

US Social Forum 3 People's Movement Assembly (PMA)

.... Movement building, going from defensive to offensive

Goals

1. Discuss and model the People's Movement Assembly (PMA) process within the overarching USSF3 process
2. Use the PMA process to analyze, vision, and strategize movement building in the current moment
3. Encourage organizations /networks to apply to NPC and/or sign on as "allies, if appropriate
4. Build commitment to join USSF3 working groups, and to anchor and organize PMAs locally, regionally and /or thematically on the road to USSF3

Welcome & cultural opening

Agenda review & collective agreements

Introductions

Current moment and social struggle – where is our movement for transformative systemic change

We live in an urgent historical moment of crisis, danger, and opportunity. Of deep and irreversible crisis of global capitalism, of technological revolution with the accumulation of vast wealth along with economic dispossession and poverty among huge swaths of humanity, massive social and ecological destruction, intensifying state oppression that is especially racialized and gendered, and war and fascism everywhere. At the same time we are part of rising social struggles in the U.S. and globally in response to these objective conditions. The direction of this rising motion in the interests of humanity and the earth is critical.

- How do these realities shape our day-to-day struggles?
- How do they inform our task of building a broad inclusive strategic movement across our diversity of race/nationality, gender/sexuality, age and ability, across regions, fronts of struggle and nations for transformative systemic change for the long haul?
- How does the state, through existing laws and political structures work to prevent us from winning the transformation that we need?

Visioning movement – going from defensive to offensive

In the current context, USSF3 is a movement building tool. The process facilitates our movement going from defensive to offensive, to reorganize society to meet human needs and protect the earth, and to connect with global movement forces. It facilitates systemic analysis, visioning the world we need, developing political program and action agendas, and building political cohesion, alignment and independence for collective power from below to win it and hold it.

- How do we do revolutionary work within reform struggles without it becoming reformism?
- How do we relate to the electoral and policy processes of the state?
- What will it take to go from defensive to offensive within our movement work?

Collective program, action steps and movement coordination and governance

The PMA process is the leading edge of the USSF3 process – and is continuous before, during, and after. PMAs are foundational strategically to developing our political consciousness, revolutionary consciousness, to developing political content, and to our efforts to align the multiplicity of our programmatic demands, while charting an increasingly unified and independent political path forward. The methodology of the PMA includes these common elements: 1) political analysis of the current moment and the systemic root causes of our myriad problems, 2) visioning the world we are creating and specifying short-term, medium-term, and long-term programmatic demands to resolve these problems, and 3) putting forward related short, medium, and long-term collective actions, campaigns, and strategic movement agendas to transform society and protect the earth.

- Take action steps and concrete commitments for building the PMA & USSF3 as movement tools
- Consider movement coordination and governance, institutionalizing movement political education, including movement schools, anchoring and organizing the PMA process for USSF3

- Consider a process to rewrite the existing US Constitution so it no longer makes property rights more sacred than human rights, and instead guarantees human rights & facilitates genuine political & economic democracy

Another world is possible! Another U.S. is necessary! www.ussocialforum.net & www.peoplesmovementassembly.org

US Social Forum 3 – a social forum of a new type

The urgency of movement building in the current moment of crisis on the road to USSF 3

From defensive to offensive – declaring our vision and building collective power from below to win it

We live day to day in crisis and struggle. For the first time in history we are experiencing a rapidly deepening crisis of global capitalism and technological revolution affecting millions in the United States and billions world-wide – producing austerity policies and massive permanent unemployment and poverty, unimaginable climate, ecological and social destruction, and intensifying political attacks, state repression, and the threat of fascism and war everywhere. At the same time, resistance, activism and organizing are on the rise across all continents, sectors, and fronts of struggle.

This moment requires a huge and unified social movement in the U.S. with millions of politically conscious people to ensure victory for the arising social motion in the interests of the oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed – to protect the earth and affirm life. The US Social Forum is playing a role in pushing forward strategic US movement development through the dynamic interrelation of local and regional struggles, and the emergence of a national movement in relation to global movements. The US Social Forum process is striving to step up and take its place in history by advancing the interests of working class, low-income, and grassroots struggles – inclusive of our diversity across race, nationality, gender, sexuality, and ability. The moment is urgent and the opportunities are great.

To advance our struggle for shared understanding, political independence, political unity, and participation on the road to US movement building and USSF 3, we invite you to visit the USSF 3 website www.ussocialforum.net to read and discuss the US Social Forum political framing documents and the People's Movement Assembly (PMA) organizing kit. Join us in making it happen.

The Goals of USSF 3 – before, during and after

1. Create a space for social movement analysis, visioning, popular and political education, convergence, cohesion and strategic discussion.
2. Advance Peoples Movement Assemblies' agendas for ongoing action directed toward social transformation.
3. Build stronger relationships, collaboration, and social movements across fronts of struggle for political understanding, strategic direction, and a powerful political force.
4. Deepen our collaboration with global social movements and our practice of international solidarity and joint struggle.
5. Strengthen local capacity to improve social conditions and social struggle.
6. Model and practice our values and our vision of another world (e.g., celebration, caring, support of identity, cooperation, collectivity, justice, equality, democracy, and sustainability).

Short Overview of the People's Movement Assembly Process

Source: Adapted from PMA Working Group Organizing Kit, USSF Detroit, 2010

WHAT IS A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY?

A gathering of people to: 1. Collectively develop a political analysis of the current moment and the systemic root causes of our problems, 2. Come up with visions of the world we are creating and programmatic demands to resolve our problems (consider short, medium, and long-term demands if appropriate) and 3. Put forward and coordinate related collective actions, campaigns, and strategic movement agendas (consider short, medium, and long-term actions and agendas if appropriate). PMAs are foundational to accomplishing the US Social Forum strategic goal of moving toward political alignment and movement cohesion to transform society and protect the earth.

WHO PARTICIPATES?

Neighborhoods, Families, Community members, Organizations and their bases, Movement sectors & / or Geographic regions.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

People gather based on location (this can be local or regional), or an issue, theme, or front of struggle. Together, we discuss and analyze the current moment and its impact on issues in our communities. We develop visions and find creative solutions to our daily struggles. We make commitments to take action and to coordinate these actions. These commitments we put down in word, video, or theatre; we call them Resolutions. The PMA is for the people and by the people: everyone participates, and all voices are included. A PMA can be 2- 3 hours or a few days.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

To find creative solutions to the problems in our communities. To connect with other communities across the country – and the world – so that we can be a stronger force for change and more readily realize our visions for a better world!

WHAT'S THE HISTORY BEHIND PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT ASSEMBLIES?

The World Social Forum (WSF) originated in 2001 to provide an open space for all political forces involved in global social movements to gather. It was meant to be pluralistic and diverse. The idea and hope was that only *together* could we discuss alternative directions for our world and society. The Social Forum grew from 20,000 participants in the first forums to 200,000 in later forums. It has proved itself to be a powerful movement building tool. But what was missing was a plan for action. If we're going to leave the Social Forum with stronger dreams, visions and directions for our world, then shouldn't we also leave with stronger plans for action? This question led us to the Assembly process...

A number of community leaders came together and decided it was not enough to interpret the world, but it was also necessary to transform the world through collective action. From these discussions a 'social movements' assembly was added to the Social Forum. The Social Movements Assembly became an essential part of the WSF. The Global Action to Stop the Iraq War on February 15, 2003 mobilized millions and was the result of a direct call to action from the Assembly process at the 2002 WSF held in Brazil.

The US Social Forum (USSF) in 2007, inspired by the assemblies held at the WSF, organized the Peoples' Movement Assembly (PMA). Through the PMA process, we developed resolutions that called for large-scale action in this country. Over 50 groups presented Resolutions on the last day of the USSF. The PMA created spaces during the Social Forum that strengthened and broadened social justice movements across geographies, issues, and communities. But People's Movement Assemblies don't only happen at Social Forums. In fact, the assemblies that occurred in Detroit were all about creating stronger communities, regions and movement sectors to come to the US Social Forum prepared to share our dreams and collaborate on our plans for action. Over 50 assemblies were held in Detroit during the USSF in 2010.

HOW DO WE PUT ON A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY?

There is no one way to gather people, facilitate conversation, and come to clear resolutions. The PMA is open to many ways of engaging the organizations and movements that decide to participate. The Assembly process is stronger, however, when a diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations, and physical capacities participate. The PMA is a movement building and organizing tool, and is thus an interactive process that places at the center people who have been marginalized in our communities and across the globe. Creativity, innovation, and strong facilitation are essential to a successful PMA. We encourage people to use video, theater, poetry and any other creative method of communication. Get a copy of the PMA toolkit at <http://abc.ussf2010.org/assemblies>.

