

A person wearing an orange jumpsuit is standing behind vertical metal bars, likely in a prison cell. The person's hands are resting on the bars. The background is dark and indistinct.

PROSECUTOR BAIL

**HOURS**

*Toolki*

**COLOR  
OF  
CHANGE**



## PROSECUTOR BAIL REFORM HOUSE PARTY TOOLKIT

### Background On Prosecutor Bail Reform Strategy

Color of Change is leading a campaign targeting the bail bonds industry--which is preying on low-income Black people who are disproportionately impacted by every aspect of the criminal justice system. We're calling on elected prosecutors across the country to stop working with the bail industry and move toward comprehensive reform. The industry is responsible for causing irreversible trauma to victims of mass incarceration like Kalief Browder and Sandra Bland. Thousands of people who have yet to be convicted of a crime languish in jails every day because they can't afford to purchase their freedom. But even worse, when a family can manage to bail someone out, they get caught up in the bail industry's never ending debt trap.

Prosecutors help drive this phenomenon by requesting money bail and using it to exploit guilty pleas from innocent people. Billions of dollars are being circulated throughout the bail industry annually from large corporations, to insurance companies, small mom and pop bail bond agencies, bounty hunters, and even to elected officials and law enforcement. They are all making money off of people not being able to afford their freedom.

Prosecutors have the power to end this cycle of predatory lending and exploitation of Black people. We have to remind them that they were elected to seek justice - not lock as many people up as possible.

We can hold our prosecutors accountable through comprehensive bail reform. We can tell our legislators to pass legislation that calls for the automatic release of non-violent offenders, resources for pre-trial services, and District Attorneys and Judges to work with people and not the bail industry by limiting the use of bail all together.

We are not alone. These steps toward justice are already happening in places like Philly where organizers helped elect the "people's prosecutor," Larry Krasner, who ran on a platform that included no cash bail. In Houston, TX there is litigation pending against the Harris County bail system for being unconstitutional and demanding the county end



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cash bail. And in New Jersey they've completely ended cash bail. This proves that the work we're doing, on all fronts, is shifting the narrative, practice, and culture of criminal justice on a local and national level. People power is real and we are making impact!

Last year, we worked hard together to push statewide bail reform and hold legislators accountable to us and not the corporate bail industry's money, and it's clear we're getting closer to ending money bail for good in Maryland.

Governor Larry Hogan and Attorney General Brian Frosh still enacted basic bail reform in the state this year. The bail industry then begin to act out of fear by bribing state legislators to block bail reform. But the anti-bail bill was defeated because of the advocacy from Maryland activist, residents, and ten of thousands of Color Of Change members. In the era of 45's "Law & Order" country, ending cash money bail entirely is an active form of resisting his bully tactics.

### **Why The Film "13Th"?**

Ava Duvernay's ground breaking film "13th" chronicles the history of this country systemically criminalizing Black folks and people of color, including how the 13th amendment to the constitution states that it's illegal to enslave people unless convicted of a crime. The film talks about some of the ways in which our government has intentionally convinced people that to be Black means to be a criminal inherently, which means inherent enslavement. She documents the so-called War on Drugs and money bail as some of the poisons that fuel the beast of mass-incarceration. We're inviting folks to watch this powerful documentary with us to connect us, heal us, and move us to action together!

### **Why A House Party?**



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Sharing stories about ourselves, our families, and community can be a hard thing to do. We've been socialized to not think about our past as it relates to our present and the trajectory of our futures. In order to move forward we must remove the shame that has festered in our community around drugs, criminalization, and mass incarceration and fight back with people power. Allow this space to be a healing balm for the wounds we carry as individuals and as a collective. And of course, we want you to have fun! Joy and community will be our saving grace along the road to ending cash bail, the war on drugs, and eventually mass incarceration. House parties are powerful way to build community and commitment to take strategic action towards our shared vision.

### Goals Of The House Party

1. Connect with other folks in your area interested in holding prosecutors accountable to the people they serve.
2. Get familiar with the strategy to target County Prosecutors as someone who has the power to end money bail.
3. Schedule a time to meet with your County Prosecutor to urge stop using money bail, and discuss the need for supporting comprehensive reform.
4. Black Joy! Removing shame from the realities of being Black by finding compassion for ourselves and each other.

### Where?

In the comfort of your own home or community venue, such as church, recreation center, library, etc.

### When?

The date and time of your choice between Friday July 28, 2017- Sunday July 30, 2017



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### How?

- 1. *Sign up to be a host***
- 2. *Join the Slack channel for leaders***
- 3. *Join a webinar***
  - a. Link
  - b. Date & Time
    - i. Thursday July 27, 2017
    - ii. TBD pm EST
  - c. Plan Your Screening: This is your event to personalize --but here's is an example of how to get you started.
  - d. Prep for your party
    - i. Review the agenda (on page 8 of this toolkit) and share it with anyone helping run the house party.
    - ii. Read over the background of the prosecutor bail strategy and the film 13th to get familiar with it (on pages 1-2 of this toolkit).
    - iii. Ask at least 2 of your participants to co-host with you. This will ensure that you have support setting up court visits with other participants and surrounding community members..
    - iv. Prepare and arrange your space (chairs, materials, etc.).
    - v. Gather materials: sign-in sheet, printed agendas for your guests, pens, name tags.
    - vi. Ensure wifi is working, charge your laptop or computer, and make sure you can log into Netflix and the actual film.
    - vii. Buy or make snacks and beverages if you'd like to provide some (although it's not required). Feel free to make this party potluck style - another great way to build community!
    - viii. Write up the agenda and party goals on big paper for everyone to see (butcher paper or sticky chart paper works best).
  - e. Host/Facilitator tips



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- i. *Be inclusive and connect with guests.* Talk to each person when they arrive, sign them in. Introduce people to each other and genuinely get to know people by asking a few questions.
- ii. *Delegate tasks to other people.* Give people roles so that you're not the only one doing all the talking. Ask a guest to be in charge of social media, posts and pictures! Try to stay active online throughout your event, we want to know how it's going! Use the hashtag #EndMoneyBail
- iii. *Stay on schedule.* Don't feel bad about keeping your guests on schedule. If you have to keep some sections short so that everyone's time is well spent and that the goals are accomplished, then it's all good!
- iv. *Get specific commitments for Court visits.* Don't be afraid to ask for a lot, you've already got them in the room.
- v. *Be positive and constructive.* Keep the tone upbeat—this is an exciting yet transformative, and participatory event!

### **4. Invite Your Folks!**

- a. Write a list of all your friends, family, neighbors and colleagues you want to invite. Don't limit yourself to folks who are already politically inclined, see this as a chance to bring in people who are new to politics!
- b. Spread the word digitally. Utilize email and social media to get the word out to your extended community. (Below are some shareable social media posts and printable graphics.)  
*\*\*Make all posts with the hashtag #TheWarOnUs\*\**
- c. Pick Up The Phone. Reach out to your folks through phone calls and texts to give them the rundown of the house party and an invitation to attend.

## **House Party Time!**

**0:00** *Guests arrive, mingle!*



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- Allow people time to get in and get settled, including food/refreshments and mingling.

### **0:10 Welcome & introductions (5 min)**

- Give everyone a chance to go around and share their name.

### **0:15 Host's story (5 min)**

- Why did you decide to host this party? What is one experience in your life that led you to wanting to end #TheWarOnUs

### **0:20 Pair and share (5 min)**

- Have participants break into pairs and share their reasons for coming to the party.

### **0:25 Group discussion (15 min)**

- Share back 1 or 2 reasons why folks came
- Review the goals of the party.

### **0:40 Watch Film! (100 min)**

### **2:20 Facilitated Discussion (20 min)**

- \*Feel free to customize your own questions\*

### **2:45 Prosecutor bail asks (15 min)**

- Make the ask to your group of guests to organize a visit to the County Prosecutor's office to demand they no longer use money bail.
  - Identify a point person(s) who want to help organize a courthouse visit or take on the role yourself.
  - Have someone look up the prosecutor's office address and find a time that works.
  - Schedule your Congressional visit:
  - Schedule a walk-in visit by finding a time that works for the majority of your team of folks over the next two weeks. When scheduling, make sure you plan to meet at the office and ask to speak with a staff person about criminal justice reform.
    - In addition, a volunteer can call the office and request an appointment at that time or others that would work. Make sure you all



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have an understanding that with or without an appointment, the visit will happen.

- Meet with your team to plan the visit in more detail including speaking roles for the visit, recruitment, etc. **Sample letter linked below.**
- **Contact info@colorofchange.org** with contact information for the courthouse visit coordinator. We will provide more materials for visits this week.

### **2:50 Closing, thank you, and pictures! (5 min)**

- Thank everyone for coming and sharing
- Take group photo with hashtag #TheWarOnUs

### **3:00 Stay and mingle!**

## **After The House Party**

Allow space and time for your guests to mix and mingle with each other. Take a group photo and post on social media with the hashtag #EndMoneyBail and tag us so that we can share!

## **Beyond The House Party: Building Your Campaign/ Organizing Tactics**

After you've set up a time to meet with your County Prosecutor, now the organizing begins.

Below are some tips, links included, to assist you in building and sustaining momentum:

- **Have a *strategy meeting*.**
  - This meeting doesn't have to be hosted by you, invite another participant to host or co-host!
- **Return to the goals!**



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- What do you hope to get from this meeting, both with the team and the prosecutor?
- **Power Mapping**
  - Identify the power players in your community, both support and opposition. Use this to clearly see who's a target for the community and who's an ally that you all should work with?
- **Escalation tactics (After the meeting, then what?)**
  - **Canvassing the neighborhood!**
    - Create a petition/ local demand around to #EndMoneyBail
    - Knock doors with campaign specific materials.
    - Get more folks in your community to join the party!
  - **Organize A Block Party!**
    - Let's expand the party by inviting the neighborhood out to enjoy fun, food, and FACTS!
    - Get folks signed up to learn more about history of the bail industry and joining the fight to ending money bail.
    - Ask folks to sign your petition
  - **Organize your own people's forum and invite your county prosecutor!**

Plan screenings in public places to talk more about ending cash bail, places like.

    - Churches
    - Schools/Campuses
    - Library
    - Community Center
  - **Schedule a meeting with your legislator to discuss ending money bail.**
    - Demand that they stop taking money from bail industry lobbyists and work for the people they represent.

## The Debrief



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After each screening, canvass, and block party it's important to have a debrief with all teammates who attended and to plan next steps for the community that wants to continue to fight. You will be able to communicate with hosts across the state and COC members on [Slack](#) anytime.

### Important Links

- Film Link: ["13th"](#)
- [Slack](#)
- Sample letter to your County Prosecutor
- Webinar Registration
- Printable [Sign-Up Sheet](#)
- Sharable social media content:
- Facebook: [Color Of Change](#)
- Twitter: [@ColorOfChange](#)

### Have Questions? Need Support?

Email [info@colorofchange.org](mailto:info@colorofchange.org) with questions and to let us know about your event. You can also tweet us or hit us up on Facebook. Links are above.