

Making Your Voice Heard: People's Town Hall Event 1.27.22

- Denver: Intros, pronouns explainer, land acknowledgement
- Adam: Who We Are
 - PTH was formed while Des Moines was coming out of the George Floyd protests in 2020. We were working outside of the system. PTH was formed with the goal of creating something better for the people of Des Moines by working collectively and building community solutions for community problems.
- What we do: (also Adam)
 - Direct actions and community events. One example is the action on Bill Gray's lawn during the "Save Our Stadiums" special meeting.
 - Council coverage: clarifying confusing rules and rule changes, turning folks out to meetings, contacting and documenting council's bullshit, connecting people to other projects.
- Molly: Newsletter plug: join the newsletter crew! We're looking to accurately cover council meetings, communicate people's issues, and call people to action and call attention to mutual aid opportunities.
- Paden: PTH Milestones/Timeline
 - August 2020: fight against 90K worth of ammo purchased for STAR, 14 hour meeting
 - September: council changes procedural rules to limit public comment, rules ultimately result in ridiculousness like 20 second speaking times
 - June 2021: First in-person council meeting, "Defund DMPD" banner.
 - July-August: multiple arrests at council meetings.
 - November: PTH endorses candidates, Indira wins.
 - Jan 22: 6 members of council amend rules to limit input from Indira and the public.
- What can we do outside of the system? (Also Paden)
 - We've tried working within the system - and the government has shown they aren't interested. We showed up on the streets, they told us to come to council meetings. We came to council meetings, they told us to get someone elected. We got someone elected, they work to silence her.
 - Examples of working outside of the system: creating our own, truly democratic process to make decisions and come up with solutions, like the People's Council. Mutual aid can help us not have to rely on the system.
- Brainstorming session: building outside our community
 - Why is our system failing?

- What can we do to build up our community?
 - The People's Council - the people represent themselves.
- Luke: Is there someone above city council who can oversee them?
 - Paden: higher forms of government, law enforcement are also perpetrating the same problems and share the same interests as council.
- Sylvia: Bring in council members to speak to us.
- Monika: resources we can reach out to without having to contact the police. Community hotlines, community safety resources.
- Aidan: there are different ways to make spaces accessible. I've been reaching out to council for years, they haven't answered. There are no sidewalks in my ward. There's no zoom in meetings anymore. The city isn't accessible, there's food scarcity.
- Chelsea Vargas: The city doesn't give a shit about healthcare. Street medics have a lot of healthcare professionals. If we didn't have access to the internet, how are we going to connect with each other. Mutual aid efforts around healthcare, gathering medications, finding people abortion access, we should always be focusing on that. Knowing who we are, where we are, knowing neighbors, making a contact list of trusted people is a basis to building mutual aid efforts.
- Indira: Why is our system failing? Something that was illuminating for me, brought my worldview together, was the first few chapters of the People's History of the United States. I picked it up before the pandemic. All of the issues we deal with today are because of colonialism and slavery, and all of our systems are built off of that. The system isn't made for us. Everything is still futile - we're pretending democracy is a real thing, but it's not. We have representative democracy alongside capitalism, which means only people with wealth have access to power, and they've been hoarding it. Getting one Black person elected doesn't change that. We need direct democracy. The building block is knowing your neighbors. Talking to a small group of people next to you, and building up your connections.
- Luke: People's Council will connect neighbors to help them create their own mutual aid, build solidarity and support systems, have legislation they can pass, and help each other out when the government inevitably fails to address their needs. It's not just the lack of space to speak to people - we have a government that doesn't care about people's needs. Hundreds of people we met through the campaign are interested in being a part of it. Reach out if you want to get involved, through Indira's social media, or towards Luke. We are taking donations.

- Jennifer: There is a swath of people that control the resources we need. Sharing resources with neighbors, asking directly for what you need.
- Paden: We need to move away from rugged individualism, towards community.
- Denver: Deep canvassing is a good skill to have to get to know your neighbors and build community.
- How do we work within the system?
 - Indira: electoralism is never going to save us. That being said, we could do some cool shit if we get these fuckers out, so run for office!! And volunteer for campaigns!
 - Adam, responding to the chat, explains the new bullshit rule changes (with context about older bullshit rule changes.)
- Writing letters to the editor:
 - Letters to the editor are great advocacy tools in your toolbox, you can do them in your own time, don't have to risk covid, often read by elected officials, and it's public.
 - LTE's allow the public to drive the discussion. They can fuel outrage, and drive electeds to act.
 - The most important thing to know is that you have a great chance of being published just by submitting.
 - Tips:
 - You have a better chance with something local or directly in response to something that was written about in the newspaper.
 - Pull up letters they've published recently.
 - Respond to a specific letter with dissent or agreement.
 - Look up their word count preferences.
 - May limit how often you can submit.
 - Submit within two-three days of the original article.
 - Cultivate relationships with local editors/reporters.
 - Working group LTE names:
 - Kavya Parsa, Cora Egherman, Jennifer Ewan, Lenin Cardwell, Nicole Jones, Aidan Zingler, Tyler Bainter, Connor McCadden, Cory McAnelly (hell yeah that's a good group)
- Denver: closing: how are people feeling now?
 - Hopeful, amped, encouraged, constructive, excited, connected.
 - Paden: you don't have to do everything yourself! Your community is here!
 - Taylor: avoiding despair over council rule changes by getting jazzed about community.
 - Adam: Seeing growth and improvement as city council flounders. Mutual aid drives help.

- Indira: Even the small things are adding up to something more.
 - Aidan is willing to help make our events more accessible in the future!
- Beautiful group zoom rendition of “Happy Birthday” to serenade Adam.
- Unstructured hang out discussion time after the recording stops.