

Saul Alinsky

From Wikiquote

Saul David Alinsky (January 30, 1909 – June 12, 1972) was an American activist and writer. He is generally considered to be the founder of modern community organizing.

Sourced

- Asking a sociologist to solve a problem is like prescribing an enema for diarrhea.
 - Eric Norden, "Saul Alinsky: A candid conversation with the feisty radical organizer," *Playboy*, **19** (3), March 1972[1] (<http://www.progress.org/2003/alinsky5.htm>)

Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals (1971)

- Lest we forget at least an over-the-shoulder acknowledgment to the very first radical: from all our legends, mythology, and history (and who is to know where mythology leaves off and history begins—or which is which), the first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom—Lucifer.
 - Epigraph, p. ix
- Dostoevski said that taking a new step is what people fear the 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 chance the future. This acceptance is the reformation essential to any revolution.
 - p. xix
- Men don't like to step abruptly out of the security of familiar experience; they need a bridge to cross from their own experience to a new way. A revolutionary organizer must shake up the prevailing patterns of their lives—agitate, create disenchantment and discontent with the current values, to produce, if not a passion for change, at least a passive, affirmative, non-challenging climate.
 - p. xxi-xxii
- No politician can sit on a hot issue if you make it hot enough.
 - p. xxiv
- The democratic ideal springs from the ideas of liberty, equality, majority rule through free elections, protection of the rights of minorities, and freedom to subscribe to multiple loyalties in matters of religion, economics, and politics rather than to a total loyalty to the state. The spirit of democracy is the idea of importance and worth in the individual, and faith in the kind of world where the individual can achieve as much of his potential as possible.
 - p. xxiv
- 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.

In this book we are concerned with how to create mass organizations to seize power and give it to the people; to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace, cooperation, equal and full opportunities for education, full and useful employment, health, and the creation of those circumstances in which man can have the chance to live by values that give meaning to life.

- p. 3
- In this world laws are written for the lofty aim of "the common good" and then acted out in life on the basis of the common greed. In this world irrationality clings to man like his shadow so that the right things get done for the wrong reasons—afterwards, we dredge up the right reasons for justification. It is a world not of angels but of angles, where men speak of moral principles but act on power principles; a world where we are always moral and our enemies always immoral; a world where "reconciliation" means that when one side gets the power and the other side gets reconciled to it, then we have reconciliation.
 - p. 13
- The cry of the Have-Nots has never been "give us our hearts," but always "get off our backs"; they ask not for love but for breathing space.
 - p. 19
- Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict.
 - p. 21
- The end is what you want and the means is how you get it.
 - p. 24
- To say that corrupt means corrupt the ends is to believe in the immaculate conception of ends and principles. The real arena is corrupt and bloody. Life is a corrupting process from the time a child learns to play his mother off against his father in the politics of when to go to bed; he who fears corruption fears life.
 - p. 24–25
- The most unethical of all means is the non-use of any means.
 - p. 26
- The seventh rule of the ethics of means and ends is that generally success or failure is a mighty determinant of ethics. The judgment of history leans heavily on the outcome of success or failure; it spells the difference between the traitor and the patriotic hero. There can be no such thing as a successful traitor, for if one succeeds he becomes a founding father.
 - p. 34
- The ninth rule of the ethics of means and ends is that any effective means is automatically judged by the opposition as being unethical.
 - p. 35
- It does not matter what you know about anything if you cannot communicate to your people. In that event you are not even a failure. You're just not there.
 - p. 81
- Change comes from power, and power comes from organization. In order to act, people must get together.
 - p. 113
- 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.
 - p. 126

- Always remember the first rule of power tactics: Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have. The second rule is: Never go outside the experience of your people. When an action or tactic is outside the experience of the people, it results in confusion, fear, and retreat. [...] The third rule is: Whenever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy. Here you want to cause confusion, fear, and retreat.
 - p. 126–127
- Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.
 - p. 128
- 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.
 - p. 128
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.
 - p. 130
- I have on occasion remarked that I felt confident that I could persuade a millionaire on a Friday to subsidize a revolution for Saturday out of which he would make a huge profit on Sunday even though he was certain to be executed on Monday.
 - P.150

External links

- *Rules for Radicals* (<https://archive.org/details/RulesForRadicals>) at archive.org

Retrieved from "https://en.wikiquote.org/w/index.php?title=Saul_Alinsky&oldid=2141478"

Categories: Political activists | 1970s deaths | People from Illinois

- This page was last modified on 25 June 2016, at 11:36.
- Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.