

I am deeply honored to address you today — a room full of so many social justice leaders — especially in a moment when I think we need each other more than ever.

I came to BWC in 2009 when then-organizer Leah Madsen invited me to mutual aid events for young adults and to a particularly special historical bike ride tour of Boston by Dick Bauer, where I met Tom, my now-husband of 12 years. Over the years I've been connected to the Acting For Racial and Economic Justice committee, Gragger, immigrant accompaniment and Shule, where our kids love going on Sundays.

I grew up and was Bat Mitzvahed at Brandeis in a conservative synagogue and didn't find out until I joined Workers Circle (and then consequently invited my parents and brother's family to join) that our family has a history here. My grandma Libbie Greenbaum was delighted to find out that I was part of the Arbiter Ring and told me stories of coming as a young girl to sing "socialist songs", enjoy cultural events and attend Workers Circle summer camp. Her father had joined the Workmen's Circle when he was a carpenter but according to her, "once he had 50 or 60 people working for him as the manager of a paper factory they said "you are a capitalist! You don't belong here" and they had to leave. So while our family took a 70 year break or so from BWC, I feel connected to my lineage as I'm standing here.

I've worked as a community organizer for almost 20 years and some people know me to always be organizing (I can vouch that the rumor is true). In this moment of extreme repression and escalated attacks on so many communities, I have turned again to organizing, as I often do in moments of crisis, as not only the way to make systemic change, but also as a source of hope in the face of so much hardness.

One of my early roles was as a housing organizer at La Colaborativa in Chelsea leading a satellite site of City Life/Vida Urbana. For the probably many of you who have been to a City Life meeting or rally one of the most common chants is:

(all together) when we fight, we win! when we fight, we win!

That chant has become ubiquitous and it's one that I've been ruminating on and honestly questioning over the past year. We lost the election, even though many of us campaigned hard to keep Trump out. We lost trans rights and much more in supreme court decisions. Our friends have been detained and deported. We protest and contact Congress to stop sending arms and money to Israel and yet the US-backed genocide in Gaza wages on. As you well know, the list of fights we are not winning is long.

Recently I bumped into Marlon, one of the core leaders of a campaign at La Colaborativa to stop an attorney from taking advantage of people facing foreclosure by charging them upwards of \$10,000 to do a loan modification knowing that the banks were not doing those and they would get foreclosed anyways. Together with the help of fellow BWC member, Nadine Cohen, we filed a class action and we kept organizing, educating and fighting back. As with all organizing, the campaign took time and the case continued several years on after I

had left. I hadn't talked to Marlon in almost 10 years but when I saw him last month he told me that not only had he won back the money he had paid that attorney when they won the case, but he was about to finish paying off his mortgage. He had taken out a line of equity and bought a vacation home in New Hampshire. His three girls were thriving in college and everything worked out. So sometimes when we fight, we win.

But actually, even without knowing the outcome of Marlon's situation, that phrase always rang true for me for this campaign because there were so many moments when people moved from feeling powerless and isolated to feeling connected and powerful. Like the moment when Gerardo volunteered to get arrested at a protest when we shut down Chase Bank, despite his precarious legal status. His commitment to the group and his willingness to take a huge risk moved me deeply. I remember him getting loaded into the back of the police van smiling while we sang in support and feeling this overwhelming sense of connectedness, hope and power. And those leaders went on to fight for their rights at their jobs and their children's schools and more. So I think maybe that's what we mean when we say "when we fight, we win".

We grow our power.

We create connections across difference.

We learn how to strategize, adapt and adjust.

We build courage to speak up even when it's scary.

We might not win the policy, lawsuit or campaign or stop every deportation but we win all these things and that's no small thing.

We take risks and make personal sacrifices for our collective liberation and we grow stronger because of that. We are winning because we are fighting. And it is worth it to resist fascism, defend our communities, build a future that our grandchildren can thrive in and fight like hell for the living. Of that, I am sure.

I've talked to a lot of people who feel hopeless, anxious and overwhelmed by everything Trump is doing. I also feel that way at moments. You are not alone if that's how you're still feeling.

But everywhere I go I am in community and building with BWC members and that gives me hope. The day after the election as I was taking in the news, I walked out my door and cried and hugged my neighbors, including fellow BWC member, Angela Markle. After the inauguration in the depths of winter on a slushy depressing day I met up for breakfast with fellow BWC member, Jenny Hochstadt and others to talk about what we were doing in JP to protect neighbors against immigration attacks. This year I've been building a mutual aid network with parents at my children's school to support those impacted by immigration policing and guess what, my BWC community there too and we've gotten guidance from the BWC immigrant justice committee. We **need** each other. We **have** each other.

If you're someone who, as you reflect on your year, didn't show up as much as you would've liked, may this be your invitation to turn towards community. One of the best pieces of advice I got this year was at breakfast on the slushy depressing day, to start by connecting with the people closest to you. To reach out to that person in your life who might feel isolated and

especially targeted by this administration and let them know you are here for them. That may be the person who cleans your house, your child's teacher, your coworkers, neighbors or the barista at your favorite café.

And if you are ready to take another step, this is your invitation to organize this year. Through work I get to be part of an international network of people fighting for democracy, many of whom have lived under fascism. The day after Trump was elected, many of them reached out to empathize and offer advice and they said that authoritarianism feeds on isolation. They encouraged us to connect regularly in community and to organize.

When I say "organize", I don't mean go to one big protest, though that's a fine place to start. I mean get connected to a grassroots group in your neighborhood or at your school or to the LUCE immigrant justice network or your union or hopefully to a committee within the Workers Circle. If you need help finding your place in the movement, there are probably a lot of people in this room who would be willing to support you in finding a role — raise your hand if you would. Wherever it is, I encourage you to get involved in an ongoing way, because organizing is not only about winning the challenges we confront today. We won't win every demand, but we will move forward collectively with more connections, with more wisdom, with more courage and with more power to create transformative change in the long run.

When we fight, we win!