

**TURNING  
THE TIDE  
AGAINST  
ENDLESS  
WAR**



**DISSENTERS**

DNA GUIDE

# DISSENTERS

## DNA GUIDE

### **Our Story, Strategy, Principles, & Structure**

The DNA of Dissenters is what guides our work and ties our movement together. When individuals and groups consistently practice and protect what's in this guide, a powerful national movement will emerge and win.

This DNA was designed by a group of young people that saw militarism harming our people and our communities. We studied other movements and organizations and asked ourselves: "How can we build a movement that connects our struggles, and is powerful enough to take on the war machine and win safety for all of us?" The answers we came up with are here in this guide. We hope you'll join our movement.

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# OUR VISION

Dissenters is leading a new generation of young people to reclaim our resources from the war industry, reinvest in life-giving services, and repair collaborative relationships with the earth and people around the world.

## WE WILL KNOW WE WON WHEN...

### 1. War and militarism are stigmatized

The majority of young people do not want to be associated with war and militarism. Anti-militarism is the new norm for people under 35. It is a core part of youth political identity.

Politicians do not want to be associated with war and militarism. Politicians want to publicly distance themselves from war profiteers and be seen as an anti-militarist candidate in order to win votes.

### 2. Institutions and elected officials take sweeping actions to:

**RECLAIM** → Reclaim our resources from the war industry. Defund war and militarism.

**REINVEST** → Move resources toward life affirming services -- good jobs, free healthcare, affordable housing, high quality public education, and the rapid transition to a sustainable economy (Green New Deal)

**REPAIR** → Repair relationships with the earth and with people. Commit to collaborative diplomacy and restorative justice. Take responsibility to increase global safety and security through joint demilitarization efforts.

# OUR STORY

This is the story we are telling the world. This is the meta-narrative framework to filter all your campaigns, direct actions, press releases, and personal stories through. When we win, everyone will feel the truth of this story and start to understand the world around them through this framework. This is how we win public opinion, activate new people, and change what's possible.

## **We have everything we need to be safe.**

Trillions of dollars are available for healthcare, education, housing, and a Green New Deal. People all over the world are ready to work together to make sure everyone can live in safety and dignity.

## **But instead, political and corporate elites create endless wars for personal power and profit.**

Their wars look like dropping bombs on countries like Iraq, but also looks like police killings in Black communities and detention centers on the Mexico border. Their wars look like arms deals to Saudi Arabia, drone strikes on Somalia, and sprawling military bases occupying indigenous communities worldwide. Their wars look like military coups that force migration from Honduras, and nuclear testing that devastates the natural environment in Puerto Rico. Their wars haunt our families and bring violence into our homes and neighborhoods. Their wars are destroying our climate and life on earth.

## **They depend on us to make profit, so they use fear to keep us divided.**

They tell us that war is necessary to keep us safe. They tell us that Black communities are criminal and dangerous, therefore police need military-grade weaponry to combat them; Protesters are disturbing the peace so they must be beaten and jailed; Terrorists threaten freedom and democracy, therefore the surveillance and harassment of Muslim communities is justified; Immigrants are drug dealers and thieves, therefore border security protects jobs and keeps peace. The very communities dying under militarism are the same ones we are told we should be afraid of. This leaves us living in fear of one another, and of the most marginalized among us.

**But the tides are turning. We choose to be the generation that dissents.**

We are the most globally interconnected generation in history, and we value life everywhere. We will not be divided. We know that real safety comes from caring for each other and our environment. We are the many. We are young, we are energized, and we are visionaries. We are Muslim, immigrant, Black, indigenous, undocumented, ex-military, trans and queer. We are a generation of hope, of healers and creatives.

**We are reclaiming the resources that belong to us.**

We are taking back our resources from elites, and their violent wars, prisons, police, weapons, and walls. We demand that our institutions and elected officials join us on the right side of history, and defund militarism and endless wars.

**We are reinvesting in life and safety.**

Trillions of reclaimed dollars will go to transition to a sustainable economy, and to make sure everyone has a job, home, healthcare, and education.

**We are repairing relationships with the earth and people all over the world.**

We work through an abolitionist framework, adapted from Black liberation movements. By demilitarizing and reinvesting in real safety, we can build the collaborative relationships that we need to repair harm inflicted on people and the environment, here and around the world.

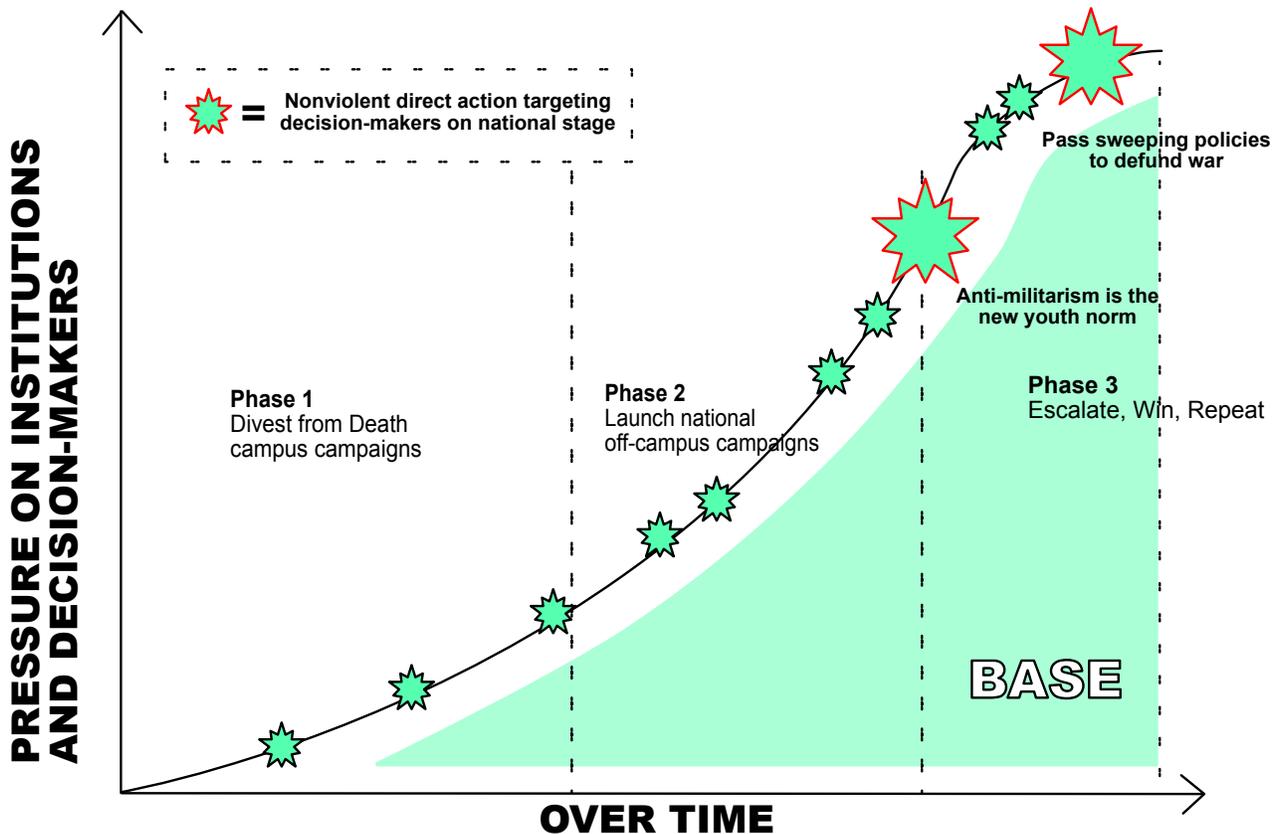


**We choose to ring in a bright new era of global**

# OUR PLAN TO WIN

We use decentralized, nonviolent direct action campaigns to win public support and force institutions and elected officials to divest from war and militarism.

We have a long-term, multi-phase strategy that begins with campus divestment campaigns and ends with sweeping national legislation to divest from militarism and war. Here's the plan, broken out into 3 phases:



# GRAND STRATEGIC GOAL

Build a youth movement that stigmatizes militarism and forces institutions and politicians to defund war.

	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
<b>GOAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build the base</li> <li>- Develop youth anti-militarism political identity</li> <li>- expose moral crisis, stigmatize war elites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Build off-campus political power</li> <li>- Build pressure on elected officials</li> <li>- Grow the progressive faction on militarism</li> </ul>	Force elected officials to divest from militarism and war.
<b>CAMPAIGN</b>	Divest from Death	TBD (to be frontloaded by members graduating from campus chapters)	TBD
<b>BASE</b>	College Students	Young people 18-35	Young people 18-35
<b>TARGET</b>	Colleges & Universities (secondary: elected officials)	Elected officials	Elected officials
<b>SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Members across the country lead viral, creative protests and absorb and develop new leaders</li> <li>- Dissenters protests are seen on front page news across the country</li> <li>- Thousands of students are trained in movement DNA</li> <li>- Masses of people follow our movement online and take action as sustainers, digital action-takers, and social media followers</li> <li>- Influential cultural and political figures amplify our story on national stage</li> <li>- Colleges &amp; universities divest millions of dollars from the war industry and commit to reinvesting in life, healing, and real safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Political candidates and elected officials publicly commit to turning our vision into law</li> <li>- Our protests and stories are taking over social media feeds and headlines</li> <li>- Thousands of young people are trained in movement DNA</li> <li>- We win the battle for our generation: &gt;80% of young people support our demands</li> <li>- We build exponential momentum: thousands more people join us as members, sustainers, digital action-takers, and followers</li> </ul>	Our vision becomes law: elected officials pass sweeping legislation to reduce military spending & operations, and reinvest resources in life, healing, and real safety.



# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

## BECOME THE COMMON SENSE

Everyday we make choices. Some of these are small, like what shoes to purchase, and some are big, like which political candidate to support. Regardless, most of these choices are based on some combination of the following factors:

our access to resources,

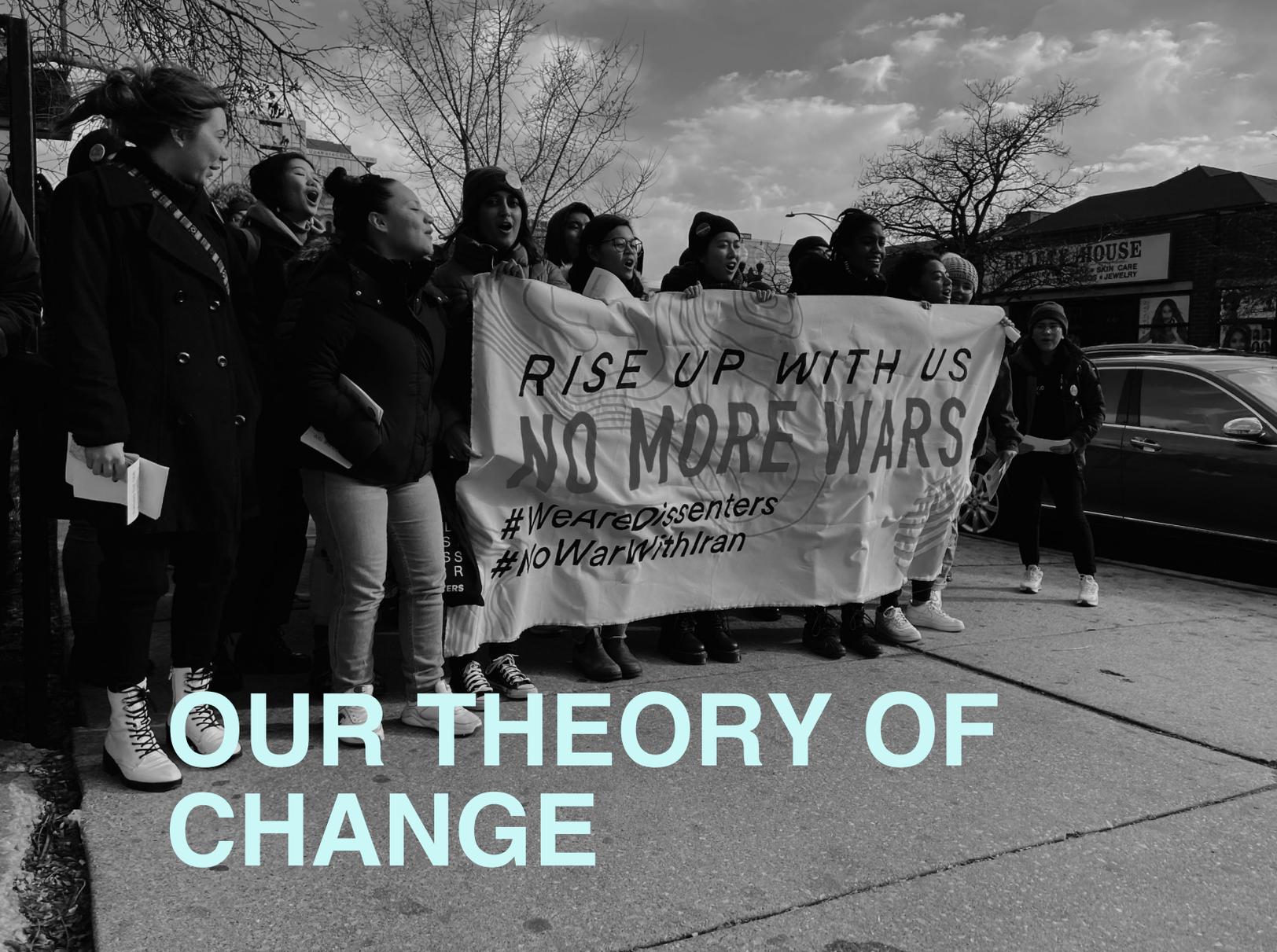
our skills, and

**our worldview** (our beliefs, values, and perceptions).

Our worldview, is the most important factor to this equation because it shapes the deepest parts of ourselves: our goals in life, who we relate with, and what kind of world we want to live in. Whether we like it or not, outside actors – whether it's mainstream media, politicians, or corporations – are constantly fighting to control our worldview in order to maintain our allegiance. Elites use fear and misinformation to divide us and suppress our imagination as a society. They flood our screens and timelines with images and headlines to make us think that endless war and military violence are just the way things are.

For us, this means we need to disrupt and replace the elite-spun worldview – one of scarcity, fear, and control – and make our vision for the world – one where resources are directed to support life, healing, and collaboration – the new common sense.

By transforming the dominant worldview, including what we the people expect from institutions and policy-makers, we will make what's currently politically impossible (defunding war) and make it not only possible-- but inevitable.



# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

## MAKE THEM FOLLOW

As our vision for the world becomes the new common sense, we will force institutions and policy-makers to follow us and move resources away from war, and toward life and healing. We will turn widespread public support into widespread public pressure on decision-makers, by giving millions of people opportunities to take action.

We will run hard-hitting direct action campaigns to build public pressure on institutions and politicians. Through mass non-cooperation and disruption, we will make defunding militarism and war the only viable option for decision-makers. This is how we turn the tide against endless war and militarism.

# OUR PRINCIPLES

These are the values and practices that guide all our work. To be a Dissenter means to commit to uphold these principles.

**We are working to end war and militarism.** We are forcing institutions and elected officials to divest from war and militarism, reinvest in life, and repair relationships. We come together for this shared goal and strategy, and we are clear that war-mongering elites are our opponents. We focus our energy to win the world we deserve.

**We practice joy and we appreciate each other every day.** This can be hard work, but when we see each other, appreciate each other, and celebrate often, our joy will carry us forward. Even on hard days, we do our best to stay grounded in our hope, joy, and gratitude for each other.

**We believe everyone has a role to play.** To take on powerful elites and end to war and militarism, we need everyone! Whether you organize campaigns 10 hours a week, chip in a few bucks each month, or donate space for a training, you are playing an important role. We honor all roles and contributions.

**We grow our power by talking to new people.** We can't just talk to people that already agree with us. If we're going to win, we have to talk to millions of new people and invite them to our side. That means meeting people where they are, identifying shared values, and speaking in ways that people can understand. We know that changing minds can be a long process, so we are patient and don't expect it to happen all at once. When we plan an action, an op-ed, or a tweet, we always ask: how will new people hear and receive our story?

**We lead by supporting new leaders.** To be a leading Dissenter means to recruit and develop new leaders. The more you grow as an organizer, the more you teach and support others to do the work that you used to do. Handing away the megaphone is how we sustain our work, and how our movement exponentially grows and wins.

**We uplift the voices and leadership of those most often at the margins.** Communities who are surviving under oppression carry the solutions. These are the collective stories and strategies that will bring healing and safety to all of us.

**We embrace experimentation, reflection, and growth.** We know that to win the world we deserve, we have to try new things. That means we celebrate risk-taking and imperfection, and prioritize reflection in service of growth. After every event or action, we take time to reflect and integrate lessons learned into next steps.

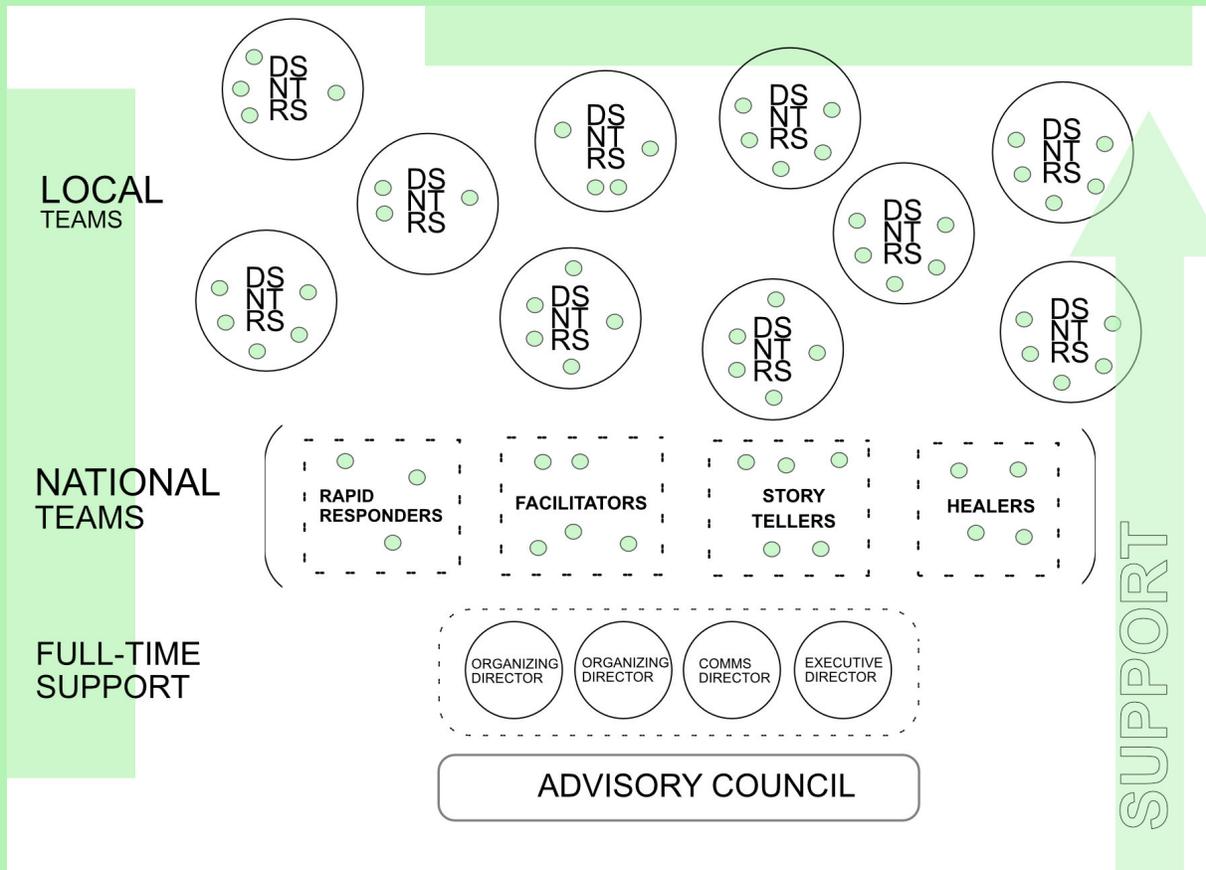
**We recognize our wave is just one part of a growing movement.** We aren't alone in this abundant movement for safety and healing. What a relief! We are always connecting to other struggles and campaigns to grow stronger together. We know and stay focused on our role, rely on and uplift other struggles, and trust that together we are all going to win.

**We move toward repair.** We believe in our worth, our right to heal, and our ability to transform. Even when we try our best to love and support each other, we still have conflict, make mistakes, and cause harm. We understand conflict as an opportunity to grow and deepen relationships through honest communication. In contrast, we recognize shame, punishment, and disposability as tools of war that seek to dominate and control. Instead, we approach conflict and harm through a transformative justice framework: everyone deserves the opportunity to heal and transform.

**We practice interdependence, we take care of ourselves and each other.** We depend on each other and make sure others can depend on us. We know that when we each take care of our bodies, minds, and spirits, we're taking care of the collective movement. That includes knowing our limitations and being honest about them, and offering and accepting support.



# OUR STRUCTURE



## LAYERS OF THE STRUCTURE

### LOCAL TEAMS

All Dissenters are members of local teams, where the vast majority of Dissenters work and decisions happen.

- Run local campaigns
- Host local trainings
- Build and develop organizational membership
- Spread the narrative
- Maintain culture and principles

## **LOCAL TEAMS (continued)**

### **Roles within each local chapter**

- Facilitators (trainers and coordinators)
- Story-tellers (artists / comms)
- Action Organizers (coordinate direct action)
- Cultural Healers (ensure principles, support conflict mediation)

## **NATIONAL TEAMS**

Individual Dissenters that belong to a Local Team can also serve on a National Team to coordinate and support the wider movement.

### **Rapid Response Team**

- Organize national and regional direct actions

### **Storytelling Team**

- Maintain active online presence: website, social media, mailing lists
- Approve and release statements
- Produce national videos, art, blogs, etc.
- Maintain strategy, story, and principles in all communications

### **Facilitation Team**

- Support local trainings
- Recruit new members to host trainings
- Co-facilitate trainings with local members
- Develop other trainers in their chapters
- Support fundraising

### **Culture / Healing & Safety Team**

- Protect and uphold principles and rituals
- Reflect and evaluate on culture and principles, update and grow
- Mediate conflict as needed, oversee accountability processes as needed

## **FULL-TIME SUPPORT TEAM**

A small staff collective of 4 full-time facilitators, storytellers, and rapid responders support the national organization. They are based in Chicago, IL.

## **ADVISORY BOARD**

The Advisory Board is made up of a combination of 2 current members and 5 elders

- Advise on strategic vision of the organization
- Hire and support full-time support team
- Support fundraising and storytelling



RISE UP WITH US  
**NO MORE WARS**

#WeAreDissenters  
#NoWarWithIran

