US Social Forum III Political Framing Documents & Questions 4.22.13

The urgency of movement building in the current moment of crisis
.... On the Road to USSF III

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 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, 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 can play 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. The moment is urgent and the opportunities are great.

To advance our struggle for shared understanding, political unity, and participation on the road to US movement building and USSF III, we invite you to read and discuss the US Social Forum political framing documents in your organizations, networks, and collectives and to answer the questions below.

- USSF 2014 Goals
- Urgency Statement 2012
- We Believe Statement (2007, updated 2013)
- People’s Movement Assembly (PMA) Synthesis 2010
- World Social Forum Charter of Principles

Questions for collective and movement political discussion

1. What is the urgency of the current moment – economically, politically, and ecologically?
2. What is the state of the movement in the US? What is the dynamic interrelation of local struggles and the emergence of a national movement? How do movements develop?
3. How can our movement go from defensive struggles to the offensive? What would this look like day to day, connecting short term goals with long term goals and visions?

4. How can the WSF & US Social Forum be a movement building tool – concretely, developing strategy & organizational forms for moving forward the road to 2014-16 plan for organizing and politically framing the social forum process to advance US movement nationally, regionally and locally and in relation to global movements?
5. How can we adopt / adapt PMA methodology for outreach, organizing and popular/political education of CVS – consciousness, vision and strategy (and tactics) — for social forum process and road?
6. What does a social forum of a new type look like on the road, during the convergence, and moving forward from USSF III?
USSF3 Goals (updated 11.9.13)

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).

Urgency Statement 2012  10.28.12

The Urgency of the moment and the challenge to the US Social Forum process

It will take a huge social movement in the United States with millions of conscious people to ensure victory for the arising social motion in society in the interests of the oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed. Given this, what are the role, responsibility and accountability of the US Social Forum in pushing forward U.S. movement development in relation to global struggles in this urgent moment of deep systemic crisis?

The current moment

The objective situation in the U.S. and the world is a rapidly deepening and widening crisis of the entire global capitalist system. It’s evidenced by an irreversible economic crisis affecting millions in the U.S. and billions world-wide, producing massive poverty and irreversible ecological and social destruction, and heightening political attack, repression, war, and the threat of fascism the world over.

In 2001 the Patriot Act marked the beginning of this intensified period of domestic repression, linkage to the so-called “war on terrorism,” and the formation of the Department of Homeland Security. More recently the federal government has enacted HR 347 - criminalizing dissent, protest, and activism – and the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act), bringing militarism and preventive detention to the domestic front of our neighborhoods. The police state continues to fill the prisons with young African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, and the poor. This increasingly rapid economic and political polarization and motion toward fascism require a powerful movement response.

Movement development is thus an urgent task; and the US Social Forum, in relation to other forces in motion, can be a powerful tool in this process. If we do not act smartly and intentionally to build our movement, the crisis will only worsen - placing humanity and the planet in peril - and the threat of fascism will become a reality.

The urgency of movement building :: from spontaneity to consciousness

Resistance is on the rise across continents, sectors, and fronts of struggle. Spontaneous motion in response to the crisis is increasing in the U.S. and globally through mobilizations, campaigns, protests, and
occupations. But there is little conscious and strategic movement development within this growing activity. The US Social Forum process can and must add this element and help fill the vacuum by advancing the interests of working class, low-income, and grassroots struggles.

Critical moment - moving the US Social Forum process forward

The essential next step for the US Social Forum process, including the Peoples Movement Assembly, is to move forward with organizing a post-election national convergence in March 2013 as a strategic movement building opportunity.

To accomplish this, we have several immediate tasks:

• To organize the NPC to include forces in motion and social movement forces not already part of the US Social Forum process.
• To develop a tight timeline and work assignments for organizing the March 2013 Convening.
• To hold bi-weekly NPC expanded calls, with NPC organizations that engage and organizations, networks and coalitions that may want to join the NPC and/or the 2013 Convening process.
• To hold an NPC expanded face-to-face meeting in early November in Chicago.

The US Social Forum process needs to step up and take its place in history. The moment is urgent and the opportunities are great. Join us in organizing the Strategic Movement Convening in March 2013.

Make it happen!

Peoples’ Movement Assembly (PMA) Synthesis 2010 *

We can build a better world. Working together, we can create a world that respects the human rights of every human, nurtures creativity and health, promotes unity, solidarity and peace, and uses resources in a way that protects the earth and affirms life.

At this historical moment, there is a growing sense of overwhelming crisis. We recognize that the money and other resources that have been swallowed up by militarization must be redirected to solve human needs – to protect the basic human needs of food, shelter, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom from harm, and protection of Mother Earth, which nurtures and sustains all life.

We believe that we can create a new economic system. We can build an economic system that is not based in individual, corporate, or private ownership and does not exploit people, the planet, natural resources, or living beings but instead is based on principles of collectivity and sustains our communities. We must move aside old systems that have failed and create new ones that serve and are accountable to all people and all living beings.

We must link arms with our sisters and brothers globally. We must commit to a willingness to work together to seek understanding, to coordinate action, and to move forward with a sense of urgency to create a more just world. We acknowledge the need to break down barriers. We must integrate our national struggles for the human rights to dignity, welfare, freedom and justice.

Each one of us has to dig deeper to understand each other’s culture and history. We must build respectful relationships across difference. Our struggles and our goals are all connected to each other. Our fronts of
struggle and our goals are all on the same continuum. We have the desire and energy to create something different that sustains us. As a people, we must rely on each other. We can realize our dreams to treat each other as equals and to build alliances across our commonalities and differences.

We affirm self-determination and self-reliance. We believe that we can build our collective power through participation in popular political education and organizing collective action. We can each realize the power within each one of us and build collective power by participating in the fronts of struggle recognized through the Peoples Movement Assemblies. Let us unite and create a better world for all future living generations.

A better world is possible! Another U.S. is near…

* This statement represents the work of a Synthesis Assembly to craft a social movement agenda based on the work of over 50 assemblies held at the U.S. Social Forum in 2010. A Synthesis Commission made up of leaders from various movements (Marian Kramer, Rose Brewer, Suzanne Pharr, Manuel Pino, and Jacqui Patterson, facilitation by Dana Wright) wrote and read this declaration at the National Assembly.

**We Believe Statement (2007, updated 2013)**

We, the organizers of the first United States Social Forum:

- Believe that there is a strategic need to unite the struggles of oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed communities and peoples, classes, and genders within the United States (particularly Black, Latino, Asian/Pacific-Islander and Indigenous communities) to the struggles of marginalized, oppressed, and dispossessed peoples and classes around the world.

- Believe the USSF should place the highest priority on groups that are actually doing grassroots organizing with working-class people and people of color, who are training organizers, building long-term structures of resistance, and who can work well with other groups, seeing their participation in USSF as building the whole, not just their part of it.

- Believe the USSF must be a place where the voices of those who are most marginalized and oppressed from Indigenous communities can be heard--a place that will recognize Indigenous peoples, their issues and struggles.

- Believe the USSF must create space for the full and equal participation of undocumented migrants and their communities.

- Believe the USSF should link US-based youth organizers, activists, and cultural workers to the struggles of their brothers and sisters abroad, drawing common connections and exploring the deeper meanings of solidarity.

- Believe the USSF is important because we must have a clear and unified approach at dealing with social justice issues, and meaningful positions on global issues.

- Believe that a USSF sends a message to other people’s movements around the world that there is an active movement in the United States opposing U.S. policies at home and abroad.

- Believe that the USSF will help build national networks that will be better able to collaborate with international networks and movements.
We believe the USSF is more than an event. It is an ongoing process to contribute to strengthening the entire movement, bringing together the various sectors and issues that work for global justice.

**World Social Forum Charter of Principles 8.6.02**

The committee of Brazilian organizations that conceived of, and organized, the first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre from January 25th to 30th, 2001, after evaluating the results of that Forum and the expectations it raised, consider it necessary and legitimate to draw up a Charter of Principles to guide the continued pursuit of that initiative. While the principles contained in this Charter - to be respected by all those who wish to take part in the process and to organize new editions of the World Social Forum - are a consolidation of the decisions that presided over the holding of the Porto Alegre Forum and ensured its success, they extend the reach of those decisions and define orientations that flow from their logic.

1. The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.

2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that "another world is possible", it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.

3. The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension.

4. The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens - men and women - of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.

5. The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but it does not intend to be a body representing world civil society.

6. The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.
7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations that participate in the Forums meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, hierarchizing, censuring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.

8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. The World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection, on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that - in both public and private life - will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity.
