



# when the dog bites you can bite back

november 2024

## REBEL SCUM PAPERS



## where to get involved and how to start





# Where to get involved and how to start

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# REBEL SCUM PAPERS



# What Is Organizing?



Organizing is a word that often causes more confusion than clarity in 2024. This is for a **wide array** of reasons. The rise of the paid organizer via nonprofit organizations has made it so that folks see organizing exclusively as a profession; **one does not have to be a paid organizer to be a good organizer.**

Additionally, the use of organizing tactics during electoral cycles has fostered a political landscape where organizing is being **simplified** to just electing the “lesser of two evils”. Electoral politics **can** be the work of a series of organizers; It however is not always the only path depending on what you are aiming to achieve.

Additionally, the same corporations that cause our communities harm such as mortgage lenders, urban renewers, and political actors hire managers and deploy them as “organizers”. This further obscures the role of a community organizer.

In short, a community organizer is someone who takes responsibility for **developing the leadership** of people who are not yet engaged in political action. This can span across many activities including but not limited to the following: training and coaching, mutual aid, storytelling, healing and care work, fundraising, issue campaigns, rapid response to crises, neighborhood projects, and electoral strategy.



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# What Is Organizing?

Because the term “organizer” has become jargon--slang that only makes sense to a certain subset of people, it is actually **vital** that we are making our movement more accessible!

We must be willing to admit that **we do not yet have enough leaders to obtain the change we want**. We are capable of “wins” but organizing is not always about winning. Often the relationships and learning we build along the way are far more important longterm than what we are struggling to obtain.

We must be willing to humble ourselves to form lasting relationships with folks who know both more **and** less than we might about political struggle. Lastly, we must clarify both our personal gifts & areas for growth and where they may fit in that longterm struggle towards change.

Organizing is life affirming, and often forces us to face our demons in ways we least expected. But along the way, there is great hope for the betterment of self and others.



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I have been engaged in many discussions lately about **“Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements”** by Charlene A. Carruthers. Chapter 5, dubbed “The Five Questions” asks five questions that every organizer must answer for themselves.

These questions help one develop what we often call **Political Imagination**. Because our lived conditions are extractive and harmful to those with the least amount of power, we are often cheated the opportunity to develop political Imagination. We must develop the discipline of seeing **alternative, more equitable futures** that are possible for our people **AND** being able to connect actions immediately in front of us to those future dreams.





But let's simplify it even further.

**Consider 5 friends or family you know**

**Who are they?**

**What do they care about?**

**Do you feel safe with them?**

**Do they feel safe with you?**

**Do you/they know?**

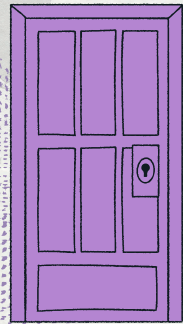
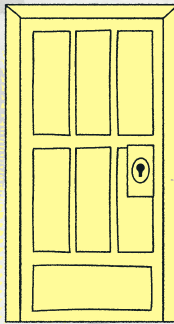
**What conditions do you need to build to feel safer with each other?**

With these 5 people, you could host a small meeting to answer these questions together! Often in organizing, we call small intimate meetings of 5-10 people a “house meeting” or “house party.” They often serve as an invitation to take action together. That action could be anything from raising money for a local cause to meeting with a key lawmaker.



But let's simplify it even further.

## Who's Next Door?



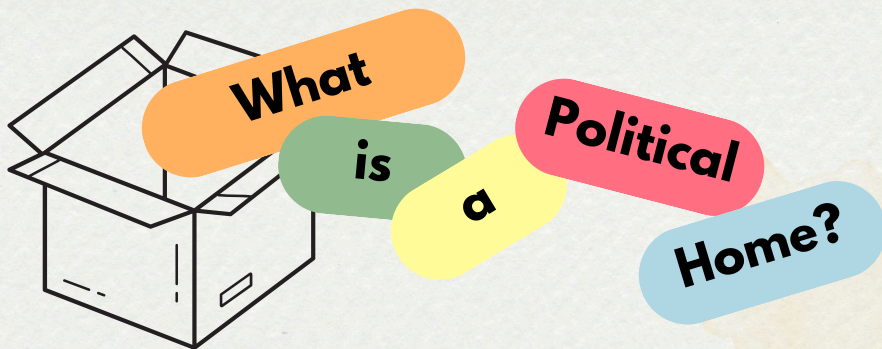
**It seems simple to ask, but ask yourself...**

### **Do I know my next door neighbors?**

Not every living space has the privilege of having a neighborhood association or block club. This means that your nearest neighbors may be unfamiliar with each other. This creates lesser safety for all parties involved. So ask yourself...what could it look like to ask my neighbors to talk for 15-30 minutes?

Folk live very different lives and it's okay if they can only talk for a short period of time! What's important is that **1) you are getting to know your surroundings** and **2) you are learning how to talk to strangers about the collective good of the neighborhood.**





Often folks will tell you to find a **political home** as if its a seamless process! I'm here to say that finding a political home should be a thoughtful and patient process.

Ask yourself...what does **home** mean to you? What **conditions** do you need to feel safe, heard, and empowered? What are your **dealbreakers**---places where you are unwilling to compromise? What are your **stretch zones**--places where you are willing to negotiate for the good of the collective? What are you looking to **learn** about both yourself and your community?

**Conflict** and **negotiation** are vital practices in community organizing. Often we are taking the responsibility for **developing the leadership** of someone else in our community to where they can make decisions, guide strategy, and make meaning of those **actions** together. This means that we are going to have to engage with folks that aren't 100% "in-the-know."

However, this does not mean that we have to put ourselves in harms way with those who aim to make us feel small or unsafe. We must be able to discern where our **gifts** and **humanity** are not only valued but seen as necessary to the advancement of collective action. Through positive experiences organizing, we learn to create the same for those we desire to organize with.

**Always remember, action is the lifeblood of organizing.**

# Let's Try It Out?



**When choosing a political home, ask yourself: what's at stake for me?**

If you've already formed **deeper relationships** with 5 friends or family, you can be searching for a political home **together**.

Imagine, attending a community meeting or action together and then **debriefing** together afterwards. You can ask questions like:

- 1) What was the **core message** of the meeting/action we went to?
- 2) What change do the organizers and people involved want?
- 3) Who or what challenge is standing in the way of that change?
- 4) What skills + resources do we have that could be helpful to that movement?
- 5) What actions do we need to take to get further involved?
- 6) What questions do we need to be asking the organizers so that we can build a better understanding of how to be collaborators?

**For this shared action, you all can identify some roles so that everybody takes responsibility for making the most of it.**

## Roles

**Notetaker-** Takes notes in their phone/journal about the meeting/action. This is a great role for an introvert!

**Historian-** Who's the artist/influencer? Have them take photos of you all at the action! You're gonna want to remember this moment together. However, not all actions should be posted to social media. Check with the organizer! first!

**Social Butterfly-** Which friend is the most extroverted? Have them connect with the organizers and introduce your group.

**Action Planner-** Think of your Type A friend. They can plan the time you all have to arrive/leave, any necessary carpools, and a debrief dinner after!

**Debrief Lead-** Consider your observant friend. They can pay close attention to the event and your group throughout. After they can lead you all through some shared reflection, journaling about what you all learned together!



# Let's Try It Out?



**Now let's give some examples of potential political homes right here in Metro- Detroit!**

Keep In mind, there are many organizations and formations of like-minded people In our region. This list is neither a penultimate list nor the total sum of our movement here. It is however an opportunity to see a wide array of potential options where you can get involved. All organizations listed are hyperlinked so that you can go straight to either their website or social media.

Additionally, I am sharing resources from other resource mobilizers that have made similar lists of their own! This is to acknowledge that I am not the first individual to list off groups organizing here.

There are more than 50+ organizations of all types here in Metro-Detroit working towards the wellbeing of working class people. More than likely, there is a place for you. And if there is not yet, there are like-minded folks who are thinking through how to build them!



Guts  
Xahool  
Z

# environmental justice

## **We The People of Detroit**

Community-based organization formed in response to the emergency management in Detroit and its public schools. They focus on Civil Rights, water, education, and the democratic process.

## **Transit Riders United**

TRU advocates for a seamless transit network that connects our communities to empower riders, create vibrant neighborhoods, and help Michigan thrive.

## **Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition**

Coalition working towards energy democracy & clean air.

## **Soulardarity**

Soulardarity (est. 2012) stands behind their mission to demonstrate that Highland Park, MI can serve as a national model for community-scale clean energy and **just transition**.

## **Ann Arbor Public Power**

Ann Arbor for Public Power is an organization of local residents advocating for a 100% renewable, public-owned electric utility for their city.





# urban agriculture

## **Keep Growing Detroit**

Keep Growing Detroit's mission is to promote a food sovereign city where the majority of fruits and vegetables consumed by Detroiters are grown by residents within the city's limits.

## **The Joy Project**

A Living Archive of African Atlantic Agriculture and Foodways

## **Feedom Freedom Growers**

A community group committed to growing community relationships through the cultivation of food, hearts & minds.

## **Fennigan's Farms**

Sustainable Design & Development. They create sustainable spaces for food sovereignty and community resilience.

## **Avalon Village**

Avalon Village's Mission is to create a safe, nurturing, uplifting, and healing space within the City of Highland Park MI.



## **Urban Agriculture**

Urban Agriculture is the act of growing food and/or livestock in urban or suburban areas. Often urban agriculture repurposes vacant or neglected land as community space where the surrounding neighbors can access sustainable and healthy food options.



# powerbuilding

## **482Forward**

Coalition working towards education justice for Detroit

## **Detroit Action**

Working towards renters rights, youth organizing and economic justice.

## **MOSES Detroit**

Focused on leadership development, civic engagement, issue campaigns, advocacy & community organizing with the clergy

## **We The People, MI**

Statewide organization working towards multiracial, working-class power. Focused on: Immigrant rights, renters rights, education justice, energy democracy

## **Michigan United**

Statewide organization for civic engagement, community organizing, energy democracy

## **Rising Voices**

Seeks to organize and develop the leadership of Asian-American women (cis, trans, gender nonconforming and femme-identifying) and young people for power and progressive values.

## **Mothering Justice**

Empowering the next generation of mothers, working towards: affordable childcare, reproductive justice, and paid leave/EPST.

**\*\*Organizations holding either 501(c)3, 501(c)4, or PAC status, looking to engage in **both** longterm leadership development and **Issue-Based Campaigns** leveraging the political system to foster social change for working class people.**



# Public Safety

## **Michigan Liberation**

Comprehensive criminal justice reform;. Formed Care Not Criminalization (CNC) campaign In 2021. Also has Bold Against Bail campaign highlighting harms of the money bail system.

## **Care Based Safety**

An unarmed response and community safety initiative. Collaborates with community partners to address the root causes of violence, crisis, and neglect in Washtenaw County.

## **Detroit Safety team**

Detroit focused organization dedicated to assisting communities in building a new safety infrastructure that shifts away from police reliance.

## **MI-CEMI**

The Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration is a broad-based, statewide, non-partisan collaboration representing non-profit, faith-based, advocacy, grassroots, and service organizations united to end mass incarceration in Michigan.



## **Public Safety?**

Organizations that are thinking through transformative, new systems to provide public safety.

# political education

## **Grace Lee Boggs Center**

Cultural hub nurturing the transformational leadership capacities of individuals and organizations committed to creating just, productive, conscious, and ecologically sustainable communities.

## **The People's Book Club**

Currently reading "What If we Get It Right" by Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson.

## **Black Bottom Archives**

Black Bottom Archives (BBA) is a community-driven media platform dedicated to centering and amplifying the voices, experiences, and perspectives of Black Detroiters through digital storytelling, journalism, art, and community organizing with a focus on preserving local Black history & archiving our present.

## **Political Education**

The sharpening of our historical, political, and material analysis to deepen our desire for social change. By learning about our past, we are better equipped to take actions in the future. But furthermore, we find inspiration in past social movements.

## **Misinformation & Disinformation**

We must be vigilant In resisting misinformation meant to discourage our movements. We are often told that our actions do not matter and we are often erased from stories of social change. We must do the work of clarifying the values of our movements and our people. This means both correcting false information **and** filling in gaps where information has been kept from our people.



# cultural strategy

## **Dolls Night**

Detroit based party & Trans advocacy organization by the Dolls for the Dolls

## **Answer Detroit**

A sex worker justice collective existing for the right of all people to choose sex work on their own terms. To not only survive, but thrive.

## **Solutionaries Collective**

Building ecosystems of care through grassroots journalism + facilitation offerings.

## **Swords into Plowshares**

Detroit Peace Center and Gallery. Using their space to connect communities for justice and solidarity.

## **Afro Moone**

Holistic resources for community care!

## **Motor City Mobile Wellness**

Cooperative of healing practitioners operating outside of the medical industrial complex to address the spectrum of wellness needs of our communities. Check out their **free zine** detailing even more organizations to get involved with.

## **Black to the Land Coalition**

Black to the Land is a coalition of Black, Brown, and Indigenous nature enthusiasts, intent on helping our people to actively engage in meaningful outdoor experiences.

## **Cultural Strategy?**

implementation of cultural, spiritual, and emotional practices in efforts towards political & social change.

# Let's Try It Out?



**Again, these are merely examples of places where you can take action.**

As you step further into public action, consider that you are now part of a process toward social change. You are going to make mistakes. Your values and politics may change over time. And additionally, you will learn even more about both yourself and others.

There's obviously more than we can cover in this zine but the purpose is for this to be a quick toolkit that gives anyone some clear next steps they can take locally.

In moments of upheaval and hardship, turn to eachother to work through it, not to individualism. If we have leveraged moments of uncertainty to learn how to better care for eachother and work together, we have made progress. Wishing you the best of luck; until next time!

Lets Grab Crayons,  
Kamau Jawara



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