

MOON SPACES, SUN SPACES AND COMMUNITY POWER



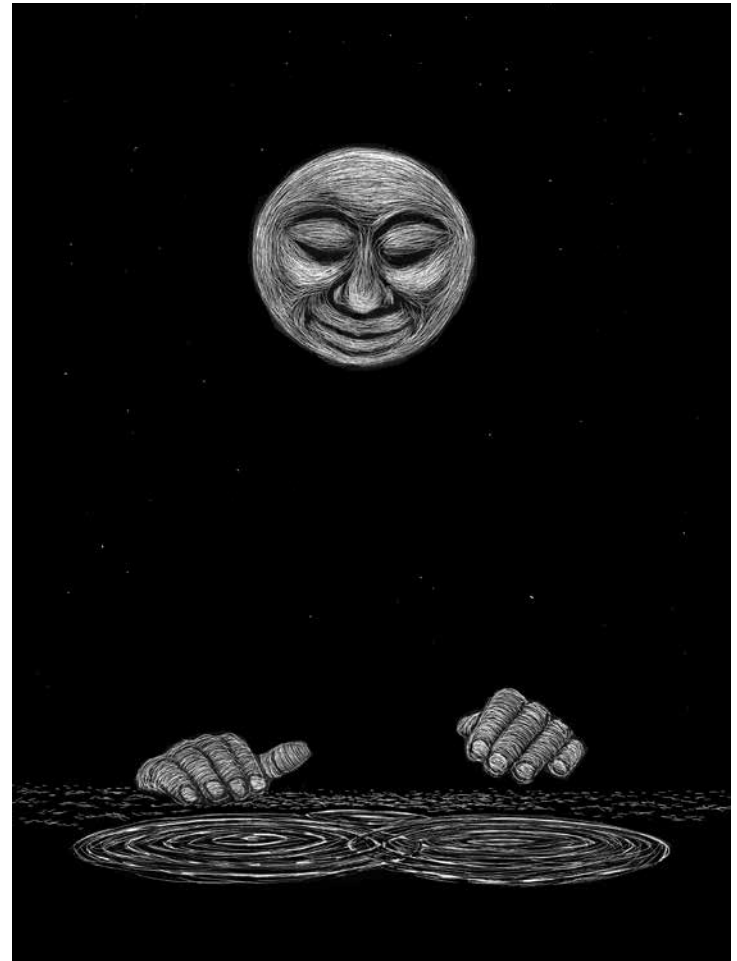
part of a series on social justice organizing by
Ricardo Levins Morales
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A lot of movements find themselves, at one time or another, negotiating for power in what I call a “Moon Space.”

By a “Moon Space” I mean the places like union negotiating tables, peace treaty negotiations, court rooms, legislatures, the places where contending forces try to settle their differences and come up with a decision.

I call them “Moon Spaces” because they don’t generate power. The moon doesn’t generate light - it reflects light from the sun.

The “Sun Spaces” are where the people are. The Sun Spaces are where the power is generated, where the movement, where the contending forces represented in those moon spaces get their energy and their strength from.

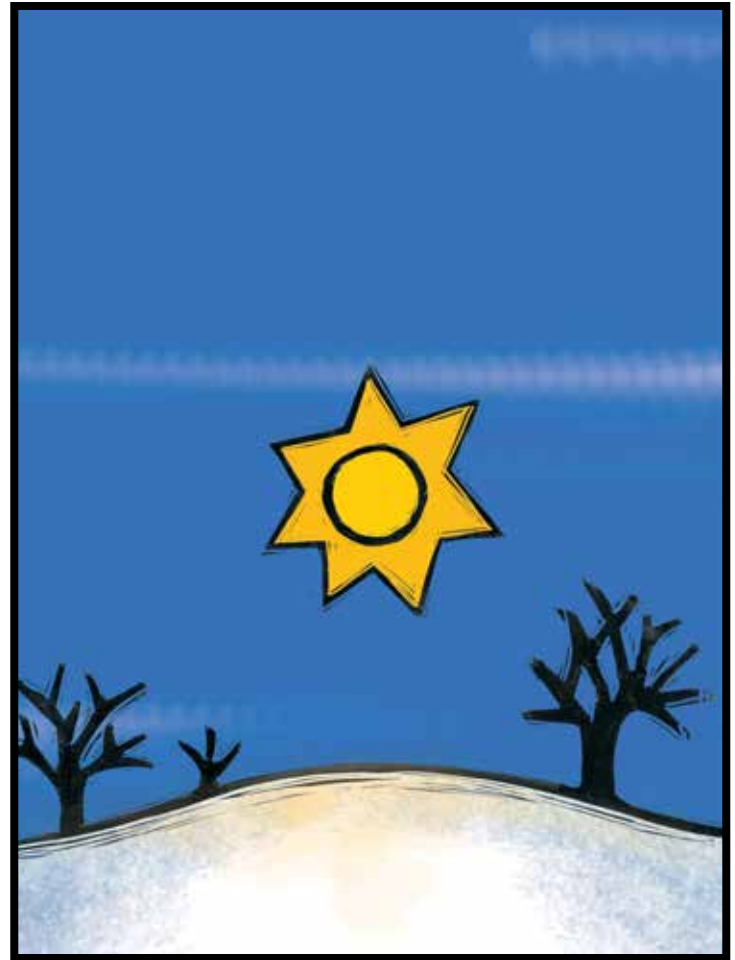


If we're in a negotiation that's not going well, where we don't have a lot of leverage, a lot of times it's not about our skills. It's about the fact that we would actually need to be on the street, we don't need to be at the table.

We're often fighting for a place at the table, but that may or may not be to our advantage.

Sometimes it's to our advantage to be doing more organizing, creating more alliances, raising the level of militance. Building power in the Sun Spaces.

These and other things are what is going to give us more energy at our backs when we go into that Moon Space to do the negotiations.



People who

spend a lot of time in the Moon Spaces often come to believe that that's where the power is, that that's where the story is being written. They think of themselves, especially if they didn't go in with a real strong power analysis, as being the spear when they're really just the point of the spear, and the hands holding that spear are on the outside.

In order to really be able to take advantage of these spaces, there needs to be an organic connection.

It's not so important whether it's inside the system or outside the system, but **whether your feet are firmly planted in the community where the power really originates.**



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.