

A Mobilization Story: Patterns for the Impending Emergency

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The ascension of a TV personality with no governmental experience and a despotic and impulsive temperament to the presidency of the United States is not funny any more. His looming presence on the international stage can no longer be seen as the amusing if embarrassing distraction that it seemed—at least in the beginning—to provide to the nominating process. Unfortunately, it is now an emergency.

Any attempt to catalog the ways in which Trump has—and continues to—demonstrate his unsuitability is doomed to failure. The evidence seems to be mounting too quickly — and he has not yet been inaugurated. His nominations for cabinet posts tell quite a bit: for Education, he proposes a candidate who opposes public education; for State, he puts forward an executive in the oil industry; for Environmental Protection, a climate change denier; for Labor a fast food magnate.

Maddeningly, he is unwilling or unable to provide evidence or logical support for his many curious views. These include the fundamental benevolence of Russia and the fundamental malevolence of China among countless others. This is alarming of course but the fact that his followers and many elected officials of the Republican party do not seem to care or to ask for more explanation may be even more so.

Is this the end of America's democratic experiment as many contemporary authors are speculating? The rejection of civic intelligence seems palpable and endemic. Yet, hopefully, the descent into chaos or worse is not inevitable. But if it is not, there must be very powerful counter currents. Therefore we must ask how quickly can a credible and peaceful — but *forceful*—resistance to his actions materialize? What form might it take? What roles should individuals and groups assume? What are their objectives?

In my book, *Liberating Voices: A Pattern Language for Communication Revolution I* (and 85 contributors) presented 136 "patterns" for civic engagement. Each pattern acts as a seed for thought. The patterns are open-ended so groups can use them to develop ideas and actions that meet their specific needs.

For the impending emergency that truly begins today, inauguration day, I have selected fourteen patterns that seem to be most relevant. I have put aside another thirty (listed below) which could help strengthen and build on the first set.

With these fourteen patterns as the base I have developed a narrative that weaves them together. (The pattern names are shown **LIKE THIS**.) The narrative describes one way that we collectively could use the patterns for thinking *and* acting in these strange times. But it is not the only one that can be developed. The patterns are intentionally open-ended and there are millions of ways they can be woven together to tell stories.

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First and foremost, the election of Trump represents an enormous challenge to [CIVIC INTELLIGENCE](#). The fact that Trump was elected demonstrates that our [CIVIC INTELLIGENCE](#) is currently deficient. To resist his policies it must be re-energized. And in the long run it must be inclusive and sustained if it is to equal to the challenges that we will inevitably be faced with in the future.

The mobilization should help prevent many of the oppressive intentions of Trump, his supporters, and the legislative bodies under his party's control. At the same time, ideally, the circumstances that gave rise to Trump's support—the anxiety, mistrust, anger, frustration, and fears of many Americans—should be addressed. Moreover, the general [CIVIC INTELLIGENCE](#) of the citizenry should be strengthened and institutionalized so as to avoid this type of emergency in the future.

It is absolutely vital not to succumb to hopelessness or cynicism. Instead, it is crucial that a [SENSE OF STRUGGLE](#) emerges that acknowledges the magnitude of the challenge while also providing motivation to persevere and to build community. This pattern was demonstrated within days after the election when [PEACEFUL PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS](#) sprouted up all over the country including one at the middle school in our neighborhood. These help show the size and strength of the rejection of the policies proposed by the president-elect to the world and also, significantly, to the participants themselves.

But proclaiming dissatisfaction is not enough. Many groups were vilified and threatened during the campaign and after. Accommodating the broad diversity of concerns and those who have those concerns will require a [BIG TENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE](#). And, at the same time, [COMMUNITY NETWORKS](#) must be animated to help ignite and perpetuate a sense of enduring solidarity. We are seeing this with neighborhood meetups and dinners and a lots and lots of new groups and projects that are helping to create new occasions for meaningful action.

Thinking about our actions and making meaning out of our situation is critical and everybody can participate. Why are we doing this? What do we expect to achieve? How do we describe our hopes and fears to others? How do we describe our connections to each other? This where [THE POWER OF STORY](#) comes in. From the times before the advent of writing to the present we conveyed meaning to each other with the stories we tell each other. One of the ways that the pattern can be used is through another pattern, [VOICES OF THE UNHEARD](#), which reminds us that some voices have more access to the microphones and helps us work to ensure that these unheard voices are heard. This pattern in turn helps to support another pattern, [ANTI-RACISM](#). During the campaign racism was employed overtly (immigrants from Latin America are rapists, Muslims are terrorists) and implicitly ("Make America Great Again"). To fight this we must from the beginning adopt an [ANTI-RACISM](#) approach.

Although our [CIVIC CAPABILITIES](#) always existed to some degree, they have been undervalued and underused by the citizenry. This has helped usher in these new unfortunate realities. On the other hand, with strengthened [CIVIC CAPABILITIES](#) we can better fight the damaging program of Trump and his allies. We can also reclaim and reconstitute a new [PUBLIC AGENDA](#) which must also be defended now and in the future. Although we have known for a long time that helping to define and enact the [PUBLIC AGENDA](#) is not the sole province of government it too has been neglected. And when citizens withdraw, corporations and other moneyed interests fill the gap. This new [PUBLIC AGENDA](#) reaffirms that the United States exists for the general welfare of its inhabitants, not for the private strip mining of its assets.

Many of the actions to counter the new types of oppression and ignorance seem to be organic and natural—and they are. We have done much of this before. Positive social change has been won before. But it is not won via a steady or predictable route. path that reason we must seriously evaluate and build our [STRATEGIC CAPACITY](#). This means that examining the threats, the actions we need to take, the resources that we need, and look ahead, consciously building ideas that will allow modern day Davids to defeat modern day Goliaths. Goliaths notwithstanding, we are likely to find ourselves outside of our comfort zone as we move forward. [EVERYDAY HEROISM](#) describes the necessity of making this work somewhat routine. People who risk their life for a noble cause are heroes, but people who face smaller challenges, sometimes daily, are also heroes although their work is less commonly heralded.

As we all know, this election has exposed a great chasm of attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives. For that reason [CONVERSATIONAL SUPPORT ACROSS BOUNDARIES](#) becomes extremely important. Ideally the people who supported Trump are open to discussion to some degree; important discussions about the situations affecting families, jobs, health, and education must be had. And they must be open and direct, not circumvented via ideologically dictated media such as Fox News. Many other patterns in our library of patterns are directed towards reconciliation, some directly and some indirectly, and these also need to be consulted, customized, and deployed.

This is not a test. We now live in under emergency situations in which decisions are being made daily that affect the health, safety, and well-being of people everywhere. Democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are all imperiled, in the United States obviously, but around the world, indeed, in any place that is affected by actions of the US—*everywhere*, in other words.

Emergencies call for [EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS](#). But what is different about communication systems now, during this emergency? Although mainstream media is not entirely unreliable it probably is not adequate for our current needs. And, of course, historically around the world mainstream media has become compromised. A variety of other patterns in the pattern language provide some ideas as to what directions we can take.

The narrative described above is only one way to weave a story using the patterns. I encourage others to weave their own. Unfortunately, the patterns do not come with a guarantee. The hope is that is they can help unlock the ideas and aspirations that we need to help create a better world. The work is important and vast. Today is the day!

### ~~~~ Appendix ~~~~

All of the 136 Liberating Voices patterns can be found at <http://www.publicsphereproject.org/patterns/lv>. We also have cards (both physical and in paper form) that contain short versions of the patterns that are available in [English](#), [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Spanish](#), and [Vietnamese](#). There are many other translations underway and we're always looking for translators.

The 14 Patterns selected for the mobilization story above are below:

|                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| CIVIC INTELLIGENCE             | CIVIC CAPABILITIES              |
| SENSE OF STRUGGLE              | PUBLIC AGENDA                   |
| PEACEFUL PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS | STRATEGIC CAPACITY.             |
| BIG TENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE     | EVERYDAY HEROISM                |
| COMMUNITY NETWORKS             | CONVERSATIONAL SUPPORT ACROSS   |
| THE POWER OF STORY             | BOUNDARIES                      |
| VOICES OF THE UNHEARD,         | EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS |
| ANTI-RACISM                    |                                 |

The 30 additional patterns to be employed soon are below:

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|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Retreat and Reflection</a>           | <a href="#">Strategic Frame</a>            | <a href="#">Teaching to Transgress</a>        |
| <a href="#">Open Action and Research Network</a> | <a href="#">Future Design</a>              | <a href="#">Spiritually Grounded Activism</a> |
| <a href="#">Citizenship Schools</a>              | <a href="#">The Commons</a>                | <a href="#">Public Agenda</a>                 |
| <a href="#">Shared Vision</a>                    | <a href="#">Social Responsibility</a>      | <a href="#">Experimental School</a>           |
| <a href="#">Citizen Journalism</a>               | <a href="#">Matrifocal Orientation</a>     | <a href="#">Informal Learning Groups</a>      |
| <a href="#">Social Dominance Attenuation</a>     | <a href="#">Collective Decision-Making</a> | <a href="#">Thinking Communities</a>          |
| <a href="#">Indigenous Media</a>                 | <a href="#">Translation</a>                | <a href="#">Community Inquiry</a>             |
| <a href="#">Free and Fair Elections</a>          | <a href="#">Education and Values</a>       | <a href="#">Power Research</a>                |
| <a href="#">Equal Access to Justice</a>          | <a href="#">International Networks of</a>  | <a href="#">Activist Road Trip</a>            |
| <a href="#">Grassroots Public Policy</a>         | <a href="#">Alternative Media</a>          | <a href="#">Follow the Money</a>              |
| <a href="#">Development</a>                      | <a href="#">Transforming Institutions</a>  |                                               |