Four Roles in Social Change

Helper

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Assists people in ways that affirm their dignity and respect	Believes charity can handle social problems, or that helping individuals can change social structures
Shares skills and brings clients into decision-making roles	Focuses on casualties and refuses to see who benefits from victimization
Educates about the larger social system	Provides services like job training which simply give some people a competitive edge over other people, without challenging the scarcity which gives rise to competition
Encourages experiments in service delivery which support liberation	

Advocate

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Uses mainstream institutions like courts, city hall, legislatures to get new goals and values adopted	"Realistic politics": promotes minor reforms acceptable to power-holders
Uses lobbying, lawsuits, elite networking/coalition-building for clearly-stated demands, often backed by research	Promotes domination by top-down professional advocacy groups
Monitors successes to make sure they are implemented	More concerned with organization's status than the goal of their social movement
	Identifies more with powerholders than with grassroots
	Does not like paradigm shifts

Rebel

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Protests: says "no!" to violations of positive American values	Promotes anti-leadership, anti-organization rules and structure
Employs nonviolent direct action and attitude, including civil disobedience	Attached to an identity as lonely voice on society's fringe
Targets power-holders and institutions	Uses tactics without realistic strategy
Puts problems & policies in public spotlight	Has victim attitude, behavior: angry, judgmental, dogmatic
Uses strategy as well as tactics	Uses rhetoric of self-righteousness, absolute truth, moral superiority
Does work that is courageous, exciting, risky	Can be strident: personal upset more important than movement's needs
Shows in behavior the moral superiority of movement values	

Organizer

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Believes in people power: builds mass-based grassroots groups, networks	Has tunnel vision: advocates single approach while opposing those doing all others
Nurtures growth of natural leaders	Promotes patriarchal leadership styles
Chooses strategies for long-term movement development rather than focusing only on immediate demands	Promotes only minor reform
Uses training to build skills, democratize decisions, diversify and broaden organization and coalitions	Stifles emergence of diversity and ignores needs of activists
Promotes alternatives and paradigm shifts	Promotes visions of perfection cut off from practical political and social struggle

From Bill Moyer's Doing Democracy