WE ARE BUILDING A NEW SOCIAL ECONOMY.

WE ARE PRACTICING A PEOPLE’S DEMOCRACY.

WE ARE PROTECTING & DEFENDING OUR COMMUNITIES.
SYNTHESIS & ACTION PLAN

The Southern Movement Assembly practices synthesis as a form of collective decision-making. This document reflects over six years of work, organizing, and peoples movement assemblies that have gathered over 700 Southern community members to name what is happening, cultivate visionary solutions, and plan coordinated actions across the region. We released the Southern Movement Blueprint in 2016 to lay out our visions of a new social economy, a people’s democracy, and the protection and defense of our communities. This document represents the growth and evolution of the Blueprint into a concrete plan of action to exercise our power.

WHO ARE WE? The Southern Movement Assembly represents Black, Latino, indigenous, Muslim, queer, and working class people living in rural counties, urban cities, Gulf Coast wetlands, Blackbelt farm lands, and Appalachian hollers. We represent organizers, workers, students, artists, lawyers, and leaders working on every frontline of injustice to grow #SouthernPeoplesPower from the bottom up.

BACKGROUND: Since 2012, community leaders in the U.S. South have gathered at seven Southern Movement Assemblies in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, and North Carolina. At each assembly, people discuss the pressing issues of our time, develop bold visions for change, and commit to action steps to build power. Over a thousand participants from 150 different organizations have participated in the Southern Movement Assembly from 13 states in the U.S. South, Puerto Rico, and Up South cities.

Southern Movement Assembly Anchor Organizations:
Alternate ROOTS, Regional
Black Belt Citizens, AL
Black Workers for Justice, NC
Crescent City Media Group, LA
Concerned Citizens for Justice, TN
Georgia Citizens’ Coalition on Hunger, GA
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, LA & Regional
Highlander Research & Education Center, TN & Regional
Hondo Empowerment Center, TX
National Council of Elders, Southern region
National Nurses Union/Organizing Committee, national
Project South, GA & Regional
SpiritHouse, NC
STAY (Stay Together Appalachian Youth), Appalachia
TOPS (The Ordinary People Society), AL
University Sin Fronteras, multi-site campuses
Women Watch Afrika, GA
GATHERING ON SACRED GROUND
ROOTED IN PLACE & SPACE

The Southern Movement Assembly operates within collective principles of unity, and one of our 10 principles includes deep respect for place and space as critical to our understanding of history, locally-based leadership, and the ground where we defend and build people’s power.

The seventh Southern Movement Assembly was organized on sacred ground in Nash County, North Carolina near Whitakers. The choice to facilitate the assembly at the Franklinton Center at Bricks was a strategic choice to continue the tradition of regenerating the Southern Freedom Movement on the reclaimed ground of people’s resistance to slavery and oppression. We gathered on the grounds of a former plantation that was used to break rebellious Black people and then reclaimed by the Black community to house a school, farms, and retreat space. The living legacy and history of the site immersed us in the necessity and possibility of transformation during our times of violence and extreme exploitation.

Naeema Muhammad of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network reminded us that North Carolina is home to the pork industry, 10 million hogs, 39,000 workers, and the world’s largest slaughterhouse that pollutes waterways, creates health crises, and is exponentially worse during any kind of climate crisis. The 30-year battle with Smithfield has built a powerful community response to environmental and social injustice.

We gathered on this ground as an active expression of building a new economy, practicing a people’s democracy, and protecting our communities.

We raised and contributed resources to support Bricks as a space that holds ground, recognizes history, grows food, and provides sanctuary. We healed by walking the land and connecting with the history. We broke bread together with life-affirming soul food cooked with love and family. We reinvigorated and renewed our commitments to building a Southern Freedom Movement strong enough to contend with the most harmful and exploitative realities of our time.

“We were living part of our ancestors’ vision in the spirit of Harriet Tubman’s declaration, ‘My people are free.’ We were able to sow seeds at Bricks, walk in a level of democracy, exercise our ability to protect and defend our people, and create that Southern Movement Village we envisioned.”

Nikki Brown, SpiritHouse, North Carolina
SpiritHouse Co-Director Mya Hunter built an installation on the grounds of the Southern Movement Assembly to connect the memory of our legacies to the place and space of Bricks. All photos credited to Jared Story of Concerned Citizens for Justice in Chattanooga, TN.
A NEW ERA OF OPPRESSION, DISASTER & VIOLENCE
LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF WHAT OUR COMMUNITIES FACE EVERY DAY

“We are living in a war zone.”
Aysja Pryor, Concerned Citizens for Justice, Tennessee

A fundamental component of the Peoples Movement Assembly is to name and analyze the conditions in which our communities live. Seven Frontline Assemblies were organized to discuss the current realities and consider new visions for action during this time of crisis, confusion, and division.

Existing forms of democracy are threatened by voter suppression, the re-segregation and privatization of schools, lack of civic understanding, and investment in harmful policies rather than people-centered policies. States, the federal administration, and the Supreme Court have shut down democratic mechanisms through voter suppression, voter prevention, and misinformation. 2020 will represent the first census after the dismantling of the Voting Rights Act. Public infrastructure, in the form of services, education, transportation, housing, and public space, has been systematically destroyed and narrowed. At a time when only 7% of workers in the South are organized into unions or autonomous workplace organizations, old abuses remain while new challenges emerge, including the vulnerabilities of a generation surviving off the gig economy and a global financial system driven by debt.

Corporate and privatized land ownership decreases access to quality food and economic self-determination and increases toxicity in our bodies and relationships. Climate disasters that include extreme weather, extractive industries, and dismantling of public infrastructure, ravage our communities with heightened frequency, and the wreckage is exploited by state and capitalist opportunism. The dismantling of basic public infrastructure, like 9-1-1 response and protection of public lands, leaves a vacuum filled by white supremacist militias. We are witnessing a dramatic rise in racist violence during the Trump Administration and experiencing increased state repression against Black, Brown, Muslim, immigrant, women, youth, and LGBTQ folks.

Displacement and the criminalization of poverty, youth, immigration, gender, and people of color has given rise to a disastrous expansion in prisons, social control, violence, policing, and deportation.

With the increase in military spending, surveillance and counter-movement repression is on the rise. Young people have identified the failures within schools that range from lack of relevant resources and curriculum to authorities’ sexual and physical brutality that endanger students’ well-being. The migrant and refugee crisis across the globe is rooted in colonial borders and exacerbated by economic, social, and climate violence.

All kinds of people are organizing to exercise power on these frontlines, and they are making the connections between them. We recognize that our battles can no longer be limited to single issues and that our vision for systemic change reaches beyond simply reforming the current system.
GROWING & EXERCISING POWER
OUR PEOPLES VISION

“We will be living in freedom, not just trying to survive.”
Reynaldo Padilla, University Sin Fronteras, Puerto Rico

Our shared vision for the work of 2018 is to exercise people’s power at all levels, from grassroots organizing to launching economic projects to growing harm-free zones to coordinating regional civic strategies. We recognize that it was the people themselves who were the first-responders after extreme weather devastated Texas and Puerto Rico in the fall, who have resisted the state repression of the Trump administration, and who have developed our own forms of media. We recognize that people are rising up and demanding political education, opportunities to act, and places to build. We are committed to building an intersectional movement that brings together Black, Brown, Muslim, women, workers, LGBTQ, rural, and youth communities in order to change the balance of power.

The Southern Movement Blueprint developed at SMA VI in 2016 remains our framework, and in 2018 we will implement strategies to dismantle oppression and build liberation.

A strong social movement in this time of crisis requires offensive and defensive strategies. We must actively defend against all forms of poverty, violence, and repression while we also begin to practice new systems based in justice and equity. The Southern Movement Assembly is a vehicle to govern ourselves as we practice, assess, and evolve our work.
A constellation of Mutual Aid Liberation Centers provides sanctuary, resources, education, new economy projects, leadership development opportunities, and cooperative systems rooted in land and agroecology.

Peoples Movement Assemblies are organized as entry points for people to engage, learn, share, and determine solutions to immediate and long-term problems. These spaces are recognized as sites of governance and power that influence municipal, county, and state policies.

Civic action builds independent political power, grows people’s democracy, and implements local, statewide, and national electoral strategies that intervene on current trends and catalyze organized efforts to shift power within local judicial elections, agitate for workers’ rights, and engage the upcoming census.

The National Student Bill of Rights is honored and practiced in all institutions and educational spaces for youth leadership development. Youth-led centers and groups replace corporate-run boys and girls clubs and create opportunities for developing and practicing leadership skills.

Harm Free Zones restore intervention practices within communities to eliminate reliance on law enforcement and the state and to repair the damage of racism and oppression by developing the tools to confront and transform harm, violence, and conflict.

Crisis & Climate Disaster plans include strong community-based preparation plans, rapid response from geographic neighbors and professional sectors, resourced short-term recovery efforts, and long-term transformation that strengthen community power.

New Economy projects redefine work and workplace democracy, community-centered self-determination, land ownership, food production, and income generation.

Globally-connected communities learn from partners around the world, protect and defend immigrants, migrants, and refugees, and develop shared strategies to intervene on military, economic, and climate crises that exacerbate migration, war, and poverty.
Seven Frontline Assemblies converged at the seventh Southern Movement Assembly in 2017. Above: the Climate Disaster Frontline Assembly connected the recent hurricanes and aftermath in Puerto Rico and Texas to the long-time environmental racism of the hog fields in Eastern North Carolina. Below: Organizers at the Decarceration Assembly discuss Harm Free Zones and organizing to stop prison construction in Appalachia. All assemblies are facilitated by people who are directly affected by injustice and organizing to build power from the bottom up.
BUILD MUTUAL AID LIBERATION CENTERS

A source of movement power comes from holding land, buildings, and public space. Southern Movement Assembly members are building a constellation of physical and virtual centers that offer sanctuary, resources, and opportunities for local governance in rural and urban sites. Mutual Aid Centers can include radical libraries, healing and wellness spaces, disaster response centers, independent vendors, space for fundraising and developing shared funds (like community burial funds), gardens and food distribution sites, faith and spiritual practices, harm reduction supports, and skill banks/time banks.

- Convene a Mutual Aid Liberation Center team to establish shared political vision, practices, and strategies to implement centers in multiple communities.
- Produce Mutual Aid Liberation Center Toolkit that includes history, shared protocol & principles, and examples of how to build centers.
- Build out existing 4 centers in Atlanta GA, Chattanooga TN, Hondo TX, and Dothan AL and launch 3-5 more across the region.

ORGANIZE PEOPLES MOVEMENT ASSEMBLIES & INCREASE CIVIC ACTION

At a time when the existing mechanisms are designed to limit and prevent political participation, the Peoples Movement Assemblies (PMA) are open, welcoming spaces for all people to grow community governance and collective action. PMAs are organizing tools we use to activate frontlines and to build democratic power in local communities to make decisions. PMAs spark local action, govern Mutual Aid Liberation Centers, and culminate in strong representation at the next regional assembly. Assemblies are sites of community and frontline governance that support local and electoral strategies that support candidate accountability, increase civic action on particular frontlines, and generate platforms that influence existing policymakers.

- Map out community frontlines in South to develop Peoples Movement Assembly strategy that deepens governance and expands SMA representation.
- Create and facilitate a process for organizers to develop Before/During/After plans, access resources to jumpstart the work, and get direct support.
- Track and document trends of oppression and attacks from within the federal government and amplify strong movement positions through op-eds, narrative shift strategies, and direct action strategies.
- Develop and implement Southern Civic Action Strategy for Peoples Democracy to intervene in significant local and statewide primaries and 2018 midterm elections, particularly addressing criminal justice, judicial, and local seats, as well as the census process for 2020.

FACILITATE POLITICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH FOR MOVEMENT POWER

In order to grow a multiracial, multigenerational force in the South to wield power, social movements require strong political education rooted in history, experience, and analysis. The Southern Movement Assembly practices political education in multiple ways, and in 2018 we plan to develop historical timelines, organizing kits, and curriculum to support our shared work. SMA participants identified the need for Crisis Response Kits to contend with ICE raids, climate disaster, white supremacist militias, and state violence. A Political Education & Movement Research Work Team will coordinate efforts.
• Organize political education discussions for Monthly Calls connected to overall action plan.
• Produce online Crisis Response Kits that support organizing the Southern Peoples Initiative.
• Facilitate political education and skill-building capacity at multiple Organizing Intensives that support entry level and advanced learning opportunities across the region.

BUILD A COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

In the 21st century, forms of communication are evolving rapidly, and social movements require autonomous and independent mechanisms to communicate. Our communities also require open access to information, tools, and opportunities for engagement. We plan to build robust internal communication that connects active Southern Movement Assembly participants and communities through online directories, resource maps, and databases of organizing tools. We also plan, over time, to develop, produce, and distribute our own media through videos, articles, radio production, and online platforms.

• Update the southtosouth.org website as an entry point, connector, and resource directory.
• Create Southern Movement Media Hub to connect people to technological tools to track and respond to crisis; maps of organizations and resources; and archives of tools, curriculum, and media.
• Develop plan to visibilize and amplify the work of the Southern Movement Assembly and the narrative about the growing movement in the South.
• Produce and distribute regular communications through print, online, radio, and video formats.

During the Southern Movement Assembly 7, representatives from each Frontline Assembly participated in the Synthesis Assembly to begin the process of combining ideas, visions, and actions into a cohesive plan. Youth representatives from the National Student Bill of Rights Assembly shared visions for youth-led community spaces and learning exchanges across the South.
ACTION TIMELINE

SPRING 2018

ACTIVE MAPPING & RESEARCH
SMA members research local elections across the region, existing assets, and situational analysis

WORK TEAMS ACTIVATED
Teams of SMA members coordinate plans to build Mutual Aid Liberation Centers, support Communications, grow Resources, develop Political Education & Research, and advance the Action Plan

PUERTO RICO WORK EXCHANGE
SMA members work with University Sin Fronteras representatives in Puerto Rico to support New Economy efforts to rebuild after the storm

SUMMER 2018

#SOUTHERNPEOPLESPOWER TOUR
Multiple sites host Organizing Intensives for work exchanges & skill-sharing across region

PEOPLES MOVEMENT ASSEMBLIES
Local sites facilitate PMAs to create Community Accountability Platforms for 2018 midterm elections

TOOLKITS & POLITICAL EDUCATION DEVELOPED
Historical analysis, community practices, and curriculum is gathered and shared across the region based on the tours & exchanges

FALL 2018

PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL, REGIONAL, & NATIONAL CONVENINGS
Share Blueprint and Southern Movement Assembly strategies in social justice spaces around the country

PEOPLES MOVEMENT ASSEMBLIES
Local sites continue to facilitate PMAs to create Community Accountability Platforms for 2018 midterm elections & post-election actions

COORDINATED POST-ELECTION ACTIONS
Regardless of election outcomes, exercise movement power to implement shared visions (actions to be determined by PMAs)

2019

SOUTHERN MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY 8
Date & Location of the eighth regional assembly will be determined by strategic planning throughout 2018
YOU ARE ALREADY A PART OF THE SOUTHERN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

WHAT ROLE WILL YOU PLAY IN 2018?

Participate on a Work Team, join the Monthly Calls, organize a Peoples Movement Assembly, contribute your research and resources.

Visit WWW.SOUTHTOSOUTH.ORG for more information & resources

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