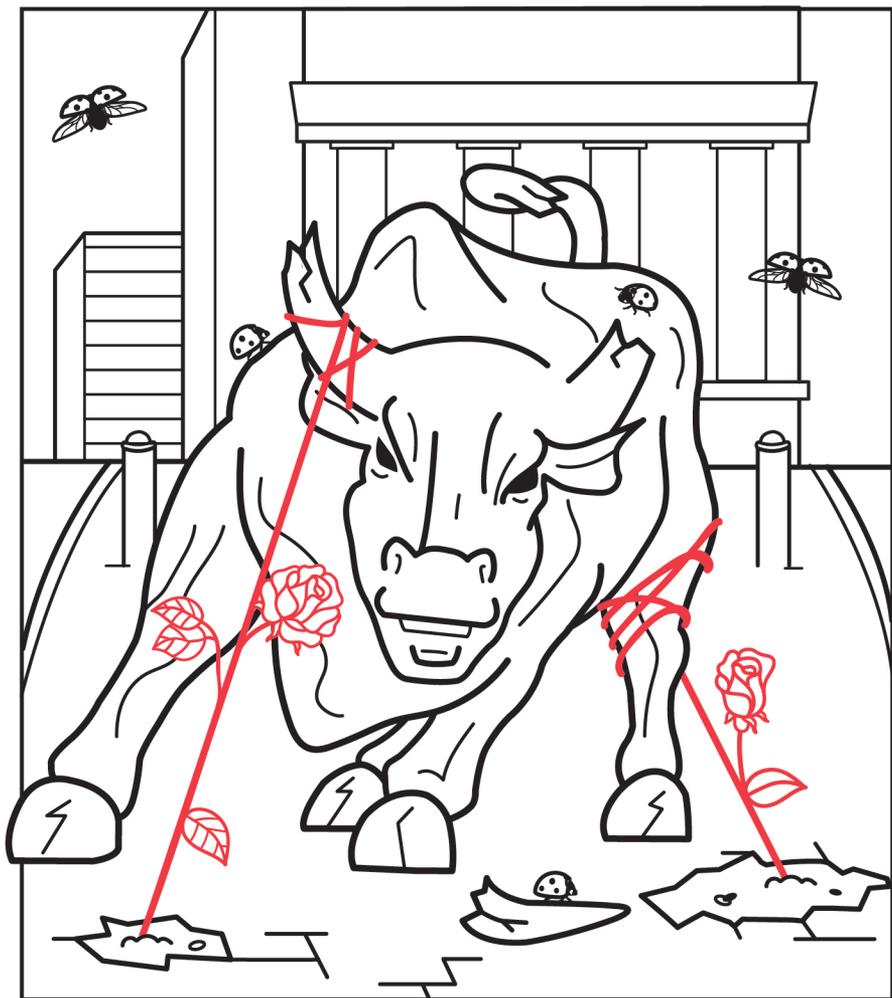


Build

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GARDEN OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

Empire thrives on making us feel alone. The ruling class wants us to believe there is no help when they evict us from our homes. They want us to believe we should feel ashamed of the abuse they inflict on many of us. They have ingrained these types of myths into our consciousness. Capitalism wants us to believe that the only way to live freely is through self-sufficiency.

Some of us work 80-hour weeks, in addition to shouldering domestic responsibilities never meant for a single person, and we are often made to feel guilty for reaching out to our loved ones for support. In many of our roles, we are forced to solve problems individually, rather than collectively. Capitalism locks us into lonely and miserable lives. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people between the ages of 10 and 34. Alienation and loneliness are features, not bugs, of capitalism.

As socialists, we know the solution to these structural problems is not individualized. Yelling at individual men will not single-handedly abolish patriarchy. Instead, we focus our energy in implementing policies that lift up women and gendered minorities. Since capitalism profits from making us feel powerless, organizers have one of the greatest tasks of all: showing our communities how powerful we can be through collective action.

When we organize, we are building cultures of care. We are fighting for our neighbors, our coworkers, our families, our friends, and ourselves. Within DSA, we are building structural solutions to the ruling class' destruction of our communities. We have neighborhood hangouts, craft nights, and beer caucuses to build relationships so that we can fight alongside each other. We fight for tenants unions, learn how to talk to our coworkers about socialism

and healthcare, and remind each other that we can be loud together until they can't ignore us.

The most beautiful part of socialism is that it is impossible to do alone. Socialism is the antidote to the disease of alienation capitalism. We refuse to allow Empire to convince us that we have to go through this dark world alone. When we organize together, we show the deepest type of love to one another: solidarity.

When we do nothing, the same forms of oppression we are trying to fight replicate themselves in the very spaces we hope will foment and facilitate revolution. The first people to get pushed out are typically the most marginalized among us, who are typically doing the draining work of keeping our organizations afloat.

A lack of community care is how movements are destroyed. As organizers, we are constantly on alert and witnessing burnout in our work. Party machines and non-profits view volunteers as transactional. We must reject this approach. Our goal is not to schedule as many people for a phone bank or canvassing shift as possible. This framework that views people as disposable also allows ableism, xenophobia, transphobia, and multiple forms of oppression to thrive.

We all bring skills, gifts, and behaviors that can uplift and support one another. We must harness this potential to revolt against the ways in which capitalism wants us to relate to each other. It will be messy and challenging, but it will be worthwhile. Pour energy and resources into implementing strong harassment policies and community standards; they protect us and hold us accountable.

We want to win, but we cannot win alone. Taking community care seriously and integrating it into all of

our organizing is of the utmost importance. We have a responsibility to each other, and developing community care is not only important for our day-to-day survival, it is necessary for our liberation. We engage in the struggle because we have no other option. Our lives depend on it. We organize because we care so much about each other and ourselves. We deserve lives full of laughter.

Sometimes we cry through emails, or while on mute in conference calls. It is so hard to communicate with each other when we all have our unique lived experiences. We study socialism because we know that we can figure out what brings us together and what connect us. By engaging in the struggle, we can discover that the oppression we face is not the only thing linking us together. We also share a deep desire to live in harmony. To bake, to knit, to paint — to live beautiful and wonderful lives together; this is the world we want.

We have seen glimpses of this better world. We have fed each other on the picket line. We have won races that seemed impossible. We have hula-hooped with each others' kids. We have raised more money for abortion care than we thought was possible. The hell world we live in is engineered to keep us down. But, we are fighting back. We are lifting each other higher than the ruling class could ever know. We are building something new.





STOMP OUT SLUMLORDS

STOMP OUT SLUMLORDS

Metro DC DSA is a large chapter, but we sometimes struggle to find our place in the snarl of nonprofits, political institutions, and community organizations at work in the nation's capital. Stomp Out Slumlords (SOS), a campaign that began as a collaboration between an experienced organizer and a housing lawyer but has since drawn in dozens of DSA members and sympathizers, has quickly become one of our most successful projects. In November 2018, SOS was highlighted when DC Jobs with Justice, a local coalition of labor and community groups, recognized MDC DSA for its local activism. The campaign's work has only expanded since then, but it hasn't always been a straightforward process.

In the pieces below, SOS organizers look at their corners of the project and reflect on the lessons they've learned in the past two years. We hope they'll be useful for other chapters as they work out ways to build working-class power in their own communities.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Ray V., project impresario

Our initial project idea in the spring of 2017 was simple: mobilize tenants with eviction cases to flood the landlord-tenant court in an effort to grind the machinery of eviction to a halt.

The numbers initially seemed impressive. We found one person can knock doors for a maximum of about 50 households threatened with eviction in an afternoon. This included time to get into apartment buildings and have worthwhile conversations with the people we contacted. If we turned out 10-20 people every two weeks (canvassing more frequently than that led to burnout) and canvassers

worked in pairs (which we always do), we reached about 300-500 households per canvass.

But we're lucky if a third of those people are home when we knock. At that pace, we can only expect to talk with about one-tenth of the roughly 30,000 households sued in landlord tenant court every year in Washington, DC. Our data analysis suggests that for every ten face-to-face conversations we have, one tenant who would have otherwise missed their court date shows up. Although we were making a positive difference in people's lives, this effort alone could not create a critical mass of people to drastically alter the court's daily operations.

Nonetheless, our Know-Your-Rights canvass provides an entrypoint into embryonic struggles breaking out all around us. When we canvass, we meet tenants who have sued their landlord, started petitions about building conditions, or joined a tenant association. A surprising number of tenants we talk with have been sued for deliberately withholding rent in protest. Gradually, we've adapted our strategy and oriented our work towards supporting these struggles. We help angry tenants formulate demands to unify their neighbors, foster organization, and plan collective action to take on the landlord. We are also supporting organizing projects in five properties across the city, developing a training program for our cadre who are learning to organize on the fly, and beginning to think about building an umbrella organization to unite militant tenants from different buildings, all while continuing our canvassing and court support programs.

Still, one thing hasn't changed: our overriding goal from the beginning of the project of connecting with ordinary Washingtonians who aren't predisposed to come to DSA meetings, helping them unite in collective struggles to transform their material circumstances, and thus gradually rebuilding the working class as a political subject.

ON THE GROUND AT COURT

Allison H.

Landlord-Tenant Court is one of D.C.'s many windows into a failed system. 95% of tenants who attend their hearings do not have a lawyer representing them, while only 5% of landlords arrive unrepresented. Each morning starts at 9AM with roll call. The clerk reads off the names of cases being heard that day. If you do not say you are there, or your name is Trujillo and the clerk does not know how to pronounce it, you receive a losing "default" judgement.

SOS's bread and butter has always been Know-Your-Rights canvassing, but in 2018 we added court support as a new component. Court support volunteers attended roll call on dates when we knew large sections of tenants we'd canvassed were scheduled to appear. Attending roll call was initially meant to be our final "touch" in the campaign to overload the court. In this last push, we could encourage tenants to speak with the free pro-bono attorneys who staff the court each day, and remind them to opt for consent agreements over highly-constructive consent judgments. (In a consent judgment, a tenant signs away their rights and can be evicted immediately if they fail to hold up their end of the deal.)

This strategy failed for two reasons. First, the U.S. Marshals who work as Landlord-Tenant Court security guards decided organizers distributing legal information flyers was "solicitation" and kicked us out of the building. Nearly every time we go to court, guards force any volunteer who wears something less formal than a suit or is too conspicuous while speaking with a tenant to leave. Second, we misjudged tenants' frustration with the court's grim, faceless bureaucracy. Tenants often chose to negotiate directly with their landlord's attorney rather than wait for hours to get advice from an overworked advocate.

Much as we reworked our initial plan to overload the court, we've also had to rework how we connect with tenants while there. Our outreach at court is now much more targeted. We only speak with tenants living in buildings where we are building relationships. This allows us to connect them with ongoing organizing in their building, rather than simply offering to show them where they can wait in line for a lawyer (though we occasionally do that as well). Court support remains one of the more frustrating aspects of our project, and one I hope to spend more time refining in 2019.

FROM CANVASSING TO ORGANIZING A BUILDING

Sam M., with Stephanie B.

Working with SOS was my first experience with real organizing. Naturally, it was also my first experience with the highs and lows of organizing, its successes and failures. I started canvassing with SOS in October of 2017, and began organizing in a building that December. The newness was certainly conducive to a practical kind of humility! There were missteps and many low moments I could mention. Here, though, I'm going to share a high point. This one stuck with me.

It was our first major meeting after a big victory. The landlord had agreed to change management companies and do serious renovations and exterminations of the building. The turnout was one of our biggest yet: over forty tenants. A city councilmember attended and was promptly asked if he could help with the dog shit in the corridors. (Dearest reader, he could not.)

A parallel victory was that the tenants managed the entire meeting. Two of our lead tenants in the building ran a tight ship, and my fellow organizer and I were only there to help take attendance and minutes. We both spoke just

once to answer direct questions. After the councilmember retreated, the question was put: how do we want to be treated by this new management company? This sparked a heated discussion, which flared up when one tenant questioned another tenant's account of being mistreated by security. Just as the meeting was about to disintegrate into recriminations, one of our core tenants in the building intervened.

She had canvassed with us for several months now, but had been generally hesitant to take the lead talking to her neighbors, even with a little gentle encouragement. Here, she spoke concisely and without hesitancy. "We can't fight each other," she said. "It's not tenant against tenant, it's management we need to be directing our anger at. Yeah, it's not your job to pick up trash, but if you do a little, people will do it too. We do have security, but we have to watch out for each other too."

The conflict was quashed, and people were feeling it, with later complaints mostly directed against management. After the meeting, she made her way over to us. "I found my voice," she said, grinning at me, and I beamed back.

"YOU WOULD HAVE ACTUALLY THOUGHT THEY'D LIVED HERE"

Reactions collected by Paul B.

(who swears he couldn't get them to come up with any constructive criticism)

These are reflections from a group of tenants whose organizing efforts we started supporting and advising on a month and a half ago. They'd just had a very successful turn-the-tide sort of meeting with the building's owners and management staff.

Marlo: "What I found useful the most was your input about what our rights were, about how unity would be a huge part of getting a great response. I think the teamwork ethic that you guys have was impeccable. The fact that you guys showed up to do a canvass...was a great gesture on your part."

Lowell: "You've always been in contact by email. Any questions I have had or that I wrote to you for the group there's always been a response. You guys always respond in an hour or so. It's not like the next day. You guys came out and helped us with the canvassing which we were definitely new to and I think we learned a lot from you guys and we became confident with doing it. You've been there since the beginning with us."

Charmaine: "I think your approach was perfect. All of us were a little uncomfortable going to the tenants knocking on folks doors, even though a lot of the residents you might see in passing, but your presence helped us to be able to accomplish what we set out to do. Not only that but your input, how you guys showed up, how you helped with the baby sitting, suggestions that you made like to offer snacks, things we weren't even thinking about."

Charmaine: "You pretty much prepared us for this which is an excellent thing."

Lowell: "Even with the success of our last meeting, I mean, Anna and Mackenzie, you would have actually thought they'd lived here because they were that happy."

THE DATA THAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE

Jasper C. and the SOS Data Team

It was fortunate that in Fall 2017, months after the SOS project began, the DC Superior Court system opened an

online court portal to make public court information more easily accessible to the public. In the first few months of the project, SOS volunteers went to the court in person to ask for court records, but now this task could be done from the comfort of one's own home.

Address pulling and creating worksheets is one of the more essential tasks for our anti-eviction canvassing, but it can quickly turn into dull and repetitive administrative work. Even with the online docket browser, transcribing 600 addresses from PDFs into a spreadsheet by hand can feel overwhelming. And that's when the DC court website isn't taking 30 minutes to load a page. We are working on automating parts of this task. First, we've gotten better about splitting up transcription work on a shared spreadsheet. A pool of about 30 volunteers chips in 1-5 hours early in the week before a canvass, each picking away at the pile of cases that need information filled in.

One volunteer also created a web scraper that moves the process even further along before a human touch is needed. The scraper pulls the tenant's and landlord's names off the webpage, and even downloads the docket PDF containing the tenant's address. The DC Court system runs on an unholy combination of javascript and enterprise server-side software that can't be automated with simple scraper tools, so we actually use a headless browser to get the website to cough up its secrets. Put plainly, it isn't just a matter of pointing the computer to the correct URL and siphoning up the HTML data. We must have the computer simulate the whole webpage behind the scenes and click through the interface like it is a "real user" indistinguishable from one of our DSA comrades.

Doing addresses for the SOS campaign is an exercise in not losing the forest (the larger project of shutting down the eviction system) for the trees (which management

companies are we looking at this week?). When making worksheets, one must choose walkable clusters of eviction cases while also relying on field reports and institutional knowledge of likely bad actors. Sometimes we go off of tips for badly managed properties, and sometimes we just go after known slumlords. Careful human judgment and streamlined automation work in tandem to prepare our organizers to hit the streets.

BUILDING ORGANIZERS, NOT JUST ORGANIZING BUILDINGS

Greg A.

When I moved to DC in 2017, I started organizing with Stomp Out Slumlords because it seemed like the kind of campaign you could just slot into: show up, grab a partner and a worksheet, and go. I didn't realize that the easier a campaign looks on the front end, the more work it takes behind the scenes.

The decisions you make as you're doing that work cause invisible ripples that can transform the campaign's entire culture. Early on we thought we could do without meetings; today meetings are a core part of the work, as a venue for political education and an opportunity for the various parts of an increasingly sprawling and specialized project to intersect. We also dealt with burnout by canvassing less often and streamlining our preparations. Recently we've focused on building group cohesion, as we've come to recognize that people who like and trust each other are more likely to show up and "do the work"—but we try to branch out beyond the traditional happy hour format by organizing museum outings, potlucks, and housing-specific reading groups.

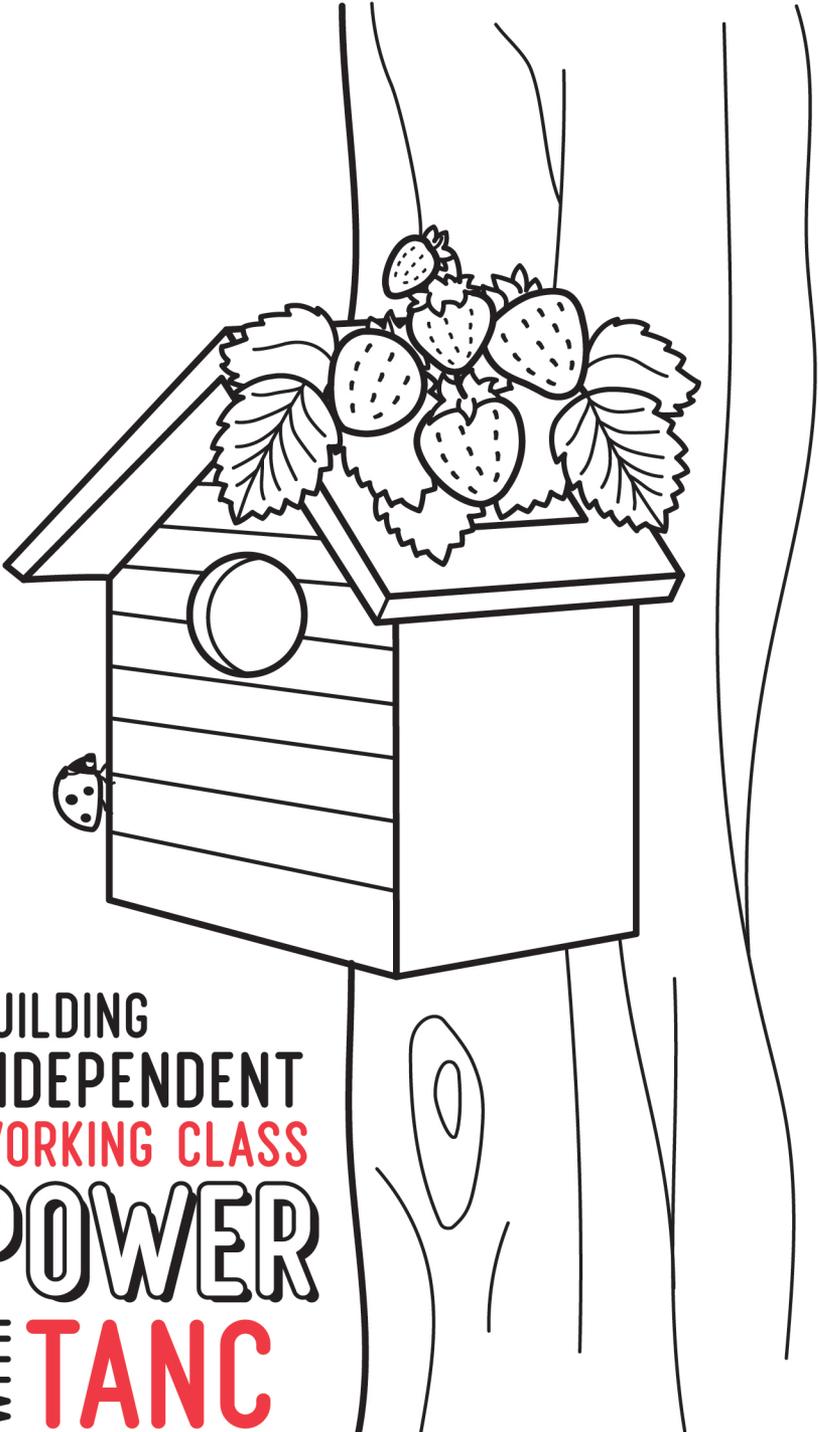
Yet challenges remain. The more tight-knit a subgroup gets, the harder it is for new people to plug in. Worse,

the overrepresentation of cis white men can become amplified over time: not everyone feels equally comfortable socializing in a group when they're distinctly in the minority, as women can be at our large canvasses and social events, though not in our building organizing group.

To survive, we can't get complacent and take refuge in inertia ("as long as one remains a monk, one goes on tolling the bell"). Nor can we rely on the same people month after month. We're building for the long haul, which means that sometimes we have to sacrifice immediate efficiency for the sake of training new leaders. Eventually, we hope to organize enough buildings that tenants themselves will take the reins. If we haven't built an open, flexible organization by then, our efforts will have been wasted. There's a whole working class out there to organize.

To learn more about Metro DC DSA's Stomp Out Slumlords campaign, contact the organizers at tenants@mdcda.org.





BUILDING
INDEPENDENT
WORKING CLASS
POWER
WITH **TANC**

BUILDING INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS POWER WITH TANC

INTRODUCTION

The evidence that working class people are losing a battle with capital is everywhere. We feel it in the marked deterioration of our lives – in declining wages, the elimination of social programs, and painfully skyrocketing rents. Less evident, but more decisive, is the impact of decades of counter-revolution on class struggle itself. Active class struggle has waned since the 1970s as the popular institutions that once supported this struggle have drastically declined. Organizations that promote liberal practices, reinforce capitalist logics, and strengthen civil organizations embedded within the capitalist political parties have replaced these popular institutions.

Many popular movements in the United States have forgotten where the source of our class power lies. Entire generations can't remember what class struggle looks like. We have lost the blueprint. The steady rightward drift of US politics demonstrates the inadequacy of non-profit advocacy organizations, electoral campaigns, and bureaucratic business unions. The toothlessness of this kind of politics has driven many working class people to give up on politics altogether.

Taking revolution off the table has made politics a morbid affair. We have trouble imagining we can shape history. History becomes an inevitability. It is something that happens to us. Yet, as long as class divisions exist, the working class can once more become a threat to capitalist domination and take an active role in shaping history.

BUILDING POWER VS ACCESSING POWER

The current left has two main organizing orientations: (1) *accessing* the institutionalized power structures, or (2) *building* independent bases of working class power.

Attempting to access institutionalized power through existing structures sets us up for failure. Because these structures are reliant on the capitalist class for power, they are necessarily disconnected from and opposed to the interests of the working class. Further, because this reliance on capitalist power and disconnect from the working class produce opportunism and careerism as a fundamental operating principle within institutionalized structures, individuals operating within them are unable to organize effectively for working class power. In contrast, building independent structures enables the working class to effectively organize ourselves to exercise our dormant power.

Reform-oriented politics are often presented as "harm reduction." Here, reforms are desirable to mitigate the damage that capital inevitably produces. Yet, this notion that working class people can legislate from the helm of the capitalist state begs the question: if we can institutionalize reforms, why stop at the reduction of harm? The absurdity of this question lies in a misunderstanding of what reforms are.

Reforms are concessions. Ruling classes throw reforms into the path of movements building towards working class emancipation as a way to manage, and sometimes neutralize, mass organized discontent. Hence, directly seeking specific reforms is to misunderstand that reforms are a byproduct of revolutionary power. We call for an offensive, rather than inherently defensive, type of politics. Revolutionary organization thus requires a program of harm production. Our aim is to become an existential

threat to accumulation and empire-building. We joined the DSA to do just this. We want to reconstitute our class, the working class, into a fighting force. After all, only through organizing towards the realization of the most radical demands have we won sustainable victories for the working class. We want to build the power necessary to strike terror into the hearts of the ruling class. This will be achieved once we have the organizational capacity to shape history, rather than submit to it.

COMMUNIST CAUCUS & TANC

We formed a caucus — Communist Caucus — based on this strategy of building independent working class power. We chose this name in Marx's spirit because we understand communism not as an abstract idea, but as a living movement to abolish the present state of affairs.

Our wonderful city of Oakland is in the midst of a brutal housing crisis, with more people being priced out of their homes and living on the street every day. Working class people are crushed inbetween bosses and landlords who conspire to keep wages low and raise rents. There is ample opportunity for struggle. As we grapple with finding stability and safety, we thus view tenant organizing as a clear approach to build working class power that can oppose bosses and landlords. We created an organization called "Tenant and Neighborhood Councils" (TANC) because we, as the working class, need institutions that can grow our power.



TANC is a militant housing organization which aggregates and elevates class struggle around housing. We organize around reducing housing costs and improving the conditions of tenants. We envision that TANC will become

a mass housing organization, composed of working class people who act as militants, teachers, and leaders, eventually becoming a force capable of decommoifying housing and doing away with landlords entirely. While we are not there yet, in TANC's first year it has already become a site of independent working class power.

LAURA THE LANDLORD

We wanted to address an issue affecting all working class people in the Bay Area: rent. As it turned out, a member of Communist Caucus had a notoriously oppressive landlord, Laura, whose constant harassment of tenants had already been written about in the local paper. Organizing against her seemed like a great starting point.

We hosted a BBQ at a public park to gauge tenants' interest. Our objective was twofold. First, we wanted to facilitate connections among tenants to discuss their issues around rent, housing, and the landlord. Second, cookouts are fun, and because we are all alienated, it is crucial to build trust in simple, supportive ways.

To spread word about the BBQ, we canvassed Laura's tenants. We identified Laura's holdings through public records at city hall; she owns over 40 properties, with each property worth an average of \$1 million. We went door-to-door with flyers for the BBQ, and a print-out of the newspaper article about Laura's history of harassment. A common response was a mixture of shock and relief—"it's not just me?" Tenants told us seemingly endless stories: Laura regularly went through tenants' trash at night, discriminated against Black tenants, even took pictures of tenants through their windows. People were unhappy with Laura, but without a common cause and organization, they lived with her bad behavior.

The BBQ was a great success: over 20 tenants attended. Throughout the event, one pressing issue emerged from the conversations among tenants: Laura regularly denied subtenant applicants. When somebody moved out, Laura required that the replacement tenants have high incomes and white collar backgrounds. Tenants often could not find such a person, forcing to pay for the empty room. This meant an effective rent increase not regulated by rent control; evidently, Laura hoped to evict through attrition.

A collective issue thus identified, the real question was what to do. We decided to call a formal meeting of all tenants so we could study the situation and plan next steps. We invited tenants we met at the barbeque to canvass, so they could agitate and practice organizing other tenants. We continued building a contact list and getting more people involved in our organizing efforts. However, a problem soon arose: right before our meeting, we discovered Laura had gotten hold of one of our flyers.

Laura sent a letter to every tenant, urging them not to organize against her. She claimed she and her husband were a small "mom-and-pop" business. They also claimed they would resolve all of the tenants' issues. The letter's tone was a surprising contrast from the accusatory letters she normally sent, and it included a gift card for a local candy shop. But it had one concerning element: Laura promised she would attend the tenant meeting so as to engage in "dialogue."

We decided it was too soon to confront Laura directly. We sent her a letter requesting that she not attend the tenant meeting. She ignored us, insisting she would attend regardless. To facilitate the tenant meeting, we formed a security team which rerouted tenants to meet at an alternate location as they arrived, and successfully ensured no one was spotted. When Laura showed up,

Communist Caucus members confronted her with a letter stating she was not welcome. She refused the letter and left, only to return two more times. Finally, a non-affiliated comrade on a motorcycle telling her she was not welcome chased her away.¹ Laura erratically sped down the street, flying over speed bumps at 50 MPH.

Ultimately, Laura's candy-laced letter only emboldened the tenants further. The meeting was a success, as more tenants participated in the meeting than the barbeque. At the meeting, tenants drafted a letter demanding Laura immediately end her harassment and accept all pending tenant applicants. Within one week, Laura caved to the tenants' demands. She decided that going forward she would only give "recommendations" for new housemate applicants. She didn't want to deal with us anymore. We had won our first fight.

Throughout our experiences with Laura and other landlords, we developed a model of supporting tenant organizing by offering infrastructure such as research, canvassing, and tenant inquiries; hosting cultural events and BBQs; establishing communication channels between tenants; facilitating tenant organizer trainings; producing media such as posters and a reader with theory on housing, history, and local struggles; and shielding tenants from retaliation however possible. We call this project "Tenant And Neighborhood Councils" or TANC. In a future issue of Build, we will provide more detail about the structure of TANC, lessons we've learned through struggle, and a few of our future plans for DSA.

To learn more about TANC, visit them at baytanc.com or contact tenantorganizingeastbay@gmail.com. You can also follow them on Twitter @TANCBay.

¹ *Identity of the mysterious motorcycle riding anarchist is unknown. Whoever you are, we applaud you!*

MUTUAL

AID

WITH
HEART
OF THE
VALLEY
DSA



MUTUAL AID WITH HEART OF THE VALLEY DSA

I have long advocated for the concept of mutual aid. Like many leftists, I believe strong networks of community support and mutual aid are essential to any revolutionary movement. At meetings of Heart of the Valley (HotV) DSA in Benton County, Oregon, I pitched it incessantly, and tried to make it central to the chapter's praxis. However, until I needed it myself, I didn't truly understand what that rhetoric meant.

On December 17th of 2018, my girlfriend, two other comrades, and I, got into a confrontation with several local neo nazis, which ended with them attacking us. The details of the assault aren't important, but by the end I had a severely injured knee and one of the nazis was rushed to the hospital in critical condition. Another comrade, who was on their way to join us, called Cameron Greene, a HotV DSA member and Vice President of the National Lawyers Guild. He dropped everything and drove to the scene. He helped prepare us for arrest and excoriated the cops who were intentionally misgendering the three of us who are trans women.

The police arrested us and took us to holding, where they locked us in separate interrogation rooms for the next several hours. The police told us that we would be cited for DISCON-II, but said more serious charges were on the table if the nazi died. They stripped us naked, photographed our bodies, and took our DNA samples. The police also took our clothes, phones, and wallets, and dressed us in thin sweatsuits. Finally, they took our mugshots, and we were released, one by one, into the freezing rain. I was the first one out, and had to walk several miles home on a barely functional knee.

Like any good leftist, the first thing I did was get on Twitter to see if folks were talking about the incident. I saw that

comrades across the country were sharing a fundraiser for our legal defense and medical bills. It was surreal to see myself in the same situation I'd seen so many other antifascists endure. For years, I'd shared similar posts on social media, but now I was beginning to grasp what it meant to be on the other side. Even though I was still freaking out, I felt the energy of comrades across the world gathering behind us.

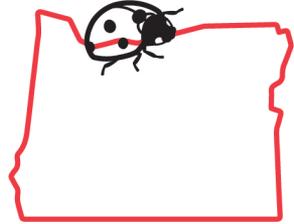
The next morning, I awoke in immense pain, unable to stand up. My girlfriend contacted some of our DSA comrades, who quickly came over. They helped me out of bed and provided a phone to call into work and explain my situation. They also brought us much needed food and drove us to urgent care. While I was in the doctor's office, two comrades dug old cell phones out of storage and filled them with prepaid plans so my girlfriend and I could reach our friends and family.

Our local paper, the Corvallis Gazette-Times, began publishing articles about the incident that day. We were dismayed to learn they publicly deadnamed and misgendered the three of us who are trans. Outraged comrades from the DSA and other groups came to our defense and inundated the paper with comments and phone calls. Eventually, they issued a milquetoast retraction. The article led to my girlfriend getting fired from her job, which severely reduced our household income. However, our comrades were there to make sure we didn't go hungry and could live as normally as possible.

Over the next several days, we began receiving information that neo nazis were trying to doxx us. They published the addresses and other personal information of several people on sites like Stormfront and The Goldwater. Luckily, we had well armed comrades willing to spend lots of their time with us and ensure we felt safe. Folks also provided home

cooked meals and transportation around town, which was a lifesaver because I could barely walk or ride a bike. We were very rarely left to suffer alone and knew we could always reach out for support.

During this time, Cameron helped coordinate legal representation for us. We got the Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC), an activist legal group to work on our defense. The lawyers were incredibly helpful and considerate. They provided us with all the information we needed to know about our uncertain futures as well as good advice based on their years of experience.



The fundraiser continued to near its goal, largely from the contributions of Corvallis locals and the International Anti-Fascist Defence Fund. We also received significant financial help from Bitter Half Booking and Eugene Pyrate Punx, who each put on a benefit show to raise money for us. Thankfully, the money helped cover all of my medical bills. It also paid for our legal representation and kept our lives stable through the loss of my girlfriend's job.

On the day of the arraignment, the defendants met with our legal counsel and arrived early at the courthouse. Upon entering, we found several comrades from different organizations waiting for us. They talked with us and gave us emotional support as we waited for our turn on the docket. As the time approached, more comrades arrived, eventually filling the entire courthouse. In total, there were probably 70 people from DSA, IWW, Our Revolution, CCDS, The Communist Party, local unions, and more. They all shook our hands and reassured us. Seeing the immense solidarity from our community was incredible. It was clear that the love and compassion within the local left dwarfed

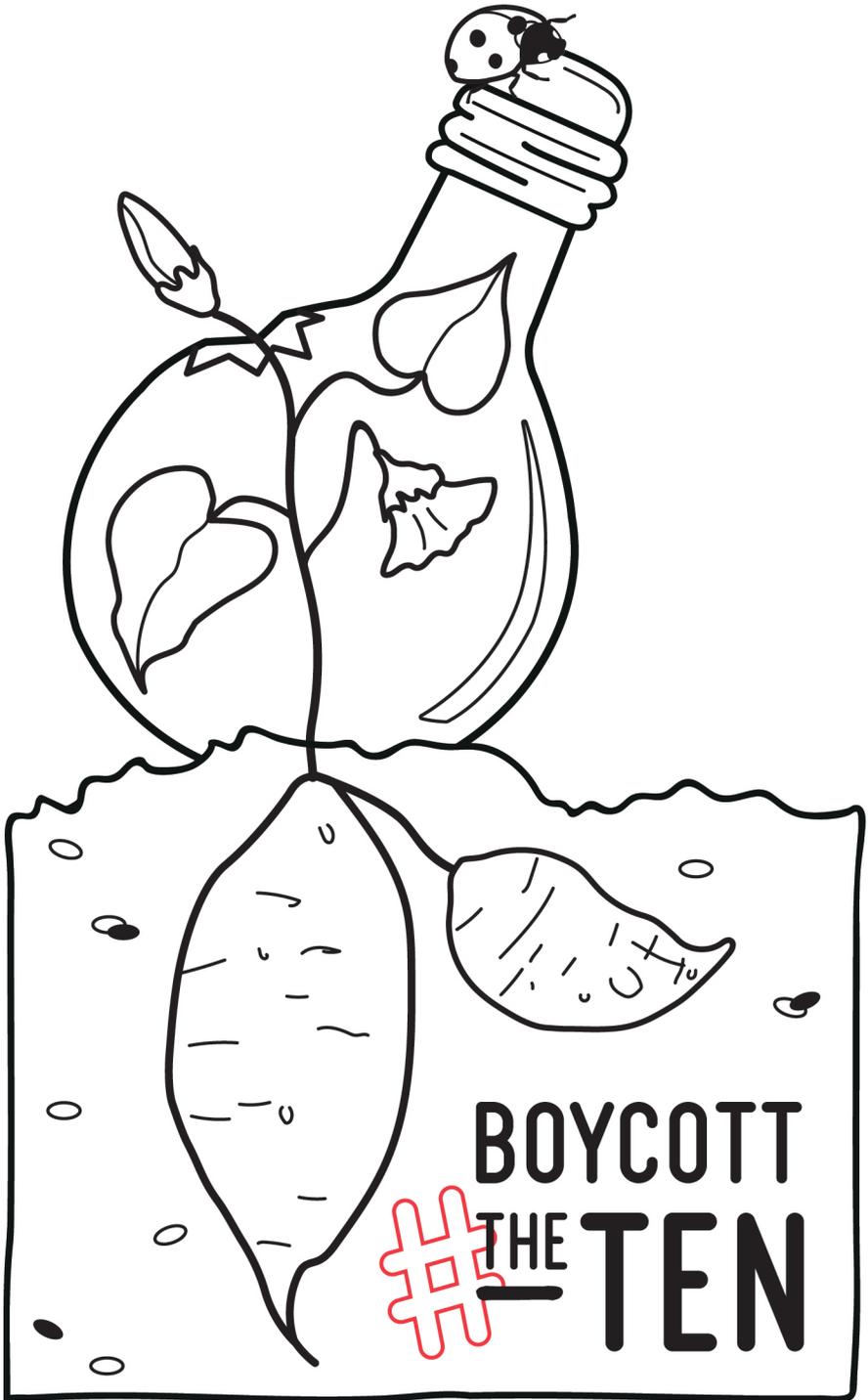
our sectarian differences. When we were finally called into the courtroom, our lawyers received papers letting us know that the DA would not be pursuing charges against us. A huge cheer roared through the courthouse, and a sea of relief washed over us.

The struggle isn't over. We are still working to combat white supremacy in our community and taking legal action against our attackers. However, we survived this traumatic experience thanks to the kindness and love of our comrades in DSA and the greater left. The mutual aid we received was truly incredible and helped us make it through some of the worst times of our lives. Without the help of our comrades, I can't imagine how much harder the situation would have been.

After this experience, I am left with the realization that our chapter hasn't just built campaigns and programs. It is a community that loves and supports its own. Mutual aid isn't just about collecting and redistributing resources and labor; it's about creating relationships between people willing to struggle alongside each other through the adversity capitalism creates. We exist in a lonely, scary, fucked-up society, and in the end all we have is each other. If we stick together in solidarity, we might just have a chance to create a new world.

What I think is most remarkable about Heart of the Valley DSA is that we show up for each other. Even though we have huge differences in opinion and countless personal quarrels, we will always be there for each other and anyone else who wants in.

To learn more about HotV DSA's work, contact the chapter at bentoncountydlsa@riseup.net. Follow them on Twitter [@hotv_dsa](https://twitter.com/hotv_dsa).



#BOYCOTT THE TEN

The Working-class and Homeless Organizing Alliance (WHOA) boycott, colloquially referred to as “the boycott” or “#BoycottTheTen,” emerged from a fight over panhandling ordinances in Greensboro, North Carolina. In Spring 2018, Greensboro’s City Council considered amending existing regulations to bar so-called “aggressive panhandling.” During this process, community organizations brought attention to the fact that the existing regulations were unconstitutional due to a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*. In turn, the City Council sought to implement ordinances that would allow police to arrest and push houseless residents out of the downtown area. Our branch, Greensboro DSA, realized we had to take action.

The initial drive for aggressive panhandling ordinances came from a covert lobbying effort. The main backers were Downtown Greensboro Inc. (DGI), a local organization that administers our Business Improvement District (BID), and the local developer class. Through its connections to commercial landlords within the BID, DGI petitioned local downtown businesses to contact the City Council to demand more anti-panhandling ordinances in response to a growing “aggressive panhandling crisis.” In turn, businesses asked employees to come forward with sexual harassment or misogynistic behavior by houseless Greensboro folks in the downtown area. This was an abhorrent attempt to paint all houseless neighbors and panhandlers as abusers in order to sweep them out of public spaces.

Greensboro’s City Council and mayor are all “progressive” Democrats; yet, the local developer class heavily influences our elected officials, to the tune of \$90k in campaign contributions in 2017 alone. Through public records requests, our friends and comrades in the Homeless Union of Greensboro (HUG) uncovered DGI’s lobbying campaign.

These records included emails from businesses to the City Council containing horrid characterizations of houseless people. Nonetheless, in hearings on the ordinances, the Mayor and City Council members consistently fell back on businesses owners' requests to justify the ordinances. We realized we were in a tough spot; five of the nine City Council members supported the ordinances and we needed to do more than just speak out at City Council meetings. We could not boycott DGI or the developers, as they did not sell things we could buy. That left the businesses organized by DGI to pressure the City Council, so we started discussing boycotting these businesses.

Members of our chapter did not unanimously support this approach at first. While these businesses had said truly awful things about the houseless, they were still local businesses. People viewed them far more favorably than say Marty Kotis, Greensboro developer and noted reactionary. We also knew the coalition of community groups opposing these ordinances, such as DSA, HUG, and other organizations, was running out of leverage to push any of the 5 pro-ordinance City Council members.

Our chapter's housing working group started planning a boycott, and other organizations soon noticed. We formed a separate organization to house the boycott so community members across the left could help with planning. Thus, the WHOA was born. We created a list of the ten businesses that had directly asked the City Council to pass the ordinances. We then drafted a set of demands these businesses had to agree to in order to be removed from the boycott. These demands included renouncing the ordinances, calling for their repeal, and calling on the City Council to support reforms such as increased spending for social services and passing a homeless bill of rights. We had two weeks until the vote on the new ordinances. If they passed, WHOA would launch the boycott.

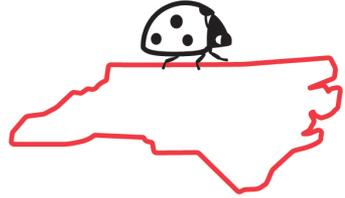
We planned to cut up turf, canvass, and reach out to workers at the boycotted businesses to get their support, but word came in that the vote was being moved up. The threat of litigation pushed the City Council to pass a temporary bill through an emergency session. We had to move or we wouldn't be able to garner the attention needed for the boycott to succeed. Consequently, we launched our petition, started pushing our networks to support the boycott, and began the campaign with an announcement at the City Council meeting where the vote took place. Pushback against our efforts was swift. The City Council condemned our campaign and owners of the boycotted businesses flooded WHOA's social media inboxes with angry statements about how they had always supported the houseless, despite backing what amounted to state violence against them.

With a small cadre of organizers committed to canvassing, we formalized our petition's demands and hit the streets. We started with canvassing downtown pedestrians. Considering the nature and targets of the aggressive solicitation ordinances, starting here made the most sense. WHOA canvassers quickly detected a racial dynamic in who supported the boycott and who dismissed it. The average white downtown resident was not interested in supporting the homeless struggle, and many were actively hostile to the boycott effort. In contrast, most black downtown residents supported the boycott and signed the petition. Greensboro is a deeply unequal city, with high levels of gentrification and eviction that primarily affect black, working-class neighborhoods. We should have expected that many people we engaged with would be agents of the very gentrification process we were fighting.

This dynamic highlighted that the fight against anti-homeless discrimination is a fight for racial justice and centering it was key in building public support for the

boycott. Most importantly, through our canvassing and on the ground work, we engaged with those suffering from homelessness. We connected with people in the downtown area, who faced the biggest brunt of gentrification and over-policing, and directly used those conversations to inform and shape the boycott's demands.

We next took the petition to neighborhood blocks surrounding the area, canvassed on college campuses, and visited the City Council at least once a month



to keep pressure on its members. We acquired over 700 signatures of people pledging to honor the boycott within a few months. Proof that our agitating was becoming effective came just before the holidays, when council member Michelle Kennedy formed a campaign with five of the anti-homeless businesses listed in the boycott, as well as others, called "Givesboro." The Givesboro campaign sold discount cards to benefit Kennedy's Interactive Resource Center (IRC). This was an obvious attempt to repair their tarnished anti-homeless image while still turning a profit. We launched a counter campaign named "Greedsboro," and while we successfully fought back with flyer-ing and agit-prop posters, the bulk of our organizing energy was about to be redirected into a movement of related struggle.

On September 8th, 2018, the police murdered Marcus Deon Smith, a black homeless man experiencing a mental health crisis. The police hogtied Smith, and he asphyxiated. In a press release, Greensboro Police Chief Wayne Scott lied about the details of Marcus' death, claiming he was suicidal and collapsed. WHOA's work on the boycott was pushed to the backburner as we began working with a broad coalition to demand an end to police brutality in Greensboro and justice for Marcus Smith.

A critical mistake we made was not engaging the public better outside of the petition. Instead of inviting those who pledged to the boycott to join us directly in canvassing, thereby amassing “people power,” we focused on inviting them to WHOA meetings and events. Creating a deeper engagement with the community that focused on building the movement through shared work — versus being mediated through organizational channels — would have made the boycott stronger. Knowing the pitfalls from our original petition/boycott efforts, we have folded those experiences into our present work.

While the boycott work is now dormant and the fight against the anti-homeless ordinances remains, we do not see #BoycottTheTen as a loss. WHOA is now being recognized in other ways, and it is a permanent and active fixture among the left organizations in Greensboro. We have built an effective organization that can continue to struggle against anti-homeless and anti-worker efforts locally. #BoycottTheTen was the first fight in a long struggle, and we're more determined than ever to win that fight.

La Lutte Continue!

To learn more about Greensboro DSA's work, contact them at gsodsa@gmail.com or follow them on Twitter @[gso_dsa](https://twitter.com/gso_dsa). You can also follow WHOA on Twitter @[gsowhoa](https://twitter.com/gsowhoa).



POLITICAL EDUCATION: READING GROUP

Morning. We assemble in the College of DuPage's empty cafeteria. David, the co-organizer, arrives first. A few pink post-it notes stick out from his copy of Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, on the horrors of colonialism and the psychology of the oppressed. Ken, a Green, arrives second, always with coffee.

The rest file in from the parking lot. Barry, a veteran of the Communist Party and Amazon warehouse worker, now diligent organizer of the West Suburban chapter's labor group, walks in talking to Giselle, a former Trotskyist. Nick arrives, then Tim. William, who is not a member of the DSA, but discovered the event through the Facebook page, drove all the way from Chicago to attend today's meeting. The commute was rough, he says. Ken offers solidarity and banana chips.

The group has met monthly since we founded it one year ago. Four people attended our first meeting to discuss the *Communist Manifesto*. It is now common for twelve people to attend, although usually the number averages at eight to ten, weather depending. This is ideal. We've found larger study groups to be unwieldy, with too many opinions and not enough time to discuss how the material connects to the individual, which is vital.

The atmosphere is less than academic by design. As moderator of the group, I depend on a reading group model resembling a Socratic circle rather than an academic lecture. Having experienced a trial by fire in my personal introduction to Marxism (where a list of books was presented to me, and when I read all fifty, only then would I be considered a Marxist) I understand the value of a kinder approach to people unfamiliar with the language of theory. After all, with minor exception, most of us have

only been with DSA no more than two years. Rather than any member feigning absolute authority on the topics of socialism, the reading group evolves and grows with the contributions of each member. We've found enormous success in adopting this model and encourage other chapters to consider something similar.

We typically use two hours to discuss material no longer than two hundred pages in length, one hour being devoted to a summary of the book itself, the other hour reserved for asking how this can be applied to our current reality. How would Fanon analyze the unfolding situation in Venezuela? How has DSA organized around anti-imperialism? The reading is always topical. We vacillate between the classic and contemporary, depending on the mood of our members. Our meetings are a lightning storm of opinion, but everyone affords a tremendous amount of respect and love for each other. This prevailing attitude of respect, where every person is permitted to toy with enormous ideas without being chided or dismissed, is critical to allow thoughtful discussion, but it must be intentionally cultivated.

Everyone is heard. Highbrow elitism is not permitted and theory is not used as a cudgel against newer members. We learn together. At the end, we always finish the same way. First, five minutes are dedicated to selecting the next reading. Second, a joke. Then we part ways until we meet again next month.

Our reading group has been an enormous success in providing a space where our community can discuss radical ideas and members can develop their own politics. Despite what our ruling class would have us believe, most Americans have an appetite for radical solutions to the crises of capitalism. The effective reading group is not an echo chamber, it is active outreach. Beyond developing our membership into more informed socialists, the objective

of a reading group is to expand the imagination of what is possible in our time.

By reading, we draw from the well of lessons and mistakes made by the great luminaries of human liberation, their trials and errors, and their achievements. More than just a meditation on what has been done, reading is an examination of what can be done, and what there is to do. There is tremendous power in this.

Some closing wisdom for chapters developing Marxist reading groups of their own: levity, levity, levity. Avoid becoming overly didactic. Facilitate a space where people can express their principles and reservations honestly and openly. Bring babka. Forgive. Give space for people to disagree, and meet them where they are. Avoid becoming tangled unnecessarily in the leftist squabbles of yesteryear. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg had drastically conflicting tactics for realizing socialism. Read both. Never start with *Das Kapital*. Theory in service of people, not people in service of theory. Be the group that anyone could walk off the street and be a part of. Be the reading group you needed when you first began your journey.

Socialists across history have valued their reading groups, and for good reason. The work of the Marxist reading group may not put anyone on a poster, but it can be a powerful force in an organization slowly discovering the potency of a revolutionary socialist message.

A reading group can be an immeasurably rewarding experience. To paraphrase a bearded weirdo, the purpose of philosophy is not just to interpret the world, but to change it. Do the good work, and happy reading, comrades!

To learn more about West Suburban Illinois DSA, contact them at info@westsuburbsildsa.org or visit them at westsuburbsildsa.org. You can also follow them on Twitter @WestSuburbILDsa.



SEASON
OF THE
BITCH

SEASON OF THE BITCH: A SOCIALIST FEMINIST MANIFESTO

Season of the Bitch (SotB) is a leftist feminist podcast comprised of 6 hosts, referred to as The Coven, talking politics and culture. It is just like any other leftist podcast, except there are no cis men. The following was written by Zoë Naseef, but inspired and approved by the rest of The Coven. Creating a socialist feminist podcast pushes me to explore different topics and question what I already know. Leftist spaces (and podcasts) can feel trepidatious for women, nonbinary folks, and trans people. A large theme for me in organizing work involves feeling unheard, undervalued, and excluded. We are constantly learning and growing in our lives; as workers, mothers, daughters, sisters, patients, friends, and comrades. SotB is an intentional space for us to explore different topics from a socialist feminist lens and know that we will always be heard, supported, and valued. The following truths we hold to be self-evident:

1 NO SORRY.

"No sorry" is a trademark among the Coven. As 6 people who were socialized as girls and women, we were taught early and often to apologize for our existence, to stay quiet, to doubt ourselves. With our podcast we are learning to be unapologetically ourselves, one episode (and group chat) at a time. It often feels strange and unfamiliar to me to own my actions instead of apologizing for them. "No sorry" means reminding myself that what I have to say is valuable and worthy of people's attention -- including when I find myself feeling guilty for inserting a personal anecdote into an episode or second-guessing whether I should have said something that didn't feel utterly groundbreaking. The more positive feedback I see about the podcast, the more I understand that being unapologetically ourselves is revolutionary.

2 REPRESENTATION MATTERS.

Sorry, not sorry... but cis men are canceled. While we limit hosts and guests to women, non-binary

people, and trans folks, cis men are encouraged to listen. Representation is about intentionally creating space for people who do not get as many opportunities to have a platform in the dominant culture. Our listeners know that we run on accessibility and inclusion. We strive to be inclusive of race, sexuality, ability, and class by having diversity amongst the hosts and by finding guests who can speak from diverse perspectives and experiences. It is always inspiring to talk to people who are experts in their field and who also just so happen to not be men. We often talk about how lucky we feel that we get to talk to so many amazing people, especially when the world feels particularly dark.

It's not just our listeners that learn from the podcast -- with every episode, I learn more about the topic we are discussing through my own research, from my co-hosts, and from our guests. We hope cis men will listen and learn from us too, since feminism creates a better world for everyone (more on that later). However, the show ultimately answers to a deep-seated desire to see ourselves represented, which is something that cis men can empathize with but never fully understand. White cis/het men rarely know what it is like to watch a movie or listen to a podcast where there is no one you identify with as part of the cast, and similarly do not understand how validating it is when you finally get to see yourself reflected in the media you consume. This probably explains why we get a lot of positive feedback from fans similar to ourselves, who were thirsty for a leftist podcast not dominated by men.

3 DISMANTLE THE HEGEMONIC CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY.

Not all of our episodes concern explicitly socialist or explicitly feminist topics; we cover a wide array of subjects, but always approach them with a socialist feminist analysis. The capitalist hetero-patriarchy affects

all aspects of our lives, so we try to draw out these themes and connections across many different topics.

One of the greatest threats to capitalism is the collective organizing and action of women. It is no coincidence that the development of capitalism came alongside the development of notions about gender and the nuclear family that served to ensure that (white, middle- or upper-class) women remained in the home, where they wouldn't be able to talk to each other, compare experiences, or conspire against patriarchal oppression. It is similarly by no coincidence that when women seek more collective power today we are met with tidal waves of shame, attempts to silence us, and attempts to placate us.

4 RADICALIZING IS ABOUT SIMULTANEOUSLY LEARNING AND UNLEARNING, AND OH HOW FRUSTRATING IT CAN BE.

I grew up the daughter of a civil rights activist/union organizer and a life-long feminist, so understanding radical politics feels like second nature to me. However, that did not stop the world from socializing and imprinting on me the way it does to all girls (and those assumed to be girls). This connects back to focusing on not over-apologizing, but it has also helped me realize some of the other behaviors I learned from my socialization. For example, when I listen to the podcast I notice that I preface things I am very confident in with "I think" or "maybe" because I am so afraid of sounding overly confident, even when I am. For me, learning theory is a lot easier than unlearning the ways I was socialized to atone for myself. The work required to learn and unlearn can feel Sisyphean, which is to say highly frustrating and repetitive, but another trademark of Season of the Bitch is how strongly and passionately we have each other's backs. In one of the early episodes that I co-hosted, I told The Coven that I was feeling imposter syndrome about being a host. Hearing

other hosts agree that they have felt the same way gave me more strength to believe in myself and what I have to say.

5 MONEY IS A CATCH-22.

We would love to grow as a podcast and build a larger platform. One of our major roadblocks is lack of funding. We are all busy working various jobs, in various time zones, which makes it hard to put as much time and effort in the podcast as we would like. Our episodes get an average of 3,000-6,000 listens, though we only have about 300 Patreon supporters (whom we appreciate dearly). We are not able to pay any of the hosts yet; only our editor gets a small stipend for her labor.

We continue to brainstorm ways to grow and make more money. However, this quickly becomes a catch 22: we can't offer a lot of exclusive content that might attract more Patrons because we need the support in order to provide more exclusive content. It can be disheartening that male driven podcasts make significantly more (like, very significantly more), but the podcast is our labor of love and we keep pouring our hearts into it. I do not want to understate how much we appreciate the kind emails, tweets, DMs, etc., that we get from our listeners. It is really motivating to know how much people relate to and appreciate our work. But we live in this hell hole of a capitalist society and therefore we would love to be getting financial support so we can continue to grow.

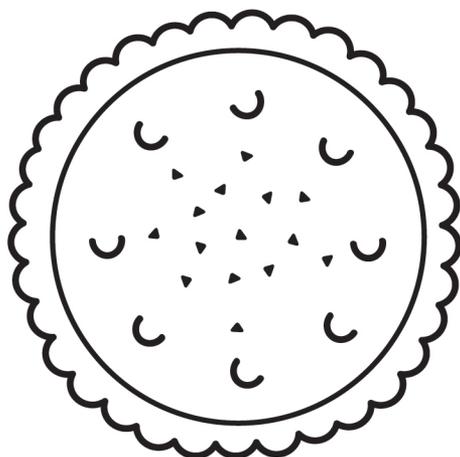
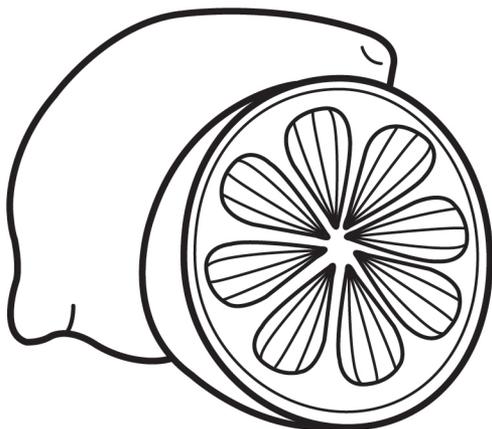
6 SOCIALIST FEMINISM IS THE FUTURE.

Please do not question us on the matter. Everyone would benefit from more socialist feminism in their lives. If you find yourself wondering "What? Why? How?" try listening to our podcast. If you find yourself saying "yes duh we all need more socialist feminism," you should also listen to our podcast.

7 LOVE YOU, BYE.

The closing of every episode is this reminder of radical love and friendship. We have heard from listeners that something that stands out about Season of the Bitch is how clear it is that we all genuinely love each other and are excited to record every episode. Being the podcast that deeply loves each other, and deeply hates capitalist patriarchy, is a reputation we proudly accept. Love you byeee byeee love yooou okay love you byeeeeee love uuuuuu bye.

To learn more about Season of the Bitch, contact the hosts at seasonoftheb@gmail.com or visit them at seasonoftheb.com. You can follow them on Twitter and Instagram @seasonoftheB.



ELIZABETH'S CARLOTA DE LIMON

This recipe means so much to me. My mom made it for me and my siblings for almost every special occasion growing up. I learned the recipe about ten years ago and have continued the tradition for my family. This past holiday season, I made it to share with my comrades for the first time. I was delighted they loved it as much as my family. Making and sharing food is such a beautiful way to share our history, culture, and nostalgia with new friends and comrades. I'm so excited to share this with you all. I hope you enjoy making, sharing, and eating this too.

P.S. It goes great with coffee!

EQUIPMENT

- 13x9" cake pan
- Large mixing bowl
- Something to mix with: sturdy whisk, blender, hand mixer, standing mixer

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz package cream cheese, room temperature
- 10 oz sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup evaporated milk
- 2 packet of Maria's Cookies (or any dry, thin, vanilla biscuit)
- 1 cup lime juice (4-6 limes)*
- 12 oz canned peaches
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans

*I like mine very tart. I suggest taste testing as you add lime juice.

Substitutions

- Walnuts or coconut flakes instead of pecans
- Fresh or canned pineapple instead of peaches
- Fresh berries

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the room temperature cream cheese, evaporated milk, and sweetened condensed milk. If using electric mixer, use medium setting. Mix until smooth. Mixture will be runny.
2. Slowly add lime juice, turning electric mixers to the lowest setting. Mixture will start to thicken as you add juice. Be careful not to overmix or mixture will become runny again.
3. Cover the bottom of a 13x9" pan with a single layer of cookies. Scoop 1/3 of the cream mixture and spread evenly. Add 1/3 of the peach slices and sprinkle 1/4 cup walnuts evenly. Repeat once.
4. Add one more layer of cookies and cream.
Use remaining fruit and nuts to decorate the top.
5. Refrigerate at least 4 hours.
6. Enjoy!

THANK YOU

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Made with solidarity and donated labor

“ANOTHER
WORLD

IS NOT ONLY

POSSIBLE,

SHE IS ON HER WAY.

ON A QUIET DAY,
I CAN HEAR HER

BREATHING.”

ARUNDHATI ROY



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