Highlander Workshop Develops New Tools for Understanding Race and Globalization

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Developing popular education tools that help communities talk about the intersection of race, migration and globalization is critically important, especially in the U.S. South. A predominantly Black and white region still unresolved around race, the South has experienced dramatic demographic change due to immigration in the past twenty years, contributing to cross-race tensions and challenges. In addition, what happens in the South, good or bad, affects the rest of the country and therefore the world. The Civil Rights Movement shook the racist underpinnings of U.S. society and led to public policy that made life better for everybody, including low-income and working-class whites.

A strong movement here made up of and led by African Americans and immigrants and refugees, a number of whom have experience in liberation movements in their home countries, has tremendous potential to move the whole country forward. But this can only happen if communities see the connection between the U.S South and the Global South, learn about each others’ countries and regions, as well as the histories and strategies of resistance, and are able to contextualize their experiences and understand that the problems that they face are rooted in systemic racism and economic exploitation, and that a key component of those systems is the divide and conquer strategy that pits their communities against one another.

On June 11-13, Highlander brought together a team of 16 African American, immigrant and refugee organizers, community leaders, popular educators, artists and cultural organizers to develop three educational tools that help people understand globalization and migration in the context of race. Last year, Highlander organized a delegation of 12 activists, popular educators and artists to attend the International Conference of Racism and Globalization, a gathering for people of color organized by Agricultural Missions and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund and held in Chicago. Highlander drew from this delegation, as well as participants from our Southern Strategy sessions, and our immigration, cultural organizing and youth work to bring together a race and globalization working group to develop these tools.

The working session participants were: Tomas Aguilar from Colectivo Flatlander, Austin, TX, Malik and Vassie Browne from Storytree, Etowah, AL Jona Kasoanga from Greensboro, NC, Roxanne Lawson from Washigton, DC, Ann Lennon from the American Friends Service Committee, Greensboro, NC, Ana Mercado, from Blocks Together, Chicago, Chioma Oruh from Washington, DC, Collin Rajah from the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Oakland, CA, Tonio Verzone, from Washington, DC, Attica Scott from Kentucky Jobs with Justice, 13 year old Advocate Scott from Louisville, KY, and Jamil Smith from the United Methodist Church, New York. The gathering was facilitated by staff members Tufara Waller Muhammad and Monica Hernandez and Board Chair Maurice Turner.

The group worked on developing three popular education tools that integrate art and culture as a way to bring communities together and to jumpstart a dialogue around race and globalization. They include:

- A series of 3 workshops on the impact of globalization on food sovereignty around the world
- An Interactive Listening Party to challenge individuals to envision themselves a global actors and activists making change and to help generate community discussion about how to frame their organizing work within the global level, while still being rooted at the community level
- A Race and Globalization Tribunal that uses art and culture in addition to traditional oral testimony to capture and tell the story of how the intersection of race and globalization has impacted a local community.

Although they are being developed as individual tools, communities will also be able to integrate the three tools to undertake a longer, more integral process by combining the three tools.
Over the next month and a half, the teams will be finalizing the three tools and will then test them in their communities. Participants will then share the results of the field testing and make any necessary revisions to the tools. The tools will be finalized and then made available through the Highlander website in late fall.

For more information, please contact Mónica Hernández at Hernandez at highlandercenter.org.

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