



**SOUTHERN MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY**

**SOUTHTOSOUTH.ORG**

## **SMA VII Landscape Analysis**

Materials collected or produced by the Movement Research and Political Education Work Team

### **Table of Contents**

<b>DARING TO DREAM: Crafting a Harm Free Zone</b>	<b>2-3</b>
<b>HEALTHCARE-4-ALL: HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>HISTORY OF STRUGGLES FOR A PEOPLES DEMOCRACY IN THE SOUTH</b>	<b>6-7</b>
<b>CONCISE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN WORKERS AND ECONOMIES</b>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>CONCISE HISTORY OF PROTECTING AND DEFENDING SOUTHERN COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>HISTORY OF MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES WITHIN THE BLACK RADICAL TRADITION</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>HISTORY OF DISASTER CAPITALISM ON THE GULF COAST</b>	<b>14-15</b>
<b>CRITICAL ISSUES IMPACTING BLACK IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>16-17</b>
<b>HISTORY OF RIGHT-TO-WORK LAWS AND OPPOSITION TO THEM</b>	<b>18</b>

## Daring to Dream: Crafting a Harm Free Zone

The Harm Free Zone project aims to work with communities to encourage strategies and practices that reduce harm—without the use of police or prisons. The abolition of the prison industrial complex (PIC) grounds the Harm Free Zone project. Because the PIC is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy. It is not just about getting rid of buildings full of cages, but also transforming relationships and transforming our own “cops in the head/cops in the heart” ethos. A PIC ethos dissolves complexity and functions in binaries: guilt vs. innocence, good vs. evil, pain vs. pleasure. It denies collective responsibility and favors rugged individualism. It is a system that takes away our power and our self-determination—our ability to resolve conflict and unease.

The Harm Free Zone project emphasizes community autonomy, independent and self-directing communities, as a necessary step toward abolition. Our focus is *within* communities of the oppressed, placing the oppressed at the center of our vision.

By communities of the oppressed we mean communities of shared daily living or history; shared identity or struggle, or of shared visions. As we affirm and seek to transform ourselves and our communities, we contend with communities that are often fragmented, dispersed, and individualistic. However, despite these obstacles, there are also numerous strengths. People have an investment in their communities. There is a sense of place, of belonging, support, companionship, shared strategies for survival, and, not infrequently, a shared identity. Building on these strengths is where we begin.

### Community Accountability

To establish a Harm Free Zone is a complex and long-term endeavor. Prior to encouraging people within our communities to deny the PIC, to embrace abolition and strive for community autonomy, we must first uncover or encourage **community accountability**. Community accountability is defined as the ability and desire of communities of the oppressed to adopt a “harm-free” way of thinking and to construct processes and mechanisms that broadly address harm. Community accountability demands certain conditions:

- **Community investment**—*commitment to the past, present and future of the community.*
- **Ongoing democratic dialogue**—*shared power and decision-making, and an appreciation for difference within the community.*
- **Systemic analyses of oppression**—*evolving and inclusive critical analyses that does not place rank or hierarchy on oppression.*
- **Agreed upon principles and practices**—*community-specific, integrating the history and cultures of its members.*
- **Clear boundaries and roles**—*stated and respected limitations, rotating positions of power.*
- **Vision and hope**—*desire for liberation, a belief that fundamental social change is possible.*

The more autonomous, the community becomes, the greater the degree to which these conditions will be fulfilled. The larger oppressive society inflicts constant, pervasive and systemic harm on our communities without acknowledging itself as accountable. Therefore, in order to reduce harm within our communities, we must be accountable to ourselves.

A Harm Free Zone requires that communities of the oppressed adopt a harm-free way of thinking—imagining ourselves outside of the limitations imposed by the state. We are challenged to struggle with our internalized oppression and envision ourselves and each other as people who have the ability and the responsibility to create, implement and benefit from our own liberation.

### Processes of Community Accountability

Once the conditions for community accountability are identified, we can initiate practices that directly address harm. These practices, defined here as processes of community accountability, describe the methods used to address harm as complex, fluid and interconnected. These processes will take on different characteristics and present different challenges, depending upon the conditions. We have identified four processes:

- **Processes of prevention**—*the act of preventing harm within the community. Prevention ensures that basic needs are met for all community members and that information is available and accessible for all.*
- **Processes of intervention**—*the act of directly intervening when harm occurs. Intervention values all community members and emphasizes active care and compassion.*
- **Processes of reparation**—*the act of repairing harm among all community members. Reparation analyzes the root causes of harm. It enhances individual and collective investment in the well-being of the community to secure healing, trust, forgiveness and responsibility for all community members.*
- **Processes of transformation**—*the act of completely transforming individual and collective power relationships. Transformation honors and encourages individual and group imagination, critical thought, communal reliance, self-determination and democratic decision-making.*

Just as these processes are not static, they are also non-sequential. They are linked with each other in such a way that separating one from the others changes its meaning and force. The spirit animating intervention and reparation is not punitive, but healing; it both requires and creates vision and hope. Thus, there is an important reciprocal relationship between the processes through which a community is accountable and the conditions that make accountability possible.

We have seen numerous attempts to reduce “crime” in our communities where these critical steps are bypassed in favor of immediate “solutions.” Community Policing or Neighborhood Watch programs may intervene and seek reparation for crime, but neither prevent or transform harm. These types of programs are generally state-defined (or collaborate with the state) and do not do not present a discourse around systemic oppression or a critical analysis that seeks to understand the conditions in which many acts of harm take place. Nor are the long-range goals of community autonomy central to the goals of reducing crime. Inevitably, these models bolster and encourage the prison industrial complex.

Why are community accountability and interconnected processes necessary to the development of a Harm Free Zone? Take, for example, the act of intervention. When there is conflict or violence among community members, intervention would likely be rejected if there was no transparent accountability. A Harm Free Zone would be unrealizable unless the person inflicting harm (the “Actor”) and the people involved in the process of intervention had an investment in the community, a systemic analysis of why harms occur, clear boundaries and roles to determine what constitutes harm and who has a right to intervene, agreed upon principles and practices (including principles for handling harm) that govern the community and are borne from democratic dialogue, and vision and hope that the people within the community and the community itself can be fundamentally changed. Without these components, why would someone let other people “meddle” in their affairs? Why would someone put themselves in the hands of “outsiders”?

When a person harms other people, the processes of community accountability allow the Actor, the person harmed, and the community members to be taken seriously. Recognizing that we are answerable to each other, the community must see the Actor as:

1. inseparable from the community,
2. affected by a historical and present-day reality of oppression that influences the beliefs, character, desires, sense of self and relationships,
3. not passive with respect to oppression. Capable of acting, desiring, believing differently, and thus capable of resisting oppression,
4. a mirror for and of the community,
5. holding promise for the community.

Because the Actor is not a passive receptor of oppression, the Actor can be held accountable for the harmful act. The community can also hold itself accountable for its role in creating an alternative set of social practices, relations and institutions.

The community’s intervention stops the harm. It also enables the Actor to acknowledge the act as harmful, to take responsibility for the act in the face of oppressive conditions, to understand the relationship between the act and its oppressive social context, and to participate in the rebuilding of the community as an active member of the community.

After a harmful act, the person harmed must recognize the changes that have occurred and cannot simply recover without altering their perspective and conditions. The connection between intervention and reparation means that the person harmed must also be viewed by the community as a mirror for itself, inseparable from the community, as holding promise for the community, and as someone who can be made whole and placed in a healthier interpersonal and communal condition.

The work of repair is a communal process of change. In this sense, a transformation of the community accompanies a transformation of the Actor and a transformation of the person harmed. This is one of the most vivid forms of community education available and key to the prevention of additional harm.

All of these processes reaffirm and strengthen the community, which paves the way for a community to resolve its own conflict without prisons or police.

### **Models of Community Accountability**

An abolitionist vision drives the Harm Free Zone project to build models today for our future. This means developing practical strategies that move us toward our dreams. It means uncovering and formalizing the strategies that we already use to transform our relationships and our material conditions. It means living this vision in our daily lives. Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal.

The attached models do not necessarily reflect the political framework of the Harm Free Zone project. Our goal is to present some examples where processes of accountability are used, though not in the interconnected manner we have discussed. Neither do these models necessarily embrace the goals of community autonomy or abolition. We include them with the hope that these models further dialogue and stimulate ideas that can launch a million Harm Free Zones.

## HEALTHCARE-4-ALL: HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

**1763:** As an act of biological warfare and genocide, one British commander gave two Native American chief blankets laced with smallpox and another wrote, “Try to inoculate the Indians by means of Blankets, as well as to try Every other method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race.”

**1820-1865:** The institution of slavery defined the role of healthcare under capitalism, as when Dr. Richard Arnold pointed out that a white man claiming to own enslaved workers understood that “to save his capital was to save his Negroes.” The life expectancy of people “sold down the river” to the giant cotton and sugar plantations along the Mississippi River was about seven years.

**1909-1914:** After a scientific report explained that hookworm infection (from walking barefoot near fecal matter) was causing lethargy for many white textile workers and rural workers in the South, the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission used a million-dollar grant to attack the infestation, revealing how health care in a capitalist system reflects the need for a productive workforce.

**1916-1917:** Congress began discussing a “sickness insurance” bill proposed by the American Association for Labor Legislation, but America’s entry into war with Germany and the anti-communism of the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) defeated the bill.

**1932:** The US Public Health Service initiated the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, in which black men were purposely infected with the disease, indelibly stamping the potential negative impact of health care research on the African American community.

**1935:** While the Social Security Act was originally intended to include national health insurance, strong opposition by the American Medical Association and white southern Democrats led to it not happening.

**1946:** The Hill Burton Act pumped public money into hospital construction but allowed local control so white southern officials could deny African Americans access to hospitals built with federal funds.

**1964:** The Medical Committee for Human Rights was founded. MCHR provided medical personnel for Civil Rights marches and struggles in the South, along with free community-based clinics.

**1965:** Medicare, passed the same year as the Voting Rights Act, provided national health insurance for the elderly and disabled through Social Security, which still excluded mostly black farm and domestic workers to satisfy white southern employers. In addition, Medicaid, with means-tested, state-administered health insurance, was not fully implemented in southern states until the 1970s.

**1966:** The Mississippi Mound Bayou Clinic and community control struggles over healthcare facilities grew out of the Civil Rights Movement, reasserting the linkage of illness, hunger, and poverty.

**1970:** *The Health/PAC Bulletin* explained that “the problem with national health insurance was precisely that it was *only* insurance: it would funnel dollars to the same old actors on the health scene – doctors, hospitals, insurance companies without reorganizing how healthcare is delivered.”

**1970:** The Lincoln Hospital Collective, Young Lords, and Local 1199 took over the New York hospital in reaction to proposed cutbacks and poor quality of care.

**Mid and Late 1980s:** More specific fronts of struggles in health care included ones about reproductive rights, disability rights, and various others.

**1987:** ACT-Up challenged the unaffordable cost of AZT, a drug for those with AIDS that was developed with public research funds and then privately patented.

**1989-1991:** Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) was formed and an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* called for a national health insurance program to solve the growing crisis of uninsured people, excessive costs, and the frustrations and increasing powerlessness of private practice doctors at the mercy of the private insurance industry. The delivery system would remain essentially unchanged, (a mix of public, private, for-profit and not-for-profit mix), emphasizing the cost effectiveness of a single payer system and provider choice.

**1992:** Georgians for a Common Sense Health Plan introduced single payer legislation in Georgia.

**1993:** A caravan of 2000 folks from across the South went to Little Rock, Arkansas to demonstrate for single payer in front of Bill Clinton who was about to take office.

**1995:** The California Nurses Association became independent of the American Nurses Association after several years of staff nurse uprisings based on low wages, excessive hours of work, and a low nurse/patient ratio. CNA also supported single payer.

**1998:** PNHP, CNA, and the Labor Party (existing from 1996-2007) mounted a Just Health Care Campaign, organizing a Committee of a Million.

**2003:** The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act created Medicare Part D to provide prescription plans for seniors but prohibited negotiation cost controls with pharmaceutical companies.

**2003:** Congressman John Conyers introduced the United States National Health Care Act (HR 676) to establish a universal single payer health care system.

**2009:** When Democratic Senator Max Baucus refused to allow supporters of single payer to speak at hearings he chaired, nurses, doctors, activists, and unionists were arrested for interrupting the deliberations and demanding that Single Payer be put on the table. The action inspired a civil disobedience campaign for health care for all.

**2010:** The Affordable Care Act (ACA) passed without support from the Republicans, who called it “Obamacare.” It was designed to extend health care coverage to over thirty million uninsured Americans without threatening the ability of health insurance companies to make profits.

**2011:** After a massive effort coordinated by the Vermont Workers Center announced that health care is a human right and local PNHP work, Vermont passed the first state-managed single payer health care plan, but Democratic Governor Shumlin never implemented it.

**January-September 2017:** The Trump Administration and Republicans in Congress tried in various ways to dismantle ACA but were unable to pass a bill ending it or creating a new plan.

*Compiled by Rita Valenti and Cita Cook for the Southern Movement Assembly, October 2017*

## HISTORY OF STRUGGLES FOR A PEOPLES DEMOCRACY IN THE SOUTH

**1865-1866:** African Americans held Freedmen's Conventions in North Carolina where they demanded equal rights, including the ability to vote.

**1868:** Armed black men assembled at the courthouse in Hayneville (Lowndes County, Alabama) and demanded that the white men in local offices who had supported the Confederacy step down from their positions as Congress had ruled they should do. Eventually, all did this or were defeated by black voters.

**July 9, 1868:** The Fourteenth Amendment granted to all Americans equal protection of the laws and due process of law. This made the denial of civil rights to African Americans unconstitutional.

**1868-1875:** Thousands of African American men were elected to political offices, including U. S. Senators Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce from Mississippi, fourteen men in the House of Representatives, almost 800 state legislators, and many more at the local level. The only state where they held the majority of the seats in the state legislature was South Carolina.

**February 3, 1870:** The Fifteenth Amendment established that any action taken to restrict (male) citizens' right to vote because of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" was unconstitutional.

**1875-1910:** White Democrats across the South used terrorist violence, laws, and constitutional amendments to take the vote away from African Americans. For many decades, retroactive poll taxes, literacy tests, and other manipulations of the law were enforced only against black people trying to register to vote.

**1942:** A meeting of fifty-seven black leaders (five of them women) from the Southern Conference on Race Relations issued the Durham Manifesto, which opposed Jim Crow segregation and demanded voting rights, equal education, and job opportunities for African Americans in the South.

**1944:** In *Smith v. Allwright*, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that primary elections held by political parties (southern branches of the Democratic Party) that allowed only white people to vote were unconstitutional.

**1949:** An Alabama law required voters to re-register every four years and correctly answer thirty questions, but it was repealed two years later when more whites than blacks failed the literacy test.

**January 1952–May 1954:** With the support of the Dallas County Voters League (Selma), 74 African Americans registered to vote.

**June 1956:** The state of Alabama banned the N.A.A.C.P., leading the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and other black ministers in Birmingham to found the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR).

**1960:** After voter fraud gave an election to the whites, black people formed the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights.

**June-December 1963:** In Selma, Hudson High School students, even when too young to vote, became more willing than their parents to demonstrate and go to jail. Whenever police drove students back to the school, they walked out the rear door and returned to the meeting to be arrested again. The jails were sometimes so crowded that they had to take turns standing up during the night. The white school officials refused to give diplomas to some of the demonstrators and thirty-two teachers lost their jobs.

**1964:** The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) set up an office in Selma to organize for voting rights there and in surrounding counties. They arranged for people in Lowndes County to hear tapes of lectures Malcolm X gave every week in New York City.

**November 1964:** Leaders of the Dallas County Voters League asked Dr. King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to come to Selma to add to the pressure for voter registration.

**June 1965:** After court-ordered reapportionment, a special election led to eight African Americans joining the Georgia General Assembly.

**February 18, 1965:** A demonstration was held at night in Marion (Perry County) to protest the arrest of SCLC organizer James Orange for “contributing to the delinquency of minors” by involving them in the voter registration campaign. When 26-year-old Jimmie Lee Jackson tried to stop attacks on his mother and his 82-year-old grandfather, he was shot by a state trooper and died eight days later.

**March 7, 1965:** State troopers beat and tear-gassed many of the 600 people who were trying to march from Selma to Montgomery to protest the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson and the denial of the right to vote. SNCC organizer John Lewis was given a cracked skull and Amelia Boynton was beaten and gassed nearly to death. Seventeen marchers were hospitalized, leading to the day becoming known as Bloody Sunday.

**March 21-25, 1965:** A successful march from Selma to Montgomery started with 8,000 people and ended with about 25,000 people at the state capitol, where Dr. King gave the speech “How Long, Not Long.”

**August 6, 1965:** President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act.

**December 1965-1967:** Tent City (also called Freedom City) was established by Highway 80 for sharecroppers and others who had lost their jobs and homes because they had registered to vote. In Detroit, the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights raised money to buy the 200 acres.

**May 1966:** After at least 2,500 black people registered to vote in Lowndes County, the local Democratic Party greatly increased the fees to run for office in the Democratic Primary (such as from \$50 to \$900). Black leaders decided to form a separate political party, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. When the state required them to put a symbol on the ballot, they chose the Black Panther.

**1970:** John Hulett, a local black civil rights leader, was elected Sheriff of Lowndes County, a position he held for about twelve years. African Americans were also elected to be the coroner, the tax assessor, and the superintendent of education. By 1980, all of the offices in the county were held by African Americans.

**March 2003:** In *United States v. Charleston County, SC*, the District Court ruled that Charleston County had improperly diluted the voting strength of African American voters “by maintaining an at-large voting system in a manner which violated Section 2” of the Voting Rights Act. After the U. S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case, the County Council system changed from at-large to district voting in 2004.

**October 21, 2008:** The NAACP Legal Defense Fund settled a lawsuit against the Alabama Department of Corrections so the Reverend Kenneth Glasgow and The Ordinary People Society (TOPS) in Dothan could once again teach incarcerated people about their rights as voters.

**June 25, 2013:** The Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* that Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is unconstitutional, in effect also taking away Section 5, which required certain states and local governments to obtain federal preclearance before implementing any changes to their voting laws or practices.

## HISTORY OF SOUTHERN WORKERS AND SOCIAL ECONOMIES

**1619-1865:** Almost all Africans brought to the Americas and their descendants were enslaved workers whose labor in sugar, tobacco, rice, and cotton fields created surplus capital which became the basis for the fortunes of white planters, merchants, bankers, textile factory owners, and industrial capitalists. Whenever possible, workers created hidden economies, sharing or bartering whatever they could grow, kill, or create.

**January 16, 1865:** When General Sherman reached South Carolina and Georgia, he discovered that people who had freed themselves had already taken over the rice and Sea Island cotton plantations. Twenty black leaders warned that if he did not accept this, they would fight back. He therefore issued Field Order 15, granting up to forty acres to those who had been enslaved from north of Charleston to the Savannah River.

**March 3, 1865:** Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (the Freedmen's Bureau) to assist former slaves and poor white people. Because they supported Sherman's Field Order 15, at least 10,000 black people were farming 40,000 acres of land by June.

**Summer 1865:** President Andrew Johnson overruled the Freedmen's Bureau and began redistributing land occupied by ex-slaves back to the original white, ex-Confederate owners. Some black people fought to hold their land, but most were forced to become sharecroppers for white landowners.

**1867:** The United States outlawed peonage, which involves claiming the right to force someone to work because of their alleged debt and often extending the length of service through various tricks and lies. The government did not, however, try to enforce the law until 1898 and many African Americans (most of them farm workers) became victims of peonage well into the twentieth century.

**1880s:** Former Georgia State Senator James M. Smith forced hundreds of debt slaves, some of whom he had once claimed to own, to work near Athens on what became Georgia's largest plantation, as well as on farms in several other counties. Deputy Sheriffs and their dogs helped retrieve fleeing workers.

**July 1881:** Twenty black laundresses in the Summerhill neighborhood of Atlanta (near what is now Georgia State Stadium) organized the Washing Society and called a strike with about 3,000 women, some of them white. They endured arrests, beatings, and fines for unknown results.

**1903:** Federal investigators were run out of Lowndes County, Alabama at gunpoint when they tried to investigate the ways in which Sheriff J. W. Dixon was abusing black prisoners leased to white employers.

**1933:** The New Deal programs passed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress rarely helped poor black southerners because of Roosevelt's reluctance to alienate white southern Democrats in Congress.

**September 1935:** Members of the Alabama Sharecroppers Union working on the J. R. Bell Plantation in Lowndes County struck for higher wages. They lost the strike; six activists were killed; many were beaten; and twenty-five union leaders had to leave the county to save their lives.

**1938:** 6,000 mostly Latina female pecan shellers in San Antonio, led by Emma Tenayuca, won a 37-day strike, but a new national minimum wage of twenty-five cents an hour led the company owners to close or mechanize their plants, leaving most of the workers jobless.

**1943-1947:** President Franklin Roosevelt and the British government established a program to allow farm workers from British Caribbean islands to work on farms in the United States. Unlike farm workers from the United States or Puerto Rico, these workers could be sent home if they upset the employers.

**October 1945:** 1,200 Charleston cigar plant workers, many of them black women, went on strike because of discrimination and low wages. In March 1946, they achieved a positive settlement.

**1967:** The Federation of Southern Cooperatives was founded to assist black farmers and the rural poor in developing cooperatives and credit unions; protect and expand the landholdings of black family farmers in the South; and to develop

and support beneficial public policies. Forty years later, there were over seventy active coop groups with over 20,000 families involved across ten southern states, especially in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina.

**February 12-April 16, 1968:** About 1300 black sanitation workers in Memphis went on strike after two of them were crushed to death when they sought shelter in the only place allowed, in the back of a compressor truck. The strikers made an international impression by marching with signs saying, "I AM A MAN." After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. supported them actively, he was shot and killed in Memphis on April 4. The workers gained union recognition and wage increases, carried out only after more strikes.

**1969:** Migrant farmworkers from Florida and Texas testified about the rough conditions they faced in a U.S. Senate hearing. They asked to be covered by the National Labor Relations Act, the Social Security Act, and other laws that benefited most workers.

**March 20-July 18, 1969:** Workers, most of them black women, in two Charleston hospitals were on strike. Some picketers were arrested, but they eventually settled for better pay and conditions.

**1982:** After a struggle in 1981 by black women workers over race and gender discrimination at a K-Mart store in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Black Workers for Justice was founded.

**October 6, 1997:** Seventy former employees of the abandoned Almark Mills fabric cutting and sewing plant in Dawson, Georgia used their now-dissolved union fund (from dues they had paid) to open a worker-owned cooperative sewing factory. 76% of them were female and most were black.

**1997-2010:** Because of the pressure and research of the Anti-Slavery Campaign by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the United States carried out nine cases prosecuting farm owners for their mistreatment of farmworkers in Florida. Seven of them convicted the owners and imposed sentences ranging from thirty-three months to thirty years. For more specifics on the cases, go to their Anti-Slavery Museum booklet (<http://www.ciw-online.org/museum/booklet0811.pdf>).

**1999:** *Pigford v. Glickman* was a class action lawsuit alleging the US Department of Agriculture had discriminated against over 400 African American farmers in the allocation of farm loans and assistance between 1981 and 1996. Two settlements led to the distribution of at least \$2 billion to the farmers.

**March 18, 2011:** The Southern Grassroots Economies Project held its first meeting to begin promoting and launching sustainable cooperative economies, guided by examples of worker-owned cooperatives in Mondragon, Spain and Emilia Rarnagno, Italy. Member organizations include the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, the Fund for Democratic Communities, the Highlander Research and Education Center, Cooperation Texas, Farmworker Association of Florida, and Cooperation Jackson.

**March 2013–May 2014:** While serving as mayor of Jackson, Mississippi (until he died), Chokwe Lumumba began creating a cooperative economy in the city. Cooperation Jackson, established in 2014, became a network of coops focused on sustainability, self-determination, community development, and cooperative economics.

**2015:** The Southern Workers Assembly began conducting annual Southern Worker Schools to create a cadre of workers capable of building organizations to establish workplace democracy in the South.

**October 2016:** After almost twenty years without a regular grocery store, the African American community around Philips Avenue in Greensboro, North Carolina opened Renaissance Community Cooperative, a community-owned, democratically run store.

## CONCISE HISTORY OF PROTECTING AND DEFENDING SOUTHERN COMMUNITIES

**1526:** In the Pee Dee River community of South Carolina, slave rebellions against the Spanish “settlers” united stolen Africans with American Indians. The “Black Indians” of the Pee Dee River set up the first colony on the continent that called for and practiced equality for all people.

**1672-1864:** At least fifty Maroon communities across the South included Africans and Native Americans who had liberated themselves from slavery and colonialism. These liberated zones provided a safe haven for community and helped launch attacks on plantations and colonial military, freeing more enslaved Africans who then joined them.

**1817:** The Mayor of New Orleans issued a city ordinance restricting gatherings of the enslaved to one location in the Treme, where many free people of color lived. People of African descent have met ever since at Congo Square to hold markets, sing, dance, and play music, often in groups based on their African ethnic/tribal identity.

**1791-1804:** Once it became clear that the revolution led by enslaved and free Africans on the island of Saint-Domingue would be successful in founding the nation of Haiti, many French colonists moved to New Orleans, bringing with them slaves ready to tell other enslaved people the details of what had happened there.

**June 16/17, 1822:** Denmark Vesey, an AME Church leader who had bought his freedom with lottery winnings, used Bible classes to discuss how they might rebel and escape to Haiti. When thousands were ready to rise up and attack the city of Charleston, two slaves prevented it by telling white officials. Vesey and five others were hanged.

**1831-1834:** After a rebellion led by Nat Turner Rebellion in Virginia in 1831, southern states outlawed teaching slaves how to read and write and some religious practices, but many black people still managed to meet secretly for spiritual and educational activities.

**1851:** Henry Long, the first slave to be returned to the South through the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, was sold to someone in Atlanta and then arrested for “making insurrectionary speeches.”

**June 11, 1864:** Ten months before the end of the Civil War, African Americans of all ages paraded to Congo Square to celebrate emancipation, which had come early to New Orleans when the Union troops made it easier for slaves to walk away from their owners. One speaker (in French) called on everyone to “impress on the minds of children to venerate the names of their liberators – they will bless them and hand them down to their posterity.”

**December 6, 1865:** The Thirteenth Amendment made slavery and “involuntary servitude” (“except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted”) unconstitutional.

**May 1, 1865:** The first major Memorial Day celebration in the nation was celebrated in Charleston as about ten thousand black people of all ages participated in a parade for what they called Decoration Day.

**September 9, 1867 -** Nine white U.S. soldiers attacked several homes and stores and beat some people severely in a settlement of black people on the outskirts of Atlanta. More than 200 armed residents then prevented more attacks.

**1865-1875:** During Reconstruction, formerly enslaved people build 10,000 schools, churches, and other institutions for self-determination and to practice radical democracy.

**1880s:** Black women and men in Atlanta, after their complaints about mistreatments by the all-white police force went unanswered, began carrying out collective self-defense, sometimes freeing captured individuals.

**September 22-25 1906:** An anti-black riot by white Atlantans led to the death of dozens of African Americans. Because white people living south of Lakewood Park were hostile to the black people living north of the park in Brownsville, African Americans there set up armed patrols. Those who could “pass for white” bought guns to distribute to the others. When a group of Fulton County policemen and armed white citizens arrested some of the patrol members, a series of altercations led to the deaths of at least four black men and the arrests of at least eighty.

**September 3, 1944:** Recy Taylor, an African American mother, was raped by seven white men outside of Abbeville, Alabama. Mrs. Rosa Parks from the NAACP organized the Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor, establishing networks that helped the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott succeed.

**1953–1957:** When William Earl Fikes received a death sentence after being pressured to confess to rape of a white female, he was able to appeal it with the help of NAACP lawyers and widespread support from the African American community. Although the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in 1957 that his confession should not stand, he was not released from prison until 1971. During the trial in Selma, African American families brought their children to see black attorneys and witnesses standing up to white officials and many

joined the NAACP for the first time.

**March 9, 1960:** The Committee on the Appeal of Human Rights (COAHR), made up of students at the black colleges in Atlanta, published “An Appeal for Human Rights” and began seven months of sit-ins in restaurants and other segregated businesses serving the public.

**April 1, 1960:** After being trained in non-violent action, twenty-four black students from Burke High School in Charleston sat in at Kress’s Five-and-Dime Store and were arrested, inspiring about a year of other demonstrations.

**July 2, 1964:** President Lyndon Johnson signed the strongest Civil Rights Act since Reconstruction.

**March 12, 1967:** An arsonist destroyed the headquarters of the Lowndes County Self-Help Housing and Job Training, but the program continued and built houses for people living in Tent City.

**July 1968** - The Black Solidarity Committee for Community Improvement began what became a six-month boycott of stores in downtown Durham, including a special parade for “Black Christmas.” They eventually negotiated a number of positive changes, including the appointment of two black people to the Housing Authority Board.

**1985:** In the *Tennessee v. Garner* case about a black eighth grade boy who had taken a purse and ten dollars, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that police may not shoot someone simply because he or she is fleeing.

**October 27, 1997:** In *Whitner v. State*, the South Carolina Supreme Court declared that since viable fetuses are “children,” pregnant women who used illicit drugs could be sentenced to up to ten years in jail. Of the thirty women who were eventually arrested at a Charleston hospital, all but one was African American. In 2001, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled, in *Ferguson v. City of Charleston*, that drug testing of pregnant women without their knowledge or consent involved unreasonable searches and therefore violated the Fourth Amendment.

**2005:** Taser International sent out a special bulletin warning law enforcement institutions that they had learned by experimenting with pigs that repeated stuns could lead to impaired breathing.

**October 1, 2006:** Kip Black, a mentally ill black man who had taken his clothes off in the middle of traffic and then fought with officers trying to remove him, died after being tasered nine times. A newspaper reported that North Charleston officers had used Tasers 201 times in eighteen months, always disproportionately against African Americans. North Charleston became known as “Taser Town.”

**February 26, 2012:** George Zimmerman, a self-appointed neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Florida, followed Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old African American walking to his father’s home. When Zimmerman called 911 to report someone looking “suspicious,” the operator told him not to follow the man. Instead, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin, claiming he had the right to do so because of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. The Sanford NAACP held two town hall meetings with hundreds of black residents to express their concern about police misconduct, compiling details of at least six incidents to turn over to the Justice Department for possible investigation.

**July 13, 2013:** In spite protests of many people around the nation and the world, George Zimmerman was acquitted of the murder of Trayvon Martin. In reaction to what was widely seen as an unjust decision, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi began using the hashtag *#BlackLivesMatter* on social media to reach thousands of people quickly whenever there was a need to protest police murders of black people and other forms of racist violence.

*Compiled by Cita Cook, Project South for the Southern Movement Assembly, June 2016*

## HISTORY OF MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES WITHIN THE BLACK RADICAL TRADITION

**Pre-Colonial Sub-Saharan Africa:** A variety of sometimes secret fraternal associations, ethnic societies, religious groups, political clubs, and trade guilds all involved bonds of fellowship confirmed by an oath or promise and reinforced by various kinds of feasts, dancing, parties, and rituals; rules for preserving courtesy and order; regular contributions by members; and, most often, burial assistance. Many were only for men; some were for women; and a few were for both men and women.

**1568:** The first *cabildo de nacio* (town hall) of enslaved people from a particular African ethnicity was founded in Cuba, followed by many others. They pooled money and resources to assist needy members and used songs, dances, and drum rhythms to honor African deities and protest Spanish cultural hegemony.

**1780:** Women created the African Female Benevolent Society in 1809 to educate and clothe poor children.

**1787:** The Free African Society was founded in Philadelphia to help support widows, orphans, the sick, and the unemployed, as well as to offer money for burials and some medical care. Members paid monthly dues to gain access to the benefits when they needed them, as long as they “lived an orderly and sober life.” In 1793, the Female Benevolent Society of St. Thomas took over the welfare functions.

**1842:** The state of Maryland made membership in mutual aid societies a felony to prevent interactions between enslaved and free black people.

**1846:** Moses Dickson, a Prince Hall Mason, led twelve men from eight southern states and Ohio in planning a massive armed assault against slavery. Over the next decade, tens of thousands secretly drilled and stockpiled arms as the Knights of Liberty. In public, they were a Masonic order named the Knights of Tabor. In 1857, Dickson called off a planned attack on Atlanta at almost the last minute.

**1872:** Moses Dickson formed the International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor, which became especially popular in the South. Members pledged to promote “Christianity, education, morality and temperance and the art of governing, self-reliance and true manhood and womanhood.”

**1875:** The new Crystal Fount Lodge of the Good Samaritans in Atlanta purchased lots in South View Cemetery for its members. The profit from the cemetery enabled them to become one of the earliest Atlanta black fraternal societies to own real estate, including a meeting hall on Ivy Street by 1895.

**1880:** African Americans in Savannah had formed 193 clubs and mutual aid societies, including volunteer fire companies which were also social clubs for parades, dances, picnics, and excursions.

**1888:** A Jacksonville newspaper reported during a yellow fever epidemic that the local black community was organizing “as a race for all cases of public and common calamity” and had “formed a colored auxiliary committee...to control the supply of the fever fund and provisions to the negroes of that city.”

**1889-1893:** The Colored Farmers’ Alliance, with a shaky relationship with the white Alliances, opened chapters across the South. By December 1890, the Georgia Colored Farmers’ Alliance included 84,000 members, many of them women. They opened cooperative groceries and joined white Alliance members in opposing some monopolies. In Mobile, Alabama, they financed a Black Alliance central exchange and warehouse for black farmers from several states through two-dollar dues.

**1895:** The Tuskegee Women’s Club opened in Alabama. Some of their activities included visiting and providing ‘fruit and clean clothing...to the prisoners who have expressed their gratitude, and made successful efforts to present a tidy appearance during our visits’ to the local jail.

**1904:** Reverend Bryant at Wheat Street Baptist Church established the Atlanta Benevolent Protective Association at a time of rising unemployment and poverty. Members paid five to twenty-five cents per week to have access to medical and funeral costs. In 1906 the state required insurance companies to have at least five thousand dollars on deposit with the state Treasurer, so Alonzo Herndon, an ex-slave who was a successful barber, purchased the society, making it the

Atlanta Mutual Insurance Association. Atlanta Mutual soon became a million dollar business “because the mutual aid, benevolent, and secret societies had already cultivated potential insurance buyers.”

**1909:** The U.S. Corporate Excise Tax Act exempted from taxation fraternal beneficiary societies that provided for the payment of life, sick, accident, or other related benefits. It still applies.

**1912:** The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, the wealthiest African American fraternal organization in the South, held its national convention in Atlanta once the city agreed to open segregated parks to them and allow them to hold a parade. The Order bought an entire block on Auburn Avenue and built a six-story office building and then an auditorium. Members could borrow money for businesses and farms.

**1931:** George Schyler, a black journalist in Harlem, founded the Young Negro Cooperative League to promote and organize cooperatives and buying clubs. Ella Baker became its executive director. She considered cooperatives useful training grounds in participatory democracy.

**1934:** The Bricks Rural Life School in North Carolina offered classes for adults in African American cooperative development. Two years later, they organized a credit union which allowed member to buy a tractor. In 1838, the school opened a cooperative store and in 1939 a health program.

**1942:** After the International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor opened the Taborian Hospital in Mound Bayou, Mississippi (a town founded by ex-slaves in 1887), their membership doubled to 47,000 within three years. The hospital provided low-cost health care to thousands of residents of the Mississippi Delta until stricter hospital regulations led to it having to close in the 1960s.

**1965:** The Vine City Foundation was established in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Atlanta. Their thrift shop raised money for emergency services such as getting people out of jail, helping individuals receive government aid, and supporting a food cooperative. To convince the city to build a playground in their neighborhood, they blocked a street for a week while dancing to music from record players.

**December 2004:** When Afro-Cubans in Abakua Societies joined African members of Ekpe (Leopard) Societies at a festival in Calabar, Nigeria, they discovered that their music, chants, and much else were quite similar and that they had the same association ancestry from centuries earlier. An old Abakua chant was translated as “Our African brothers, from the sacred place came to Havana....we salute the Ekue drum.”

**October 2016:** After almost twenty years without a regular grocery store, the African American community around Philips Avenue in Greensboro, North Carolina opened Renaissance Community Cooperative, a community-owned, democratically run store.

**August 19, 2017:** At 9 Gammon Avenue in Atlanta, Project South and the Georgia Citizens’ Coalition on Hunger opened a Mutual Aid Liberation Center which will serve as a Social Emergency Response Center.

## HISTORY OF DISASTER CAPITALISM ON THE GULF COAST

**June 28, 1879:** Congress established the Mississippi River Commission, allowing the US Army Corps of Engineers to build levees to prevent flooding instead of using safer ways to drain high water. This approach has led to some floods becoming much more damaging for people, structures, and land.

**Early 1900s:** The construction of new canals in Florida to drain water from both Lake Apopka and Lake Okeechobee, and then dikes, led to more farming and pesticides poisoning the lakes and water table.

**September 8, 1900:** A Category Four hurricane hit Galveston Island, Texas. A fifteen feet storm surge caused the deaths of at least 8,000 people, making it the deadliest storm in US history. After the newspapers spread false rumors about African Americans looting bodies, white terrorists lynched dozens of black people. A new commission form of city government ensured that black voters would always be outnumbered in local elections.

**1910-1914:** Harris County voters voted to create the fifty-mile long and twenty-five feet deep Houston Ship Channel to the Gulf of Mexico with the help of matching federal funds, ensuring Houston's future as a major port for the oil and gas industry.

**1918-1923:** The Industrial Canal, created to allow ships to move cargo between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, cut the Lower Ninth Ward off from the main segments of New Orleans. Although over 25,000 people lived in the Lower Ninth, officials claimed the area was uninhabited.

**March-April 1927:** In the most destructive river flood in the history of the United States, the Mississippi River became sixty miles wide south of Memphis, causing at least 246 deaths. About 70% of the over 325,000 people forced into relief camps were African American. Afterwards, the Army Corps of Engineers built more levees, preventing the deposit of silt needed in the South Louisiana wetlands to protect New Orleans and rural areas from future hurricane damage.

**September 16, 1928:** The Okeechobee Hurricane in Florida, with its twenty-foot storm surge, was the second deadliest tropical cyclone in the history of the United States, killing at least 2,500 people, about 75% of them mostly black migrant farm workers. Zora Neale Hurston described the storm's impact on them in her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

**1930s-2002:** The proliferation of petrochemical plants in much of South Louisiana led at least five independent African American towns to demand that the companies take responsibility for the diseases and deaths caused by the toxic air and water, but few could avoid selling their property to the company.

**1945-1948:** The Army Corps of Engineers built the Addicks and Barker Reservoirs west of Houston. When Hurricane Harvey arrived in September 2017, Army Corps officials decided it was necessary to release some of the water, flooding about 4000 homes that would not have otherwise been damaged.

**September 9, 1965:** A storm surge from Hurricane Betsy poured so much water into the Industrial Canal of New Orleans that the levee broke in several places, killing at least eighty-one people, mainly in the Lower Ninth Ward. Many believe the levee was bombed to keep water away from the wealthier areas.

**1996:** To restore the health of Lake Apopka, the government of Florida paid the farm owners \$103 million to leave their property and then did a \$3 million investigation of the impact of pesticides on birds and alligators. No government agency spent any money to investigate and treat the physical problems the toxicity caused in the 2,500 African American, Haitian, and Mexican farm workers.

**August 29, 2005 and soon after that:** Hurricane Katrina hit land and, after levees in the Industrial Canal and the Mississippi River-Gulf Coast Canal broke, led to over 1800 deaths, most of them in poor communities of people of color in Louisiana and Mississippi. As of 2010, 700 people were still missing. At least 1000 of the known dead victims were from the Lower Ninth Ward. More than one million people evacuated from the Gulf Coast.

**September 24, 2005:** Hurricane Rita hit the coasts of Louisiana and East Texas. Although the worst of the storm missed New Orleans and the death toll (120) was smaller than Katrina's, Rita destroyed more property than Katrina in segments of south Louisiana, particularly areas inhabited by the Houma Nation and other indigenous groups. The combination of

the two hurricanes so close together turned about 200 square miles of wetlands into open water, taking away many people's homes and livelihoods.

**April 20, 2010:** An explosion on a British Petroleum (BP) drilling rig off the coast of Louisiana led to the deaths of eleven workers and the largest oil spill in U. S. history. Both the oil and the chemical dispersant Corexit caused untold damage to marine life; to the fish, shrimp, crab, and oyster industries; and to the health of people living on the Gulf Coast.

**April 20, 2015:** On the fifth anniversary of the BP oil spill, the 1700 members of the United Houma Nation petitioned the Obama administration to support their fight for federal recognition so that, unlike after Hurricane Katrina, they might become eligible for federal aid because of the oil spill. The Louisiana Land and Exploration Company, a subsidiary of ConocoPhillips, and other oil companies opposed the petition, hoping to take more Houma land.

**July 3, 2015:** The Justice Department reached an agreement for the payment of \$18.7 billion (spread over 18 years) by BP for the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the largest fine for environmental damage ever. The settlement also ended all other pending federal or state government suits.

**April 18, 2016:** What became known as the "Tax Day Flood" in Houston killed sixteen people and caused over \$1 billion in damages. That May, Mayor Sylvester Turner appointed Houston's first "flood czar," Stephen Costello, an engineer and former member of the Houston City Council.

**August 25-31, 2017:** Hurricane Harvey caused severe wind damage along the Texas coast and then spent several days pouring fifty-one inches of rain over Houston, killing at least eighty-eight people.

**August 30-September 16, 2017:** Hurricane Irma, a Category Five storm, traveled over islands in the Caribbean, through most of Florida, and up the East Coast. Of the 134 confirmed deaths because of it, 90 were in Florida, 4 in the US Virgin Islands, and 3 in Puerto Rico.

**September 18-October 3, 2017:** Hurricane Maria, with winds up to Category Five level, rampaged more Caribbean islands, especially Puerto Rico, already struggling from its inadequate colonized infrastructure, denial of democratic rights, and damage from Irma. President Trump ignored the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act which grants Puerto Ricans, as American citizens, the same right to aid from the US government as Texans or Floridians. The US Virgin Islands face similar problems.

**October 23, 2017:** While residents of Houston and the Gulf Coast were complaining about the slow response of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), most Puerto Ricans were still without electricity, safe water, cell phone service, or enough food. The official death rate was still 49, but there were rumors of hundreds of unidentified bodies and missing people.



## Critical Issues Impacting Black Immigrant Communities

---

### 1. Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

TPS redesignation deadlines for Sudan (September 3rd), South Sudan (September 3rd), and Haiti (November 23rd) are rapidly approaching, leaving over 50,000 nationals (combined) from these nations facing detention and removal. It is essential that TPS is preserved and re-designated as many TPS recipients have established communities while contributing to the economy and overall socio-cultural fabric of the nation.

- TPS Recipients by Nation of Origin<sup>1</sup>
  - Haiti - 58,706
  - Somalia - 497
  - Sudan - 1,039
  - South Sudan - 49

### 2. DACA and The DREAM Act

On September 5th, DACA was rescinded. DACA recipients will be given six months until all benefits associated with DACA are cancelled. DHS is swinging this fight over to Congress as they have been charged to find appropriate legislative solutions. Congress needs to do everything in their power to defend DACA, including by supporting the bipartisan DREAM Act.

### 2. Refugee Resettlement

Between now and the end of September, the administration must consult with Congress to determine how many refugees to resettle in Fiscal Year 2018. Congress needs to protect funding for refugee assistance abroad and resettlement in the U.S., and urge the Trump administration to resettle at least 75,000 refugees.

- The U.S. admitted 84,995 refugees in the fiscal year ending in September 2016<sup>2</sup>. 32% of refugees<sup>3</sup> came from the African nations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Eritrea.
  - The highest number of refugees came from the Democratic Republic of Congo (16,370 refugees).
  - 9,020 refugees came from Somalia.
  - 1,949 refugees came from Eritrea.

### 3. Cut Funding for Deportations, Detention and Border Militarization

Trump has asked Congress for more than \$4.5 billion to increase deportations, detention, and border militarization. It is essential that Congress reject these requests and reduce funding for deportations, detention and border militarization, which are destroying our communities.

### 4. Rejecting the anti-family, anti-refugee, anti-immigrant legislation (i.e. RAISE Act, SAFE Act for America Act)

Congress must reject anti-family, anti-refugee, and anti-immigrant bills.

- BAJI's State of Black Immigrants Report shows that 69% of Black immigrants<sup>4</sup> enter the US via a family or diversity visa

---

<sup>1</sup> DHS to end protections for Sudanese immigrants

<http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/18/politics/sudan-tps-decision-dhs/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center: Key facts about refugees to the U.S.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/30/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>

<sup>3</sup> Migration Policy Institute: Refugees and Asylees in the United States

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugees-and-asylees-united-states>

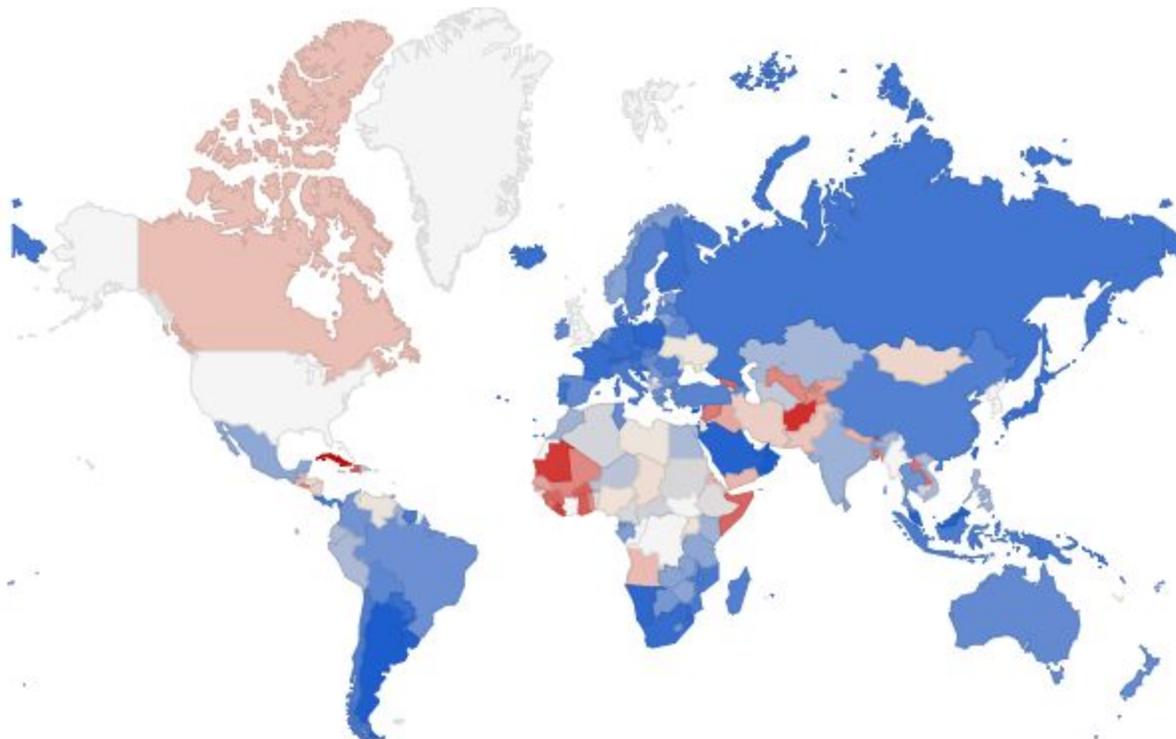
<sup>4</sup> Black Alliance for Just Immigration: State of Black Immigrants Report [www.stateofblackimmigrants.com](http://www.stateofblackimmigrants.com)

## 5. Visa Sanctions against Eritrea, Guinea, Sierra Leone.

The Department of Homeland Security's decision to implement visa sanctions on Eritrea, Guinea, and Sierra Leone is in line with historical and contemporary bias against African nationals. As of FY 2016, African immigrants accounted for 5% of non-immigrant visas issuance<sup>5</sup>. Within the same fiscal year, 64% of Guineans, 61% of Sierra Leoneans, and 50% of Eritreans were refused B Visas. Furthermore, among the top 30 countries of which nationals were refused B Visas, 15 were African nations<sup>6</sup>.

- We are calling on all elected officials to stand in solidarity with Black immigrants and denounce these sanctions.

**Geo Map of B Visa Refusal Rates, FY 2016**



*Note: Red indicates the highest refusal rates*

---

<sup>5</sup> U.S. State Department, Nonimmigrant Visa Issuances by Applicants' Nationality Regional Breakdown (Fiscal Year 2016)

<https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Statistics/Graphs/NIV%20Issuances%20-%20Regional%20Breakdown.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. State Department, Adjusted Refusal Rate (B-Visas Only) by Nationality, Fiscal Year 2016

<https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Statistics/Non-Immigrant-Statistics/RefusalRates/FY16.pdf>

## HISTORY OF RIGHT-TO-WORK LAWS AND OPPOSITION TO THEM

**1936:** Vance Muse, a Texas oil and lumber industry lobbyist, founded the Christian American Association and claimed that the growth of unions in the South would force white women and men “into organizations with black African apes whom they will have to call ‘brother’ or lose their jobs.” He was the first to call for the “Right to Work,” meaning workers would not have to pay fees for the hard work of union activists.

**November 1944-April 1947:** Led by the Christian American Association and similar organizations, the following states passed either state laws or constitutional amendments that limit the right of workers to organize (right-to-work laws) **before** the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act: Arkansas and Florida in 1944; Arizona and Nebraska in 1946, and Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, and Iowa in 1947.

**1946:** The Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.) created Operation Dixie to organize into unions a million southern workers within one year. They failed, in part because the CIO was not racially segregated

**June 23, 1947:** An alliance between northern Republicans and southern Democrats in Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act (Labor-Management Relations Act) by overriding the veto of it by President Harry Truman. The law limits many of the organizing rights of workers, including the ability to carry out wildcat strikes, secondary and mass picketing, and solidarity or political strikes. The executive branch of the federal government was given the power to obtain legal strikebreaking injunctions (court orders to stop striking) if they can claim they are protecting national health or safety. Section 14(b) allows states to pass laws (“right-to-work laws”) which prevent unions and employers from agreeing to charge a fee to be paid to the union by workers who benefit from the work done by the union but choose not to join it.

**July 1947-1985:** The following states passed either state laws or constitutional amendments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century limiting the right of workers to organize (right-to-work laws) after the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act: South Dakota and Texas in 1947; North Dakota in 1948; Nevada in 1952; Mississippi and South Carolina in 1954; Utah in 1955; Kansas in 1958; Wyoming in 1963; Louisiana in 1976; and Idaho in 1985.

**1954:** The percentage of American workers in trade unions peaked at almost 35%.

**January 1955:** The National Right to Work Committee was established to support Right to Work laws. One of the founders was E. S. Dillard, a Charlotte business leader. Supporters over the years have included the John Birch Society and members of the Koch family.

**1961:** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “We must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as ‘right to work.’ ...It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights....Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone.”

**1965:** A Senate filibuster prevented the passage of HR 77, which would have repealed Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act, even though President Lyndon Johnson supported it and the House had already passed it.

**2001-2017:** Recent state right-to-work laws: Oklahoma (2001), Indiana (2012), Michigan (2013), Wisconsin (2015), West Virginia (2016), and Kentucky and Missouri (2017).

**February 1, 2017:** Republican Representatives Joe Wilson (South Carolina) and Steve King (Iowa) sponsored HR 785, a national “Right to Work Law” with Trump’s support.