

# Some Ideas and Experiences with Fundraising

excerpted from *Revolution* newspaper

Here are some fundraising ideas:

## La tamaliza audaz—The Bold “Tamaliza”

We decided that since the xmas holidays were coming we could sell tamales, “we should have a *Revolución* tamaliza [tamale fest]!”

Right away we went to the masses to solicit their help and talk to them about this bold initiative. One person who works in a grocery warehouse—and who buys the paper regularly—donated \$50, he wants the paper to be distributed broadly and was very glad that we were so enthusiastic about raising funds. His brother sold us the vegetables at a good price—almost free. Another person who works in a poultry store got us very cheap chicken and several other people (two teams of four) that read the paper helped to make tamales, one woman even missed a day of work so that she could fill the orders that we had gotten.

We made up a form so that people could make orders and in that way know that the money is going to *Revolución*: a dozen for \$20, half a dozen for \$10 and singles for \$2. The bookstore Libros *Revolución* helped us in our efforts, they sent the order form out by e-mail and some people picked up their tamales there. We got a lot of orders! ... All in all we sold 400 tamales and collected \$530.

## Food, Poetry—¡Revolución!

We were inspired by the call from *Revolución* newspaper and the need to raise a lot of money so the newspaper can continue to come out and expand its reach and influence. As one comrade says, “*Revolución* is like the air we breath. I need this newspaper, and after thinking about it a lot I am worried by the idea that the newspaper will no longer be printed. Therefore we have to take care of it, and I am donating \$100.”...

After a couple of meetings and discussion we set about to organize a “Convivio,” a potluck dinner to raise funds and invite all Spanish speaking readers of *Revolución* newspaper. So we sent emails and made phone calls inviting everyone we knew who reads the newspaper, and of course those who aren’t familiar with the newspaper... We also went out the day before to sell the newspaper and invite more people...

At 4:00 pm people began to arrive... people of different nationalities... There were students, poets, artists and others. They not only brought food but gave support by buying tickets for the event...

There were testimonials from a few readers [of the newspaper] who spoke of their experience reading and distributing the newspaper. Some read letters that had much emotional impact and inspiration for them... Much of the testimony gave rise to heated debate and comments... We passed around a bucket to collect donations. After this some of the participants made comments and then we continued the program with poetry presented by a group of artists and poets...

## Ceviche, Gorditas, and Strawberries and Cream

A circle of us regular readers of *Revolution* set out to raise \$1000... We went out to some friends who had been getting the paper out and coming to the programs at the bookstore. We knew they wanted to help the paper expand... Someone said they could make the best ceviche anybody ever tasted and we were sure to raise a lot of money for the paper. So we invested \$250 and bought lemons, shrimp, octopus, crab, clams, fish, tomatoes, onions, olive oil, bay leaf, and tostadas. When we went out on the street, people agreed it was the best ceviche they had ever eaten and came back for more or bought enough for the whole family. We talked to them about the paper and tried to sell them subscriptions while they ate...

We went to a corner with a lot of vendors we know. One vendor who also distributes the paper brought a cooler and got a bunch of cups of ceviche to take to another corner to sell them there. Some of his friends read the paper but thinks there’s too much anti-communism among the masses for the paper to have broad appeal...

But the fundraising project was put out as a challenge to them: here are some people who believe so strongly that we can take that anti-communist shit on, and fight with people to be scientific and recognize that revolution and communism is what they and the masses worldwide need... This had an effect of “hmmm, something’s happening here...”

Since then one of these vendors has stepped up to the challenge, he gets a bundle of papers every week and pays for them up front. There’s a new respect and seriousness there. Another guy took ceviche to sell to his family and talked to them about the garage sale project. A cousin donated a nice TV that somebody later had a garage sale and sold it for \$50...

We thought about making stickers to put on the ceviche cups “Have you read *Revolution* newspaper?” “Do you know who Bob Avakian is?”... All along in this process, we didn’t ever let determinism creep in and blind us to the terrain we changed with our work!... We surpassed our \$1,000 goal and some new readers were developed in the process.

## Door to door flyering and fundraising in the projects

First, we made fundraising a central theme of what we were doing. We didn’t just talk about the revolution we need and the leadership we have and then, after that, ask those who were interested to give money... Instead, we told everyone that they need to know about this revolution and this leadership and get involved in putting this on the map because we need a different world and it can only happen through the involvement of those who most need revolution. (Often, I would do very brief explanatory agitation about what the revolution we are talking about is setting out to transform.)

We’d then immediately tell people, “Let me tell you quickly what we are doing out here—our goal today is to distribute 10,000 of these leaflets and raise \$300 from folks in the projects and neighborhood around here. This type of thing is happening in concentrated areas all over the country—as part of making a real beginning towards revolution. We are asking EVERYONE to give something to make this possible—and for everyone to take 2 or 3 more statements to give to folks you know, to start spreading this now.”... It made a difference to stress right up front that our goal was to distribute and to fundraise—and that we are asking EVERYONE to GIVE SOMETHING...

## Response to \$200 *BASics* Challenge

When I read the letter about donating \$200 to the publication of the book *BASics* and the celebration in New York, it really made me think. I had already donated \$60, but I thought, why give only a little bit to a cause that demands that you give your all? The only real choice that oppressed people have in a life of slavery is to make the choice to support the Party that's working for Revolution. Revolution requires sacrifice! So I decided to give \$400 more.

I earn just a little more than minimum wage and I sleep in my car—and even though I save a lot on rent, I know there are many who support revolution who can donate a lot more than me! I would especially like to issue a challenge to the people in the middle classes who could donate thousands. The people need this party and this leader in order to make the revolution that this world needs so badly.

And to those who used to have dreams of revolution but have given up. I challenge you to lift your heads and take another look! Look at the events in the Middle East and in Wisconsin—and tell me that the analysis that Bob Avakian has been making all these years is not correct! The huge cracks underneath the surface of this society are opening up and 1000s of people are starting to fight back. They need to be able to find the movement for revolution! I invite you to join in the fight to break all of the oppressive chains of imperialism by donating all you can to *BASics* and to the RCP.

By A Proletarian who Desires Revolution

## Some experiences and lessons of the 30-30+100 fundraising project

In May *Revolution* issued a call for \$30,000 + 100 new sustainers in 30 days—to bring forward funding for several important projects that will help get *BASics*, from the talks and writings of Bob Avakian out into the world, and for the ongoing work of RCP Publications and *Revolution* newspaper and the Prisoners Revolutionary Literature Fund (PRLF). This fund drive was an opportunity to introduce many more people to *BASics* and to Bob Avakian. It was an opportunity to involve people in and enable them to contribute at various levels to the movement for revolution. And it was an opportunity to begin to build long-term strategic ties and connections, accumulating forces for revolution.

Here's some of what happened... There was the musician who had been reading the PRLF brochure along with some letters from the special issue of *Revolution* on prisons and prisoners, who was moved to donate so the prisoners could read *BASics*. There was the shop owner who said he's still checking out what this revolution is all about, but he bought a copy of *BASics* and donated because he thinks people need to know about the revolution even though he still has big questions about whether it's possible. There was the professor who donated to PRLF because he was inspired by the prisoner's letter quoted in the brochure asking to receive *Revolución* in Spanish so he can share it with the Spanish-speaking immigrants...

Where people went out broadly and found ways to connect with many new people, there were important results—both in raising funds and in beginning, or deepening, relationships with people. One small group of revolutionaries went out to 60 people in the course of the month, winning 14 of them to donate, including 3 new sustainers and one person who agreed to double their monthly contribution to PRLF. One of these revolutionaries commented: "I think one of the main things about this fund drive (vs. other times we have tried to go out to raise money) was a more developed understanding of how this drive was a critical part of letting people in to the revolution..."

## A New Person Coming Forward

One person, who pledged \$100 is a first time donor, was inspired by *BASics*, and said any quote from it could speak to people. He thinks people need to be shaken up to see that things don't have to be this way and that *BASics* shows people that. Quote #2:1 jumped out to him—we can be emancipators of humanity—this is how the world can be.

He decided to take *BASics* and the fund drive out to friends, family and co-workers, but didn't know how to do that... He attended a meeting about the fund drive at Revolution Books where he asked these questions and we walked through the different materials for the different projects. At the end he said it made sense to him — he could see the structure of the campaign and how the different parts of it contribute to the whole. He saw how he could take this out. His goal is to talk to 10 people.

## Meeting One on One—Getting Into the Hard Questions

We met with a professor who was very open, engaged and glad to meet with us and pledged \$200. We had a very good back and forth, this is the first time we have had this type of conversation with him. Our approach was to go through the brochure with him and use quotes from *BASics* to speak to questions that came up in our conversation. Two main questions he had were why does the right wing have all the initiative, and why aren't people coming forward around more reformist goals? With things so bleak, how did we think a revolution is possible? We used the pyramid analogy in *BASics*—at least pointed it out and then spoke to it, and then read part of the beginning "On the Strategy for Revolution" in terms of how things could change and the importance of building a movement for revolution right now and what this can change and influence—the dynamic of hastening while awaiting. We also spoke to the need to work together to build resistance and opposition and have more exchanges where people are presented with different radical solutions.

He is going to donate \$200, got a copy of *BASics*, and is very interested in talking more. He is very broadminded, even though he is focused on what seems to be more reform oriented things, but also sees the need for basic and in some ways radical change.

## Other Ideas for Fundraising

- **Yard Sales** – both hosting one and contributing quality items to be sold
- **Bake Sales**
- **Car Washes**
- **House Parties**
- **Phone Banking** (a good script will make it easier to involve all kinds of people)
- **One on One** meetings asking for contributions, sustainers and even matching contributions

## Be Creative

## Be Bold

## Go Out Broadly

***The main way to raise money is to ask for it!***