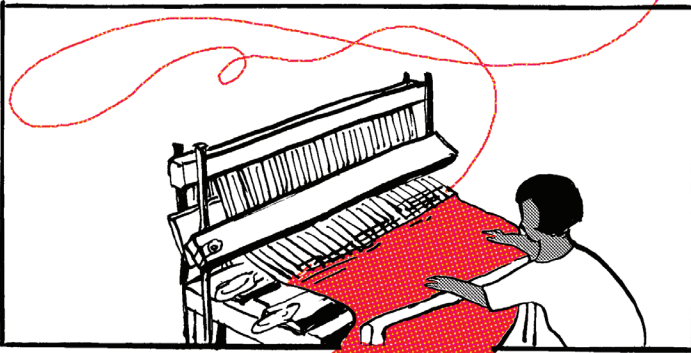
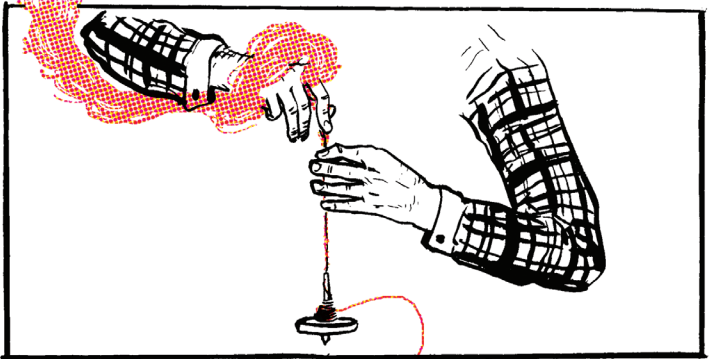


BUILD
DSA



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Introduction

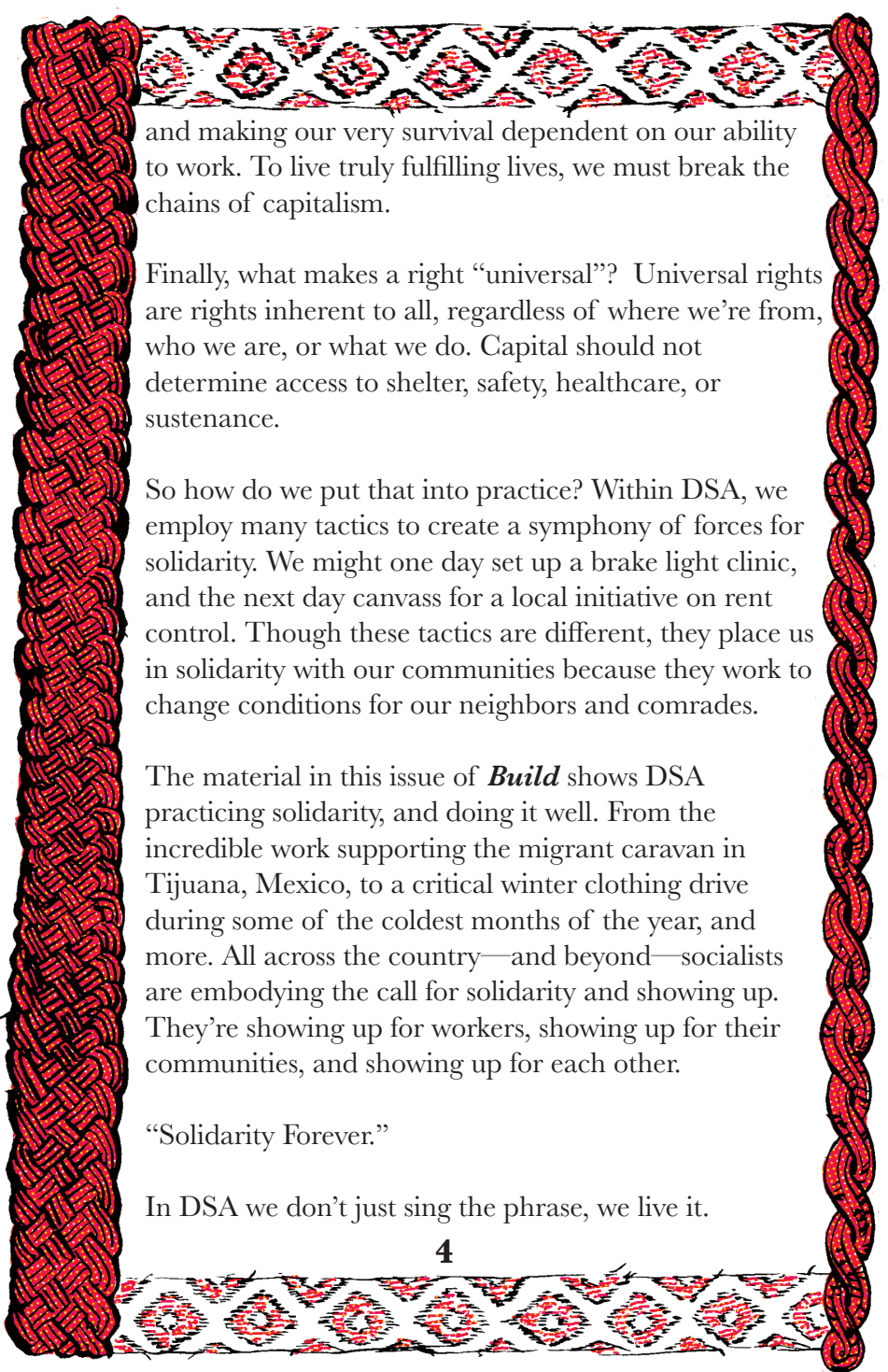
S “Solidarity Forever.”

It’s a phrase used a lot in DSA. We sing the union anthem at most gatherings and use it as valediction in emails. We say it when our comrades are striving, be it on the picket lines or on the ballot.

But what do we really mean when we say “solidarity forever”? We mean that we, as socialists, are dedicated to standing with the working class, understanding our issues and struggles, and working to positively change our conditions. We mean that as believers in a universal right to a dignified and fulfilling life, we will forever and everywhere side with those being denied such a life against those who seek to deny it.

What makes a life “dignified”? As socialists, we understand that everyone deserves to live with honor and respect, but capitalist interests exploit and divide us. We fight to create the material conditions that allow people to continue the unifying struggle towards socialism.

What makes life “fulfilling”? A fulfilling life is not dictated by servitude for survival. When we build community and expend our energy on meaningful pursuits, that is when we are truly living fulfilling lives. Capitalism seeks to compromise that fulfillment for its own gain; through alienation, through wage slavery



and making our very survival dependent on our ability to work. To live truly fulfilling lives, we must break the chains of capitalism.

Finally, what makes a right “universal”? Universal rights are rights inherent to all, regardless of where we’re from, who we are, or what we do. Capital should not determine access to shelter, safety, healthcare, or sustenance.

So how do we put that into practice? Within DSA, we employ many tactics to create a symphony of forces for solidarity. We might one day set up a brake light clinic, and the next day canvass for a local initiative on rent control. Though these tactics are different, they place us in solidarity with our communities because they work to change conditions for our neighbors and comrades.

The material in this issue of *Build* shows DSA practicing solidarity, and doing it well. From the incredible work supporting the migrant caravan in Tijuana, Mexico, to a critical winter clothing drive during some of the coldest months of the year, and more. All across the country—and beyond—socialists are embodying the call for solidarity and showing up. They’re showing up for workers, showing up for their communities, and showing up for each other.

“Solidarity Forever.”

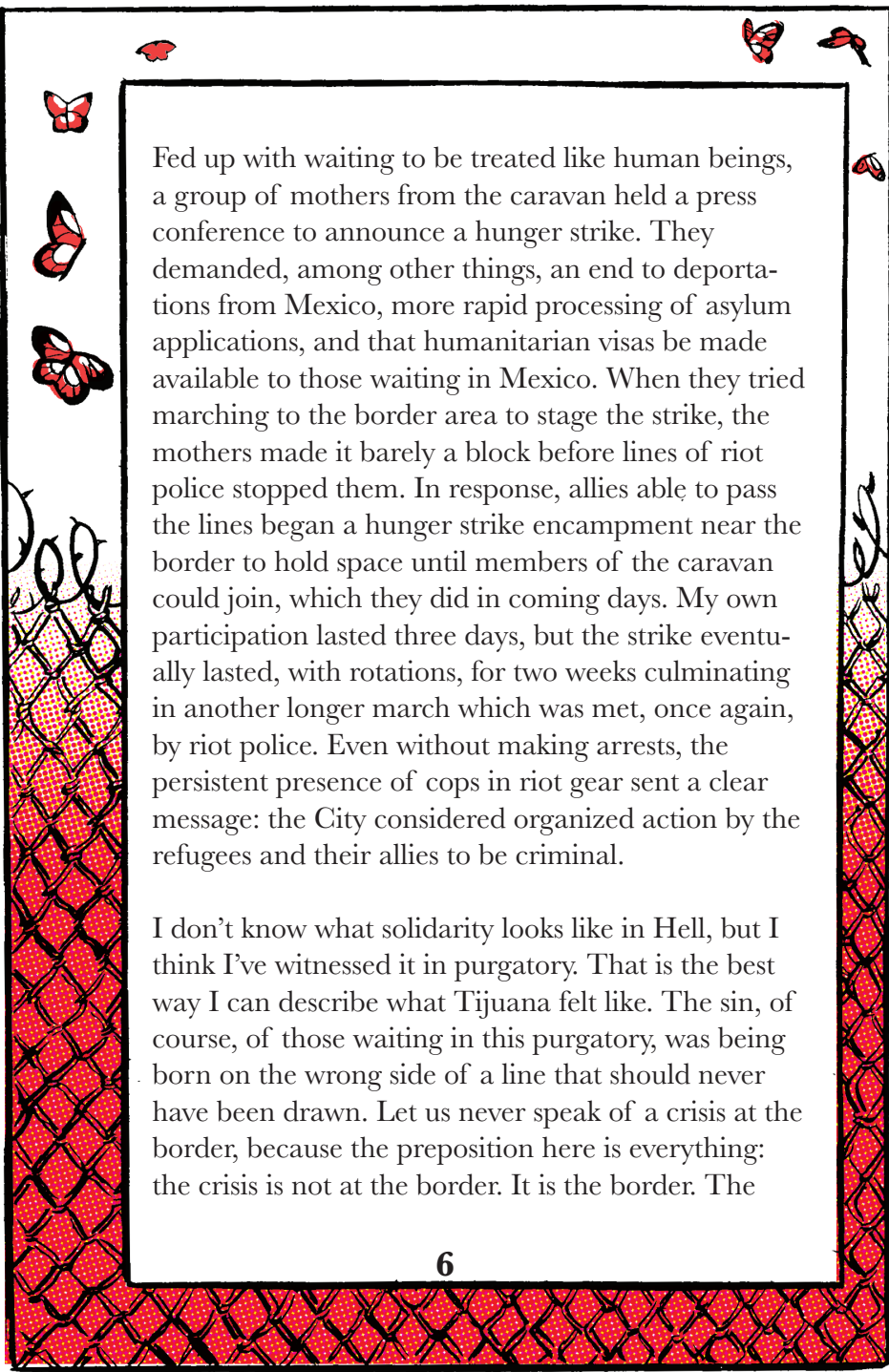
In DSA we don’t just sing the phrase, we live it.

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Solidarity at the Border

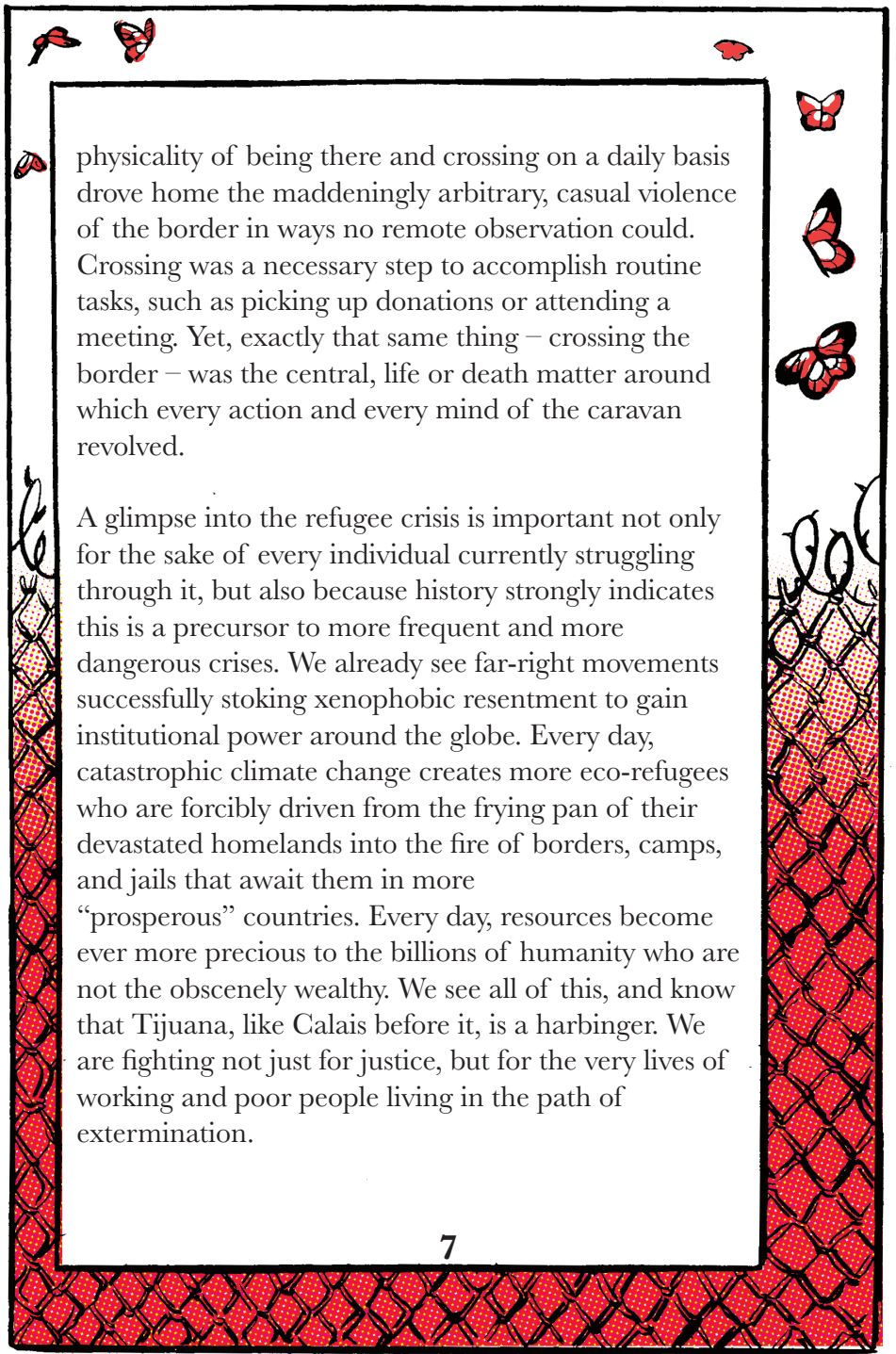
In November 2018, I arrived at the Mexican-American border between Tijuana and San Diego. The largest (yet) number of refugees traveling north together had recently reached Tijuana amidst the political theatre of the Republican-orchestrated “crisis at the border.” The situation appeared to still be at a climax, complete with thousands of troops and public flirtation with a declaration of a national emergency. Mere days before I had landed, border patrol agents fired tear gas on peaceful refugees, including children, attempting to cross the border into the U.S.

My first full day there, it was pouring rain. In the middle of a long drought and wildfires devastating the region, that drenched day and the havoc it wreaked on the refugees’ material situation was a harsh reminder of climate change’s increasingly dominant role in spurring ever-worsening refugee crises all over the globe, including the one at our own southern border. The rain prompted an outcry and demands from caravan participants for officials to address the flooded, unsanitary, and generally inhumane conditions of their packed shelter.

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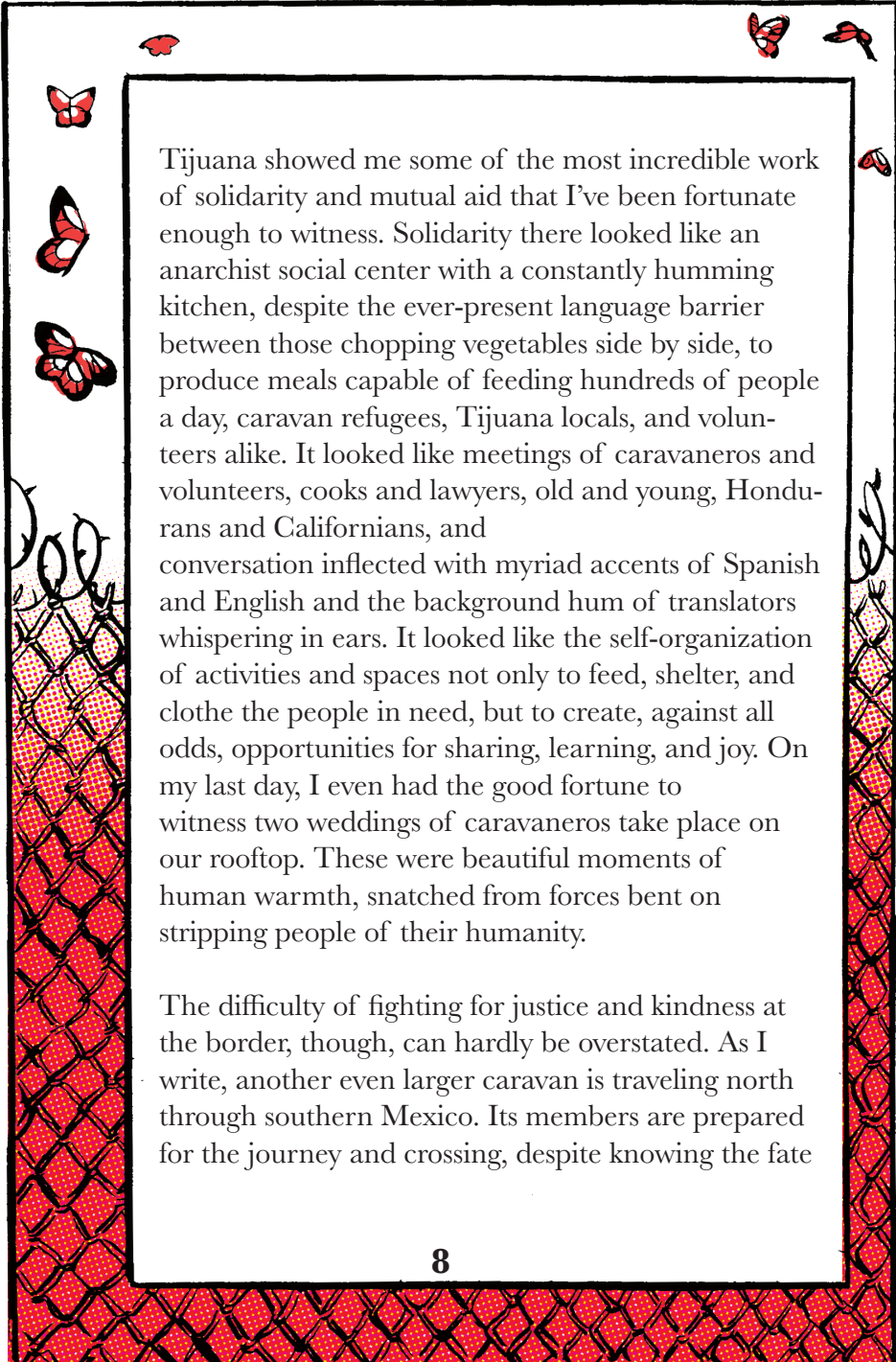
Fed up with waiting to be treated like human beings, a group of mothers from the caravan held a press conference to announce a hunger strike. They demanded, among other things, an end to deportations from Mexico, more rapid processing of asylum applications, and that humanitarian visas be made available to those waiting in Mexico. When they tried marching to the border area to stage the strike, the mothers made it barely a block before lines of riot police stopped them. In response, allies able to pass the lines began a hunger strike encampment near the border to hold space until members of the caravan could join, which they did in coming days. My own participation lasted three days, but the strike eventually lasted, with rotations, for two weeks culminating in another longer march which was met, once again, by riot police. Even without making arrests, the persistent presence of cops in riot gear sent a clear message: the City considered organized action by the refugees and their allies to be criminal.

I don't know what solidarity looks like in Hell, but I think I've witnessed it in purgatory. That is the best way I can describe what Tijuana felt like. The sin, of course, of those waiting in this purgatory, was being born on the wrong side of a line that should never have been drawn. Let us never speak of a crisis at the border, because the preposition here is everything: the crisis is not at the border. It is the border. The

The page is framed by a decorative border. At the top, there are several red and black butterflies. The sides of the page are decorated with a vertical strip of chain-link fence, with red and black butterflies interspersed. The bottom of the page is a solid red area with a black chain-link fence pattern.

physicality of being there and crossing on a daily basis drove home the maddeningly arbitrary, casual violence of the border in ways no remote observation could. Crossing was a necessary step to accomplish routine tasks, such as picking up donations or attending a meeting. Yet, exactly that same thing – crossing the border – was the central, life or death matter around which every action and every mind of the caravan revolved.

A glimpse into the refugee crisis is important not only for the sake of every individual currently struggling through it, but also because history strongly indicates this is a precursor to more frequent and more dangerous crises. We already see far-right movements successfully stoking xenophobic resentment to gain institutional power around the globe. Every day, catastrophic climate change creates more eco-refugees who are forcibly driven from the frying pan of their devastated homelands into the fire of borders, camps, and jails that await them in more “prosperous” countries. Every day, resources become ever more precious to the billions of humanity who are not the obscenely wealthy. We see all of this, and know that Tijuana, like Calais before it, is a harbinger. We are fighting not just for justice, but for the very lives of working and poor people living in the path of extermination.



Tijuana showed me some of the most incredible work of solidarity and mutual aid that I've been fortunate enough to witness. Solidarity there looked like an anarchist social center with a constantly humming kitchen, despite the ever-present language barrier between those chopping vegetables side by side, to produce meals capable of feeding hundreds of people a day, caravan refugees, Tijuana locals, and volunteers alike. It looked like meetings of caravaneros and volunteers, cooks and lawyers, old and young, Hondurans and Californians, and conversation inflected with myriad accents of Spanish and English and the background hum of translators whispering in ears. It looked like the self-organization of activities and spaces not only to feed, shelter, and clothe the people in need, but to create, against all odds, opportunities for sharing, learning, and joy. On my last day, I even had the good fortune to witness two weddings of caravaneros take place on our rooftop. These were beautiful moments of human warmth, snatched from forces bent on stripping people of their humanity.

The difficulty of fighting for justice and kindness at the border, though, can hardly be overstated. As I write, another even larger caravan is traveling north through southern Mexico. Its members are prepared for the journey and crossing, despite knowing the fate



most refugees have met over the last few months. Riot police and tear gas. Crowded and unsanitary shelters. Hostile locals and even more hostile border officials. Even the luckiest few who manage to cross the border endure detention and yet more hostile immigration officials, with deportation still hanging over their heads.

This work will continue over the next months, years, and decades, as violence comes at the poorest and most exploited people in the world from all directions: from capitalist-driven climate change and “natural” disasters, from the borders and the imperialist state apparatuses that they reify, and from the capitalist class manipulating working class individuals on the other side of the borders into complicity with their reactionary agenda. In the face of this violence, like the dispossessed that Ursula Le Guin wrote about in her beloved and radical novel, we must come with empty hands and the desire to unbuild walls.

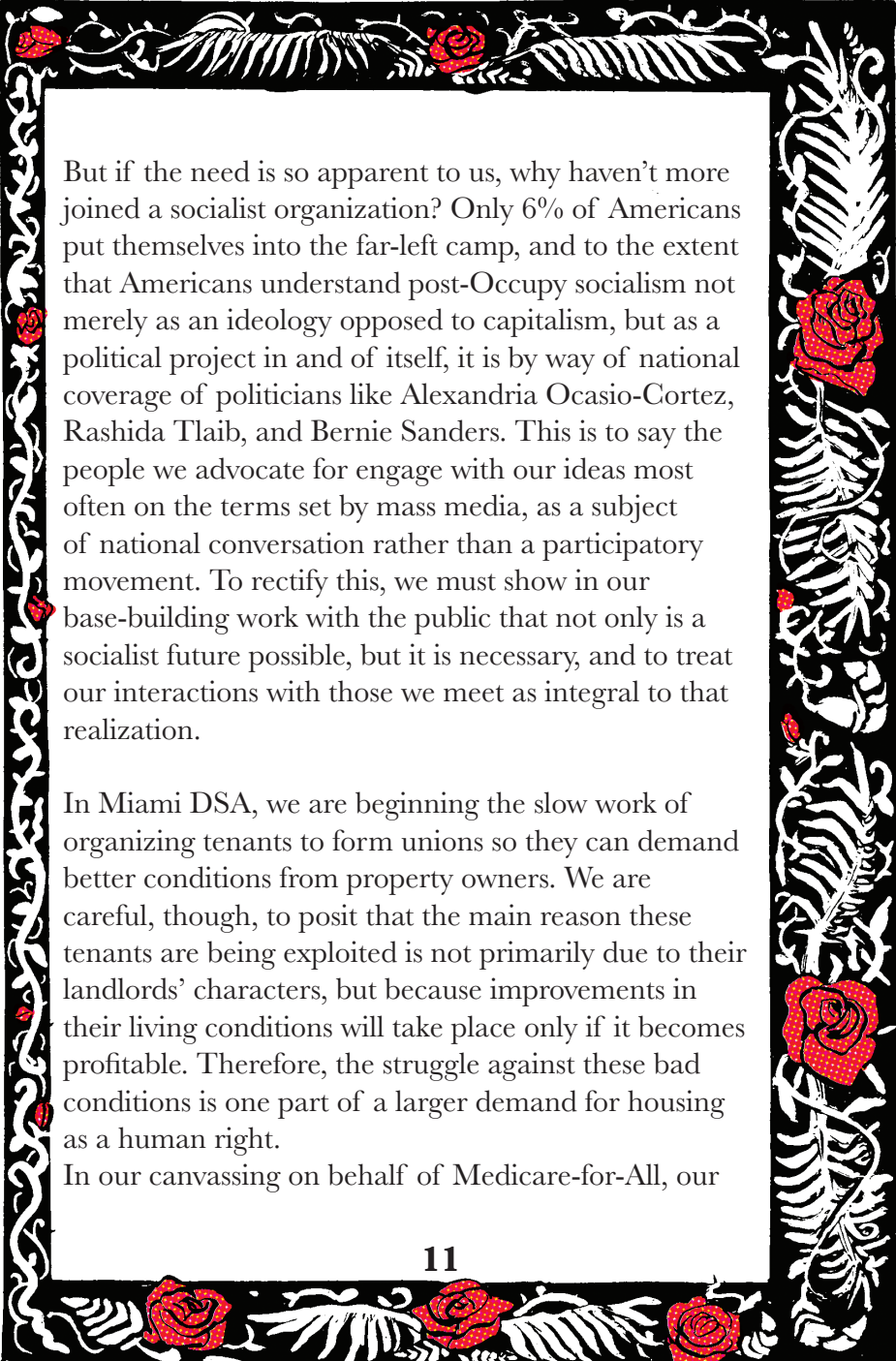


Base-Building in Miami

One of the ironies of being a socialist in the 21st century is the declaration that we are “for the many,” and yet are so few in number ourselves. It’s easier said than done, but if we are to build a revolutionary force capable of altering our economic and political conditions, we need many more active socialists.

This is a point we often lose (or perhaps forget) in the insular hot take wars of the day, but our success—for it is possible that we will fail—will depend on engaging the unengaged, and readicalizing the already politicized. This can be tiring, unglamorous, and often thankless work, as the task of earning trust from people who neither know nor care about our project yields many more rejections than conversions.

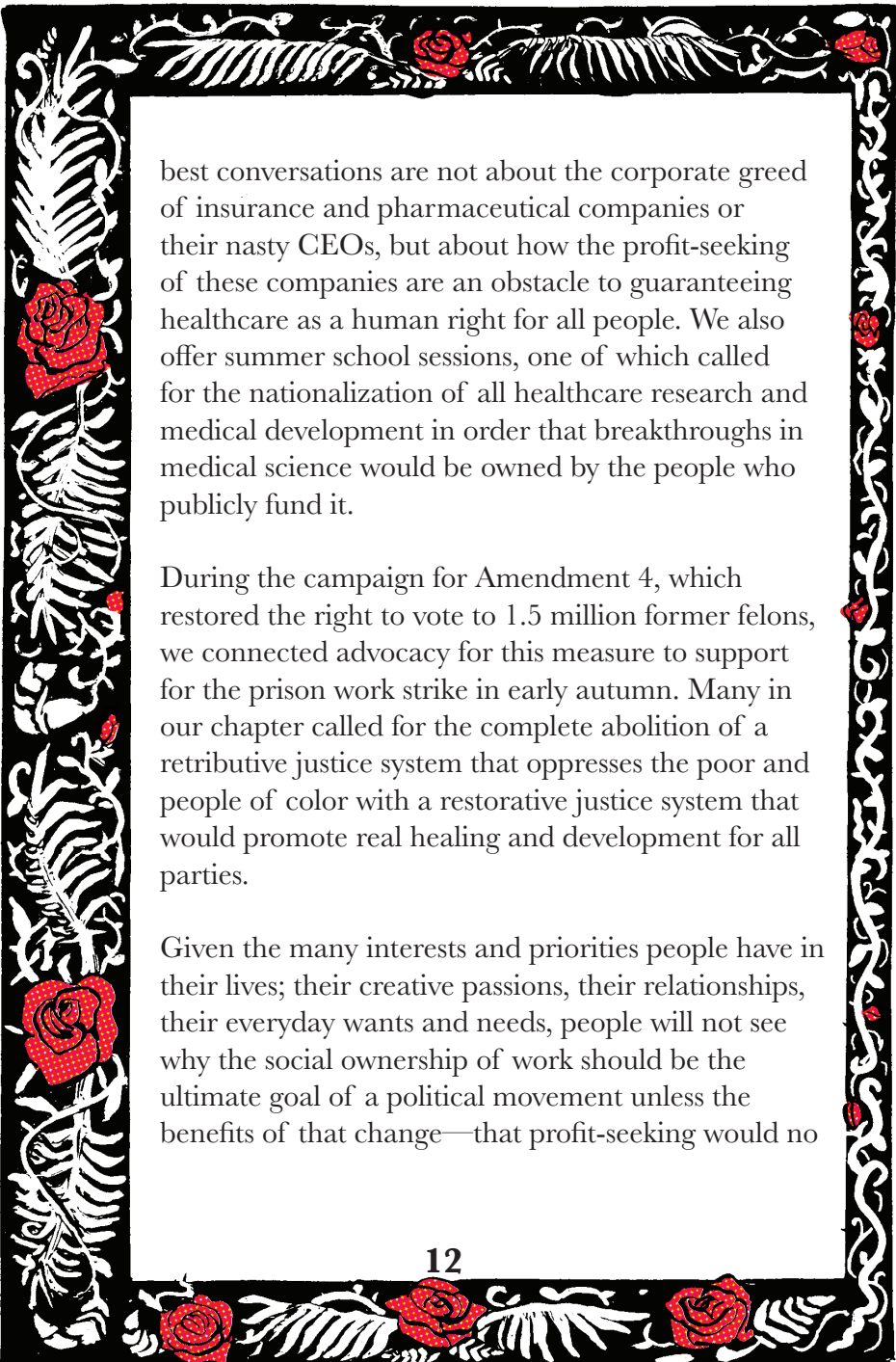
In order for that to change, we must introduce and persuade more people to the ideas we have to offer. We must connect the crises faced and shared by our communities to our current socioeconomic conditions, and advocate for socialism not merely as the necessary antidote to these immediate challenges, but as an emancipatory project committed to the self-actualization of every human being.



But if the need is so apparent to us, why haven't more joined a socialist organization? Only 6% of Americans put themselves into the far-left camp, and to the extent that Americans understand post-Occupy socialism not merely as an ideology opposed to capitalism, but as a political project in and of itself, it is by way of national coverage of politicians like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, and Bernie Sanders. This is to say the people we advocate for engage with our ideas most often on the terms set by mass media, as a subject of national conversation rather than a participatory movement. To rectify this, we must show in our base-building work with the public that not only is a socialist future possible, but it is necessary, and to treat our interactions with those we meet as integral to that realization.

In Miami DSA, we are beginning the slow work of organizing tenants to form unions so they can demand better conditions from property owners. We are careful, though, to posit that the main reason these tenants are being exploited is not primarily due to their landlords' characters, but because improvements in their living conditions will take place only if it becomes profitable. Therefore, the struggle against these bad conditions is one part of a larger demand for housing as a human right.

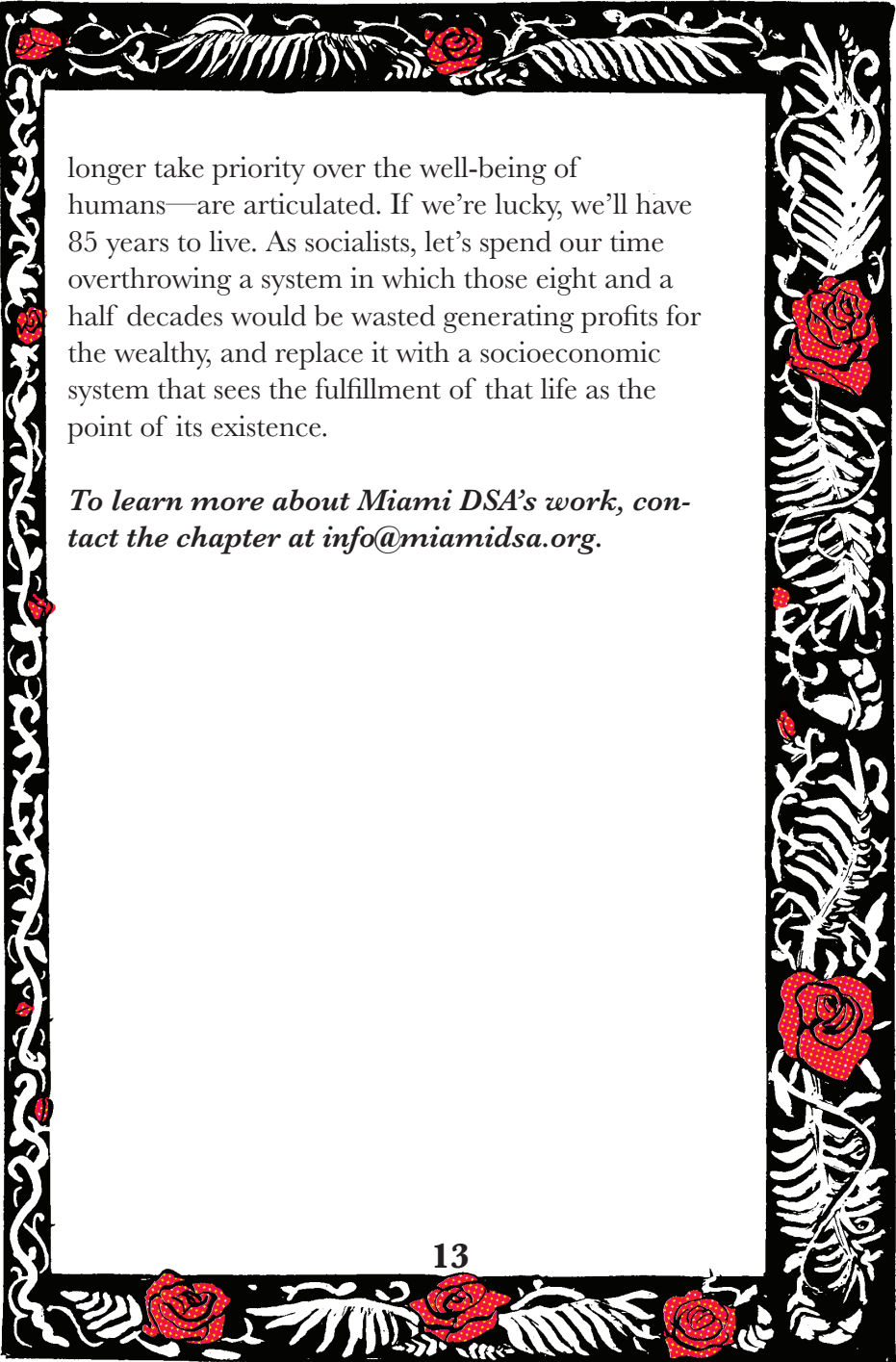
In our canvassing on behalf of Medicare-for-All, our



best conversations are not about the corporate greed of insurance and pharmaceutical companies or their nasty CEOs, but about how the profit-seeking of these companies are an obstacle to guaranteeing healthcare as a human right for all people. We also offer summer school sessions, one of which called for the nationalization of all healthcare research and medical development in order that breakthroughs in medical science would be owned by the people who publicly fund it.

During the campaign for Amendment 4, which restored the right to vote to 1.5 million former felons, we connected advocacy for this measure to support for the prison work strike in early autumn. Many in our chapter called for the complete abolition of a retributive justice system that oppresses the poor and people of color with a restorative justice system that would promote real healing and development for all parties.

Given the many interests and priorities people have in their lives; their creative passions, their relationships, their everyday wants and needs, people will not see why the social ownership of work should be the ultimate goal of a political movement unless the benefits of that change—that profit-seeking would no



longer take priority over the well-being of humans—are articulated. If we're lucky, we'll have 85 years to live. As socialists, let's spend our time overthrowing a system in which those eight and a half decades would be wasted generating profits for the wealthy, and replace it with a socioeconomic system that sees the fulfillment of that life as the point of its existence.

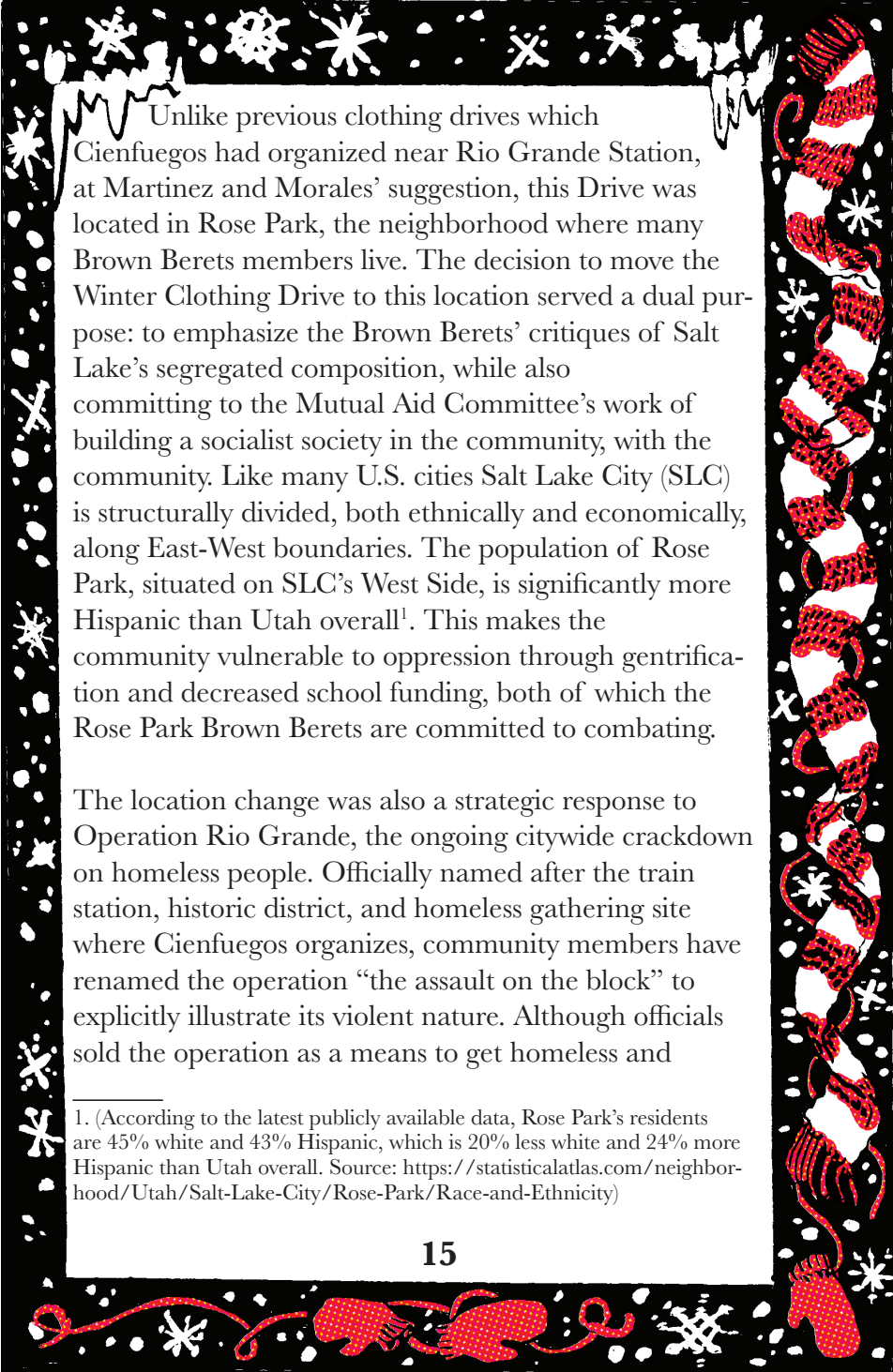
To learn more about Miami DSA's work, contact the chapter at info@miamidsa.org.



Coalitions in the Cold: Salt Lake City

In December 2018, Alex Morales and Carlos Martinez, two dual-carding members of the Rose Park Brown Berets and Salt Lake DSA Mutual Aid Committee, and Gabe Cienfuegos, a local socialist organizer, saw an opportunity to fortify efforts in their community's struggle with homelessness. Having collaborated before, they understood the lost potential when various socialist groups in Salt Lake City conducted isolated, yet similar, mutual aid work with the homeless population.

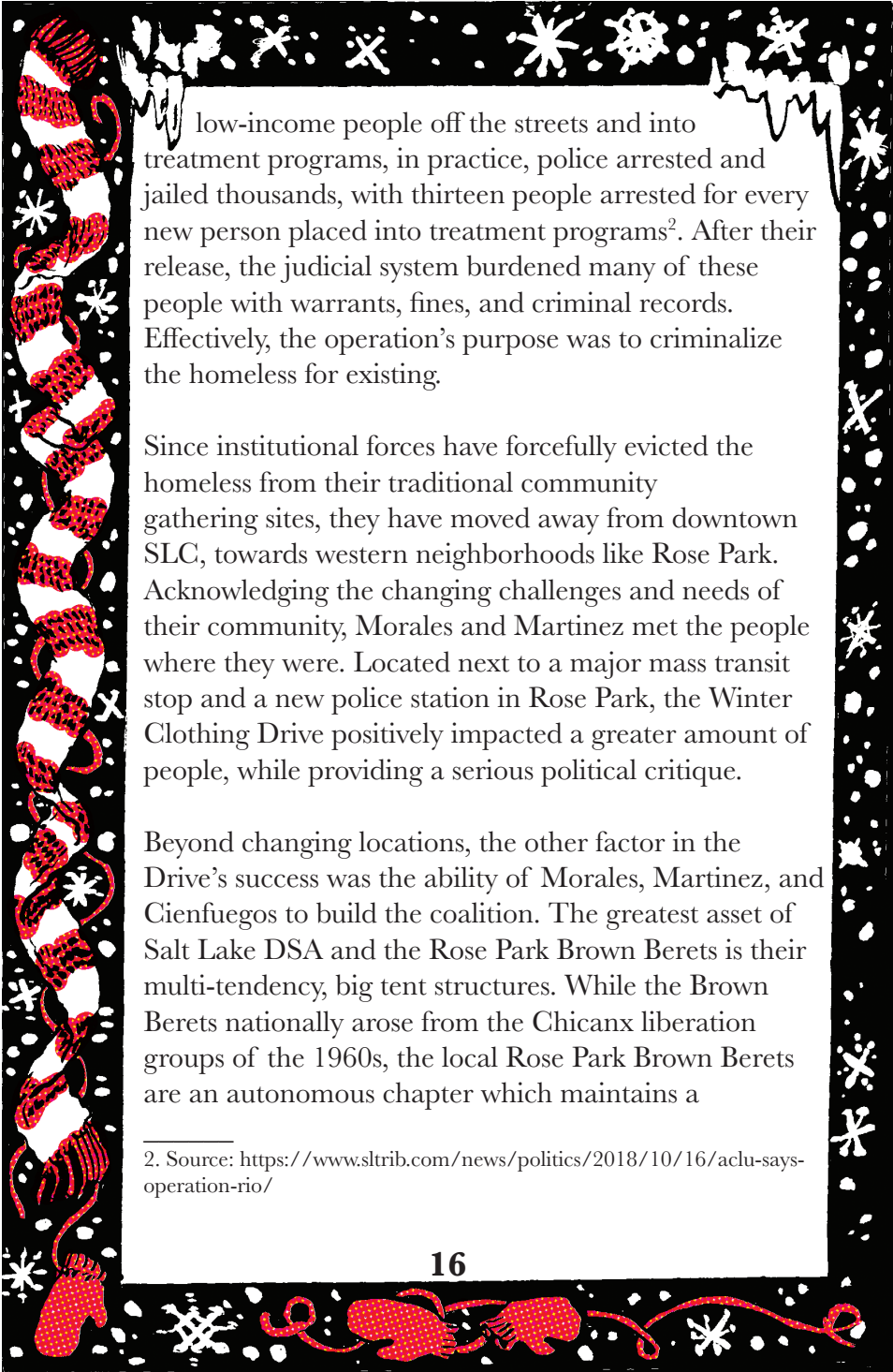
Putting collective action into practice, Morales, Martinez, and Cienfuegos engaged a network of allied organizations and activist circles. Their efforts brought together seven Salt Lake socialist organizations for one large event on December 29th: the Utah Harm Reduction Coalition, Utah Against Police Brutality, Union for Street Solidarity, Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), Salt Lake DSA, and Rose Park Brown Berets. Amidst the holiday cheer and shared commitments, this diverse coalition held the Winter Clothing Drive, the largest unified mutual aid drive in the Wasatch Valley's recent memory. Socialists of all stripes changed the material conditions of those most in need, while spreading knowledge about campaigns and initiatives happening in the surrounding area.



Unlike previous clothing drives which Cienfuegos had organized near Rio Grande Station, at Martinez and Morales' suggestion, this Drive was located in Rose Park, the neighborhood where many Brown Berets members live. The decision to move the Winter Clothing Drive to this location served a dual purpose: to emphasize the Brown Berets' critiques of Salt Lake's segregated composition, while also committing to the Mutual Aid Committee's work of building a socialist society in the community, with the community. Like many U.S. cities Salt Lake City (SLC) is structurally divided, both ethnically and economically, along East-West boundaries. The population of Rose Park, situated on SLC's West Side, is significantly more Hispanic than Utah overall¹. This makes the community vulnerable to oppression through gentrification and decreased school funding, both of which the Rose Park Brown Berets are committed to combating.

The location change was also a strategic response to Operation Rio Grande, the ongoing citywide crackdown on homeless people. Officially named after the train station, historic district, and homeless gathering site where Cienfuegos organizes, community members have renamed the operation "the assault on the block" to explicitly illustrate its violent nature. Although officials sold the operation as a means to get homeless and

1. (According to the latest publicly available data, Rose Park's residents are 45% white and 43% Hispanic, which is 20% less white and 24% more Hispanic than Utah overall. Source: <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Utah/Salt-Lake-City/Rose-Park/Race-and-Ethnicity>)

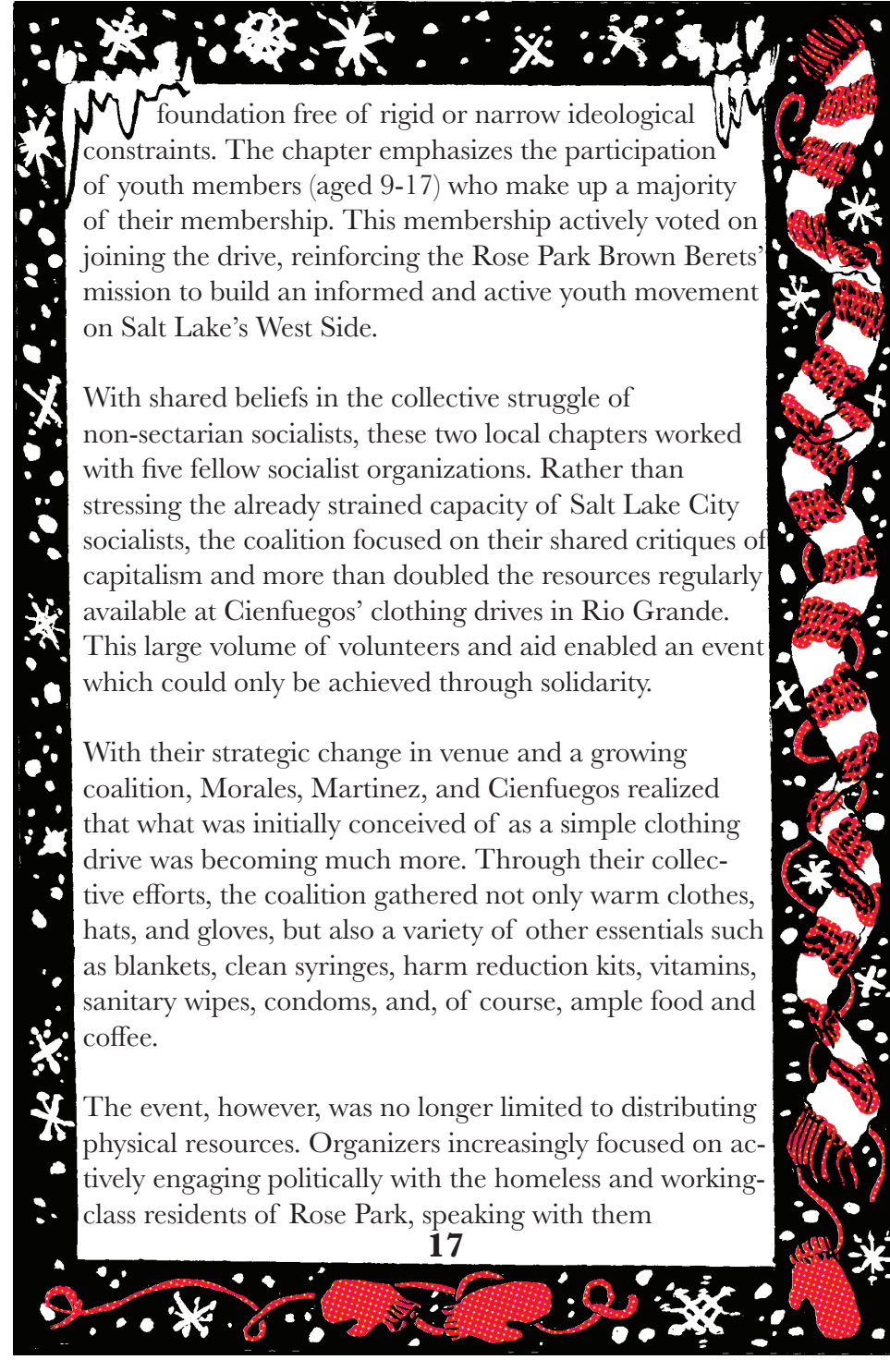


low-income people off the streets and into treatment programs, in practice, police arrested and jailed thousands, with thirteen people arrested for every new person placed into treatment programs². After their release, the judicial system burdened many of these people with warrants, fines, and criminal records. Effectively, the operation's purpose was to criminalize the homeless for existing.

Since institutional forces have forcefully evicted the homeless from their traditional community gathering sites, they have moved away from downtown SLC, towards western neighborhoods like Rose Park. Acknowledging the changing challenges and needs of their community, Morales and Martinez met the people where they were. Located next to a major mass transit stop and a new police station in Rose Park, the Winter Clothing Drive positively impacted a greater amount of people, while providing a serious political critique.

Beyond changing locations, the other factor in the Drive's success was the ability of Morales, Martinez, and Cienfuegos to build the coalition. The greatest asset of Salt Lake DSA and the Rose Park Brown Berets is their multi-tendency, big tent structures. While the Brown Berets nationally arose from the Chicax liberation groups of the 1960s, the local Rose Park Brown Berets are an autonomous chapter which maintains a

2. Source: <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2018/10/16/aclu-says-operation-rio/>

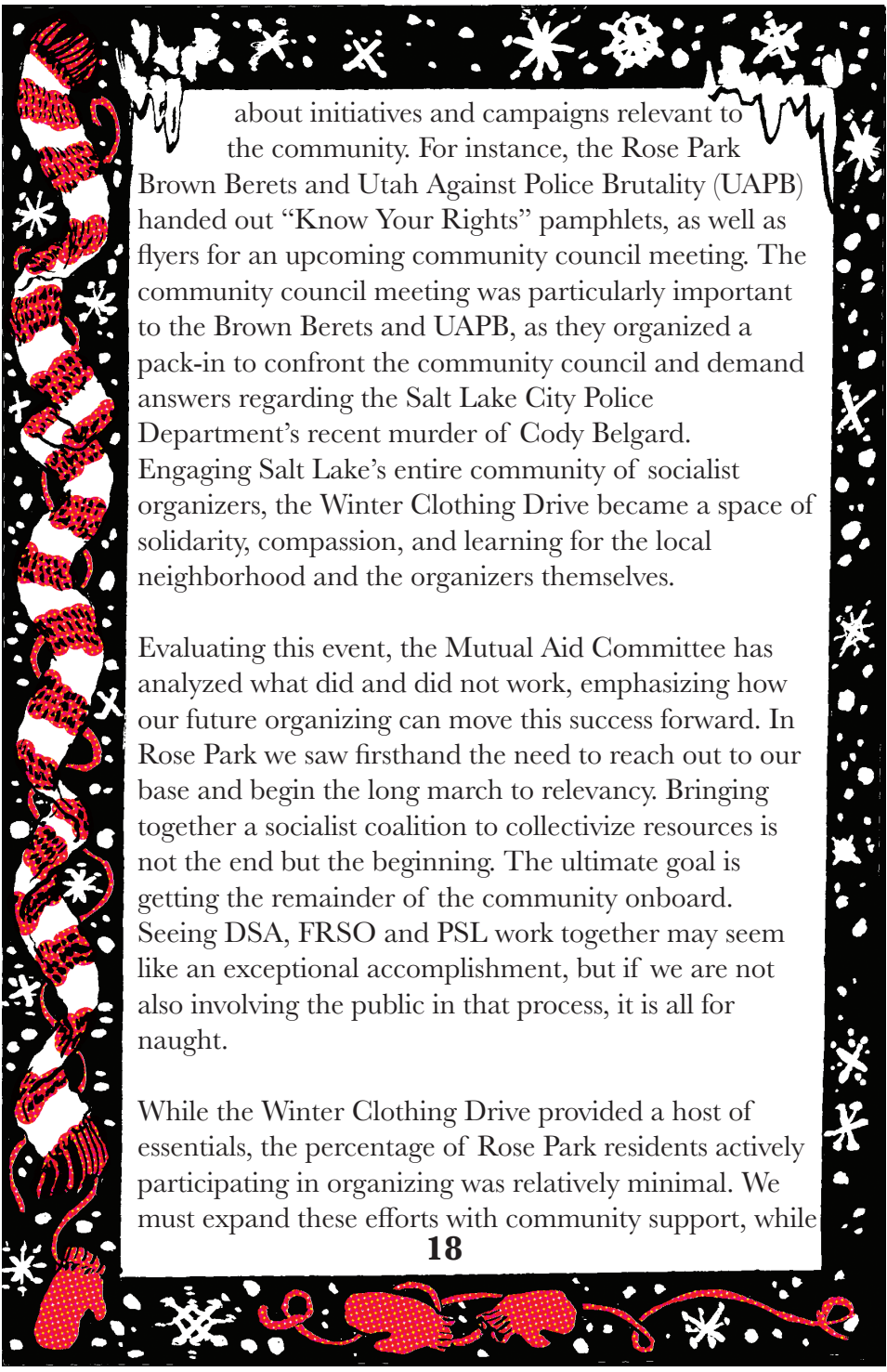


foundation free of rigid or narrow ideological constraints. The chapter emphasizes the participation of youth members (aged 9-17) who make up a majority of their membership. This membership actively voted on joining the drive, reinforcing the Rose Park Brown Berets' mission to build an informed and active youth movement on Salt Lake's West Side.

With shared beliefs in the collective struggle of non-sectarian socialists, these two local chapters worked with five fellow socialist organizations. Rather than stressing the already strained capacity of Salt Lake City socialists, the coalition focused on their shared critiques of capitalism and more than doubled the resources regularly available at Cienfuegos' clothing drives in Rio Grande. This large volume of volunteers and aid enabled an event which could only be achieved through solidarity.

With their strategic change in venue and a growing coalition, Morales, Martinez, and Cienfuegos realized that what was initially conceived of as a simple clothing drive was becoming much more. Through their collective efforts, the coalition gathered not only warm clothes, hats, and gloves, but also a variety of other essentials such as blankets, clean syringes, harm reduction kits, vitamins, sanitary wipes, condoms, and, of course, ample food and coffee.

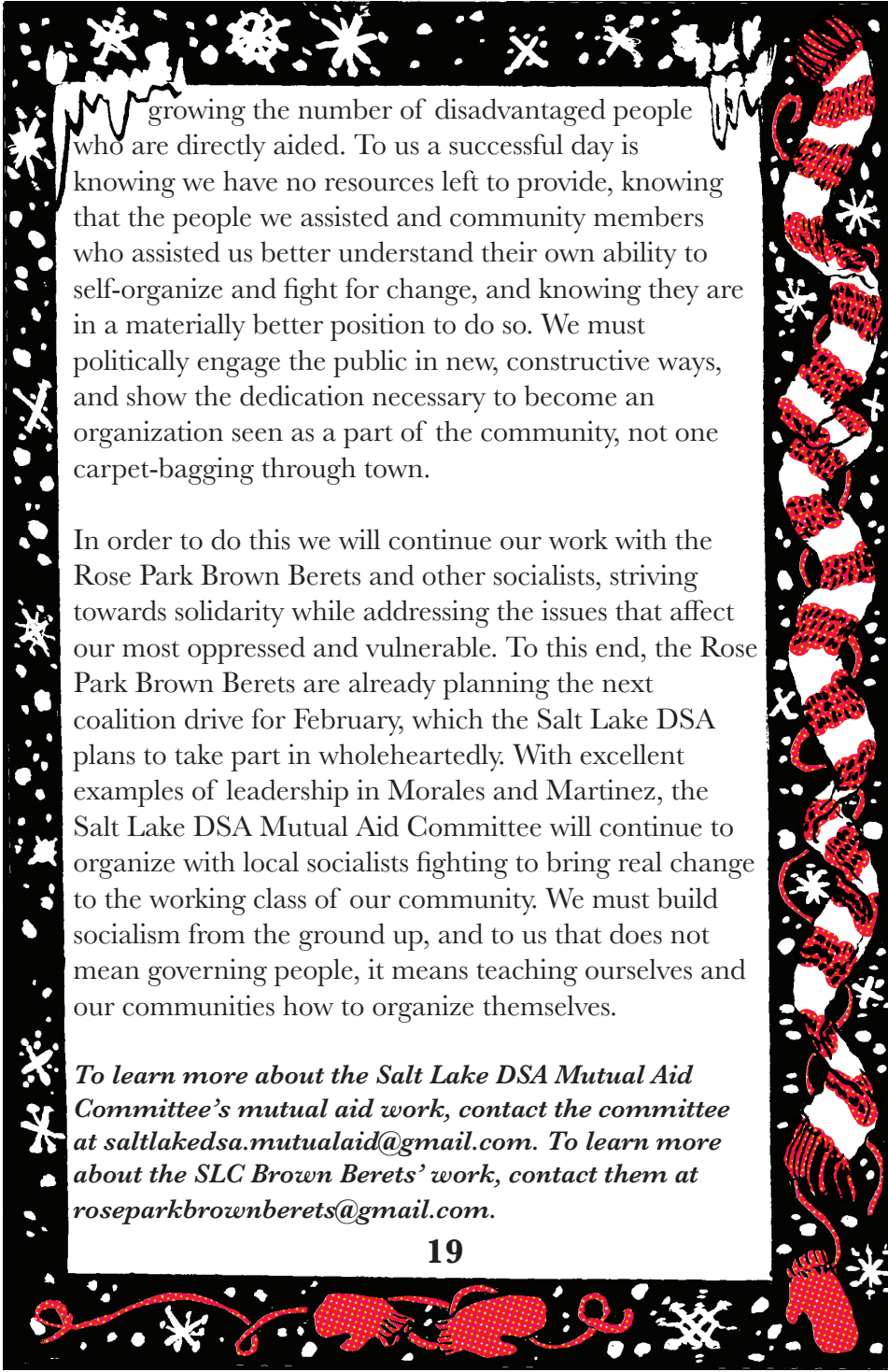
The event, however, was no longer limited to distributing physical resources. Organizers increasingly focused on actively engaging politically with the homeless and working-class residents of Rose Park, speaking with them



about initiatives and campaigns relevant to the community. For instance, the Rose Park Brown Berets and Utah Against Police Brutality (UAPB) handed out “Know Your Rights” pamphlets, as well as flyers for an upcoming community council meeting. The community council meeting was particularly important to the Brown Berets and UAPB, as they organized a pack-in to confront the community council and demand answers regarding the Salt Lake City Police Department’s recent murder of Cody Belgard. Engaging Salt Lake’s entire community of socialist organizers, the Winter Clothing Drive became a space of solidarity, compassion, and learning for the local neighborhood and the organizers themselves.

Evaluating this event, the Mutual Aid Committee has analyzed what did and did not work, emphasizing how our future organizing can move this success forward. In Rose Park we saw firsthand the need to reach out to our base and begin the long march to relevancy. Bringing together a socialist coalition to collectivize resources is not the end but the beginning. The ultimate goal is getting the remainder of the community onboard. Seeing DSA, FRSO and PSL work together may seem like an exceptional accomplishment, but if we are not also involving the public in that process, it is all for naught.

While the Winter Clothing Drive provided a host of essentials, the percentage of Rose Park residents actively participating in organizing was relatively minimal. We must expand these efforts with community support, while



growing the number of disadvantaged people who are directly aided. To us a successful day is knowing we have no resources left to provide, knowing that the people we assisted and community members who assisted us better understand their own ability to self-organize and fight for change, and knowing they are in a materially better position to do so. We must politically engage the public in new, constructive ways, and show the dedication necessary to become an organization seen as a part of the community, not one carpet-bagging through town.

In order to do this we will continue our work with the Rose Park Brown Berets and other socialists, striving towards solidarity while addressing the issues that affect our most oppressed and vulnerable. To this end, the Rose Park Brown Berets are already planning the next coalition drive for February, which the Salt Lake DSA plans to take part in wholeheartedly. With excellent examples of leadership in Morales and Martinez, the Salt Lake DSA Mutual Aid Committee will continue to organize with local socialists fighting to bring real change to the working class of our community. We must build socialism from the ground up, and to us that does not mean governing people, it means teaching ourselves and our communities how to organize themselves.

To learn more about the Salt Lake DSA Mutual Aid Committee's mutual aid work, contact the committee at saltlakedsa.mutualaid@gmail.com. To learn more about the SLC Brown Berets' work, contact them at roseparkbrownberets@gmail.com.

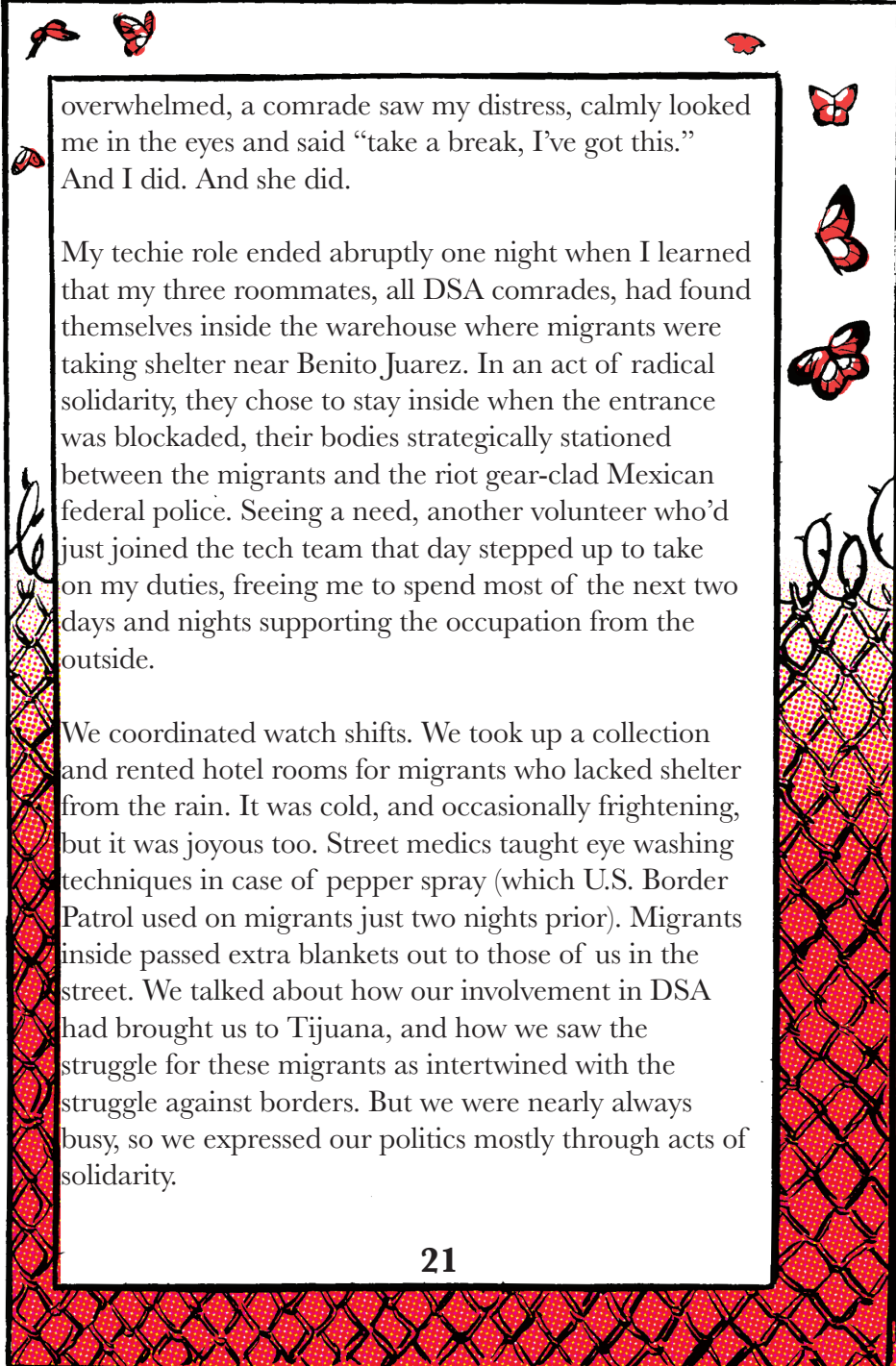


Migrant Caravan Support In Tijuana

I drove down from Los Angeles to Tijuana at the tail end of December 2018 because I'd heard there was a need for help transporting donations to shelters around the city. I'd been to Tijuana a few times before, and was traveling in the company of a trusted comrade, so I arrived feeling prepared. I wasn't, but collectively the scores of volunteers who rotated through the doors of Enclave that week accomplished far more than I expected.

On my first day I drove a newly re-wed migrant couple to the shelter at El Barretal. They beamed with hope at the improved prospect of avoiding separation, promised by the documentation of the day's ceremony.

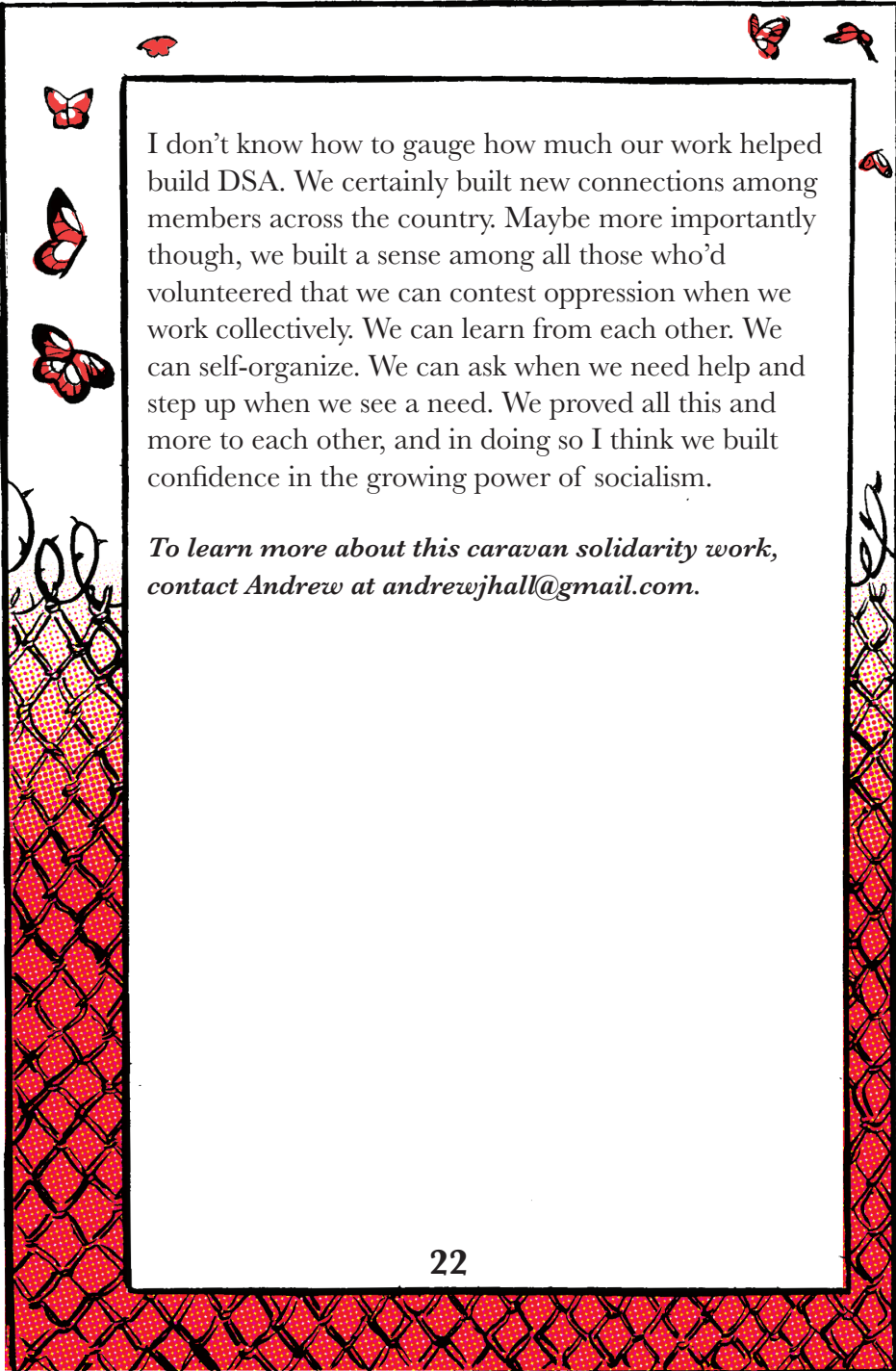
By day two, I found myself leading the tech team at Al Otro Lado. I don't work in IT, hadn't touched a PC in six years, and wasn't exactly thrilled about office work, but it needed to be done, so I dove in and learned on the go. When a laptop wouldn't print, I re-installed drivers. When a soft birth certificate image needed sharpening, I retouched it. And when an outreach lead was awaiting my redesign of the Creole version of the map to our building, and an officiant needed a document printed for a couple about to be married, and the printer went down, and I became visibly



overwhelmed, a comrade saw my distress, calmly looked me in the eyes and said “take a break, I’ve got this.” And I did. And she did.

My techie role ended abruptly one night when I learned that my three roommates, all DSA comrades, had found themselves inside the warehouse where migrants were taking shelter near Benito Juarez. In an act of radical solidarity, they chose to stay inside when the entrance was blockaded, their bodies strategically stationed between the migrants and the riot gear-clad Mexican federal police. Seeing a need, another volunteer who’d just joined the tech team that day stepped up to take on my duties, freeing me to spend most of the next two days and nights supporting the occupation from the outside.

We coordinated watch shifts. We took up a collection and rented hotel rooms for migrants who lacked shelter from the rain. It was cold, and occasionally frightening, but it was joyous too. Street medics taught eye washing techniques in case of pepper spray (which U.S. Border Patrol used on migrants just two nights prior). Migrants inside passed extra blankets out to those of us in the street. We talked about how our involvement in DSA had brought us to Tijuana, and how we saw the struggle for these migrants as intertwined with the struggle against borders. But we were nearly always busy, so we expressed our politics mostly through acts of solidarity.



I don't know how to gauge how much our work helped build DSA. We certainly built new connections among members across the country. Maybe more importantly though, we built a sense among all those who'd volunteered that we can contest oppression when we work collectively. We can learn from each other. We can self-organize. We can ask when we need help and step up when we see a need. We proved all this and more to each other, and in doing so I think we built confidence in the growing power of socialism.

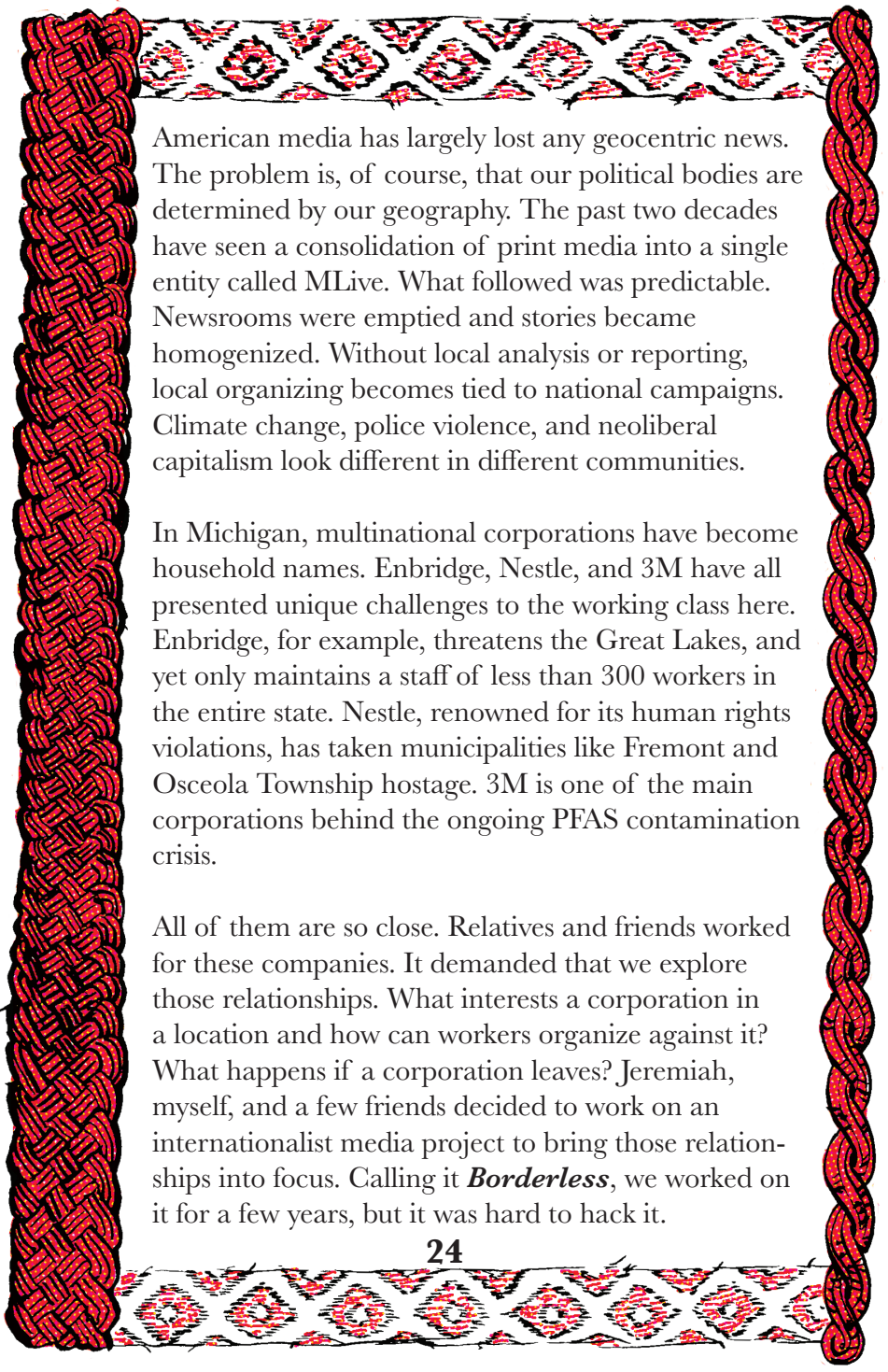
To learn more about this caravan solidarity work, contact Andrew at andrewjhall@gmail.com.



The Robin Podcast

Organizing in Michigan was difficult during the Rick Snyder administration. They created Emergency Financial Managers to engage in union busting, and worked tirelessly to make Right to Work a reality in Michigan. Republican supermajorities controlled both houses of the Michigan Legislature, and the degree of transparency was murky at best. Reports frequently rated Michigan as one of the most corrupt states in the country. It was an all-out assault on anything that could hold power democratically accountable. Things were bleak.

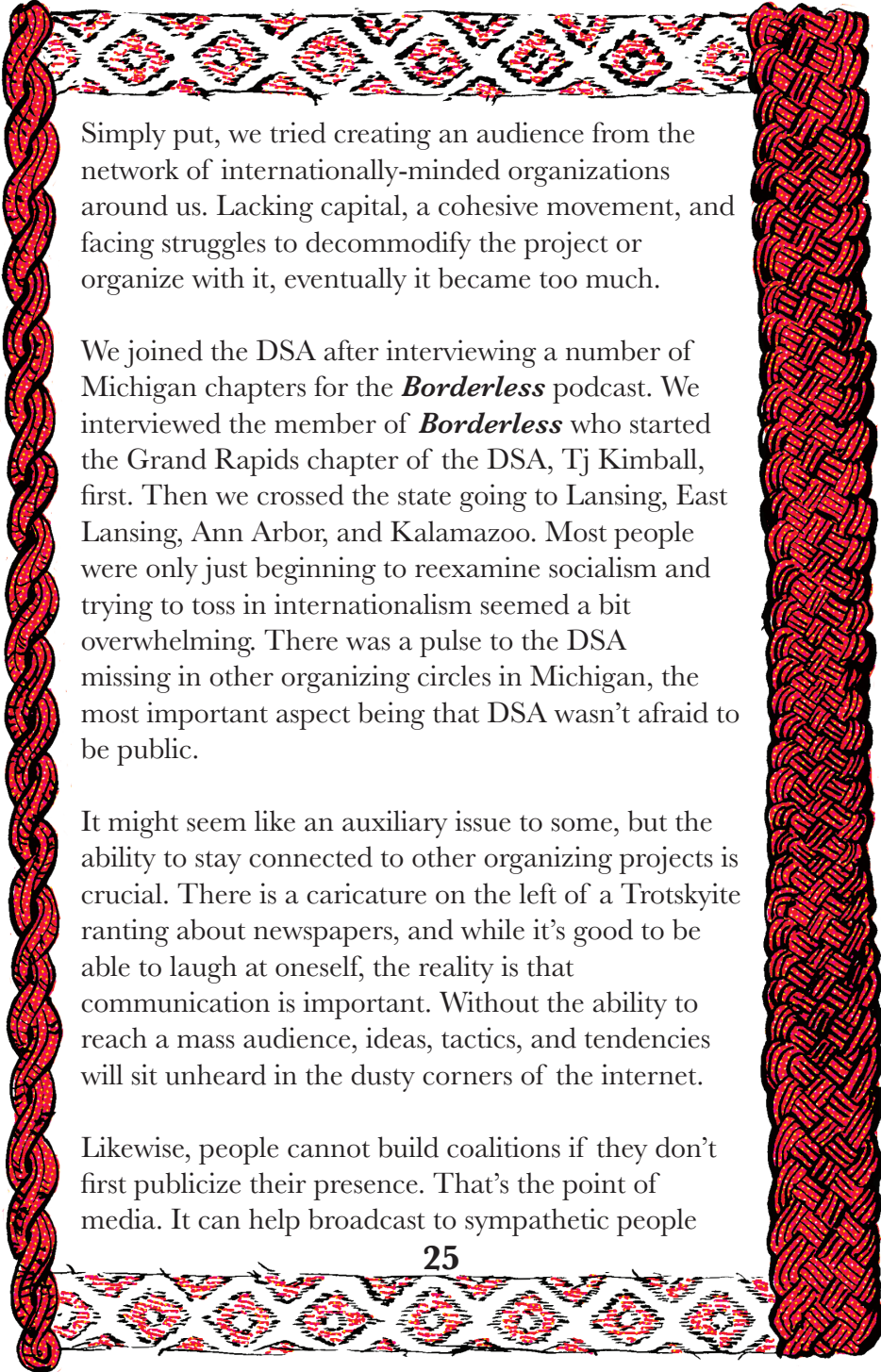
Entering leftist politics at that time was gut wrenching, especially after Line 6B, an Enbridge pipeline, ruptured near Marshall, Michigan, spilling into the Kalamazoo River. Although it happened during the last months of Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm's administration, the task of holding Enbridge accountable, and the ensuing debacle over Line 5, became central to Snyder's administration. There were only a handful of existing activist groups around the state's west side, and most of them were older and unsure how to work with younger people. They focused on direct action, but without much explanation for their tactics, and while they passed around a lot of information, their work largely lacked a critical perspective.



American media has largely lost any geocentric news. The problem is, of course, that our political bodies are determined by our geography. The past two decades have seen a consolidation of print media into a single entity called MLive. What followed was predictable. Newsrooms were emptied and stories became homogenized. Without local analysis or reporting, local organizing becomes tied to national campaigns. Climate change, police violence, and neoliberal capitalism look different in different communities.

In Michigan, multinational corporations have become household names. Enbridge, Nestle, and 3M have all presented unique challenges to the working class here. Enbridge, for example, threatens the Great Lakes, and yet only maintains a staff of less than 300 workers in the entire state. Nestle, renowned for its human rights violations, has taken municipalities like Fremont and Osceola Township hostage. 3M is one of the main corporations behind the ongoing PFAS contamination crisis.

All of them are so close. Relatives and friends worked for these companies. It demanded that we explore those relationships. What interests a corporation in a location and how can workers organize against it? What happens if a corporation leaves? Jeremiah, myself, and a few friends decided to work on an internationalist media project to bring those relationships into focus. Calling it *Borderless*, we worked on it for a few years, but it was hard to hack it.

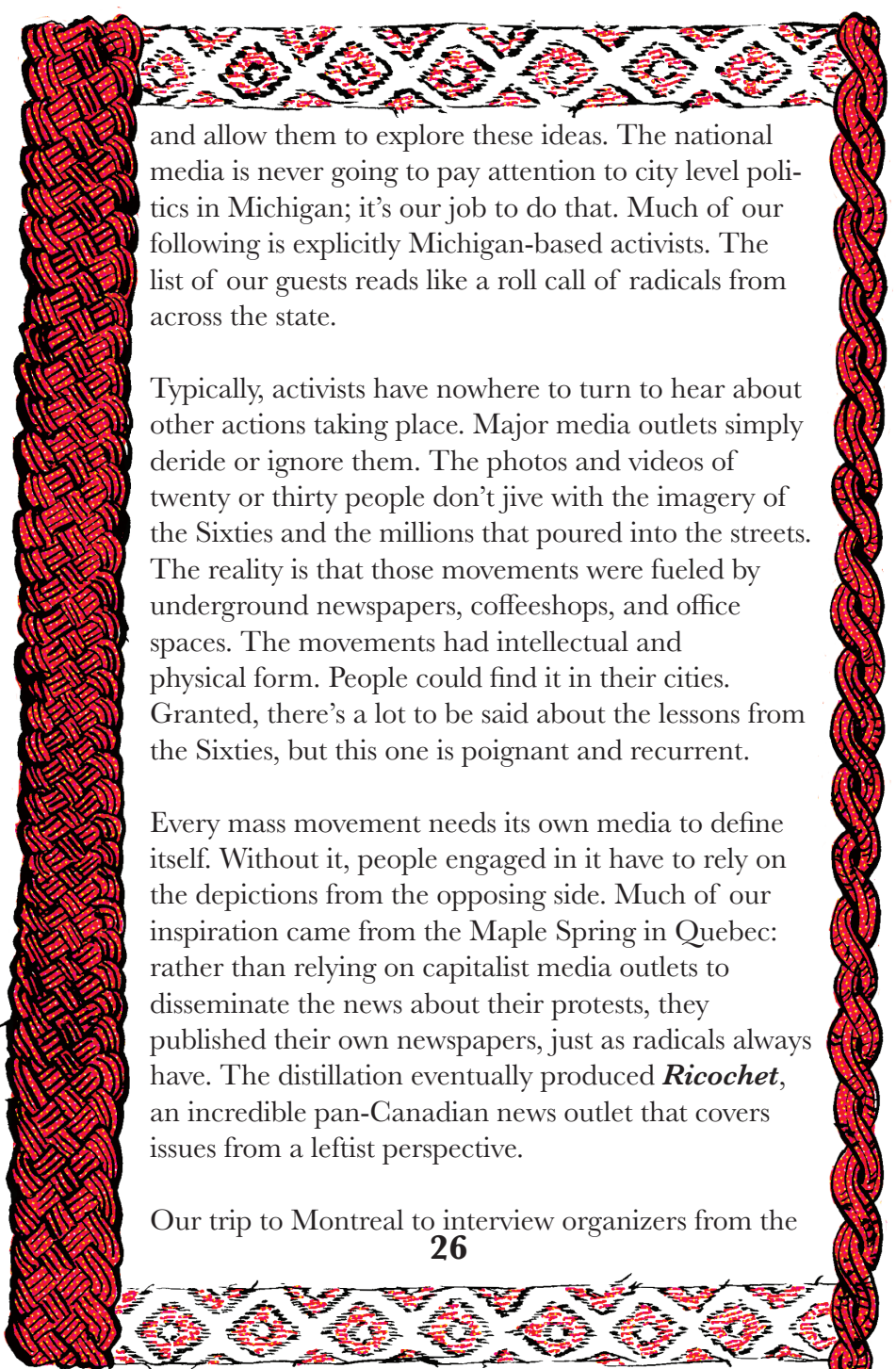


Simply put, we tried creating an audience from the network of internationally-minded organizations around us. Lacking capital, a cohesive movement, and facing struggles to decommodify the project or organize with it, eventually it became too much.

We joined the DSA after interviewing a number of Michigan chapters for the *Borderless* podcast. We interviewed the member of *Borderless* who started the Grand Rapids chapter of the DSA, Tj Kimball, first. Then we crossed the state going to Lansing, East Lansing, Ann Arbor, and Kalamazoo. Most people were only just beginning to reexamine socialism and trying to toss in internationalism seemed a bit overwhelming. There was a pulse to the DSA missing in other organizing circles in Michigan, the most important aspect being that DSA wasn't afraid to be public.

It might seem like an auxiliary issue to some, but the ability to stay connected to other organizing projects is crucial. There is a caricature on the left of a Trotskyite ranting about newspapers, and while it's good to be able to laugh at oneself, the reality is that communication is important. Without the ability to reach a mass audience, ideas, tactics, and tendencies will sit unheard in the dusty corners of the internet.

Likewise, people cannot build coalitions if they don't first publicize their presence. That's the point of media. It can help broadcast to sympathetic people






and allow them to explore these ideas. The national media is never going to pay attention to city level politics in Michigan; it's our job to do that. Much of our following is explicitly Michigan-based activists. The list of our guests reads like a roll call of radicals from across the state.

Typically, activists have nowhere to turn to hear about other actions taking place. Major media outlets simply deride or ignore them. The photos and videos of twenty or thirty people don't jive with the imagery of the Sixties and the millions that poured into the streets. The reality is that those movements were fueled by underground newspapers, coffeeshops, and office spaces. The movements had intellectual and physical form. People could find it in their cities. Granted, there's a lot to be said about the lessons from the Sixties, but this one is poignant and recurrent.

Every mass movement needs its own media to define itself. Without it, people engaged in it have to rely on the depictions from the opposing side. Much of our inspiration came from the Maple Spring in Quebec: rather than relying on capitalist media outlets to disseminate the news about their protests, they published their own newspapers, just as radicals always have. The distillation eventually produced *Ricochet*, an incredible pan-Canadian news outlet that covers issues from a leftist perspective.

Our trip to Montreal to interview organizers from the

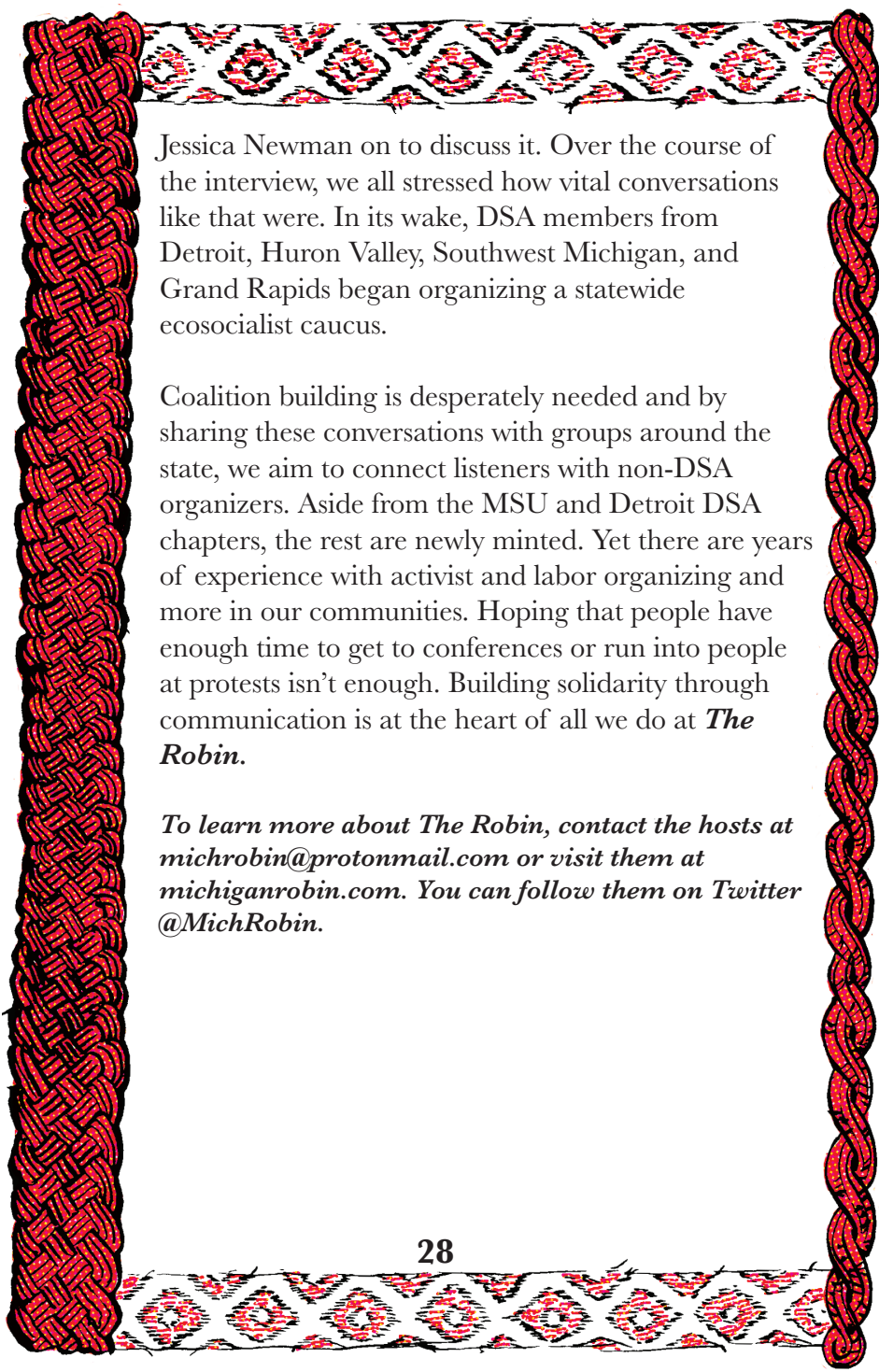


Maple Spring, and the discovery of *Ricochet*, led us to ultimately shelving *Borderless* and creating *The Robin*. Internationalism will not happen unless it is undergirded by local organizing. Rebuilding and strengthening organizing efforts in Michigan became the goal. With one eye on local and statewide issues and the other on international solidarity, we began to change.

For the past eight years we've lived under the Republican trifecta, and they've controlled the state senate since 1992. Conservative officials sent Michigan, especially with the deterioration of Detroit and Snyder's union-busting, into disrepair. This terrain calls for adaptation. There's a lot of bitter tastes about unions in this state and general disillusionment. Simply reviving the UAW, AFL-CIO, and MEA won't be enough to take on the neoliberal times we live in. Simply put, one tendency won't be enough. By having guests from multiple tendencies on *The Robin*, we hope to examine how they might function together in Michigan.

Having guests on the show while simultaneously remaining accessible to other organizers means that if people hear about a project that someone is working on, they can reach out to us and we can help connect them. This has happened specifically with regard to prison abolition work and ecosocialism.

Before the Green New Deal action in Detroit, we had



Jessica Newman on to discuss it. Over the course of the interview, we all stressed how vital conversations like that were. In its wake, DSA members from Detroit, Huron Valley, Southwest Michigan, and Grand Rapids began organizing a statewide ecosocialist caucus.

Coalition building is desperately needed and by sharing these conversations with groups around the state, we aim to connect listeners with non-DSA organizers. Aside from the MSU and Detroit DSA chapters, the rest are newly minted. Yet there are years of experience with activist and labor organizing and more in our communities. Hoping that people have enough time to get to conferences or run into people at protests isn't enough. Building solidarity through communication is at the heart of all we do at *The Robin*.

To learn more about The Robin, contact the hosts at michrobin@protonmail.com or visit them at michiganrobin.com. You can follow them on Twitter @MichRobin.

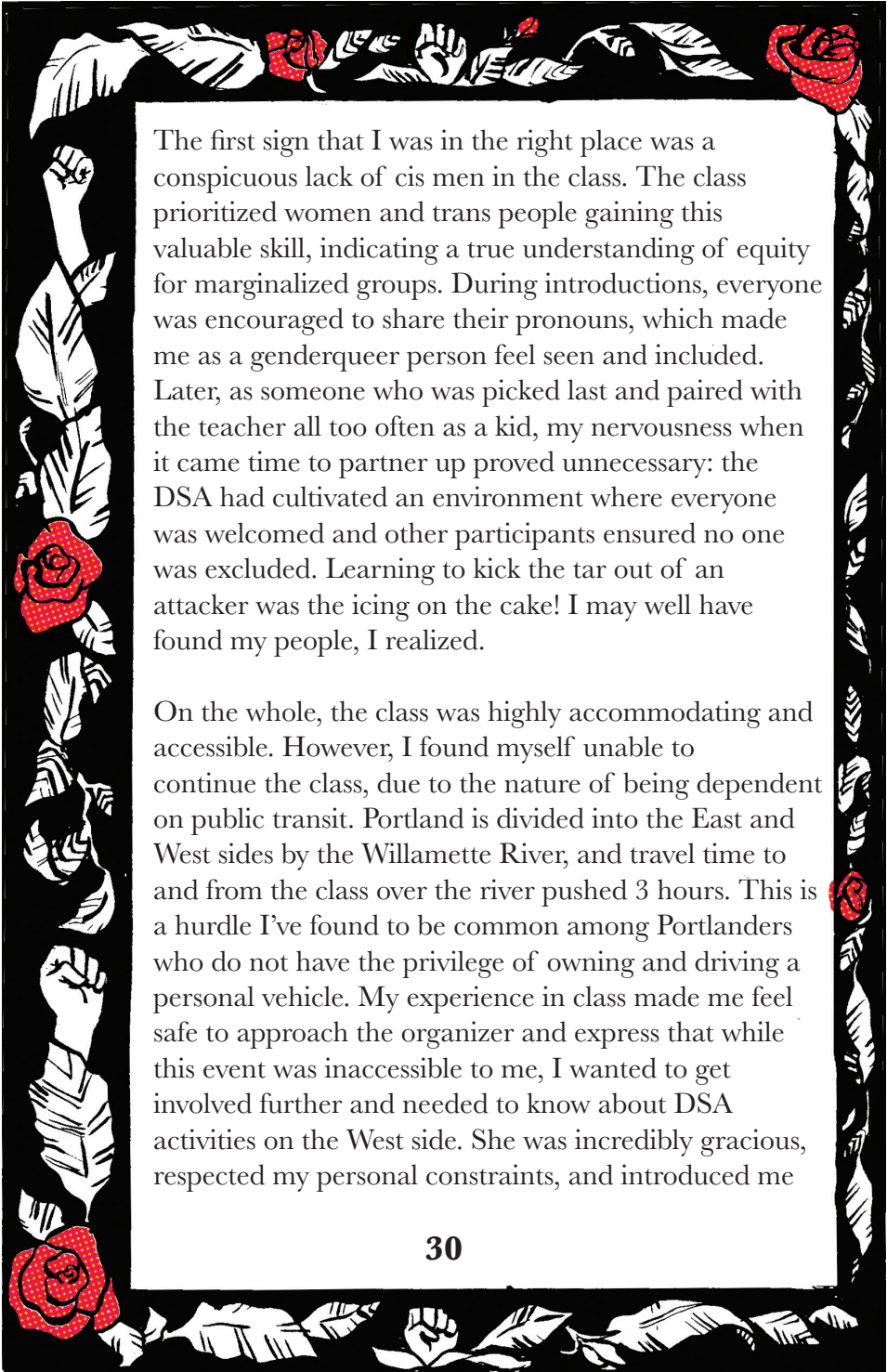


Punching Up Accessibility With Portland DSA



When I made the 50-mile move from Salem to Portland, Oregon, I had just come out of a long and ugly depressive episode. The move was spurred by a fantastic opportunity to work for the labor union I was previously a member of, and it allowed me to return to the path of feeling like me again, as I was only minimally and sporadically involved in activism since dropping out of university. While my new job was fulfilling in ways that felt totally out of reach a year before, I found myself feeling capable of and wanting more. A friend repeatedly told me about the empowerment she found in dedicating time and energy to causes she cares about, without the need to make rent and put food on the table restricting her actions within the organization. Her words rang true, so the hunt was on to get more deeply involved in my community.

I was fortunate enough to come across a self-defense class held by Portland DSA. Great! Their support for the Burgerville Workers Union, as well as their opposition to police brutality indicated that their values likely aligned with mine. This would be the perfect opportunity to scope out the organization's culture AND learn defense skills to raise my confidence in going out and about alone in a new city, so I signed up. A few weeks later I found myself in a kettlebell club waiting for class to start.



The first sign that I was in the right place was a conspicuous lack of cis men in the class. The class prioritized women and trans people gaining this valuable skill, indicating a true understanding of equity for marginalized groups. During introductions, everyone was encouraged to share their pronouns, which made me as a genderqueer person feel seen and included. Later, as someone who was picked last and paired with the teacher all too often as a kid, my nervousness when it came time to partner up proved unnecessary: the DSA had cultivated an environment where everyone was welcomed and other participants ensured no one was excluded. Learning to kick the tar out of an attacker was the icing on the cake! I may well have found my people, I realized.

On the whole, the class was highly accommodating and accessible. However, I found myself unable to continue the class, due to the nature of being dependent on public transit. Portland is divided into the East and West sides by the Willamette River, and travel time to and from the class over the river pushed 3 hours. This is a hurdle I've found to be common among Portlanders who do not have the privilege of owning and driving a personal vehicle. My experience in class made me feel safe to approach the organizer and express that while this event was inaccessible to me, I wanted to get involved further and needed to know about DSA activities on the West side. She was incredibly gracious, respected my personal constraints, and introduced me

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring stylized white roses with red polka dots and raised fists on a black background. The border is composed of repeating patterns of these symbols, with larger roses and fists placed at the corners and midpoints of the sides.

to the folks building the Washington County branch on my side of the river.

Within a week I got coffee with a member and learned how I could attend the next meeting. Once the meeting came, I knew I made the right choice: other members supported what I had to contribute and offered all attendants carpools to future events. My experience goes to show that in order to build strong movements, we are only better when we foster a culture of inclusion and strive towards accessibility for all. To paraphrase a beloved quote: If it is not accessible to the poor, to POC, to immigrants and refugees, to the disabled, or any other marginalized group... it is not revolutionary.

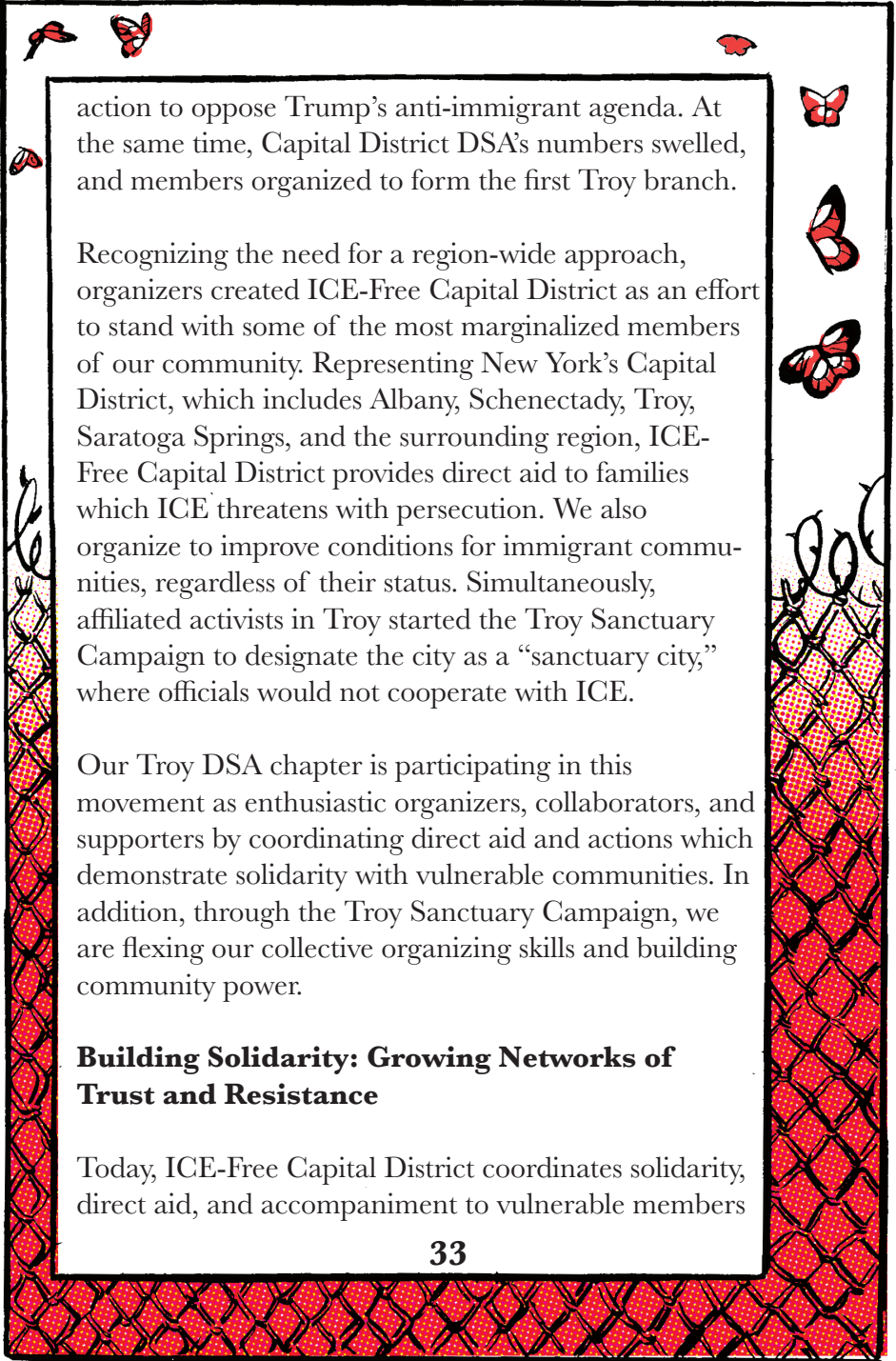
To learn more about Portland DSA's self-defense classes, contact the chapter at info@portlanddsa.org.



Troy, NY Stands With Immigrants

When Siobhan Burke, an organizer for ICE-Free Capital District, told the organizing community that one of our neighbors was in need, we responded. Due to the precarity of their situation, she couldn't tell us the name of who needed help, or any specifics about their case, just that they were undocumented and at risk of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detaining and deporting them. They came ICE-Free Capital District for help because they were unable to work and their landlord had threatened to evict them in several days unless they could quickly raise several hundred dollars. Within a day, our GoFundMe campaign raised enough to cover their rent. Within 48 hours, we raised enough to cover three months' rent.

While New York is nationally known as a “blue state,” much of the area outside of the NYC metropolitan area is not. Our county, Rensselaer, voted for Trump, and Troy, its biggest town of 50,000, elected a Republican City Council in 2015. As in much of the country, things changed after the 2016 elections. In early 2017, over a hundred people attended the first post-election meeting of Albany New Sanctuary for Immigrants. Before the election, this group had usually counted on single-digit attendance. Top priorities were providing direct aid to immigrants and taking political

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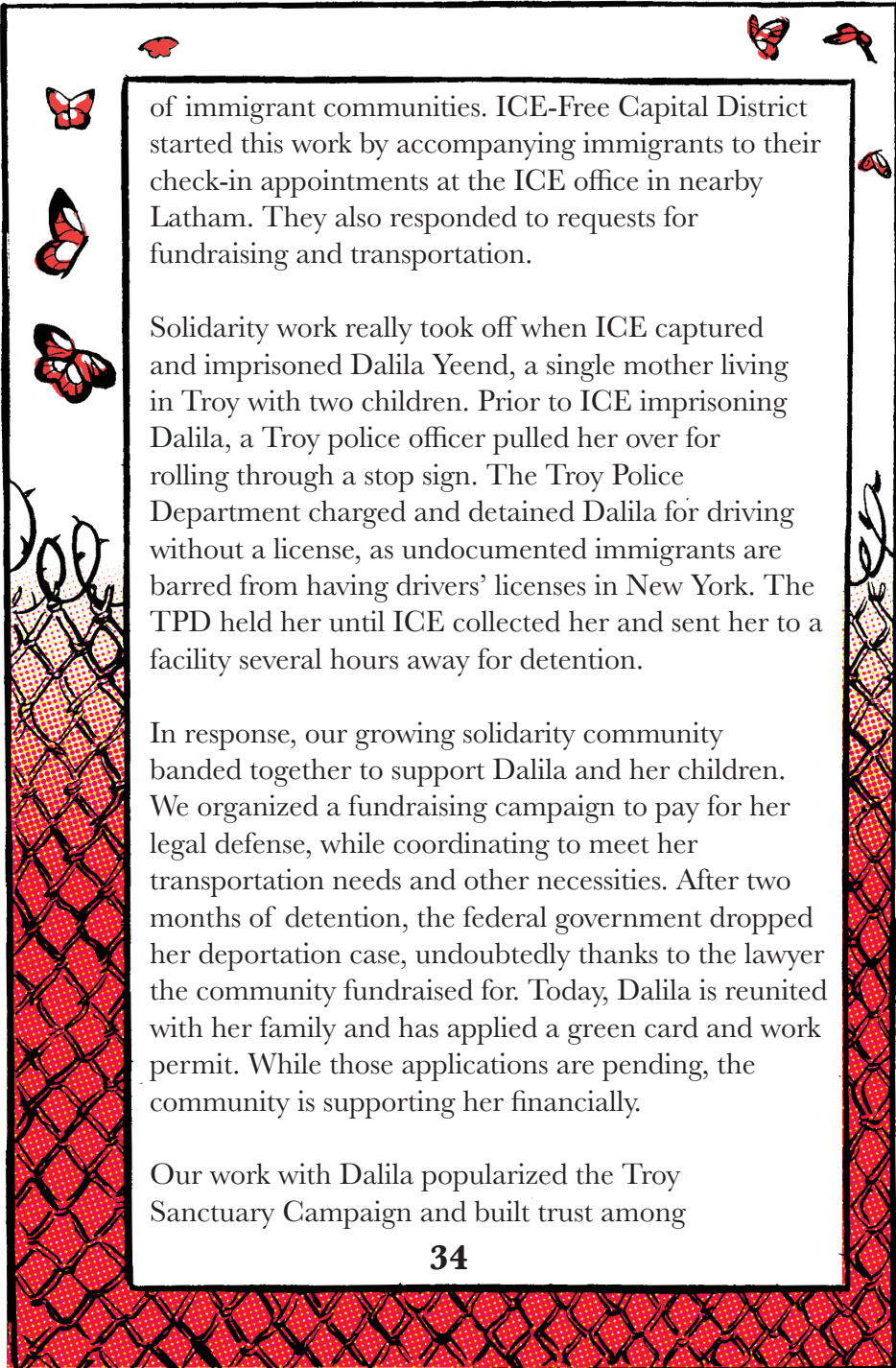
action to oppose Trump’s anti-immigrant agenda. At the same time, Capital District DSA’s numbers swelled, and members organized to form the first Troy branch.

Recognizing the need for a region-wide approach, organizers created ICE-Free Capital District as an effort to stand with some of the most marginalized members of our community. Representing New York’s Capital District, which includes Albany, Schenectady, Troy, Saratoga Springs, and the surrounding region, ICE-Free Capital District provides direct aid to families which ICE threatens with persecution. We also organize to improve conditions for immigrant communities, regardless of their status. Simultaneously, affiliated activists in Troy started the Troy Sanctuary Campaign to designate the city as a “sanctuary city,” where officials would not cooperate with ICE.

Our Troy DSA chapter is participating in this movement as enthusiastic organizers, collaborators, and supporters by coordinating direct aid and actions which demonstrate solidarity with vulnerable communities. In addition, through the Troy Sanctuary Campaign, we are flexing our collective organizing skills and building community power.

Building Solidarity: Growing Networks of Trust and Resistance

Today, ICE-Free Capital District coordinates solidarity, direct aid, and accompaniment to vulnerable members

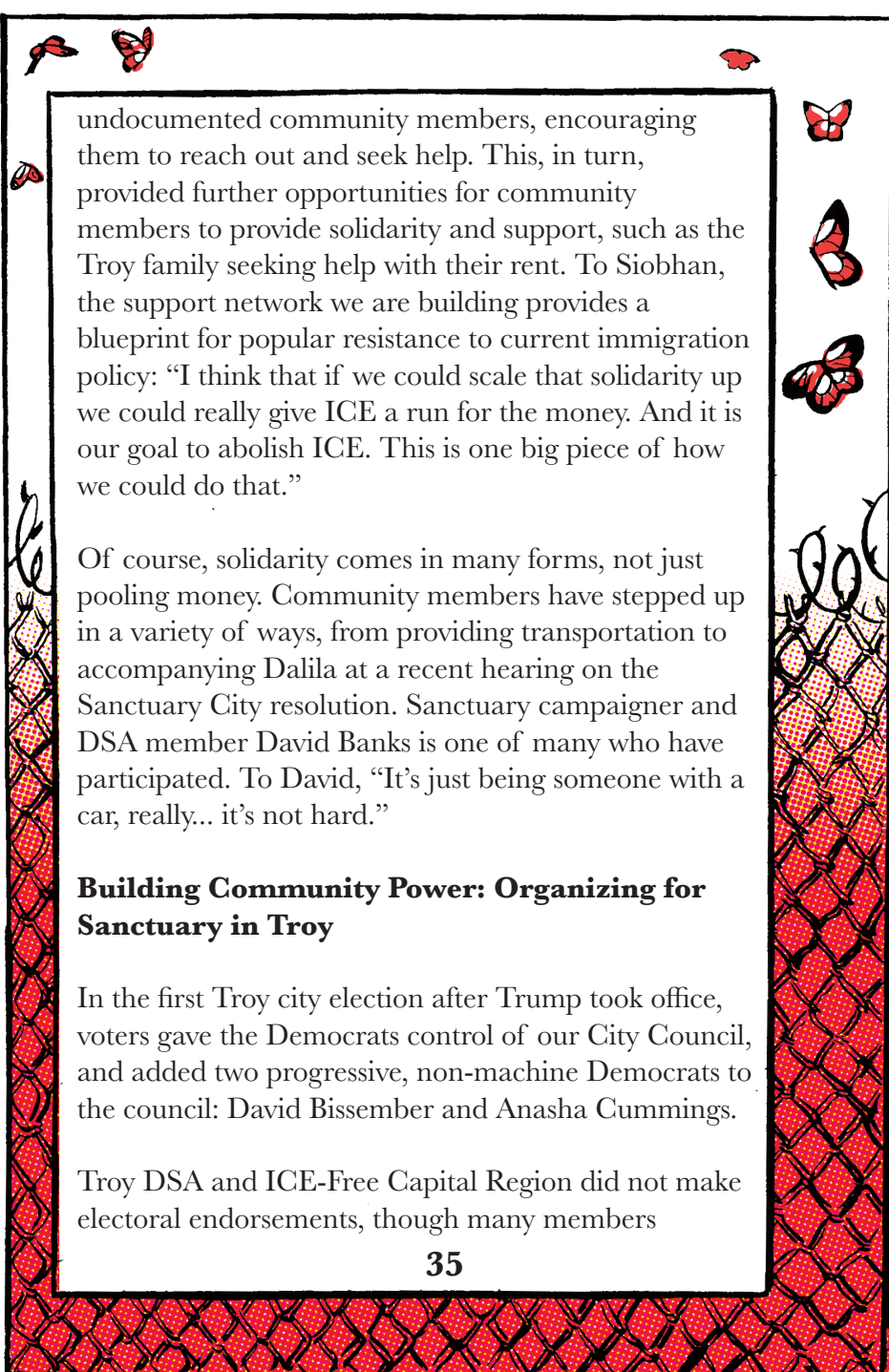


of immigrant communities. ICE-Free Capital District started this work by accompanying immigrants to their check-in appointments at the ICE office in nearby Latham. They also responded to requests for fundraising and transportation.

Solidarity work really took off when ICE captured and imprisoned Dalila Yeend, a single mother living in Troy with two children. Prior to ICE imprisoning Dalila, a Troy police officer pulled her over for rolling through a stop sign. The Troy Police Department charged and detained Dalila for driving without a license, as undocumented immigrants are barred from having drivers' licenses in New York. The TPD held her until ICE collected her and sent her to a facility several hours away for detention.

In response, our growing solidarity community banded together to support Dalila and her children. We organized a fundraising campaign to pay for her legal defense, while coordinating to meet her transportation needs and other necessities. After two months of detention, the federal government dropped her deportation case, undoubtedly thanks to the lawyer the community fundraised for. Today, Dalila is reunited with her family and has applied a green card and work permit. While those applications are pending, the community is supporting her financially.

Our work with Dalila popularized the Troy Sanctuary Campaign and built trust among



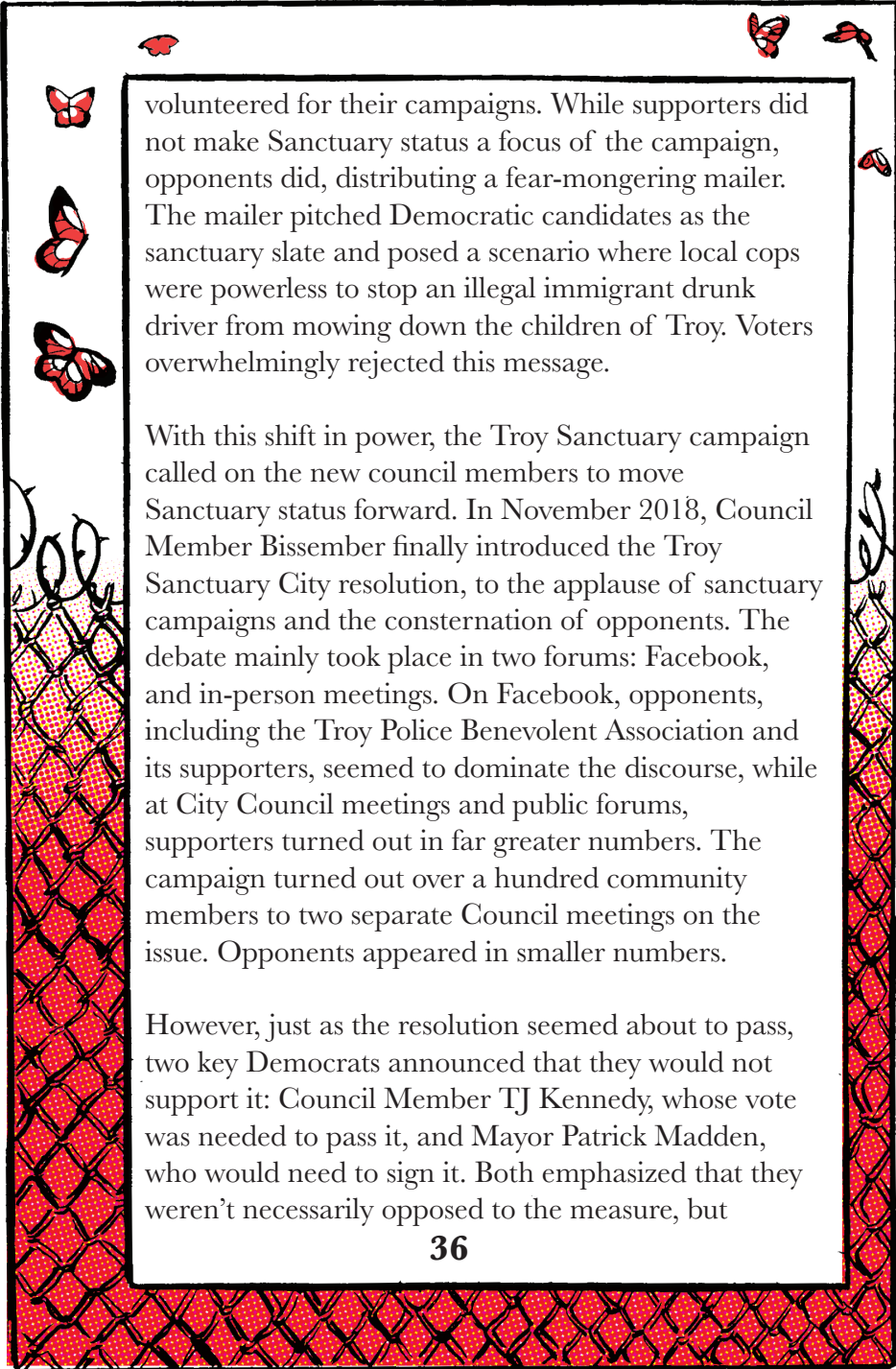
undocumented community members, encouraging them to reach out and seek help. This, in turn, provided further opportunities for community members to provide solidarity and support, such as the Troy family seeking help with their rent. To Siobhan, the support network we are building provides a blueprint for popular resistance to current immigration policy: “I think that if we could scale that solidarity up we could really give ICE a run for the money. And it is our goal to abolish ICE. This is one big piece of how we could do that.”

Of course, solidarity comes in many forms, not just pooling money. Community members have stepped up in a variety of ways, from providing transportation to accompanying Dalila at a recent hearing on the Sanctuary City resolution. Sanctuary campaigner and DSA member David Banks is one of many who have participated. To David, “It’s just being someone with a car, really... it’s not hard.”

Building Community Power: Organizing for Sanctuary in Troy

In the first Troy city election after Trump took office, voters gave the Democrats control of our City Council, and added two progressive, non-machine Democrats to the council: David Bissember and Anasha Cummings.

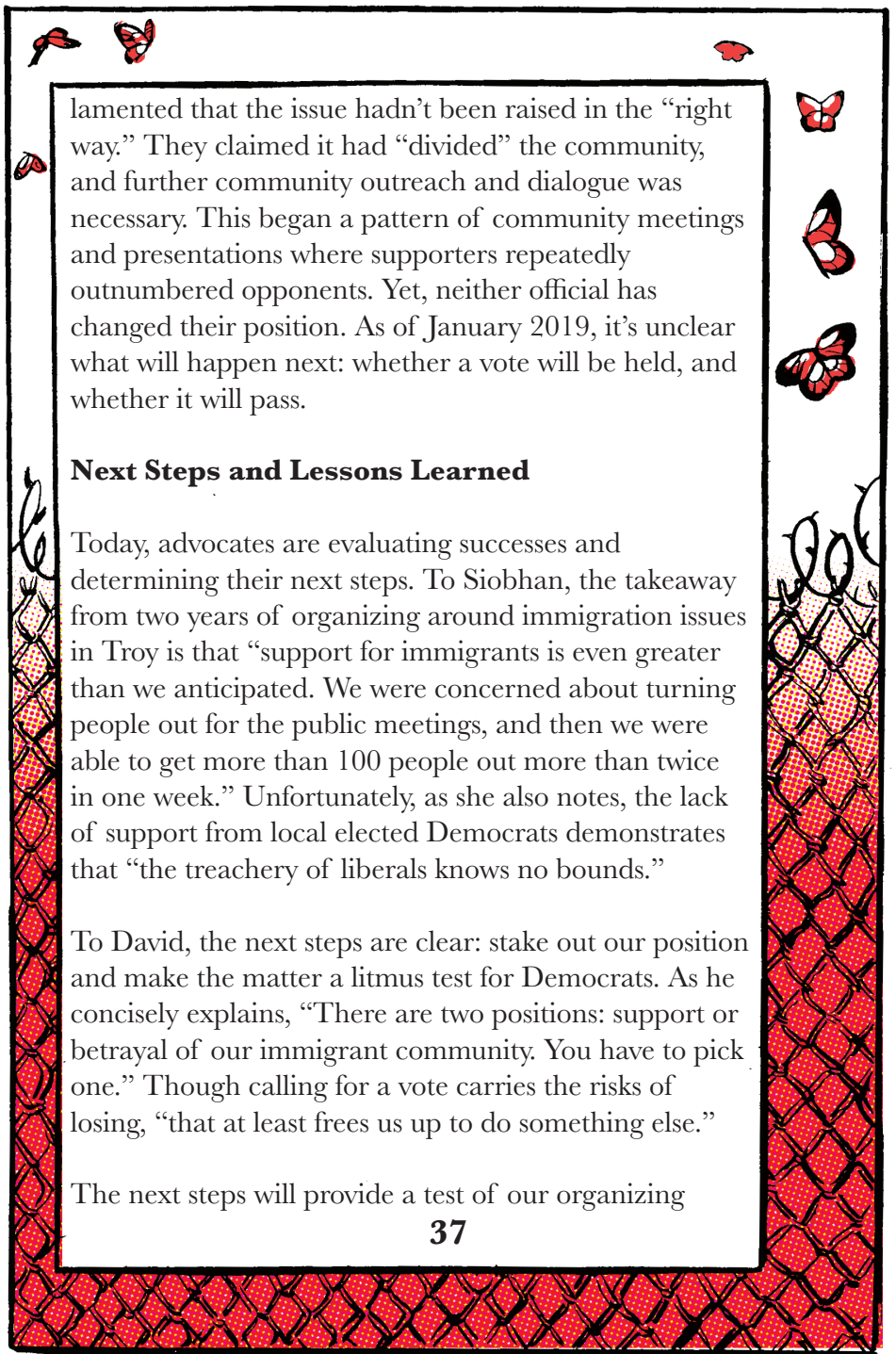
Troy DSA and ICE-Free Capital Region did not make electoral endorsements, though many members



volunteered for their campaigns. While supporters did not make Sanctuary status a focus of the campaign, opponents did, distributing a fear-mongering mailer. The mailer pitched Democratic candidates as the sanctuary slate and posed a scenario where local cops were powerless to stop an illegal immigrant drunk driver from mowing down the children of Troy. Voters overwhelmingly rejected this message.

With this shift in power, the Troy Sanctuary campaign called on the new council members to move Sanctuary status forward. In November 2018, Council Member Bissember finally introduced the Troy Sanctuary City resolution, to the applause of sanctuary campaigns and the consternation of opponents. The debate mainly took place in two forums: Facebook, and in-person meetings. On Facebook, opponents, including the Troy Police Benevolent Association and its supporters, seemed to dominate the discourse, while at City Council meetings and public forums, supporters turned out in far greater numbers. The campaign turned out over a hundred community members to two separate Council meetings on the issue. Opponents appeared in smaller numbers.

However, just as the resolution seemed about to pass, two key Democrats announced that they would not support it: Council Member TJ Kennedy, whose vote was needed to pass it, and Mayor Patrick Madden, who would need to sign it. Both emphasized that they weren't necessarily opposed to the measure, but



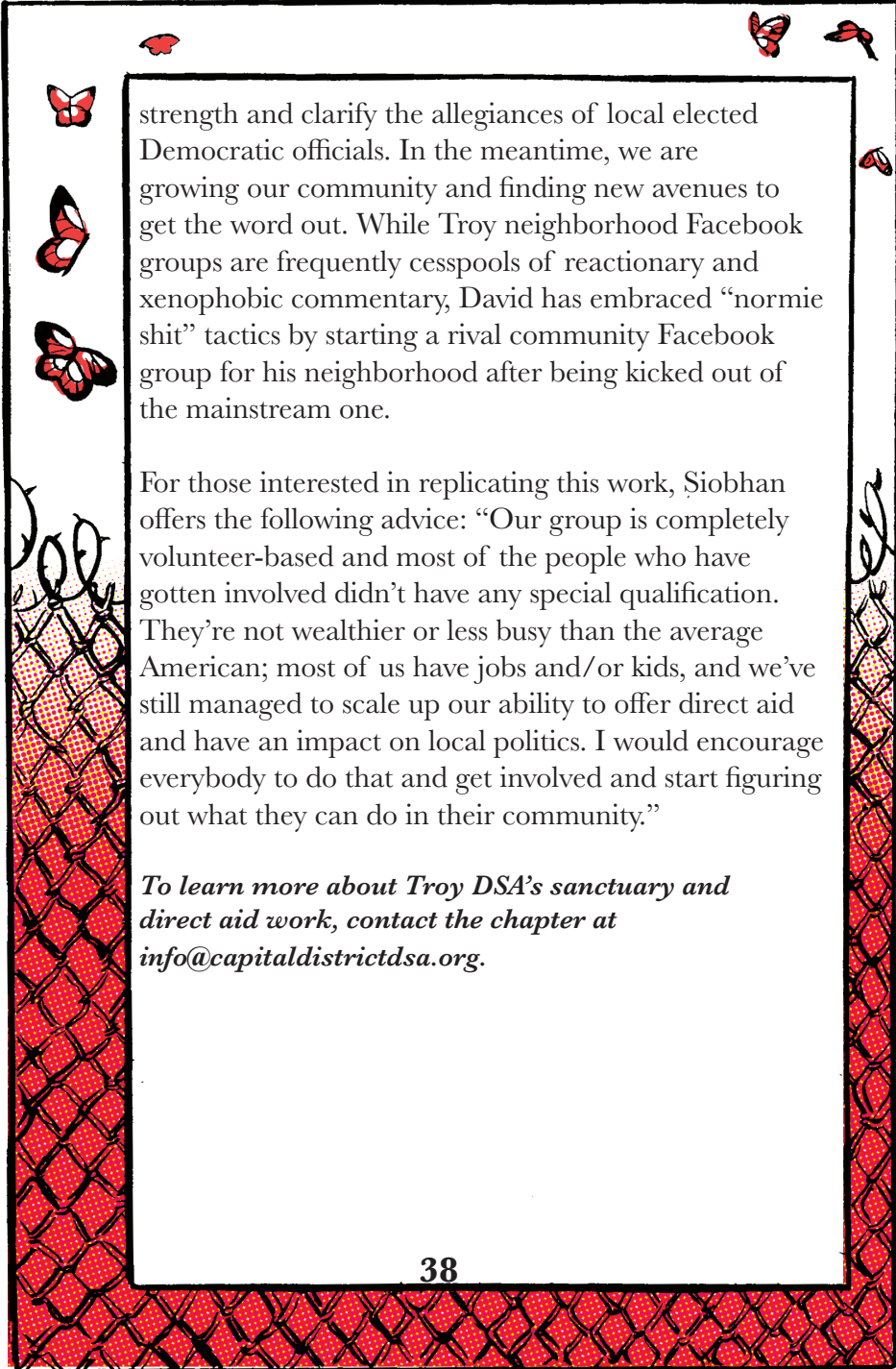
lamented that the issue hadn't been raised in the "right way." They claimed it had "divided" the community, and further community outreach and dialogue was necessary. This began a pattern of community meetings and presentations where supporters repeatedly outnumbered opponents. Yet, neither official has changed their position. As of January 2019, it's unclear what will happen next: whether a vote will be held, and whether it will pass.

Next Steps and Lessons Learned

Today, advocates are evaluating successes and determining their next steps. To Siobhan, the takeaway from two years of organizing around immigration issues in Troy is that "support for immigrants is even greater than we anticipated. We were concerned about turning people out for the public meetings, and then we were able to get more than 100 people out more than twice in one week." Unfortunately, as she also notes, the lack of support from local elected Democrats demonstrates that "the treachery of liberals knows no bounds."

To David, the next steps are clear: stake out our position and make the matter a litmus test for Democrats. As he concisely explains, "There are two positions: support or betrayal of our immigrant community. You have to pick one." Though calling for a vote carries the risks of losing, "that at least frees us up to do something else."

The next steps will provide a test of our organizing



strength and clarify the allegiances of local elected Democratic officials. In the meantime, we are growing our community and finding new avenues to get the word out. While Troy neighborhood Facebook groups are frequently cesspools of reactionary and xenophobic commentary, David has embraced “normie shit” tactics by starting a rival community Facebook group for his neighborhood after being kicked out of the mainstream one.

For those interested in replicating this work, Siobhan offers the following advice: “Our group is completely volunteer-based and most of the people who have gotten involved didn’t have any special qualification. They’re not wealthier or less busy than the average American; most of us have jobs and/or kids, and we’ve still managed to scale up our ability to offer direct aid and have an impact on local politics. I would encourage everybody to do that and get involved and start figuring out what they can do in their community.”

To learn more about Troy DSA’s sanctuary and direct aid work, contact the chapter at info@capitaldistrictdsa.org.

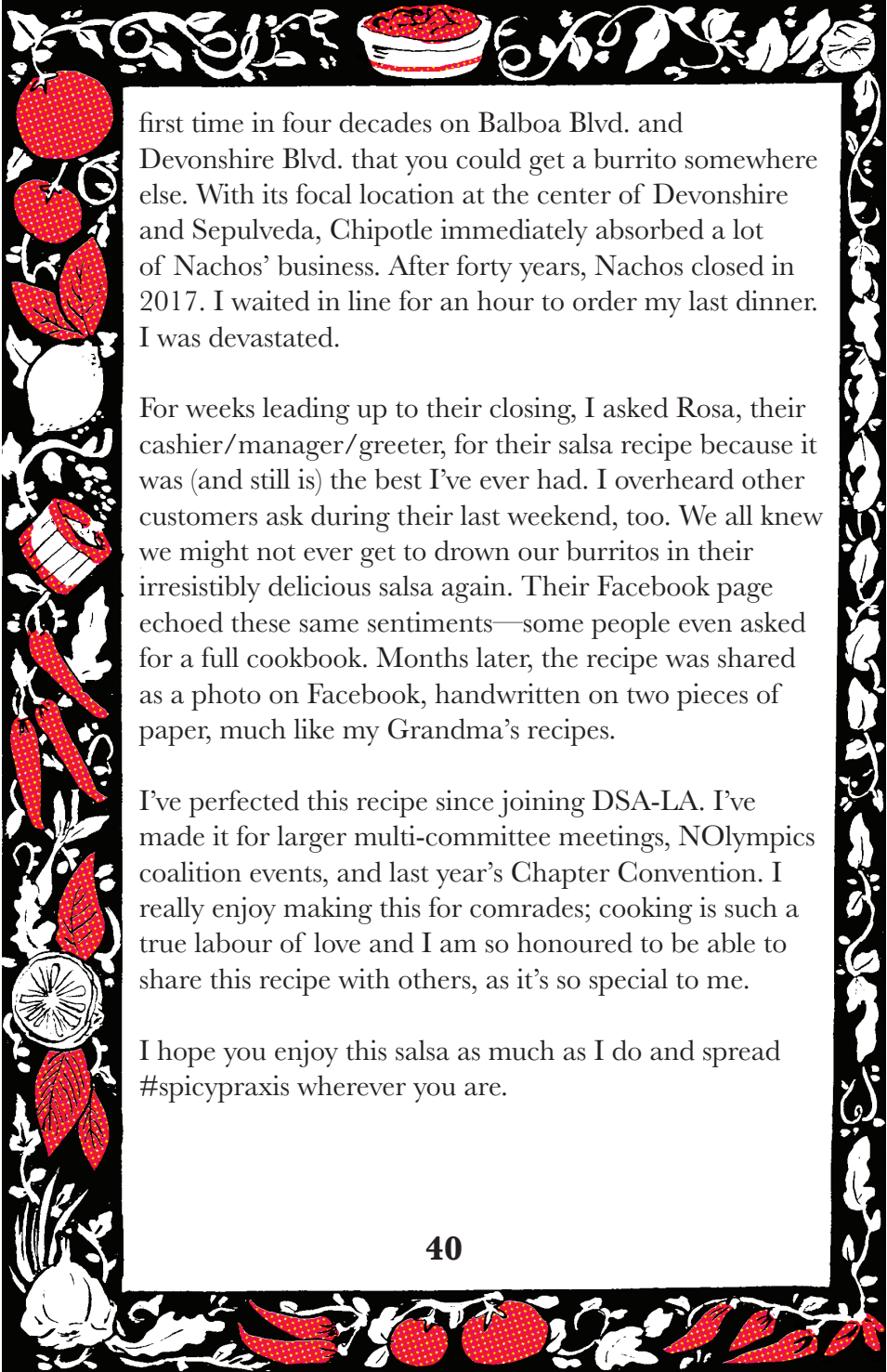


Spicy Praxis (Salsa Recipe)

I was born in raised in the San Fernando Valley, a 260-square-mile suburb of Los Angeles home to over one million people. I love the Valley—an attitude most transplants to LA never express. I know it isn't the sexiest part of the city, but it is home to some of my most treasured memories and favourite restaurants. My family has spent six generations here, and though we've lost some of our cultural traditions, like having quinceañaras, food remains important to us. Cooking was a big part of my childhood, from making misshapen tortillas to deep frying buñelos over the holidays with my Grandma.

My love of Mexican food means I eat at every burrito place, taco truck, and panadería I can find in LA. When I was a teenager, I fell in love with Nachos, a small family-owned restaurant in Granada Hills. Eating their food felt like eating my grandma's meals—perfectly mashed frijoles and fluffy arroz rojo that filled the room with its aroma. If you've ever visited me in LA, you've eaten at Nachos. Whenever I returned from a trip out of town, it was the first place I would visit after landing at LAX. Nachos was where I ate with friends to process difficult experiences and celebrate achievements.

The adjacent businesses were never in direct competition with Nachos (you can't eat tires!), so it served as the only spot to get a quick burrito in the area. Then two years ago, Chipotle moved in down the street. This was the



first time in four decades on Balboa Blvd. and Devonshire Blvd. that you could get a burrito somewhere else. With its focal location at the center of Devonshire and Sepulveda, Chipotle immediately absorbed a lot of Nachos' business. After forty years, Nachos closed in 2017. I waited in line for an hour to order my last dinner. I was devastated.

For weeks leading up to their closing, I asked Rosa, their cashier/manager/greeter, for their salsa recipe because it was (and still is) the best I've ever had. I overheard other customers ask during their last weekend, too. We all knew we might not ever get to drown our burritos in their irresistibly delicious salsa again. Their Facebook page echoed these same sentiments—some people even asked for a full cookbook. Months later, the recipe was shared as a photo on Facebook, handwritten on two pieces of paper, much like my Grandma's recipes.

I've perfected this recipe since joining DSA-LA. I've made it for larger multi-committee meetings, NOlympics coalition events, and last year's Chapter Convention. I really enjoy making this for comrades; cooking is such a true labour of love and I am so honoured to be able to share this recipe with others, as it's so special to me.

I hope you enjoy this salsa as much as I do and spread #spicypraxis wherever you are.



Equipment

- Blender (otherwise can use patience and a strong, concise dicing method)
- Knife
- Large pot
- 2 large mixing bowls (only one if you're halving the recipe)
- Large spoon
- Can opener
- Garlic press
- Lemon juicer (or your hand)

Ingredients

- 6 Serrano peppers
- 6 wax peppers
- 2 large white onions
- 1 bunch cilantro
- 50-60 oz tomato sauce (this depends on how thin you like your salsa)
- 1 garlic head
- 1 large lemon
- Salt and pepper, to taste

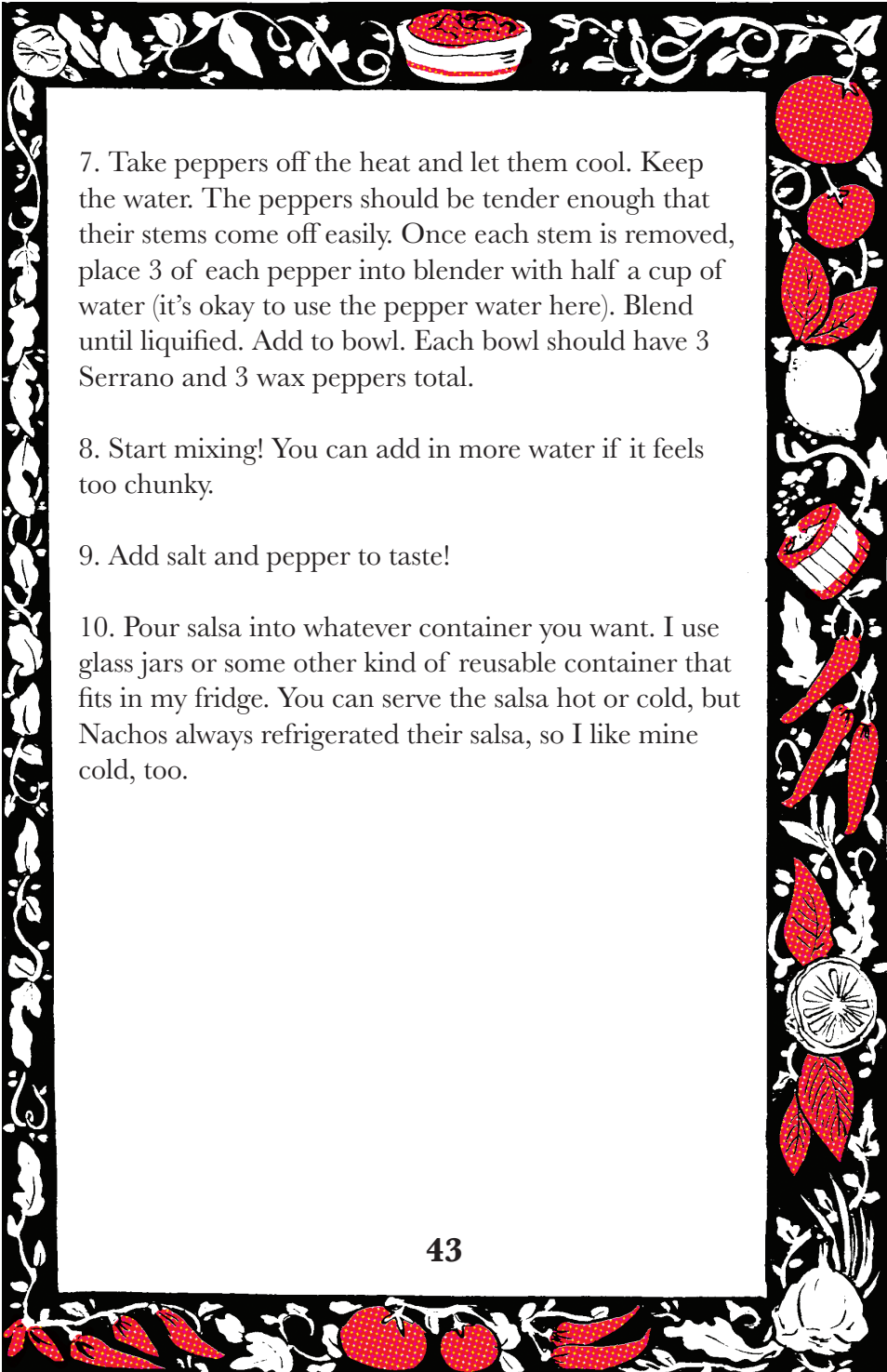
Estimated Cost of Ingredients – \$9.35

Serving Size: 1 Gallon



Directions

1. Rinse and boil all peppers in a large pot for one to two hours. I find that the longer I leave them boiling the less spicy the salsa. I'm not sure if there's any science to this, but it's something I've observed.
2. While the peppers boil, prepare everything else. Chop the onion up into tiny squares. The onion won't be blended so ensure the pieces are small enough to eat. Set aside, with one chopped onion per mixing bowl.
3. Rinse cilantro. Put into your blender of choice with about half a cup of water. Blend until it looks almost like green juice! You want it liquified. Evenly distribute between mixing bowls.
4. Split garlic head in two, one half per bowl. Press the garlic cloves directly into the bowls. You can add more garlic if you wish, but I find one garlic head enough for a serving.
5. Cut lemon in half. Squeeze the juice of half a lemon into each bowl.
6. Open cans of tomato sauce. I like to use one 29-oz can for each bowl (total of 58 oz of sauce). Dump into each bowl (slowly! This gets messy!). I like to use a bit of the pepper water to ensure I get each bit of sauce out of the cans and into the bowls.



7. Take peppers off the heat and let them cool. Keep the water. The peppers should be tender enough that their stems come off easily. Once each stem is removed, place 3 of each pepper into blender with half a cup of water (it's okay to use the pepper water here). Blend until liquified. Add to bowl. Each bowl should have 3 Serrano and 3 wax peppers total.

8. Start mixing! You can add in more water if it feels too chunky.

9. Add salt and pepper to taste!

10. Pour salsa into whatever container you want. I use glass jars or some other kind of reusable container that fits in my fridge. You can serve the salsa hot or cold, but Nachos always refrigerated their salsa, so I like mine cold, too.



Reading Commentary

*Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and
Economy of the U.S. Working Class*

by Mike Davis (1986)

In *Prisoners of the American Dream*, Mike Davis thoroughly details labor's history and its sometimes fraught relationship with the U.S.'s working class, as well as economic growth in the 20th century through Reagan's first presidential term.

Davis describes a movement that, even at its peak, had unique challenges compared to its European counterparts. Geographic spread made it difficult to organize where there were not strong socialist ties. Labor leaders were also generally more conservative, often icing out socialist organizers. This benefited those unionized while post-war prosperity rose, but backfired catastrophically later. Having focused on maintaining internal gains while atomizing and suburbanizing legislation and tax structures spread, unions were caught out in a downturned economy.

Naturally, Davis's account frustrated me. While noting major wins like the Cost of Living Adjustment, he also describes a white male-dominated movement that redbaited, colluded with management, and hired staffers at the expense of training more shop floor organizers; a movement that neglected organizing newer sectors (like the mostly female clerical workers or

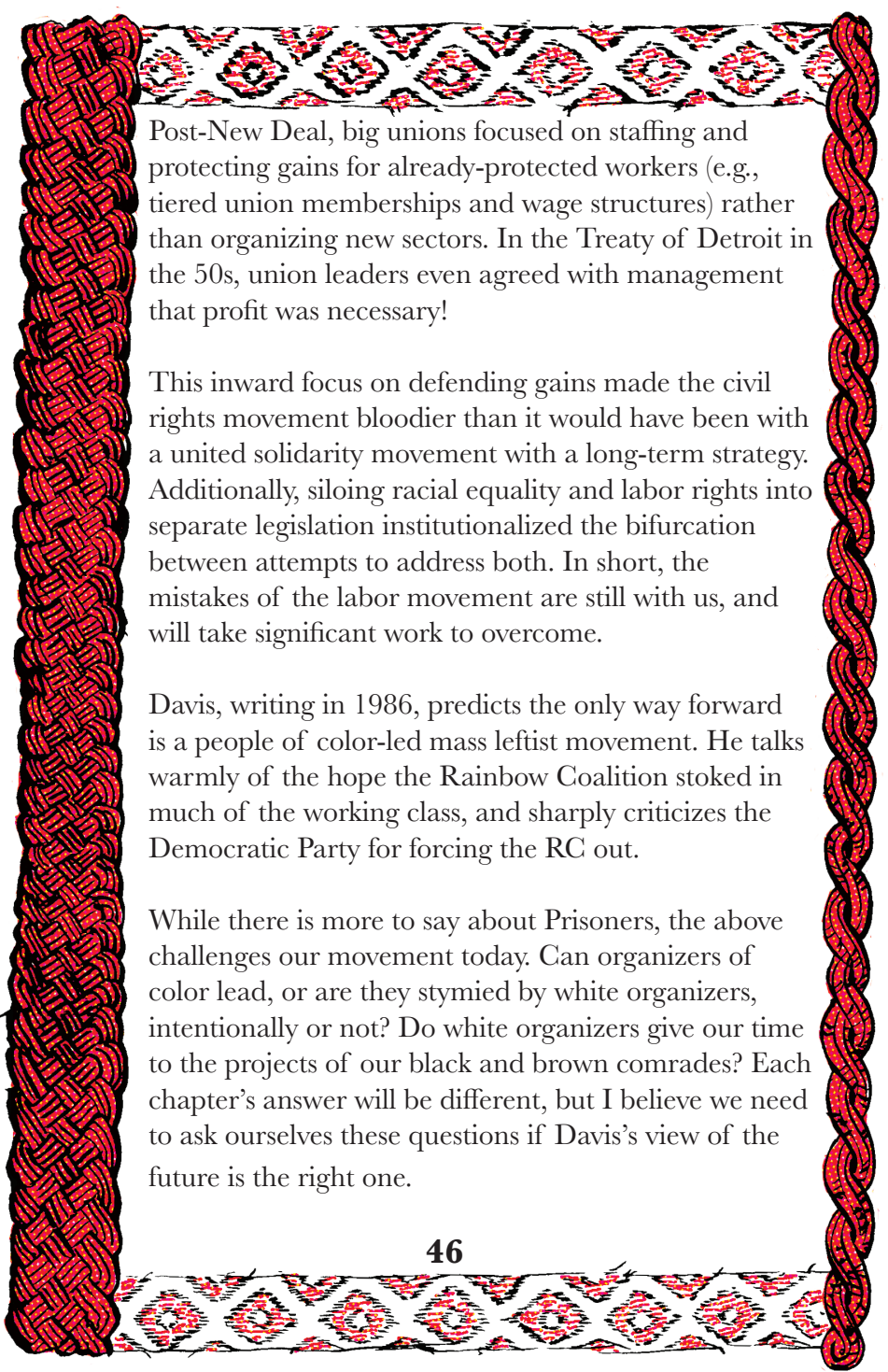


predominantly black and brown agricultural workers in the South).

The most sobering aspect of Davis's analysis comes early, and distinctly parallels today's Left. He describes leadership's neglect of Southern organizing and refusal to engage with (and sometimes outright hostility to) the Black liberation struggle – both key for a unified working class movement. The CIO's failure to work alongside the Civil Rights Movement, for example, kneecapped the Democratic Party's recomposition in the 40s. Davis writes:

“Only a massive unionization campaign closely coordinated with full support for Black civil rights could have conceivably generated the conditions for interracial unity and a popular overthrow of Bourbon power ... The national CIO's gradual backtracking on civil rights (a trend again intimately connected with the rise of anticommunism) left the Black movement even more vulnerable to the racist backlash which swept the country in the late 40s.”

But this is far from the only time white male workers failed to see the importance of a united working class. The New Deal explicitly excluded female and non-white-dominated sectors like service work and agriculture. By valuing certain laborers over others, the state deliberately advantaged white male workers at the expense of their female and non-white counterparts.

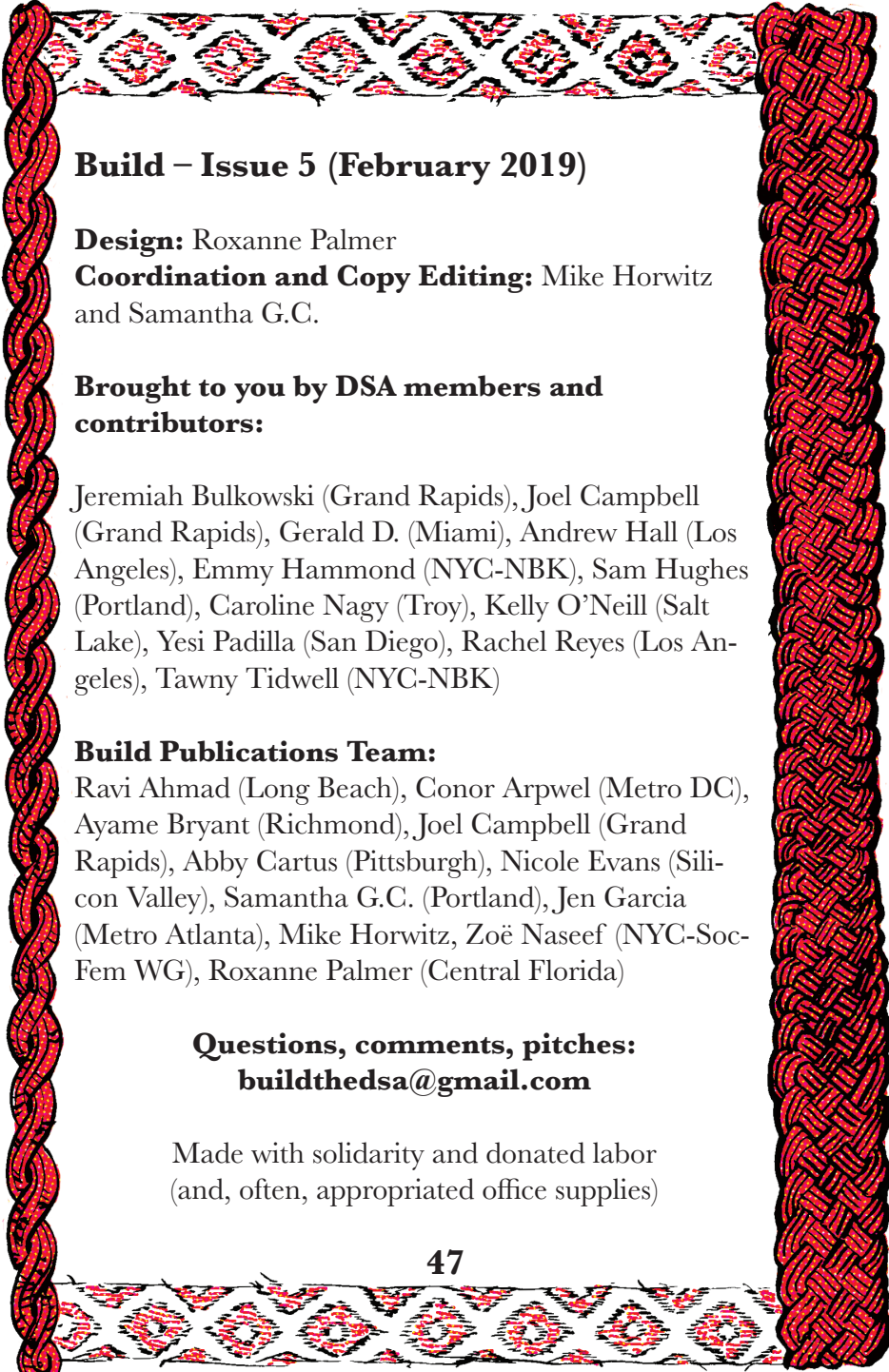


Post-New Deal, big unions focused on staffing and protecting gains for already-protected workers (e.g., tiered union memberships and wage structures) rather than organizing new sectors. In the Treaty of Detroit in the 50s, union leaders even agreed with management that profit was necessary!

This inward focus on defending gains made the civil rights movement bloodier than it would have been with a united solidarity movement with a long-term strategy. Additionally, siloing racial equality and labor rights into separate legislation institutionalized the bifurcation between attempts to address both. In short, the mistakes of the labor movement are still with us, and will take significant work to overcome.

Davis, writing in 1986, predicts the only way forward is a people of color-led mass leftist movement. He talks warmly of the hope the Rainbow Coalition stoked in much of the working class, and sharply criticizes the Democratic Party for forcing the RC out.

While there is more to say about Prisoners, the above challenges our movement today. Can organizers of color lead, or are they stymied by white organizers, intentionally or not? Do white organizers give our time to the projects of our black and brown comrades? Each chapter's answer will be different, but I believe we need to ask ourselves these questions if Davis's view of the future is the right one.



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Made with solidarity and donated labor
(and, often, appropriated office supplies)

“Weaving” (excerpt)

... So up and down before her loom
She paces on, and to and fro,
Till sunset fills the dusty room,
And makes the water redly glow,
As if the Merrimack’s calm flood
Were changed into a stream of blood.

Too soon fulfilled, and all too true
The words she murmured as she wrought:
But, weary weaver, not to you
Alone was war’s stern message brought:
“Woman!” it knelled from heart to heart,
“Thy sister’s keeper know thou art!”

*-Lucy Larcom,
poet and abolitionist*

