

The ABC Trilogy: At all times, human rights activists must be Angry, Brave and Creative.

Aphorisms from Anwar Fazal provided by Claudio Schuftan who dedicates this Reader primarily to share some of the enlightened aphorisms about activism of Dato Anwar Fazal the Malaysian long-time activist and dear friend.

Activists beware: Constraints surround us; while this may sound alarming, they need not impede. So, remember: Fatigue is not uncommon with self-sacrifice; it can be debilitating. (J. Koenig)

- Light a candle rather than curse the darkness; do whatever you can, even if it seems little.
- The Power of Five: Combine the power of one (individual as a change agent); with the power of many (joining hands with gender, ecology, justice and other networks and movements); with the power of the halo (spiritual traditions); with the power of information (good research and creative communications); with the power of success (every victory, however small, must be celebrated; good work inspires more good work).
- Social cohesion leading to joint action is a symptom of political maturity.
- You can do it, you must do it, you will do it. And yes, we will. (citing the Intergalactic Commission)
- The responsible human rights activist has critical awareness and awakes others to be more questioning; she gets involved first-hand in actions that make sure all people get a fair deal; she is socially responsible and acts with concern for the impact of her actions on others; she is ecologically responsible and is aware that collective decisions impact the physical environment; and, in solidarity, she engages in the formation of citizens groups who together make sure needed attention is given to people's rights.
- The activist has not only vision and ideas, but acts to make change happen through networking, advocacy, information dissemination, capacity building and harnessing resources in creative ways. (She uses the word 'network' as a verb rather than as a noun).
- Dare to dream, wake up and make it happen.
- Dishonest leadership practices lead to a dishonest society and shoddy people. Society is like fish, it rots from the head down. Leaders have a responsibility on their conscience to fight for a fair deal for citizens. If they do not, society will rot with them.
- If the people are asleep awaken them. If the people fear to act, give them courage by taking the first step yourself.
- Without alternatives there is no vision (and vice-versa). There is no point trying to focus if one does not know where one wants to go. Issues have to be made as visible as possible (but not less). If we cannot make them visible, if we cannot relate human rights (HR) issues to aspects of the lives of ordinary people so they are moved to demand their rights, governments and the media will never become even interested. We alone, as activists, are not going to move anything or anyone by ourselves; our personal demands will be considered rather remote and will be disregarded. Guaranteed.
- Professional competence must never be compromised. Activists must constantly upgrade their abilities in the social and economic field. They must also communicate well the achievements of their work. Human rights activists must thus be active, informed and critical.
- Constant action is needed to ensure that the changes achieved remain in place and are renewed and strengthened.
- Give doable tasks to new people so they face the daily realities face-on and progressively become multipliers and accelerators.
- Competence and creativity are critical: in science, in politics, as well as in the methods and practices you use.

- It is through active trust-building that we end up with a community of practitioners that work in synergy with the mission of transforming oppressive realities as they support each other and move forward together in this endeavor.
- Movements have no future if they do not build new generations of activists. True leadership is not about heading organizations, but about preparing more leaders. (citing Ralph Nader)
- Activists are at least five things: They are a hub, a catalyst, an incubator, a multiplier and an accelerator.
- Without committed people and without creative communications, no organization can remain alive -- much less achieve anything.
- The guarantees HR activists offer are often the easiest given and the most often disregarded.
- There is a growing worldwide realization that HR issues are real, important and urgent, requiring a constructive vigilance and a steadfast adherence to HR principles. Sheer vocalism (lung power) and sloganeering may have a role in highlighting and dramatizing issues, but real progress, real benefits will only be gained through responsible and constructive strategies and tactics and through the cooperative efforts of HR activists, claim holders and duty bearers.
- There was a time when claim holders' viewpoints had little influence; they were passive and often captive. The position has rapidly changed. The HR movement is now asserting itself vigorously as a countervailing power demanding justice. But action by HR activists will not lead to significant changes unless new alliances and new organizational strategies are undertaken. It is through sustained campaigns that broadly-based networks become an international antibody working for remedies that work by causing irritation and pain to reluctant, unmoving duty bearers. Direct actions will thus be aimed at the worst antigens/HR offenders including the widespread publication of counter-hegemonic information and even taking legal action. Vigilance, an alert press and responsible activists with a new morality and affirmative action are what we strive for in our movement.
- Our movement is about people, people who care about society; it is not about value for money, but value for people. It is about power, the power of ordinary people as a force to protect their interests and jointly act against those responsible for the active and passive violence they experience in society. It is about HR, the right to a decent life lived with dignity and, importantly, about the right to organize; in short, it is about bringing about justice.
- The HR movement has begun to excite, to interest and to involve ordinary people in a way unprecedented in our short history. Diverse organizations are strengthening weak links, setting up decentralized participatory structures that link countries in the South with countries in the North and are acting together.
- An iron triangle is emerging uniting NGOs, governments in the South and ideologically sympathetic international bureaucrats. So the truth is slowly weighing on our side.
- There has been an explosion of energy in all five continents. There has also been a new depth and intensity in the work of activists. They deal with the messiness of the world and help the little people --help them have that power that makes the difference. Among other, they seek to change laws, make them work for the people and work to change the systems that imposes structures on society that are unjust, unfair and unacceptable. Government inefficiency needs to be met by actively demanding changes. Faced with government indifference, we will raise hell.
- Some things are free, others we pay with our lives, unnecessarily, unforgivably. Some of us have, some do not have; they just exist --and need a wake up call.
- Laws are only a reflection of the state of our society. A violent, corrupt, manipulative society will breed laws that serve it. Laws can pervert and subvert justice and become a powerful instrument for systematic repression. When laws do not mean justice, they should not imply automatic obedience.
- There is a worldwide proliferation of citizen movements that are seeking the common good; and they are making a difference, making waves and making miracles.
- The HR revolution is militant, but not violent. It spans the globe and gives new strength to ordinary people.

- Because we are right we will win in the end. Because we are not alone and we are getting stronger, we can win even sooner.

These are Anwar Fazal's credos:

- We need to undertake programs that will mean real things to real people.
- We must always be angry about things that are wrong in our society.
- We must stand up and speak out. But not only speak out and move information around: Be good both with drums (tom toms) and at the same time with dot.coms.
- Developing islands of integrity sparks action.
- We are a force for HR to be reckoned with; we are a force for social justice and we are a force for a better world.
- No more being a fringe movement! No more just some token ad-hoc, half-hearted response! But direct questioners of the prevailing paradigm. Yes, using the power of truth, the power of science, the-power-of-responsibility-with-a-conscience, many little groups seeking little justice first to then create an avalanche of HR power: We shall overcome! We shall create more power, more strength! We have done it before and we will do it again --many more times! We have already done much with so little! And now we can do much more! This is a liberating necessity. We can create the future! (not just react, but pro-act, setting the agenda, adding more leaders who think global, think action, think strategy, think politics; activists who organize and manage, who ask when, what, why and how; who think big and think small; who are fast, flexible and furious --what a combination!

A Closing thought: Activists often think they finally are in the drivers seat, but the danger of getting to occupy the driver's seat is that, more often than not, they are not (yet) the owners of the bus.