

THE SOIL IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SEEDS



part of a series on social justice organizing by
Ricardo Levins Morales
watch in video format at RLMArtStudio.com

One of the most important insights that cultural organizing has brought to movement struggle is the idea that the soil is more important than the seeds.

Almost anything will grow in rich, nutritious soil, whereas it's hard to get anything to grow if the soil is barren, toxic and won't hold moisture.

The seeds are our projects, our initiatives, our campaigns, our organizations, our institutions that we want to build.

The soil is the compost of beliefs, ideas, values, and narratives that create the environment in which we're working.



For example,

if you're trying to win a decent contract and more funding for school teachers, it's going to be hard if "everybody knows" that teachers are greedy, lazy, indifferent and don't care about kids. The right wing has been hammering in that message, instilling that into the soil.

In fact, for forty years, the right has devoted themselves largely to preparing the soil.

That includes saying stuff that sounds ridiculous, fighting for things that aren't winnable yet, because they're investing in the future and ten years later it won't sound ridiculous and they'll win.



The question

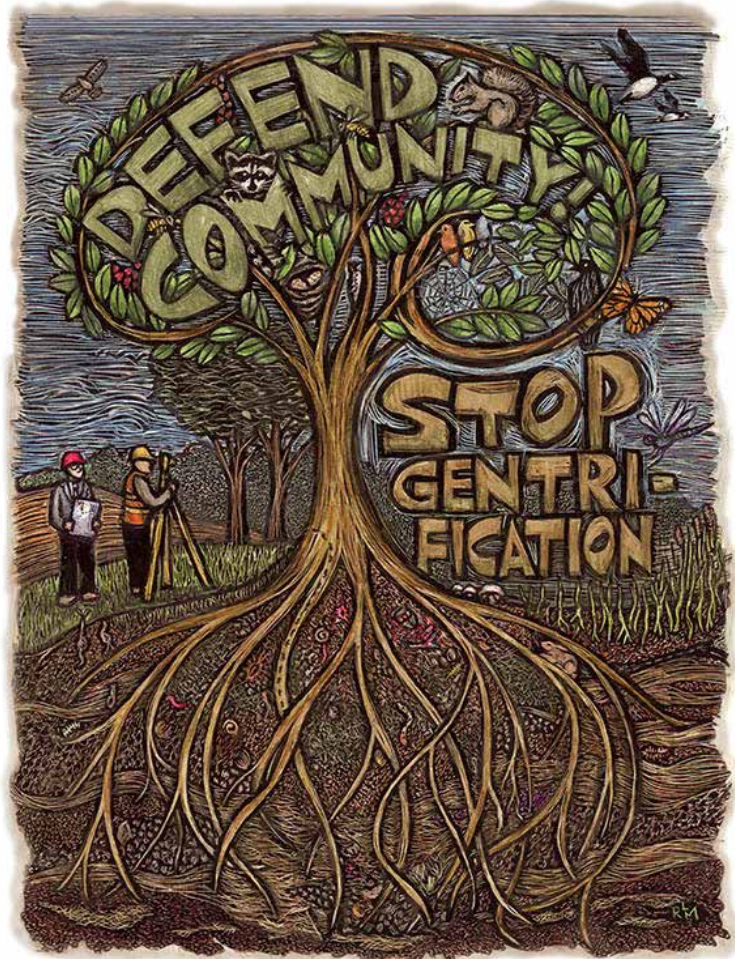
I would pose to you is:

What stories, what narratives, what beliefs—if they were widely disseminated in the soil of our communities—would make it easy to win?

Just imagine it for a moment: what would make victories easy if everyone believed it? Now, we're fighting against the weight of all these toxic narratives that people have internalized.

We're the only ones who can plant the seed of the tree that one day we want to live under.

We need to be preparing the soil in which that tree can grow.



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**.