

April Showers Brings May Power



Seri Lee, Deputy Organizing Director

onenorthside.org/

@ONENorthside   

ONE Northside

ORGANIZING NEIGHBORHOODS FOR EQUALITY



ONE Northside envisions a diverse, united North Side of Chicago acting powerfully for our shared values of racial, social, and economic justice. We are building a future where everyone in our neighborhoods has the opportunity to thrive.

Our communities: Rogers Park, Edgewater, West Ridge, Uptown, Ravenswood, North Center, Lakeview, & Lincoln Park.

We are mixed-income, multi-ethnic, and intergenerational.

THE CONDITIONS

- **The U.S. is no longer a democracy.**
- **The checks and balances that we had taken for granted have been undermined.**
- **The role of the tech sector is a factor in this executive coup in a way that few of us prepared for.**
- **We have a fragmented pro-democracy civil society space.**

WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE

The likeliest path is **electoral autocracy**, or what some call **competitive authoritarianism**.

The worst-case scenario (but *not* the likeliest) is something more consolidated, moving beyond electoral autocracy and into **full fascism**.

THE PREMISE FOR THIS TRAINING

- **What got us here won't get us there.**
- **We need to move with urgency in the short-term while building for the long-term.**
- **We do not all need the same strategy, but we do need a shared analysis so we can have *aligned strategies*.**
- **All of our organizations have something to offer and have different strengths to bring to the effort that will bolster the whole.**

THEORY OF CHANGE

If authoritarian consolidation is to be stopped, millions of people must move from scattered resistance to disciplined, mass non-cooperation.

Our role is to help make that possible by advancing three interlocking strategies:

INTERLOCKING STRATEGIES

1. Impose costs on authoritarian consolidation through **noncooperation** and **united campaigns**.
2. Harness civic participation and mass mobilizations beyond just elections by advancing **popular demands**.
3. Define and defend red lines by **preparing our people** for action when they are crossed.



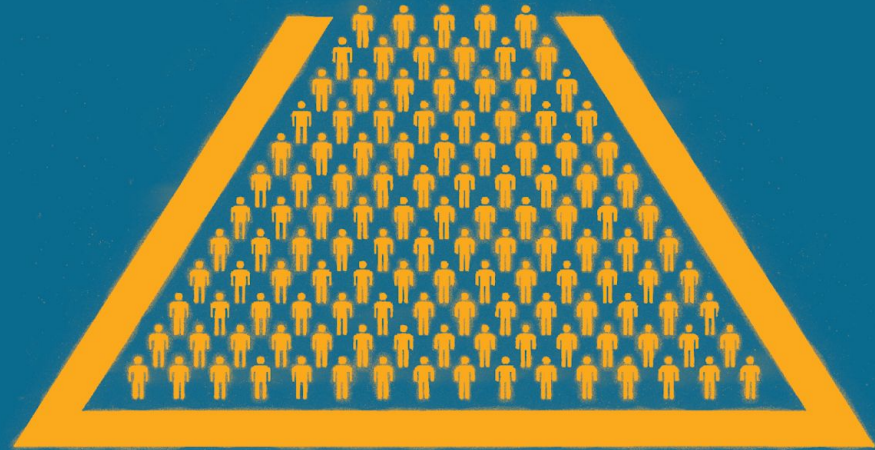
Movements, protest movements, defiant movements, movements that break the rules, are the main lever, the main weapon, that ordinary people have in realizing their aspirations and protecting their democratic rights.

Frances Fox Piven

Two Views of Power



Monolithic Power



Social Power



**The most common way people
give up their power is by thinking
they don't have any.**

Alice Walker

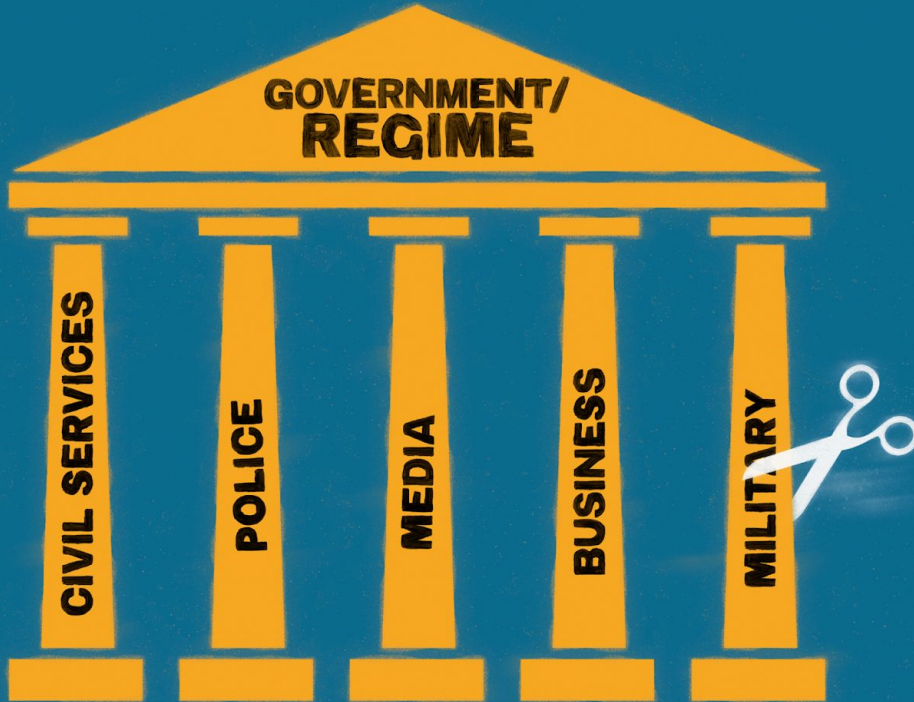
**It's our job as organizers to create
conditions for people to feel that power**

**When we see the world through a social view of power,
and organize people in large enough numbers, we can
stop institutions from functioning.**

**Rulers cannot rule. Bosses can't turn a profit.
Decision-makers can't carry out their decisions.**

This is mass noncooperation.

PILLARS OF SUPPORT



Instead of conceptualizing power as flowing from the top down, **Pillars of Support** shows that the power of the state is upheld by institutions, without which the status quo would collapse.



How do we uphold the pillars?

Labor

Working for industries that provide vital services to the state, industries run by oligarchs, or businesses that cooperate with government policies.



Money

Paying taxes, purchasing goods or services from companies that comply with the state.



Participation

Obeying laws that are unjust, going about business as usual (i.e. going to school or church, consuming media, etc.), living a normal life even in abnormal times.



THE BILLIONAIRE PLAYBOOK

✓
Cut Essential Services

✓
Attack Workers & Dismantle Government

✓
Steal Our Personal Data

✓
Attack Immigrants to Increase Detention & Incarceration

✓
Increase Violence using Police, ICE, Military, Tech



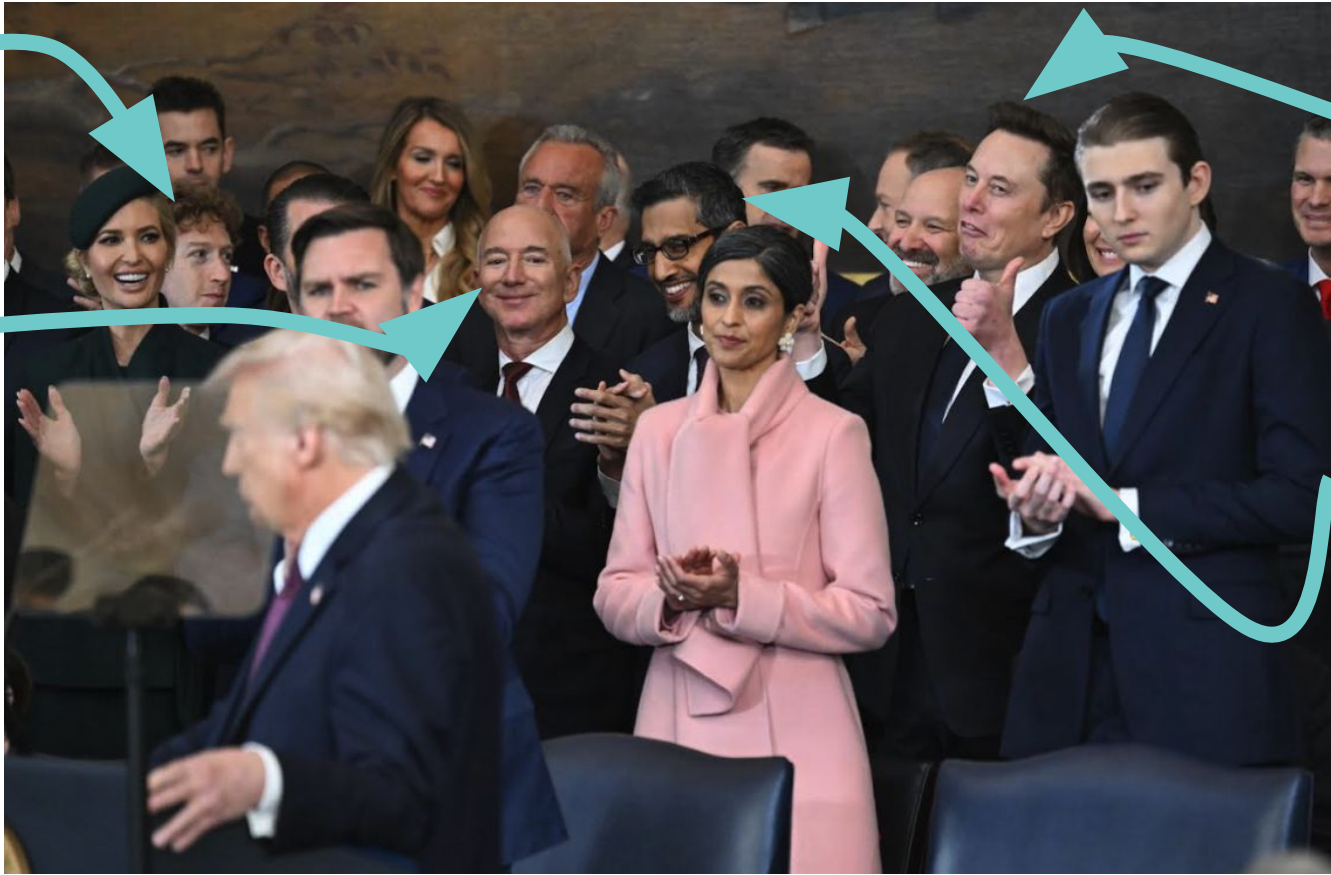
NEOLIBERALISM BREEDS + NEEDS INEQUALITY

- Corporations should be freed from taxes & regulation.
- Government and public services should be cut
- Worker and union power should be weakened
- Republicans and Democrats believe in neoliberalism
- Profit over People: Everything has a profit motive, even education, healthcare, “national security”



WHO PAYS THE PRICE?

- Why are you working harder for less money?
- Why do you think everything so expensive?
- Why do elected leaders not listen to what the people want?



Mark
Zuckerberg,
CEO of Meta

Jeff Bezos,
CEO of Amazon

Elon Musk,
CEO of Tesla and
SpaceX

Sundar
Pichai
CEO of Google

The cost of living crisis is real. Our feelings of division have been manufactured.



“One Big Beautiful Bill” (for Billionaires)

Believed to be the **largest transfer of wealth** from the poor to the rich in a single law in U.S. history.

What Billionaires' Wealth Costs Us

Billionaires Behind the Curtain



"I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible."

- **Peter Thiel, Palantir Co-founder**



"I don't believe all cultures are equal... I am saying this nation is incredibly special, and we should not view it as equal, we should view it as superior."

- **Alex Karp, Palantir CEO**



"Without me, Trump would have lost"

- **Elon Musk**



What is authoritarianism?

Concentration of power in the hands of a small group of people who act in ways that are not constitutionally accountable and who maintain that power through repression and threats or acts of violence.

- A concerted effort by a network of organizations and institutions to legitimize an oppressive system
- The misuse of the power of the state to advance personal and/or partisan desires
- Often emerges “legally,” by democratically elected leaders who subvert democratic norms and institutions
- A slow and quiet advance over a period of years where small battles weaken the foundations of democracy



QUESTIONS ABOUT USE OF TEAR GAS
DURING CONFRONTATION IN LITTLE VILLAGE

What authoritarians do:



**Direct
Investigations
Against Critics**

**Deploy Military
Domestically**



**Give License to
Lawbreaking**

**Federal Law
Enforcement
Overreach**



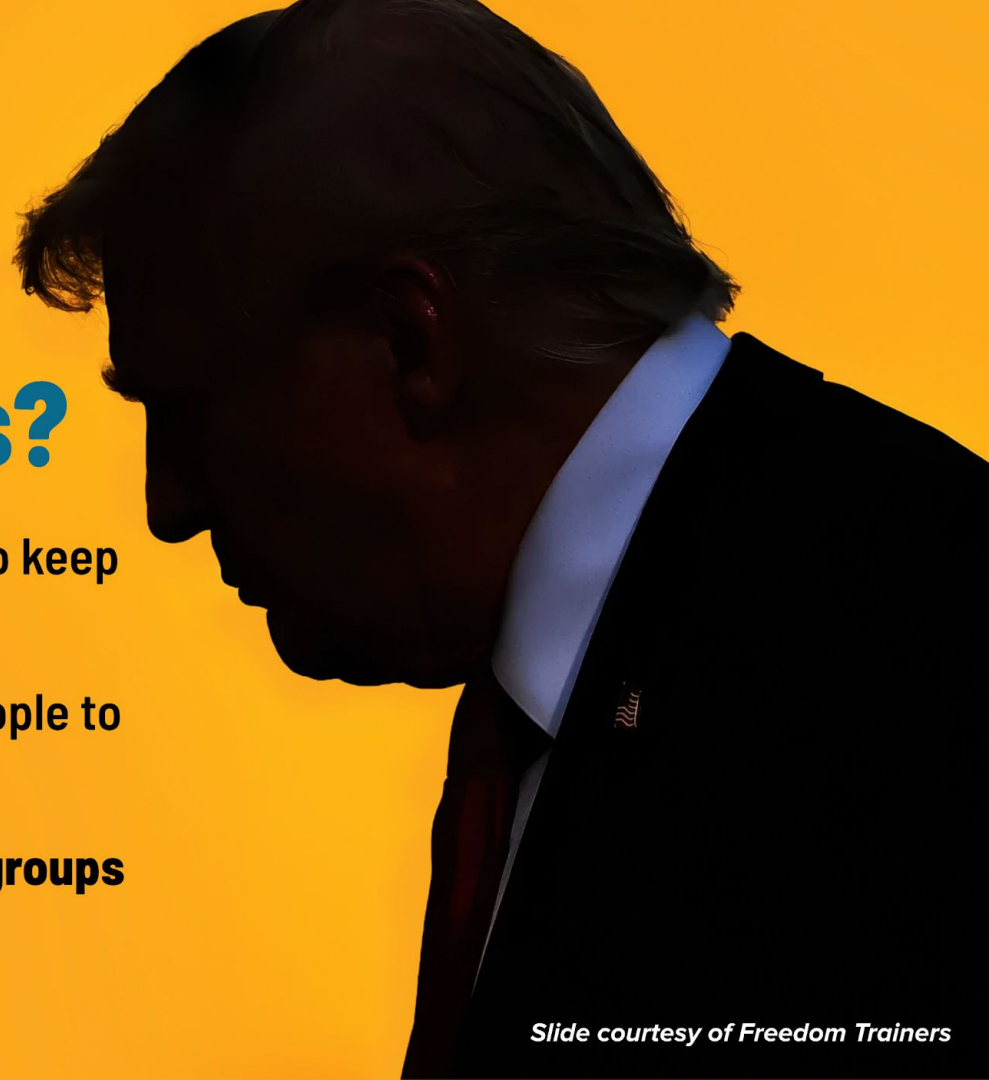
**Regulatory
Retaliation**

**The Autocrat Won't
Leave**



What to expect from **authoritarians?**

- They will stoke **fear and chaos** to keep us off-balance.
- They will make threats to get people to **obey in advance**.
- They will weaponize **fear of subgroups** to keep us divided and apart.



Authoritarians take advantage of inequality and deeply felt grievances in the public related to inequality.

We need to advance an agenda that addresses those grievances better than the authoritarians do.



Credit: United Farm Workers strike in Delano
[Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons](#)



The most successful organizing efforts in anti-democratic conditions in the U.S. translated public grievances into an ambitious agenda for economic and political democracy.

“The 4 D’s”

Delegitimization

Disruption



Defections

Develop alternatives



Noncooperation

Nonviolent action that undermines the authority of an unjust system by refusing to comply with it, disrupting it, and imposing costs on those who uphold it, therefore making it impossible for the system to keep its unfair policy.



Mutual aid becomes
lifeline as ICE fears keep
Minneapolis family inside

Types of Nonviolent Action

Protest

Persuading elites to
make decisions

Examples:

- Marches and rallies
- Street theater
- Petition drives
- Group lobbying
- Symbolic direct actions,
i.e. protesters chained to doors
of an institution still functioning

Noncooperation

Preventing elites from
continuing business as usual

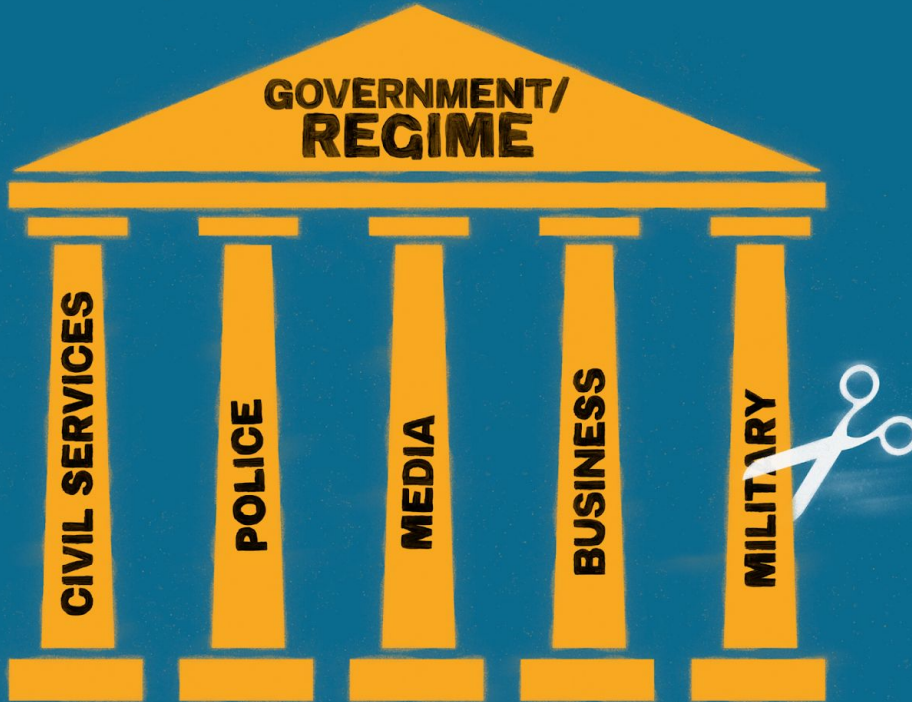
Examples:

- Worker strikes
- Boycotts
- Rent strikes
- Tax refusal
- Jury objections
- Alternative Systems,
i.e. Breakfast program

All authority ultimately derives from the consent of the governed, and therefore when consent is withdrawn on a mass scale, authority can lose its power.

Consent can be participation, labor, money, votes, and even silent obedience.

PILLARS OF SUPPORT



Our job is to chip away at pillars, cause them to crack, and ultimately topple!

Categories of Noncooperation

Social Noncooperation

Social noncooperation means people stop doing normal social things that support unfair leaders.

For example, shunning officials or elites, sex strikes, suspension of sports activities.

Political Noncooperation

Political noncooperation means people refuse to follow the rules or systems of the government.

For example, delaying paying taxes or not listening to unjust or unlawful orders.

Economic Noncooperation

Economic noncooperation is when people stop giving money or work to those in power.

For example, boycotts, labor strikes, rent strikes, and the alternative systems that enable us to sustain them.

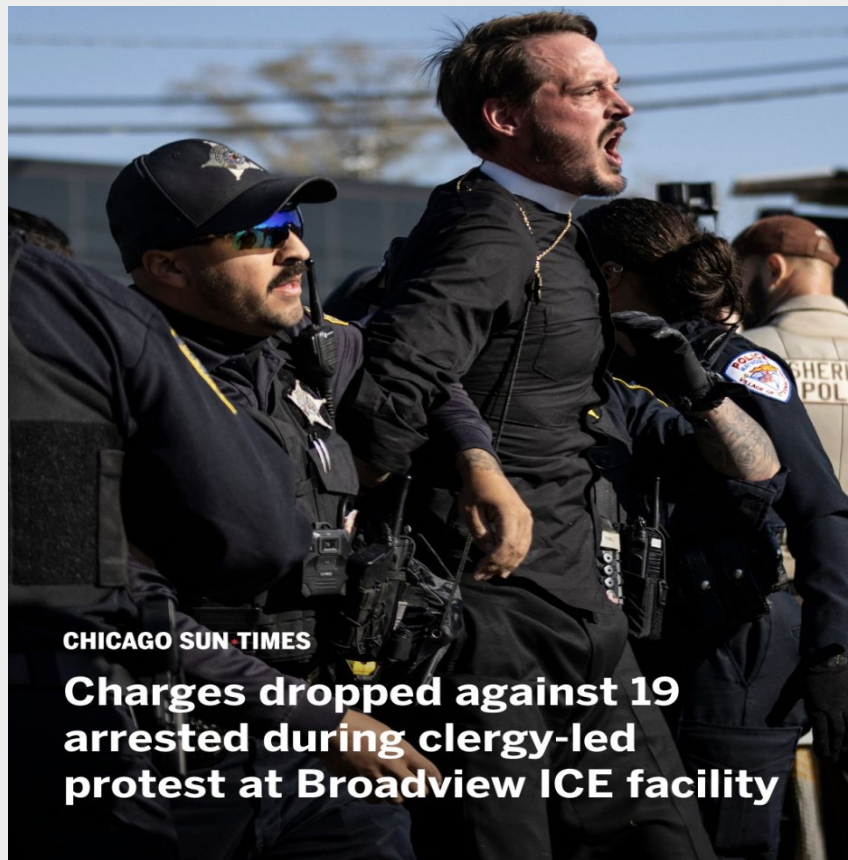
SOCIAL OSTRACISM



**Chicago Just Named A
Snowplow 'Abolish ICE'**

Block Club Chicago

REFUSING TO COMPLY



CHICAGO SUN TIMES

**Charges dropped against 19
arrested during clergy-led
protest at Broadview ICE facility**

Slide courtesy of Freedom Trainers

REFUSING TO BUY


M The Mashable 101 Creator Hub Tech Science Life Social Good Entertainment Deals Shopping

Home > Life > Digital Culture

Disney reportedly lost 1.7 million subscribers during Kimmel's suspension

Many people cancelled their Disney+, Hulu, and ESPN accounts in protest.

By [Amanda Yeo](#) on September 30, 2025 [f](#) [X](#) [v](#)



Credit: Mario Tama / Getty Images



REFUSING TO WORK



Why do people **obey**?

- **Fear of loss:** there are material repercussions for people's lives.
- **Fear of the state:** revoking of benefits, housing, work papers.
- **Economic necessity.**
- **Habit.** We are just used to it.
- **Moral obligation.** A lot of us are used to obeying authority.
- **Self interest.** We hope it'll work out for *us* — even knowing it may be bad for others.
- **Psychological or emotional identification with the ruler.**
- **Conditioning to indifference.** We just don't care.
- **Absence of connectivity to a collective.** Going it alone is scary.

Levels of Noncooperation

**Individual &
Small Group
Noncooperation**

**Collective
Noncooperation**

**Mass
Noncooperation**

Mass noncooperation looks like:

- ***Millions* who previously bought products all agree to boycott a single company.**
- ***Millions* call out sick on the same day.**
- ***Hundreds of thousands* of students refuse to go to school.**



Slide courtesy of Freedom Trainers



Structure Tests

are actions that tell us how many people are willing to act with us.

They are activities that give us data about who we have and who we still need to get, so that by the time we call for an action with real disruption costs, we know we have the numbers to deliver.

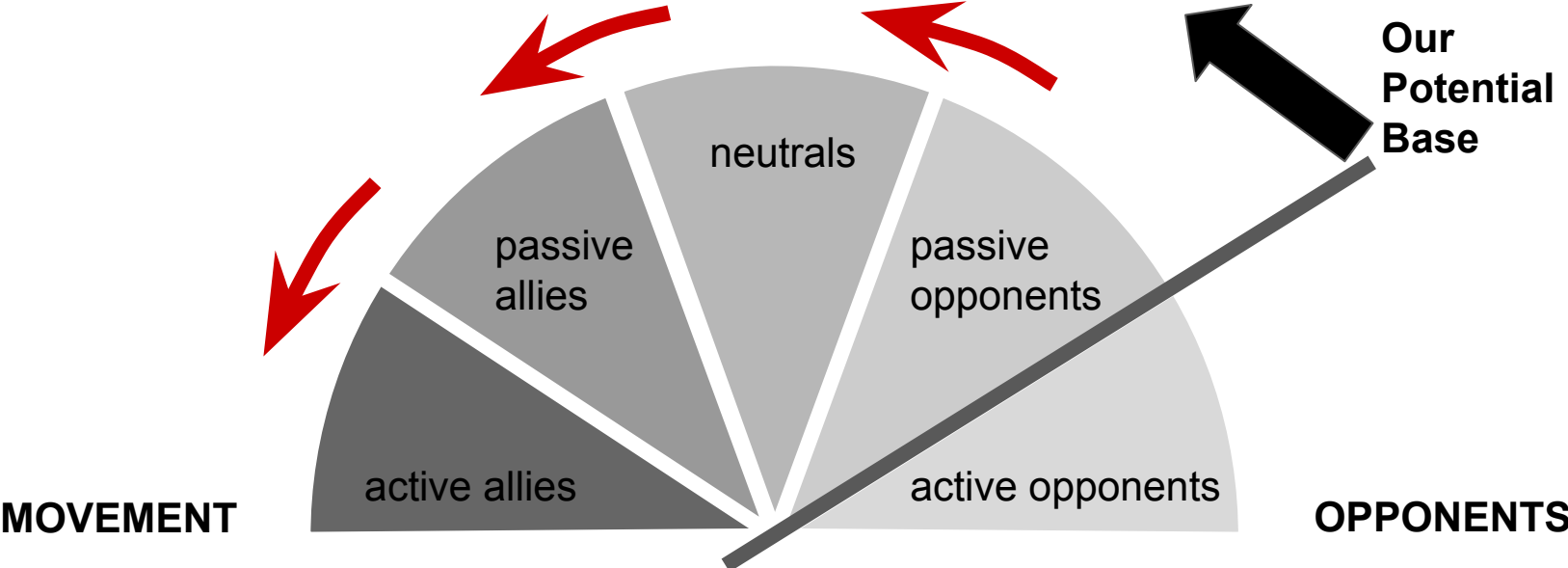
Structure Tests Prepare Us For Mass Noncooperation



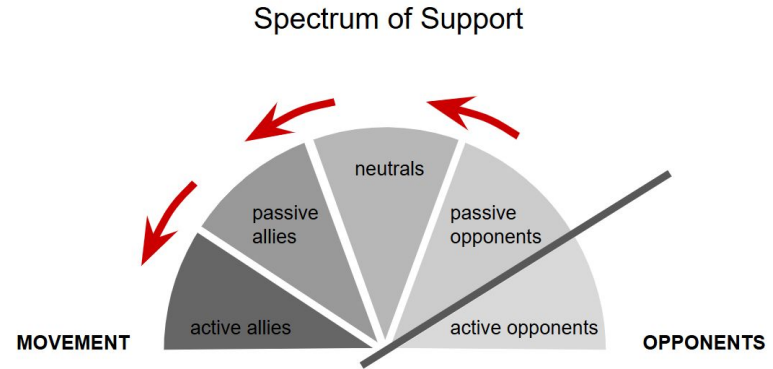
What is Base Building?

- **Base building is an intentional practice for recruitment, retention, and leadership development into and in your organizations. Base building is about scale and depth, and is a constant practice.**
- **Base building is not just about getting more people or turnout to individual actions, but expanding our capacity and power (i.e. the ability to disrupt business as usual by imposing economic and political costs).**
- **Requires us to go beyond the “usual suspects.” Also requires us to listen and change our plans as we bring in more people.**

Spectrum of Support: **Assessing** Our Strength



- **Active support:** People who are taking action.
 - Looks like: donating; attending a protest/marching/non-cooperating; attending a training, public meeting, open campaign call; recruiting or persuading other
- **Passive support:** People who are on your side but are not taking action.
 - Looks like: polling positively on your issue; liking a social media post, etc. Could also be people who agree with the issue but not the tactic.
- **Neutral:** People with no position on your issue.
 - Looks like: asking for more info; saying the issue is too complicated; sharing they never thought about it
- **Passive opposition:** People who passively oppose your issue but aren't doing anything about it.
 - Looks like: someone liking a meme against your issue that doesn't have much context
- **Active opposition:** People who are actively working against the issue and/or the movement.
 - Looks like: donating to, working for an org against your issue; attending a rally; persuading or recruiting others to join their side



**ENERGIZE
THE BASE**

**MOVE THE
MIDDLE**

**ISOLATE THE
OPPOSITION**

REDLINES

A redline is where power has clearly gone too far. They are opportunities for politicization, polarization, and mass action.

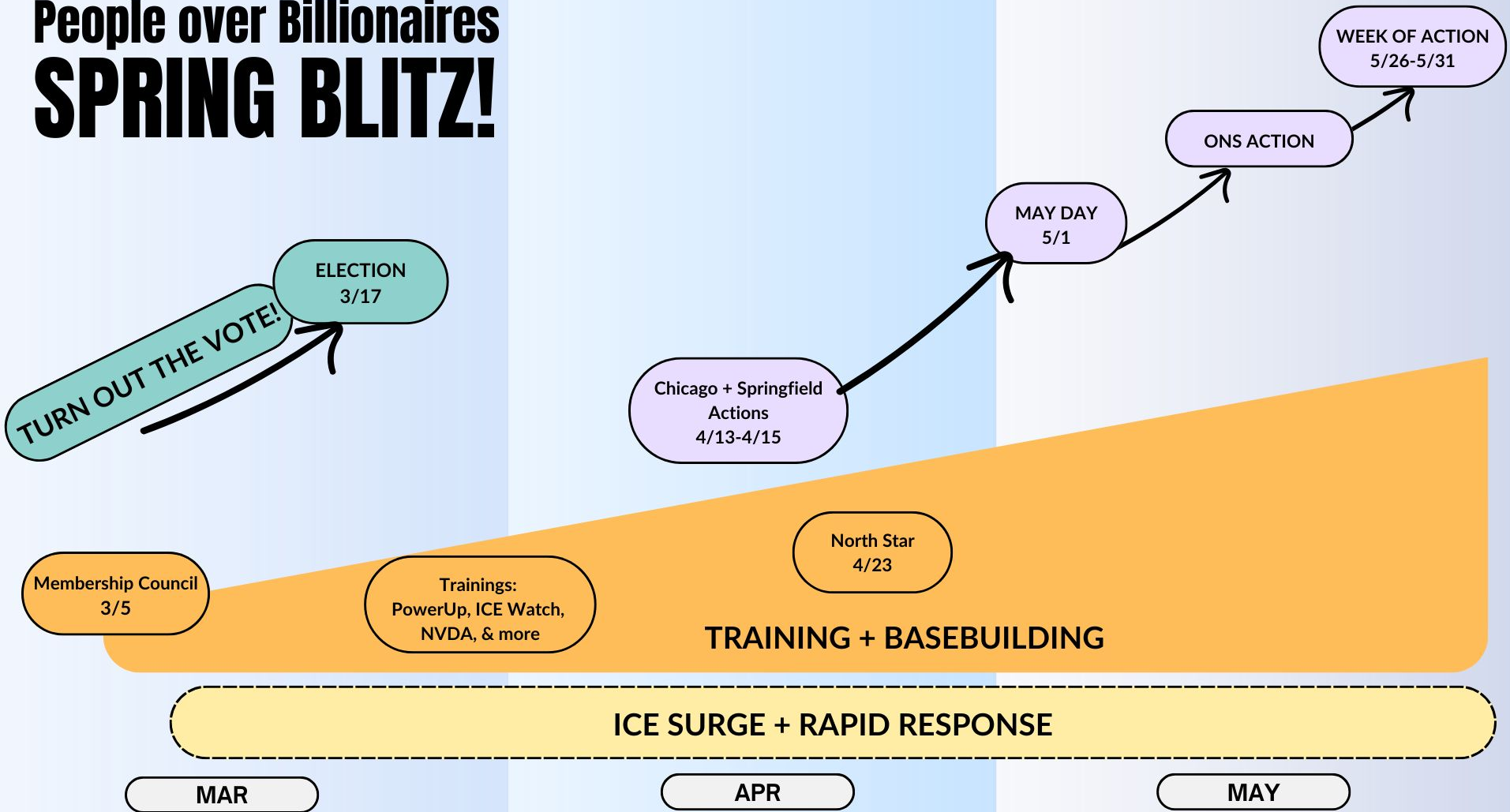
Redlines are moments that can shock the conscience and activate people – and MOVE THE MIDDLE – but only if we're already organizing and agitating.

What are some examples of red lines that have already happened this year?

Some potential **red lines** :

- **Overriding a Supreme Court ruling**
- **Forcibly enacting the executive order revoking birthright citizenship**
- **Implementing an executive order that criminalizes "Anti-American speech"**
- **Abandoning people after a climate catastrophe**
- **Cutting public benefits (housing, healthcare, food) for millions of people**

People over Billionaires SPRING BLITZ!



has No
orders
ism and Liberation.org

DECEASED
MAY 1ST COALITION

MANANA
VOTAMOS

LEGALIZATION
NOW!
MAY 1ST COALITION
WWW.MAY1STCOALITION.COM

NOT MARCHAMOS
MAÑANA VOTAMOS

WORLD CAN'T WAIT
DRIVE OUT
THE BUSH REGIME

IMMEDIATE LEGALIZATION
FOR ALL UNDEPORTED
NO LUDY
NO CRIMINALIZATION OF
PEOPLE
DEMILITARIZATION OF THE
BORDER
CIVIL RIGHTS AND
CIVIL LIBERTIES FOR ALL
MAY 1ST COALITION

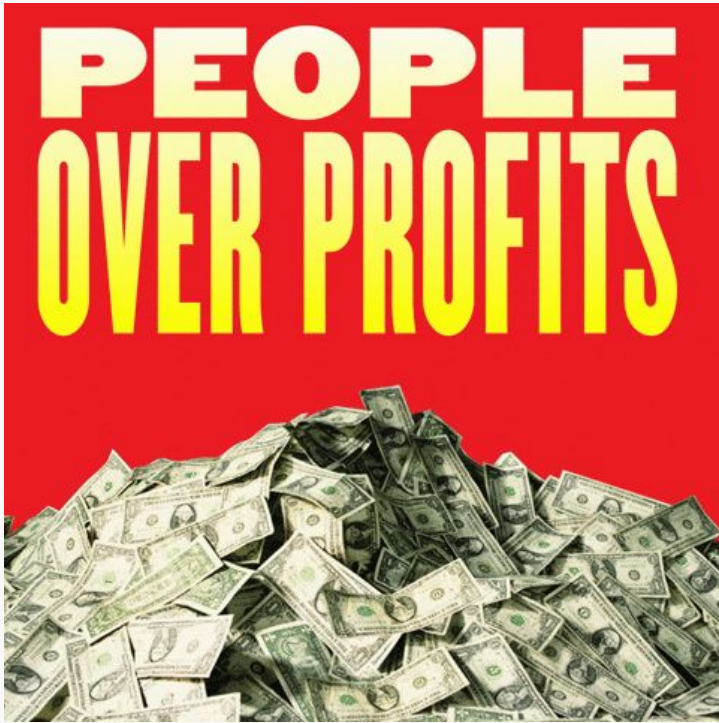
MUNDO NO PUEDE ESPERAR
¡SACAR CORRIENDO
al GOBIERNO
de BUSH

MUNDO NO PUEDE ESPERAR
¡SACAR CORRIENDO
al GOBIERNO
de BUSH

HOY
MARCHAMOS
MAÑANA
VOTAMOS

USA IS A NATION
OF IMMIGRANTS

May Day Demands



- Tax the rich! Our families, not their fortunes, come first.
- No ICE, no war!
- Defend & expand democracy, not corporate rule!

onenorthside.org/taxtherich

What reasons will people give us for not participating in a day of No Work, No School, No Shopping?



Overcoming Obstacles

- **Listen to what they want to win, protect, or change.**
 - Your priority may not be their top issue.
 - People often tell us what's important to them if we really listen to their objection.
 - Look for reasons to organize in their excuses for not getting involved.
- **Challenge them.**
 - Change requires conflict.
 - People can handle it when they feel respected.
 - Go back to their issues. You are challenging them because you want them to win.
- **Show that we're not going to give up on them.**
 - We don't go from uninvolved to leading rallies in a day.
 - Organizing is not a single conversation or event.
 - People take you more seriously when you go back to them after they've already told you no.

Feel, Felt, Found

I understand, you FEEL like _____

- Show that you are listening to them. Let them know that you aren't dismissing their concern.

I FELT the same way when...

- Validate their concern and that they are not alone.
- Tell a story. What similar experience have you had (or seen others work through)?
- Try to say the feeling that they might not be directly saying

...but by getting involved, I FOUND that _____.

- Instead of telling them they are wrong for having concerns: Why should they get involved despite the objection?

May Day Organizing Convo + Demo

1. Intro: Defining the current moment and why it matters to you.
2. Agitate: Ask questions and listen - What is their redline?
3. Vision: We can win if we disrupt business as usual.
4. Ask: Invite them to take action with you on May 1st.

Few other thoughts...

- We're not going to get hundreds of thousands to stay away from work/school/shopping through one on one convos alone – but they are important to build momentum. Think about winning over key sectors/institutions/organizations.
- Mass meetings can turn one on one organizing into broader momentum and give people confidence – think about how to incorporate that in your build up.
- Risk levels are real (i.e. race, status, non-union, etc.). But we've also seen that there is safety in numbers and people with higher levels of risk will throw down like anyone else, especially when there is momentum.

Practice

- **Get into groups of 3**
- **Take a minute and write down the name of a person in your workplace, school, neighborhood, organization, family, etc. who you want to organize to take part in May Day 2026. Write down 1 or 2 objections that they might have.**
- **Everyone in the group will have about 3 minutes to practice the organizing rap. Someone else in the group will be the person you are organizing. Let them know what objections you wrote down.**
- **When I call time, switch to the next person practicing.**

Debrief / Reflections



Next Steps

- Sign the pledge: [onenorthside.org/ taxtherich](https://onenorthside.org/taxtherich)
- [Count Me In](#) !
- ONE Northside orientation on Mon, May 4, 6-7pm at the ONE Northside office (4750 N Sheridan, Ste 200): register [here](#).