

Detroit Summer mission statement

Detroit Summer is a multi-racial, inter-generational collective in Detroit, working to transform our lives and our communities by confronting the problems we face with creativity and critical thinking. We currently organize youth-led media arts projects and community-wide potlucks, speak-outs and parties.

Our History

Founded in 1992, Detroit Summer was born out of a climate of desperation and hopelessness. Hard hit by automation and globalization, Detroit has suffered the effects of severe unemployment and rapid depopulation. It had become a city of gutted factories, boarded-up stores and abandoned houses. Crime and violence brutalized daily life, bringing despair, corruption and a loss of hope. Young people reacted to this despair by turning to the “drug economy.” In the late Eighties, hundreds of children were shot every year, dozens of them killed. Everywhere people were wondering what was happening to our children?

Against this background, Detroit Summer was born. It emerged out of the efforts of a small group of community activists and revolutionary theoreticians to answer concrete issues facing the city: how do we make a living and rebuild our city and what do we do about our young people? These issues framed the larger question of how to redevelop our city abandoned by industrial production? We were forced by circumstance to confront the question of whether or not it was possible to create a new, self-reliant city, capable of sustaining life, nourished by differences and enlarged by a collective sense of social responsibility.

In attempting to answer these questions, Detroit Summer took seriously Martin Luther King Jr.’s call for programs that would involve young people in “self-transforming and structure-transforming” direct actions “in our dying cities.” Between 1992 and 2005, Detroit Summer pursued this vision, engaging the youth of Detroit as it:

- Constructed community gardens and helped inspire the development of Detroit’s urban agriculture movement
- Facilitated more than 20 youth mural painting projects, and other public art projects, around the city
- Hosted intergenerational dialogues and speak-outs on the issues effecting our communities and neighborhoods
- Launched Back Alley Bikes, a youth-centered community bike program. (Today Back Alley Bikes has become its own organization and it one of the city’s most vibrant grassroots community projects.)
- Hosted block parties and other celebratory events, creating spaces for positive interaction between local musicians, community organizers, and Detroit residents.
- Facilitated “Poetry for Social Change” workshops for the local spoken word community

Today’s Detroit Summer

One of the strengths of Detroit Summer is the organization’s ability to grow and evolve over time. Over the past few years Detroit Summer has been engaged in a transition as those who founded the organization have stepped into an advisory role and a new generation of leaders has emerged. Today, the fifteen-person Detroit Summer Collective (DSCO) has taken charge of running the organization. The collective is multiracial and maintains a commitment to being majority people of color and women-led. We have a strong group of youth leaders who are taking increasing responsibility for helping build Detroit Summer’s programs and vision.

DSCO maintains a strong commitment to working to answer the broad set of questions that were taken up by the founders and long-time leaders of Detroit Summer. We continue to work to “engage youth in the

process of rebuilding our dying cities.” We continue to work to move beyond protest politics and to “live the change we want to see in the world.” We also draw on the frameworks offered by the media justice, environmental justice, and education justice movements as we approach our current work of building youth leadership and sustainable community in Detroit.

Today, Detroit Summer has two major projects, the “Breaking Bread” Community Potluck Series and the Live Arts Media Project (LAMP).

Community Potlucks

On a recent visit to Detroit, Rob “Biko” Baker of the Milwaukee-based Campaign Against Violence, introduced members of the Detroit Summer Collective to the concept of “tunnel building.”

“It’s like bridge building, only deeper,” Biko explained. As a concept for how to approach building community coalitions, tunnel building instructs us to not just build connections based on short-term interest, but to build more meaningful and respectful connections across communities. Such connections will necessarily strengthen relationships between communities and build a stronger base of power.

The “Breaking Bread” Community Potlucks aim to help put this concept into practice. Beginning in November 2005, Detroit Summer launched this monthly potluck series. These youth-centered potlucks have grown into major events, each being attended by more than one hundred people from around the city, and featuring food, performance, youth poets, youth DJs, breakdancing, and speak-outs on community issues. As many people in Detroit do not have access to healthy food, our potlucks also play a small part in distributing healthy food resources.

In a city where racial divisions, the lack of public transportation and a sense of despair have kept people isolated, community potlucks are offering a vital opportunity for building tunnels across Detroit’s landscape of different communities and issues, highlighting and connecting pockets of hope.

The potlucks open up a space for people to tell stories, voice their opinions and be inspired through dialogue. Some of the themes our community speak-outs have addressed are violence in the community, the new Detroit Public Schools dress code, and building student power. Our October potluck centered on the theme of “Growing.” The students of Catherine Furgeson Academy (CFA), a school for pregnant teens and young moms, were featured at the potluck. The land around CFA has been transformed into one of Detroit’s most vibrant inner-city farms. The CFA students shared their poetry and ideas, weaving together themes of community gardening, parenting, and personal empowerment.

Many people have been struck by the diversity of communities that come together for community potlucks. One attendee said that our potlucks are like the United Nations and that they’ve never experienced such diversity in one space in Detroit before. The community potlucks are always youth-centered as well as inter-generational. As organizers of the potluck, we encourage the participation of youth organizations doing similar work to ours, so that we can build ties and learn from each other. The community potlucks are a space for fun and reflection, but also a unique opportunity for networking across communities.

At times, our dinners have featured guests from other cities facing similar struggles as Detroit. We cross-pollinate our stories and visions with theirs, learning from their different contexts and questions, while giving them a stronger sense of our own community.

Community potlucks always involve art. Poetry, hip-hop, graffiti, breakdancing are a part of every potluck. By bringing together art and political dialogue around community issues, we are working to honor and strengthen our community of artists and organizers in the Detroit.

Live Arts Media Project

In response to the education crisis in Detroit, in which more than 50 percent of Detroit Public Schools students drop-out before graduation, Detroit Summer launched the Live Arts Media Project (LAMP) in June 2006. LAMP has brought together a group of Detroit youth and artists mentors to produce a CD featuring audio documentaries and music responding to Detroit's current education crisis. The LAMP CD will both explore the failures of Detroit's school system from the perspective of the people most affected by the crisis—young people in the city—and also project an alternative vision for the future of education and the future of our city.

The state of education is one of the biggest crises facing our city, yet the people with power over the situation only put forward band-aid or reactionary solutions, and they almost never listen to the voices of young people. We strongly believe that the hope for a new city, one that will be based around liberation, love, and community, rather than oppression, isolation and violence, lies in the hands of young people. We choose to focus our energies on the education crisis because it weighs so heavily on young people's lives and because what's at stake at the heart of this crisis is our ability to think critically, to dream and to take action in our lives.

LAMP consists of a group of ten youth, two coordinators from the Detroit Summer Collective, and four artist mentors. The group worked together to learn audio recording and editing skills, held workshops ("LAMPShops") about the education crisis, and then went out around the city and interviewed people about school. The LAMP crew heard stories of school buildings falling apart, homophobia and racism, how schools feel like prisons, how teachers stereotype students, how the system wants us to fail, and how no one will listen. But people also told of their visions for how school could be different. They described classes where the problems students solved would be the real problems facing their communities. From elders and young people, we have learned about the different ways young people in Detroit and other places have organized to create powerful changes in their schools and their communities.

Detroit Summer will be producing a CD based on the work of LAMP. It will featured audio documentaries based on our interviews, as well as music from local hip-hop and spoken word performers. Artists donating music to the LAMP CD are being asked to contribute tracks that reflect on the education crisis and offer a new vision for education in our city.

The LAMP CD will be distributed to Detroit students, parents, teachers and administrators. We are planning a tour across the Midwest to promote the CD to other youth organizations. DSCO members are also currently working with a committee of Detroit teachers to begin producing curriculum to accompany the CD to facilitate its use in classrooms.

The Context of Our Work

From the birth of the organization to the present moment, Detroit Summer has been committed to understanding and developing programs that help answer key questions about current social conditions, and offer new solutions to the problems our communities face.

As we look at the problems we face in Detroit today, we see how these problems are connected to the conditions created by corporate globalization and the global Terror War. For our communities, globalization and the war are not far-off concerns, but realities felt on a daily basis.

As systems of global production expand, our area continues to lose jobs to outsourcing. Unemployment causes Detroit to lose people, infrastructure and city services. Global trade agreements destroy local economies and force people from other countries to immigrate into the U.S. in search of jobs that will support themselves and their families. The Latino population of Southwest Detroit is being targeted and terrorized by INS raids aimed at capturing "illegals" living here.

In Dearborn, memorial services are held for family and friends killed by U.S.-made bombs in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine. Families throughout Detroit are losing their children to war, in the service of the U.S. military and to gang violence.

Racial divisions carve up our communities. Despite the fact that we are all being brutalized by the same system, all too often, our communities remain fragmented and un-united.

Amidst these crises, political leaders offer "hope" that corporate development downtown, mega sporting events and gentrification of certain neighborhoods will "bring Detroit back." But promises of salvation through these top-down measures leave many of us skeptical. We are wary of placing our hope in powers so distant from our own lives. While downtown is being redeveloped, many neighborhoods are getting left behind.

Our schools continue to be under-resourced as this country spends its wealth on prisons and bombs instead of its young people. School curriculum aims to prepare students to become workers, but many rightfully ask, where are the jobs and what does school really have to do with my life? Our schools are failing to address the real problems affecting our communities and more than 50 percent of students are dropping-out. Grace Lee Boggs has described these students not as drop-outs, but as "walk-outs," rejecting a system that has failed them.

Education is in dire crisis in our city as public schools deteriorate or shut down, charter schools multiply, and the dialogue around education remains stagnant, consistently excluding the voices and needs of the young people most affected by this crisis. Our schools are not doing enough to engage students in the process of rebuilding their communities.

Students have been responding by staging organized walk-outs to protest school conditions. We are inspired by the initiative of these student organizers and their willingness to take risks in fighting for change.

Non-profit organizations are stepping up to fill in some of the gaps left by our city's failing education system. These social service organizations are doing impressive work in providing meaningful opportunities for youth. However, we see a need for more organizations that will prepare youth to be organizers in their communities, to give them the support and skills they need to "bring back Detroit" through their own visions.

A Movement City

In Detroit we are living the hard realities of deindustrialization and urban neglect, of wars at home and abroad. But we take pride and inspiration in Detroit's living history of being a movement city. We are emboldened by the sense that we can change the way things are.

Our city was central in the battle for the dignity of working people in the Thirties and Forties. In the Fifties and Sixties, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements helped define the politics of the city, bringing advances in revolutionary theory and action as well as in electoral power. In the Eighties, Detroit political leaders supported South Africa divestment, nuclear disarmament, and built ties to anti-imperialist struggles in Central and South America. Detroit was the first city in the U.S. to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. The spirit of hope and resistance is with us as we approach the problems that we face today. As a collective we have been blessed with the support and presence of many elders and mentors who connect our current work to this history of organizing.

Today we see that Detroit continues to be a place where people are prepared to defend themselves and their communities. When congress threatened to pass the anti-immigrant bill HR4437, we saw the Latino population of Southwest Detroit march downtown, 40,000 strong. Months later, we saw thousands of people march in Dearborn and Detroit against the bombing of Lebanon and Palestine.

Detroit is a place where people are responding to oppressive social conditions not merely through protest, but by "living the change they want to see."

We have especially been inspired by the growth of Detroit's urban agriculture movement, through which

people are creatively responding to the problem of food insecurity in the city. We are seeing the continuing proliferation of community gardens and farms, gardens at schools, and the growth and sophistication of organizations that provide resources and support to urban farmers. Urban gardens provide meaningful and fun activities for young people, help reduce blight and improve communities, and provide healthy food. Through the practical and necessary problem of producing food, we are also restoring important connections between people and the earth.

As Detroit Summer helped inspire and grew alongside Detroit's community gardening movement, today we believe that that we are on the cusp of a new movement to define the future of education in our city. This is an opportunity to not just protest the failure of our schools but to create new direct action programs to transform education and the relationship between young people and their communities. Through the Live Arts Media Project and our Community Potlucks, the Detroit Summer Collective is dedicating itself to the work of supporting this new movement.

Here in the Cass Corridor

Since its founding in 1992, Detroit Summer has found a home in the Cass Corridor, which is often called the heart of the city. Hit hard by white flight, the 80's and 90's were hard years for the Corridor, as the area became one of the most poverty stricken in the nation. The loss of commerce in the area led to a shift from a small business-based economy to a drug economy. Homelessness became and continues to be one of the most serious problems in the Corridor.

Although the economic situation in the Cass Corridor is improving with the return of some small businesses, the neighborhood continues to experience many problems, lacking resources which can allow for stable community. There is no recreation center for the neighborhood and few centers to serve youth who live here.

Amidst the problems that have impacted the Corridor, this has been one of Detroit's most important centers for progressive subculture and diverse community. In many ways, the Cass Corridor represents the multicultural potential of Detroit. This neighborhood, with its problems and potential, has been fertile soil in which Detroit Summer has grown over the years. Since its founding, Detroit Summer has built community gardens, painted murals, hosted countless events and run a youth space in the Cass Corridor. Although our work has taken us all over the city, we have always been rooted here.

We continue to collaborate with the Cass Corridor Neighborhood Development Corporation (CCNDC), who build affordable housing in the Corridor. CCNDC is doing important work, holding off some of the negative effects of the increasing gentrification of the area. But this work of building housing infrastructure needs to be matched with the development of strong community amongst residents. Detroit Summer's monthly "Breaking Bread" potlucks, held in the CCNDC Community Space, are helping to build this community.

Core Values

Collective

Detroit Summer's collective leadership structure is an intentional, living expression of our commitment to democracy, cooperation and accountability to one another. The way we do things is as important as the final outcome. We see collectivity as an alternative to authoritarian and oppressive leadership structures, and as an alternative to the isolation and powerlessness of acting alone in the world.

Our collective is bound together by our personal commitments to one another and our commitment to the work of our organization. We hold weekly meetings in which we divide up responsibilities and roles and support each other in completing necessary tasks. As a non-hierarchical organization we can draw on the knowledge, experiences and skills of all of our members.

We accept greater accountability to each other than if we had a director whose job it was to delegate and monitor work. We work to know and value one another as full humans, not merely as colleagues. Our collective is a network of relationships that we are continually building.

Multi-Racial

The Detroit Summer Collective is a multi-racial collective with a commitment to a multi-racial organizing in Detroit. In this work, we aim to honor and connect with one another across our differences. We are inspired by this quote by poet Audre Lorde:

We have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change. Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.

Because our vision for the future of the city is a humanistic one, we attract people across lines of race, gender, class, sexuality and ability. We are unlikely to turn anyone away who shares our vision for the city and wants to take part in making it happen. As a result we are able to carry issues across community boundaries.

When we look around Detroit we see a lot of culturally-specific organizing, within the Black, Latino, Native, Asian and Arab communities, which are often pitted against one another on issues where all communities have common interests. We also see a disproportionate number of mostly-white social service organizations who may do good work and claim to be "inclusive" but do not actually create respectful space for people from different backgrounds to be involved. As a multi-racial collective we intersect all of these communities. Taking lessons from our mentors who were involved in the Black Power movement, the Labor Movement, the Women's Movement, the LGBTQ Movement and others, we see this vision of critical multiculturalism as a next step.

We believe it is necessary for there to be both ethnocentric groups and multicultural groups at the same time, as a reflection of where we are now in society and a vision of where we hope to be. Ultimately we believe that you can't compartmentalize justice and healing, that it's good to have a specialist like a foot doctor, but it is the health of the whole body that is desired, so the intention in the end has to be the well being of all people.

Inter-generational

It is inspiring to see someone who has done so much in their life, so Detroit Summer chooses to maintain intergenerational relationships. We have experienced that everyone's voice is important and believe everyone is an expert in their own experience. But something such as an elders wisdom is invaluable. Our mentors have walked in our shoes before and it just makes sense to bring them into our lives for balance and support and to learn from both their successes and what they recall as important tests and times they participated in the struggle to get through life and change the parts that were needless and destructive.

Detroit is full of elders with a lot to say, stories to tell and lessons to teach, but we have to have/create intergenerational spaces if we want to have the opportunities for a back and forth. There we can offer our hopes and concerns with how we are all doing and nurture this age diversity and different energy between different perspectives. It's nurturing to have young and old in the same space.

Words are a lot more powerful when they are accompanied with action, so the actions of our elders are particularly interesting to us, like a walk out, takeover, whatever method they used or still do is another way we can learn from them.

Youth

If you are a parent, or have ever worked with youth, you must know that they are the most inspiring,

challenging, energetic and fun people to spend your time with. We believe it is not for us to lead them, but for young people to tell us where they want to go and for the members of the Detroit Summer collective to figure out the way to get there together. We have made it a priority, since the inception of Detroit Summer, to work with our future leaders as equals. We can learn so much from them, about them, and about ourselves.

Youth often have new interests and fresh perspectives to bring to the table. Contrary to the way our institutions are organized now, they deserve the same respect and considerations as any adult. Detroit Summer believes it is our responsibility, both to them and in the belief in our efforts towards social change, that to not engage them assures failure.

Because youth are scapegoated and victims of the failures of what came before them, they are targeted within our consumer society. Corporations try and use their open minds towards making a profit and define their values for them. We mean to help youth find their own values. Together, we hope to lay the foundations for values and guiding principles that will promote justice, equality and ethics that properly inform and energize one another as to how we are to get ourselves out of the crises we see happening all over, from Detroit to Iraq.

Pop Ed

"Popular education is experience-based and action-oriented, bringing people at the grass roots together for dialogue in a non-hierarchical setting enabling them to analyze the conditions in which they live and to develop plans for collective action based on their own values and perceived needs."

--Escuela Popular Norteña

We see pop ed. as an antidote to the way education happens in schools. it helps us to unlearn the values and learning methods conditioned into us by schools, replacing them with critical-thinking and creativity.

Pop ed. replaces hierarchy with collectivity, destabilizing the idea that a teacher has all of the answers. When we act as facilitators of group discussions, rather than teachers of particular lessons, we become participants in the learning process. We talk *with* people rather than *at* people and this allows individuals to have greater control over the content and process of their learning.

Pop ed. emphasizes questions rather than answers. We understand that the most crucial aspect of critical thinking is the ability to ask questions. To ask good questions is to be curious about the world around us. This curiosity leads us to a deeper understanding of the world and empowers us as decision-makers in our own lives.

Pop ed. fosters creativity rather than standardization and repetition, making concepts relevant and personal. It uses unconventional media to communicate and to express concepts. Music, theater, video, poetry and visual art replace textbooks and lectures.

Pop ed. is experiential, meaning it allows people to learn through experience and also to draw knowledge from their previous life experiences, rather than center learning around an arbitrary standard.

Question: What would it look like for pop ed strategies to be applied in schooling on a mass scale?

Media

Accurate (and interesting) knowledge about what is going on in the world is essential in helping make informed choices before actions are taken. This kind of information is not always so easy to come by, or participate in making. Media has been consolidated to the point only a handful of corporations control what gets out there and limit the amount of critical dialogue that is available for the public. They are biased due to their financial relationships to other groups, and their motives for profit, less learning.

Detroit Summer has been trying to decentralize this control, diversify the types of media by giving more people a voice for 15 years now. We have learned that if we become the media we not only do not have to

compromise what we want to say, but we help create a space or opening for change.

Social change does not just happen through new ideas and the same old methods either. It is important we connect with each other and do so with emotion, relevance and imagination. In the process of making media we become aware and critical of other media. By telling our own stories it is revealed that there's only versions, rather than the ultimate truths. Recently we have asked local community members their thoughts around particular issues and published them... We use the airwaves because they are a public treasure either through the internet or radio and forward ideas that come from those barely ever asked their opinion, because we know that with greater control of one's own reality how that is forwarded is a powerful means for us to connect with one another. Beyond just writing articles, which is something we do, creating murals for instance paints colorful visions of both what is wrong and what we want. Throughout the Cass Corridor was an early way Detroit Summer helped to turn up the volume on youth voices. Also, we continue to use poetry and community gatherings in the form of potlucks as a form of media creation and information transfer.

Art

As members of the Detroit Summer collective, we are all artists *and* organizers. Though some of us may identify as one or the other more strongly on a given day, we work towards an expanded definition of what it means to be both of those things. Historically, we've seen a false divide set up between "art" and "organizing" -- rooted in the idea that one is fanciful and the other revolutionary, or that one is transformative and the other mundane. We look to the words of Toni Cade Bambara who, among many others, laid a path for artists to be revolutionary organizers and vice versa:

"... And the contracts we creative combatants will make to mutually care and cure each other into wholesomeness. And the blueprints we will draw up of the new order we will make manifest. And the personal uncton we will discover in the mirror, in the dreams, or on the path across This Bridge. The work: To make revolution irresistible."

We see "revolution" the ability to envision a society based on liberation and love, to express that vision to other people and to build it into reality through struggling in community with other people.

In our city, we have some of the most brilliant minds, capable hands and open hearts. We find them in the poets and MCs, graffiti-writers and b-girls, in the radical teachers, farmers, bike mechanics and muralists, in the small-business owners, media-makers, labor organizers and anti-war activists, and in the unexpected compassion of people random people walking down the street.

We're building a community that tunnels between all these different communities of artists and organizers in our city. Through these tunnels, which may take the shape of events, or projects, love affairs or friendships, we aim to connect, inspire and mutually support one another.

For Detroit Summer we do not know what better way there is to create change effectively than to use art as a powerful weapon. It is underutilized in our society and youth connect to it. Art is a part of the human spirit and engaging in such creativity is a reifying experience that is essentially a reminder of our humanity. It forces you to open your mind to different ways of thinking and is therefore liberating.

For those involved in the Detroit Summer collective making art is so much apart of who we all are, we are compelled to make art a natural extension of our creative organizing. Since it is so vast we use it as a seamless part of our organizing. In past generations and efforts at times there was a perceived disconnect between artists and activists. We use it as an intersection and because the act of experiencing it is so powerful we think it is more useful than political rhetoric.

When we actually break down what art is we understand that it is a representation or symbol of a vision, so it makes change (or the desire for) tangible. Art can also help deprogram while simultaneously help give space to creating meaning of one's own experiences. In the end our goal is for individuals and communities

to express these personal experiences rather than give away your force to the system.

Garden

Indeed, Detroit Summer feels an insatiable appetite for creative organizing and one of the means we have successfully used to satisfy this hunger is the reclaiming of land through gardening. Gardening in Detroit makes a lot of sense, and for Detroit Summer it has been a symbol of our vision, and approach to the world. We see so many other urban gardeners/farmers now and are excited that gardening is apart of our history, our “roots”, and that our organizations efforts have had a long standing effect on our city.

If we insist on anything though, it is that Detroiters of the future are healthy and gardening is a key step that we can take towards a healthy mind, body and spirit. Something casinos are definitely not going to give us. Urban growers know that as far as our cities economy is concerned, the way forward is not backwards been done models of improvement that never even touch the core of the problem, but planning that is a holistic approach to change and development. Of course, casinos may temporarily create some jobs and money for the cities coffers, but so would have a massive public works gardening program. We must never expect those with power to lift the people of our city up to the point of being healthy though, we have to do it ourselves. So, if art is our weapon then certainly food is our medicine and local food production is one of the ways we will get healthy and free from the control of others.

Bare in mind that people across the United States and the world have been reinventing how we live in cities, so Detroit is actually in the forefront of a movement that we sususpect most so called leaders actually have no idea about. It is likely that either our grassroots efforts towards a sustainable model of development will either be claimed as legitimate and now under the much needed supervision of the state taking our power from us, or that we will have to defend our efforts from those who only see the potential for profit when they look at the land and use eminent domain to get what they want. This is what is going on elsewhere and already in Detroit too. No issue is so black and white, but make no mistake this issue is very important for us to push and fight for. A community garden can help fight isolation, save our schools and be a truly revolutionary classroom for all, reminding us about the cycles of life and death and how there is a lot of life on this planet to keep in mind when we talk about the future.

Fundraising

We are recovering addicts of the non-profit-industrial complex. When we first started out, Detroit Summer was all-volunteer-run. We had a microscopic budget and a huge vision. When we built a community garden in a given neighborhood, we had to ask the neighbors to borrow their tools. This interdependency brewed community as well as accountability. Years later, we found ourselves trapped beneath the weight of certain grant awards that at first had seemed as vast and limitless as our vision. Through them we expanded our programming, hired a large staff and a built a global reputation. But in the end, we were wedded to a funding system which ultimately left us disorganized, disinvested from our vision and thousands of dollars in debt. We narrowly escaped with our hope in tact.

Today we aim to have as diverse of a funding base as humanly possible so that we don't have to answer to one particular source. But if we *are* going to answer to anybody we believe it should be the people in the communities that we are a part of / work in, rather than to far-removed funders.

We fund our community potlucks with the \$20 - \$50 we usually take in at each dinner. This works out because we rely heavily on hook-ups from friends who work in food-distribution, generous mothers who cook obscene amount of chicken, and the unexpected arrivals of food on any given night.

We aren't opposed to soliciting grant money or accepting large unsolicited donations from random sources (like Pearl Jam!) but we are 100% committed to keeping such income in line with our ultimate vision for self and community-reliance. Especially in the context of our city's economic crisis, we want to be a model of working-with-what-we-have, making-something-out-of-nothing and relying on the creativity and generosity of ourselves to make our dreams happen.

