2020

Annual Report

Sojourner Truth School for Social Change Leadership

Truthschool.org
@truthschoolma

649 State Street
Springfield, MA 01109
From the Director

Dear Truth School Supporters, Funders, Class Participants, Donors, and Believers!

Annual Reports often lean toward the vague and hyper-positive--Directors write cover letters, like this one, hoping to paint a picture of the organization's impact and success without highlighting the hard places, missteps, and weak areas. So cover notes, like this, often paint an overly-rosy picture about the organization's general health.

I open this way to acknowledge that it is the tendency for folks like me to do exactly that. So I will tell you in all honesty, the brief summary below is true! This is an accurate snapshot of how the Truth School fared in 2020--a hard year that required countless adjustments due to the COVID pandemic. You do not need a long explanation of the ups and downs we faced during the last year. But you deserve a brief and honest assessment of how we are doing, how we spent your contributions, and a sense of the health of the School.

Let me start by saying that we are deeply grateful for your financial and moral support! Many of your donations are accompanied by notes and messages cheering us on and telling us they are happy and proud to be part of the giving circle that keeps the Truth School going. It truly is a remarkably generous circle of donors and funders that keeps the Truth School alive and well. Because ALL our classes are FREE, our donors are compensating all our trainers, paying our small staff, funding the expenses of every single class, and covering every other expense in our $112,000 annual budget. Please accept our heartfelt and sincere thanks for your financial support--the Truth School would not exist without you!

An honest assessment of the work of the Truth School in 2020 is that we did remarkably well--despite the odds and challenges, we had a good year. We began the year holding our usual in-person classes in five cities in Western Massachusetts, and then the pandemic hit and we migrated...(with some missteps), and held our classes on Zoom for the rest of the spring semester. Early on, we were not very proficient with Zoom, and our trainers were anxious, questioning, hesitant but also eager!
So we offered Zoom support sessions, actually TONS of support, and we pulled off most of the spring semester on Zoom with a few notable glitches but with many triumphs as well.

The Fall Semester was an entirely different story--we scheduled ALL the 48 classes to be held on Zoom. And that semester went off without a hitch. Because we were "All Zoom, All Fall," we had trainers from around the country teaching for us, and class participants from 28 states tuning in, as well as folks from Canada, Europe, India, Brazil and other cities and towns from around the globe.

What we heard consistently over the Fall Semester was: thank you. Thank you for migrating to Zoom. Thank you for the great classes welcoming a diverse group of participants. Thank you for hiring outstanding trainers. Thank you for the connections, affirmations, and extraordinary workshops.

We received love letters, donations, and confirmation repeatedly that the Truth School matters to people, that the work is strengthening their organizing and movement-building work, that the content is cutting edge, and the fact that the classes are free makes our offerings accessible to all.

As we say probably too frequently....but it is true: we are scrappy, spunky, and successful. And all three matter! The words on the cover of our hard copy catalogue--also found on our website--reveal one secret of our success: "We do one thing. Well. We teach movement-building skills. Class after class, week after week, month after month. We prepare social change leaders to win movement struggles."

It is true: We do one thing. Well.

Thank you for your ongoing support. We need you, and we are grateful beyond words.

Ever thankful, and in the struggle with you,
Andrea Ayvazian
Founder and Director
It has been my mission since attending those workshops to help guide the Town of Amherst in being a welcoming, inclusive, accessible, and equitable form of local government (...) The Truth School inspired me to move forward in what is now my life’s work. I would like others to experience the awesomeness of the Truth School as well.

−Jennifer Moyston
(Town of Amherst Administrator and class participant)

For those not sure where to begin their activism or those who want to go deeper and learn more, the Truth School is the place to come (...) they’ve captured the special sauce in social justice activism of access, education, inspiration and action.

−Alexandra Russell (Truth School Donor)

The Truth School offers exceptional knowledge for free, but nearly any price would be worth paying

−Loretta Ross (Esteemed Activist, Truth School Trainer and class participant)
Catalyzing Engagement

- **Expanded class offerings:**
  - Food Justice, Climate Crisis, Science for Social Justice, Indigenous Communities, Disability Rights, Electoral Organizing, Housing and Homelessness Issues

- **Engaging many new first time activists**

- **Expanded Reach**
  - Trainers and participants from across the country and globe
Activating Agents of Social Change

85 Classes Offered
68 Trainers
1457 Class participants
We deeply apologize if we missed any donors. We appreciate you all.
Fueled by Dedicated Staff and Generous Volunteers

Founder and Director, Andrea Ayvazian

Board of Directors
Thonas Chang
Olivia ILano-Davis
Renee Moss
Rose Sackey-Milligan
Mehlaqa Samdani
Pamela Schwartz
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Cate Woolner
Shelley Abend Zimbalist

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Shelley Abend Zimbalist, Development Consultant

Volunteer Leadership Team
MJ Adams and Chris Mohn, Co-Coordinators, Host Program
Sue Carbin, School Courier
Julie Kurose, Registrar, Catalog/Newsletter Editor
Renee Moss, Administrative Manager
Marcie Sclove, Technical Advisor
Shelley Zimbalist

Hosts

2020 Total Income: $72,845.66

2020 Expenses Total: $75,060.38