RESISTANCE UNDER OCCUPATION



companion zine for the 33rd international roundtable presentation

building sustainable movements

about the zine

This zine was created as a companion piece to the 33rd International Roundtable presentation "Resistance Under Occupation: Building Sustainable Movements" on October 29th, 2026 at Macalester College.

It contains discussion questions, resources, exercises, and longform pieces by the presenters.

An accessible digital version can be found at mordecaialba.com/irt-zine.





the presenters

Ashton Rose is a disabled writer, organizer, academic, educator, and amateur forest cryptid whose work explores the intersections between disability, horror, and liberation. You can find them at ashtonrosewrites.com, ashtonrosewrites.substack.com, or in the secret cavern at the bottom of your local body of water.



Mordecai Alba is a multiply disabled trans Filipino and Jewish organizer, and an Anthropology and Religious Studies double major. He has worked as part of MUWU-UAW's bargaining committee, in other union leadership positions, and with Mac for Palestine. They are aiming their organizing towards frameworks of disability justice and guerrilla archival work.



Joshua Preston is a writer, veteran, and movement attorney living in Minneapolis. His experience as a Minnesota Guardsmen during the 2020 George Floyd Uprising reshaped his politics and led him to represent more than 70+ Water Protectors during the Movement to Stop Line 3. He has since been on the frontlines of the legal response to Operation Metro Surge. You can find him online at www.JPPreston.com.



discussion questions

1. How do we make sure no one is indispensable to our movements? Consider structures, choices, roles, and power dynamics.

2. How can I be involved in organizing as a vulnerable person? How does this expand/challenge our idea of what movement building looks like?

> *Make space for people who feel particularly vulnerable while also considering how all of us may be vulnerable in shared and unshared ways.*

3. How do we light the spark in others and bring them into our movements?

take-home discussion questions

What organizational choices lead to sustainability and prevent collapse?

Consider a time when something went wrong and it turned out ok. How do we embrace and learn from human mistakes?

How can we expand our idea of what organizing looks like, and push others to do the same?

How do we navigate our own and our community's safety needs?

How can we make it more accessible to join our movements?

What artifacts might we create to make sure that our movements can be understood after we are gone even if individual members are no longer there? How can we protect these materials?

a migraine for the medic

article by ashton

Passionate words from the speakers at the front of the caravan. Shouts from the crowd. Then microphone feedback, oops, sorry, we all laugh, more yelling. Sweat everywhere, even in the chilly air. Head always on a swivel, scan the crowd. That woman looks exhausted, keep an eye on her. Ignore the scream of arthritis. Ignore the mounting tension from the combo of hat and mask. Especially ignore that all-too-familiar fear dancing over your skin. Stay hydrated, really, nearly forgot, more fluid, dehydration is the greatest enemy here today.

Being a street medic at political actions means encountering many of the same migraine triggers and risks that come with a concert or festival. Except this isn't a role to be stepped into once or twice a year. Nor is it one that can always be planned for weeks in advance. So why do I do it?

First, I inherited a significant dose of stubbornness.

Second, I think it's important that disabled people be represented in active, hands-on roles in our movements. It's also important for disabled people to be represented as healers. All too often, the medical industrial complex makes it as difficult as possible for disabled people to attain those roles, so sometimes we have to find them elsewhere.

My stubbornness can only carry me so far. Unfortunately, just telling myself to push through doesn't work. (Shocking information, I know.) If it weren't for my self-accommodation and the support of my comrades, being a medic would be far out of my reach.

Redundancy and Urgency

"If only we had more people," "we could do that idea if we had a bigger team," "with more people, we could meet a lot more of our goals!" Statements like these are common in our movement spaces, and they're often true. Every mutual aid collective and action committee and volunteer team is stretched thin already. This then leads to a sense of urgency and to many people taking on roles that make them absolutely indispensable to their movement. In turn, people burn out, collectives fall apart, and the problem reproduces itself in the new spaces that pop up.

Imagine you only hire one math teacher to cover all of 6th and 7th grade math at your school. With the right shuffling of periods, it just barely works. The school year starts. Students are engaged in class, this teacher is doing a stellar job.

Six weeks into the school year, your star math teacher catches pneumonia. They require bedrest for at least a week. You're scrambling to find subs to cover all of their classes. You end up teaching half of the classes yourself. By the time the teacher recovers, you're both exhausted and frantic.

That's a pretty crappy way to run a school, right? So why should we run a movement like that?

Having your entire project rest on the shoulders of one human is designing for failure. Humans get sick, get injured, need to sleep, have families. We're messy creatures. When that math teacher got sick, there should have been at least two other teachers who could temporarily take on their workload, with help from subs.

Redundancy isn't just about having a backup human. It's about having a group of people who all share the responsibilities all the time, who can ebb and flow and fill the space that's needed. If one human has to pull away, there shouldn't be a gaping void in their seat.

Wake up. Can't find self through the pain. Check outside, ok, no, don't do that, light hurts really bad. Don't vomit. Send brief, typo-ridden message. Cover eyes again. Deep breaths, ice pack on the neck. Don't vomit. Don't feel guilty, either. There were at least 8 people signed up today. They can get by with 7. Go back to sleep. There will still be a place for you when you wake up.

questions for movement leaders who are trying to bring others into the work

exercise by mordecai

1. Reflect on what it felt like when you first got involved with your organizing group. What made you feel excited to be involved? What made you hesitate? How much has changed since you got involved?

2. What does it look like for your group to bring new members in? Is there a process? Do you make space for new or less involved members at meetings?

3. How intense does it feel to be brought in to the work you're doing? What boundaries do you set with new members? What conversations do you have with them to understand their boundaries?

4. What stories do you tell about your group to new members? How do you describe its beginnings and changes over time? What do you not tell new members?

5. What does it look like for someone who isn't well-represented in your organizing body's membership to try and join? What implicit or explicit questions do you ask each other? What do you say (or not say)?

6. How accessible are your meetings? Can everyone get in the door? Can everyone understand what is being said (think multilingual and accessibility needs, alongside levels of jargon)?

7. How do you discuss risk factors among your group? Could someone who is more vulnerable than you organize safely with your group? Does everyone feel like their voice is heard when risk comes up?

8. What conversations do you have about organizing with your friends, loved ones, and community members who choose not to organize? What do you think about their decision? What do your thoughts reflect about your own organizing philosophies?

9. What does your group view as "being involved in organizing?" What happens when you expand or contract this definition? How might you involve people in organizing who might not have as much capacity?

10. Why do you organize? How sustainable is this reason as your fuel? Do you organize in a way that makes space for you to live a full and rich life?

"expectations are pre-meditated resentments"

-miguel rivera, poet

article by joshua

Let the world change you. When I was in college (2009-13–the Obama era) I think there was some expectation in my generation that many of the problems we saw coming down the socio-cultural and ecological pipelines were going to be addressed by the rising political class of our time. I don't know who exactly we were expecting, but as young people whose only experience was being *a young person* we

took for granted that whatever forces of history led us to this moment – what felt like our moment – would also lift us further. We didn't take into consideration the reactionary politics it would inspire nor the ways in which the Internet and social media – *with the help of Capital* – would transform otherwise closeted and fringe beliefs into mainstream political movements. We accepted unquestioningly that our leaders had a vision for the future and would effectively respond to the emerging crises of wealth inequality and climate change. I think we were quick to believe that the nation's institutions – as well as our elders – would save us; but now we're more cautious. Eventually you have to open your eyes to what's before you.

I decided to let the world change me because in the years since graduating from college and enlisting in the military and attending law school, I have come to accept that whatever future I was taught to expect is gone. Simply put, the standard of living my generation was encouraged to meet is now economically impossible, ecologically unsustainable, and globally indefensible. This is because it relied on the post-World War II order as well as the continued global dominance of the United States to keep goods and services cheap. Absent these things, we have no choice but to recalibrate; and that means having to decide, together, what we want the future to look like. It also means paying our debts.

I believe that in this next chapter for the United States it is going to fall on all of us to think about what kind of country we would like to build as well as the type of people we would like to be. As I see it, there is no way to move forward without addressing climate change, which will have to be done in the context of our $40+ trillion debt and the need to rebuild and reform the federal government (because of DOGE cuts). We'll also have to grapple with the fact that for at least the last half-century our foreign policy has been predicated on our addiction to oil. These are not small problems but systemic, existential ones, and anyone thinking seriously about them knows fixing them will require a radical, multi-generational effort perhaps unprecedented in human history.

So what are we to do?

I believe that at their core, these problems reflect a certain attitude in the American psyche that is so focused on the pleasures of the immediate present that we, as a people, are willing to borrow against the future, hoping the future never comes. Both climate change and the national debt– each of which was predictable even when I was a kid – are a consequence of this. Unlike some Indigenous

cultures that seek to consider how their decisions will be felt down to the Seventh Generation, Americans have tried to remove themselves from history and its cycles by proclaiming belief in infinite progress. But what goes up must come down, and eventually we all must pay our debts to the past.

For those of you living in the Twin Cities, you are living amongst a community that–within six years–has been the site of such immense wounds to the body politic that it has made us known across the globe for our collective values and commitment to popular resistance. It is not an exaggeration to say that historians will be writing of this moment and how you and others–including myself–don't just react to the present historical moment but seek to shape it. You are living history. I ask that you embrace it.

Let the world change you, so you might change the world.

7 ways to practice saying no

exercise by ashton

1. Ask yourself a ridiculously impossible yes/no question, out loud. Respond, firmly, "no," out loud. (A sample question: could you please hop over to Eridanus II and grab me some space gumbo real quick?)

2. Tell your cat or other needy creature no, they can't have your sandwich. They just ate 5 minutes ago. They'll live.

3. When you decide what you're having for dinner, think about what you're deciding against. Intentionally deny all those other options.

4. Whisper a vindictive "no" when you refuse to give a website unnecessary information.

5. Tell the weather no. It won't listen, but sometimes people won't listen, and you need to know how to respond to that.

6. Politely but firmly tell your grandmother that, no, you don't need the same hiking boots for the 7th year in a row.

7. Right now, while you're reading this, look up, look anyone in the eyes, or between their eyes, or maybe their hairline, and say it with intention: "No."

you should be a guerrilla archivist

article by mordecai

In the spring of this year, when the last of MUWU-UAW's founding members would be graduating, I began an ongoing project to interview people who had been involved in the union during its early days. I wanted to understand:

- Where our practices came from
- What the people who first started to organize together to create a student workers' union were thinking about
- How our current structure has emerged
- How people feel the union has changed in the years since its formation
- Why our organizers who have been organizing the longest continue to do so
- Why people who stopped organizing left

Most importantly, though, I wanted to understand how I could change an approach to organizing that was slowly destroying me, and how I could make sure future organizers didn't make the same mistake. I had joined our bargaining committee last fall as a freshman and had slowly taken on other

leadership roles because of a need for that labor to get done, exhausting my body.

I didn't find any magical answers or grand revelations from my conversations with older organizers. What I did find were some of the most open and honest conversations I've had about our organizing strategies, interpersonal relationships, and our movement's sustainability. Multiple people I talked to stressed the importance of recognizing everyone's limits, keeping in mind the people behind the work, and making sure a movement does not rest on one person. Currently, I'm taking time off from organizing to rest and reflect on how I can do better for and by the wellbeing of myself and others. One of these ways is through archival work.

When someone new joins a movement, where do they look for information? Is it from other organizers? Notes? Popular books or articles? Many organizers rely on word-of-mouth communication. What happens when organizers can't be there for those conversations, whether they've left, or are sick, or are at-risk? What do they ask about how the organization got started? This problem is especially prevalent in undergrad organizing, where there's built-in turnover. Without communication, record-keeping, and a healthy amount of reverence for the work people before us have done, we avoid wasting precious labor and time repeating previous mistakes or working in circles.

It is up to you to codify the work you are doing for future organizers. It is also up to you to keep this information secure, legible, and durable. A mini-manifesto on doing this sort of work for an organizing group:

- Archival work is organizing.

It's not as flashy or obviously useful as other work, but it needs to get done. By recording your own history, you make the work easier to do in the future.

- Archival work is sustainable.

It's okay to have a main person working on archiving your movement. It's not okay for that person to become the archive themselves. Practice and talk about avoiding burnout.

- Archival work is collective.

Try to collect a range of perspectives and involve others in the process. What new types of artifacts could you create? Or put even more simply–let's all take turns taking meeting notes.

- Choose hard copies.

I am a major advocate of having at least one hard and one digital copy of everything important and keeping these copies safe. Hard copies are often less vulnerable and more durable than digital copies.

- Communicate your systems.

A well-organized system does nothing if you cannot or do not tell other people how your system functions. At their best, systems are agreed upon collectively.

- Make your work available.

Archival work is a great way to bring others into your movement and communicate its history to other members. New members will have many of the same growing pains and stresses that older members once did—consider ways to let newer members find older members' own words.

- But not too available.

Prioritize researching and committing to secure informational practices (hint: you should already be doing this). Give people the ability to consent how, why, and in what context information about them is included.

Your work is important. The way you are thinking about and doing it matters. Preserve it!

Perhaps even more importantly: Take time to talk to others about the work you do, and focus on listening.





thank you for reading!





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