Teamwork makes the dream work!

Folks gathered in July in Greensboro for a two-day training session to build working class political power.

WHO KNOWS WHAT WE NEED BETTER THAN US?

To strengthen our local democracies, Down Home is working to make sure that working-class people across race and their politics are part of elections up and down the ballot. This goes beyond just voting, and extends to organizing and even having poor and working class people run for office. After all, who knows their communities better than those of us who live, and sometimes struggle, here?

In July, Down Home joined up with the Carolina Federation and the Working Families Party to have a two-day training session for working class folks from all across the state who are interested in running for office or working on multiracial working-class campaigns next year.

Why we believe working people should hold office in our towns and counties:

1. Representation for the rest of us

Poor and working-class individuals have the lived experiences of navigating systems and economies that aren’t made for them— and once elected can bring those experiences to the table when decisions are made. By stepping into local office, they bring a firsthand understanding of the struggles faced by the majority of their communities. This authentic representation allows for policies and initiatives that directly address the needs and concerns of the poor and working class, ensuring their voices are not only heard but genuinely represented.

2. Working together and bridging divides

Historically in North Carolina and the South, tremendous effort has been put in by the powerful few to keep working people’s power divided by race and class. Working class candidates’ campaigns can and should be built to bring multiracial
and diverse groups together around common interests and needs. By actively participating in the decision-making process, working-class individuals can advocate for equitable distribution of resources, affordable housing, accessible healthcare, and quality education.

3. Community empowerment

Far too often, we assume that electoral politics are for the wealthy and powerful. Most of us didn’t grow up seeing people like our parents—working people who do shift work or hustle multiple jobs—be decision makers in our communities. Running for local office demonstrates that working-class individuals across race can and should be agents of change within their communities. Through their leadership and campaigning, they can mobilize community resources, encourage civic engagement, speak across racial divides, and foster a sense of unity and empowerment among the poor and working class.

4. Shifting power

Historically, power has often been concentrated in the hands of the wealthy few—down here in North Carolina, we call that the good ol’ boy system. Since the beginning of our state, politicians have been traditionally white, male, and rich. By running for local office, working-class individuals challenge these age-old power dynamics, disrupt the status quo, and assert our right to representation. Our presence in local government shifts the narrative, ensuring that decisions reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of the entire community, rather than a select few.

5. Prioritizing working people’s policy

Frequently, our small town and rural elected officials are property owners and business owners and as a result prioritize policies that privilege local business, development, and the like while ignoring regular people’s needs. Working-class candidates bring a critical perspective to policy discussions, often focusing on issues that directly impact our day to day lives. Whether it’s advocating for fair wages, workers’ rights, or sustainable development, our presence in local government elevates these crucial topics—often for the first time. Through legislation, we can drive meaningful change, addressing systemic issues that perpetuate inequality and improving the lives of their constituents.

Want to get involved? Contact the political team!
Email Vicente: vicente@downhomenc.org

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**UPDATES FROM OUR LOCAL CHAPTERS ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA!**

**When Two Chapters Meet! Watauga and JoCo**

Johnston County member Christina Arena first met Watauga County member Mikey Bugge at a Down Home training. “He looked so unique, and so do I,“ she says. “So heyyyy!” Then, imagine her surprise much later when he showed up at their chapter meeting, about 3.5 hours away, with two local friends to check out how her chapter is doing.

“I grew up in Johnston County,” says Mikey. “I’ve lived out of the area for a few years, but I remember all the issues that were here. I was raised by two public school teachers and I know how much money they had to put into their classrooms. So to see that the Johnston County chapter is working on that and making real progress means the world to me.“ Us too, Mikey!

**Cabarrus gets things done!**

After getting the county to double their budget for emergency assistance and make it much easier for working folks to apply, members are building power by spreading the word and helping working people get access to funds that have been hard to get in the past. “There is good work being done,” says member Mae Mack. “What I love about Down Home is that we actually do things. We talk to people and we strategize, and we have a plan how we can make a different world. Building multiracial power is a surefire way for us to get there.”

Contact Cabarrus organizer Jasmine: jasmine@downhomenc.org
Granville continues fight for park

Member Chelsea Smith gave an update to the chapter in July after meeting with the head of the Oxford Parks Department. “We’re looking at August or September for the next meeting. After that, the Parks Department proposes a budget to the City Manager, and they say yay or nay to the budget. We suggested $325,000 and the Parks Department said that was a huge amount. She almost fell out of her chair.” A community event is tentatively scheduled for Aug. 19 in the park to show the people of Oxford are still organizing for this important public space!

Contact Granville organizer Reeves: reeves@downhomenc.org

A fresh start in Pitt

Our new Pitt County organizer, Carlos Alfonso, says he’s looking forward to helping folks change their community to match their values. But he took a CONTROVERSIAL stance when we asked him whether Duke or Carolina is the correct blue. “This question is more than just the color of the universities,” he says. “It’s a matter of private vs. public, religious affiliation vs. non-religious, stone buildings vs. brick, JJ Reddick vs Michael Jordan. If the answer isn’t apparent yet, I must ask you one last thing, why did the Gods make the sky Carolina blue if they weren’t trying to show us how much they loved Carolina?”

Contact Pitt organizer Carlos: carlos@downhomenc.org

Growing in Person

What is our new organizer Sam Lias fighting for in Person County? “I want everyone everywhere to be able to go to the dentist, have access to great affordable housing, fresh fruit and vegetables, quality free healthcare right up the road, transportation, free education, more sleep, ending the war on drugs, universal childcare, living wages, more free time for hobbies, fully funded lunch/afterschool programs, representation and reparations, free broadband internet, clean air and water, a future you can plan for, a world where it’s easy to vote, and ending bans on books, bodies and people. You know... just the basics.”

Contact Person organizer Sam: sam@downhomenc.org

Alamance’s strong team

Why did Brian Dickerson become a member of the Alamance chapter? “I wanted to be a part of the group,” he says. “I felt welcome. It felt like family. We had an election party that first night and I went on and joined. I’ve met some incredible people. It’s very important to organize. It creates solidarity. Without organizing, we can’t be a team. And without a team, we can’t work as one and reach our goals.”

Contact Alamance organizer Bryant: bryant@downhomenc.org

Getting better Ashe housing

After meeting with county commissioners about housing standards, the chapter is working on an education program that will build power for working people. “At a bare minimum, folks deserve to live in housing that isn’t making them sick or dangerous to them,” says member Stefanie Heinrich. “And landlords have a responsibility to uphold and maintain those standards. And we’re hoping Ashe County sets those standards for landlords to follow in the future.”

Contact Ashe organizer Dolly: dolly@downhomenc.org
EVENTS THIS MONTH

Find our events and sign up here: mobilize.us/DownHomeNC

ALAMANCE COUNTY
Monthly Chapter Meeting
Saturday, Aug. 5

ASHE COUNTY
Monthly Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, Aug. 15

CABARRUS COUNTY
Monthly Chapter Meeting
Thursday, Aug. 10

GRANVILLE COUNTY
Monthly Chapter Meeting
Thursday, Aug. 17

JOHNSTON COUNTY
Monthly Chapter Meeting
Thursday, Aug. 31

WATAUGA COUNTY
River Clean Up
Saturday, Aug. 12

PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Back-to-School Letter to the Editor Training
Tuesday, Aug. 1

Public School Strong Training
Saturday, Aug. 12

H.E.A.L. Together NC Statewide Call
Thursday, Aug. 24

E pluribus unum

Regan Shaw is a mother and local organizer with Public School Strong in Union County, North Carolina. She is also a product of our nation’s public schools. When it was time for her son to start school, Regan made the decision to leave the United Kingdom where she was living and move to North Carolina to enroll him.

But now, Regan is witnessing a small minority attack the school system that has served her family so well. The national manufactured culture war has come to Union County. A small but vocal extremist minority are attempting to remove literature from the libraries and LGBTQIA+ symbols from school grounds. As a mother, Regan is outraged that the people waging these attacks would use the county’s very own children and those children’s identities as fuel and fodder.

Meanwhile, lawmakers in Raleigh are also doing the bidding of this extremist minority. The General Assembly continues to introduce bigoted bills, to target teachers and administrators, and are working to divert money away from public education into private hands. Below, Regan asks an important question: Do these attacks reflect North Carolina values? Her answer is no.

In American public schools, you cannot bully people for being different. We have rules so our children do not do this. You cannot bully other children for their race or religion or disability or sexual orientation or gender identity. You can’t ban books just because they have gay parents in them. That’s the law.

Public schools do not indoctrinate. They teach people how to coexist. Gay people exist. Trans people exist. Their identity is not a “divisive political concept”. It’s their life. It may not be something you like or understand but you have to respect other people’s rights to be who they are.

That is the promise of America in a nutshell. E “ pluribus” unum.

In private schools, on the other hand, you *can* discriminate. In fact, you can fully indoctrinate. You can indoctrinate with a religion. You *can* ban books about gay parents. You can teach holocaust denial or flat earth theory. There are no rules about learning facts or rules about learning to coexist with others. Private schools are not regulated at all and, if the extremists targeting our public education system have their way, soon charter schools won’t be either.

Unregulated schooling is ripe territory for controlling minds, for capturing youth, which was part of the Hitler quote an Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty recently placed on the front page of their newsletter (to no surprise to anyone paying attention).

Schools can be the ultimate political weapon. That’s why people who don’t like diversity and freedom of thought don’t just send their kids to private school or homeschool their kids. They want to destroy our American public schools and replace them with private school vouchers. In order to achieve that, they foment chaos and division to try to undermine the integrity of the very concept of public schools.

Last year they created CRT hysteria, claiming civil rights education was Marxist. This year it’s book bans and picking on LGBTQIA+ kids and families, running around calling everyone groomers, accusing all of us, parents and teachers included, of trying to have sex with children. Some even claim we drink their blood, the same thing that was said about Jews in WW2.

They don’t care about improving classroom materials or teacher retention. They’re fixated on trans kids, a tiny fraction of harmless students who statistically are already the most bullied, now being pushed further into harm’s way. Hmm... going after transgender people sounds familiar to those of us who study history, doesn’t it?

It’s an old playbook dug up from the dustbins of the 20th century rebranded as the “war on woke”, and it won’t work. You will not use our public purse to suppress others in your quest to create a fascist state as you droll over Victor Orban at CPAC. We are onto the scam and we are fighting back.