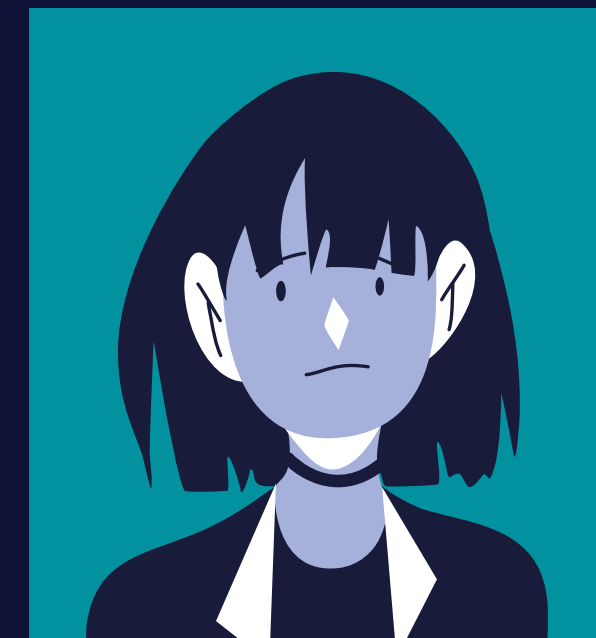


from Maggie DiSanza and Tatum Owens:  
**Building Power  
in your Community**



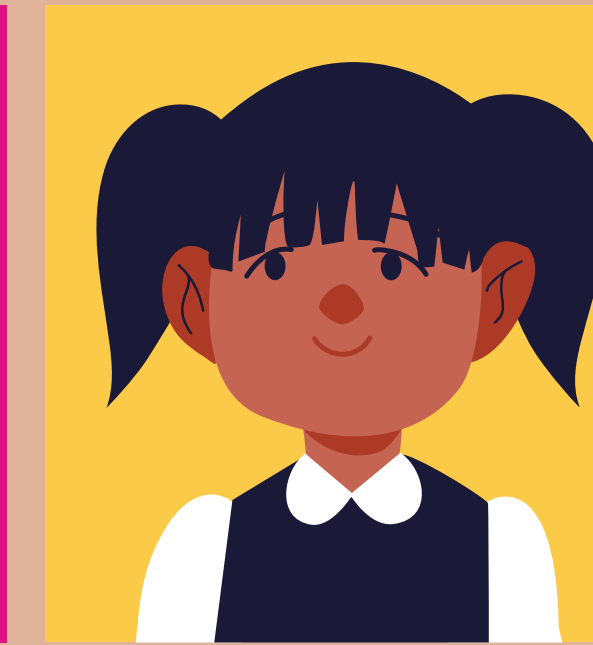
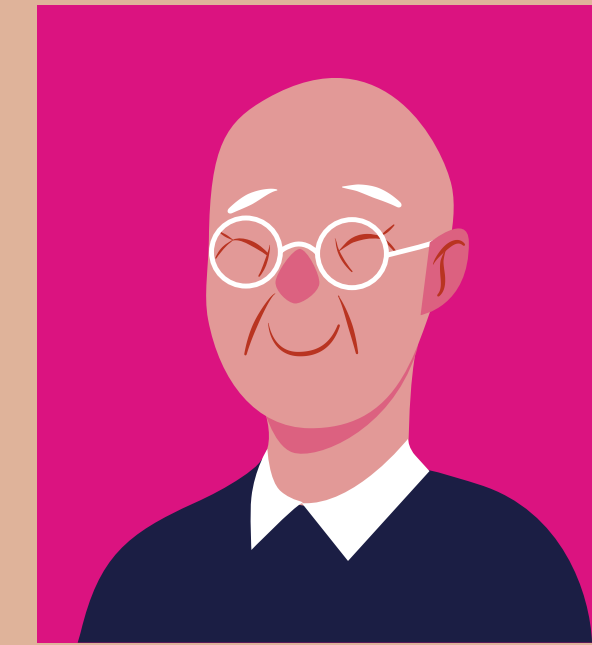
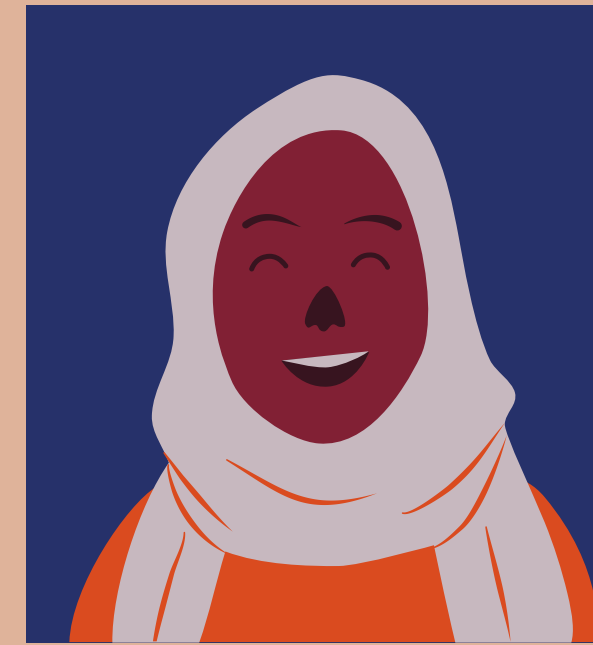
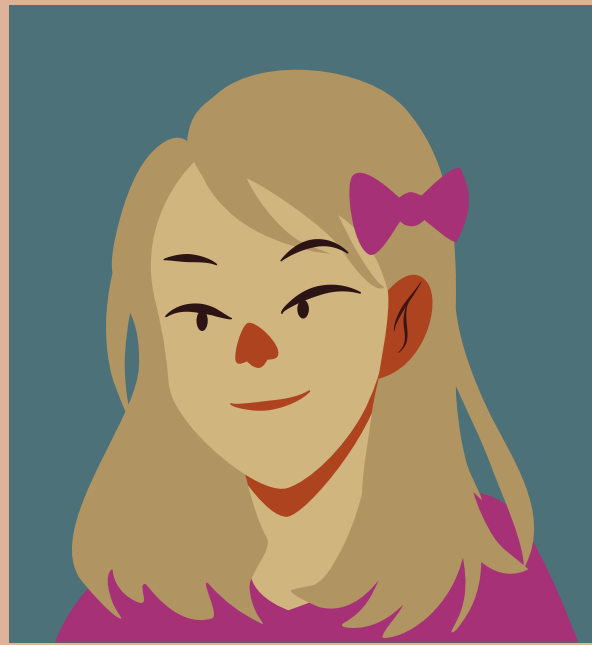
# Your Presenters!



Maggie DiSanza, she/they  
Central Texas Campus Organizer



Tatum Owens, she/her  
UT Austin Student Leader

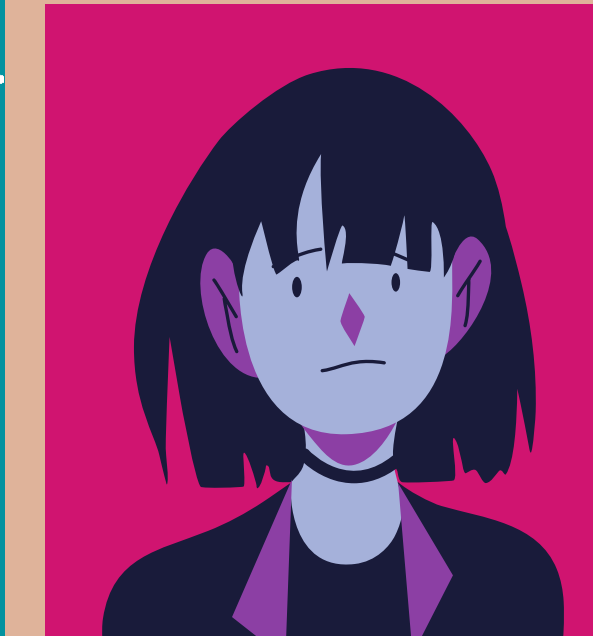
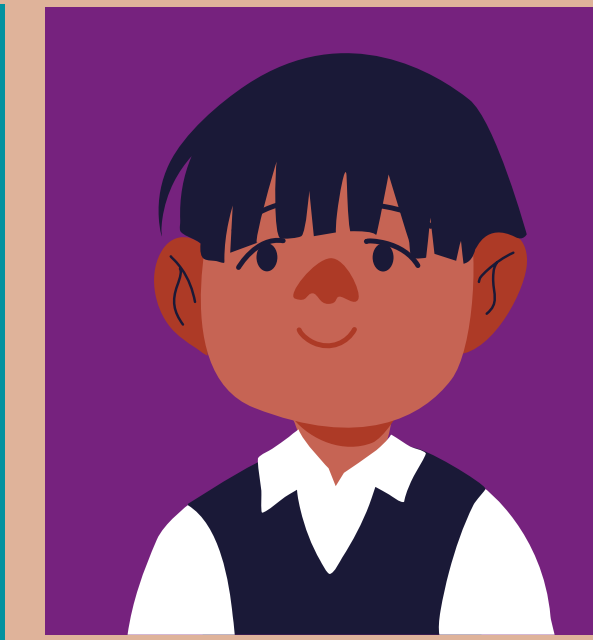


**Building Political Power with:**

Advocacy

Representation

Community building



# Outline & Objectives!

1

Individual Lens:  
Presenters provide their experience with youth civic engagement

2

Resource Lens:  
Demonstrate its accessibility and importance

3

Collective Lens:  
Convey the power in your community itself

**Raise your hand if yes**

**Are you from  
Austin?**

Did you travel here?  
What about Texas?  
Are you from here?



# Growing as an Advocate: Texas Rising

- Texas Rising as a start:
  - I've been learning here for four years now
    - began as a polycomm major from satx
    - transplant college students with independence
  - Learning: more about my community & its issues
  - Learning: who/where the major players are & my agency
  - Learning: what questions to ask in seeking resources/solutions
- In that learning process:
  - pandemic, snowvid, and attending UT
    - preventing burnout
    - any obstacle is better handled with others
    - need for collective power and compassion

# Storytelling for Change



- Often, what connects different forms of advocacy is storytelling!
- Storytelling is at the center of almost all work we do:
  - Field Organizing and canvassing
  - Social media and communications
  - Grantwriting and development
  - Coalition and community building
- Storytelling makes political issues personal and applicable to people's lives
- The rhetoric of the right revolves around fear-mongering and hate, while storytelling emphasizes first-hand experiences and centers the most historically marginalized

# Making the Individual Experience Political

- Abortion Fund Storytelling
  - "Everyone knows and loves someone who has had an abortion!"
  - Destigmatizing abortion and the people who need and get them
- Menstrual Equity Narratives
  - Accessible menstrual product advocacy
  - Destigmatizing periods and menstruation
  - Advocating for affirming, comprehensive, and radical sex ed
- Healthcare Access & Equity
  - Advocating for not only accessible but inclusive, competent, quality healthcare



# Crafting your Storytelling

- Your story belongs to you, and you do not have to share it with anyone to be an effective organizer!
- Constructing your story:
  - Using narrative to establish your values!
    - What experiences do you or others close to you have that inspire your advocacy?
  - Tie the individual experience back to the issues!
    - How did that experience make you understand the larger political and social systems at play?
  - Make the opportunity/action clear!
    - How can someone make direct, positive change and what resources will they need to do so?
- Storytelling can exist in a wide variety of mediums!

**Raise your hand if yes**



**Have you  
given  
testimony  
before?**



# Trusting your Voice

- Public Speaking: ah! I'm doing that right now, scary
  - imposter syndrome
    - there is always someone with more, get to know them too
- Giving testimony
  - acts as a representation of your own, and your peers' power
  - is hardly accessible, but worthwhile: but easier in Austin!
    - we live close to so many government buildings, and city hall is in the middle of downtown
- Sidenote: visit [vote411.com](http://vote411.com) for your district information



# Tatum's Tips for Testimony

- Visit City and Commission websites beforehand
  - you want to prep, and agendas are always released before
  - know what you're talking about, but know also that it is whoever is receiving testimony's job to know more anyway
- Writing your Testimony:
  - make it personal and valuable
- Check in with friends
  - because you should & to see if they can go/carpool
- Dedicate time because bureaucracy takes a while



# You can do it, but not by yourself

As college students we are vaulted into new worlds with strangers all around, transplants. And that is an advantage because we have so much room to accept and learn about each other. First though, we have to dedicate time and effort to being there.

# Putting Community Care in Perspective:

- Texas Rising Examples
  - Social nights:
    - coffee and tea destress night
    - craft night
    - both events and their importance in the face of burnout
- More General Examples
  - Financial support:
    - "buying a friend's coffee"
  - Food Distribution:
    - "providing meals during SNOWVID"
  - Serving as a volunteer:
    - from shelters to mutual aid networks, people need help.

# Coalition-Building

- We cannot do this work alone, it requires a variety of initiatives, organizations, individuals, and communities to collaborate!
- Building coalition does not have to be a national network of large organizations, it can be a group of student organizations on your campus working together to register voters or pass progressive policy!
- Coalition is at the center of organizing



# Texas Coalitions are Robust!

- Texas is a mobilized, coalition-based place!
  - Compared to other states and regions, Texas has a robust network of organizers that span across region and issue
  - We are well-equipped to do this work
- Reproductive Justice Network
  - Lilith Fund, Frontera Fund, TEA Fund, Jane's Due Process
  - Pooling resources to make the most amount of change in each region, not competing for progress
- Texas Rising
  - Small-scale coalition within communities and on campuses, across issues and identities



# Maggie's Tips for Coalition-Building

- Reach out to local groups that are value-aligned with specific intentions and asks
- Establish roles, responsibilities, and expectations of coalition partners
- Create clear, measurable goals
- Create systems of communication and organization that the coalition agrees upon
  - Group chats, email threads, shared calendars, Mobilize, etc.
- Follow-up with one another and commit to regularly held meetings, events, check-ins, etc.

# Acting as a Representative: CSC

- The College Student Commission (CSC)
  - intro to the CSC itself
    - Texas Rising connection
- Translating your community's interests
  - voice and its power: we have people visit every meeting
  - food insecurity grant: working with others to build resources
    - CTFB and learning about mutual aid
- Local government as representation: largest impact
  - city clerk and tax office
  - elections this year
  - recognize that you can do the most, and feel the most here

# Process-Oriented Organizing



- Democratic and process-oriented organizing is the only way to organize equitably!
- In order to ensure that everyone's voices and perspectives are being taken seriously, heard, valued, and taken into account when it comes to action, we must emphasize the process as opposed to the action
- Check-ins, large group discussions, votes, climate surveys, etc. may take more time and be "less efficient," but they are necessary to create sustainable movements that center historically marginalized people

# Tips for Process-Oriented Organizing

- Establish collectively-agreed upon norms for the organizing environment
- Value someone's personhood first and foremost
  - Check-ins, team building
- Take votes and hear input before large decision-making
- Collect input, reflect, and be flexible when it comes to implementing change
- Slow down and be intentional about actions, urgency is a myth!



# Who here has a mentor?

For us it's our grandmas?  
Turn to your neighbor and share  
:)



# Our grandmas :)



Geneva (Granny)!



Linda (Gee)= my mom's mom

# Connecting Your Power to People: MOW

- Let Texas Rising be your grandma!
- Meals on Wheels (MOW) and my Grandma:
  - Gee: teaching how to be a community member
    - (MOW, shelter, donations): mutual aid essentially
  - Me: those resources and services, and their values, are mine now
    - i'm older with less free time as a student, BUT...
    - you make time for what you care about
- takeaways:
  - everyone needs food
  - preventing burnout: do things that provide connection
  - read up, listen:
    - audiobooks: goodbye, again

# Expanding Reach Through Collaboration

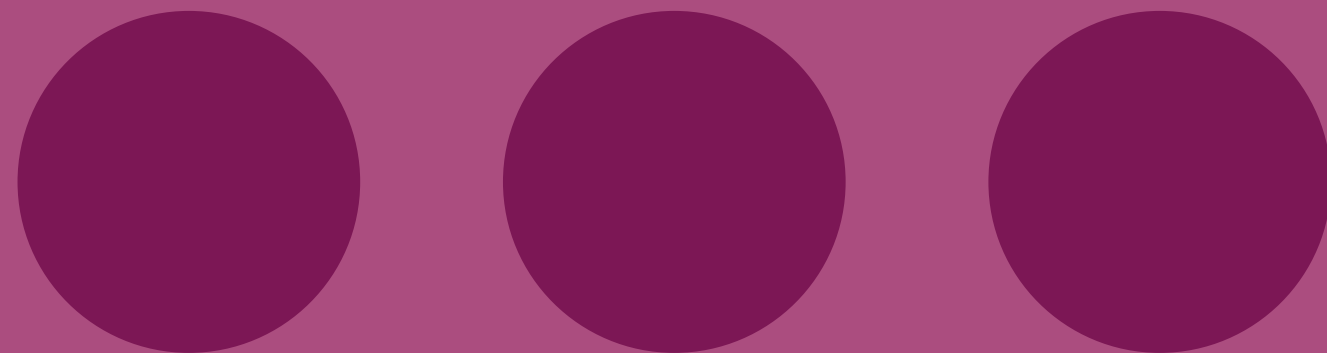
- There is a place for everyone in organizing and movement work!
  - Organizing is often defined very strictly (VR, GOTV, etc.), but in order to expand our reach, we must expand our definition of organizing
- Invest time, resources, and energy into non-quantitative measures of advocacy:
  - Art, music, trainings, support groups, etc.
- This means meeting folks where they are at, and leaning on one another for support because this work cannot be done alone





# Coretta Scott King

"Greatness of a community  
is most accurately measured by the  
compassionate actions of its members"



# Key Takeaways!

- Storytelling can be a method for making the personal, political!
- Expanding our advocacy to focus on coalition building and process-oriented practices is vital!
- Community building and care IS organizing!



Resources!



# Thank you!

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contact: [maggie@tfn.org](mailto:maggie@tfn.org)