Power and Place

Advancing Health and Racial Equity through Local Organizing

A Four-Part Webinar Series from the Lead Local Research Collaborative

8/26, 9/9, 9/21, and 9/28

Transcript Session #3: Profiles in Community Power: Multi-Issue and Multi-Racial Organizing

Tuesday, September 21, 2021 — 1:30-2:15 p.m. (Eastern)

Featuring Emily Timm of Workers Defense Project, Shoshana Krieger of Building and Strengthening Tenant Action, a project of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc., Michelle Tremillo of Texas Organizing Project (TOP), and Aditi Vaidya of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

ADITI VAIDYA:
I want to welcome you to today's session Profiles in Community Power: Multi-Issue and Multi-Racial Organizing. This is the third session of a four-part webinar series focused on insights from the Lead Local Collaborative, about community power, place and structural change to advance health and racial equity. If you have not already, I invite you to sign up for the final webinar on September 28 -- just follow the link in the Chat to register. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provided support for Lead Local and this webinar series, and we want to extend special thanks to the University of Southern California Research Equity Institute for hosting the series. The University for Southern California's Equity Research Institute was one of the leads in the Lead Local Collaborative.

The chat will be closed for most of the session today, but we will keep it open for a few moments. We would love for you to share your name, the organization you are affiliated with, and where you are Zooming in from for today's session.

For today's session we will be focusing on Texas. Texas is one of the largest states in the nation, with multiple metropolitan areas. And it is leading the nation in some of the fastest-growing cities. In 2019, four of the top 10 cities with the largest increases in population were in Texas, including Fort Worth, Austin, Fort Worth and Frisco. Texas is also defined by its rapidly-changing demographics. Between 1980 and 2010, the percentage of people of color in Texas increased from 34% to 55%, with the largest growth being among Latinx communities. And these projections indicate that this trend will continue into 2050. The rapid growth, changing demographics, and Texas’s emergence as a battleground state for both local and national
politics, create immense opportunities for increasing the voice and the power of communities to shape both local and statewide conditions for health and racial equity.

This includes building power for large population centers in the state, and expanding from there into suburban and rural areas.

Today, we will hear more about how communities are organizing and the ecosystem within which they are organizing for long-term and structural change.

Let’s start with what power really is. Through the Lead Local Collaborative, we worked with our grantees to develop the definition of power – the definition being the ability for communities most impacted by structural inequities to develop, sustain, and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, public discourse, influence decision-makers, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability to change systems and advance health equity.

And what they are building power for is to change structures. So what is structural change? Structural change is fundamentally about addressing inequities at their root. This includes systems, laws, institutional policies and practices, resources, and cultural norms that shape conditions in the community. You can see the definition here on the slide.

Central to Lead Local’s Collaborative work was understanding how community power is built and impacts change at the state and local levels. The Lead Local Collaborative partnered with 40 local community power-building organizations across the country, including our panelists today, who I will introduce in a minute. You can see from the map here, the locations that we looked at and funded through Lead Local.

Today’s session will shed light on how state and local organizations in Texas are moving forward in these challenging times, sharing resources and skills, and focusing on addressing immediate needs towards longer-term actual change. We will have time for Q and A at the end, so we hope you will take the opportunity to submit your questions via the Q and A function at the bottom of your screen.

Now I am just thrilled to introduce you to our esteemed panelists. Shoshana Krieger is the project director for Building and Strengthening Tenant Action, or BASTA, at Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid. BASTA organizes Austin renters to work with their neighbors to ensure that all Austinites have access to safe and affordable housing by facilitating the development of tenant associations and building tenant power in Austin. Emily Timm is co-executive director of the Workers Defense Project, an organization she co-founded in 2005. Workers Defense empowers low-wage construction workers to achieve fair and safe employment. They are a statewide organization with thousands of members, and offices in Houston, Dallas, and Austin. Last but certainly not least, Michelle Tremillo, co-founder and executive director at Texas Education Fund as well as their 501c4 sister group, the Texas Organizing Project, or TOP. TOP conducts strategic, year-round community organizing centered on issue-based campaigns. TOP has a base of over 200,000 supporters, and consistently engages low-propensity voters who are predominantly women and people of color. Thank you, Shoshana, Emily and Michelle, for joining us. I have a few questions for each of you so we can learn more about the diverse ways that your organizations work – but also how you work together and with others in Texas. So let’s get started.
We're aware that there's a deep history of organizing in Texas, and there are lots of ways to organize -- sometimes through issues and sometimes through different types of identities. From where you sit in your organizations, can you give us a sense of what that history looks like? Shoshana, let's start with you, and then I welcome Emily and Michelle to add your experiences.

SHOSHANA KRIEGER:
There is not as much of a deep history of tenant organizing in Texas, in part because of the very hostile laws towards tenants in Texas and the lack of overall infrastructure. And so a lot of the history that we rely upon in our work is getting inspiration from groups like Workers Defense project and like TOP – and being inspired by their advocacy in a variety of arenas, including workers' rights and immigrants' rights. So we really lean into learning from our allies on the ground who are working in other spaces.

We also lean into folks who have historically been trying and succeeding in tenant organizing but in a very lonely world. The Texas Tenants Union has been doing this work for decades and really was the only organization in Texas doing tenant organizing for many decades. BASTA started around 5 years ago and we are starting the process of trying to create a more robust infrastructure for tenant organizing. We're the only tenant organizing group in Austin, and since we've been around we have had over three dozen tenants' associations form of willing tenants. So we are really looking at the micro-level of how we are building and organizing infrastructure.

ADITI VAIDYA:
Thanks, Shoshana. Emily, do you want to share a little bit?

EMILY TIMM:
Sure! Workers Defense has been around on the Texas scene for about 17 years. I think one of the things that I want to highlight is how Texas really has a history of organizing in the state, especially over the last 10 years, and has really grown a rich ecosystem of organizations that are working in partnership at the state level. And the Worker's Defense Project and the Texas Organizing Project are two of the many organizations in that ecosystem that have really come together. And it is important to highlight, I think there are a lot of misperceptions of Texas from the national perspective, that Texas is a tough place to organize. That is true, but we are in this incredible moment of change like Aditi laid out. Of demographic change, of political change, where there are organizations who have come together, in particular a constellation that we like to call Texas for All, and we have really come together around a larger vision of building community power and building community power around racial and economic justice. And building power for communities that are traditionally left out of the decision-making roles here in Texas. That is something that at a really exciting moment that we have, in the past 5-10 years, have really come together to figure out how we work together.

We have really doubled down and tried to win, to come together, around several big statewide fights. One was trying to push back against State Bill 4, which was a terrible anti-immigrant bill that brought many of our organizations together to fight back – to fight back against the racial profiling bill and then to lead local campaigns to push back and protect immigrant families at the local level. And, also, to come together around a proactive campaign for paid sick leave for Texas families and Texas workers.

Those are some of the really exciting examples of how our groups are coming together in this
moment to fight back and to win on the racial and economic justice front, and ultimately fighting for healthier Texas families. And I will let Michelle share a little bit more about the collaboration.

MICHELLE TREMILLO:
First of all, thank you so much for this panel and the opportunity to talk about all of the exciting work that is happening here in Texas. I think the headlines, especially over the last few weeks, show a really dismal picture. And you know, they are really turning up the volume at the state legislature into the direct response to the success that we are having at the local level. And so I think it is important for context. TOP is almost 12 years old now. About 10 years ago, we did a landscape analysis to look at who is participating in our government and who is not, and where do they live. Not surprisingly, overwhelmingly those of us who are not participating in our government are people of color, young women -- and we live in the nine most populous counties in the state. Texas is one of those states that people feel is too big, in fact most of us. Ten years ago, it was 9 counties, and we continue to grow, so now it’s 9-15 counties, depending. (laughs)

Several organizations started to come together over a theory of change that were calling our cities and counties out strategy. As Emily was mentioning, where we can impact change and where we can pass local policies that can have a positive impact in our communities is at the local level. You know, there’s just been a lot of work. All of our organizations have expanded into more geographies, and again concentrating where the majority of our future as a state live – so people of color and young people: the new American majority. I know they are called that in other spaces.

That is really where we have just been year after year, just building a base, building the capacity to influence change at the local level. And then, as Emily referenced, we have actually started to coordinate that. It’s a multi-city strategy, and that is our path forward. Not only are we trying to push for policies, in the past it was kind of just Austin. Austin was the sole city willing to take on, you know, a pretty oppressive state legislature. And now you see every major city in Texas has been pushing back on the mask mandate, I think that made a lot of national news. So you see an evolution over time, where 10 years ago, if you were not Austin, Texas, you were afraid to make a move that would be seen as hostile towards the state legislature. Right? And we’ve been steadily building the power necessary to fight back and eventually see, in c3 terms, an effective democracy in our state.

ADITI VAIDYA:
That is very helpful. It’s interesting. It seems like, regardless of whether you are organizing tenants or voters like Michelle or workers through Emily, you all are still working together in different ways across the issues. You named a lot of different issues: Emily, the SB4, other efforts and campaigns. And it sounds like Michelle, you are saying there are different organizational formations that are coming together or have been coming together across issues regardless of what type of constituency you are organizing.

This brings me to my next question. You talked about this, Michelle, in the context of Austin, and Shoshana as well. There different kinds of organizations that can help build power. Through our own collaborative’s work, we understand – and you can see this on the slide – that base building sits at the center of ecosystems for capacities needed to build power. As you can see on the slide, this includes other critical functions to base building. You talked about this, all three of you: coalitions, alliances, advocacy, and other functions. I'm curious if you can each share an example of the hyper-local base-building work that each of your organizations do and what that
looks like, so that we can get a sense of the differences and potentially some of the similarities too. Shoshana, I would love to start with you, if you could share with us some of the hyper-local base-building work you do in Austin.

SHOSHANA KRIEGER:
Sure, hyper-, hyper-local, and it’s also happening right now as we speak. There have been some developments in the campaign. I will share about one apartment complex we are working with, which is called Rosemont at Oak Valley, and it’s a 280-unit complex. It is owned by a subsidiary of the county. When the winter storm happened back in February, a lot of multi-family apartment complexes experienced prolonged water outages and significant damage. BASTA actually did a mutual aid project with Workers Defense, where we distributed countless thousands of gallons of water and meals to really connect affected multi-family tenants with resources where government was absent.

At this complex, Rosemont at Oak Valley, the tenants were living with damage from the storm for many months, paying rent afterwards. And in July, 87 families got notices that their leases would be terminated. And the tenants came together and reached out to us, and we door knocked, had meetings, did just kind of all of the bread-and-butter organizing to get folks out. They formed a tenants’ association called Neighbors of Rosemont. And we went to the commissioners’ board, the executive body over the commission, and demanded that the evictions be dropped. And they were, but that was just the start of a massive relocation process. Many, many harms have been done to these tenants.

So we worked with tenants to come up with a list of demands that we practiced and role-played for negotiation. And then we got agreements but then they backed down, so they would not put it in writing. So then we escalated it to commissioners’ board and have been working on testifying to address their specific concerns. And then even after they testified, folks kept going to other people to ask about what the tenant experience was or what they should be doing, and not to the tenants directly. So over the weekend we had a tour, which was a seat-at-the-table tour, inviting county commissioners to tour the property in anticipation of today, where there is a resolution to both address all of the concerns, or most of the concerns, of the tenant group. But they will also lay out protections for tenants who are similarly situated and who are in properties owned by the county – to make sure this does not happen again.

So today, a bunch of those tenants are not only testifying about their own specific needs and concerns, which are really real and need to be addressed, but one of the biggest things they are pushing for is for continued tenant protections, including the right to organize for tenants in all county-owned properties. So I think that Austin’s base building is rooted both at the complex and apartment level, but then we build to a broader analysis with folks we’re working with to bring it to a local level, and eventually -- hopefully -- draw inspiration from my fellow allies on this panel and more broadly.

ADITI VAIDYA:
Thank you. That’s a very clear example, I appreciate that. Michelle, let’s go to you next. Do you have an example?

MICHELLE TREMILLO:
We are a multi-issue organization, and our members are predominantly Black and Latino
families Harris, Dallas and Bexar County. In each of the counties that we are in, the work looks a little bit different because it really is a partnership with our membership, and our priorities are driven by the local conditions on the ground. So base-building in Dallas can look like bringing parents and students together to address oppressive disciplinary practices in the Dallas Independent School District to bring the community together around moving funding out of the police budget and into mental health services.

In Houston, it can look like making sure that hurricane recovery dollars are spent through an equity lens so that our communities that have been neglected for decades are actually first in line for projects to prevent flooding in the future.

In Bexar County we are celebrating -- this is one of those words -- anyway, we are honoring just this week the fact that we have hit the $1 million mark in terms of bailing poor people, predominantly people of color, out of jail that have not been convicted of anything. They are simply sitting in jail because they are poor and cannot afford bail. A quick side note: Of these 629 people we have bailed out of the Bexar County jail, 85% of them had their charges dropped. So had they stayed in jail simply because they could not afford bail, they probably would have pled out because that is the fastest way to get back home to your family. So, it looks very different and yet very much the same across the various counties that we work in.

ADITI VAIDYA:
Thank you very much, Michelle. I know there are many examples you could offer. Emily, we would love to hear the example from the Workers Defense Project of how you do base-building at a hyper-local level.

EMILY TIMM:
Workers Defense Project’s members are primarily Latinx immigrants, construction workers in Houston, Dallas and Austin. So for us, hyper-local could be as small as organizing a particular worksite – really getting down to particular worksites where there is widespread abuse in the construction industry. While may we start at worksite level, we also know that these issues of wage theft, workplace injuries, unsafe conditions, and other sorts of labor abuses are representative of a much larger experience of construction workers and workers in Texas.

One example is in Houston. It’s one of our newest offices, and we’ve been in Houston since 2017. We have been working on a wage claim case for a group of workers from the University of Houston, a big public university where construction workers were building dormitories and other university buildings, and they were not being paid their proper wages; they were being grossly underpaid for their wages. So organizing in that case meant bringing in many of the workers from, at the end of the day, dozens of workers from the worksites on the campus and working with them to not only launch a legal campaign to recover their hundreds of thousands of dollars of unpaid wages, but also to launch a broader campaign to actually change the practices of the University of Houston so that it would have stronger standards and adopt community-endorsed standards that we call the Better Builder Standards, to ensure that their sites that are built with public tax dollars are actually creating good, safe construction jobs that pay a living wage and a fair wage.

That is just one example of a hyper-local, base-building organizing effort. But we know that once members come in to fight back on their own wage case, it is a larger process of connecting to a
broader campaign that impact a larger group of workers. For example, members who would come in through their own wage claim case would then pivot to be part of fighting back on our c4 side to help elect officials who would promote protections for essential workers during the pandemic, that will put in place guidelines to keep workers safe from the spread of COVID-19. Or that would pass local policies like a rest break policy. In Austin and Dallas, our construction worker members came together and identified they were having a shared experience in their various worksites -- that they were not receiving a basic lifesaving water break during the workday -- and organized to win an ordinance in 2010 in Austin and in 2015 in Dallas that would guarantee that they are able to take a water break. Really, our members are coming around to some of the local fights of a single workplace, and sometimes a fight at the neighborhood or community level, and then at the level of fighting back to win broader protections for a broader community of interest at the local level.

One of the critical things we have seen around the fight for water breaks and paid sick leave, which is another campaign our members have led and worked together with statewide allies, we know a community cannot be healthy if they do not have political power. If they do not have the ability to influence the conditions that they work in, live in, and to be able to set the agenda of what elected officials are doing at the table to really stand up for their families and their community.

So, that is something that I really think shows how there is the hyper local and still a largely local focus – and in a state as big as Texas, we are building together with our collective local efforts towards this larger, shifting governing power at the state level as well.

So I would just highlight one other thing that is really exciting: an example of the city-level campaign in Harris County, where a worksite is organizing. Construction workers have now come together with workers from other sectors and are fighting for, and on the verge of winning, the first essential workers’ board in the country. Harris County, where Houston is located, is actually establishing an essential workers’ board that will be able to identify worksite violations and make sure essential workers are being safe and work to making sure they are lifting up the experiences of workers in a way that actually makes worksites safer in Harris County.

And so sort of seeing this individual level organizing, but now it is growing into a larger impact for hundreds of thousands of workers who live in the Harris County region.

ADITI VAIDYA:
Thank you so much, all three of you. I am sitting with the fact that at the hyper-local level there is a lot of different types of organizing that your organizations are doing: in the workplace, within apartment complexes, at the county level, around different types of identities and immigration and other issues that come up in the different hyper-local contexts you are all sharing.

And yet, we just finished understanding that Texas is a huge state, and you are trying to build power across the state to create structural change. So I am curious if you could share what does structural change look like through your organizing work? What are some of the barriers and opportunities to advancing change? Clearly, given all the different ways your organizations are organizing, there is no one vision for the way you change the state to be able to advance racial equity and health equity. But I wonder -- are you aligned in different ways? What are the ways you’re thinking about structural change at the state level? We would love to unpack this a little bit more and take a moment for this. Michelle, I would love to start with you if you could
share a little bit both from TOPS’ experience as well as the coalitions and alliances that you laid out and some of the ways that you work.

MICHELLE TREMILLO:
Sure, thanks. I think when you hear Emily and I keep talking about these local wins I think, as a quick reminder, our cities and counties are the size of battleground states. Even though structural changes are at the city level, they are still often impacting millions of families. The Harris County area is about the size of Colorado. The Dallas/Ft. Worth area is about the size of Nevada, and even Bexar County is the size of New Mexico in terms of population. So I think it is important to realize that, while we still have a decade or longer ahead of us in terms of the work we need to do to be able to influence decision-making at the state level, at the local level we can still have a really important impact.

Going back to the base-building for just a second, for us to be able to increase participation, for us to ensure that the majority of us who live in the state are participating in our government, requires that we win along the way. People will only continue to keep showing up if it makes a difference, right? The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. So people are not going to keep showing up if there are not results. I think that is a really, really important fundamental understanding. We are building a movement; we are building a vehicle for power and change in our state. And we have to demonstrate that we are winning along the way.

And we are! I have referenced, Emily has referenced, some of the wins. We have seen major changes in bail reform in Harris County, eliminating cash bail for misdemeanors, we continue to fight for felony bail reform, and in Bexar County we have an agreement among judges. We are still working for the systemic change, but we have a policy around bail reform. But we have a state government that actually just passed the opposite of bail reform (laughs) at the state legislature, in direct response to the progress that we've been making at the local level. So I think that this is very important - that a lot of those things are not proactive, they are in direct reaction. That voter suppression bills in direct reaction to the beautiful growth that we have seen in voter participation in our state.

You know, the really important thing to remember is that whether the victory is that we got an ICE hold released off of an undocumented person sitting in jail or it is bail reform for millions of people, each one of those victories is important. In San Antonio, we won a library card with a photo which may not sound like that much. But for an undocumented person or transgender person to know that law enforcement is going to accept that as a form of ID is invaluable. And that is spreading. We’ve got an agreement in Harris County to expand it, and we are looking to expand it in Dallas County as well. Victory and structural change is about making sure that we are rooted at the community level and what issues are most directly impacting our families, and then taking steps. We need progress every step of the way, right? And progress will reach a transformation. We are not going to just make that leap to transformation, especially when you think about the maps that just came out this week for re-districting here in Texas.

The people accruing the power in this state are going to work to hold onto it with everything they’ve got, and we have to keep growing our participation. And this is a c3 conversation, but who we elect matters. Harris County is leading the charge in the state, and it is not just because of the wonderful year-round organizing that we are doing. It is also, with our other hats, the
electoral work that we are doing to change who is in power in Harris County. I will leave that for another panel discussion, but we cannot talk about one without the other.

ADITI VAIDYA:
I think some of it is definitely relevant, even to a c3 conversation, so I thank you for bringing it up, Michelle. Some of the ways that have talked about in the Lead Local conversations is that this is about governing power. So you want people to work with those that are elected and in these positions and those that are staff and appointed in the legislatures to be able to advance the visions of your base and your constituency. I do think it is relevant and it matters. I appreciate the reminder for all of us: when we talk about cities and counties in Texas, we are talking about huge populations and big geographic areas, as well. I would love for Emily to share a little bit about how Workers Defense sees structural change, adding to what Michelle has already shared -- because I know all three of your organizations work together in some ways, but they are also very distinct in the ways around structural change.

EMILY TIMM:
One of the things, as Michelle said, about how we are fighting for these big fundamental changes in how, in our case, workers are treated in their workplace and how workers can exercise power in the workplace and the conditions that they can enjoy. I think that we see that as big shifts that have to do with our power within our environment, within governing power at the state level. And I think one of the key ways we think about this is the sort of fight that has been happening between the local, where we have been able to build the power and have that impact, and in the state where, as Michelle described, you are really seeing that folks are holding onto power with everything they have and rewriting the rules every chance they get -- with voter suppression laws, redistricting maps to try to hold on in the face of powerful organizing work happening at the local level. And powerful shifts in who Texans are in terms of people of color, youth, women.

The Census results demonstrate how this state has changed, where white people are no longer the majority, just to put it bluntly as well. So, I just wanted to share how that is played out, particularly this year. We are going into our third special legislative session in Texas, and so we have had an ongoing fight where elected officials have been doing anything they can to hold onto power and to push back. Because we are winning, and we are being successful at the local level. Our movements are powerful and, for example, construction workers who were primarily undocumented immigrants, have been able to win. Some of the most progressive worker changes like the water breaks law. And we have seen in these past few legislative fights, the state legislature was coming out against water break laws that have been on the books for decades in some cases. We are seeing the state, it has become that much of a battle that the state electeds and our governor are trying to take away a fundamental basic protection for workers. And the ability of local officials to take action to protect their constituents.

So in this year we found ourselves facing climate change, higher temperatures, our workers are at greater risks and we're still having to fight for something so basic. And we've been able to push back and rebuff those efforts. I think that in a year, pandemic year, the story has a really important connection to health equity and to public health. This is also been very much a fight around the governor’s effort to prohibit local officials from requiring masks to keep workers safe, to keep kids safe at our schools, and the ability of local officials where we have built power where local officials are accountable to our members and our families to actually save lives and minimize the spread of COVID.
We have really led this fight with many of our partners against this dangerous legislation. We have been able to push back and hold off on these regressive attempts. We have even seen broad-based support on this about officials rising up and fighting back and resisting the governor in a way that they have not done before in this state, or at least not in recent times. Even healthcare providers standing up in masks and saying this is a problem, we cannot do this.

So the takeaway is there are big opportunities. Texas is big! We need support and funds to really scale up this work so we can take on these fights at the local level, but understanding that in Texas it means building toward the state level. And really, the work that is being done by base-building groups, like the ones highlighted on this panel, are so critical to shifting that narrative.

ADITI VAIDYA: There have been a few questions that have come into the Q and A, so I want to incorporate those. Shoshana, as you were sharing some of BASTA’s perspective on structural change related to renters and some of the other work you do, could you also reflect on the question of how preemption at the state level is affecting your work? The word hasn’t come up in our conversation yet, but I think that’s what many of you were alluding to, and we’re curious how you are working on that at your organization. Sadly, we do not have that much time left, but if you could give a quick reflection, then I would love to do a quick round-robin of all of your closing thoughts, too.

SHOSHANA KRIEGER: Sure, preemption is a word that I think comes up every day in all of our organizations in some way. In the landlord-tenant context in Texas, our property code really preempts local governments from advancing progressive regulation of landlords. So it is something that we struggle with, or we see the results of, in terms of the way tenants are treated on a daily basis. It is also something that, when local governments do try to advance housing, oftentimes their efforts often end up being preempted. In Austin, about five years ago, city council passed a discrimination law so landlords would have to accept Section 8. The apartment association sued, the city won, but then they just went to legislature and preempted it. We are one of the only states in the country that says that you can discriminate against Section 8 holders.

It impacts our work in a number of ways. One of the ways that we have been working around it and why organizing is so crucial is also saying, how can you use contracts as a way of having some level of structural change even if you cannot do it at the local level or the state level?

So having contracts with tenant associations that can affect 500 units of housing and a landlord or the city’s contract if they are financing the housing, of getting the city to put those robust contracts language in their loan agreements, which then will have the impact of benefiting hundreds of thousands of Austinites, even if they are preempted from doing other things. So those are some creative ways that we have been thinking about how we can organize -- even in a space where we still need to have those crucial victories to move forward.

ADITI VAIDYA: Thank you so much. I would love to give the final word to Michelle before we close. I think we are at time. And then I want to share some reflections, given that we went from local to state to
structural, before we close. Go ahead, Michelle.

MICHELLE TREMILLO:
Thank you for that. I wanted to put an exclamation point. Because I think it is important to understand that we win more preemption fights and we lose. I think that is something that gets lost in the larger narratives there. So even paid sick leave, which I think many folks who support us around the country were following that fight. we have been stopped in the courts, but the state legislature tried and failed to preempt us. I think it is really important to remember that, yes, preemption is a scary word in Texas, and again, the movement that we have built, the power that we are building here is effective. And we are winning while we are losing (laughs). I will end with that! Eventually, we will be winning while we are winning.

ADITI VAIDYA:
Thank you, Shoshana, Michelle and Emily! We knew we were not going to cover nearly the full story in a 45-minute webinar. But I think just to pick up where you left off, Michelle, it feels like what you all are doing is trying to both influence change at the very local level, be in solidarity with one another and in an aligned way around what structural change looks like at the statewide level – move an agenda that you are seeing an oppositional force come up against. It seems like there are lots of different fires -- I think there are lots of different ways to describe how the terrain keeps shifting, and we are just excited to learn a little bit about what you and the three of your organizations have been doing.

Thank you for giving us the time and giving us windows into what that looks like. And we really want to thank you so much for helping us to get a window into your work.

And with that, I will say thank you so much for joining us. Have a great afternoon, and I really hope that you will register for the final session of this four-part webinar series. I think we’re going to put the link in the chat again. Thank you so much for joining.