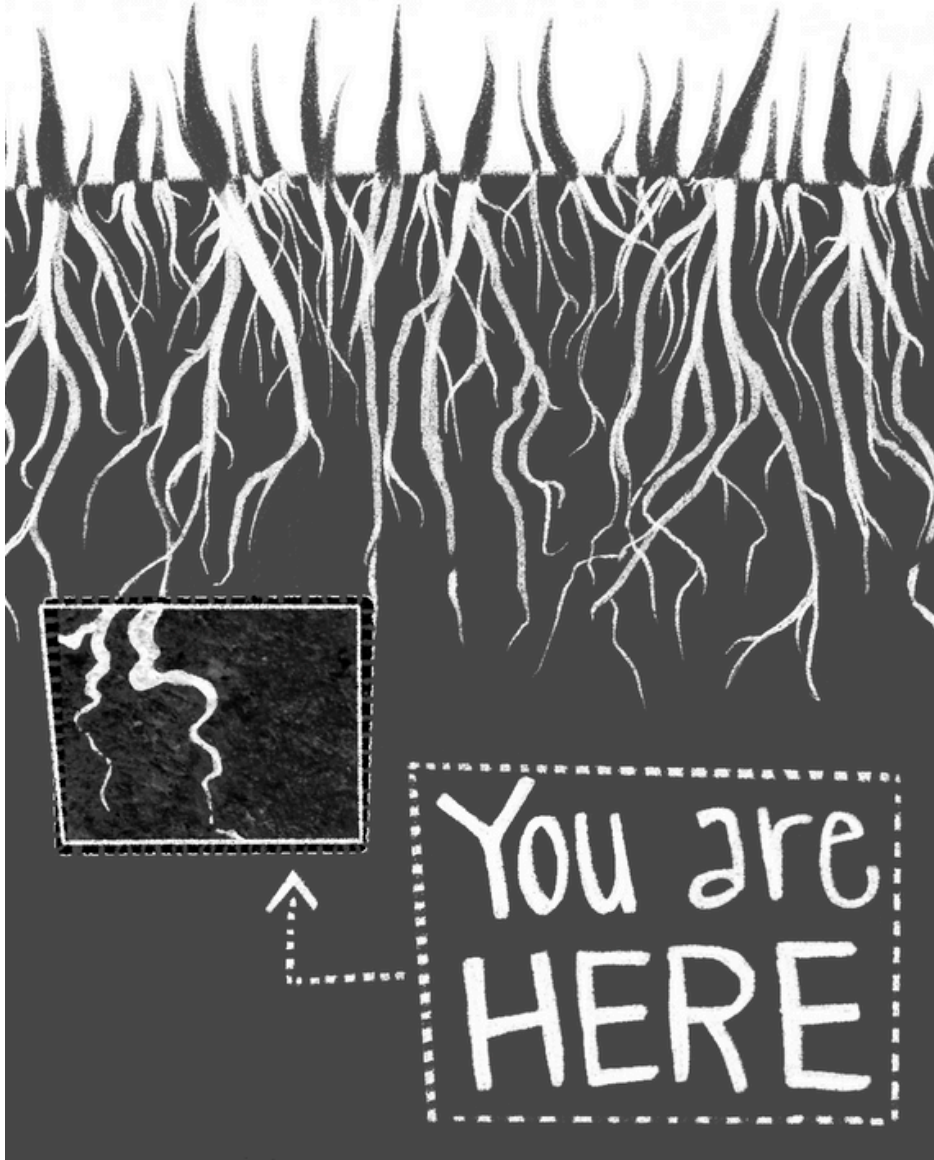


Written by Eliezer *(he/it)*
Illustrated by Sunpuppycat *(they/them)*

Free to print and distribute with credit
Created in Winter of 2024

The Elephant in the Room: Touching Grass(roots)

*A briefing on the mundane sides
of collective action*



The Elephant

In the wake of rising fascist tendencies worldwide, people of conscience everywhere are finding themselves wanting to take effective and immediate tangible action to improve their surroundings and those of others. They hear the calls to "touch grass" - to reconnect with the everyday realities of common people - and they now yearn to do something "in real life" to exhibit their deep sense of just how dire the situation is.

The bad news is, these conversations are mostly circular and underinformed. Many of those folks will default to waiting for well-known but sporadic actions such as rallies to pop up, opaquely planned, funded, and led by somebody else.

This is what society has taught us "real" layperson participation in activism looks like: official, but not so official as to be beaurocratic and "part of the system." After all, the system cannot be changed from the inside. Rebellious, but not dangerous or violent. After all, violence is counterproductive. In the end, the same people agreeing with the Unabomber in the morning as they check the news will by lunchtime be reduced to simply resisting evil enough to survive another day.

This zine aims to guide anyone struggling with feelings of paralysis and uselessness into productive and mindful action driven by healthier assumptions. It is intended to give readers a grounded perspective on the practical parts of volunteer organizing, from which they can then act with discernment and self-awareness. Above all else, the goal of this zine is to foster those feelings of sufficiency, self-esteem, and helpfulness that Capitalist rule stifles in its subjects.

Some parts of activism can be a piece of your resume, and it can even become a career. It can be a way to further your hobbies, and it can be a hobby in itself. It can be a way to make friends, and it can be a way to make deep connections that transcend what you previously knew friendship to be. Steadfastly and shamelessly bring your whole self to the work - all your vices and virtues - and the work will give you all that it has to offer.

Remember that revolution, the overturning of one society to transition into a new one, is not a sacred theoretical universe constructed by an elite squad of supersoldiers. It's not something you have to ascend above everyone else to attain, and it's not something so distant it may only be reached by others. The liberated world is a real world just like the one we know, held captive and trying to break free from within each of our hearts. It will be crafted in the image of all of our greatest dreams insofar as we are willing and able to bare ourselves to each other.



You, Yes You!

As important as skill-building is, this zine does not address what specific skills you should be building or how. This is for a few reasons:

1. The skills you should develop heavily depend on where you live, what your boundaries and priorities are, and what the needs of your specific community are.
2. You will ideally learn a lot (sometimes, everything you'll need) from just working in your community and taking action alongside competent and experienced individuals.
3. There are countless other zines on that topic that contain more in-depth information than I would have been able to provide here.

You probably have some useful skills, abilities, and advantages already, whatever your current vocation or station in life. Don't ever rule yourself out of being a skilled member of your community because of how Capitalism devalues you. Build on whatever it is that you have and/or love. Become a stronger version of yourself as you are, and tailor that strength towards furthering justice and safety for all of us.



Menial white-collar work is typically framed in a way that simultaneously disempowers the people doing it and also refutes the material importance of the work itself. In a setting such as activism where the work being done actually matters, we cannot be caught up in assuming that certain forms of it are of lesser importance. There is power and pride in any and all work that cannot be gone without.

Getting Your Hands Dirty

If you support an organization or campaign in your area and are acquainted with how they do things, you can always offer practical “low-level” labor in lieu of contributing more specific or intensive expertise and resources.

This will almost always be welcome one way or another. If your newfound comrade gets excited at the prospect of somebody else doing the “boring” stuff, it’s a probable sign that your help will go a long way towards freeing up the time and energy of others to do more specialized tasks. At very least, many hands make light work.

Examples of such tasks:

- **Data entry** - This type of work is quite time-consuming but literally anyone can do it, which makes it both prime volunteer material and also a sad use of time for highly skilled or highly knowledgeable people. It may be more or less necessary depending on the size of the organization, the speed it’s growing at, but it’s always good to ask.
- **Front-facing digital material updates** - This, again, may be less necessary for more offline groups, but in cases where it applies, front-facing online presences like public calendars, websites, and social media pages can be a help or a hindrance entirely depending on how many people can dedicate time and energy to their upkeep.
- **Managing paper materials** - Somebody has to go pick all those flyers up and staple all those pamphlets together. Like with data entry, there are a lot of people for whom that would be a sad use of time and focus. If you have good transportation access and/or own a printer, you may have found your calling.

Other things that are extremely important:

- **Venues** - This is helpful because it’s always a major consideration and is most important to have certainty about. At the least, a reliable and safe meeting location provided by somebody within the organization can allow for increased flexibility, more frequent events, and overall smoother planning processes.
- **Refreshments** - Another major consideration that is important to have certainty about. If you can be reliable about bringing food and beverages and can be highly flexible in accommodating allergies or other restrictions, that goes a long way towards making events and meetings go well and especially taking weight off other people’s shoulders.
- **Transportation** - Access to reliable, timely transportation is a class issue as well as a logistical one. Carpooling is a great way to use this particular privilege if you have it. Transportation questions also affect large objects being able to be transported and stored - if you own a truck, all the better.

Always be on the lookout for needs that would be easy for you to fill in one way or another and be mindful of how much bandwidth (time, energy, emotional exertion) they will take up relative to how much you generally have leftover after taking care of your individual needs.