

## **The Power of the Polycentric: USSF3 3-year plan update**

4.19.14

### **Keeping in mind why USSF3?**

The US Social Forum has always been a tool for ongoing movement building in the US in deep relationship with global social struggles. In visioning what the 3-year process of the USSF3 can contribute to the long haul of building a transformative movement in the US, we offer these aspects of movement praxis: movement relationships, movement infrastructure and capacity, movement governance, movement political education, movement culture, and movement alignment and cohesion.

### **What do we mean by polycentric and how will we pull it off?**

The polycentric USSF3 in 2015 is embedded within the 3-year thread of movement building theory and practice. The vision of the polycentric USSF3 is three (or four) regional social forum sites (in Philadelphia, PA, Jackson, MS, and the western US). In all regional sites the social forum will reach out to and strive to include Indigenous peoples and struggles. These sites will sink deep roots in three US regions in support of USSF3 social movement goals and purpose. They will be nationally connected through the political framing and goals of the forum, ongoing work of the national process through working groups, communications and technology, Peoples Movement Assemblies (PMAs), Movement Schools, 2015 timing for some overlap among the sites, and motion toward the National PMA in 2016.

The polycentric forum will be infused with creativity and energy. We will forge political bonds through our common work and political commitment, building cohesion, but we will also make meaning and build political cohesion through our art, music, transformative healing. We understand how deeply culture moves us. Our music, art, spoken word, and connections to one another are the tangible glue that will run through the polycentric forum and will deepen our political connections, mutual respect and willingness to struggle through hard spaces together. Thus, the regional sites of the polycentric forum will be interconnected relationally, culturally, politically, organizationally, and concretely through overlap days during which technologically interactive plenaries or other programming will happen.

People will be encouraged to go to the social forum site in their region. And the national process will work with regional sites to further develop their contacts for building capacity and resources, including funding. Communication, information, and submissions for the three polycentric regional sites will be located on the USSF3 website, including distinct pages for each site, as needed. The overall coordination of the totality of the 3-year process will be held by the National Planning Committee (NPC), the Accountability and Coordination Team (ACT), and the national Working Groups and Committees, along with the National Coordinator. This is in collaboration with the regional Site Anchors and Local Organizing Committees (LOCs), who will also be in close relationship with each other through the national process.

The polycentric regional sites will use their history to lift up the key fronts of struggle in their regions, but will also be in ongoing relationship to articulate the national political thrust, vision and strategy to inform the arising motion in the interests of humanity and the planet. What is the economy we need? How will we realize political democracy? What is our relationship to the earth?

And what are our campaigns and long term movement strategies to realize our vision? Interwoven with the big struggles of economy, democracy, ecology is the fact that these struggles exist in the context of worldwide resistance to the deep rootedness of patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism, and global capitalism.

The overarching purpose of moving toward movement cohesion and political independence informs the entire 3-year social forum process. And is reflected in and infused within the regional sites in the polycentric process. The impulse toward political independence and self-determination for the people most oppressed, impoverished, and dispossessed finds expression in all three regional sites.

In Jackson the election of the late Mayor Chokwe Lumumba, as a Black revolutionary running as a Fannie Lou Hammer Democrat, is extremely significant for movement development in Jackson, the South, and the country. .... The Jackson Rising New Economies Conference ....

In Philadelphia, the strong Green Party presence and participation in elections (Cheri Honkala's run for Sheriff of Philadelphia on a platform to end evictions) and local organizing work brings an independent voice and presence to that region. ....

In the Bay area, confronting and resisting the Silicon Valley takeover of the region, are a multiplicity of forces including the Green Party Mayor of Richmond who is using eminent domain against banks and mortgage conglomerates to block housing foreclosures. ....

Each regional site will identify specific site goals and lift up the 4 or 5 most important struggles in their region to politically inform their PMA and USSF programming and movement building work.

Philadelphia has put forward poverty, immigration, disability, education, and political democracy as their key struggles. ...

Jackson .....

Western US ....

Peoples Movement Assemblies and Movement Schools are essential components of the 3-year USSF3 process. PMAs will be held in the regional sites to build a base for the polycentric social forum in 2015 and beyond. Movement Schools will be held for the leadership (anchors, LOCs, working group coordinators, others) holding each of the regional sites to deepen political analysis and movement cohesion.

### **Peoples Movement Assemblies for Strategic Direction – more detailing**

[See also: <http://www.ussocialforum.net/node/506> for *The People's Movement Assembly & the Southern Movement Assembly Rising: A conversation with Stephanie Guilloud & Emery Wright of Project South*]

To deepen the analysis, synthesis and movement alignment that the PMA process brings to the 3-year social forum process and to better prepare for the 2016 National PMA, the Outreach & PMA Working Group will facilitate these benchmarks:

- Coordination of periodic conference calls among PMA organizers to document and share political and organizational relationships, outcomes, campaigns, and strategies, best

practices and lessons learned, and paths toward movement cohesion connecting the 2014 PMAs to the 2015 USSF3, and the 2016 National PMA.

- Coordination of a PMA training for PMA organizers and anchors for the regional sites in the summer of 2014.
- Documentation for USSF Newsletter, website, and other of the Pacific/Northwest Social Forum & PMA process.

### **Movement Schools – more detailing**

Movement Schools (MS) are foundational for developing collective leadership for US movement forces in the social forum process and larger movement through political education and study, and for moving toward political clarity, unity and cohesion in the PMA process and broader social movement. Schools will be 1 to 2 days. The Outreach & PMA Working Group and Road Working Group & Site Team, in consultation with ACT and in collaboration with the sites where MSs will take place, will develop the curriculum. Movement Schools will be organized in the regional sites for anchors, LOCs, and others, and will be launched in the Summer 2014.

Movement Schools will focus on the following concepts:

1. political independence,
2. movement going from defensive to offensive,
3. how to work in the day to day reform struggle without it becoming reformism,
4. the revolutionary process and spontaneous/mass movement – and their interrelationship,
5. collective leadership
6. movement culture
7. movement governance

The purpose of Movement Schools

**(what Jerome & walda wrote)** ----- ROSE -- NEED TO MERGE THIS & WHAT YOU WROTE IN PLAN

1. see the context of the big picture
2. develop long term vision
3. develop political culture of study
4. develop leadership to keep the motion on track
5. develop deep understanding of the objective process of change and movement processes

**From Rose's section plan:**

- to convene movement leaders on critical fronts of struggle locally and/or regionally
- to go deep into our understanding of the current political moment, and to create a space for strategic and tactical movement analysis for the long haul
- to struggle for political clarity, direction, unity and cohesion within the USSF process and larger movement
- to discuss the revolutionary process and its relation to our day to day work
- to launch Summer 2014 training for movement governance, organizing and facilitation

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### **Big questions for USSF3 face-to-face**

- What is the role of technology and communications in the current movement moment?
- What is the role of money in the movement?

**Next step:** Write series of articles on the motion within the US social forum process and its relation to the larger movement and relation of forces over the next three years. For USSF Newsletter, website and mass movement distribution.