

ANARCHISTS CARE ABOUT BOOKS (JUNE 2018)

EMERGENT STRATEGY, BY ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN

EMERGENCE: Was the definition of emergence that brown borrows from Nick Obolensky helpful or interesting to you? From page 3: “Emergence is the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions.”

SCIENCE: What did you think of brown’s handling of science? As she writes on page 4, “My style is more ‘Ooh ah wow how??’ than ‘Empirical data proves that...’”

OCTAVIA BUTLER: Throughout the book, brown draws on Butler’s work, especially the parts about “shaping change” from Parable of the Sower. Page 15 uses one of Butler’s verses to outline the rest of the book. How do you feel about brown’s interpretation of Butler?

THE PRINCIPLES: On pages 41 and 42, brown lists the principles of emergent strategy. Do you use principles like these in your organizing work? Do you want to use any of them in the future? Do you have any troubles with any of the principles?

BIOMIMICRY: On pages 45 and 46, brown explores six examples from nature that could inspire social justice movements. How could these examples relate to our own organizing and to anarchism in general?

FRACTALS: “How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale,” brown writes on page 52. Do you agree with this way of thinking? Does it actually challenge oppression and hierarchy to think this way?

ADAPTATION: brown’s story about arriving late to a meeting (73-75) emphasizes the importance of adapting towards pleasure. How do you think our movements would be different if we tried to do this more?

INTERDEPENDENCE: “No one has time for rock star tears,” brown declares on page 99. Was her juxtaposition of charismatic leadership and interdependence helpful to you? What did you think of her story about burnout?

NONLINEAR/ITERATIVE: As I've matured as an activist, I've given up on ideas of progress. I appreciate brown for sketching an alternative pattern for seeking change, which comes across most clearly to me on page 105. Did this resonate with anyone else as a challenge to the idea of progress?

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE: From page 134 to 136, brown explains the concept/practice of transformative justice, which I loved! Do others find it appealing? How can we make it happen? What do we think of the her three guiding questions?

AFROFUTURISM: Besides the examples that brown gives, in the last year I've deeply enjoyed Afrofuturist work like Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* and Janelle Monae's *Dirty Computer*. Do others find Afrofuturism inspiring? If so, how? For those who are not Black, how do we understand our relationship to Afrofuturism?

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Did anyone do this? What did we think of her decision to include this? (I'll be honest, I found it a little creepy. It reminded me of some kind of superficial magazine quiz or a manager's performance review.)

SPELLS: Did anyone try them? How do we think they work? What do we think of the relationship between spells, meditation, and forms of knowledge that are supposedly more rational?

ONLINE ORGANIZING: From 207 to 211, brown shares two compelling stories about online organizing. One was about cutting down on sugar and the other was about affirming beauty. Did you find any inspiration in these stories?

TOOLS: Did we find anything new or exciting in these tools? Did we find anything troubling or confusing? Did it affirm anything we're already doing?