

# Leaderfulness from a Gramscian perspective: Building organic intellectuals within Black lives matter

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## Abstract

Contemporary social movements and organizations have increasingly embraced the notion of ‘leaderfulness’. This development has the possibility of affecting the current struggles these movements face as well as the activist landscapes of the future. Due to its distinct contribution to developing an analysis of leadership, this article seeks to position Gramsci’s intellectual work at the heart of understanding the ways in which these contemporary movement organizations are using organizational structures to address social objectives and the implications this has on the movement. Specifically, this article examines the Black Lives Matter Global Network, which openly advocates for leaderfulness, through documentary content analysis and 22 interviews of activists across 18 local chapters. We find that the structures for promoting leaderfulness which Gramsci had advocated for were lacking and, we argue, this was the reason why the development of leaderfulness was limited. This article helps to shed light on the difficulties of social movement momentum and proposes a solution drawn from Gramsci’s work.

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**Introduction**

Since 2015, discussions of ‘leaderful’ social movements have become popular among activists in the United States. Leaderfulness describes a structure of organizing in which there are more horizontal and equal relations between activists within a single organization than there are hierarchical ones. Many of the most popular movements have fit that description predating the widespread use of the term including the 2010 UK student protests and university occupations and the 2011–2012 Occupy movement. Often seen as structureless, these movements inspired others in their wake through their tactics and their ‘structures’. However recent the terminology is, leaderfulness has been a frequent part of discussions in progressive and radical social movements for hundreds of years and theoretical discussions that occurred in the past have rarely been applied to these seemingly new manifestations.

Gramsci is not known for being an advocate of leaderfulness and few studies of social movements have seriously applied his theoretical work to understanding movement processes (although see, for example, Chalcraft 2020; Kioupkiolis 2017). However, this article argues that a reading of Gramsci holds leaderfulness to be critical. Building on his ideas of intellectuals, hegemony, and the war of position and manoeuvre we find that Gramsci’s central theoretical contributions have built into them a drive for the development of leaders among the working class. We take his analysis and apply it to other ‘social groups’ within the struggle over social and political change by placing the focus on a movement that has become the epitome of activism in the United States for nearly a decade: Black Lives Matter.

The organization at the heart of the Black Lives Matter movement is Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN), an organization that is openly leaderful. Using interviews with members and documentary analysis, we explore BLMGN through the theoretical lens of leaderfulness via Gramsci. By exploring the organization’s structure at the national and local level, we ask how we can understand leaderfulness as it plays out in contemporary movements. We answer the questions: how does Gramsci theorize leaderfulness? In what ways is BLMGN leaderful? What can BLM learn from Gramscian theory? How can other movements and movement organizations develop leaderfulness?

***On leaderfulness***

‘Leaderfulness’ is a natural conceptual offspring of the more familiar leaderlessness which is described in the movement literature and among movement actors as a structure that lacks hierarchy (Costanza-Chock 2012). Leaderfulness, however, is not the opposite of leaderlessness. Instead, it is closely aligned and further refined. As the framing literature would suggest, it is a way to present organizations to publics with certain connotations

and meanings (see Benford and Snow 2020). 'Leaderlessness' gives the image of a kind of lethargic anarchy whereas 'leaderfulness' is a plenitude of active participants. Leaderlessness could be used synonymously with structurelessness which was held up as an ideal type within left libertarian movements but was heavily critiqued, particularly in Freeman's (1972) 'Tyranny of Structurelessness', an essay which argued that the lack of an organized structure produces implicit hierarchies through informal networks that create an elite within an organization or factions that vie for power. Often, these informal networks within the movement organization or the movement as a whole mirror the society around it, replicating social injustices. In addition, such structurelessness or leaderlessness can lead to inefficiencies when it comes to the movement work needed to be done.

Of course, having a leader has its own problems. As the civil rights and Black power movements have attested to, the loss of leaders – in this case at the hands of the state, the opposition, or competing movements or organizations – can derail the movement's progress just as much as those leaders had propelled the movement into the spotlight. The murders of Martin Luther King, Jr, Malcolm X and Huey P Newton, for example, were setbacks not only for the loss of amazing leaders but also for the holes in leadership their deaths produced. Even when leadership is embodied within a team of people, which is more difficult to completely (figuratively and literally) kill off, the hierarchy or explicit elite can act in ways detrimental to the movement. These leaders can direct movements in ways that are undesirable to their on-the-ground activists or to their constituencies, or make decisions that benefit themselves over the interests of the whole. This is often a criticism levied against Lenin's democratic centralism, for example. Such hierarchies can also perpetuate ideologies and practices of inequality that are often against the spirit and goals of the movements themselves. Thus, both unstructured leaderlessness and structured leadership have their own problems.

Leaderfulness attempts to ameliorate concerns on either side by suggesting a type of system that has relatively horizontal decision-making practices that are embedded into the structures of the movement. Leaderfulness in its ideal form has everyone taking a leadership role in some way but its more realistic variant would establish a process of leaders building leaders and a recognition of the difference between *a* leader and *the* leader even within a movement organization. Leaderfulness also relies on a recognition that leadership can come in different forms and be more or less useful depending on the context, making everyone's leadership essential to the long-term success during the ebbs and flows of a social movement campaign.

While Gramsci is often discussed in relation to intellectuals and questions of superstructure, there is much to be said of his ideas about leadership and his position on leaderfulness that is very much tied closely to ideas of the organic intellectual and hegemony. The connection between these ideas and his general position on the matter as gleaned from his written work and commentaries about his ideas are discussed in the following section.

### *Gramsci, leadership and leaderfulness*

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was a leader within the Italian communist movement who was imprisoned for his political ideas following the seizure of power by the Fascists.

In prison, Gramsci wrote about his radical ideas with a focus on the primary question of why the communist movement failed to develop to the point of taking power in Italy and elsewhere in the West. He had expanded on ideas he had developed in prior publications and exchanges. For Gramsci, the idea of leaderfulness – though he never referred to it as such – was important and perhaps critical. It is not apparent that Gramsci's theoretical contributions to Marxist thought may hinge on leaderfulness given his central conceptualisations that are often repeated are the dialectical notions of hegemony/counterhegemony, war of position/war of manoeuvre, and traditional/organic intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> However, the story told by these concepts can lead us to the position that leaderfulness is a critical feature of his revolutionary politics. For Gramsci, building towards and maintaining control after a revolution cannot be done by a few leaders alone. The workers as a whole must develop the capacity to lead within their own particular area of life in order to sustain a different society. As we will demonstrate, this requires the development of leadership skills across the working class, particularly strong strata of organic intellectuals working in the interests of the proletariat. These organic intellectuals would fight the important war of position. They would be the central source of the ideological counterhegemony that is necessary under hegemonic rule.

Before diving further into the work of Gramsci, it is worth noting that, just as any other theorist whose works span decades, Gramsci had his own intellectual contradictions and inconsistencies. His thoughts change over time and across his many prison notebooks, let alone his prior writing; not all his ideas are easy to understand as perfectly fitted puzzle pieces that make up a crystal-clear image. That being said, with the help of other Gramscian scholars we make the case that Gramsci essentially advocated for a kind of leaderfulness as critical for the revolutionary project he died fighting for.

To begin our journey through Gramsci's thought, let's start with the war of manoeuvre. Famously, Gramsci accepted that the war of manoeuvre was sufficient for the taking of state power by representatives of the proletariat within countries that were less developed and relied largely on coercion to maintain control. This, for example was the case in Russia where the revolution was 'successful'. The apostrophes are necessary here because success must be defined. In his weekly socialist newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo*, Gramsci wrote that a revolution is not necessarily successful if 'it proposes and achieves the overthrow of the political government of the bourgeois State'. Nor, he wrote, was it a success if it just 'achieves the destruction of the representative institutions and administrative machinery through which the central government exercises the political power of the bourgeoisie' or if 'the wave of popular insurrection places power in the hands of men who call themselves (and sincerely are) communists' (Gramsci [1920] 1977: 305). For Gramsci, his marker of success is a 'proletarian and communist' revolution defined by 'the expansion and systematization of proletarian and communist forces that are capable of beginning the patient and methodical work needed to build a new order in the relations of production and distribution' (Gramsci [1920] 1977).<sup>2</sup>

Here we begin to see the importance of leaderfulness within the context of Gramsci's thought. It was not enough for a cadre of revolutionaries to gain power if the workers were not developed to create new institutions and to manage the affairs of a classless economy where the state would wither away. Gramsci noted the revolutions that failed because they did not do this effectively:

Germany, Austria, Bavaria, the Ukraine and Hungary. The revolution as a destructive act has not been followed by the revolution as a process of reconstructing society on the communist model. The presence of these external conditions – a communist party, the destruction of the bourgeois State, powerful trade-union organizations and an armed proletariat – was not sufficient ... (Gramsci [1920] 1977: 306)

Instead, Gramsci argues, the subaltern themselves – what he refers to as the ‘proletarian masses’ (Gramsci [1920] 1977) – had to effectively lead the process. In order to succeed in this role, workers must develop the technical and analytical skills needed to rule themselves and other classes after a successful takeover of power to produce the desired success.

Of course, this follows nicely from Gramsci’s distinction between war of position and war of manoeuvre. The war of manoeuvre can be summarized as the physical and armed taking of power whereas the ‘long war of position’ (Gramsci 2000: 265) concerns the ideological war over hegemony; hegemony signified consent by the proletariat which is given to the bourgeoisie for the latter to rule over society. Within the Italian context, Gramsci was particularly focused on the importance of hegemony and the war of position. In that situation, ‘the social structures were of themselves still capable of becoming heavily armed fortifications’ (Gramsci 2000: 229). The war of manoeuvre takes place within the battlefield and the political arena where coercive force is used. For the capitalist class, this coercion is used in line with bourgeois laws. But the war of position is fought within civil society or ‘the ensemble of organisms commonly called “private”’ (Gramsci 2000: 306). These include such private organizations as trade unions, religious groups and schools.

*Intellectuals and leaders.* Intellectuals, broadly defined,<sup>3</sup> play a key role in both civil society and politics. It is in these ‘private’ spaces where ideology is cemented and the ‘spontaneous consent ... by the great masses’ occurs. ‘Intellectuals’, Gramsci writes, are the bourgeoisie’s “‘deputies” exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government’ (Gramsci 2000: 306–307). Intellectuals therefore ease class tensions through, on one hand, working to gain consent and, on the other, facilitating the legitimation, bureaucratization, and process of repression against those who refuse to consent. Intellectuals are particularly critical where the war of position is being fought – or has been won. A war of manoeuvre, regardless of its outcome, necessitates a war of position to ensure and sustain hegemony since hegemony is always open to counterhegemony and the possibility of losing consent. In a period where capitalist hegemony was secured, the war of position accelerated, and with the growth of a war of position, came the growth of intellectuals as a category. Intellectuals filled the many new roles that were ‘not all justified by the social necessities of production, though they were justified by the political necessities of the dominant fundamental group’ (Gramsci 2000: 308).

Those intellectuals that serve class interests are organic intellectuals. They are elaborated by a class to benefit that class. Gramsci gives the example of an industrial technician who is created by the entrepreneur to best extract profits. Likewise, the roles that establish and develop the legal system represent organic intellectuals from strata of intellectuals ‘which give [the dominant social group] homogeneity and an awareness of its

own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields' (Gramsci 2000: 301). Organic intellectuals thus function as the main creators of bourgeois hegemony, developing the ideological framework that enables the proletariat to buy into the system through ideological acceptance. The worker becomes a true believer of the equality of rule of law or a reformist that seeks greater returns for continued exploitation, a criticism Gramsci made of trade union politics.

Unlike the organic intellectual, the traditional intellectual does not *directly* serve the function of a class. Whereas organic intellectuals grow out of the context of the present class system, traditional intellectuals were developed out of roles from previous historical epochs as intellectuals in roles meant to serve those class interests. They continue their intellectual work seeing themselves as part of an 'uninterrupted historical continuity', representing an interest untainted by class considerations. Here we have the academic, philosopher, artist, ecclesiastic, and so on. However, Gramsci does not accept the idea that these intellectuals no longer serve a class function because of their outdated class roles. Instead, traditional intellectuals continue to serve the power structure of the ruling class. This can be seen even in their detachment from class politics which serves the ideological purpose of furthering the supposed naturalness of class rule by having such a 'free-floating intelligentsia'.

It is not only the bourgeoisie that has intellectuals functioning in its favour. In the war of position, it is also the working class that can develop its own intellectuals to serve their class interests. Karabel (1976) points out that the arguments Gramsci presented concerning the working-class intellectual stratum was a critical intervention in Marxist thought. Although he argues that Gramsci's formulation is still insufficient in solving key questions concerning the possibility of developing sufficient counterhegemonic forces and establishing a singular revolutionary push to tackle the dual necessity of overthrowing the bourgeois state and establishing proletarian hegemony, Karabel does credit Gramsci with tackling an issue previously ignored within Marxism. The issue for Marxism since the time of Marx himself was the contradiction that the political project that devoted itself to the elimination of class through the revolutionary force of the proletariat was guided not by the proletariat but by the intelligentsia. Karabel notes that such critiques were present throughout the early days of the communist movement. Conflicts with Wilhelm Weitling in 1846 and a motion to exclude all non-workers from the First International were just the tip of the iceberg for concerns that an intellectual stratum not of the working class would either lead the proletariat astray or form into a new oppressive class following a revolution that overthrew the bourgeoisie (see, for example, Albert and Hahnel 1979; Bakunin 1999).

The challenge Gramsci failed to meet was a full exploration of the ways through which the proletariat could create their own organic intellectuals where they had little resources or flexibility. If an organic proletarian intellectual stratum was critical for creating hegemony and the war of position, and this needed to develop significantly prior to a successful war of manoeuvre, it was not clear in Gramsci's work how such an asymmetrical war could be won. The capitalist class amassed profit that could be reallocated to the establishment of their own organic intellectuals through roles, job opportunities, and funded institutions. The state itself creates positions filled by organic intellectuals that serve the function of benefitting the capitalist class through the maintenance of

hegemony. The bourgeoisie have no problem in developing their organic intellectuals, but how does the proletariat manage to do this?

One indication that Gramsci gave was that the traditional intellectuals would eventually side with the proletariat and assist them in their struggle for hegemony:

There does not exist any independent class of intellectuals, but every social group has its own stratum of intellectuals, or tends to form one; however, the intellectuals of the historically (and concretely) progressive class, in the given conditions, exercise such a power of attraction that, in the last analysis, they end up by subjugating the intellectuals of the other social groups; they thereby create a system of solidarity between all the intellectuals, with bonds of a psychological nature (vanity, etc.) and often of a caste character (technico-judicial, corporate, etc.). (Gramsci 2005: 60)

Karabel, however, is not convinced by such an argument as Gramsci's position does not seem particularly rooted in a materialist explanation. A 'power of attraction' lacks depth as a justification for how the working class would develop intellectual force. In any case, Gramsci still requires the 'progressive class' to have a body of intellectuals who could 'exercise' that power of attraction. Neither Marx nor Lenin, the two powerful forces of the Marxist intellectual project at that point, were intellectuals 'of' the proletariat (even if they were intellectuals 'for' the proletariat). Thus, it begs the question, what institutional roles do working-class members ascend to that enables them to function in creating counterhegemonic culture and ideology? In Gramsci, we find two established answers to this question: the factory council and the party.

*Councils and the party.* In Gramsci's earlier works he advocated for factory councils as part of a larger model of workplace democracy. Workers would create places of democratic control within factories. Coordination across local factories from various industries would be coordinated by socialist clubs. Delegates would be elected from across industries in the area and area committees would eventually have the power to maintain discipline and be able to impose strikes when needed. These committees would then be overseen at the city level by the party and federations of trade unions. Democracy was a key to this structure and elected officials would be delegates of worker's democratic interests rather than representatives. The slogans that would promote such a system were 'All power in the workshop to the workshop committees' and 'all state power to the workers' and peasants' Councils'. In making this argument, Gramsci sidelined the party to an institution more important in a subsequent phase of action. Instead, the workers, rather than the party as the 'educators', would lead (Davidson 1975: 43–44).

By calling on more workplace democracy, against the editorial position of the newspaper he was writing for,<sup>4</sup> Gramsci managed to win the hearts of some of the radical workers in Turin who invited him to speak to other workers. This was a militant time in the industrial centres of the country with high levels of unemployment, strikes, and clashes with police all occurring. Turin already had a nascent worker's council in the *com-missioni interne* and Gramsci was hopeful this would be a seed of the communist future planted in the earth of capitalist Italy. Gramsci wrote of these nascent councils, 'Developed and enriched, tomorrow they will become the organs of the proletarian power which



replaces capitalism in all its useful functions of administration and leadership' (quoted in Davidson 1975: 43).

Gramsci's view of the councils, naturally, was part of a response in relation to the conditions of its time and the lessons Gramsci had learned up to that point.<sup>5</sup> Later his position would seemingly change. The tumultuous and turbulent period came to an end with little advancement for the working class. Uncoordinated, the working classes' democratic institutions would not get far. The party, central to the coordination of these workers, would be another, and indeed key, place for the development of the organic proletarian intellectual. Here, Gramsci veers away from his more democratic position. In 1921 he wrote,

The 'dictatorship' of the Communist Party does not terrify masses, because the masses understand that this 'terrible dictatorship' is the best guarantee of their freedom, the best guarantee against betrayals and intrigues ... [T]he working class ... must follow not men, but organized parties that can subject individual men to discipline, seriousness and respect for voluntarily contracted commitments. (Gramsci [1921] 1978: 78)<sup>6</sup>

Although the party would take charge in a revolutionary situation and, we can imagine, a form of Leninist democratic centralism would be the leading process within the party, the Gramscian view of the party still differed substantially from the Leninist conception. This is because of Gramsci's emphasis on the war of position. In his later writings, Gramsci viewed the party as an institution that would shape the organic intellectual through a process of education about the state. The party is not simply an organ of power but a part of the civil sphere that develops consciousness and intellectuals. Here, we see that for Gramsci, intellectuals are almost interchangeable with leaders. Whereas in the war of manoeuvre leaders would play the role of generals commanding and disciplining their troops, in the war of position leaders are those who make advances in the ideological battlefield. For Gramsci, intellectuals are those that, in their role in civil society, attempt to make such ideological advances.

However, the difficulty with building organic intellectuals within the party, as Karabel notes, is that its capacity is limited. Gramsci envisioned a party composed of three parts: mass membership, a leadership group, and an 'an intermediate element, which articulates the first element and the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually' (Gramsci 2005: 153). The development of leadership can be seen as important within all three parts since Gramsci still held that the party's role was to develop the masses for taking over the economy and state, but it is certainly a difference from factory councils. The mass membership was not exactly meant to be developed into the organic intellectual in this model, as it was not clear what their intellectual *role* was in this regard. So, while the leaders and the intermediaries represented the organic intellectuals, Karabel argued that this view does not quite demonstrate how the level of intellectual counterhegemony needed would actually come out of the party.

Gramsci's interconnected notions of hegemony, war of position and organic intellectuals call on the development of a substantial segment of the working class to obtain leadership skills to help guide other workers to win the war of position and, after the revolution, to fully establish and maintain a new hegemony. This speaks to the idea of



leaderfulness now frequently discussed in contemporary social movement organizations where those involved in activism obtain leadership skills and leadership positions in a more horizontally organized movement.

*Civil society, social movements and intellectuals.* It was not just the councils or the party – in this hierarchical role – that were vehicles for creating organic proletarian intellectuals. Positions within places such as the media, schools, and universities are also places that the proletariat's organic intellectuals can make advances. But, as Karabel notes, the working class does not have enough of a powerful institutional base in society in order to create enough counterhegemonic pressure to win the civil sphere. The institutions of the media, the arts, and education are often capitalist institutions (Karabel 1976: 163–164). While this is particularly true in the time Karabel's words were published, the nature of some of those institutions has changed to an important degree. The media in particular is now frequently a place of platforms for individual transactions of information by the masses. As discussed by Fuchs (2020), the digital age we are in represents a convergence – not only in technology but also in our roles and identities. We are all now 'institutionally' in the role of media content creators and broadcasters, even as we are many other roles as well. Likewise, similar to the ways in which trade unions were institutionalized, social movements have undergone a process of institutionalization since the 1960s which may constitute a legitimate space in which organic intellectuals can operate and thus be developed (see McCarthy & Zald 1977).

Of course, Gramsci was writing about revolutionary social change rooted in philosophy of social classes that broke down society by their function within the economic realm. Contemporary social movements rarely hold such a position or perspective. The post-materialist turn was discussed and researched by Ronald Inglehart who argued that as wealth grew in the post-war Global North, concerns around physical and economic security gave way to issues of self-expression, identity and quality of life. Such a shift explained the rise of movements for the expansion of rights, environmental campaigns and the student movement.<sup>7</sup> From a more orthodox Marxist position such a change of focus can be seen as false consciousness, drifting away from the positive ideology focused on the primary mover of society – economics. From a more Gramscian perspective, this could be seen as a sign of further hegemony by the ruling elite. However, not all radical theorists rooted in Marxism have taken such a position. Famously, Hardt and Negri (2004) posited the notion of the multitude as a set of singularities that contain with them different identities that cannot be reduced down or flattened (p. 105). For Hardt and Negri, the Battle of Seattle in 1999 epitomizes the kind of collective struggle that maintains differences as was seen across such seemingly contradictory groups as trade unionists and environmentalists and religious congregations and anarchist.

Gramsci sometimes referred to 'social groups' as a way of highlighting different social and identity-based distinctions. Social groups could be classes,<sup>8</sup> but they could also be other arrangements of people that were not based in economic function. While Gramsci's discussion of social classes and their importance was not as extensive or prominent, we can adopt his theoretical perspectives and consider them in light of this more nuanced and rich tapestry of movements. Therefore, our application of organic intellectuals need not be applied to economic classes only as it is conceivable that other social groups also

establish their own intellectual strata. One of these social groups is Black North Americans, a continuously oppressed and exploited social group whose oppression is interrelated with but not completely explained by class. Racism in its particular but certainly not exclusive North American form produces a social group with its own intellectual stratum. This stratum is certainly full of contradictions within the context of class issues but nevertheless elucidates the strategies and trajectories of their social group. Historically, Black colleges and universities serve as one such set of institutions.

Social movements focused on civil rights, Black power, cultural nationalism, and so on also develop institutions that produce intellectuals. These different aspects of the broader Black social justice movement resemble the different political distinctions that grew out of predominantly class based socialist politics: communism, anarchism, trade unionism, and their own internal variations. While these and other movements had specific areas focused on the creation of intellectuals (see Isaac et al. 2019), the movements themselves serve as training institutions. Although the analysis could apply much more broadly, for the purposes of this article we will pay particular attention to the Black Lives Matter movement. As movements consists of informal groups, individuals and organizations (Rootes 2007), we are particularly interested in the ways organizations can shape and form organic intellectuals. Thus, we focus in on the most prominent organization within the movement that shares its name, the Black Lives Matter Global Network.

## *Methodology*

This article draws on data collected from 2016 to 2019 with members of BLM chapters. During that time, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted from participants that belong or belonged to BLM chapters, both affiliated and unaffiliated with the national BLMGN organization in the United States and Canada. The participants in this study were selected via convenience sampling based on their involvement with a BLMGN chapter and contacted via social media to ask for their participation. Following initial interviews, snowball sampling was used to obtain additional interviewees.

The selection criteria were for all participants to have held a leadership role in their BLMGN chapter. A leadership role was defined as being a chapter member with decision-making responsibilities either across the whole of the chapter or within a particular area of concentration (e.g. legal, education, social media team). In some cases, these roles came with titles (e.g. president, leadership team member), but in other cases these were less formal. Those selected for the study could provide detailed descriptions of their experiences, thereby providing rich information to their involvement and processes in their BLMGN chapter.

Data obtained from interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo to group in relevant classifications to improve analysis. Cross comparison was used to generate key themes of how leadership practices are utilized at the national and chapter level within BLMGN, as well as the relationship between the national and chapter levels. Quotations were selected to illustrate the themes found.

In addition to the interview data, documentary analysis was undertaken to strengthen and triangulate data from interviews. Documents were obtained from the national BLMGN organization as well as from chapters. Due to the lack of consistent reliability

from the news media on reporting social movement events, few news media accounts were included within the documentary analysis. This enabled the movement members to individually and collectively speak for themselves.

### *Black Lives Matter Global Network*

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a movement that was given a name when the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter first appeared in 2012 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the death of Trayvon Martin. An organization, which was co-founded by the initial users of the hashtag, developed as a response to the death of Michael Brown at the hands of the police. In a build-up of protests following Brown's death, BLMGN co-founder Patrisse Cullors and Brooklyn-based activists Darnell Moore organized the 'Ferguson Freedom Rides' where groups of people from various backgrounds came to Missouri to stand in solidarity under the name Black Lives Matter. Protests continued in Missouri as the trial date for the officer accused of killing Brown was set on the 24th of November. Organizations leading these protests led a sustained organized network often repeating the statement 'This is a movement, not a moment' (Ransby 2018).

After the Ferguson protest, activists and organizers discussed with the co-founders how to develop local movement chapters to strengthen the work catalysed by the early #BlackLivesMatter project and organizing in Ferguson (BLMGN n.d.a). Co-Founder Alicia Garza stated in an interview that 'those people pushed us to create a chapter structure. They wanted to continue to do this work together and be connected to activists and organisers from across the country' (Cobb 2016). By 2015, a chapter-based organization had developed within the United States and Canada and is thus composed of a 'national'-level organization and affiliated chapters, calling itself Black Lives Matter Global Network. Their mission is to 'eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes' (BLMGN n.d.b).

*The national level.* At the national level, there are no leaders in the conventional sense and no single charismatic voice to speak for everyone (Day 2015). The co-founders have 'repeatedly insisted that they were not personally leading or speaking for an entire movement' although 'they often found themselves cast in that role; with that casting came lavish praise, harsh criticism, and unrealistic expectations' (Ransby 2018: 75). Co-founder Patrisse Cullors stated that

the consequence of focusing on a leader is that you develop a necessity for that leader to be the one who's spokesperson and the organizer, who tells the masses where to go, rather than the masses understanding that we can catalyse a movement in our own community. (quoted in Cobb 2016)

Thus, the national level of BLMGN focuses on providing support and resources for the local affiliated chapters, as well as other local BLM movement organizations that are not affiliated with BLMGN. In order to achieve their desires to develop locally-based leaderfulness, the national organization employs some staff members to take on roles

such as communication and outreach coordination (Ransby 2018) which also worked to bring in additional funds that could be distributed downwards.

Another role that the national organization played is in regulating who would become and stay an official chapter. The national level provides the framework for chapters to be affiliated with BLMGN. Given the wide geographic scope of the organization, the communication process for becoming a chapter occurred via emails. According to one participant, chapters get in touch and request an application by 'sending an email out to the field officer at the national BLMGN level. The field officer responded by giving us a survey to fill out, which was two pages'. To belong to BLMGN, the chapter must agree to abide by the organization's 13 principles, which affirms an intersectional approach in their efforts. This meant that to be part of the network groups may have to change their approach to be more inclusive, which proved to work in some cases. Where some prospective chapters may have previously ignored intersectional issues such as LGBTQIA+ and feminist concerns, the guiding principles ensured such an approach would need to be reflected in the organizing work of the chapters. As one interviewee noted, 'We were happy to change criteria to meet the needs of the mission statement'.

To apply as a chapter, local groups needed to submit a mission statement. Although BLMGN has an overarching objective, chapters are likely to specialize on certain aspects of the movement and focus on certain local targets or issues of importance within the broader social justice goals and these mission statements enabled these more specific objectives to be detailed. In addition, to become official, chapters must have a legal status (i.e. fiscal sponsorship, 501(c)(3)), complete an induction process, engage in conversations with current chapters, and pass a 'grace period' (BLMGN 2020). Once a BLMGN chapter became official, they were added to the national organization website, and they gained access to a network of support and resources provided by and at the discretion of the national level to whom chapters can apply for funding.

Although local chapters are able to acquire and use their own resources without any restriction by the national organization, the national organization also has various resources that are shared across affiliated chapters. Nationally, the media attention and publicity BLM received from being a viral hashtag to an ongoing large-scale movement led to substantial fundraising and celebrity donations. In October 2015, rapper Jay-Z's music streaming service Tidal held a charity concert in Brooklyn raising \$1.5 million for social justice groups, which included BLMGN. According to one member of BLMGN, the donation from Jay-Z was used to hire staff at the national level. Later The Weeknd, a Black Canadian RnB singer, donated \$250,000 to BLMGN. According to their own 2020 Impact Report, BLMGN donated funding to 30 non-BLM groups and 11 local chapters (including no longer officially recognized chapters) totalling \$21.7 million. The 30 local organizations received grants of six figures (BLMGN 2021).

Rather than being pulled into BLMGN out of a desire to access the financial resources that could support their local social justice efforts, many chapters affiliated to be part of the wider movement. According to one BLMGN chapter member:

The hashtag was the start of the movement, and everywhere networks want to be associated with the creators of the movement. Having a coalition with other chapters help people know each other. It is beneficial not to be distinct from one another. The work is fluid and can move through spaces.

That connection with others served as an important resource and was facilitated directly by the national level. Regional networks were set up to enable support networks to form across chapters that were likely facing similar struggles and articulations of racism and injustice, which did not have a homogeneous national character. As one participant stated,

We support nearby chapters; however, there are chapter differences. The south deals with systemic racism, as in people are racist and will say what they feel publicly to your face; however, in the north, people are publicly kind [to] your face but act differently towards you.

Another interviewee felt that not only were the problems regionalized, but also ‘a big cultural difference between here and there with chapters in the area’ among the activists themselves.

The national level did not mandate or enforce coordination entirely and the relationships between chapters were not always consistent. Instead, chapters-level decision-making determined the level of solidarity and support provided to others. As an illustration, one interviewee stated,

One of the cofounders of our chapter had close connections to other chapters, and they knew a lot of people directly. We did work with them because of the connection, and sometimes we got the support and backing from them, and sometimes we did ask for support, and we did not get it. It was inconsistent. I understand because they have their own thing going on as well, but then there were times where they would say that they would do something and did not follow through. So, yea, that’s the challenges, you know with different chapters because everybody got their own thing going on.

Where inter-chapter relations were more directly fostered by the national organization were through conventions. The national organization established conventions across all chapter or regional chapters. For example, a Black Lives Matter Midwest Regional Convening took place in Chicago where, according to a BLM Detroit chapter member, the Midwest chapters were asked to answer the question of ‘How do we best utilise our resources for the benefit of the group as a whole’. Workshops were facilitated with breakout sessions dedicated to the intentional growth of a regional strategy. According to one participant, ‘the convening was an informal sort of like building up the grassroots and involving others’. Likewise, in 2016, the Southern chapters of BLMGN came together for a convening at the historic Highland Research and Education Centre in Tennessee to get a shared understanding of movement principles and developing strategies for their chapters. These chapters included Atlanta, Birmingham, Bowling Green, Greensboro, Little Rock, Louisville, Memphis, and Nashville (BLMGN 2018). These conventions also included multiple training sessions including movement building, visioning, and building momentum. According to one participant, the meeting of the Southern chapters, for example, included a leadership training that was ‘based on the media and connecting with other people through the media’.

Also in 2016, BLMGN was able to incubate a training project that was shared across Black movements. The programme was entitled Channel Black and it provided training

in media and storytelling as part of an effort to develop social movement leadership within the Black community with a goal to ‘equip marginalized people with the tools and supports to develop and tell their own stories and have a say in how power and resources in the United States are distributed’.

Additional resources are provided by the national organization such as the ‘Tools for Addressing Chapter Conflict’ toolkit, which chapters can use to deescalate situations and attempt to ensure their well-functioning longevity; and the ‘Healing in Action’ toolkit, which attempts to ensure protest actions taken by the movement incorporate healing and personal sustainability to reduce activist burnout and triggering events that may lead to trauma and eventually movement decline. Concerns about burnout were apparent among some interviewees. One stated, ‘sometimes, you are overworked in the organisation, and it is kind of draining because of needing help within the organisation’ and another noted that ‘Self-care needs to be understood, and you need to take time off’. A third interviewee stated,

Ethics of care is transactional because we are fighting for communities; however, they are human beings, and they need help. Some days not everyone led to optimal levels. We need to teach to speak up and take care of each other. Activists sometimes explode and burn out.

*BLMGN chapters.* By 2018, the organization had 30 affiliated chapters (BLMGN 2018) and at the time of writing, BLMGN has over 40 chapters<sup>9</sup> (BLMGN n.d.a). According to one chapter member, ‘social media created a wildfire, and everyone wanted to be a part of the movement’. However, although a locally based organization may use the name ‘BLM’, some are not affiliated with the national organization. We consider these chapters in the analysis below and will refer to these as unaffiliated chapters.<sup>10</sup> These unaffiliated chapters are not regulated by the national organization and over time some chapters go from being affiliated to unaffiliated and vice versa.

While the affiliated chapters subscribe to a set of principles determined at the national level, ‘beyond that they are given a great deal of autonomy and freedom to define their priorities, their campaigns, and even their membership’ (Ransby 2018). This autonomy also applied to organizational structures within the chapters, as interview data would reveal. Chapters are able to decide on their internal hierarchies, or lack thereof, on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Anything from collective leadership structures to traditional leadership roles, such as president and vice president, to individual figureheads were evident from the interview data.

One chapter was explicit about their hierarchical organizational structure and where it was drawn from. ‘We have a hierarchy like a business. I am the president. We also have a vice president and directors. This structure works best for our chapter’. However, this was rare. More typically, chapters expressed a clear aversion to formalized hierarchies. As one chapter member noted in an interview, ‘We wanted to get away from the white normative president/chairman top-down, charismatic leadership structure whereby one person makes decisions on behalf of the group’. Here, such hierarchy was attributed to whiteness. Another respondent, also in opposition to such hierarchy, rooted this in the economic system that was exploitative. ‘We automatically think hierarchal because of

capitalism but want to steer clear of this ideology'. Another chapter's member described their chapter's organizational structure as focusing on 'developing leadership in everyone' but ensuring you 'know the landscape' before taking on important roles.

Although some chapters clearly attempted to have leaderful organizational practice, it was clear that some members had more power than others, such as the co-founders of the chapters and/or members with the most seniority in the chapter or in the local movement. Sometimes, these co-founders or senior members would allocate other roles to chapter members, including handler of social media and community events, whom they believed would be best suited for the task. While these roles could develop skills and experience for the building up of leaderfulness, informal – but often internally acknowledged – hierarchies persisted. One reason for this, according to some within such chapters, was that a more horizontal structure would enable untrustworthy members to sit in positions of responsibility. 'Just showing up to the meetings does not get you anywhere', as one participant stated. Instead, people needed to earn trust and the group made decisions collectively on who would do what:

We got roles and responsibilities delegated to each of us, and that was pretty much how that went rather than anyone being called to be a leader. We each had responsibilities, so we tried to avoid the typical idea of leadership.

The desires of some chapters to share out tasks and leadership in a horizontal way proved to be difficult because willingness to engage and take on responsibilities varied across members. As one member noted,

We wanted to be a collective group, but it ended up being two people doing all the work. I had so much going on, and I had to walk away because it was too much to handle at this point and time.

Different engagement levels not only created unwanted hierarchies with de facto leaders being few in number but also the burnout of these individuals who continued to take on responsibilities that others were not willing to pick up. This was not limited to this one case. Another interviewee noted,

I did not have a life. Since people in the neighbourhood knew who I was, I was always receiving phone calls, which is the role I signed up for, but it became too much. Then, I got arrested, and from there, I decided to resign from the organisation.

Even where processes were more formalized for leaderfulness to be implemented, sustainability became an issue. One interviewee stated, 'two core members were handling more responsibilities than anyone else, and it was taking a toll on them. However, so many responsibilities came up, and we all ended up going separate ways'. Membership turnover also became an issue in sustaining the chapter and being able to fully develop leaderfulness. This was particularly true for BLMGN chapters with a heavy intake of members from university campuses. The problem with having a chapter consisting of university members is their student schedule as some members would leave during holiday breaks, a concern echoed by interviewees from such chapters.



There were BLMGN chapters that had a core leadership team that made decisions on behalf of the chapter, as one member revealed. ‘We had a core leadership group. Founding members created bylaws and a criterion for being in the core team’. In addition to core leadership team, there were other teams within the chapter that consisted of various engagements such as social media, events and education. ‘We make decisions collectively and when making collective decisions the decision-making body have to show they are leaders and dependable to make strategic decisions on behalf of the chapter’.

In some cases, there were BLMGN chapters in which a single person claimed the position of leader.

I make the decisions in the chapter. I don't like to look at it as like a dictatorship, but I have been through a lot of trials and tribulations with people inside and they really gave me a sense of direction and really pushed me to just keep trying to get better. However, all inputs are welcome. So, like what we do if there is a situation that comes up like someone gets shot, whoever is closest to the situation, we ask them to pull up and go live and see what's going on there. Then I decide what to do from there.

It was clear that chapters' internal structures varied along hierarchies and level of formality of structure. This enabled a light-touch approach from the national level and in that way minimized their position of leadership, but it was also likely a decision based on the ways in which these BLMGN chapters formed, which interview and documentary data bears out as often but not exclusively a renaming of previously existing local organizations or groups under the BLM banner. Thus, rather than trying to attract existing groups but then forcing on them a particular structure, the national level decided to enable these existing groups to maintain the internal structure previously developed. New BLM chapters that grew out of the movement itself were given little direction as to how to develop leaderfulness as a result.

Now that we have provided some information regarding BLMGN, we can analyse how Gramsci's view of intellectuals, hegemony and councils can help us understand the BLMGN and its aspirations for leaderfulness.

### *Gramsci and BLM*

In analysing Gramsci's radical thought, we found that leaderfulness represented a key concept never named but often implied that was a necessary condition for successful revolutionary economic change. Applying that logic beyond a class politics enables us to bring that analysis to a wide range of social movements, particularly those organizations and groups calling for significant change within other aspects of society. As we have seen, Black Lives Matter offers us one such example.

Key to Gramsci's conceptualization of leaders is the idea of the intellectual, which almost serves as a synonym for leader due to their ideological role in the war of position. These leaders would develop through institutions and go on to impact the ideology of others, leading to a wider mass rejection of the capitalist logic and, for Gramsci, an acceptance of a communist worldview that would eventually create the hegemony needed to sustain the taking of power through the war of manoeuvre. Gramsci's view

casts the party in a central role of the creation of leaders, with factory councils serving as a more grassroots layer for the development of additional leaders on the ground.

We see that BLMGN imitates such a structure of leadership development through the organizational structure of a national-level body and various affiliated and unaffiliated local chapters. The two layers of BLMGN are not only attempting to be internally 'leaderful' by establishing local leaderful practices in most chapters and taking a hands-off approach regarding the national level's relationship with the local level, but also through the work done by each of these levels. Although not discussed in detail above, local chapters work to promote their causes with activism and through social media. Their aims are not only to push for significant reforms on the issues dear to them through the efforts of chapter members, but to galvanize others to join forces and develop leaderfulness across their constituents. Those at the national level also give talks and write books to engage in a similar battle in the war of position.

The development of leaderfulness is hard to pull off in a structure devoted to discipline, such as the Leninist party model, due to the inherent passivity and reliance on orders that is present. The democratic aspect of democratic centralism seems to only be able to spread itself so far, requiring only a small group of leaders making meaningful decisions. At the same time, however, there can arguably be stagnation when there's limited support for further developing or sharing the ideological and skill development that constituted Gramsci's conception of the intellectual. Thus, rather than an overruling or directive force per se, within the war of position a party – or in the case of BLMGN, the national level – should serve as a means of support for the development of leaders. Like the party, BLMGN could function as a 'collective intellectual' as Togliatti (2001) refers to it. It produces intellectuals but also creates a kind of integrated intellectual with a more single focus.

In the case of BLMGN, the national body provides some support, though this may be limited to specific areas not entirely directed at leaderfulness-building. Instead, much of their resource provision besides funding is focused on sustaining activism. While important, it is not clear from the documentary materials that much resource provision was focused on the development of leaderfulness as understood from the Gramscian perspective discussed above. BLMGN's *Tools for Addressing Chapter Conflict and Healing in Action* are both resources for dealing with interpersonal in personal conflict that occurs within or as a result of BLM organizing and are used to try and maintain and improve the wellbeing of BLMGN members. It is also used to foster the sustainability of action amid difficult and traumatic experiences. Both sets of documents note that issues of leadership can lead to problems, but this point lies among a list of other potential issues that may need to be addressed. The tools propose processes for internally building the solutions which enables decision-making to happen at the local level and therefore, arguably, spurs leaderfulness. However, under a diversity of structures or structurelessness, leadership can be amassed in a few members and leaderfulness can be sidelined, as noted in Freeman's (1972) famous argument. When the structures are not in place, individuals end up relying on others to make decisions and leadership is often not fostered. As one BLM activist stated, 'People want one or two leaders to take charge which hinders people from getting involved'. While these forms of support provided by the national level can be helpful for

those chapters with structures that promote leaderfulness, they may not produce leaderfulness elsewhere. Nor is it their intention to produce leaderfulness.

The other resources present on the BLMGN website are two similar toolkits entitled #TrayvonTaughtMe. One toolkit is geared towards Black and non-Black people of colour while the other is for white allies. Both look at examples of tweets and Facebook posts that can be used to commemorate the 5-year anniversary of the death of Trayvon Martin. These are helpful for framing the issue, engaging in a struggle within the ideological realm, and, in so doing, bolstering some aspects of leaderfulness. The use of social media has become a prominent tool within social justice campaigns regarding the war of position and these have been prominently discussed by BLM chapter members as well (e.g. 'Social Media is important. Can push events through social media and can reach other organizations'; 'Good idea to have social media . . . We use social media to build alliances, which helps getting the message out faster'). However, these toolkits do not touch the structure of the organizations and it is unclear whether or not they would promote the leaderfulness that enables the skills, and not just the ideology, for a world without the racism that BLM seeks to create.

In trying to balance the needs of the movement and a non-hierarchical relationship with local chapters, it feels as though the national level of BLMGN has done little to shape the structures and leaderfulness of local chapters. It is a balance that is very difficult to strike. However, not all chapters felt that the national level was being as hands-off as they claim, or that were borne out by interviews.

On November 30, 2020, BLMGN chapters across nine US cities and one Canadian city published a statement calling for accountability of the national level's handling of finances and leadership structure which had undergone significant change at that time. In particular, the statement identifies that the appointment of Patrisse Cullors to Executive Director and, subsequently, the creation of two bodies overseen by the Global Network (BLM Grassroots and the Black Lives Matter Political Action Committee) were undemocratic decisions that damaged the movement. The creation of the Executive Director role meant for some that the idea of leaderfulness was dissipating within the Global Network. According to their statement, BLM Grassroots 'effectively separated the majority of chapters from BLMGN without their consent and interrupted the active process of accountability that was being established by those chapters' (BLM10 2020). Once this statement was published, these chapters were removed from the BLMGN website and were effectively removed as affiliated chapters.

Other chapters raised similar concerns following these events. The chapter in California's Inland Empire left the network stating, among other things, that 'the creation of the Black Lives Matter Political Action Committee is a violation of our collective agreement. This agreement was composed of two rules: 1. We do not work with police, 2. We do not endorse politicians' (BLM Inland Empire 2021). In addition, the Inland Empire chapter's statement contradicted other reports regarding the ways in which the national level of the organization had a horizontal approach to the local chapters. According to them, 'The Global Network is a top-down dogmatic organization that promotes certain chapters that choose to align with their direction and sequester the ones that don't'.

These events seemed to eventually lead to Patrisse Cullors resignation from the organization which occurred in May 2021. Instead of an Executive Director, Cullors was

replaced by two Interim Senior Executives. A statement by BLMGN noted that the two Senior Executives would be replaced by 'a new permanent team', suggesting they would return to a more leaderful approach within the national level as well.

Thus, we can see that either there are contradictory views of the leaderfulness of BLMGN as a chapter-based organization with a national level, or that BLM has increasingly become less leaderful within that national level. In any case, BLM's claims to leaderfulness are contested for a range of reasons. First, local chapters can have a wide range of structures – some which are more leaderful than others. Second, the national level is not necessarily as hands-off and leaderless as described by some. These suggest that the actual structures in place are not leading to the leaderful results promised. Such anti-democratic positions have led many chapters to leave the organization, but it is not clear how many chapters would have appreciated or left under conditions of a national body attempting to mould chapters in a leaderful image.

Gramsci's contradictory views on leadership resemble this complex middle-ground between democracy and direction ('dirigere' – see Gramsci 2005: 55, n5). For Gramsci the factory councils were understood by the keyword of democracy, where horizontalism was to govern the relations of workers through an organized structure, whereas discipline was the keyword for the party. In his early writings, the party played more of a role in the war of manoeuvre and thus felt less important in the current phase of struggle. Later, however, the party became a more imminent player in the war of position. It would take on a leadership role that deemphasized democracy because, in Gramsci's experience, the forces on the ground needed to be coordinated in action, and so democratic decision-making would need to be delayed. However, without the knowledge and skills of leadership, even a party that was able to take power would crumble under its own weight of governing a system that necessitated discipline rather than democracy as communism required a consistent and purposeful push by the masses in order to be maintained.

BLM's objectives may not seem as grandiose in comparison to Gramsci's, but they are struggling for a North America free of racism from an intersectional perspective which also sees the struggle of racism and interlinked with the struggles of other oppressed communities. Nothing more than revolutionary change is required for such a victory, even if the path to achieve it requires (non-reformist) reforms. Thus, we can see how the need for leaderfulness that Gramsci implicitly called for can be mirrored in the work of BLM, with BLM stating it explicitly. However, neither the networked approach of organizing that the interview participants are describing, nor the more 'directive' approach claimed by Inland Empire activists are producing the desired effects of leaderfulness. Some BLM chapters are succumbing to the pressure of burnout while others are explicitly led by individuals or small groups of leaders.

Nothing in the BLMGN protocols seems to direct or even necessarily encourage an internal chapter structure that would institute leaderfulness in an organized and managed way. While a structure of local autonomous groups with centralized facilitation of platform generation, training, and political development may help achieve optimum coordination and leadership development, it needs to be directed for that purpose in order to work – and even then, it may face difficulties of intransigence from local activists or chapters. It seems as though on top of having an intersectional politics as a basis for joining BLM, active leaderfulness should also be a basis for inclusion. Like chapters

modifying their positions on intersectionality in order to join BLMGN, the ask could be to operate under the principle of leaderfulness, without specifics detailed. This may enable further discussions on how to reorganize some local chapters to better achieve this result. This may also have prevented the conflicts around democratic structures to take place in relation to the national level as that would have been made a more explicit objective of the organization.

## **Conclusion**

BLMGN is a large and important organization in the present activist climate. It represents the central organization in one of the Global North's most vocal and powerful movements. Other movements and organizations look to BLM for inspiration and in some ways its two-layer structure is not dissimilar from other organizations fighting other ideological and political battles, such as Extinction Rebellion. Thus, BLM's trajectory is important for the struggle for Black lives as well as for social movement studies more broadly, particularly where those studies seek to advance the causes of their participants and research subjects.

The BLM movement and BLMGN are nearing a decade-strong resilience but the ground on which it is standing is shaking. Black lives will continue to be taken by the police and local and national protests will continue to erupt around this injustice, but the strength of BLMGN is in its development of a sustained approach to fighting racial injustice against Black people. However, as recent events concerning the conflict between chapters and the national body attest to, there is no promise of its longevity. To grow, BLM's fight necessitates the development of leaderfulness, just as Gramsci argued during his fight for communism.

Gramsci, as an intellectual of intellectuals, discussed the importance of building institutions and structures that would develop leaders. While his answers did not always satisfy, organizations like BLMGN must consider how their institutions are structured in relation to this question of leaderfulness. BLMGN explicitly discusses leaderfulness and its importance, but its conceptualization is not always clearly realized in its processes. Its 13 principles do not highlight leaderfulness and it does not appear to be a basis of inclusion as an affiliated chapter. Likewise, the resources provided from the national level to chapters do not appear to highlight the development of leaderfulness via strategy, tactics or structure. Instead, some claims have been made that the national level is undermining the organizations existing levels of leaderfulness through undemocratic decision-making processes.

Due to BLM's importance within the social movement milieu, this has implications for the trajectory of social movements. In our reading of Gramsci, leaderfulness is a critical component of struggles for hegemony and should be part and parcel of all movements fighting a war of position, especially those that see themselves as part of the multitude (Hardt & Negri 2004). Taking this seriously would require a reassessment of how leaderfulness is nurtured and how organizational structures promote or restrict its development.

Gramsci sought to create a world that was radically different from the one he experienced. That communist world meant a radical form of democratic rule that necessitated

that the majority of people in society play an active part in co-constructing their lives. In turn, this required that many ordinary workers develop leadership skills that they could bring not just to the revolutionary battlefield in the war of manoeuvre but into co-constructing hegemony in the new world once constituted. BLMGN's vision requires almost as much of a wholesale cultural and institutional change as Gramsci's, seeking 'to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes'. They too require the development of leaderfulness in order to achieve their objective. Many movement organizations have similar long-term visions that require the development of leaderfulness among their constituencies.

The analysis of BLMGN through the Gramscian lens presented above highlights that BLMGN, and other organizations that follow in its footsteps, are failing to develop leaderfulness effectively due to 1) a lack of strategic focus placed on achieving leaderfulness as an explicit aim, and/or 2) a failure to incorporate structures that help achieve leaderfulness. Where Gramsci drew on the party structure as coordinating leadership and the factory council as leadership-building, movement organizations – particularly those that are composed of central/national and local/chapter layers – can adopt the principles suggested in this analysis by which the former's role is focused almost predominantly on the generation of leaderfulness within the latter.

The failure to develop leaderfulness through a structured process may help explain the lack of momentum generated by movements over longer stretches of time, as leadership skills are confined to few participants. Similar to how important BLMGN's emphasis on incorporating intersectionality structurally to the movement has been in addressing the historic downplaying of other oppressions, movements focus on structurally integrating leaderfulness can help to achieve progress not only in building 'people power', but also enabling new voices to raise new yet-to-be-uncovered oppressions, ideas, and solutions into the light.<sup>11</sup>

## Notes

1. Second, Gramsci, especially in his later years, was a proponent of hierarchy when it regarded the revolutionary party.
2. Many, including Karabel (1976: 162), note that the October Revolution and Soviet project were not successful in this regard, though he also argues that it was not merely the failures of Soviet communists but also of the context of economic 'backwardness', counter revolutionary sentiment and external attacks (Karabel 1976:137).
3. 'By intellectuals, one must understand not [only] those ranks commonly referred to by this term, but generally the whole social mass that exercises an organizational function in the broad sense, whether it be in the field of production, or culture, or political administration' (Gramsci [1992] 2011: 133).
4. Gramsci and his compatriot Terracini had to sneak it passed the editor in order for it to be printed (Davidson 1975: 43).
5. Gramsci wrote that learning occurred through one's own experience and education which he defined as 'the outcome of others' experience' (Gramsci 2000: 47).
6. Nevertheless, the party was only there to help launch the revolution, not embody it. 'The party and the trade union should not impose themselves as tutors or ready-made superstructures for the new institution, in which the historical process of the revolution takes a controllable historical form'. (Gramsci [1920] 2012). In later writings, however, the party became

- more central and the factory councils all but disappeared (Karabel 1976: 137).
7. The Black Lives Matter movement is not explained by this shift to post-materialist concerns as it is often fighting against matters of life and death, as its name suggest.
  8. Sometimes Gramsci seemed to use the term exclusively for classes within his prison notebooks which he had to write in partial cypher to avoid the censors (Hoare and Smith 2005: 5, n1).
  9. BLMGN no longer lists chapter members at the time of writing so no precise figures can be provided.
  10. Unaffiliated local chapters, other organizations focused on Black justice and individuals who tweet '#BLM' have frequently been conflated by the media (Ransby 2018).
  11. One possible structure could incorporate what Albert and Hanhel (2002) refer to as balanced jobs.

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