* 40 yrs - Biblical
* 40 yrs have passed
  Me didn’t go for political power
  Bush, Rove,
  Social movement base

* 1/2 pop doesn’t vote
  I build soc. movement
  by mob this base
  Using comm org techni

* 1970 to 2010 - just the beginning
* Grandson
But by 2008 the looting of the economy caused by so-called free market capitalism, combined with the drain of years of futile wars, produced an enormous economic collapse. Finally a disgusted majority of American voters did something few ever thought possible—they elected a black man as president of the United States. That historic victory represented in a large measure the efforts of millions of young people. But the fluke election of one black man under the ambiguous slogans of "change" and "hope" wasn't enough. Political power, fronted by both the Democratic and Republican Parties, and supported by corporate media, remains firmly in the hands of the ruling oligarchy. The center-right Congress is not the least concerned with the needs of the people, but only with that of their masters. President Obama's a pragmatist and understands this well. The recent fight over healthcare reform is a perfect case study of the problem. But the failure is ours: a progressive wing of congress is so weak and disorganized that no one bothers to even pay it attention, alas.

So the economic crisis continues, unemployment is permanently high in the general population but totally off the charts among youth and non-white people. Social disintegration continues, with rampant crime, drug use, and incarceration as social services and education are cut. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan drag on while civil liberties such as habeas corpus continue to erode. Torture continues. The current administration is proposing to waste billions more on the production of nuclear weapons, weapons that cannot conceivably be used against any targets but only serve to promote global nuclear proliferation. According to Tom Hayden, the military is now planning for a forty to eighty year so-called Long War. Even as we gather here today, the administration is still proposing more off-shore drilling, despite the severe damage to the Gulf coastline from one of the largest oil-spills in world history. Could anything be more obvious than that public money--our taxes--should be diverted from war and put to work developing sustainable energy technology and conservation?

But the response of a terrified and not insignificant portion of our population to this crisis is a right-wing populist movement whipped up and amplified by the corporate media that is demanding lower taxes, less government, more militarism, and attacking non-white people, especially immigrants. None of this is logical or rational. Conveniently forgotten are the Lockheed Martins, Goldman Sachs's, and Exxons that own the government, loot our treasury, give us perpetual war, a growing gap between rich and poor, and environmental destruction.

Forty years is a biblical length of time. In Exodus, the Hebrews wandered in the desert for forty years before they reached the Promised Land. God wanted enough time to pass that the old generation would die and the people would lose their habits of slavery they had acquired in Egypt.

It's taken us forty years to get from 1970 to now. We've learned a lot in that time, but we haven't yet lost the habits that we acquired living under the slavery of oligarchical corporate rule. We're addicted to our iPods and Big Macs and SUV's. As individuals and families, we're bound on the wheel of consumer debt, including the outrageous cost of higher education, which should be free to all, since education is both a social function and a human function, like breathing. And worst of all except for the tea-partiers, we've become politically passive, envisioning no way out, resigned to our fate.

To break out of our mess, we need to counter bogus right-wing populism with a democratic social and political movement that wrests back power from the corporate and military oligarchy. Our rallying principle has got to be that government represents the whole society, the collectivity, and therefore has responsibility for the well-being of the people and the planet. Imagine, for example, what could be accomplished through international law, rather
than war. To define more specifically a vision of where we’re going, what democracy can look like, we need to devote ourselves to creating a Democracy Charter, as suggested by Black Freedom Movement veteran Jack O’Dell and others.

Building a democratic populist movement won’t be easy. It will take a herculean organizing effort, the commitment of the rest of our lives. Half the population doesn’t vote at all. These people are as disenfranchised--for a variety of reasons--as African-Americans were in the white-supremacist South a half-century ago. To mobilize our disenfranchised neighbors will take no less than a Second Civil Rights movement, using both old-school organizing techniques like door-to-door neighborhood community organizing and twenty-first century digital social networks. This long hard work will be accomplished by millions of young people committing their lives to nonviolent struggle, as happened in both the civil rights and anti-war movements of the mid-twentieth century.

At the same time, we’ll have to take back the Democratic Party, to turn it from the center-right clone of the Republicans that it has been for the last sixty-plus years to become the center-left Party of the People that it should be. We’ll have to throw out the opportunist and thieves that control the party now, the small-town and big-city machine mayors, the county commissioners and state legislators who are in it only for the power and the money, the congressmen and senators who are wholly owned by corporations. The Republicans can be the tiny party of the corporations and their tea-party dupes.

As we build a mass social movement for democracy, based in the middle of society and those at the bottom, the disenfranchised, we’ll of necessity have to struggle for the soul of the Democratic Party. The road to Washington is very long, and it winds through city halls and state capitals of every state.

My generation will help with this effort, but it will be young people’s energy that carries the day. You young people are no different than we were forty years ago. You’re just as capable as the Kent State students of 1970 of permitting your hearts to long for peace and justice and of using your brains to address our social problems. You’ve just been distracted, as have many of us, by the fantasy culture of entertainment and consumption that has mushroomed in the last forty years. But reality--and I’m not talking here about ludicrous reality TV shows--has a tendency to eventually intrude on fantasy, in a variety of nasty ways, such as economic collapse, war, and environmental disaster. We have very little choice but to commit ourselves to a united effort to remake this country and, in so doing, save the planet. Your engagement with reality begins here, now.

The forty years since 1970 seems like a long time, but here’s the fact of the matter: we’re still only at the beginning of our organizing work. It’ll take at least forty years more to extricate ourselves from the jam we’re in, maybe longer. My grandson will be celebrating his first birthday next week. My deepest hope is that he'll experience peace and democracy in his lifetime.

Now let’s get organizing to work. We’ve only got 40 more years.