

***LOVE Building:
Chatting with Harry Susalla,
founding member and Director of Youth Organizing at DAYUM***

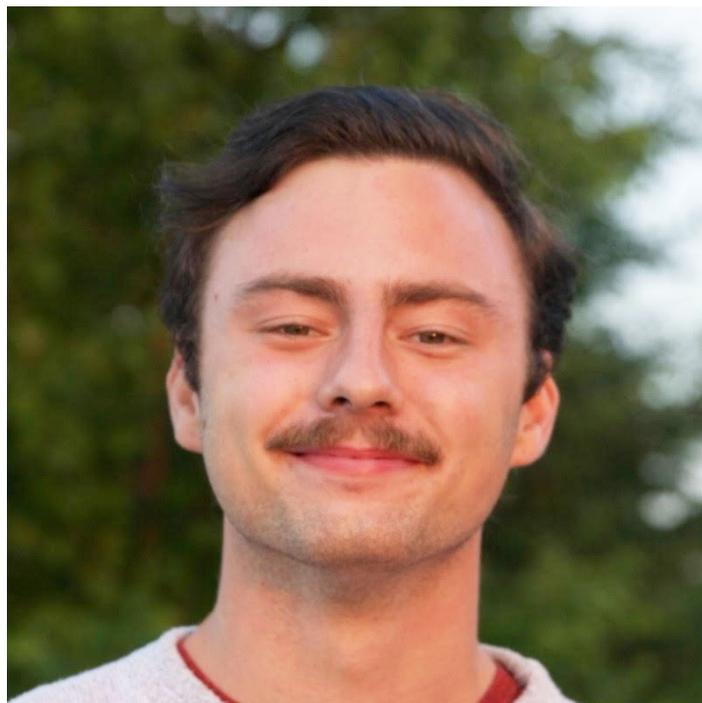
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“In 2018 there was not an organization that existed across the state to train high school students in community organizing and radical political leadership. DAYUM serves as a political home to build relationships and give resources to teenage change makers in Michigan,” states Harry Susalla, founding member and Director of Youth Organizing of Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan.

Created after the March for Our Lives Protest in 2018, Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan (DAYUM) empowers young people to take control of social change by training them in political activism and leadership. Since its inception, the group has organized multiple protest rallies across the Detroit area including ones that address gun violence and contaminated drinking water in schools. DAYUM focuses on issues that affect and are important to young people and encourages grass-roots initiatives that support the political leadership of the future. Since young people’s voices are generally ignored, the organization empowers and nurtures youth organizers by building their confidence, developing their skills, and supporting their ideas.

Harry Susalla, a youth organizer based in Detroit, has seven years of experience in campaign leadership and organizational development. He also has had education in Sociology and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Susalla dreams of a world where young people are free, have equitable access to resources, and have the opportunity to play a critical role in decisions that guide the development of their communities.



Portrait of Harry Susalla.

Harry Susalla believes that the current political climate is causing violence within communities but realizes organizers have faced harsh political conditions for centuries. “We center hope as a discipline, foster it within the work we do, and build an organization that provide for the needs of our people, while collectively forcing decision makers to meet our demands.”

DAYUM members meet weekly on Sundays to discuss upcoming events with their adult allies. There is also a month-long internship program for one-on-one mentoring that dissects the causes of various societal problems. Members interact with the community through social functions such as museum visits and camping trips, and they also travel across the country to collaborate with other youth organizations.

The LOVE Building was the perfect home for DAYUM, providing support that the organization needed. “DAYUM picked the LOVE Building because of its commitment to providing the community space to find joy, build relationships, and seed social change,” says Susalla. Through fund-raising and development, DAYUM’s growing number of staff is filling out the building’s capacity.

DAYUM has faced challenges, with the biggest being the conditions that young people are facing within their living environments. Youth are harder to motivate when they are dealing with traumatic events and mental health issues. These circumstances are further challenged by lack of school funding, which would be used to provide counseling for the students. DAYUM also works with many marginalized communities where welfare funding has been given to corporations instead of the residents. It also solicits funds for transportation for young people who do not live locally, so that they may attend meetings and functions. Another challenge is the general public is more apt to donate to youth-service organizations, not to ones that inspire political activism.

Outreach is a big focus of DAYUM. By collaborating with the community and providing community events and training, DAYUM hopes to attract more youth. Susalla ends with, “Success in DAYUM looks like the adults and youth in our organization becoming more prepared in the present to lead powerful campaigns to meet not only the current, but also future needs of our communities.”

For youth who are interested in DAYUM,
head to <https://alliedmedia.org/projects/dayum-2>
or email Susalla at harrysusalla@gmail.com.

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