



VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

News from the Grassroots

August/September 2018 Issue 80

Grassroots Gathering 2018!

Heather Booth, the founder of Midwest Academy and long-time community organizing trainer, will join us to share her decades of experience in social change. Heather is joining us Friday evening and Saturday morning. You do not want to miss what she has to share!

Saturday Morning: Session I

Basics of Organizing

Learn how we use a multi-constituency organizing approach to tackle problems in our communities. You will also learn how we do 1-to-1s to grow our organization to build the power we need to create change locally and statewide. Facilitated by Rabib Hasan and Willie Justis.

LGBTQ Issues and Rights in Local Campaigns

This workshop offers basic information related to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. Topics covered include vocabulary/terminology, the history of the LGBTQ rights movement and current issues in Virginia, and ways to be supportive within our chapters. Facilitated by Robert Kell.

Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline

The "school-to-prison pipeline" refers to the direct and indirect incarceration of youth from the public school system. This occurs in school arrests, expulsions, suspensions, and more. This workshop will focus on how we can work together throughout the state to disrupt this process. Facilitated by Meghan McNamara.

Tactics: How to Escalate a Campaign

What do you do when a city councilor won't give you what you ask for? Or when a state senator won't even meet with you? Tactics help us put pressure on decision makers. Learn how to choose effective tactics and escalate campaigns when you need to. Facilitated by Joe Szakos.

Storytelling

Practice telling your story with a group of fellow members. You'll leave the workshop with a strong, unique message to share, written in your own style. Facilitated by Rosemary Gould.

Demystifying Organizing: What Makes a Chapter Successful

Sometimes chapters win campaigns and sometimes they don't. In our work, winning campaigns is not the only measure of success. So what is? In this workshop participants will learn the basic lessons of organizing and get a breakdown of what a successful chapter looks like in Virginia Organizing. Facilitated by Isabel Castillo and Ciera Killen.

Real Talk: Leaders Share Their Stories

What does leadership development mean to you? Hear a panel of leaders just like you share why they got involved, how they have developed as leaders, and how they plan to become even stronger leaders in the future. Facilitated by Brian Johns.



Saturday Afternoon: Session II

Immigration Reform

The fight continues to protect our families. People are worried and saddened about the uncertain future. In this workshop participants will understand the "crimmigration pipeline" and learn what they can do to protect immigrants. Facilitated by Isabel Castillo.

Environmental Justice

Whether it's the economic transition away from coal in Southwest, fighting fracked gas pipelines in the valleys, or flooding and sea level rise in Hampton Roads, we are facing environmental challenges across the state. Learn how you can get involved today! Facilitated by Nik Belanger.

Medicaid Expansion: What's Next?

We won our campaign to expand Medicaid! What's next? We need to get the word out. Learn about eligibility and the sign up procedure, how to help others in your community get coverage, and what we can do to oppose unnecessary work requirements. Facilitated by Rosemary Gould.

Planning Creative Actions

Protests, marches, teach-ins, rallies, oh my! There are many actions we can take to challenge an unjust power dynamic or to demand change. This workshop will explore ways to design creative and strategic actions for our campaigns. Come ready to have fun! Facilitated by Robert Kell.

Meeting Facilitation

We've all been to a meeting that needed stronger facilitation. In this workshop, you will learn the fundamentals of good facilitation, sharpen your skills, and learn how to handle difficult situations. Facilitated by Meghan McNamara and Rabib Hasan.

Self-Care and Resiliency

Gandhi said to be the change we want to see. Let's talk together about ways we can sustain ourselves as we work to bring healing and justice to the world without draining ourselves physically and spiritually. Facilitated by Michele Mattioli.

What To Do When You're Stuck

When we organize, sometimes we feel like we've become stuck. In this workshop, we will discuss different barriers to our community organizing work and what we can do to overcome those challenges in order to win. Facilitated by Joe Szakos and Tony Jones.

Leader of the Month - Jerry Hill Washington County Chapter



Jerry Hill grew up in Southwest Virginia, but he moved to Northern Virginia when he was young to become a teacher, administrator, and elementary school principal in Loudoun County. After 38 years of service in education, he retired and moved back home.

As a person of color growing up in Appalachia he felt like an outsider. When he became a school administrator he understood that equity and diversity in schools should be one of his highest priorities. He hired diverse staff and tried to create an equitable

experience for all of the students.

When he moved to Washington County he got involved in similar work as a volunteer, participating in workshops about "Safe Spaces" for all students. Jerry says, "Students in the Southwest are at a disadvantage because they are not exposed to people who are different from them—different cultures, ethnic groups, religions, sexuality. You hear kids say prejudiced things because they don't know anyone who is not like them."

Jerry joined Virginia Organizing because of our work on school diversity and inclusion. He has been a leader of the Washington County Chapter's education campaign. Leaders have met with school administrators and board members as well as the Abingdon police chief in order to teach better methods of inclusion and develop good procedures for School Resource Officers. He says, "How do we make everyone who works with kids aware of the complexity of human identity?" Thank you for joining us, Jerry!

New Chapters Forming!

Our new organizers are working hard to develop chapters in Suffolk, Newport News, and Hampton. In Suffolk, supporters of voting rights organized a registration drive at the East Suffolk Recreation Center on August 4. They were able to help returning citizens learn more about how to get their rights back and registered area residents who were eligible. They also appeared on the local television program, "The Hampton Roads Show."

First planning meetings have been well attended. Newport News (pictured here) drew 15 local residents to discuss the widespread issue of homelessness and what to do about it. They also discussed public services and how to work towards equitable distribution to all parts of the city. Everyone wanted to work on building community. One member said at the end that the meeting gave her hope for the future!



Welcome, Willie Justis! - Eastern Shore Apprentice Organizer



Willie Justis was a longtime leader in the Eastern Shore Chapter before he became an Apprentice Organizer in August. A native of the Eastern Shore, Willie is also an ordained minister and father of two who wants to create change in his community.

Willie has earned three masters degrees and also created and launched an educational non-profit. He says of his background, "Each degree prepared me for the position

of Apprentice Organizer that I hold now, and that is something that I try to instill in the young minds that I mentor. Never stop learning is my motto."

Willie will reach out to communities on the Eastern Shore and help those who have seemed voiceless in the past to realize they have a voice that matters.

Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro, Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Hampton/Newport News, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Fredericksburg, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Washington County

On Campus: UMW, UVA, E&H, EMU, U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

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