

Community space, care teams and... comrades?

All Power Books in Los Angeles challenges the misconceptions, and puts new faces, to what communism looks like today.



Savannah Boyd and Jiji the cat at All Power Books. (Photo by Alyssa Peccatiello).

By Alyssa Peccatiello

When asked who she would most like to have a conversation with – living or dead – Savannah Boyd picked Fidel Castro.

“He's so outgoing, he's so outspoken, he has such a strong heart and he's just a revolutionary that was brilliant beyond his years, way before his time, and he's completely demonized,” she said.

Boyd is one of the co-founders and co-organizers of All Power Books, an anti-capitalist bookstore and community space on West Adams. The not-for-profit organization houses a

variety of educational events, movie screenings, weekly free grocery distributions and free clinics for the local community.

All Power Books opened in 2021 and was founded by six comrades, including Boyd. The number of volunteers has grown over the years, especially through the expansion of its free, mutual aid services.

“We wanted to tackle capitalism in a very radical way, but doing that is very difficult,” said Boyd. “It wasn't like anyone was after us, it was more so just the struggle of proving ourselves as a space that people can trust.”

All Power Books sells an assortment of socialist and communist books and various clothing items. The walls are adorned with brightly colored posters for sale that read: “PLANT THE SEEDS OF REVOLUTION” and “TOGETHER WE CAN TOPPLE THE OLD WORLD.” The profits go towards maintaining rent and electricity and purchasing supplies.



The framed poster wall at All Power Books. (Photo by Alyssa Peccatiello.)

Couches and tables are spread throughout the space, welcoming group conversations or simply a place to relax. Jiji, an affectionate black cat, roams the space and mingles with anyone who stops by to give her a pet.



Jiji wears her signature red scarf and a small green communist cap. / The affectionate cat is also painted above All Power's entryway. (Photos by Alyssa Peccatiello).

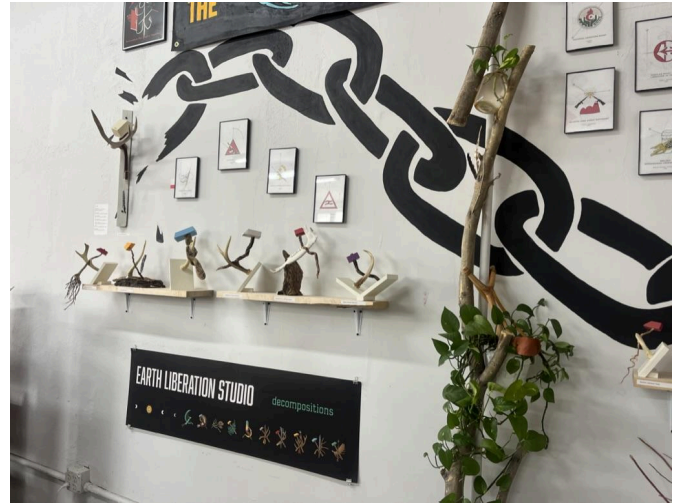
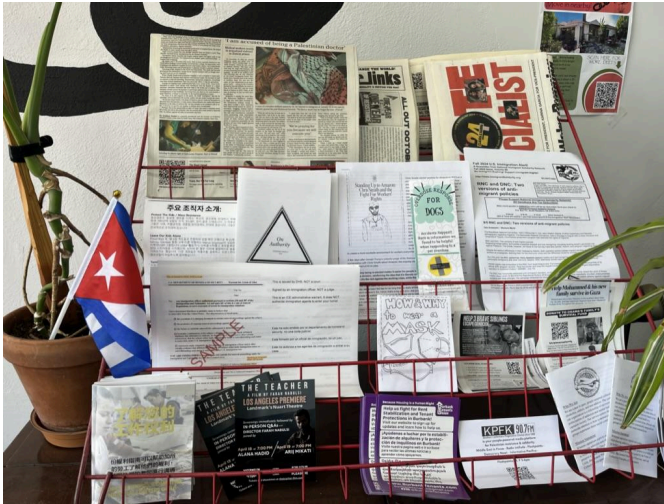
Boyd grew up in the small town of Florence, Oregon, with a working-class family who took a keen interest in the environment. Boyd said she was always “a child of the forest.”

Her family's foundations are what originally drew her to communism, having found it through her younger brother, as well as her socialist grandparents.

In 2017, Boyd came to Los Angeles while working in the music industry – a world she still works in today. With no plans to originally stay in the city, Boyd ended up meeting her partner, Jesse Barnett, who is a touring musician.

Together, Barnett and Boyd came up with the idea for what would become All Power Books.

“We wanted to open a record store that had a little section for mutual aid, like a community fridge and a little radical section,” said Boyd. “It morphed eventually into being a mutual aid store with a tiny little music section.”



An arrangement of pamphlets and newspapers for different events, organizations and information on various issues. / One wall of All Power is currently decorated with art pieces from Earth Liberation Studio. (Photos by Alyssa Peccatiello).

The organizers at All Power Books aim to serve their community’s needs, particularly through their free store of food, clothes and hygiene products, their weekly free grocery distribution and their occasional All Power Free Clinic. Volunteers offer their time, skills and resources for community members who stop by.



The All Power Free Clinic resources include cold and allergy medicine, pain relievers, hand warmers and pamphlets containing more information on healthcare and medicine. (Photos by Alyssa Peccatiello)

Sean Mendes, a registered nurse, is one of the founders and volunteers of the free, community-based clinic.

“This is at its core a political project and not a bandaid on a gaping wound that is unable to be solved by the system that created it,” he said. “I think we’re in a unique position because healthcare is something, regardless of politics, that people can rally behind.”

The free clinic, an extension of All Power Books and its socialist foundation, provides free services to both housed and unhoused community members. Volunteers from various healthcare backgrounds provide basic first aid, blood pressure and blood sugar checks and offer free supplies and medicines.

Brigitte has been a member of the local community for over 25 years. She frequents All Power Books to take advantage of their free grocery distribution and the clinic and stuck around for the political reading and discussion after.

“I don’t have income... I don’t have a way to get food... to check my blood pressure,” she said.

Brigitte emphasized that the volunteers at All Power, like Mendes who greets her by name with a smile, stand out from other organizations in the community.

“If you have a problem it’s easy to ask them about it... it doesn’t matter who you are,” she said.



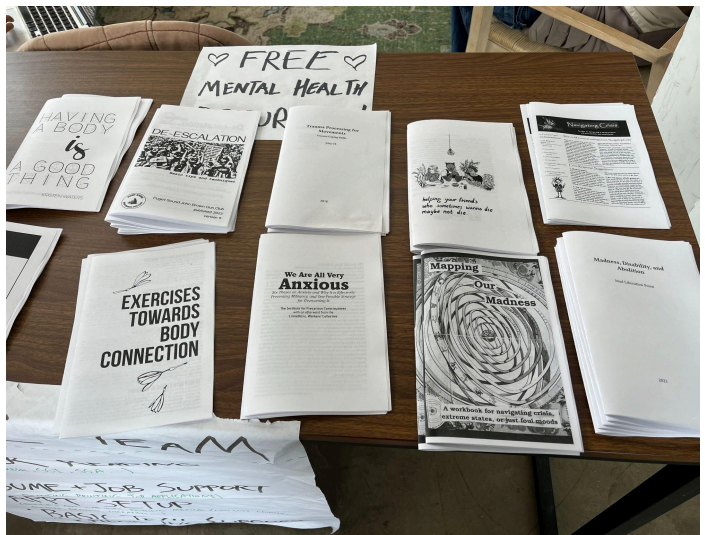
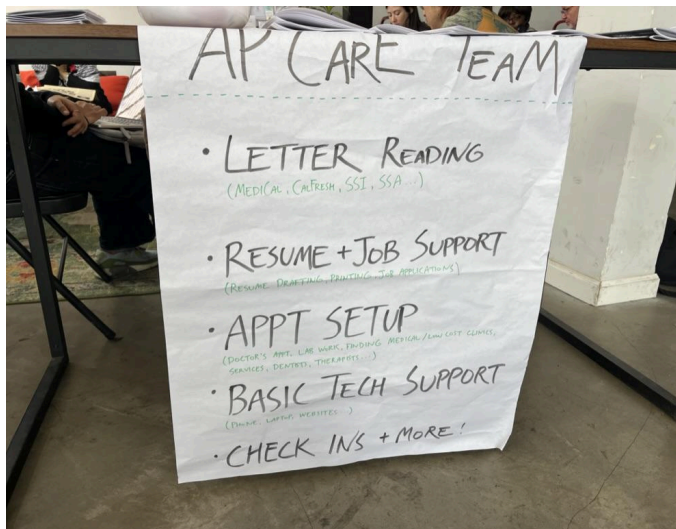
The grocery distribution included produce, bread, nuts and other items. / Volunteers and community members circled up and took turns reading and discussing an article on issues surrounding healthcare. (Photos by Alyssa Peccatiello).

A new addition to the free clinic is the table designated for the “All Power Care Team” who provides mental health resources, help with job applications and government forms and tech support.

Te, a full-time therapist and social worker, volunteers their time to build up this new extension of the free clinic and combat the traditional system of social care.

“Social workers, for instance, have caused a lot of harm,” they said. “Like I, in my day job is a therapist slash a social worker... my ultimate goal is to work myself out of my profession, because both therapists as well as social workers have caused immense harm, especially in communities of color.”

Te emphasized that “robust community care” is the best solution for mental health care.



The All Power Care Team offered a variety of services for community members, including various booklets on mental health support. (Photos by Alyssa Peccatiello.)

Across her life, Boyd has felt a call towards service and community building.

“I’m just led by compassion; that’s in everything that we do,” she said. “Which sometimes can get in the way of doing real life things like making money, but none of that matters, as long as people are suffering.”



Boyd's finger tattoos read "LESS HARM" or "HARM LESS" when switched. The expression is a testament to her life's work, while admitting she supports fighting back against oppression. (Photo by Alyssa Peccatiello).

Despite her packed and rapidly-changing schedule as an organizer at All Power Books, Boyd also continues to work for an event relations company, doing gig work and occasionally taking on shifts for Uber Eats.

All Power Books has faced its fair share of challenges, including a relocation in 2022 after their rent was raised and the building required renovations. The organization successfully moved to its current space two blocks away.

"We used to be in a really precarious spot with money and actually a lot of us personally had to fund this," said Boyd. "That was through working and volunteering and then dumping all of our own money to keep the lights on."

Despite the mutual aid work Boyd and her comrades have done through All Power to serve the surrounding West Adams community, she still faces skepticism for her political values.

“They don't try to understand it,” said Boyd. “If you hate it so much, I'd love to introduce you to your enemy. Get to know your enemy so you can fight it better. And then, usually, when they get to know it, they go, hey, it's actually not at all what I was told.”

All Power Books continues to host a variety of educational events, art exhibitions and more this month. Some highlights include three days of events for International Workers Weekend, a Marxism 101 class and a screening of the 2024 film “No Other Land.”

Boyd also discussed plans of having an ordained minister bless the space of All Power Books so it can be classified as a sanctuary and offer protection for undocumented immigrants from government raids.

“Every living thing deserves care for free,” Boyd said.