

**#SOUTHERN
PEOPLES
POWER**

SOUTHERN MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY

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ACTION PACKET 2016

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Invitation to SMA VI & the Peoples 100 Day Countdown

WHAT is the Southern Movement Assembly?

The Southern Movement Assembly is an organizing strategy for community and movement governance. The assembly brings people together to determine shared action plans on multiple frontlines.

The Southern Movement Assembly is the architecture that supports a broad base of Southern leaders and communities to exercise political power at the community, city, state, and regional levels. Five regional assemblies have been organized since the first SMA in Lowndes County, Alabama in 2012. Assemblies are anchored by local leadership and connect frontline communities to the Southern Freedom Movement of the 21st century.

Core Strategies:

- Organize to grow our numbers & leadership
- Create & practice liberatory education
- Create new communication infrastructure
- Facilitate community, local, and thematic assemblies
- Build & cross-pollinate for greater impact
- Increase capacity for collaborative rapid response to crisis and opportunity

Fundamental values:

COLLABORATION – We are stronger together than we are separate.

CONVERGENCE – We fortify our movements by gathering, sharing, learning.

SELF-DETERMINATION – We honor the autonomy of local leadership & organizations.

INNOVATION – We learn from history and we take risks.

DECENTRALIZED COORDINATION – We reflect bottom-up movement building.

WHO is the Southern Movement Assembly?

Anchor Organizations participate on the Governance Council after working a full cycle (which includes participating in a seasonal organizing drive and an SMA). Participating organizations are aligned with the Principles and participate at varying levels.

Alternate ROOTS, Atlanta GA – Is a regionally-based arts and cultural organizing group that supports artists in the South who work directly with community members to enhance organizing efforts. Coordinates annual retreats for over 500 artists and community workers to share and develop their work.

Black Workers for Justice, Raleigh NC - Organizes to build the strength and leadership of Black workers in the labor movement and the Southern Freedom movement. An anchor organization of the Southern Workers Assembly, BWFJ organizes against race and gender discrimination in the workplace and for self-determination of all working and oppressed people.

Crescent City Media Group, New Orleans LA - Organizes with young people to teach video advocacy and filmmaking skills. Produces community education videos to support movement work across the Challenges re-districting and the de-population patterns that have decimated the culture and people of the Gulf Coast since 2005.

Concerned Citizens for Justice, Chattanooga TN - Organizes families to change law enforcement policies that affect low income and working class people. A new generation re-vitalized the organization after the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012. The group is actively involved in the city's decision-making, the Civilian Review Board, and development of policy solutions based in the experiences and wisdom of the people affected.

Georgia Citizens' Coalition on Hunger, Georgia Statewide - Organizes unemployed people to develop income alternatives, cultivate urban farm projects, and challenge voter suppression. The Coalition provides over 5,000 families with food and basic need assistance annually, and the Georgia Human Rights Unions has initiated a Jobs Campaign to generate employment trainings and opportunities in South Atlanta.

Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, Gulf South Region - Challenges re-districting that further displaces voters from the gulf region. Provides legal advocacy to the growing population of immigrants in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, as well as those affected by the last seven years of eco-disasters. The center won over \$1 million in community claims resulting from the BP oil spill.

National Council of Elders, Southern regional – Is an organized group of movement veterans who work to support emerging leaders. They create intergenerational spaces to connect the lessons of the 20th century movements to today's political moment.

New Jim Crow Movement, Jacksonville Florida - Supports families affected by the incarceration and criminal justice system through grassroots organizing and legal advocacy. NJCM won a victory in 2015 that reversed the guilty verdict of Marissa Alexander, a domestic violence survivor who was sentenced 20 years for firing a warning shot against her abuser, though no one was injured.

Project South, Atlanta & Regional - Organizes with Black youth in Atlanta to advance the National Student Bill of Rights through youth-led actions and voting. Project South develops and provides comprehensive political educational tools to organizations, schools, and programs around the country. Regionally, Project South provides strategic coordination to Southern-wide organizing and acts as facilitative anchor to the Southern Movement Assembly.

Southwest Workers' Union, San Antonio, Texas - Organizes public and domestic workers, youth, and immigrants to challenge environmental injustices and develop community-based solutions. SWU supports community-based agriculture and collaborates on regional and national campaigns.

SpiritHouse, Durham, North Carolina - Cultural arts and organizing organization working with low-wealth families and community members to uncover and uproot the systemic barriers that prevent people from gaining the resources, leverage, and capacity for long-term self-sufficiency.

The Ordinary Peoples Society, Dothan, Alabama - Organizes across Alabama with formerly incarcerated people, families, and young people to challenge disproportionate sentencing and to ensure fair voting practices. TOPS provides over 300 meals a day to families living in poverty, provides re-entry support for men and women getting out of prison, and intervenes on police violence with transformative solutions combined with legal advocacy. Won major statewide voting rights in 2016 for formerly incarcerated people.

University Sin Fronteras, Atlanta, San Antonio, & Detroit - Facilitates courses for community members on nine anchor campuses Political education is practiced as a vehicle for social movement development. Emancipatory education is informed by the wisdom of our communities to which we are accountable and ensures continuity of histories, cultural traditions and legacies.

Women Watch Afrika, Clarkston Georgia - Organizes African immigrants to navigate legal and social services. Coordinates and facilitates community assemblies and spaces with youth, elders, and Latino immigrants to bridge cultural divides and advocate for progressive immigration reforms across the South.

HOW do we work together?

Southern Movement Assembly Principles of Unity

The principles that connect the members of the Southern Movement Assembly reflect many years of organizational partnerships and a synthesis of ideas based in collective practice and historical example. The principles serve to name who we are, what we believe, and our purpose for working together to regenerate and advance the Southern Freedom Movement in the 21st Century. Affirming these principles affirms the foundational belief that we are stronger together, and we do not want to do this alone. To work and be together is a political decision; we are not doing it for either comfort or practicality. These principles should be evaluated and evolved periodically as the Assembly shifts to meet the moment.

1. We believe remembering and regenerating our movement history is critical. We recognize the long-term legacies and the most recent work that led to this moment.
2. We value and practice transparency. We strive to distinguish between perception and reality.
3. We respect and support locally-based leadership. Place & space matter, and we recognize the unique histories of the South and local sites.
4. We create spaces to assemble so that people can voice our truths and bring our whole selves. We stand against criminalizing our people in any way.
5. We recognize and respect the self-determination of each organization and strive to engage in principled dialogue when disagreement or conflict is a barrier to collective action.
6. We believe political direction is determined by big picture analysis grounded in struggle to dismantle white supremacy, economic exploitation, and colonialism while simultaneously building decolonization processes for liberation of all people.
7. We believe no one should be excluded from any form of governance that makes decisions about their lives.
8. We believe in and respect the diversity of tactics and strategies as we are working for liberation. We believe there are many ways to do this work. We respect the different organizing choices and traditions of our member organizations.
9. We recognize and value the skills, contributions, and resources that each community, individual and organization brings and will prioritize Collective Accessibility in how and where we assemble and share information. We commit to maximizing those contributions for our collective goals.
10. We will defend the ground we have gained through struggle, and we will create and practice new forms of participation and governance that include and serve all of us.

WHAT ARE the Southern Peoples Initiatives?

in-i-ti-a-tive :

1. the ability to assess & initiate things independently
2. the power or opportunity to act or take charge before others do
3. an act or strategy intended to resolve a difficulty or improve a situation; a fresh approach
4. the right of people outside the government to originate legislation

*The Southern Peoples Initiatives (SPI) is the shared work of the SMA launched on MLK Day 2015. The SPI is a synthesis of the commitments and political direction generated during the Southern Movement Assemblies IV & V. **Over 60 organizations and 170 members across 13 states of the South have signed on to the Southern Peoples Initiatives three-prong strategy to develop a new social economy, support a functional peoples democracy, and protect & defend our communities from violence.***

MAY 1st INITIATIVE FOR A NEW SOCIAL ECONOMY

By building power that can overturn the economic injustices in our communities, the Southern Movement Assembly is rewriting the narrative on labor organizing, workers' rights, migration rights, wages, and working conditions. We recognize slavery as the institution that generated the Southern political economy and codified the ongoing dehumanization and exploitation of indigenous, Black, migrant, and other exploited workers. The Southern Movement Assembly is developing a just transition from extractive and exploitative economics to a new social economy by practicing inclusive economic alternatives such as cooperatives, community-controlled funds, food sovereignty and community-based agriculture; organizing to connect climate displacement and labor; and carrying out education that generates the knowledge and strategies needed to decolonize the existing economy.

PEOPLES DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE FOR POWER

Democracy in the United States has always been a contested project. As civic infrastructure is systematically dismantled and more people are prevented from participating in the official political process, the Southern Movement Assembly is creating grassroots democratic spaces and community governance. In a tumultuous national election year, there are unique opportunities to develop and amplify a people's political agenda built through inclusive processes. Our organizations challenge legal barriers to political participation, expand civic engagement beyond the vote, and carry out voter education and mobilization campaigns in the most marginalized communities. Local and regional Peoples Movement Assemblies will prepare us to deepen our public and civic engagement year-round and to face the existing crises while also creating new ways to live together, now and in the future.

PROTECT & DEFEND INITIATIVE TO END STATE VIOLENCE

State violence and racist brutality are foundational in the South, impacting our communities every day and requiring movement responses on multiple levels. The Southern Movement Assembly calls for coordinated community efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate state violence, including all forms of mass incarceration, social control, medical violence, and militarism. Community resistance begins with education that helps us understand the connections between state violence within the U.S. and world-wide violence fostered by globalization. This initiative coordinates our collective efforts through Harm-Free Zones that do not depend on state intervention and organized rapid response to disasters. We commit to developing community infrastructure that will enable us to work together in the face of large and small crises, to foster interdependence and self-determination in the face of multiple challenges, and to elevate the well-being of all.

HOW DO WE JOIN THE SMA?

Organizations, projects, or community groups sign on to the Southern Peoples Initiatives to coordinate our campaigns, learn from each other, and sharpen our collective impact. [Join the SMA by signing up HERE](#)

Organizations commit to be part of the Southern Movement Assembly and coordinate their existing work to advance collective goals:

- Share & report your work during the Peoples 100 Day Countdown in order to build a collective story about Southern movement power
- Facilitate a Peoples Movement Assembly in your community or on your frontline. Prepare a Movement Briefing to bring to the SMA
- Prepare and send a delegation to SMA VI in Chattanooga, Tennessee on October 1-2 to represent for your community

The Southern Movement Assembly commit to support participating organizations to:

- Coordinate with you to advance the Southern Peoples Initiatives and support exchanges between communities
- Provide facilitative support for assemblies, organizing strategies, and communication plans in your community
- Resource & support to participate and represent at the SMA VI

WHAT IS A PEOPLES MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY?

- 1) PMA is a gathering of people to make decisions for collective action & power.
- 2) The PMA puts the trust and leadership in the people assembled to move forward and make decisions together. It's not about a single leader or a pre-determined goal.
- 3) The PMA is not neutral. The PMA is based in a clear, political analysis that considers the history of place and people, the current conditions, the lived experience of the participants, and relationships of power.
- 4) The PMA is multi-ideological & creates space for multiple worldviews.
- 5) The PMA agenda begins with a process to surface the ideas that people have about the problems they face. Throughout the process, the group discusses and agrees on visions or ideas about the short-term and long-term solutions to those problems. The PMA closes with collective agreement for next action steps that the assembled people are willing to work on together.
- 6) The PMA requires leadership from the people who are facing the effects of oppression and who are engaged on the frontlines of struggle.
- 7) The PMA is based in the capacity and political will of the anchors that organize and create the space. Anchors, as groups or organizations, accept the responsibility of coordinating or moving the collective agreements forward into action.
- 8) The PMA reflects the culture and practices of the participants and organizers. Place and space matters, and local leadership is centered. The PMA includes attention to food, culture, music, physical set-up, opportunities to interact, how children are engaged, how bodies move through the space, and ceremony.
- 9) The PMA is an ongoing process that does not start or end. The Before, During, After cycle reflects the purpose and organizing process of the PMA. Preparation, facilitation, participation, reflection, and follow-up are critical to advancing from one stage of development to the next. As each PMA is organized, it should build on the previous lessons and gains.
- 10) Synthesis is the decision-making process of the PMA. Synthesis requires rigorous attention to all the information that emerges from an Assembly. Synthesis is the new knowledge that is produced at the Assembly and applied in shared action plans to move towards the visions of the groups assembled.

[DOWNLOAD the full, updated Peoples Movement Assembly Organizing Handbook HERE](#)

ROADMAP to SMA VI in CHATTANOOGA TN

Before SMA VI

- **Peoples 100 Day Countdown** (August 1 – November 8) coordinates SMA members' actions, assemblies, education, and communication work to show collective movement power.
- **ASSEMBLIES: August & September** Communities and organizations hold Peoples Movement Assemblies to prepare **Movement Briefings** about what is happening in your community, what your vision looks like for a new social economy, peoples democracy, and/or safe community, and recommendations for how to build it. [See Calendar HERE](#)
- **SMA FACILITATION TRAINING:** Governance Council holds a SMA Facilitation training on Labor Day weekend, September 2-3.

During SMA VI

- **PARTICIPATION:** Delegations from all over the South attend SMA VI in Chattanooga TN on October 1-2 and are prepared to present their **Movement Briefings** and make recommendations for action plans.
- **DETERMINE SHARED AGENDA:** SMA is facilitated to consolidate Movement Briefings, synthesize new knowledge, and develop overall **Southern Movement Blueprint** for 2017.

After SMA VI

- **SYNTHESIS:** A Team of Governance Council members, SPI Organizing Team members, and SMA participants synthesize the content of SMA VI to produce a **Southern Movement Blueprint** for 2017.
- **COORDINATED ACTION:** Launch the Blueprint after the Elections.
- **IMPLEMENTATION:** SMA organizations implement the plan in local sites with regional coordination.

PEOPLES MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY ORGANIZING WORKSHEET

Organizing a PMA to build a plan of action in a time of crisis
and prepare for the Southern Movement Assembly VI

Your PMA Name: _____

NAME YOUR GOALS:

Organizing Goals: How many people do you want to be there? How will they find out about it?

Assembly Goals: What do you hope to accomplish? What action steps can people take after the Assembly?

Consider: What is happening in this political moment in your community? What are people concerned about? What do you need to remember about history, root cause analysis, and political context? What visions for change already exist?

CONFIRM YOUR LOGISTICS:

WHERE will it happen?

WHAT DAY?

WHAT TIME?

WHAT IS NEEDED re: SUPPLIES, FOOD, CHILDCARE?

SET YOUR AGENDA:

- I. Welcome & Purpose
- II. Set your agreements
 - *EX: the SMA Principles of Unity / Basic Guidelines*
- III. Describe the Problem(s)
 - *EX: Name the political moment / Share a Landscape Analysis / Speakers present on conditions*
- IV. Discuss Visions, Solutions, & Strategies
 - *EX: Use guiding questions about a New Social Economy, a Peoples Democracy, and/or Safe & Protected Communities that lead to visions for your particular community, frontline battle, or organization*
- V. Reportback & Synthesize
 - *EX: This is who we are; this is what we want; this is how we will achieve it in our community*
- VI. Commitments to Action
 - *EX: Registering for the SMA VI / synthesizing the notes to create the Movement Briefing*

Prepare your MOVEMENT BRIEFING for SMA VI

Delegations will bring 1-2 page briefings to SMA VI that lay out the political conditions in your community, the analysis generated by your assembly, and recommendations for action.

Movement Briefing

Who attended the Assembly and what are they concerned about?

Example: The PMA brought together 30 people who live in Gulf Coast communities affected by extractive industries and who are concerned about the toxics that are killing them, the police who are killing them, and how they will create employment and affordable housing.

What is the shared analysis of the problems?

Example: The PMA participants discussed the root causes of the problems, addressed how they intersected, and named the assets in their community to address the problems.

What are the recommendations for change that advance a new social economy, a people's democracy, and/or a safe & protected community?

Example: The PMA participants discussed how to protect their community from harm, how to address the lack of police & corporate accountability through community oversight, and committed to the following steps . . .

SOUTHERN PEOPLES INITIATIVES

A plan of action in a time of crisis

Enough is Enough

May 1st Initiative for a New Social Economy

Organizing to build plans that implement Just Transitions away from extractive and exploitative economics and towards new institutions that sustain and grow a people's economy

Peoples Democracy Initiative for Power

Challenging barriers to political participation, expanding civic engagement year-round beyond the vote, organizing voter education, and practicing local and neighborhood assemblies

Protect & Defend Initiative to End State Violence

Coordinating efforts to eliminate the crisis of violence in all its forms including mass incarceration, medical violence on our bodies, and military and police violence in our communities and globally

AUGUST 1 – NOVEMBER 8

PEOPLES 100 DAY COUNTDOWN

Community Assemblies will gather to strengthen our organizing efforts in each initiative and prepare Movement Briefings to collectively launch a Southern Movement Blueprint for 2017

OCTOBER 1-2

SOUTHERN MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY VI

Join Southern organizers & community leaders in **Chattanooga, Tennessee** to collaborate towards a shared vision & plan of action for the Southern Freedom Movement in the 21st century

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