

Throw a house party for Working Films!

THE WHY

In order for us to be able to continue the work of connecting documentary films with grassroots movements for racial, economic and environmental justice we need to build a wide base of supporters who give at the level they are able. Every single dollar is significant. By pooling together our resources we can raise enough money to allow Working Films to center the needs of social change movements, not just those of philanthropic foundations. Together, we can uplift the cultural strategies of community organizers through the use of moving image storytelling.

THE WHAT

A house party is an informal fundraiser organized by an individual host who has a relationship with Working Films and wants to help us build our base of supporters to sustain our work over the long haul. A house party can be what the host wants it to be; it could be five people or fifty, a Sunday morning brunch or a Friday evening dance party. The host volunteers their time, space, and social connections to make the event happen (with some logistical support from Working Films staff). There is not a fixed dollar amount that the host must commit to raising; you can set your own goal.

THE HOW

Step 1: Pick a date

This should be a date that ideally is at least three weeks from now (so you have time to plan and do outreach), works well for you, and is a time that you are likely to get people to show up. Factors to consider are: work schedules, dependent care (children, elders), weather, etc.

Step 2: Build your guest list

This step depends on the scale of your event. If it's a small brunch, maybe you'll just invite your close friends. If it's a large dance party, maybe you want to invite your friends, coworkers, or members of groups you're involved in and ask them to invite others as well. If you don't want to be the only host, you could co-host or form a host committee of people who also invite their networks. The general rule in event planning is that you invite 3-4 times the number of people you actually want to attend since not everyone will be available to join.

Step 3: Plan the party details

Your details depend on the nature of the gathering. If it's a dinner party you might need to think about the menu. If it's a mixer, you might want to make sure you have enough chairs for people to sit and stand and finger food snacks. Do you want decorations? Will there be a theme? Games? Activity? What should be clear--no matter what kind of party you decide to host--is that this is a fundraiser for Working Films. Once you've planned these aspects, you can send the invitations.

Step 4: Send invitations

Your invitation and RSVP process will depend on the scale of your party. If you're inviting a few friends to dinner, you might just send a text message. If you're co-hosting with some friends you may want to use a free service like Evite or PaperlessPost. Make sure to include the date, time, location and description of the event. In the invitation, you should have language that says (in your own words): "Please join me to learn about and help support Working Films, a national organization that uses films to advance social and environmental justice. Bring cash or a credit card to contribute an amount that is meaningful to you." It is important that some version of this text appears in the invitations so attendees are clear about the expectations of the event as a fundraiser. You can also provide a link to our website (workingfilms.org) and share that people who are unable to attend can still make a donation online at workingfilms.org/donate.

Step 5: Send reminders

Make sure to send reminders at least a week before the event, and then a day or two beforehand.

Step 6: Plan the fundraising pitch

Make a plan for how you'll share information about Working Films and how you'll ask your guests to make a donation. Remember: fundraising is not begging. Begging is asking for something for nothing in return. What you are doing is asking people to invest in building strong movements for racial, economic and environmental justice by connecting community organizers with films that can advance their strategies for change. Working Films can send you printed materials and videos that talk about our programs, but ultimately it will be your words that move people to donate. Studies about giving in the United States repeatedly confirm that the number one reason people give is because someone they know asked them to. If you'd like to talk more about how to make your fundraising ask, you can work with Working Films' Development Manager Sara Zia Ebrahimi (szebrahimi@workingfilms.org).

Step 7: Enjoy your party

This part is on you. Have fun! Eat something delicious, meet some new people, or cut some rug with your dance moves--whatever type of house party you do, make it a great time. Make sure you pick a time when enough people are there and before too many have left to make the fundraising pitch so it reaches the most number of people.

Step 8: Follow up

After the party, be sure to send Thank Yous to everyone who attended. If you're doing a larger event, particularly one where people you might not know also attended as someone's guest, be sure to have a sign in sheet or some way to capture everyone's name and email address. Please send the list of attendee names and email addresses to Working Films' development manager Sara Zia Ebrahimi (szebrahimi@workingfilms.org) so we can thank them as well!