Reflections on NAM[1]

Michael Lerner

Rabbi Michael Lerner was one of the founding members of the New American Movement (NAM). His 1972 essay, "The New American Movement: A Way to Overcome the Mistakes of the Past," co-written with the NAM National Organizing Committee, summarized the founding principles of the organization which had held its first national meeting in October 1971 and its founding convention in Davenport, Iowa in November of that same year. "The New American Movement" was published two months later in the January-February 1972 *Socialist Revolution*, one of the New Left's most widely-read theoretical journals. The 1972 article was both a criticism of the directions the New Left had taken to that point in time and a coherent proposal for developing NAM as the organization that could help bring into being a popular socialist movement in the U.S.

For me and most of the people I knew in Berkeley in the mid- and late-'60s, the most significant experience of our lives so far was our participation in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). SDS was a social change movement filled with hope, vision for a new world, courage, and solidarity. We were drawn to its ethic of caring for each other, that ran totally counter to the "looking-out-for-number-one" common sense of the culture into which we had been socialized. Its destruction in 1969 created a huge problem for social change activists in their twenties. SDS had grown from a few hundred people in 1961 to become the primary vehicle for local antiwar activists to connect with each other, share ideas and experiences, and strategize together. By 1969, it had a membership of close to 100,000.

Watching competing factions tear the organization apart at its June 1969 convention was a heartbreaking experience for me and many others. How could people become so deeply attached to their ideologies that they would be willing to destroy the unity of the largest antiwar organization just a few months after Richard Nixon, the country's most dangerous warmonger, had taken office? How could the faction that "won" and took over the national office, the Revolutionary Youth Movement I (also known as "the Weathermen"), subsequently dissolve SDS and destroy all its membership records so no one could ever reconstruct the organization? Supposedly this was done on the grounds that this information might fall into the hands of the police—but so what? We weren't doing anything illegal. But that was the Weathermen's complaint—that to be truly antiracist and pro-Vietnamese, we should have been engaged in illegal acts of

struggle against the war. Towards this end, they turned the public image of the antiwar movement—super-democratic, Martin-Luther-King-Jr.-styled, nonviolent ("all we are saying is give peace a chance")—into a violence-cheering and hateful group of people who were determined to tear down American society Malcolm-X-style: "by any means necessary."

For tens of thousands of SDSers, the very way that the movement had fallen apart seemed to confirm the contradictory worldview that had dominated SDS at least until late 1967—that to be truly democratic, we didn't really need a national organization; that the transformation of our country would have to come "from below" as a spontaneous upsurge of "the people"; that we ourselves were of questionable legitimacy since we were "students" who had the privilege to go to universities and hence couldn't really understand or represent "the most oppressed" (poor people, blacks, Vietnamese, the people of the Third World) whose oppression had "taught them a wisdom that we couldn't possibly have living lives of privilege"; that our greatest fear ought to be the tendency of local leaders of our organization to amass "too much power" for themselves and hence stymie "real democratic procedure," either because they themselves were power-hungry-egotists, members of some socialist sect group, or even worse, the Communist Party U.S.A.

It was not unusual for people who had been active in the local SDS chapter for a year to be referred to as "the old leadership" and put down for that reason while the newest person to arrive at an SDS meeting was seen as more authentic and hence listened to with greater authority. The greatest authority was to be given to high school students who were "ready" (if only we could spend more time organizing them), to blacks (who on rare occasions might show up at a meeting, or whose local chapter of the Black Panther Party contained all kinds of wisdom if we could only listen to them), or to the people of the Third World.

No wonder, then, that for the bulk of local activists, the emergence of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and the two factions of the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM I and RYM II) felt irrelevant. They were the manifestation of precisely what was hated, and their subsequent destruction of SDS was further proof to local activists that national organization was irrelevant or destructive and that leadership, particularly male leadership, was inherently suspect. In fact, from 1968 onward, antileadership thinking had taken that turn as well, given the increased presence of militant feminists in the movement.

I had been chair of the Berkeley chapter of SDS from 1966-68 and was as much part of the problem as anyone else. Eschewing all forms of ideology, I became a leader of what was sometimes called "the action faction," the group that was concerned with overcoming the tendency of SDS to turn into an intellectual debate club. I was an organizer of sit-ins against the CIA and ROTC, that sought to recruit on campus in 1966, and the Stop the Draft Week in 1967 when thousands of us marched day after day in attempts to close down the Oakland Induction Center of the U.S. Army. I turned in my draft card at "Vietnam Commencement" (as did hundreds of others—we sent

them back to our local draft boards with the message "Hell no, we won't go"), and I was one of the organizers of the People's Park demonstrations in 1969. Later, I was also an "unindicted co-conspirator," according to the charges eventually brought by the Alameda County District Attorney who went on to become Ronald Reagan's attorney general. I felt no allegiance to the national SDS, not recognizing until Nixon was elected and the attack on the anti-war movement became more nationally coordinated through COINTELPRO, how very important it would have been to have a national organization.

Originally, as a part of the superdemocracy crew in SDS, I was one of many for whom the idea of a nationwide hierarchical political organization had no appeal. I was a graduate student in philosophy, and my ideas were very important to me. I didn't want to lose my autonomy in some organization that had "Stalinist" tendencies to top-down control. But I soon realized the problem with ultrademocracy: it quickly yielded to manipulation and nondemocratic practices. I watched as my roommate Jerry Rubin manipulated SDS when some of the members questioned the teach-in on Black Power that Jerry and I were organizing in 1966. When people raised objections, Jerry would get up at the meeting and say, "This is too important to decide without real consultation—let's break down into small groups so that everyone's voice can be heard." The small groups would go on and on, and by the time anyone tried to reconvene the meetings, it felt undemocratic to make any decisions because so many people had gone back to their apartments to go to sleep. Week after week, Jerry would champion full democratic process to those who were critical of the teach-in, while we who were organizing the event went right ahead until it was too late to stop it. On other occasions, I would watch as people would demand consensus, and the meetings would go on for hours. Finally, only those who were incapable of getting bored would be left, and they, the small handful of the debate-intoxicated not-so-activist-activists, would make decisions. It would have been quite different had everyone been able to stay up. But as it worked out, the insistence on ultrademocracy guaranteed processes that were in fact less democratic.

It was hard to miss the fact that an organization that was transfixed by democracy felt at times incapable of taking decisive action and turned out to be democratic in form but not in substance. It didn't really reflect what the majority of the people in our constituency of progressive students would want. No wonder, then, that there was this love/hate relationship with "democratic process." On the one hand, we all hated the phony kinds of democracy that prevailed in the larger American society that gave us choices between two pro-business and pro-war political parties. On the other hand, we wanted to end the war and not just sit around talking about process and how to do it right and most democratically. I came to understand that some forms of democratic process might not ultimately represent the constituency. Meantime, I also learned that some kinds of vanguard actions (e.g., nonviolent civil disobedience) can inspire a constituency that wants to express itself but does not want to be bothered with the details of when and how to perform that civil disobedience.

Several things made me want a more powerful leadership. One was the way that anti-leadership sentiments worked in our local chapter in Berkeley. People who had been active in the movement for not more than a year or two, often 20-24 years old, were described by others as "the old leadership" whose opinions were not much respected and whose ideas were described as "from the top on down." But the "top" of what? The very terms that many of us used to describe what was wrong with the Soviet Union were being applied to people in their twenties whose only real power was their ability to convince others, who owned nothing but their voices. Were these people really "just like" the ones we were fighting against, who owned and controlled the newspapers, radio stations and secret police, and who ran the corporations and armies of the United States and the Soviet Union? There was something so completely distorted about this perception that it became increasingly hard for many activists to take it seriously.

After facing the organized power of the federal government in 1970 when they brought me to trial as the leader of what became known as The Seattle Seven[2], I again became aware of the need for a national organization to challenge the Nixon Administration. Once I finished serving some time in the Terminal Island Federal Penitentiary for contempt of court during my trial for "conspiracy and using the facilities of interstate commerce with the intent of inciting to riot," I joined with Rennie Davis to propose, and then work on, what became the largest act of nonviolent civil disobedience in U.S. history: May Day 1971.

It was while organizing May Day '71 that I finally became convinced that the existing movement was so crazy and self-destructive that it would not have a chance against the power of the Nixon White House and the corporate media conglomerates. We needed a new national organization to replace SDS, but one that would eschew the irrationalities of the past. So, I wrote a critique of the New Left in *Ramparts* (I was at that point a contributing editor) in which I called for a new kind of movement, and then I wrote a founding statement for such an organization, which I named the New American Movement (NAM). Then, with my partner Theirrie Cook and my Seattle Seven "co-conspirator" Chip Marshall, both of whom signed the document, I started reaching out to people whom I had met through my days as a "national antiwar leader."

I had focused the founding statement on "overcoming the mistakes of the past." I was particularly concerned with building a movement that would not repeat the antileadership/dictatorial leadership dance I witnessed in the past years. I also wanted this organization to overcome the anti-intellectualism that had come into fashion in SDS around 1968 and cease romanticizing the anti-imperialist and antiracist struggles that had led to a fawning acceptance of anything that came from nonwhite sources no matter how immoral or self-destructive. During my time in Seattle, I found my own organizing undermined by these tendencies, and although I saw no way of defeating them in the larger Left, I sought to create an organization that would reject these tendencies explicitly from the start.

My biggest concern, however, was building a movement organization that would reach out to working class Americans and connect them to the radical energies of the New Left. I had been attracted to organizations that claimed such a goal in the past, but all of them had turned out to be rigid sect groups that used Marx or Mao as holy texts rather than actually following what Marx had instructed. Marx urged a scientific study of one's own specific conditions and building a program from that study, one not based on quoting him or anyone else as the authority, since their studies were of different circumstances. My own study, for example, led me to propose a tax initiative in Washington that would have lowered state taxes on middle-income and poor people by 50 percent and created a state receivership for federal taxes that would be paid to this agency. The goal then was to withhold federal taxes from the U.S. government until it stopped the war in Vietnam and use those tax monies to support the education, child care, and health care needs for all middle-income and poor citizens of the state, and rebuild inner city communities. The tax initiative, of course, was not designed to satisfy the requisites of the U.S. Constitution. It was a way to put forward a different vision of the Left, moving away from the media's portrayal of us as violence-prone destroyers of society that the Weathermen leadership and the Black Panther Party had helped make a plausible picture to many. The tax initiative received 50,000 signatures and certainly would have made the requirements for the state ballot had not the federal government stepped in and indicted me and seven others for organizing a large demonstration against the war. However, it still could have succeeded, at least to the point of being declared unconstitutional, had the rest of the Left backed it. But they did not. Instead, they denounced it as "racist" because it was, they said, pandering to "white skin privilege" by caring so much about certain white families and their concerns such as taxes, education, and health care costs.

My goal when creating NAM was gathering people who wanted precisely what I had started in Seattle—namely, an organization that spoke to the majority of Americans whose needs were being shortchanged by the government and society, and who were growing increasingly angry at a government that was spending their taxes for war and for the interests of the ruling elites of the society. I argued that NAM should appeal and speak to the interests of working people, that it should advocate a different kind of society, one no longer privileging the interests of capital, and that the movement advocating for such a society should be explicit in its democratic socialist vision as well as anti-imperialist and antiracist in its analysis. But when talking about socialism, I insisted that the movement must explicitly reject the dictatorships that emerged in the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe. NAM needed to make clear that these were as far from the democratic socialism we advocated as was the liberal reformism of the Democratic Party. The full vision of my ideas at the time appeared later in my book *The New Socialist Revolution*[3].

The central point I argued was that we must find ways to speak to working people in a language and with organizing techniques that could be heard and perceived as friendly rather than antagonistic, at

least by those working class members who were growing increasingly unhappy with the Vietnam War and with rising taxes used to support unsuccessful social welfare programs domestically. NAM, I insisted, would focus on clever and appealing outreach as the center of its mission. As one possible example, I cited the work that Heather and Paul Booth were doing in Chicago, creating a large, community-oriented, working-class organization. However, I insisted that NAM must go beyond the Alinsky-style[4] "self-interest" organizing of local concerns to address also the war, global imperialism, racism, and the foundations of capitalism itself.

As we traveled around the country trying to get the movement started, we connected with former SDS organizers who responded favorably to the ideas in the founding document. The *Ramparts* article struck a chord with many, and the founding statement gave a more detailed approach to building a movement. Although many people who supplied leadership in the past had already given up on the New Left by the time we reached them in the spring, summer, and early fall of 1971, some of the people I respected most agreed with what we were saying. Regrettably, often their position was, "Call me after you've created a movement that accords with this statement, and then I'll get involved. Right now I'm too burned out and disillusioned with how I was treated by my comrades to risk getting my hopes up again. But I'll be right there if you can make it happen." My pleas to them that I could not make it happen unless they were with us in actual involvement, not just in spirit, largely were ignored.

Nevertheless, a group came together around my organizing efforts and mostly agreed with the kind of focus outlined in the *Ramparts* article and the founding statement. They also acknowledged that the effort should affirm what is good about America, leaving behind the tendency of some in the New Left to demean the entire American society. I proposed that NAM should affirm the struggles of working people to use the democratic forms to expand democracy, civil liberties, and human rights established over the past two centuries. For example, I proposed that NAM sponsor July 4 celebrations that highlighted the ways people organized themselves into unions, the advances made against male domination through the women's movement, and the victories against racism and segregation accomplished through the civil rights movement. These struggles were as much part of the American heritage as the militarism normally associated with Independence Day. I called the organization the New "American" Movement precisely to highlight our affirmation of America even as we sought to struggle against its ruling elites and the misuse of American democracy by corporate powers. We picked Davenport, Iowa for our founding conference precisely because it had an authentic American flavor to it, and we hoped this would signal NAM's differences from those movements based in old New Left centers—Cambridge, Massachusetts; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Berkeley, California; Madison, Wisconsin.

For the first few months of organizing, Chip, Theirrie, and I worked closely together. But as the November conference grew closer, Theirrie and I had to withdraw from organizing due to the birth of our son, Akiba. Chip, who was the most popular of the Seattle Seven,

began to drift away from the clear ideological focus of the founding statement and started to tell people that, after all, we were a "democratic" organization and so the founding principles themselves were negotiable. But Chip was not the main problem we faced in Davenport. Rather, it was the growing excitement that "something was happening," and that it was inspired by "top" leaders (Chip, Theirrie, and me). I had insisted that only people who read and signed a statement fully endorsing our founding principles, and who had already formed a local group backing the NAM statement, should be allowed to attend. I envisioned a meeting of approximately one hundred organizers who would not discuss the founding principles about which they agreed but would instead discuss how best to reach working people (in the largest sense of the term) and implement NAM's goals.

As it turned out, a much wider variety of people attended that first conference. Apart from the antileadership types, there was another group heavily represented in Davenport: refugees from the Communist Party U.S.A. They sought another home but insisted that NAM should not critique what they called "real existing socialism" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, [or] what I called "the willful misuse of socialist ideals for the sake of maintaining power by a dictatorial elite." Then there was a section of socialist feminist activists who resented that this organization was pulled together by two males and a "male-identified" female (my partner Theirrie). We knew that these tendencies existed in New Left members, but we imagined that their disagreements with us would lead them to ignore and denounce our efforts rather than cause them to show up and take over what we had started.

Imagine our surprise, then, when Theirrie and I and our one-month-old child Akiba arrived in Davenport to a conference of four hundred people, a large group of whom had never read the founding statement but who nonetheless quite profoundly disagreed with it. It didn't take me long to understand that without that agreement, what was being created would not be even close to that which was needed. I was shocked and profoundly disappointed. I suggested to those who shared our perspective that we make explicit that this was not supposed to be a democratic meeting for the purpose of creating an organization, but instead one for people who wanted the specific organization we had outlined. Still, the memories of the disastrous split that had taken place at the final SDS meeting in Chicago 1969 were enough to keep us from doing what we should have done—leave and form our own separate organization. Instead, we stayed and watched as the founding principles were completely undermined by the majority of attendees. In front of our eyes, the antileadership and superdemocracy tendencies reemerged in precisely the ways that would guarantee endless debate and no serious unified strategy. Given the situation, I realized that playing a leadership role in the organization would be impossible, so when I was nominated for the ten-person leadership committee, I declined. But Theirrie and Chip, still imagining that our original vision could gain support, accepted their nominations—and then were not elected. In the end, the three people who had formed the idea and had spent the

last five months trying to build support for it while living on a shoestring had all been rewarded thusly.

During those five months, of course, I had met literally hundreds of leaders of SDS and other New Left ventures who had warned me that this would be the outcome. They had concluded already that it was futile to revive a national organization at that moment, and they described to me their own painful experiences as activists who had given their life energies to the movement in the past seven years. They had taken huge risks, some having served time in prison for nonviolent civil disobedience acts, only to find that the movement around them denounced them because they were leaders, *prima facie* evil manipulators and power-hungry elitists who sought to dominate as "top on down" and anti-democratic types. I thought that by embracing that "top on down" label and insisting that this organization would be precisely that, and open only to those who agreed with its ideals, I would avoid the kinds of people who had chased talented organizers out of the left. I was wrong.

Were the ten people who had been the core of the original leadership and who subsequently resigned from NAM secretly anti-democratic? If so, it would certainly have been appropriate for the people coming together in Davenport to push us away. But that was not the case. On the contrary, we argued that for NAM to become a democratic movement, the most important thing it could do would be to reach out to working people and seek in its first few years to change its class basis from the people who originally came—survivors of the New Left—to a wider representation of working people who agreed with our founding perspective. For that reason, we insisted that the first priority of NAM should be to engage in mass outreach activities (a version of the tax-initiative or some kind of antiwar activity), reach out to the progressives in unions and religious institutions, and contend in national politics with statements and organizing in the coming electoral campaign of 1972. We wanted NAM to become known as the sane voice of a progressive movement. I argued that one of our foci should be to become a progressive pro-family organization, showing that the dynamics of capitalism were working to undermine family stability. My point was to find aspects of the lives of working-class people that were causing pain, and to show how that pain was linked to the dynamics of an oppressive capitalism that was simultaneously waging an imperial war in Vietnam.

Those who opposed us said that it was too early to do outreach, that instead we should focus on clarifying and refining the organization's founding vision. NAM then would be composed of local chapters whose primary activity would be debating the founding ideas, rather than accepting them as the guideposts and moving to implement an organization around them. We argued, quite accurately in retrospect, that an organization whose main function was debating ideas would attract people interested in the same activity—and that hence we would build a left-wing debating society, not a mass outreach progressive political organization. Working people concerned about their daily lives, if they ever even heard about NAM, would come to meetings dominated by this kind of debate

and quickly feel that they had no real place there, and that no one was addressing their concerns even though everyone was talking about "the working class."

We were countered by others who said that the section of the working class to whom they were attempting to reach was "the new working class" made up of idea-workers and technical workers who had not been organized by the unions and who would not be turned off by the kind of movement they wanted to create. Our response: "Great, that section of the working class is very important and should be organized, but they too would not show up in numbers significant enough to make a difference in the country unless their needs were being addressed in programs that sought to organize a different reality for them." Talking to ourselves was not organizing this new section of the working class any more than it was the older sections.

As we began to clarify our ideas, I came to a deeper understanding of what the differences were really about. For many who had been attracted to NAM, the idea of a mass movement was a frightening prospect. Their only experience had been via the antiwar movement with its evolution toward violence, irrationality, Weathermen, and competing extremist sect groups. When they heard us talking about a mass organization that would reach out, they saw themselves as quickly marginalized in such a context.

For me and the others who quit NAM after the first two years of existence, our experience was quite different. We had come from childhoods or adult life experiences inside successful mass movements like the labor movement or the Democratic Party, and we were thinking in terms of an organization that might actually change the entire country. We did not imagine NAM as an organization for a few thousand New Leftists who sought community and mutual support, as valuable as that could be, but rather [as] an organization of millions of people that would shape popular debate and play a major role in mainstream American politics. From our standpoint, the New Left already represented some twenty million people, and NAM could take the most rational among them and build a far larger movement. But many thought it unrealistic, and, of course, given the form of organization that they chose, they would be proven self-fulfillingly correct, as NAM and then the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) never really got beyond ten thousand or so members. These numbers may be perhaps less—I don't have the actual figures available.

For me, the experience of failing so dramatically in NAM led to a major reevaluation of my organizing approach. I was a philosophy professor who thought that the largest problem facing the Left was that it didn't have the right ideas. I imagined that if I created an organization committed to ideals I felt would rebuild the Left, it would attract people who agreed with those same ideals, and we would work together to implement them. But after my experience with NAM, I realized that there was a psychological element that I had ignored, one that I would later describe as "surplus powerlessness."[5] In my earlier book, *The New Socialist Revolution*, I documented what I later called "real powerlessness"—the degree to which the economic and political arrangements of our society make us rela-

tively helpless to shape the world of work, foreign and domestic policy decisions that determine war and peace, and global economic arrangements. I made clear that "real powerlessness" was not absolute—that democratic forms won through the history of working-class struggles had succeeded in giving to ordinary citizens a degree of power, but that exercising that power required a huge expenditure of time and energy relative to what it took for the economic and political elites to have their needs and desires implemented. In this sense there was (and is) a real difference between how much power ordinary citizens have and how much power the elites have—what I mean by "real powerlessness."

However, as I worked to organize NAM, and then as I followed its development in the next few years, I discovered that there was another equally important factor at work: "surplus powerlessness," the degree to which people with relatively less power than the elites make themselves even more powerless than they need to be because of the way they think and feel about themselves and their world. At the height of our influence, tens of thousands of activists accepted the false consciousness that they had accomplished nothing and that hence the only "real" struggle would be one modeled on the Soviet seizure of power in 1917 or the revolutions led by Fidel Castro in Cuba, by Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Mao Tse Tung in China, or by Huey Newton in Oakland's Black Panther Party. While millions of people became radicalized, the core group of hundreds of thousands of activists grew depressed because they had not yet, in fewer than ten years of struggle, overthrown the global capitalist system, and hence felt that they had dramatically failed, that their sacrifices had been in vain. At the height of our influence and societal power, I was surrounded by people unable to credit their impact and substantial victories in changing the consciousness of tens of millions. "Surplus" powerlessness made the people around me in the movement, and then in NAM, feel that they accomplished far less than they actually were. And, in order to build a successful movement, we would have to find a way to understand that dynamic and heal it.

With this understanding, I decided to end my career as a philosopher and return to graduate school for a second Ph.D., one in social and clinical psychology. During that training, and then working with middle-income people over the next twenty years, I came to understand that the problem of surplus powerlessness was pervasive throughout society. I also came to understand how it happened that the Left had totally ignored Americans' spiritual hunger, or what I called "the hunger for meaning and purpose that transcended the materialism and selfishness of the competitive marketplace and rooted their lives in a higher set of values."[6]

With this understanding, I and my then-wife, Nan Fink, began *Tikkun* magazine, and with Cornel West and Sister Joan Chittister, I more recently started the Network of Spiritual Progressives (www.spiritualprogressives.org). Therefore, I owe much to my NAM experience for setting me on a different course.

Two important caveats: First, I met some terrific people in NAM whose lives I greatly respect even though I disagreed then, and to an extent even now, with their understanding of American politics.

Second, I've focused this narrative on me—the word "I" appears constantly. I was unable to contact many of those with whom I worked and who were part of what could best be described as the founding collective for NAM, and it was difficult to say "we" without naming names. I did not want to identify people who might in one way or another feel uncomfortable being "outed" in this particular way, even though that left me vulnerable. I risked being considered as precisely the kind of self-focused person that the antileadership-types attacked. But at the time, it was in fact a "we" and not just an "I," and the opinions expressed here I suspect represent those of many others who also left in disillusionment during those first few years.

Finally, I've left out of this account a whole other dimension which I deal with elsewhere in my book, *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back our Country from the Religious Right*. Like my experience in the New Left, I was always forced to submerge my religious identity in NAM. Whenever I brought up religion, all sides agreed that I should shut up about it. They argued that religion was fundamentally a reactionary force, and that my own personal commitments as a religious Jew were not welcome. My beliefs provided "evidence" that I might actually be a closet patriarch, since Judaism was, in their perception, nothing but another hateful, racist, and patriarchal religion that the Left had to overcome. Needless to say, this dimension of my experience in the Left and in NAM made it hard for me to feel fully a part of even the organization I was founding. I look back with considerable distaste at my own vain attempts to influence progressive politics in those days through my speedy capitulation to that religiophobia. I now believe that many of the positions I held were not adequately shaped by a spiritual understanding. Further, I believe I allowed my training at the Jewish Theological Seminary to be subordinate to my desire to have influence. My life then was untenable because it was split. I kept fairly rigorous religious practice on one side and public, political involvement devoid of spiritual language, ritual, or focus on values like love, generosity, kindness, and awe at the grandeur of the universe on the other side. This schism led to indefensible distortions in my thinking and behavior. But that part of the story is not for here and now.

Notes

[1] I invite comments and contact with people who worked with me 28 years ago in creating NAM, including those who want to question or challenge my analysis, as well as people who might be interested in working with me now as I build the Network of Spiritual Progressives (including atheists who still have a spiritual dimension to their consciousness). I invite those people to read our Core Vision for Tikkun and our Spiritual Covenant with America and our Global Marshall Plan, all of which can be found at www.spiritualprogressives.org or at www.tikkun.org .

[2] The Seattle Liberation Front, also known as the SLF, was a radical anti-Vietnam organization formed in Seattle, Washington. The group carried out various protest activities during 1970-1971. It was founded by Michael Lerner, who was at that time a visiting philosophy professor at the University of Washington. -Ed.

[3] This book was written in 1971 but only published by Dell in 1973.

[4] Saul Alinsky, who lived from 1909-1972, was a well-known community organizer and writer who spent nearly four decades organizing the poor for radical social action. His book, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (Vintage 1971) is the classic manual for community organizing. -Ed.

[5] My book of that name, now out of print, was only published in 1987 by Tikkun and then later reprinted by Humanities Press in 1991.

[6] Lerner elaborates this idea further in his book *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back Our Country from the Religious Right* (Harper Collins 2006). -Ed.


NAM
NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

II.
Socialist Feminism: NAM and the Second Wave