point of conflict.

**RULE 1: Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have.** If your organization is small, hide your numbers in the dark and raise a din that will make everyone think you have many more people than you do.

**RULE 2: Never go outside the experience of your people...** the result is confusion, fear, and retreat... [and] the collapse of communication.

**RULE 3: Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy.** Here you want to cause confusion, fear, and retreat.

**RULE 4: Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.** You can kill them with this, for they can no more obey their own rules than the Christian church can live up to Christianity

**RULE 5: Ridicule is man’s most potent weapon.** It’s hard to counter attack ridicule, and it infuriates the opposition, which then reacts to your advantage.

**RULE 6: A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.** If your people aren’t having a ball doing it, there is something very wrong with the tactic.

**RULE 7: A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.** Commitment may become ritualistic as people turn to other issues

**RULE 8: Keep the pressure on, with different tactics and actions, and utilize all events of the period for your purpose\*.**

**RULE 9: The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.**

**RULE 10: The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.** It is this unceasing pressure that results in the reactions from the opposition that are essential for the success of the campaign.

**RULE 11: If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.** *This is based on the principle that every positive has its negative\*.*

**RULE 12: The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.** Avoid being trapped by an opponent or an interviewer who says, “Okay, what would you do?”

**RULE 13. Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.** Don’t try to attack abstract corporations or bureaucracies. Identify a responsible individual. Ignore attempts to shift or spread the blame. The real action is in the enemy’s reaction. The enemy properly goaded and guided in his reaction will be your major strength.

**Dostoevski said that taking a new step is what people fear most. Any revolutionary change must be preceded by a passive, affirmative, non-challenging attitude toward change among the mass of our people. They must feel so frustrated, so defeated, so lost, so futureless in the prevailing system that they are willing to let go of the past and change the future. This**

## acceptance is the reformation essential to any revolution.

— Saul Alinsky — *Rules for Radicals*, prologue

The end is what you want and the means is how you get it

— In war the end justifies almost any means

— Any effective means is automatically judged by the opposition to be unethical

Tactics, like life, require that you move with the action

— Tactics means doing what you can with what you have

— Tactics is the art of how to take and how to give

For an elementary illustration of tactics, take parts of your face as the point of reference; your eyes, your ears, and your nose.

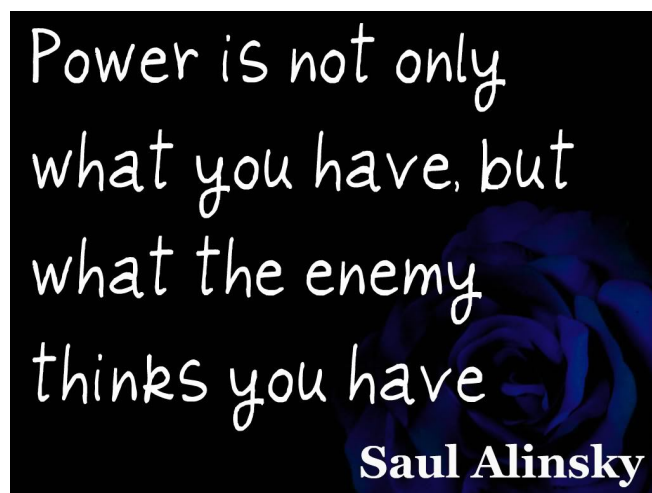
First the eyes; if you have organized a vast, mass-based people's organization, you can parade it visibly before the enemy and openly show your power.

Second the ears; if your organization is small in numbers, then do what Gideon did: conceal the members in the dark but raise a din and clamor that will make the listener believe that your organization numbers many more than it does.

Third, the nose; if your organization is too tiny even for noise, stink up the place

Next post in this series: I Am Vegan – there is power in a word

\*NOTE\*: Rules For Radicals is long out of print, along with Reveille for Radicals (1946) and many of the sources I used have different versions of the rules, some have had comments added, without saying that they are not from the Alinsky original, these have then been copies and pasted. As far as I can tell, these are the rules — in Alinsky's own words.



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2. These rules are used when one cannot debate on the issues.

It is too transparent and shameful. Make an honest argument and debate the topic. This exemplifies the use of

treachery rather than honesty. Mr. A. is not someone I would choose to follow. "The end justifies the means" NO, it doesn't unless one is void of any humanity. Hitler, Stalin, Castro, Che and Mao where such men not the best company to be in.

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