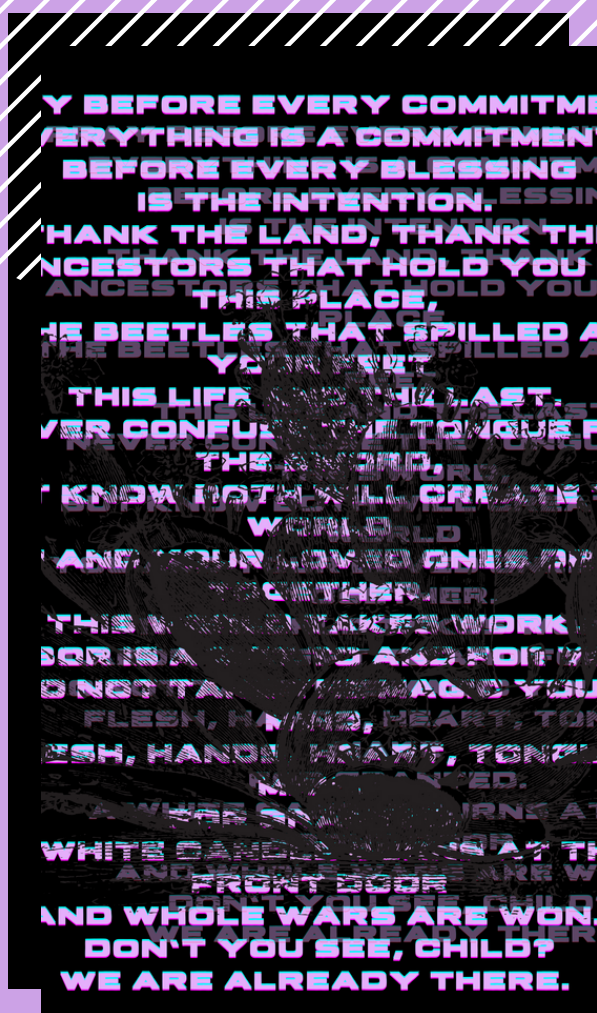


# youth autonomous organizing



A PROJECT BY UPLIFT



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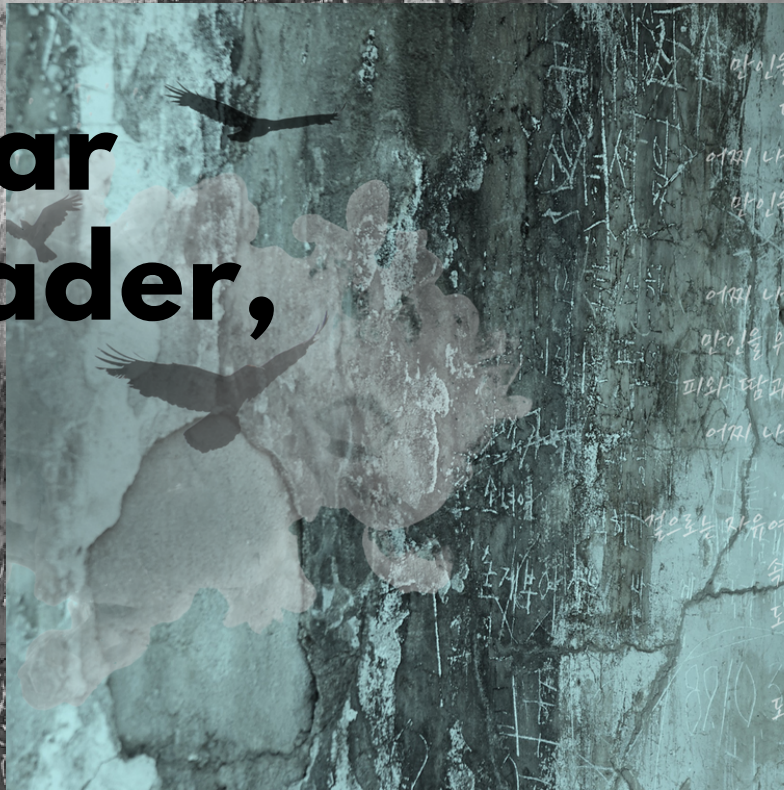
A COLLECTION OF INTERVIEWS,  
ARTICLES, SHORT ESSAYS, + ART.

A ZINE MADE BY YOUTH AND  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS IN THE  
GREATER SOUTHWEST

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# dear reader,



In 2020, after a year of wondering, planning, and strategizing, Uplift left our two parent nonprofits to become a youth led climate justice organization in the greater Southwest. This was a move informed and influenced by practices common within the nonprofit industrial complex and the larger environmental movement. Since 2020, Uplift has begun to find our footing as a youth led space. This zine and webpage is informed by this process and we hope it helps other young folks in their organizing and activist practices.

A good friend of mine, Mishka Banuri, once said: Young people don't need a degree to fight for their future.

I want to echo that sentiment, and add that young people do not need a degree, nor a career, nor any sort of special expertise to build a fundamentally different world. Climate change, and the climate crisis, is happening now, in our lifetimes, it has become inevitable and a concrete part of our reality as youth. I know that often it feels like the adults in our lives, politicians, community leaders, teachers, and corporate leaders know better than us, that they have the degrees, the experience, and the wisdom to tell us what is imaginable and realistic. I want to encourage all young people to ditch the status quo.

We, young people, may not have the degrees to make decisions, but at this point in the climate crisis, we do not need degrees to change the world. We need imagination, creativity, and bravery, all things young people and children have. The way the world works now, is not sustainable nor healthy for our communities. We do not need people with experience in doing things as they have always done, **we need people who are imaginative and brave enough to do things in ways they haven't been done before.**

We need to experiment and play with ways of being and living that are radically different from what we currently know.

We hope that this resource helps you maneuver through the climate movement and all movements for social change with your autonomy as a young person. Young people often face tokenization and other predatory behavior by the hand of non profit organisations and adults. By the end of shifting through all the resources we have designed and collected, we hope that you feel reaffirmed in your power as a young person, and in your ability to embody and create your future now.

In solidarity,  
The Uplift Team





# an interview with eva

EVA IS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER FROM LOS ANGELES, CA AND WAS A FORMER UPLIFT COORDINATOR IN 2018. EVA IS A FRIEND AND MEMBER OF THE WIDER UPLIFT COMMUNITY.

**Lyrica:** What is in your opinion the role of young people with- in the climate justice movement?

**Eva:** Ohh hahah I feel like that - I feel like I've answered this question a lot of times. The role of young people in the climate justice movement -The role of young people in every social movement, like historically, as a pattern is that young people are always the visionaries and the ones pushing movements to be most radically like devoted to our values. And young people bring a lot of energy to movements- yeah - in many intergenerational organizing spaces, young people are the one-the ones bringing new energy and excitement, new ideas and yeah, I think are the ones most down to I guess envision organizing differently, envision what our movements look like differently and keep like pushing and thinking creatively about how to push our movements to be stronger and more effective

**Lyrica:** Yeah I feel like that makes sense and it kind of feels like it's almost young people's responsibility to be more radical and sort of push the like boundaries of what we think is possible. A follow-up question that might be really similar and if you don't have anything else to say that's totally fine...

**...Why is it necessary for movements to be led by young people?**

**Eva:** Mmm. Uhm similarly to how we like look to leadership of like BIPOC, queer folks, disabled folks and other identities that are oppressed, like young people, because of ageism which is a system of oppresion, like young people don't - are disempowered by societal structures yet are so impacted by -like in the context of climate justice movement but by other issues and so like, not only to young people bring a lot of like skills, visions, energy, and like other benefits to movements, but also like their input and leadership is like-like there's no option but to follow that if we're really committed to counteracting ageism in our movements.





**Lyrica:** Yeah, thank you. I think this question is a good like kind of-you kind of flowed into it really well

**...How are young people treated within the larger environmental movement?**

**Eva:** Ah a juicy one, in the environmental movement, young people literally like are either tokenized or exploited. Right like they're exploited by being forced to do like unpaid internships to like do work their really passionate about within the movement, or like really low uhm paid internships, or even if they are decently paid it's still like young folks in environmental movement-and I'm thinking non profits because like, lets be honest the environmental movement 100% nonprofits pretty much or maybe like 95% nonprofit led which is a problem uhm. But like even in paid positions, young people's opinions and visions are very much undervalued and like experience is more valued. Uhm, so there's a lot of exploitation that happens in like environmental movement spaces. And then like when environmental nonprofits or organizations try to follow youth leadership it's almost always in a very tokenizing way. Uhm, like I feel like youth climate strike is the biggest example where it's just like all these adults behind the scenes with little puppet strings you know like, just like hovering and trying to take credit for youth to like speak up about climate change and there's so many other examples - pretty much like every youth program within an environmental nonprofit, and maybe I'm dissing some people who are doing good work, but in most cases it's just like actually about tokenizing youth and being able to get the nonprofit more funding, more grant foundation funding uhm to like- by saying oh, "we're doing- we're supporting youth, you know we're working with youth uh so i think within the environmental movement like although there's like so much attention on youth because there's-especially with climate change there's so much emphasis on doing this work for the sake of future generations and for youth and uhm, there's still like so much ageism that gets in the way of like following youth leadership.

**Lyrica:** cool thank you

**...As a former Uplift coordinator, this kind of speaks to what you were just saying, what is your opinion of the role of like youth- led, like youth-powered autonomous organizations in like the climate movement, in the climate justice movement?**

**Eva:** mm ok. Ok. This will be a longer one. Let me think uhm so I guess more generally, in my opinion like youth led-like actually youth led groups uhm often autonomous or like volunteer led or you know like not completely engrossed in the nonprofit sector are the only ones actually organizing, you know, at the grassroots level and actually doing movement work and in this way, they're able to - it's such a huge role to play, but they're carrying so much of the weight of the rest of the movement in terms of pushing other environmental organizations to do better, in all kinds of regards, and then simultaneously like actually doing the work which is already in itself so much. Could you ask the question again?

**Lyrica: Yeah of course. As a former Uplift coordinator, what is your opinion of the role of the autonomous youth-led organizations in the movement? And in your opinion what makes youth led groups feel the need to be autonomous or separate from the mainstream environmental movement?**

**Eva:** So I guess where I was going with that is like that the role of these autonomous youth-led organizations is uhm simultaneously to push the rest of the movement or bring the rest of the movement along with us and also do the actual work that the rest of the movement isn't doing which like can specifically look like taking greater risks in direct actions, or having actual authentic relationships with frontline communities that aren't extractive or exploitative, uhm being in solidarity with other movements...all these things like - it's almost always the youth taking the lead on that. Uhm, and sometimes non-youth organizations will follow, but a lot of the times the youth-led organizations have to drag them along. I think that my experience working in nonprofits was really eye opening to me in terms of what organizing work can actually be -in a nonprofit and what the many limitations are,

But like it was just really eye opening that like anything-any direction that I wanted to take that would actually have an impact and be most useful to the climate justice movement in the Southwest was like always shut down by some- by like bureaucratic policies, or straight up power tripping, or like a lot of alarmism over radical ideas which ultimately just like yeah led us to be pretty ineffective or like have our effectiveness limited a lot and I was simultaneously educating like the nonprofit.

Yeah, which is really eye opening for me in terms of this pattern of nonprofits like holding power uhm and like through resource distribution in our movements, and being able to like actually be obstacles to collective liberation. And so that kind of- that experience really turned me away from nonprofits in general like at least non profit organizing, like I don't know if I'll ever want to be a paid organizer again - I, ever since the have been doing all volunteer organizing.

**Lyrica:** Yeah, this has been great, Eva.

### **How are you careful to not implement the systems you're fighting against in your work?**

**Eva:** Hmm, another good question. It's one of those things where like, I don't ever think I'll be ever able to say that I'm fully there. Like I'm never going to not fuck up and replicate like the literal culture that I'm swimming in which is a culture of many intersecting oppressions. But I think that **embodying our values is one of the biggest ways that society transforms and that social change happens** is when I'm able to have anti-oppressive interactions with my family, my housemates, my coworkers, strangers I meet on the street, like if I'm able to show up- and with myself, when I'm alone. If I'm able to show up with the same values of love, passion for justice, commitment to like care, uhm then that is like -that is the change, you know. Like being able to exist in those ways. Uh I guess the like, whatchamacallit, the jargon term is like living prefigurately. Yeah so I guess going back to the questions, it's one of those things that I'm never going to be like, 'i don't do that,' 'I don't replicate the systems of oppression,'...

...I'm never going to be able to say that fully, but uhm i'm committed to it and I always will be so, mm because I think that that is how we build this world together is by committing ourselves to embodying those values, our shared collective values of what liberation looks like, and our shared commitment to liberation I guess. Yeah, that's it.

### **Lyrica: Yeah, that's all beautiful. And, lastly, what advice or like words do you have to young people who are just now becoming politically engaged, or politically self aware or like politically active?**

**Eva:** Mhmm. Ok. A couple-I have a lot of things, feel free to just choose from them. But my-one thing-my first thing is really understanding that self care equals collective care and that we don't need to, as individuals, take on all of the world's problems, and prioritize those over our own health and well being. So like my biggest organizing lesson, I think, is realizing if I'm not taking care of myself well like I'm not taking care of my community, and so if I'm stretching myself so hard to get all of this organizing done for the sake of a community that I care about or a movement I care about, that's actually harming the movement. So like self care is collective care- self harm is harming the community too. If we can see those things as inseparable, me not taking good care of myself isn't going to allow me to show up in the way my community needs me to show up. And like the people who care about me are going to be impacted if they see that I'm not doing well. So taking responsibility for our own healing is going to allow us to just be better contributors to our communities and is going to prevent us from causing more harm to our communities. So I really really think that taking an approach to our personal healing is like the biggest priority in organizing and especially in this pandemic where it's like, it's enough to just survive this. It can be so easy with everything else going on that you don't take care of yourself, it's like so hard to actually take good care of ourselves. So that's my first thing.

And related to that- Uplift was a huge lesson in this for me in understanding that we-we can take breaks from organizing,...



...because after Uplift I took like a six month break from any organizing and then I jumped back in, and not only did everyone welcome me back in without any resentment for me disappearing, but like I was able to see how the work just carried on without me and that was really humbling and reassuring that so much could happen-like I came back and y'all were like basically already a non-profit. All these committees, working committees just enacted the dream we'd been dreaming of. So it just proved to me, like, we can all step away- or like move away for a few months, just focus on ourselves, come back. The movements will still be thriving and building and creating and our comrades will hold it down. And then when we take breaks, then like in that example, I showed up and it was the middle of the year, and I was just so energized whereas everyone else was like- in Uplift and in other organizing spaces- I noticed this pattern that like everyone else was already burning out. And so me, like taking that break helped-like I was able to contribute so much more capacity than other people had. So I really recommend like taking breaks and staggering them with like our like community like organizers in our-in our collectives like so that we can like all balance have capacity and be nourished while organizing

That's my first biggest thing. My second biggest thing is about ego. When I was a baby organizer, I literally thought I was going to single-handedly stop climate change by the time I graduated college. I was just like, 'It's gonna be me. I'm gonna save the world.' And like, I think that I've grown a lot since that point and have had to really check myself on my motivations. Like when I first participated in underground actions and couldn't post on social media about them, that was a big ego check for me because it was just so natural of a reflex that I wanted to like share with people that I had done this cool thing and so, it made me come to terms with like wait, why am I doing this? Am I doing this just to feel good about myself? So and I see that pattern happening a lot across our movements, and I think that it's actually at the root of the problems that we're seeing with like cancel culture where canceling and calling out problems or mistakes or problematic behavior...

or language is a way for people to build clout and feed their egos and also staying angry publicly becomes a way to like feed anger and build clout on social media at least. So that's something I think about. I have a lot of these so really you know just cut out what you need to.

But the other thing I've been thinking about lately which I think is also related is like so called "factualization" or just like the divisiveness of the so-called "left" and of movements for justice cutting each other down. Like horizontal oppression and shit. Mmm people who are like inherently aligned around a lot of values, maybe not all values and maybe not aligned on specifically how to show up or show those values, but people who are generally aligned completely cutting each other off or cutting each other down because we don't- because of a lot of reasons, either we don't know how to get through conflict together or we don't value maintaining a challenging relationship over the clout we can gain by cutting people off especially publicly. Yeah, so that relates to ego also. Or we don't even know what it looks like to live in a society without punishment, and without outcasting people for doing something wrong, so yeah i've just been thinking a lot about how to hold all the like righteous anger and hold like some thread of togetherness between all of the different divisiveness in movements, and for young people who are new, I think that one of the first energies people encounter is this intensity about being like really militantly radical-or else you're cancelled. You know there's this big social energy around - maybe this is just in youth spaces, I don't know- being the most radical in the room, or just asserting and demonstrating that you're pushing boundaries which also feeds people's egos, or sometimes is driven by ego. So, feel free to paraphrase and make what I said sound better, but I think those are my biggest things that I want young people who are new to organizing to hear.

**Lyrica:** Well thank you so much, Eva. I feel like there is so much wisdom that I feel really like amazed by

**Eva:** Y'all too, don't even.

# a poem: "seed"

by Brenda Yvette

don't call me a seed.

I am not a seed

for to be a seed  
might mean  
the ability to grow

but how far do your roots go?  
when can you start to show?

don't call me a seed.

for to be a seed  
means

I grow where I'm planted  
glued down  
and rooted in  
grounds

I did not choose.

grounds plagued  
and shaped  
by views of  
those standing in  
clean shoes...

Grow where you're planted?

No.

Be sure you can choose.

Be sure your growth  
is aimed,  
and shaped by you.

I am not a seed.

Sure, the heights,  
I may see  
as a tree  
are higher  
than my mom's ever seen...

but still,  
I could only see  
directly around me

what more can I be?

Don't call me a seed.  
I am not a seed.  
I can be, anything.

I want to be a bird  
singing, and living  
and soaring through towns,  
not bound  
to the grounds  
beneath them...

But I guess even then

birds crash,  
and lash  
through windows  
Me? A bird?  
I don't think so

Even birds fly into  
their own cages...

Even birds tire,  
and desire,  
to go higher...

I am not a seed.  
I am not a bird.

So what more could I be?  
What more speaks to me?

Maybe the wind?  
A breeze  
moving between  
leaves and  
tall buildings  
passing through streams  
powering  
screens  
and dreams...

Don't call me a seed  
I don't want to be planted.  
I want to be free.

Free like the sea...  
That's it.

I am water.  
I make waves,  
unafraid  
to be  
everything  
or nothing.

I am water.  
I move, and form  
as I please

Not concerned with  
boundaries  
or people to please...

I am necessary.  
I am free.  
free to be  
what I want  
to be.





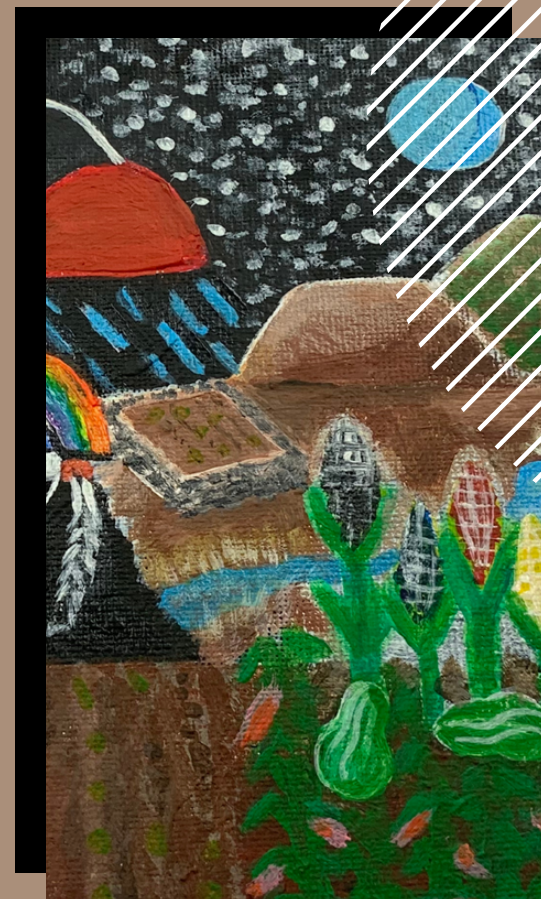
...and we started to do that and it started to rain, which was really like a beautiful affirmation of the—the land misses that type of kinship, uh so, and I'm not sure we're the only people who sing songs of kinship to the land as well. That's one important aspect of it is the land has taught us so much, uh how to live, how to live in a good way, and how to be good to each other, and once we began to see land as property, as land as a finite resource to exploit, uh, we began to see ourselves that way, you know, that old that old proverb, what we do to land we do to ourselves. I think that an important aspect of liberation is to reinvigorate those ideas of, we are—what we do to the land we do to ourselves, and that's the— I would say, the wishy washy part. You know, the new ageyier part, but you know land back has heavy political means as well. Uhm, **Indigenous Peoples are constant reminders of the failures of settler colonialism**, and are a constant threat to the settler colonial project because we demand land back, because the original people who inhabited the lands, who were raised by the lands are still here.

# an interview with brandon

BRANDON IS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER WITH THE K'E INFOSHOP LOCATED IN SO-CALLED WINDOW ROCK ON THE NAVAJO NATION.

**Jaiden:** So our first question, what does land back mean to you?

**Brandon:** For us, land back is like the restoration of kinship with the land, and all the relatives who also have kinship with the land as well. And that may seem like a nebulous idea, like what does it mean to have kinship back with the land? And it's simply that. It's restoring original songs and ceremonies to the land, for example, we had done a ceremony on some land that was in contestation with the Navajo Nation. And we were trying to figure out—and I was a young organizer at the time— and we were trying to figure out what we should do? And one of the Hatalli's, one of the medicine people said, just sing a song, when was the last time the—the land, the hills, the trees, the rocks around here heard like a hozho-ze song like a beauty way song,...



So, we're a constant reminder that there-there's a failure in capitalism, there's a failure in settler colonialism because the people who were meant to be eliminated are still here and they're still demanding justice. So that's one portion of it, and the second portion is, you know when people hear "land back" they immediately think of ethno-nationalism right? They think the Indigenous people want their land for themselves and they're going to kick everyone else out who wasn't originally from this continent, when the truth is that we want- when we talk about restorative kinship, we're talking about restoring kinship with each other as well. Uh, not just between the land and the people who were on this continent prior to European contact, but with all relatives who are still being raised by the land, uh whether they see that or not. The land is still teaching them things that they weren't being taught anywhere else. So how do we-and one way of liberation is to nurture that kinship in a more meaningful way and the only way we can do that is with land back. It's harder to do in urban areas. And with more densely populated cities, but I think it's one concrete demand we can have from people asking - like what could be done? And I always tell people that. 'Cause every time I give a talk or something, and there's always like a white settler who asks, what can I do? And I say landback, like do you have uh title or deeds to land, or do you know someone who's going to give away land? That's one thing you can do right now is just give the land back. And that's when you can tell who's really down for the just causes and who isn't. 'Cause once you say land back and say, yeah it's just simply that. Just give us the land back. 'Cause then you'll hear like a constant uh hemming and hawing, people are like giving excuses, they're like, they're flabbergasted by the idea. Because they've tied money, they've tied capital, they've tied economic reasons to the land. That's made up the identity. And so you demand something that they've built their identity on, it causes problems for them. And so I think that helps them to think further on, what does it mean for them to be a meaningful relative to Indigenous people rather than doing performative things, like real world concrete things.

**Jaiden: So our next question is, what does the nonprofit industrial complex mean to you and how do you fight those dynamics within it?**

**Brandon:** So *[laughs]* I always used to tell folks that beware of who you give your spirit to. There's this fire that's inside you, especially when you're young. Because there's a lot of organizations who-who prey on your fire, on your urgency, on your fierce power, and they extinguish it - through bureaucracy, through what-about-isms or like through 'this is how it has to be done' doctrines that they try to force into you either through electoral politics or [] through the non-profit industrial complex. And it's-the majority of them, they're vampiric. Like I said, they suck your spirit away. And so what we've done, how to work around this is that we maintain our fierce autonomy by building trust autonomously. You know, we're not looking to build trust with millionaires and billionaires [] our organization. We're looking to build trust with the community and to have a strong principle of being a community funded project, not Kellogg or [] funded project, but a grandma and grandpa signed off on us. Or auntie signed off on us, you know or your cousin or nephew signed off on us, either by volunteering at the info shop or providing material needs. Uh, and that's hard to do. Probably one of the harder things to do is for someone-to get the community to believe in your project uhm especially for Indigenous people because we're so used to people parachuting in and you know, offering solutions, and often bringing in like so-called "experts," people who are business minded, people who you-know, want us to go to school and get a stem degree so that we can for for NASA, you know, because that-the-to them, that's the way out. And I'm sure you all, and myself have heard that same type of rhetoric bring up from mega-Indian, science-Indian society, from our high school teachers, you know, we're constantly told to leave-we're constantly told that these are ways to leave the rez, and anyone who stays is met with suspicion-like why weren't you successful enough to leave? So we had to go a lot against that type of capitalist, individualist thinking by being like a steady constant presence in the community.



Uhm, and it's not going to happen right away. Like as you know, our collective is made up of some prominent folks and we still uh-wouldn't say, we don't struggle as much now, but in the beginning, I was solely funding the infoshop and we'd get donations from here and there. But slowly, we've gained the trust of the people we want to help first, which was the unsheltered, cause, I wanna share a story-often, the info shop was broken into twice early, in the beginning. And after they found out who-whose info shop they broke into, they brought our stuff back. [Laughs]. That's because we built trust with the folks that we were helping. Once they were like, oh, so-like so -and-so broke in and took something, we told them to give it back because you guys, like you help us so much. That meant a lot to us-to like, ok we built trust with them and then slowly the rest of the community we had to build trust by being present. So that's what it means to me. [] and of course it's nice to get more funding, and then inevitably we have to handle taxes, right. And what we did-we were offered non-profit status, all this stuff, for a long time. Because like people would say, we could get you millions of dollars to buy this stuff, and then-but it would always seem really sketchy, and it took us a long time to find a nonprofit that would, not only could sponsor us, but that was like-wouldn't seek to exploit us, like we wouldn't have to brand ourselves with their name. They were just cool with taking money and not [] and then paying - that's all we wanted. So we found a person, a couple folks like that, 'cause we were - like I said we're really protective of our autonomy So A) When confronting the nonprofit industrial complex is to **protect your spirit**, to protect your autonomy, because always looking for someone - always looking to pad their end-of-year reports, like saying 'oh we swooped in and we funded this project that was happening in this poor community' and to always frame it in the economic lease of poverty porn. So protect your autonomy there. And the second is to **build trust in the community that you're building your movement in**. You know, are you building trust with government employees? Are you building trust with the folks who have to sleep in the ditch at night? You know, who's really going to be down for you?

Uhm, and understand what you mean when you talk about liberation, and isn't too invested in continuing a relationship with the United States, who's invested in destroying that relationship with the United States? And the third is, when you do get those big grant opportunities, because they do come and you will need them, is to find a nonprofit that will- that really understands and truly respects your autonomy, and truly respects that you know, they understand what their privileges are and they're using their privilege, their status to find you funding, and to know that you have boundaries in place, and that you're fiercely protective of your autonomy. It's very hard to find nonprofits like that, very very hard. Like I said, we were self funding the infoshop for about three years before we found a nonprofit that we could trust.

**Jaiden: Cool, the next question, what is the role of young people in the movement?**

**Brandon:** Gosh everything. It took me a long time to step back and listen and to hear different ideas and new ways of thinking that young people bring. They bring a different spice to our community and with us older folks it feels like we keep arguing about the same thing over and over again. There are new and better ways for us to build our movement, and young people bring that energy in. A lot of older folks bring hierarchies and the youth are always nipping at the heels of hierarchy to prevent that from happening. At first I didn't give a lot of credit to young ways of thinking, I thought they were coming from a place of being naive and inexperienced. If a young person has questions I'll answer them and pass on resources, but I'm not going to tell them how to do things, because I don't have those answers.

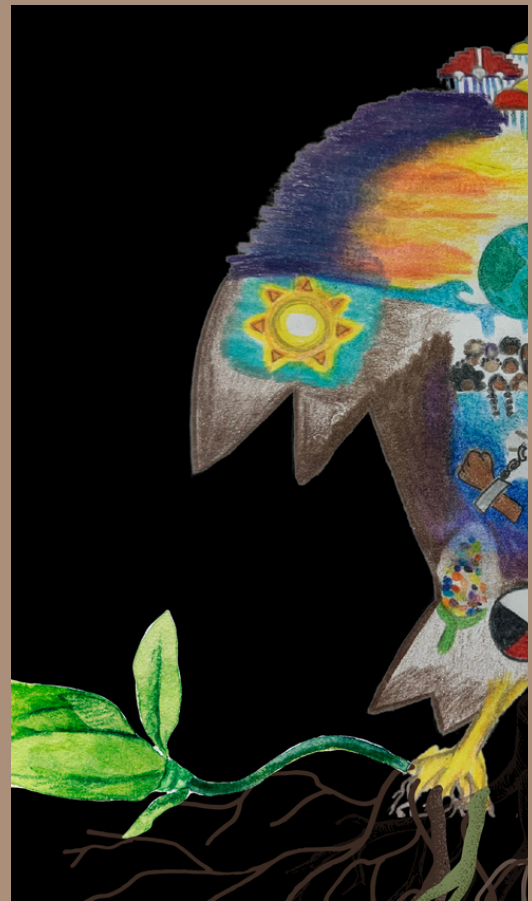
**Jaiden: How are you careful to not implement the systems you're fighting against in your work?**

**Brandon:** For me personally, it means combating implied hierarchy. As a cis man whenever people have questions they come to me, so I turn to others in the infoshop. I try not to replicate implied hierarchy, the privilege of being an older organizer and being seen as...

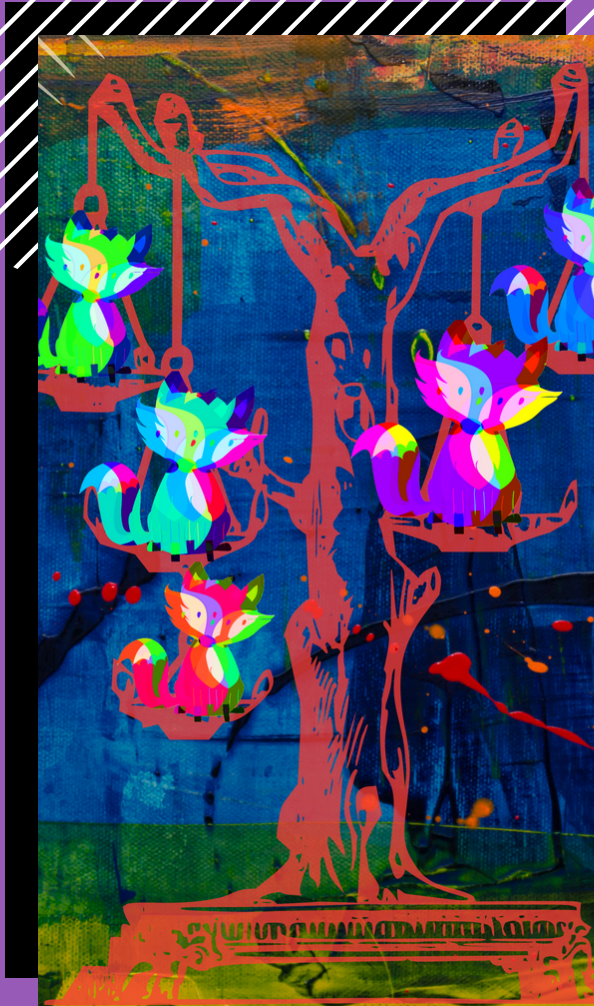
...an authority on organizing. I try to make everything a horizontal process, on how we make decisions and on how we do things. Always empowering each other and validating each other's ideas and thoughts. Not worrying so much about how long it takes, but having sincere conversations to reach a genuine sense of consensus. I always heard the clock replaced the whip, and in organizing spaces we've replaced sincerity with so-called efficiency. It has replaced our ability to work together and to see each other's uniqueness. We are often in a place of urgency.

**Jaiden:** What advice/ words do you have to tell young folks who are becoming politically engaged?

**Brandon:** Protect your spirit. I could list a dozen books to read, but what I find more with young folks is that they're anxious and sometimes not confident. Don't be afraid to build up your confidence, while being kind to others, **be kind to yourself**. Don't feel like your opinion isn't important because you didn't go to marches or make banners. Be kind to yourself because others will take advantage of those vulnerabilities. Look at how monsters affect your community and organize against it. Find other people who recognize these monsters, when we started the collective I had little hope of finding radical people here in Window Rock but if you have that fire others will see it and will come.







# become a nonprofit?

THIS ARTICLE WILL OUTLINE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS OR GROUPS THAT PEOPLE ORGANIZE THROUGH: NON- PROFITS, FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS, AND ALTERNATIVES TO NONPROFITS.

## Non- profits organizations:

Nonprofit organizations, also known as a 501c3 or NGOs, are organizations that have received a tax exemption from the IRS. These organizations have received a tax- exempt status, and, theoretically, these are organizations not making a profit from their work (such as a business would). These organizations are registered with the state and are legal organizations that must have certain documents and a legal Board of Directors to be in operation. Nonprofit organizations cannot engage in electoral politics or influence an election result, meaning they cannot campaign for a certain politician.

Why do people join or create nonprofits? Nonprofits, because of their relationship to the government, have greater access to resources. They can more easily open bank accounts, pay people, receive donations, receive benefits and discounts, and handle large amounts of money. In order to apply for grants, often you will need to be a nonprofit or connected to a nonprofit.

As you might be able to guess, the process to becoming a nonprofit requires more work, organization, and paperwork. You will need to have a Board of Directors, legal bylaws, and go through other administrative processes in order to become verified.

Nonprofits, because they are directly adjacent to the state, are more likely to become subjected to state surveillance. In the climate justice movement, we must come to the realization that the state is in direct opposition to climate justice. The government, or the state, has been actively squashing social movements since its inception. From Black liberation movements of the 1960s to the American Indian Movement to present day social movements, we see the state playing an active role in surveillance and targeting social movements.

So in becoming a nonprofit, you are more likely to be surveilled and even partnered to the state. Additionally, when nonprofits grow, they must grow their budgets as well. This means looking for larger sources of money from foundations and grantmaking institutions. Accepting money from foundations is often a slippery slope. Remember, our accountability and responsibility is to our people, the movement, our communities, and to ourselves, not to our foundations or wealthy donors.

#### A fiscally sponsored project:

A fiscal sponsorship is a formal legal relationship between a nonprofit and a group that is not a nonprofit organization. You sign a contract with a nonprofit to use some of the benefits of the organization (such as the tax-exempt status, as well as applying for grants), in exchange for a fee. Uplift is a fiscally sponsored project of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs, they do not engage in our programming or work, but we use their status to apply for grants and receive donations. In exchange, they take a small percentage to support their operations.

Fiscal sponsorship may be the easiest way to receive grants and handle money. If you are running a small group, say a mutual aid project, that has blossomed in size and donations, you may need to find a nonprofit to fiscally sponsor you.

To find a fiscal sponsor, you may be able to ask a *trusted* nonprofit organization in your community. Any nonprofit with a 501c3 status can be a fiscal sponsor. Certain organizations also run fiscal sponsor programs, such as Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs and the Power Shift Network. Some nonprofits will require more official paperwork, such as an annual budget,...

...full time staff, while other nonprofits are comfortable with less official paperwork. It's important to find a fiscal sponsor that meets your needs and that you trust to not co-opt or control your work. If you are a fiscally sponsored, your organization or group is a project of that nonprofit, and it is very common for nonprofits to detail or limit the radical work of their fiscal sponsorees.

#### Alternatives to nonprofit organizations:

There are a few alternatives to organizing beyond a nonprofit. One of these is fiscal sponsorship, discussed above. This allows you to access most of the benefits of a nonprofit without officially being a nonprofit. You can use fiscal sponsorship to different levels, only using your fiscal sponsor for part of the time or for when you need to apply for a grant. We recommend when becoming connected with a fiscal sponsor, there are clear guidelines and understanding of your relationship with the nonprofit/ fiscal sponsor.

If your project or group is small enough. You may not need any type of nonprofit status. You may be able to handle money through personal Venmos, bank accounts, PayPals, etc. If this is the case, it is recommended that you become clear on tax guidelines so you don't get a surprise call from the IRS or someone in your community.

Ultimately, it is your call as a young person to have the organizing spaces and avenues that feel best for you. We encourage you to do more research into these spaces and find the types of support that re- affirm you the most in your autonomy and agency.





# an interview with kourtney

KOURTNEY IS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER  
CURRENTLY LOCATED OUT OF ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
ON TEWA AND TIWA LAND.

**Jaiden:** What is the role of young people in movement work?

**Kourtney:** Hmm, I think that young people bring a lot of instantaneous energy into movement work, I think especially if you had been organizing anytime before this summer, and then when George Floyd was murdered, like how quickly the youth had so much energy. It was like - I feel like there's a word for it - it was just very quick and it was like burstful and vibrant and fresh I feel like, uhm especially for the Black lives Matter movement, especially, which was at-at that point already almost a decade hold but hadn't really seen that type of energy. For me it's always definitely very physically like the spirited energy that they bring to the movement. But also a lot of pretty emergent ideas and also I would say a different set of skills too, so like, as a millennial, something that I noticed this summer is that this younger generation, they knew how to use social media in a way that I'd never really seen before.

And I guess like that's also mixed with, you know, the fact that we're in a pandemic and we don't really have much of a choice, but also I just think that the youth just have like a lot more like technical skills than a lot of the elders do, and it's not to say that one is better than the other, but it's definitely a great tool to add to the work being done. I also - like **the youth are like the whole reason we do this work.** Right? Like if it wasn't for the youth, there would be literally no point. Right? 'Cause we're not going to see liberation. Uhm, so, which is like a sad thing. But I feel like doing this work for youth and with youth, uhm, it kind of helps ground you and center your work in more long term, sustainable, just like slow conscious, thoughtful work that takes time. It's not exactly reactive work. So if you're thinking about work, I feel like you're doing intentional work because you know that this is probably going to be for several generations beyond yourself. So I feel like youth are just like - they're like the frame of which we should be looking at our future through. I think that's - that's the best for me.





**Jaiden:** God Damn. That was so poetic. Like that hit my soul. I loved everything you had to say. Uhm, a lot of it is very true. I feel like, when I think of the youth, they're very just ready and kinda just down to get organized.

**Kourtney:** exactly, and they be making art too.

**Lyrica:** our next question is, let's see, **what do you wish you had known before getting politically involved?**

**Kourtney:** I wish I had known that this work is allowed to be slow and thoughtful, uh 'cause I think that especially when you are young and you don't yet know that you're not going to live to see liberation, everything is so urgent, and it's so reactive, and it's so like, we have to do this right now, and it's just like, it's-it's unending, right? It feels like you have to give your attention to every single thing that is going wrong in the world, uh which obviously, like, in the long run for anybody, actually in the short run too, it just leads to like an incredible amount of burnout. Uhm, so sometimes I wish that when I was younger I had been told by people who were older doing this work that it's ok to like stop, and like pause, and like take a breath, and to actually figure out what it is- like one specific thing you want to focus on, and like funnel your energy into instead of, kind of like having a triggered reaction to everything that happens, by the time I got to college and started doing more like direct action, and like anti-police work, it just felt like, especially because that was like during the era of Trayvon Martin, and like, Mike Brown, and Tamir Rice, and Ricky Oboid, that's like the era of when I really started getting hardcore about it, and it was like-it was like nonstop. Like, you know, Black people are being killed like every couple of hours. And like, ingesting all of that, you know, all the time because of social media. Or, during that time too, that's when people started filming it all the time too and like sharing it everywhere. You know, that 2013 to 2016 era was really traumatizing and it felt like we had to have a knee jerk reaction every time it happened. So then all we would end up doing is like getting into streets like every other week - exhausting ourselves,...

...exhausting our resources, and also like putting ourselves front and center in a way that we didn't realize at the time was super dangerous. Till later it ended up becoming very much like uh, you get to a point where you get centered and uh you know, everybody's watching you and it's not just police, it's also like the people in your community, or in your school, or even people you think you trust. So I guess, I just wish that there were more like elders involved when I first got into it and I wish they-I wish that they had been able to be there to be like-you know really be strategic about the moves you make, you know? Instead of just - cause like, this work is always gonna be here, you know? It doesn't matter if you pause, it's not going anywhere, unfortunately. As sad as that sounds.

**Jaiden:** Ok-so the next question is **what advice would you give to young organizers in college or to young organizers thinking about going to college?**

**Kourtney:** Definitely. Yeah, that's where I really started, and I think a lot of people who haven't organized at the university, the first thing they'll tell you is that like you can't do radical organizing there because you're like within the Ivory towers, but that's literally not true because we're like - we're in the ivory towers like just by being on this fucking planet. So it's just like, that type of logic really doesn't make sense, and it also it totally erases like all the Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous people who go to college who are like first gen and like totally navigating this shit by themselves who have-honestly, sometimes more radical politics than people in the community. That's how it felt for a long time for me here. So I think that my best advice would be to one: don't listen to people who are like, you can't organize in university, that's like privileged organizing. It's like no, 'cause we all deserve education, and it's like, at this point, that's what we have, like that's the access - we don't see education happening in a lot of other ways, uh, except more traditional things you know who are growing up with their families back on the Rez - that's important education.

But I would say definitely do it if you can, but also it's definitely important to keep in mind that it will be really draining, and you will definitely be very very centered-uhm, it was-honestly like some of the scariest organizing I did was at the university.

I guess another piece of advice would be to not, like let go of your politics. Uh, so I would say, stick with whatever avenues you feel like make your soul feel best in your work. 'Cause it's really easy to be the one person in a group of 20 who is like, you know, your ideas are too intense or too dramatic, or radical. You know, it's really easy to get just shut down. But I feel like ultimately, just like staying true to your politics and being very weary of co-optation, uhm things get super co-opted at the university, and it-and it's not just by other student organizations, it's also by the university itself - uhm, so for example, in like 2012 and 2013, we had been pressing for like gender neutral bathrooms and of course the administration made us feel like crazy, people made us feel crazy. Like we were always being threatened with suspension you know, two years later, the university is the first one in the state to have gender neutral bathrooms, and how big of a win this is for the leadership, and it's like, bruh, this is like 6 students like putting themselves on the line and failing their classes to press for this. So you will never get credit for anything- it's so sad. I think co-optation is probably the worst thing that happens at a university.

I feel like there's just so many lessons for college students. It's just like, take care of yourself first. Your mental health matters more than anything. Also take care of each other. I feel like, you know, just taking care of yourself and being weary of co-optation, and being true to your politics. I don't know - I, now that I'm so much older I feel like the most important thing is really just figuring out how to continue to heal and be able to learn how to emotionally regulate and things like that. Like learning more of that like skillset. 'Cause all of us were really good at protesting, but none of us knew how- we didn't have the skills to take care of our mental health.

Like, we didn't even know - self care wasn't even a word at that point [laughs] uhm, we didn't know how to do anything like that and it's honestly the most important thing, for like long-term, sustainable change. It's just, prioritize yourself, and your loved ones, and your community.

**Jaiden:** I love that. Thank you for that, that was amazing.

**Lyrica:** Yeah, thank you Kourtney, so much. **How are you careful to not implement the systems you're fighting against in your own work?**

Kourtney: I think this is the one that is probably the hardest for me and for everybody, because you know we come into this with so much anger towards like all these issues but we don't really ever see ourselves in those shoes, especially as like a mixed white person who looks entirely like a settler, I feel like I have to be very, very careful like, I mean, one: just acknowledging my proximity to whiteness at all times, and just recognizing like the way that I have experienced violence is always going to be different than my brown and Black peers do. I think that's definitely part of it for me, and I feel like something that is, I've like maybe come into in the last four or five years is just being like, ok I've really gotta check myself, you know. 'Cause it's really easy for me to get centered in movement work, even if I don't want to because people will just listen to the white person. Uhm, so I have to be very careful about certain people that want my attention, or doing interviews, like stuff like that - I try not to do interviews too often of things where my face will be on TV. I try to give those opportunities away if I can or- especially if they're white-led interviews too because they definitely try to like yeah, twist things around.

Uhm I think another aspect of it too is mental health and just yeah, general healing. I don't wanna perpetuate that like a new-age type of healing, but I think a lot of people who are doing movement work have some type of trauma in some way and we live in white supremacy, it's like - there's no way you don't.

I think it's really important for me to always be like, trying to acknowledge that, like acknowledging where a lot of my pain comes from and my anger and my rage and I think there's a lot of power in it, like I can use that stuff as a tool, I guess. But sometimes I can use it in an abusive way, right? So I think for some folks who do have trauma with whatever that is like sexual trauma, or physical trauma, or just racial trauma, colonization, anything, you just need to be really careful about like deciphering between like, am I using like the energy that I have to fight these systems like against these systems, or am I also weaponizing in my own community? Uhm, so I think that's something that I'm always trying to stay conscious of and like always trying to work on it and also just looking this way and being perceived this way granting me more access to spaces that are healing, so like taking advantage of that and like actually healing and like dealing with that shit is super important to me, and is really hard too.

**Lyrice:** So we have two more questions. The next one is, **what does autonomy mean to you?**

**Kourtney:** I love autonomy, I love that word, I love that it's a thing that we can like indulge in and practice. Uhm, autonomy to me is-is very similar to like self-determination. Uhm, just having the right to-I wouldn't say do as you please, but kind of like to-to live like how you want, live as long as you're not causing people harm or abuse or violence, you know. Uhm, but autonomy to me is-and I don't even think that in this lifetime we'll ever get to feel what it truly means to be autonomous. Right, 'cause it's like, we still gotta show up to work, we still gotta do all of these things to survive that truly aren't autonomous things that we do. So, I guess it's like, autonomy is kinda like a horizon, right, it's something you're always trying to move toward. It's something you're always looking forward-you're always trying to get to that point even if you can't necessarily embody it at times, it's something that you're trying to embody. It's kind of like, uhm, yeah like, you know you can't make a specific kind of future happen...

...if you're not trying to embody it in the future, you know, but also yeah, just trying to understand that that's not always possible, I also like-I think autonomy is super tied to, like I said, self determination and part of **autonomy is like respecting other people's autonomy**, is like, especially, especially centering the autonomy of like Native people whose land you're on and that's self determination for them to do as they please, uhm no matter how you see their politics aligning with your own.

And I think a lot of people are still having a hard time letting go of that need to control everyone, and that need to make sure everybody is politically aligned, and I-yeah, I think that's another aspect of it too. There's a lot of infighting on the left, which is like good actually, I think 'cause it's like people shouldn't all agree, I think there's a lot of danger in like people all having the exact same opinions or like everyone identifying as an anarchist if that's how they feel, like to me that's really toxic like authoritarianism uhm, and it's like stripping people of autonomy. I would like to see more like conversations of what that is. I think I have a lot more-I have a lot more understanding that needs to be built up here, you know, in like a theoretical sense, but also in like an individual sense too. 'Cause I don't, you know, I love autonomy, but here I am working like 40 hours a week, you know, that's not autonomous at all.

**Lyrice:** [laughs] No. Yeah, I feel like- something I think about a lot is how in our lives, like when we're young children, we're very much under the authority of like our parents, and then it's like our teachers who we are under the authority of, and then it's like our bosses, and then it's like, at what point do we gain-like regain control of our lives, even in like a daily sense, like thinking about how like your boss in a traditional way like decides when you get to be like at home with your family, sometimes when you get to go to the bathroom, even like when you get to eat, and I'm like, this is so messed up, and also something I think that we're so ingrained to just like accept that we're never going to have control of our lives.



**Kourtney:** It's kind of scary like how deep we are in-like we're so far in. When you say, like our bosses control when we go to the bathroom. Like yeah, we have to ask permission to do everything, and we're mostly denied.

**Jaiden:** The last question is, **how can we organize in a way that doesn't mirror hierarchical structures?**

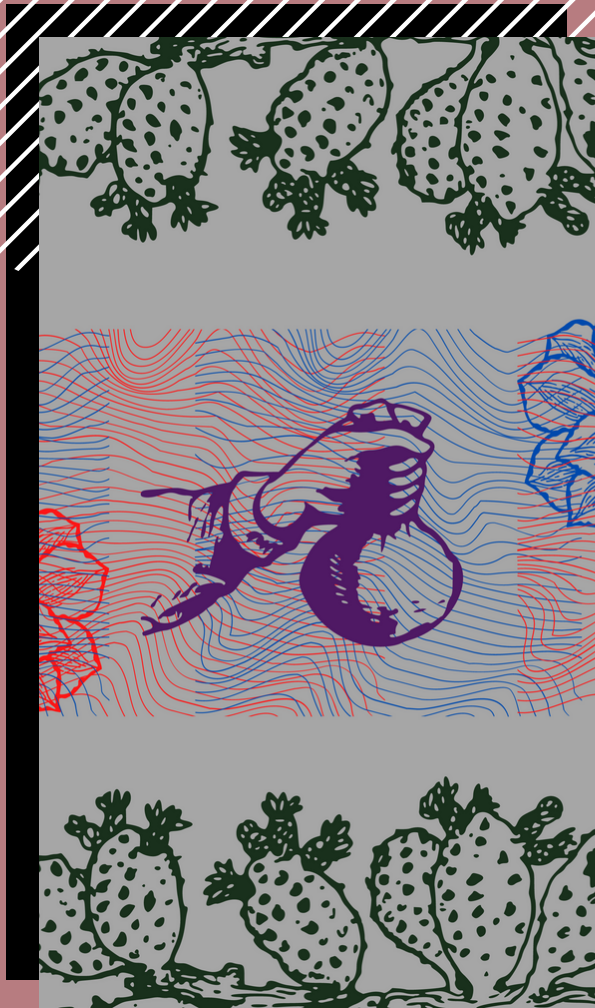
**Kourtney:** Mm. That's hard. That's such a hard question, I feel like even in community settings where that's what we're trying to practice, there's always like people who end up becoming leaders. I don't necessarily think that we shouldn't have leaders, but I feel like it's a really loaded role, and there's just always people who kind of rise up and like take that position of kind of having authority over people, even in groups of people who are really really woke as hell, I think that hierarchy is just-like not natural but we're so socialized that it comes out in really subtle ways that we don't really notice it. Uh, I think there's a couple steps. I think that one is that people have to stop trying to get credit for everything that they do. Just within our communities, I feel like people are really like thirsty for credit and attention for that work, and I-I do identify as an anarchist, and like something that I think is an important value of anarchy is that we do things anonymously, and I think that's a really good way to try to like deplete hierarchy, at least externally. Like people won't view hierarchy if people are actually doing things anonymously, and not trying to get cookies or clout for it, wow, this culture now, is-it's really hard because wow, it's so easy to get clout for organizing now because social movement is becoming more mainstream which is really weird to say, like people are being followed which is good for education purposes, but it's like, there's like a couple of figureheads that have kind of like, just a little bit too much influence in my opinion and people go to them to like ask permission for things, uhm almost like look at them in a way that they have to get approval for stuff, and I'm just like that's not how this works, like if you want something to happen in your community then you just need to do it. Obviously with respect to the Indigenous peoples who are in community with you.

I don't know, I think people need to stop trying to get clout. People need to de-platform. That's the word. I think social media education and movement work online is important, it's also super accessible for a lot of disabled people, I think it's super important, but also I think that we end up just like pedestaling people and we look at people almost like as celebrities, even though that's like the culture we're supposed to be dismantling, and it's super damaging for everybody too, I think the answer is anonymity, I don't see a lot of people practicing that. I see a lot of people being like, I don't know like, look what I did. And I think it's important to celebrate each other, you know, to uplift each other, I do think that's important. But I also just - I do think that the ability to become an influencer, it really distorts people's intentions, like why are you here? You know, you shouldn't be like doing wild things for attention, uhm that's damaging to your community and everyone around you - that's damaging to yourself, you're going to get yourself caught, you're going to get yourself in trouble.

**Jaiden:** Yeah, mmhmm. 'Cause you're endangering yourself and like endangering your community by building this huge ass platform.

**Kourtney:** Yeah, it's a slippery slope being on social media. It really is. It's like, you can get off, but like the isolation of not being on social media right now is so hard. And just like feeling like you're being left out of so much- we're like evolving so rapidly-sometimes I feel like if I get off instagram for a month, like I'm not going to be smart enough anymore. You know what I mean, like I'm not going to be able to keep up. They're not going to let me back in.

**Lyrica:** Yeah, I regularly delete the apps. But I feel like now I download it just to be like, ok I gotta check in, like see what's going on, see who got called out, like you know see like the new-I don't know what the new thing is, which I think kind of goes back to what you were saying Kourtney about reactive things, like everything being reactive, but I feel like we should be able to take a week off social media and still know what's going on and like feel welcomed like Jaiden was saying.



# the money 101

UNFORTUNATELY, THE WORLD WE LIVE IN TODAY REQUIRES MONEY AND WHILE WE WORK TOWARDS A WORLD IN WHICH MONEY HAS NO SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES ON THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES, WE MUST RECKON WITH THE PLACE MONEY HAS IN OUR MOVEMENTS AS YOUNG PEOPLE.

When Uplift left our parent nonprofits we began to conduct our own fundraising efforts. Our team talked about what types of funding we would and would not accept. Central to our conversation at Uplift is the fact that **all money comes from the exploitation of people and the Earth**. This means that we must remain critical of the role money plays within social movements for change.

## What is the role of money?

When Uplift began fundraising for our first year, we created a budget that laid out all our annual expenses. We included costs and services that we couldn't do ourselves as well as our own salaries. However, as a young person organizing grassroots actions or events in your community, your costs would likely be travel related, perhaps gas to drive to an action or training camp, or seeds or vegetables to start a community garden, or a small land plot to start the community garden on.

It's important to create transparent and accountable systems when handling money, while we often need money to create change, **the goal of our movements and our activities is not to raise money**. Just because we can raise thousands of dollars, does not mean we are successful in creating change in our communities. People creating alternative systems to capitalism everywhere must be mindful of letting money co-opt and lead our movements. At Uplift, we let our own ideas and needs lead us, and then seek to find the money to support those dreams. It is crucial that we follow ourselves and our communities, and not follow the money.

## Types of Fundraising

Nonprofits, and those connected to nonprofits, raise money in three distinct ways: grassroots fundraising, major donors, and grants. Grassroots fundraising refers to everyday individuals who are giving small amounts of money either once or multiple times. Major donors are wealthy individuals who are giving significant amounts of money to organizations either once or multiple times. Grants are often awarded by other nonprofits or foundations to organizations in large sums, they often require an application and reporting process to the funding nonprofit or foundation.

If you are a young person wanting to start a project or program in your community, you will likely be working with grassroots fundraising. This could look like a GoFundMe, or Kickstarter campaign, a graphic with a call for funds and a Venmo or Cash App handle. However, there are small microgrants or funding opportunities that might come your way to support your project.

## How To

In addition to learning how to fundraise, it's important to know the expectations that come along with raising money.

As mentioned above, there might be small microgrants that can fund your project. Often you will need to submit a budget and a small proposal or application to get these funds. Important here is that you will need to be connected to a 501c(3) organization in order to receive money through a granting process. Also important to note, is that you will often need to send in a report after you have completed your project. This will often include a narrative of your project as well as a financial report of how the money was used.

For now, we're going to focus on grassroots fundraising. You can think of grassroots fundraising as a form of organizing your community! Movements have long been funded by communities, families, friends, places of worship, and NOT large foundations for a long time.

Asking your networks and communities for money might be really scary. Money can be a scary thing to talk about, and it's likely that you have messy feelings about money. **When you are excited about what you believe in, others will be too.**

When fundraising on social media, using pictures or video is more likely to catch attention and asking for small amounts of money (10\$- 15\$) is usually best and doable for people.

It is important to be cautious about handling large amounts of money if you are not connected or a part of a nonprofit. Remember the IRS exists and if large amounts of money are passing through your bank account, they could want to investigate. Refer to Dean Spades' money management resources at Big Door Brigade to learn more about money management.

## Resources

- 9 Principles of Community Centric Fundraising
- Grassroots Fundraising Guide
- The Revolution Will Not Be Funded
- Big Door Brigade





**action: /'akSH(ə)n/  
the process of doing something,  
typically to accomplish a goal.**

THERE ARE MANY COMPONENTS TO TAKING ACTION WITH OUR COMMUNITY. SOME OF THE ROLES WE OFTEN SEE IN THESE MOMENTS ARE: LEGAL ADVISERS, DEFENDANT SUPPORT, STREET MEDICS, MEDIA STRATEGISTS, ACTION LIAISONS, AND MUTUAL AID ORGANIZERS.

There are many different types of actions that we take while organizing with our community: When our community experiences state repression, we take a personal action by checking in with ourselves and each other, and holding space for one another. When we agree on an issue, we take collective action and make plans together. Sometimes this means going to the streets to march and mourn, sometimes this means gathering somewhere together.

Before and after the protest:

There are multiple ways we can prepare alongside our community to take action together. We can chat about our needs and about our ideas and share strategies with each other. We can cook together and learn about our different experiences and thoughts. We can talk about necessary things like worst case scenarios and how to or how not to talk to the police. We can also incorporate processes of care and accountability into our organizing, to ensure that we do not project our trauma or internalized violence onto one another.

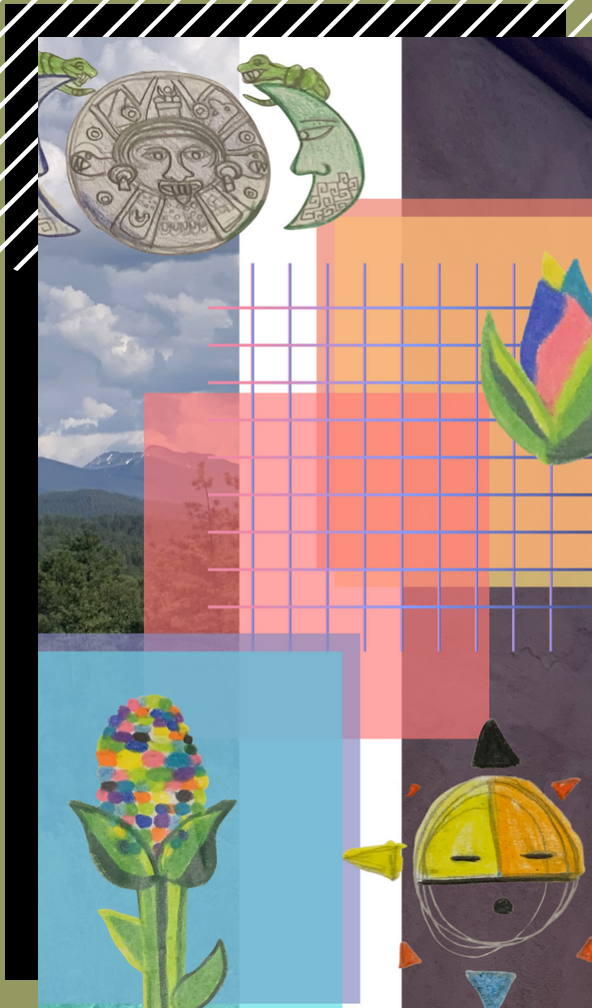
After an action it is always good to reflect and have a time of rest. We cannot expect ourselves to sustain enduring the violence of state repression especially because this heightens our risk of surveillance. As grassroots and autonomous organizations and groups we have little resources, and we have to think strategically on how we are to use them. Bail funds and pouring our resources into the state is not a sustainable solution, but it is sometimes necessary when taking strategic action towards our oppressors.

Direct Actions and Frontlines are spaces that can be preyed upon by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Non Profits. Frontlines are attractive to 501c3 status organizations because they provide an opportunity for the organization to appear as if it has a hand in social change, while extracting the labour and resources of grassroots youth who have the kinetic energy to create social change. NGOs are often the barrier preventing the catalyzation of radical action as they seek to liberalize and neutralize organic rage and creativity. Community organizers should be wary of external organizations invading frontline spaces.

Action is a necessary part of creating change. Action does not always look the same, it takes many forms. It is important to be intentional and strategic about the actions we take and to clearly outline our goals. For example a goal could be to cost the company as much money as possible thus giving them financial incentive to abandon their project or it could get as much publication as possible. We must not aim to be confined within the scope of respectability politics and remember that as Indigenous people resisting colonialism, our ancestors have always been anti-fascist, anti-resource extraction, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist.







# meeting facilitation

MEETINGS, AND OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATIONS, ARE OFTEN WHERE DECISIONS ARE MADE, ACTIONS DECIDED, WHERE TRAUMA IS SHARED, WHERE CONFLICTS ARISE. THIS IS A STARTING PLACE TO LEARN ABOUT HOW TO PLAN AND FACILITATE A MEETING.

If your group has decided to have a meeting, which is an important starting place, make sure folks have agreed there is a need to meet and have decided on a date and time, it usually helps to have a general or loose agenda. An agenda can be a detailed outline of the meetings, it can be talking points, it can be questions posed, you and all the attendants should know what the purpose of the meeting is, and what should come out of the meeting. An agenda can look like anything, it can be on a Google Doc, a notepad. It is nice to share the agenda with participants before and at the meeting so they know the overall flow of the meeting.

A meeting may be a place to catch up or share stories, and may not necessarily need an end time. However, often it's important to have general intentions on when the meeting ends, this honors our individual and collective capacity, sets boundaries, and encourages people to be succinct in their talking points.

As meetings are often places to make decisions as a group, it is important to have clear guidelines and understandings of consensus. If your group operates on full consensus (every member in your group must agree) make sure to hear from every person, ask those who haven't spoken if they would like to share their thoughts, and allow for silence so people can speak up in disagreement if they want. If you are meeting digitally, such as Zoom, ask people to express agreement or disagreement in the chat, using Zoom reaction, or by coming off mute. If you are facilitating the meeting and making a decision, it is your role to make space for discussion and come to an agreement before moving the group to the next agenda item. To decrease flakiness and create accountability and follow through on action items, someone at the end of the meeting can summarize the meeting and verbalize next steps and key decisions made.



## What type of facilitator are you?

Depending on what type of organizing space you are in, meeting facilitation may be a big part of your role as an organizer. If that is the case for you, this will hopefully give you some insight of facilitation.

Everyone can choose the style of facilitation they like the most. Some facilitators are funny, some are super chill, some are very visually minded with presentations. As you begin to facilitate meetings you will likely find the type of facilitator that fits the best. However, no matter what type of facilitator you are, we want to talk about the role silence plays in meetings.

Especially in digital spaces, silence in a meeting can be uncomfortable and awkward. However, silence is okay and it is important especially when talking through traumatic or vulnerable moments. Silence allows people to think and digest information, and it can honor the experience that was just shared. As a facilitator, you get to choose to emphasize moments of silence.

The role of the facilitator is to make space for participants to engage in conversation, tension, and silence. It is your role to invite each person to speak if you notice a couple folks are speaking more than others. You are not the “leader” in this sense, you are guiding people through a conversation.

## Resources

- Training for Change Facilitation Tools
- Facilitation in Motion



# towards liberation: jaiden willetto

YÁ'ÁT'ÉÉH, SHI ÉÍYÁ TÓDICH'ÍINII  
NISHĹÍ, MAII DEESHGHIZHNII  
BASHISHCHIIIN, NUETA HIDATSA  
DASHICHEII, TÁBAAHÍ DASHINALÍ. HELLO  
RELATIVES, I AM BITTER WATER, BORN  
FOR COYOTE PASS, AND MY MATERNAL  
GRANDFATHER IS NUETA AND HIDATSA  
OF THE WATER BUSTER CLAN AND MY  
PATERNAL GRANDFATHER IS WATERS  
EDGE.

My Hidatsa name is Mawúa ídahga (dragonfly) which was given to me by my auntie to represent my roots in the south and in the north and my responsibility to the lands and waters there. My auntie was presented with my name in ceremony as a vision of solidarity amongst relatives in the North and South. I have Indigenous roots in Dinétah (Diné Territory) so-called Arizona as well as Nueta Hidatsa lands in so-called North Dakota. I am both rooted and fluid in time and space and I cannot be severed from my ties to the land and water that made me. I am a queer femme but these words cannot fully describe an Indigenous perspective of gender or sexuality, my gender is both ancient and sacred.

I am the Indigenous youth fellow 2021-2022 for Uplift Climate. Not only are we striving for Land Back and an end to settler colonial violence in all that it entails, we strive to uphold the healthy and dignified lives of all relatives in the struggle. My comrades at Uplift have reminded me the importance of organizing in non-hierarchical ways and that we cannot subject each other to the same forms of abuse of power and status quo that this society operates in.





We have to organize collectively and with everyone's capacity in mind and with accountability processes for ourselves and each other. We make sure the work is done but we give each other the support to know that we are not machines and we cannot keep putting our own mental health and physical and spiritual selves on the backburner. We have to show up as our whole selves for community and remember that capitalism was made to keep us apart and **burning ourselves out for productivity will not aid in our liberation.** It is important as a youth to have comrades that will help guide you to your collective liberation. Personally, I could name many in the movement that gave me resources to books, articles, websites, included me in reading groups and discussion, and also provided the space to grow a critical political analysis. This is the power of solidarity and kinship, these are our weapons that we must use in order to slay the monsters that live amongst us and inside us. These monsters are capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism, heteropatriarchy, just to name a few. We can use tools of mutual aid, land caretaking, community organizing, direct action, and solidarity to build a revolutionary struggle to achieve liberation and autonomy not only here in the southwest, but everywhere.

I am also a farmer, mother, and auntie. My caretaking skills take on many levels from animal relatives like sheep, horses, pigs, and chickens, to plant relatives and the soil in which provides the nutrients for the plants and our bodies and the land again in constant cycles of reciprocity. This is kinship that has been passed down for millennia, in Diné we call this K'é. K'é is the overarching philosophy of the Diné people; it is the complex system of interconnectedness between humans and the universe. Diné philosophies and their complexities cannot be described in its entirety using colonial language, but because we are a colonized people it is necessary not to gate-keep information if we want to still have our kinship systems in place during an imminent crisis.

If I have learned anything in the past few years it is that **there is opportunity in crisis** and we can heal ourselves to show up better in the community. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic myself and my comrades at the K'é infoshop and community volunteers worked to provide food boxes for families affected by the COVID crisis. The K'é infoshop had built up a food bank over the year and had been doing mutual aid even before the pandemic started and so we were set to begin pandemic relief efforts and immediately distributed all our supplies in two weeks. After gaining more donations and a regular food drop off we were able to provide enough food for families for two weeks and we did this entirely voluntarily and risked our lives collectively to ensure that our people's material needs were met. Whether they needed water, food, medicine, cleaning supplies, and other necessities we made sure our community was taken care of. We did this without support from our own tribal government and on our own terms. This was a great feeling of autonomy and what we could get done if we came together collectively to practice kinship rooted in anticapitalism and anticolonialism. We prioritized elders, single parents, children, and unsheltered kin because we know that they are the most marginalized, and disposed of under capitalism and settler colonialism. Mutual aid is important to our autonomy and so our community can thrive without dependence on the settler-colonial state. We cannot let mutual aid be a bandaid fix. We need to continue striving for sustainable community practices of skill-sharing and refuse the charity model and remember that we do this **in solidarity not charity.**

I have been focusing a lot of my studies not only on revolutionary theory but land caretaking as well and how to be a better relative to the earth during a time of climate crisis. This summer we continued to see a record drought, record high temperatures, and a less than adequate monsoon season.



We had more water than the previous summer but it did not give us as much as we would need to reverse climate change. It is obvious that no settler colonial government can mitigate the climate crisis. The world's biggest so-called climate scientists can't even name the real reasons why our climate is in crisis and we are on a straight shot to all over catastrophe. We cannot let this news or reactionary politics lead us to despair. We need to turn to kinship and ignite the flame of revolution in all those around us.

I want to remind youth everywhere that now is the time to listen to those who have the knowledge necessary to liberate ourselves and our communities and develop and share skills to live autonomously. Be united in struggle always, make comrades across the world living in the struggle and this will make us unstoppable in the eyes of the oppressor. Lean on your ancestors courage and prayers and songs sung to ensure the livelihood of our generations and look to the future for this hopefulness and look to the past for that medicine to keep going. I look to those fierce femme revolutionaries who have paved the way for the resistance to keep growing and I learned that now more than ever in these unprecedented times we have the chance to change our worlds.



# glossary + acknowledgments

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## About Uplift:

This is a zine put together by Uplift, a youth-led climate justice organization in the so-called Southwest. We are a small organization led, as of 2021, by a small team of young adults living in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. We are Indigenous, immigrants, femmes, women, and striving for a land and world free of colonial systems, extraction, borders, police, and all forms of oppression.

Uplift hosts summer and year-long fellowship programs, we run webinar series and digital convergences, create media, such as zines, and support young people organizing in their community. You can find tons of webinars and digital workshops on our YouTube channel, and can check out our Instagram @uplift\_climate to see what else we are up to.

## Glossary:

Settler-colonialism: A form of colonialism that seeks to replace the Indigenous peoples of the land with a new society of settlers.

NPIC: The non-profit industrial complex (or the NPIC) is a system of relationships between, the State (or local and federal governments), the owning classes, foundations, and non-profit/NGO social service & social justice organizations that results in the surveillance, control, derailment, and everyday management of political movements.

The State: A nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government. For example, Mexico is a state, the United States is a state.

The Ivory Towers: Often meaning college, academia, or university.

Co-optation: A taking over or appropriation of something for a new or different purpose.

