

# A 2ND GRADE LIBERATION PROGRAM



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part of a series on social justice organizing by  
**Ricardo Levins Morales**  
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# My theory

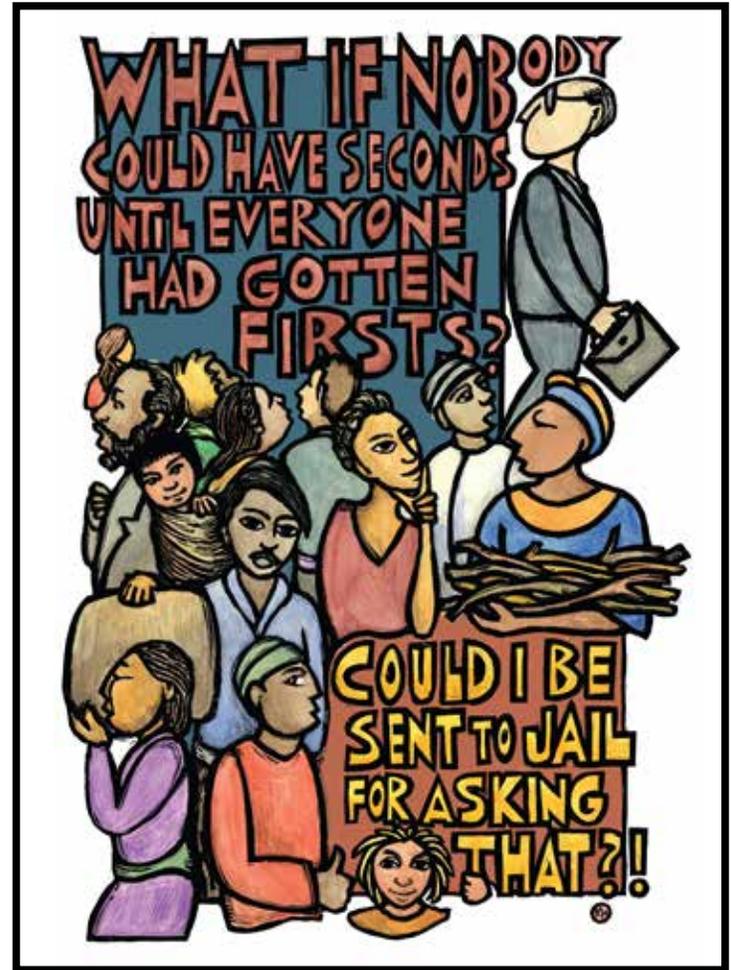
about a program for liberation is that it needs to be explainable by a second grader, or else it's not very practical. It's not usable.

For example, the first point of my program would be "Nobody gets seconds until everyone has had firsts."

That's profoundly revolutionary. It's actually incompatible with capitalism, and yet it resonates with almost everybody.

Another one might be "Don't break stuff that you can't fix." Seems simple enough.

And another: "Don't use things up at a faster rate than their capacity to replenish."



**There are** all of these things that people know and understand and have had to learn as children in order to get by in the world—but somehow they're convinced that they don't work on larger scales.

So I ask organizers, "If you took this program, the second grader program, and took it to your most reactionary relative at the holiday table and say, *Hey, listen to this, reactionary uncle, what do you think of it?, what would they say?*"

Almost everybody comes back with the answer that he would say, *"that's all very nice. I wish the world could be that way. That's pie in the sky, but we live in the real world. Get real, get over it. If we don't take for ourselves other people will."*



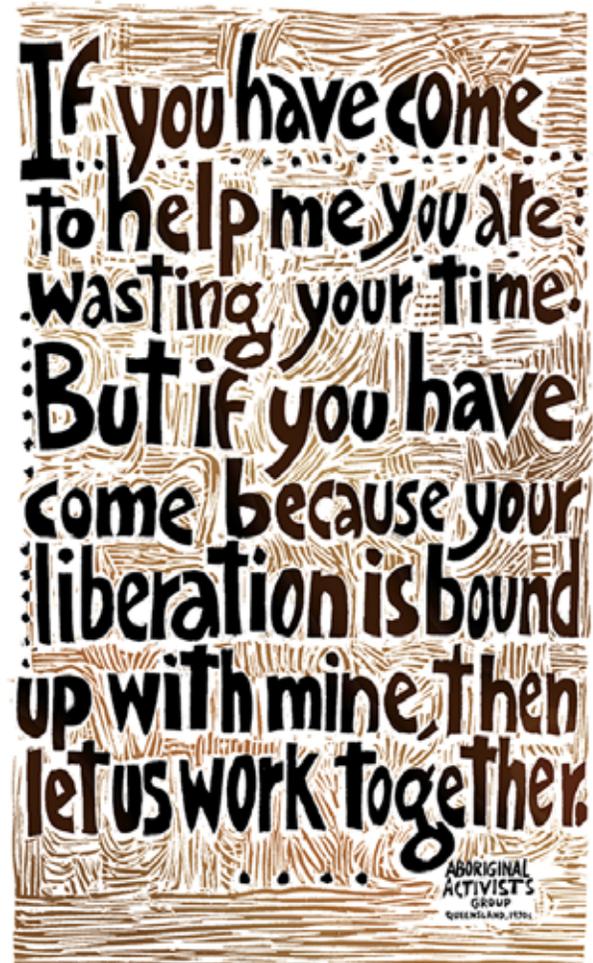
**What he's** telling us is that his heart is on our side but his despair, his hopelessness, prevents him from seeing a real pathway to that as a possibility.

So, the process of liberation is the process of making pathways visible to people.

And it's partly a question of storytelling but it's also partly a question of structuring our movements in a way that the experience of living that movement tells and reinforces that story.

The story that generosity is possible. That loving each other can be rewarding and is not necessarily a recipe for being betrayed or killed.

It's really: **How do we go back to what people hunger for most deeply but are so convinced is not possible?**



**Ricardo Levins Morales** is an artist and organizer based in Minneapolis. He uses his art as a form of political medicine to support individual and collective healing from the injuries and ongoing reality of oppression.



Ricardo was born into the anti-colonial movement in his native Puerto Rico and was drawn into activism in Chicago when his family moved there in 1967, including support work for the Black Panthers and Young Lords and later participating in or acting in solidarity with farmers, environmental, labor, racial justice, antiwar and other struggles for peoples empowerment. In addition to his art, he also leads workshops on creative organizing, social justice strategy and sustainable activism, and mentors and supports organizers.



**RLM Art Studio** is a union shop that produces and sells artwork Ricardo has made over the years as posters, cards, buttons, shirts and more. We also produce custom button pins at bulk prices for campaigns and causes. Browse and order online at [RLMArtStudio.com](http://RLMArtStudio.com).