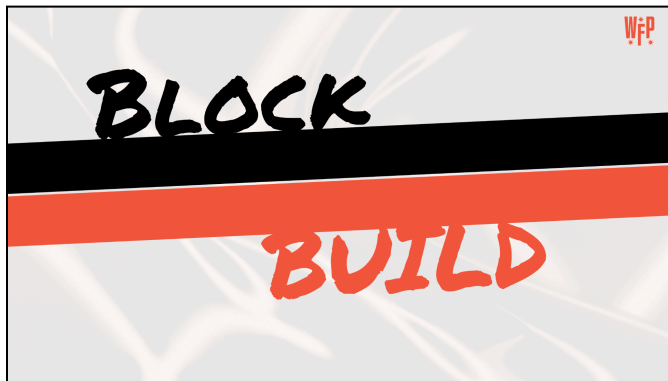


# WORKING FAMILIES PARTY MASS CALLS

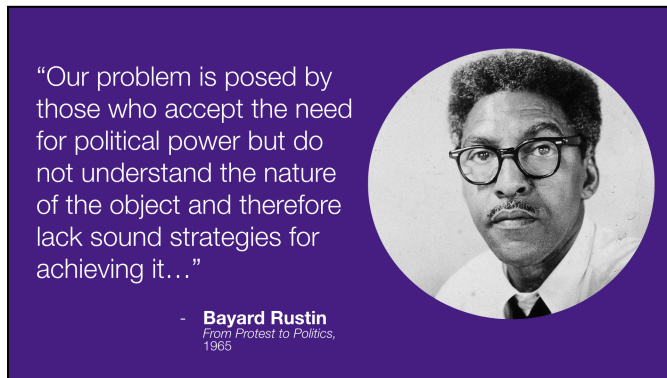
## Mass Call #14 - Political Education Script



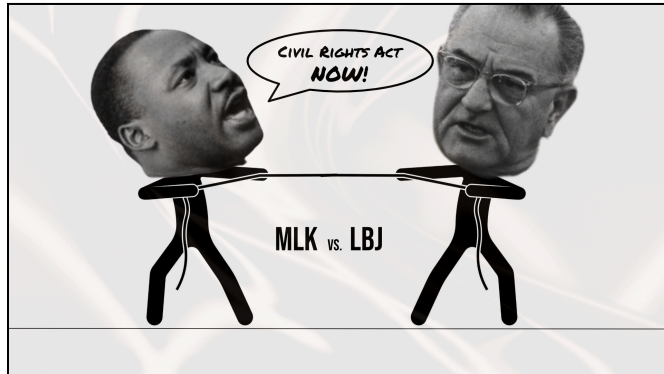
- For today's Block and Build political education session we are going to return talking about POWER.
- As powerbuilders we have to be very clear about what we mean by this term, so we have been spending the last few political education sessions digging in here.
- But before we get into today's topic, let's take a moment like we always do to review some of the material we have gone over on past calls.



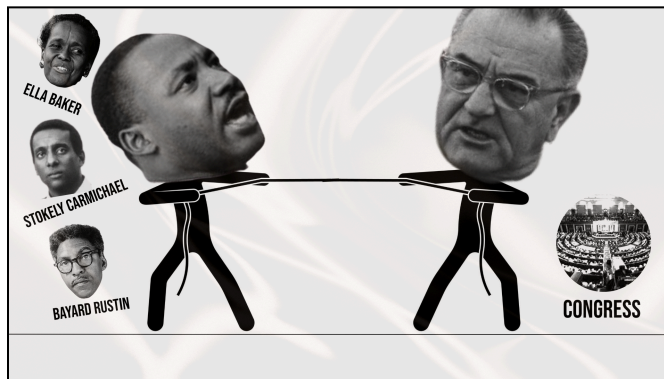
- We always start with this picture because it is the foundation of our shared understanding about why we have to build power.
- We are in a political crisis: the two major parties aren't serving us. The Republicans have been taken over by an authoritarian faction, and both major parties are heavily controlled by corporate and ultra wealthy forces. Working class people are stuck with a bad set of choices.
- Our task is to build a new majority and to pursue the power to govern.



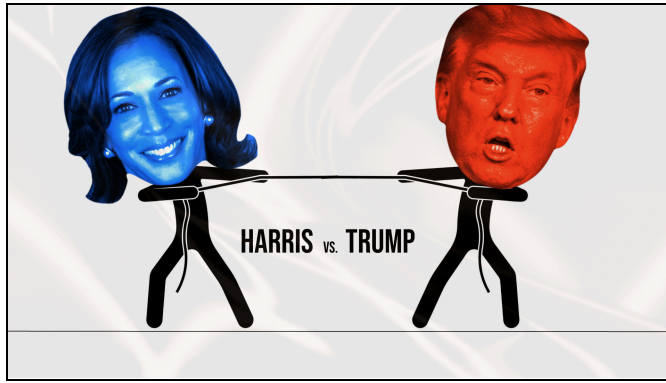
- Doing so requires strategy. For guidance on strategy we looked on a previous call at the thinking of the Civil Rights movement leader Bayard Rustin.
- In his essay *From Protest to Politics*, Rustin talks about the need to build political power.
- He also talked about the dynamics of doing so in a two party system where broad coalitions will always have to be built in order to win and sustain those wins.
- When Bayard wrote *From Protest to Politics* the movement had just won a major victory by passing the Civil Rights Act, and Rustin was taking stock of what they needed to do now to hold on to those wins.
- He was doing this because he was counting up the power the movement had. He was planning ahead. He could see the white backlash against the Civil Rights Movement was coming. As a political strategist he was attempting to protect the gains of the movement by building a cross-racial majority behind it.
- Tech cue:  
Link to drop in chat:  
*From Protest to Politics*–Bayard Rustin:  
<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1965-bayard-rustin-protest-po>



- Unfortunately, movement strategists like Bayard Rustin tend to get forgotten in the popular history that is told about movements.
- Rather we are told an oversimplified story of how history works.
- In this version of history, change comes from public figures engaged in some great struggle.
- We know enough to have a sense that this erases all the complexities of movements.



- This picture is still way too oversimplified, but it starts to show a bit more clearly what was going on. There were obviously LOTS of people involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

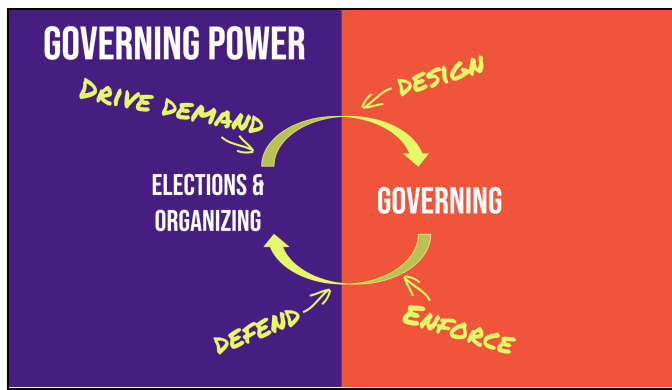


- So we should be suspicious of anyone who tells us that politics boils down to a simple equation that looks like this.
- There was and is so much standing behind both of these public figures.
- We got a bit of an insight into this when somehow – against the odds – a white paper written by a DC think tank actually became a household word during the election. Can you guess what I’m talking about in the chat?
- I am talking, of course, about Project 2025. Project 2025 represented an entire governing blueprint written by multiple actors from across the conservative movement. It required extreme coordination and a level of shared vision to produce and organize around a strategic document like that.
- That document, and all the people and institutions that helped create it, are part of the broader infrastructure that the right has built over decades to win and sustain governing power.

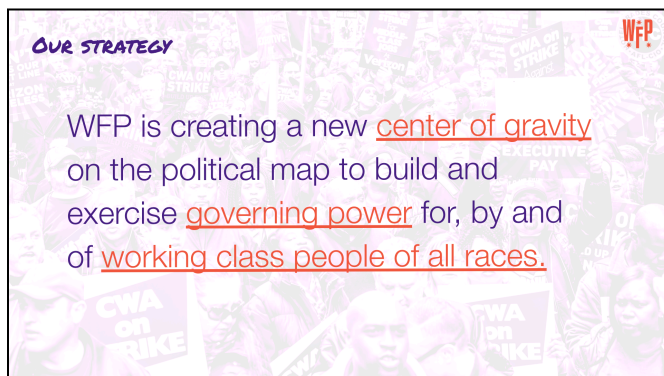
**GOVERNING POWER IS ABOUT  
CONTROLLING THE GOVERNMENT.**

- In short, the corporate conservative movement has a plan to control the government. And for all the distractions they will throw out to keep us looking in a different direction, we have to remain laser-focussed on what they are up to.
- And...we need our OWN plan to build governing power.

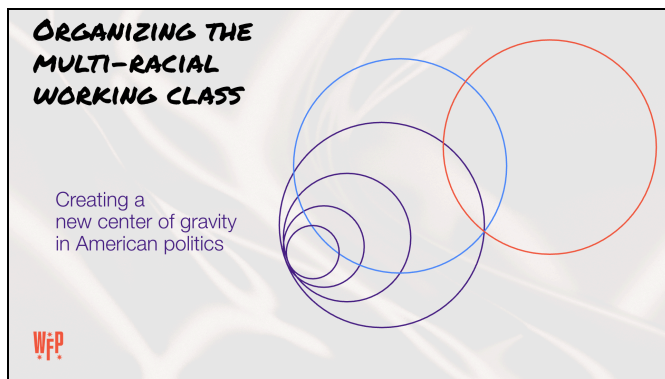




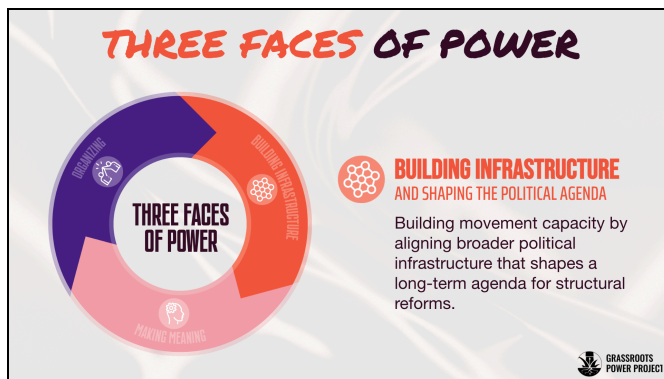
- This process of controlling the government requires many different people and organizations – each with different areas of specialization and expertise – doing their part.
- It requires playing a long game. It is not accomplished in one election or one session of Congress.



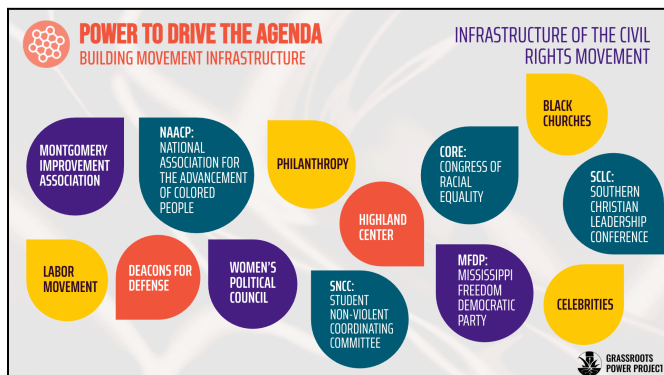
- At WFP we have a long term strategy to build this kind of governing power. We developed this strategy in the political conditions we live in. We are working within a two-party system, where most voters understand that there are just two flavors of political ice cream – the blue and the red flavors.
- Our job is to create something new. We need to attract working class people of all races to a new political camp they may not even realize exists yet. Working class people may think there are no alternatives and are just casting protest votes or staying on the couch, but it's our job – all of us – to bring them into something different.



- Here is a simple picture of what I am talking about.
- Our circle is not going to start out the same size as the two major parties. We are going to start out smaller. But over the last 26 years that the WFP has been in existence, this circle keeps getting bigger.
- When we were founded in NY, we could maybe influence a city council race, or a lower state office contest. Then we kept organizing. We also started to move to other states, and in each place we kept building that center of gravity election by election, issue fight by issue fight.
- As we grow that center of gravity in a city, county or a state, we start to create a force of attraction that is building a new working class politics. We are recruiting more and more working class candidates, and we are seen as fighting for things that matter to working class people like us.
- As time goes on, more and more people start to notice, and we become a real player on the political map.
- So let's remind ourselves of the overarching strategy here. The idea that the "WFP is creating a new center of gravity on the political map to build and exercise governing power for, by, and of working class people of all races"...that is our North Star. Is that where you, too, are trying to go? Say that's my North Star if you're still with me!

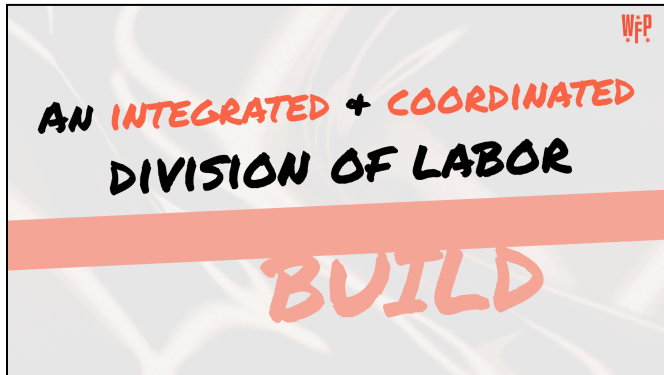


- In our past calls we introduced an idea from our friends at the Grassroots Power Project called the “three faces of power.”
- One of those faces of power is the power of building infrastructure and thus shaping the political agenda.

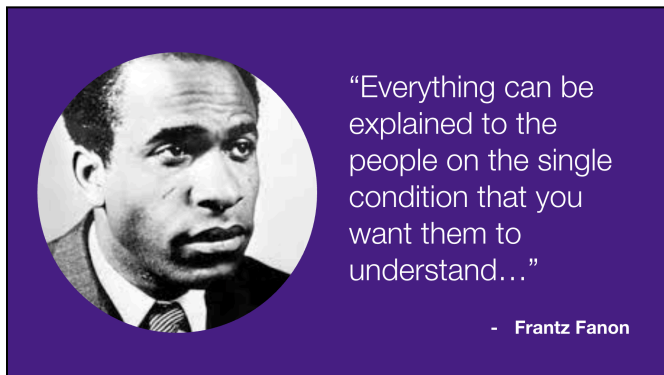


- When we first looked at this face of power, we used the example of the Civil Rights Movement.
- In the movement infrastructure they built, there were big national organizations that most of us have heard about. There was the NAACP. There was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.
- There were also smaller regional organizations that played important roles like Deacons for Defense and the Highlander Center.
- There were local organizations. And they even formed political parties – the most famous of which was the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.
- And there were other actors that each played important roles in supporting the goals of the movement.

- All of these organizations and the leaders within them did not always get along. There were personality conflicts. There were disagreements over tactics and strategy. This is natural. But the movement managed to hold together in a functional unity. And this allowed them to reset the political agenda in the United States in a profound way.

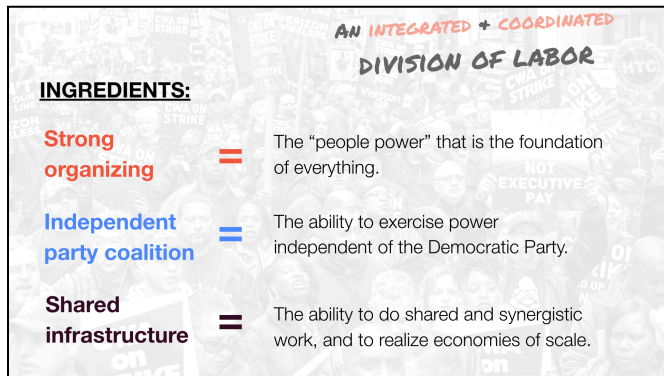


- Okay, that was our review. Now we want to get into the main topic for today. We want to look at the idea of building an **integrated and coordinated division of labor** within our movement.
- We need to do this because we need to win. And for as hard as it might seem to imagine that we could accomplish this goal, I guarantee you that all those years ago during the late 1950's and early 1960's, some of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement were also not clear they could do it. But they did.

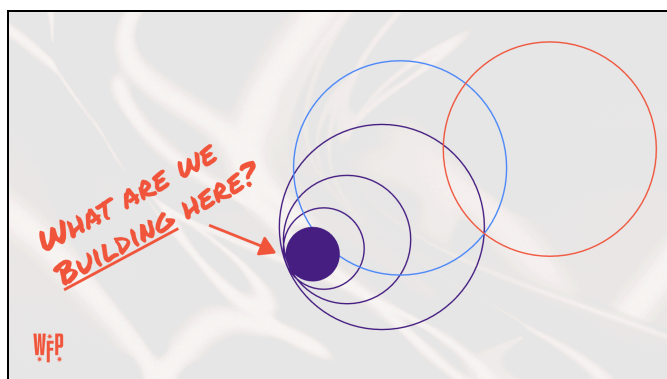


- I am starting this section with this quote from Frantz Fanon, the great anti-colonial revolutionary leader and thinker from French-occupied Martinique, because I want you to understand what we are going to talk about, even if it is a bit more complex.
- This next section attempts to answer the question of not just what are the pieces of the infrastructure we need to build, **but HOW they could fit together.**

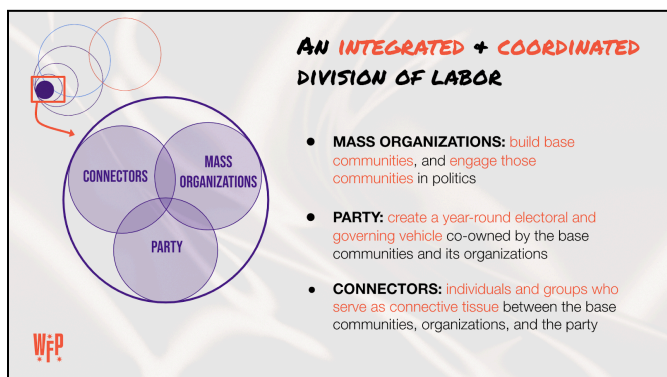
- I need you to understand this stuff because if we are going to build a political movement that can grow to scale and depth, then we are going to need LOTS of leaders like all of you on this call who get the strategy at a deep level.
- And it is not just about “getting it.” I am not up here talking just so we can sound smarter at the next barbeque we go to! I am up here talking about this so that we understand it to the point where we can DO it. I need us to be able to put this stuff into application. We need not a dozen people, or even a hundred people who get this. We need thousands who get it and can produce and reproduce this strategy at an exponential rate.
- That is what we need if we want to win at least. And you all want to win, right? I sure do...so let's talk about this!



- Because I want to make sure this is understandable, I am going to start by showing you this simple ingredient list.
- The ingredients of an integrated and coordinated division of labor are:
  - **Strong organizing:** we need organizations and organizers who are skilled and rigorous about building people power in working class communities.
  - **Independent party coalition:** we need a political vehicle that allows us to build power independent of the Democratic Party.
  - **Shared infrastructure:** we need to create and maintain tools and infrastructure that allow us to each play our part and to realize synergy and economies of scale between the various parts of what we do.



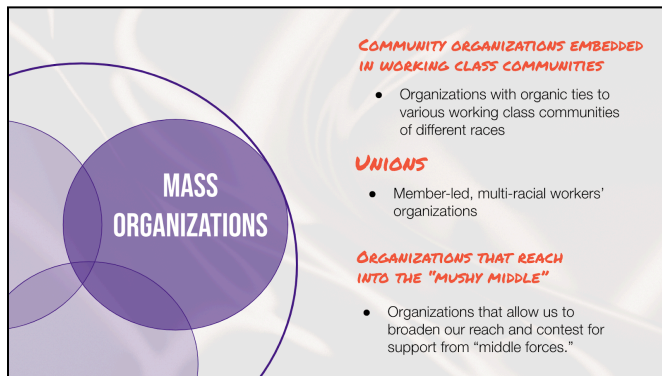
- Okay, so let's look at this picture again. This is the picture of us trying to build a new center of gravity on the US political map.
- We know that our circle is not as big as the circles of either of the major parties right now. So let's look at the work we need to do to build in this smaller circle so that we can grow.



- Here we have zoomed in on that smaller circle.
- If you are on this call as someone involved in an organization at any level, I hope you see yourself in this picture. Whether you are the president of your organization or you just went to your first meeting, I hope you see yourself in this picture of what it will take to build this new center of gravity.
- We need unions and community organizations that are building power with working people where they live, and work, and worship, and dance.
- We need a party like the WFP to act as the year-round electoral and governing vehicle for these organizations that are building a base in working class communities.
- And we need connectors. These are people who tie it all together.

They may be that person who is a shop steward in their union, and also a leader in their local branch of the WFP.

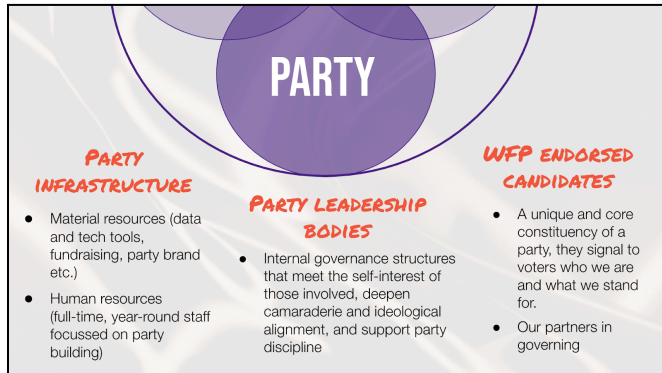
- They may be the local auntie down the block who joined an initiative to fight for decent housing in her neighborhood, but then got politically involved in the election campaign of an exciting WFP champion like Kendra Brooks or Nic O'Rourke in Philadelphia.
- Or they may be the executive director of a national organization, who also sits on the national executive committee of the WFP, who is moving high-level work across the country.
- All of these people play key roles in bridging their people – their co-workers, their neighbors, or their members – to this collective Block and Build strategy for building our power.



- At the height of working class power *within* the Democratic Party, the leadership of unions and other working class institutions were not only aligned with that party, their membership bases were deeply connected to it as well. The same could be said about the peak of the Civil Rights Movement's influence *within* the Democratic Party.
- In order to build our own center of gravity on the political map, we are going to need organizations that are deeply rooted in their communities and practicing powerful organizing at scale.
- This means community organizations that are building power around housing rights, climate justice and health access...to name a few issues that matter to people on the ground.
- This means unions that are organizing their existing members and new ones into multi-racial and democratic worker organizations.

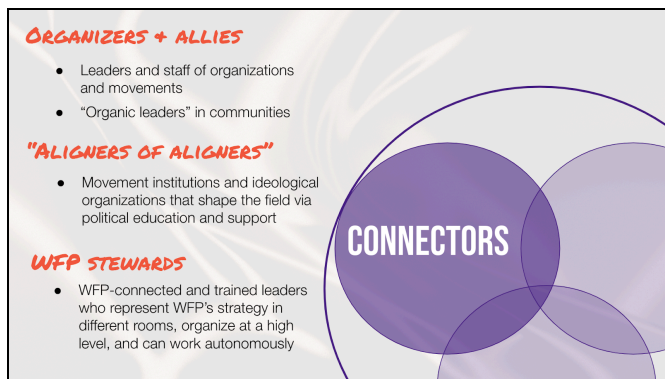


- And this also means organizations with reach into what are sometimes referred to as “middle forces.” This might be more middle class communities. It might be groups of voters that still feel some bond of connection to the Democratic Party, but at the same time are open to and possibly seeking something new.

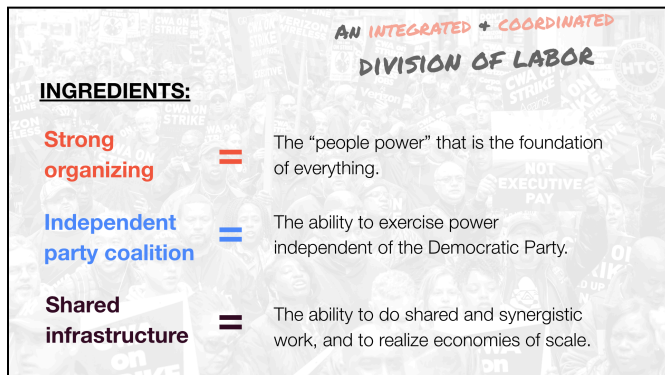


- We also need our own party. For the entirety of its existence – going back to its founding in 1828 – the Democratic Party has not been a working class party. At times working class people have had more power inside the Democrats – like in the 1930's. But even then the Democrats were a party that had to make internal compromises between their union-aligned wing and the part of their party that lined up with organized capital.
- At WFP we like to say that working class people rent a room in the Democratic Party, but we have never owned the house!
- WFP is building our own party, even if the realities of the two party system mean we often have to work inside the Democrats to get stuff done. We need to build our party and shared infrastructure that allows us to build power outside of the Democratic Party.
- Infrastructure takes many forms. It is human resources such as groups of aligned electeds, leaders, and activists, as well as highly trained staff able to perform the functions of a party year round. It is also material resources such as data infrastructure, cutting edge technology, and financial and legal systems.





- And finally, we need connectors. Connectors are the people that are able to draw it all together. They have the knowledge, the shared strategic vision, and the emotional intelligence to organize across organizations and with different kinds of people.
- The Civil Rights Movement was full of people like this. Many people talk about Ella Baker as the “most important civil rights leader you have never heard of” because she tirelessly lifted up others and built the connective tissue between parts of the movement.
- She played a leading role across organizations. She worked with a who’s who of leaders over multiple generations of the movement, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Thurgood Marshall, A. Philip Randolph, and Martin Luther King Jr. She mentored many emerging activists, such as Diane Nash, Stokely Carmichael, and Bob Moses.
- Basically...she was everywhere! Some of us need to rise up into our responsibility to be the incarnation of Ms. Baker’s legacy in the 21st century!



- Okay, that was a quick ride through the idea of building an integrated and coordinated division of labor. Maybe it was a little bit too much to absorb all at once. So I want to again end on this basic ingredient list.

- Some of us may still be a little unclear of what we are cooking here, but I at least want you to come home from the store with the right ingredients!
- Ultimately building this is about building our own ability to control the government – to exercise governing power. We can't achieve this goal if we don't figure out how to organize working class people across race and region into a coherent and visible force that can shift the politics in our country.
- Our elders and ancestors have managed to do this in the past, even when the path ahead was not clear, and we can do it too!

Watch the recordings and download the materials at:  
[www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls](http://www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls)

**MASS CALL #1: WHAT'S THE SCORE IN AMERICA**

In this call we talk about the threat posed by the MAGA movement, and the need for a united front strategy to defeat it. We make clear that in the context of the ongoing political crisis in America, elections are a doorway, not a destination.

[Download the Curriculum](#)



(Sample slides from the curriculum)

- If you like this political education session, or you want to watch it again to get something you missed, we have been posting the recordings on the WFP website at [www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls](http://www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls). We'll drop the link to that in the chat.
- And we've also put downloadable versions of all the slides and speakers notes for these political education sessions right there on the website. Again, you can find the materials at [www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls](http://www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls).

