**Rocking the Boat in Four Stages-Sussan Oladipo**

***Skim and Review***

*Review of the book-* ***Rocking the boat****: How to effect change without making trouble*

Debra Myerson argues that change does not have to be episodic but that it can be achieved in an incremental and calm way. She asserts that some bottom-top research-based strategies that managers and leaders use to effect changes in their organizations can actually be more effective than others. This type of slow but less chaotic change approach is fragmented and not episodic or revolutionary. Leaders who execute such changes are “Tempered in their approach but resilient in achieving the intended goal. They are Tempered Radicals” in the author’s words.

The author describes six strategies that “Tempered Radicals” use. They are:

Resisting quietly and staying true to self; turning personal threats into opportunities; broadening the impact through negotiation; leveraging small wins and organizing collective action.

The author argues that change does not have to be loud and oppressive to others. She reiterates that change can be done calmly but effectively, making others see the need and possibly get a buy in for the change through negotiations. This particular point resonates with me and has been applicable in my various work situations.

On a personal note, I believe that for a change agent to have the maximum impact on others, such an agent must have some level of self-control, maintain order and temperedness to the process. People do not just want drama; they want a long lasting consistency and change that is sustained over time. This kind of consistency can only be found in the tempered approach.

In reality, tempered radicals are not very popular with their colleagues who believe in episodic change in an organization. Sometimes, tempered radicals are seen as slow and reluctant in bulldozing the troubles or issues in question. The tempered radicals have to work the tight ropes of staying calm while trying to implement the changes they are convinced as well as using an approach they deem best.

According the Myers, tempered radicals are caught between conformity and rebellion, coping with at least four kinds tensions including difficulties with ambivalence, incremental lures of co-optation, potential damage to reputation, and frustration and burnout.

I can personally relate to the above four tensions in my experiences this year. Playing a dual stance was necessary for me to sustain a transitional state of the school leadership in which I was a part of. It not only put me on a neutral stance but also working very hard to understand the positions of opposing stakeholders in order to bring about the needed the stability.

**How am I different?**

Myerson sites three different ways in which people experience difference from others:

1. Those with different social identities and see those as setting them apart from others
2. Those with different social identities and see those as only cultural and not a major basis for exclusion
3. Those who have not cultural but philosophical differences that conflicts with prevailing values, beliefs and agendas operating in their organizations.

Numbers 2 and 3 apply to my work situation. Number 2 specifically applies to me however; the brutal truth is that although I do not see my cultural differences as a basis for exclusion, it is always inevitably there even in the most unexpected of places. The Chicago Public schools are sadly still segregated according to the bulk of the students who live in that community. This would have been totally fine with me if the schools embrace others who happen to also reside in that community or work in such schools but who may be “outsiders”. In most of my cases, the reverse is the case. You are painstakingly treated harshly and coldly. I felt this towards the last weeks of school.

I also see myself in number 3 with some philosophical differences. For example, I do not believe in punitive approach to disciplining students. A combination of nurturing and firm reprimand with consequences work for me. When I work with educators who believe only in immediate punitive consequences to student’s actions, we tend to struggle to reach a compromise. This has happened even when there has been a district review punitive approach.

**Becoming a Tempered Radical**  
***Task Two:****Chapters 3 to 7 in this book focus on how Tempered Radicals make a difference. Where do you see yourself lying on the continuum (see page 8)? Where do you aim to be on this continuum? What goals do you see yourself setting to move forward? What are some lessons you take from the stories in this book that would apply to you?*

On page 8 of the book, Myerson shares the spectrum of levels of how Tempered Radicals make a difference. This ranges from Resisting quietly and staying true to oneself, Turning personal threats to opportunities, broadening the impact through negotiation, leveraging small wins and organizing for collective actions. I have seen myself from one end of the spectrum to the other end in different aspects of my work in schools. I have repeatedly seen myself as a tacit victim of difference. I try to resist quietly and have seen myself operating on every levels of the spectrum to try to effect the needed change. One area I have found myself being vocal about is diversity. Schools in Chicago are homogenous, perhaps justifiably so because most communities are homogenous. However, in the context of schools, students need diverse teachers, diverse leaders in my thinking as much as situation lends itself. Research based knowledge will also attest to this. What obtains in reality is a brutal alienation of outsiders who “do not belong”. In most cases, students are equally alienated in spite of the district efforts to include students on the basis of school option and choice”.

I want to see myself organizing for collective active in a positive and calm way. I want to speak up for people like me, recent immigrant who do not yet a voice and who do not have a constituent, who are neither localized enough nor organized communally to demand a school community. I would like to have a meaningful conversation at the upper level of governance about the ills of school segregation and the continual marginalization of some educators. The marginalization is not because of any fault of these educators but because of their being different from others.

My goal is to get the message out at the policy level, to create awareness about this issue and to have the people at the level of governance effect the needed change to create acceptance for others. I believe that if taxpayers’ money is used for schools, then all should be accepted and no one should have to be segregated at the public places.

The stories in the book challenge me to a new resolve, to continue to be tempered but with a goal in mind. I will continue to quietly work to effect change and to affect others positively.

**Facing Challenges**

Debra Meyerson talks about 4 levels of challenges. How do you see yourself dealing with some, if not all, of these challenges in your work situation?

The author talks about the following challenges: The difficulties of ambivalence, incremental lures of co-optation, potential damage to reputation and frustration and burnout. I have had to deal with all four types of challenges in the course of my work. This year alone, following a change of leadership, I had to work hard to interact with faculty and staff, different teams of parents who have conflicts and so had to be ambivalent to the situations. The most frustrating aspect of this is that you

A few colleagues may never see reason even when you mean well for them. Biases from this group are very strong and no matter what you do, they will rather insist on what they want. This situation makes one not to see the immediate results of one’s effort easily.

The few people may have the main goal to overturn all the effort in their passionate quest to keep the status quo even if it defies conventional wisdom and need for communal well being. The frustration sometimes leads to burnout and frustration.

**My Goals**

Both my short and long-term goals are missional in approach. My overarching vision is to achieve the quantitative and qualitative goals for students learning and progress towards college and real world adaptation. To this end, my mission is always to create systems and structures that allow my team and I to achieve the intended yearly goals and successes for schools. An important part of this is that I keep evaluating the systems from previous year, making improvements, communicating updates and monitoring to ensure that the new updates are implemented.

Within the next six months, I need to have an evaluated and consistent systems and structures for the processes for school work beginning from entrance till dismissal time. My goal is to develop these systems for a diverse schools as well as for a school where there is much less diversity such as the school I am in 2015. In other words, I will create updated documents from the evaluations of last year processes. The updated documents will include protocols for student entrance, dismissal, lunch, recess, changing classes, transitioning to extracurricular activities, field trips, bus conducts and so on.

My next step will be to communicate the implementation of these systems to all my stakeholders with a clear understanding that accountability is very high. I will also set up a monitoring system to ensure that the processes are followed and that the intended results are seen.

Within the next one year, I will develop leadership capacity of evolving leaders in my team and support them to be effective in their roles. I will also continue to work on improving my leadership ability and myself. I will complete my two remaining superintendent courses and continue to apply the new learning into my daily work as an urban leader. Although I am currently transitioning as a result of leadership change at my school, I am optimistic that I will get the fitting job soon and continue to build on the work my team and I have done in the past. Developing leadership in others is one leadership skill I have found very useful. Not only does it help me distribute leadership and divide labor, it helps me to give back to others the way I have been nurtured and groomed by some of my senior leaders. I always work hard and stay focused towards accomplishing my goals.