

How Not To Defeat Ourselves

Marius Mason

2021

a review of

Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation by adrienne maree brown. AK Press 2021

Holding Change is the kind of wise resource book I wish so very badly that I had when I was free and organizing. Way too often, I witnessed the depressing cycle of a hopeful and energetic coming together of a grassroots group break down into sad, burned-out individual activists.

Mostly, we were defeated from realizing our dreams because of our interpersonal dynamics, even more so than the malevolent machinations of our opposition. I am uplifted by the wisdom contained in this collection of insights and tool suggestions, useful for anyone engaged in struggle and wanting the process as well as the goal to reflect an egalitarian perspective.

As someone who has suffered through anger and angst-filled hours of drama-filled meetings and having witnessed the collapse of both group structures and personal friendships because of a damaging dysfunctional group process, this beautiful book is very welcome. It can spare so much pain and disappointment. brown has created an accessible, understandable and powerful tool to handle the most difficult problem we have—us.

brown is both pragmatic and compassionate in her advice, recognizing that a broken system breaks people and that we can only do the work that is needed as the people we are. That maybe we can both get to our destination of a better world together, and learn to be better to each other as part of the same process.

Marius Mason is a political prisoner serving 22 years for environmental sabotage. **SupportMariusMason.org**



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