



or neighborhood living room, or even a prison cell, brainstorming with fellow activists on how to mobilize people, protests and programs with limited resources, volunteers and time understands the feelings of empowerment these experiences breed. This is autonomous struggle that liberates the individual while he or she empowers the community. It is actual empowerment, it is something tangible that we can feel while transforming our lives and communities.

Autonomous struggle therefore removes the “beloved leader” and “top down” method of organizing from the movement. It promotes and inspires consensus building thinking and decentralized organizations. Too many Black organizations, even ones claiming revolutionary politics, have adopted the corporate leadership structure complete with board of directors or central committees that consult amongst themselves and issue directives to the people or communities they claim to serve instead of involving these communities in the decision-making process, which would empower the community as opposed to the organization. This approach is contrary to autonomous movements which operate from a decentralized posture making decisions rapidly, fluidly and at the service of the people and community by directly engaging them in the process. Previous attempts at centralized leadership of the Black Liberation Movement has been met with resounding disappointment and failure.

For those of us who have been shackled by the outdated politics and rhetoric of the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements autonomy should be music to our ears, allowing those of us who were born in the 70's and 80's the opportunity to fashion our own ideas and solutions to the social and racial injustice we are confronting. It is our time to rebuild and refashion the movement as Fanon so eloquently puts it: “Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission and fulfill or betray it”. In this regard, we are not only breaking free from the political reality the state has imposed on us and our communities we are also breaking free from the “messiah” dependence that many of our people and communities used to be trapped in that operated under the assumption Black people must be led to the promised land by a Black leader or organization. No, that is not the case, we will lead ourselves. Any leaders or leadership that emerges would flow from an activist's history and track record of struggle and uncompromising positions when it comes to confronting state injustice as well as commitment to consensus building and new ways of meeting the needs of the community. Also any decisions the leadership arrives at would be the collective decision of the movement after consensus meetings and debate. So the concept of leadership in autonomous movements does not involve a leader directing—rather she/he is being guided by the informed decisions of the movement's members.

