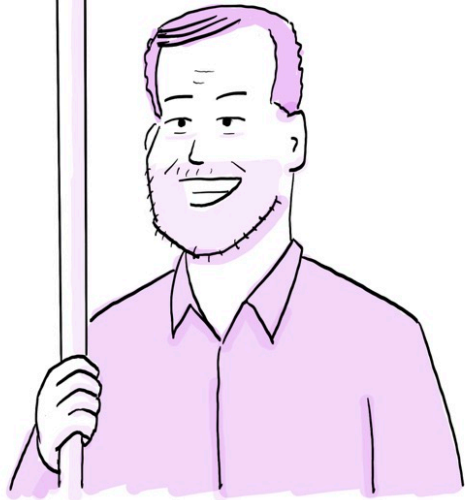


LEARNING & TEACHING IN YOUTH ACTIVISM

by
Ben Kirshner

context:
Youth Organizing
in
Communities of Color



Youth activists leading grassroots campaigns carry out complex tasks, such as critical analysis, research, strategy, and team dynamics.



How do they learn these practices? What does learning and teaching look like in youth organizing spaces?



I've been part of teams studying youth around the world in order to understand how young people develop their critiques of social and political systems and how to change them.

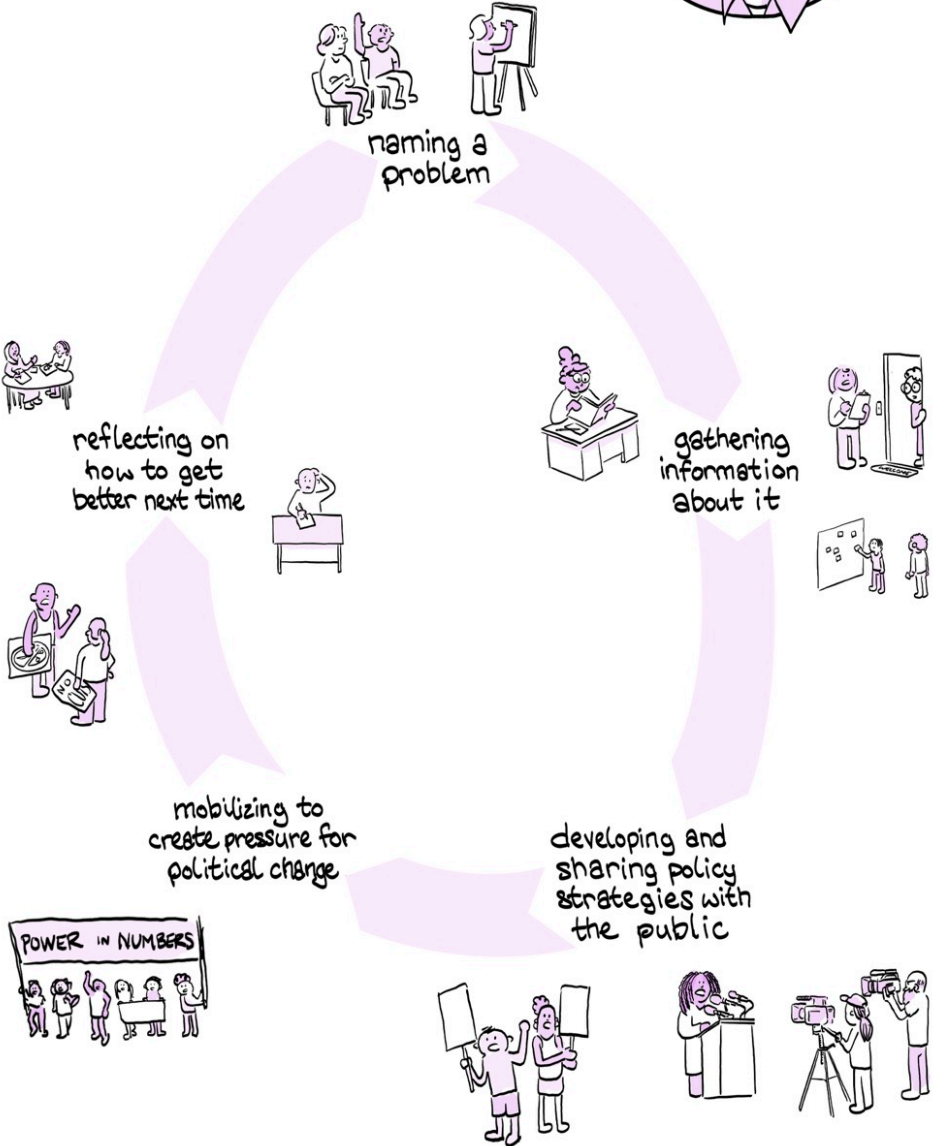
Although these groups get the most attention when they are marching in the streets —



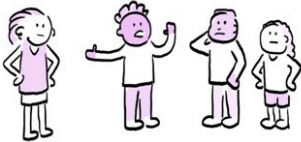
— much of their work happens behind the scenes in community meetings, group check-ins, collaborative data analysis sessions, reading circles, and more.



Learning in these settings is organized in terms of action cycles that can span several days or several years, but share a similar process of:

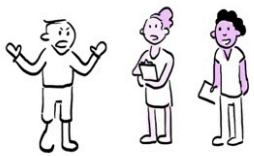


These groups build power in numbers by organizing peers, family members, and teachers to support their campaigns.

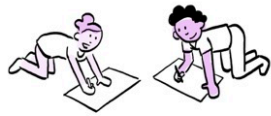
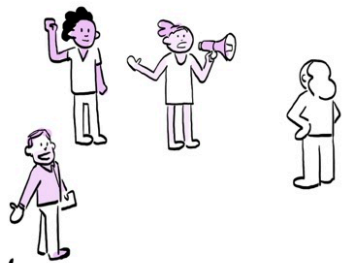




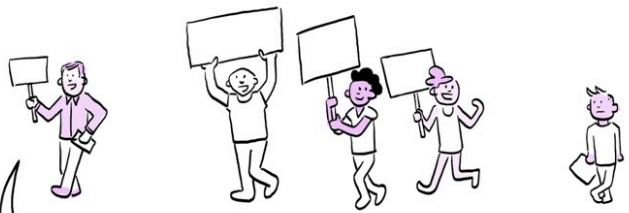
Youth often join organizing groups as novices, but unlike in schools, they experience an accelerated trajectory into leadership and decision-making.



They are soon playing central roles in group projects, such as analyzing root causes of education injustice, interviewing neighborhood residents, or speaking up about issues.

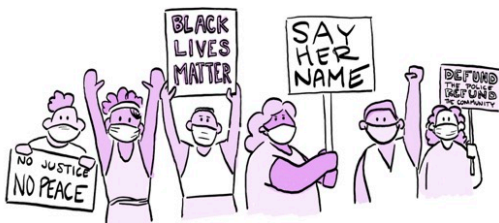


This accelerated learning is fostered by apprenticeships-in-activism, where more experienced organizers, either near peers or adults, model, coach, and then fade to the side as youth step into leadership.



These apprenticeships sow the seeds of larger scale social movements where people of different ages work together to build power.

Social movements — from local campaigns to global uprisings — are powerful sites of learning and teaching because they engage fundamental questions about how we create social systems that are just, dignity-conferring, and sustainable.



Analysis of learning in social movements enables movement actors to be purposeful about how to develop new leaders and embody in the present the kinds of relations we aim for in the future.

This comic is part of
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Sociocultural Theories of Learning.**

for more, visit:
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To find out more about the research presented in this comic, go check out:

Kirshner, B. (2008). Guided participation in three youth activism organizations: Facilitation, apprenticeship, and joint work. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 17(1), 60-101.

Kirshner, B. (2015). *Youth activism in an era of education inequality*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

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