



Tom Tresser
Public Defender
Civic Educator



Training Workshops Offered by Tom Tresser

- **"How Did We Get Here?"** – How did the Far Right capture the government and set us on a path to a Christian nationalist dictatorship? Tom revisits the Powell Memo from 1971 and the Culture Wars of the early 1990's.
- **"Civic Engagement 101"** – What is "civic engagement"? How can we do powerful and principled public work? I cover the domains of the Civic Heart, Civic Brain, and Civic Muscle. Includes an online survey for attendees to report on the extent of their own civic activities. *What is YOUR Civic Heart?*
- **"Public 101"** - I LOVE "public"! I think an understanding and love of our public assets and services is fundamental to doing any social justice work. *This highly engaging session uses several cases ripped from the headlines to surface attendee's understanding of what "public" is all about.*
- **"Chicago 101"** - How did Chicago's civics get SO toxic? Did you know that Chicago is America's MOST corrupt city? I cover Chicago's geo-politics from before the white man got here right up to the history of the Chicago Machine. *You must know Chicago's history in order to change its future.*
- **"Chicago Budget 101"** - Chicago's budget is (A) \$5 billion, (B) \$7 billion, (C) \$10 billion, (D) \$20 billion?? If you don't know the answer cold, then you need this workshop. I explain how the city's budget really works and give attendees a powerful frame for approaching civic budgets. *Follow the money or they can chump YOU REALLY easily!*
- **"Chicago Is Not Broke 101"** – This workshop covers the content of my book, the grassroots sensation "[Chicago Is Not Broke. Funding the City We Deserve](#)" which describes \$5 BILLION in sustainable, progressive budget solution for Chicago. *Expand your civic imagination - don't settle for crumbs!*
- **"Community Organizing 101"** - You know Chicago is the home of modern community organizing, right? What, exactly, does an organizer do and what makes for a great organizer? I have over 50 years combined experience in public work and this session will help you build your organizing skills. *How do the powerless get power?*
- **"Grassroots Campaigning 101"** - You know what the Left sucks at? Governing, that's what. In order to govern, you have to WIN an election. I believe anyone reading this can and should run for local office (OK, maybe not everyone - but certainly HELP someone run)! 18 people who have taken this training have run for office and a few have won! **HANDS ON CREATIVE WORK INCLUDED!** *How do you run a grassroots campaign based on justice and equity?*
- **"TIF 101 – Organizing for Economic Justice"** – My most popular offering! Over 15,000 people across the Midwest have been Illuminated. No one can tell you how Tax Increment Financing districts work and how they have harmed our communities like I can. Find out what we say "T.I.F.s" = "Taking It From Schools!" Do you know how much public money was sitting in Chicago TIF accounts at the end of the year? If you don't then you NEED this workshop. *If you are involved in ANY social change work in Chicago, you NEED this workshop!*

Tom has over fifty years of organizing and public work under his belt! He has started or led 14 nonprofit enterprises in the arts, community development, and civic engagement. He has taught public policy, leadership, organizing, creativity, nonprofit management, and civic engagement at six local universities. He has been brought into community over 300 times for workshops, public forums, and training sessions. He created the CivicLab in 2013 (www.civiclub.us), The TIF Illumination Project (www.tifreports.com), and published "Chicago Is Not Broke" (www.wearenotbroke.org) in 2016. His book on the No Games Chicago campaign (which derailed Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympics) was published by Routledge Press in 2024 (www.nogameschicagobook.com). **He is currently organizing for the 100K Project (www.100kproject.us).**

www.tresser.com – 312-804-3230 – tom@tresser.com

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Attendees said...

- In December of 2019 I did an intensive workshop on Chicago political history and the budget for the Chicago Avodah Social Justice Fellows. Attendees said: "I learned more Chicago history and politics in two hours than I learned in months of living in this city." **"I loved this workshop!"** "Fantastic!"
- "As a Lecturer of Political Science at Saint Xavier University, I am always looking for new ways to get students excited about politics and participation...Tom came up with "Civic Engagement 101" to challenge participants to think about civics as action involving knowledge, passion, and courage. **The workshop got participants excited about the taking the next steps – towards action.** I would encourage anyone interested in increasing civic engagement in their community to partner with Tom." – Elizabeth Alejo, Lecturer, Political Science, St. Xavier University
- **"Passionate, experienced organizers** share real world examples of effective organizing, philosophies, practices and opportunities to work in small groups on real, pressing issues." - *Lisa Haufschild, 39th Ward organizer*
- "Tom really came through! Their presentation on 'Chicago 101' made people mad about how Chicago works, and it made people curious, but most of all it got people engaged. This is exactly the kind of education every citizen needs in order to make meaningful change in our city. One of my favorite moments of the night was when one particularly engaged audience member literally threw her hands up and said, **'Why doesn't anybody teach us this stuff?' Well, Tom is teaching this stuff** - and I will gladly welcome him back to continue to inform, engage, and empower our community." - *Gabe Piemonte, Candidate 5th Ward Alderman*
- "Your 'Chicago 101' training was great last night!! It was the boost I needed. It reminded me of what I really care about and where I come from in terms of activism and my roots. In our activism we are working with a lot of people who have never engaged so conversation is tough because they aren't aware of the history, there is no context. We often get caught up in nonsense and focus is lost as we try to get the newly engaged to act. Being with seasoned pros was so nice. I gained some new perspective and knowledge as well as reaffirmation of my values and goals. **It was energizing and gave me some clarity, just what I needed for the burnout I've been feeling.** I'm really looking forward to the next two sessions!" - *Meaghan McAteer, Co-founder Indivisible Brookfield*
- "I recently attended the Power Institute workshop on T.I.F. **I was amazed how informative the class was.** Tom spoke truth to power and I could see his passion for his work. I was inspired to get involved with civics (boots on the ground) LOL. I will be taking my first steps toward working with communities in our great city of Chicago! I highly recommend this workshop and others that are offered through the Power Institute." - *P.H. - Hyde Park*
- **"Amazing resource for Chicago residents.** An opportunity to learn how those in power keep robbing the everyday people!" - *Gaylon Alcaraz - Chicago Tribune endorsed candidate, Cook County Commissioner, 4th District, 2018*
- "Worth every penny! **I have heard of Tom and cannot believe that I got to speak to him in such an intimate environment.** I also loved the workshop because it was cathartic and was grounded in the reality that we still have a democracy. We still matter. We can beat the Machine - but we have to be ready for a fight. I can fight. I've fought my whole life. But I've been thinking about whether it's worth fighting and this training reminded that it was." - *Priscilla Orta*