

# ORGANIZING WITH KINDLING



part of a series on social justice organizing by  
**Ricardo Levins Morales**  
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# Much of

the best organizing starts small. That's not always true of movements because movements can burst on the scene and take everyone by surprise, whether there's been proper preparation or not.

But organizing is different when you're organizing from scratch. I compare it to starting a fire in the forest after a rainstorm.

What you really want is to have those big, happy logs burning merrily, drying out your clothes and warming up your food. But if you use those matches holding them up against those logs, they're all gonna go out and you're going to be left with no matches in the dark and the cold.

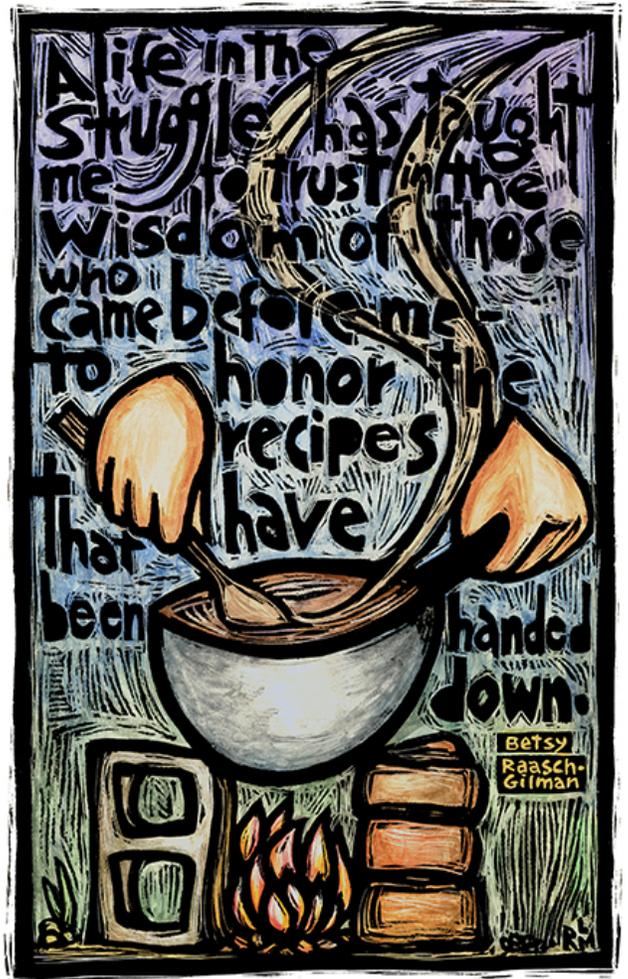


**So, you** start with the little

leaves and twigs underneath little branches, and make a little fire, and while that's burning, you're drying out the sticks.

And when you put the sticks in, you're drying those and it's drying out the larger branches. And then the branches are drying even larger ones, and eventually, they're drying out the logs and you have that merry fire burning.

A lot of times organizers will make the mistake of going to the hardest nut to crack. Like in the workplace, going to the most anti-union worker saying, "If I can convince this person, then everyone else will come along."



**But really,** if you start

that fire, start activities with the people closest to you already, the low hanging fruits, start having fun, start creating the warmth of something people will want to come to, then those who are apathetic might get off the fence.

Those who were just a little skeptical might get on to the fence. Those who were hostile might become skeptical instead.

Eventually, as people move inwards, you're building your organization and you're building your movement. Your story is becoming more accessible.

Eventually, those on the margin, the most hostile, the most against you, maybe they'll move toward you, or maybe they'll be isolated. **Either way, it's all good.**



**Ricardo Levins Morales** is an artist and organizer based in Minneapolis. He uses his art as a form of political medicine to support individual and collective healing from the injuries and ongoing reality of oppression.



Ricardo was born into the anti-colonial movement in his native Puerto Rico and was drawn into activism in Chicago when his family moved there in 1967, including support work for the Black Panthers and Young Lords and later participating in or acting in solidarity with farmers, environmental, labor, racial justice, antiwar and other struggles for peoples empowerment. In addition to his art, he also leads workshops on creative organizing, social justice strategy and sustainable activism, and mentors and supports organizers.



**RLM Art Studio** is a union shop that produces and sells artwork Ricardo has made over the years as posters, cards, buttons, shirts and more. We also produce custom button pins at bulk prices for campaigns and causes. Browse and order online at [RLMArtStudio.com](http://RLMArtStudio.com).