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RESIST



Building Movement and Finding Hope

Detroit welcomes more than 15,000 to US Social Forum

By Christy Pardew

At the end of June, downtown Detroit, Michigan was buzzing with energy. Grassroots organizers and activists from around the US and the world organized caravans, filled buses and hopped on airplanes to spend five days together sharing strategies, building community and planning future actions and campaigns. "Another world is possible. Another US is necessary. Another Detroit is happening," read the banners decorating Cobo Hall, Detroit's main convention center.

The more than 15,000 people who gathered for the US Social Forum represented a colorful cross section of movements for social change. There were youth organizers, disability activists and movement theorists. Union members, environmental justice activists and educators. Antiwar protestors, queer community builders and people working for immigrant rights. Children, youth, elders and many people in between.

In many ways, Detroit represents the potential future of many communities as we move into a post-industrial United States, and, in this sense, the city served as a powerful setting for the forum. Long suffering the effects of deindustrialization, high unemployment and industrial pollution, Detroit's other history is one of social movements creating alternatives to capitalism and its failures. Grace Lee Boggs, the longtime Detroit community organizer who celebrated her 95th birth-



Photo courtesy of USSE, www.flickr.com/photos/ussocialforum

Over 15,000 people came together in Detroit, Michigan in June for the second US Social Forum. Described as a "movement building process" and not a conference, the forum created many spaces for dialogue, strategy sharing and idea exchange. Thousands took part in the opening march, above.

day during the forum, welcomed us to her community during a panel presentation.

"Revolution is also evolution," said Boggs. "What we're talking about is uncertainty; revolution is a new beginning. But in uncertainty there is hope."

A number of RESIST Board and staff members participated in the forum, where we had the rare chance to meet in person many of our grantees who organize in communities very far from our base in Boston, Massachusetts.

Perhaps the best thing the forum had to offer its thousands of participants was

the space for people who are located in different regions but are linked by common problems to come together and share ideas, strategies and solidarity.

Only time will tell whether the 2010 US Social Forum has done its job of acting as a catalyst for movement building. But as global communities look toward the next World Social Forum, to be held in Senegal in January, we know that here in the US, change is happening, as movements for justice foster an evolution towards revolution.

Christy Pardew is the RESIST Newsletter editor.

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Accelerated Movement Building in Detroit

People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources & ecological justice

By Carmen Llanes

On Wednesday, June 23, I marched, danced and cheered alongside thousands of organizers, activists and ordinary people who care about progress in the United States. It was the kickoff of the US Social Forum. Hundreds of organizations and coalitions from across the country were represented. Over 1,000 workshops were held. And countless other activities kept our attention at all times.

I came representing PODER, an environmental and social justice organization in Austin, Texas. While the rest of PODER staff supported my decision to go, there was no funding to send me, and we were too short of time and money to organize a caravan or lead workshops. The reality was that my ability to participate hinged on the fact that several Austin folks had

decided to drive to Detroit, and with some last-minute planning and shared expenses, I was able to budget the trip for myself, both in terms of money and time. Also in our car was Rocío Villalobos, former staff member and current volunteer at PODER. She and I were two of three drivers in our four-person car trip, so we had a lot of time to share ideas.

Beyond the road trip

I was glad to have someone else from our small but incredibly busy organization to remind me that this was an endeavor for our communities and not just an individual study session. After all, this trip did involve some sacrifice from our day-to-day efforts. We missed a week of PODER's Young Scholars for Justice program, as did our summer college intern. That was almost half the adult staff and

a lot of planning time. Because we had to focus so much of our attention this year on staying afloat financially and fulfilling all of our programming for the year, PODER didn't send a large delegation or plan a great presence at the forum. On this 24-hour drive to Detroit, I wondered about what the week ahead meant for the bigger picture. I wanted to see what I could bring back home. What would make this forum most valuable to us as PODER, despite what seemed like such a personal adventure?

Fortunately, one small but positive thing I could bring home was the message that environmental justice, particularly in the urban context, was getting more attention at the forum. While I was

only able to attend a couple of workshops on environmental justice, namely one by Movement Generation, I was impressed to see the concept of "Ecological Justice" interwoven into the forum.

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Photo by Diana Pei Wu



Environmental justice organizers from Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL) in Oakland, California joined 1,000 others in the lively march to protest Detroit's toxic incinerator during the US Social Forum.



For information and grant guidelines, write to:
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Accelerated Movement Building

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At the first US Social Forum in Atlanta in 2007, the evening plenary sessions at the end of each day were more subject-specific, hosting large panels on a different topic each night. Environmental justice was couched in the ongoing movement for justice in Indigenous and Native communities, because Native people continue to bear the brunt of these environmental assaults, as they have for 500 years. This was highly appropriate, but it gave less space for urban communities to speak of environmental racism in terms of city development and politics.

New terms, broader definitions

At this year's forum, environmental justice was woven into several topics of discussion. In the closing section of the first evening's plenary, which addressed Detroit's lessons for the rest of the world, an important framework was suggested for the rhetoric we all use in social justice work: Ecological Justice. Ecological Justice addresses our ability to live in a clean local environment, and also our rights, as human beings, to live on this planet in a way that sustains her and us: the Earth as our mother, her waters, airways, land and other living creatures.

This resonated strongly with the message that PODER works to send on a daily basis. We are People Organized to Defend Earth and Her Resources. We rec-



Photo by Sasha Y. Kimel, www.flickr.com/photos/snsjakimel/

The 15,000 participants in the USSF attended over 1,000 workshops organized by facilitators from around the country. Attendees also took part in at least ten thematic People's Movement Assemblies, facilitated spaces to coordinate concrete actions to move towards our visions of a better world.

ognize the Earth as our mother, and we recognize that the assault on Earth's soil, water and air by hazardous industries is an assault on communities and also violates our right to live in harmony on the planet to which we belong. This is a view strongly influenced by our indigenous roots as Xicanas, Xicanos and human beings.

Having dealt with decades of environmental racism in East Austin, it was also good to see a wide variety of folks present at Detroit's own environmental justice rally on the final day of the forum. After all, the world's largest garbage incinerator is located in a residential community in Detroit. It pollutes the community firsthand but is also an assault on our climate, producing far more contamination than a coal-fired power plant, and an even more complex cocktail of chemicals hazardous to human beings.

The connection, then, to ecological justice as a bigger, global issue creates a crucial intersection in our collective work as social justice organizers. The "EJ" community, largely grassroots organizations led by people of color, currently receives a tiny percentage, in the single digits, of funding from environmental foundations. We usually turn to funders who care about community health, social justice, equity in land use, even hous-

ing. But clearly, in an ecological justice framework, these are environmental issues. It is my hope that this connection will transcend rhetoric and materialize as support for our work.

Investing in youth

This was only one small piece of what I saw and experienced at the forum. Among the countless other areas of organizing and movement building was the concept of youth organizing. Rocío had attended a workshop by SOUL, the School of Unity and Liberation from Oakland, California, about supporting and involving youth in the movement.

"It reminded me a lot of [PODER's youth program] Young Scholars for Justice, and how important it is to provide more history on youth organizing," she said.

Facilitators had given the participants slips of paper with descriptions of highly influential organizers from the past and then passed out separate slips with the names and ages of each person. Next, they asked the participants to match the various pairings correctly.

"Most of the facts they posted, I hadn't known before," said Rocío. "It's so important to teach, because youth have been at the forefront of a lot of struggles. If they don't know that history, it's easy to fall

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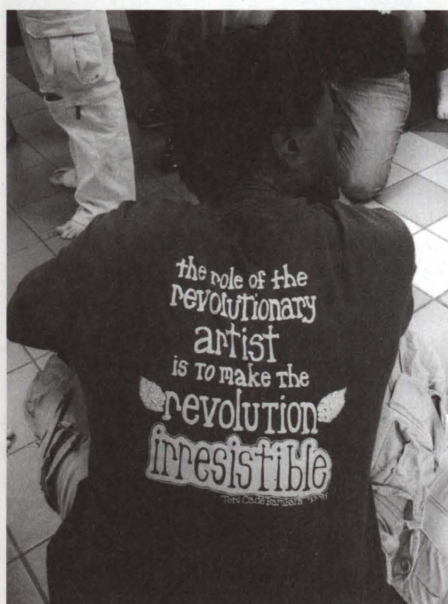


Photo by RAN, www.flickr.com/photos/rainforestinformationnetwork/

Soldiers and Civilians Build Alliances to Win

US Social Forum gathering strengthens broad antiwar organizing efforts

By Sergio España

In February of this year, as Civilian-Soldier Alliance, an organization of civilians working with veterans and active-duty service members to build a GI resistance movement, began establishing the national structure for our organization, we quickly realized we needed to begin reaching out to civilian organizers and learning from similar organizations. To that end we spent the past few months developing the infrastructure necessary to establish a national network of committed and conscientious civilian allies working directly with antiwar veterans and service members. Luckily, the US Social Forum came along and proved crucial to continuing our work.

We spent the week prior to the social forum in Chicago co-hosting a five-day Leadership and Organizing training with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). There we gathered about 20 veterans and 20 civilians from throughout the country to train ourselves in the coming months and prepare ourselves for a successful experience at the social forum where we aimed to share our work and learn from



Photo by Sasha Y Kimel, www.flickr.com/photos/sashakimel

Participants in the US Social Forum's opening march carried images of social justice heroes who paved the way towards this gathering. Movement elder and theorist and longtime Detroit organizer Grace Lee Boggs helped bridge generations with her involvement in the social forum.

the struggles for social justice taking place throughout the United States.

Thanks to the forum we were able to meet with organizers from groups such as the San Francisco-based Catalyst Project, a RESIST grantee which has worked directly to empower antiwar veterans both locally

and internationally, while also providing us a space to reach out to civilians who want to get involved through workshops and informal encounters.

Skills and connections

We carried out two workshops during our stay in Detroit. The first, held in partnership with IVAW, was an in-depth training on the developing GI resistance movement meant to educate participants about the need for such a struggle while also providing a space for people to join in. It was a packed room and a powerful emotional experience as civilians and veterans from all parts of the country came together for four hours to share their experiences and their strengths.

IVAW organizer Aaron Hughes attended and was impressed with seeing the workshop hit home.

"The best part was watching the faces of the workshop attendees as they began to understand the vitality of GI resistance," said Hughes, "and how it is working to bring the gears of the war machine to a screeching halt."

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From Detroit to Dakar

Connecting the local and the global

In January 2011, social justice organizers and activists will again gather by the thousands, this time in Dakar, Senegal for the World Social Forum (WSF).

The first WSF took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 and was organized as a response by global social movements to the challenge of neoliberal global economic policies that have concentrated wealth and political power in fewer hands, while forcing millions of people into poverty. The Social Forum isn't a conference or a one-time event; it's a process, and it has spurred the organization of many country-based social forums like the one held in Detroit in June.

There, several organizations pulled together the "Detroit to Dakar" initiative to link discussions in Detroit to issues and concerns in Africa and the diaspora. A delegation of African civil society partners from across Africa attended the forum, bringing the voices, knowledge and perspective of people-led movements for change from Africa.

We look ahead with hope to Dakar, where activists representing over 100 countries will bring ideas, strategies and energy for change – and where global connections will continue to be fostered.

Soliders and Civilians Build Alliances

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Our second workshop, co-sponsored with the War Resisters League, was an introductory course on the "Pillars of War," an analysis of the institutions and social attitudes in our society which either directly or indirectly support militarism. We also talked about how concerned citizens can challenge the conditions that promulgate for-profit wars.

Thanks to these workshops we were able to bring in new members to our organization while also providing current members a chance to practice training exercises and public speaking as we hold educational speaking to be a skill that all our members should develop. We were also able to provide direct support, such as helping a great activist from Philadelphia aid his best friend, a young person about to deploy into combat, by directly connecting him with local antiwar veterans in Philadelphia.

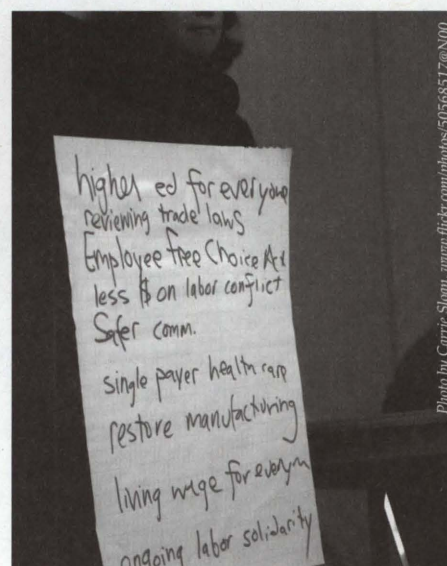
Diverse struggles, shared passions

On a larger note, one of the key components of the forum that made it such a necessary event was the vast diversity of

its panels and events. Being surrounded by so many different people from all parts of the country who are racially and culturally diverse yet share a common passion for social justice and humanity was quite a powerful experience. Though our organization has learned much from working with similar antiwar and peace organizations over the years, some of our most important lessons and ideas have come from seeing the work of community organizations that are not directly involved in the antiwar movement.

In fact, the very model of our organization and our partnership with IVAW came from seeing the organizational and community-driven successes of economic justice organizations such as Student/Farmworker Alliance (a RESIST grantee) and the Baltimore-based United Workers—and from subsequently reaching out to them for guidance. The Forum took such skill-sharing to a new level. Workshops on research skills, trauma support and national organizational development provided our organization with valuable skills.

Equally important, we were able to meet directly with activists working on important issues such as housing rights, LGBTQ empowerment and child



Participants in a Jobs with Justice workshop outlined some of their visions for a better world, including "restore manufacturing," "living wage" and "ongoing labor solidarity."

development. Indeed, the forum made explicit the shared values and commitment present throughout the diverse forms of organizing taking place all around our country.

Apart from the forum, Detroit itself, along with its people, was also a source of inspiration. Whether it was hearing veteran activist Grace Lee Boggs speak about how her city and its people are rebuilding "a new kind of society" in the wake of decades of devastating deindustrialization and corporate greed, or talking with local students and union workers from Detroit, it was clear that not only is a new world possible, but fellow activists and organizers all over the US are already creating and living it.

Though the US Social Forum is over, the work of the more than 15,000 participants continues. As a result of the forum, activists have grown stronger by sharing their passions with one another, learning from each other's mistakes and building solidarity across shared struggles. Another world is possible and it is a privilege to see it continue to take shape.

Sergio España is one of the founding members of Civilian-Soldier Alliance, a RESIST grantee and a national all-volunteer organization of civilian allies working directly with veterans and service members to help strengthen the GI antiwar movement.



The Farm Labor Organizing Committee and Moratorium Now, a group working to end foreclosures, jointly organized a march outside of Chase Bank's Detroit headquarters during the USSF, connecting campaigns for farmworker justice and housing rights to Chase's policies and partnerships.

GRANTEE VOICES

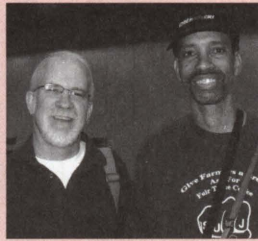
Why did you come to the US Social Forum?



**Beata Tsosie-Pena
and Vicky Downy**
Tewa Women United
Santa Cruz, New Mexico

Beata: I came to get new perspectives and connect with people. Already I've done a lot of collaboration with groups that are in similar shoes. I work around the nuclear weapons industry and contamination, and we'd always wanted to connect with other pieces of that: the mining and the test site. At the forum we've made a lot of connections that we needed to.

Vicky: I'm concerned about the earth and what's happening in the world and wondering what people are doing, how they can support us and we can support them in their work. Every year more people are becoming aware, starting to wake up and respect life.



David Mott & KA Owens
*Kentucky Alliance Against
Racist & Political Repression*
Louisville, Kentucky

KA: I think it's important for every generation of activists to be able to meet and learn what other activists are doing. The alliance was founded by an older generation of activists, and every generation needs to build its own set of relationships with people that are doing exciting things today. The forum is a wonderful opportunity for different generations of activists to come together and learn from each other.

David: I will say that the system tries to isolate us and constrict our vision. One thing I'll be taking back from the forum is being reenergized and recharged. The other thing is I've made important contacts that I think will further the work.



Twa-le Abrahamson
*KYRS Thin Air
Community Radio*
Spokane, Washington

Our community is faced with uranium mining, and I've been involved in organizing for about eight years.

Being at the forum has given me an opportunity to document some of the people's experience. My background is in indigenous organizing issues, and the interviews that I've gotten here are with indigenous people.

The forum is about solutions and alliance-building, so you don't just get a handshake and a pamphlet, you learn how you can help or how [someone else's] issues are similar to yours. Then you're not overlapping and can share resources. It's definitely about movement building and solutions.



**Corey Holt, Jay Mazon,
Theresa Blackman &
Tiffany Allen**
*Nashville Homeless Power
Project in Tennessee*

Tiffany: I came to the Social Forum to see how social justice movements throughout the world and the US are working. I'm hoping that we can bring back some good ideas and maybe share some ideas.

Jay: We've been able to keep homelessness on the agenda here. There aren't any "homeless" workshops, so we've been turning the workshops we've been going to into homeless workshops.

Corey: I came to listen, to learn, to meet people. And just to absorb the atmosphere, one where we say my problem is your problem and we all work together as one, showing the world that people here do care about the world and about each other.

Check out full interviews online: www.resistinc.org/ussfvoices

Accelerated Movement Building *continued from page three*

into the trap of thinking they can't do anything for the movement."

Rocío also emphasized that the type of stimulation people receive from a social forum depends a lot on where they are in their lives as individuals and as organizers, and for this reason, the intergenerational exchange is so important. "For the youth [spaces like the social forum] are a huge exposure, which can be such a big aspect of what they see in themselves, and what they can accomplish."

I was glad she said this, because I could waste energy lamenting PODER's inability this year to have enough time to bring more people to Detroit, to organize fundraisers like the successful ones I saw there, be present to give workshops about organizing for justice in East Austin and beyond. But my energy is much more useful in brainstorming ways to get us, especially our youth, to the next social forum and to take what we learned in Detroit back to them, to create their own ideas and strategies.

On the ride home, I realized that the personal growth and reflection gained at the social forum is a part

of maintaining our ability to contribute to the movement.

"Another aspect of it for me was the reminder to take care of yourself," Rocío added. "It's so connected to your ability to participate and give of yourself. If you're a real organizer, often you are not making a lot of money, and it's easy to get burned out. It's also difficult to be able to engage with other people if you are not making sure your own needs are met."

This made me think of an interesting point of contention at the forum. There seemed to be an incredible demand for the Health and Healing Center, which

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Accelerated Movement Building

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offered massage therapy, energy work, acupuncture and other holistic services. But this center wasn't advertised in the program and was held in a separate building from the main events.

Even in the arena of healing and self-care, there seemed to be internal politics within the forum organizing that hid these resources from view. And here we have to remind ourselves that conferences this large and well-financed are sometimes subject to the very same top-down power struggles as the institutions we are constantly attempting to change in our own communities. For that reason we are responsible for participation, for calling out imbalances and biases when we see them, whether in our campaigns or within a forum of our own.

There is always room for improvement. We are responsible for healing ourselves and by consequence, the spaces around us. And even more importantly, we must listen. That said, we can not underestimate the power of this kind of gathering in promoting exchange, healthy dialogue, new understandings and a reassurance that we are all trying to improve things.

There was too much to take in at once at the USSF, but the variety was such

that every participant had the chance to mold a unique experience. My own experience gave me momentum to involve PODER even more at the next forum, particularly for the youth, because it is what one makes of it, and the more ideas we have, the more we have to gain, as PODER and as USSF participants. This benefits us, as it also benefits movement-building in general.

In the meantime, in Detroit, we were really there to take in whatever we could as individual people, doing our best to synthesize this vast collection of ideas and issues into something tangible we could bring to our community at home. As Rocío put it, the social forum is, in part, about "reminding yourself in general that there are tons of people involved in creating the different world we want for ourselves."

At its best, the US Social Forum was a venue for accelerated movement building. But at the very least, it was a place to be reminded of a very important fact: we are not alone. There are literally tons



Enormous, colorful puppets of social justice trailblazers in the vibrant opening march of the US Social Forum included one of Justin Dart, a longtime activist, antiracist and advocate for passing the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

of people working on this together. That in itself is worth the cross-country drive.

A native Austinite, Carmen Llanes is the research analyst and community organizer at PODER, a RESIST grantee for many years. She coordinates the development and restoration committee for Oak Springs Preserve, co-facilitates PODER's youth and health-related programs, represents PODER in Texans United for Families, a coalition to end immigrant detention, and works with the Austin Fair Trade Coalition.

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Inside this issue:
Grassroots convergence at US
Social Forum in Detroit



Meet RESIST

GRANT RECIPIENTS

RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in organizing for social, economic and environmental justice. In this issue of the Newsletter we list a few grant recipients from our most recent allocation cycle in June of 2010. For more information, visit the RESIST website at www.resistinc.org or contact the groups directly.

People Concerned about MIC
PO Box 45, Institute, West Virginia 25112
www.peopleconcernedaboutmic.com

People Concerned About MIC was formed because the same chemical that killed and injured thousands in the 1984 Bhopal, India disaster, methyl isocyanate (MIC), was being produced at a neighborhood plant. PCMIC is dedicated to the health and safety of all who live and work in the vicinity of local chemical plants. They train local residents in forming "Bucket Brigades" to find out for themselves what chemicals are in the air.

A RESIST grant of \$3,000 will help support People Concerned about MIC in their efforts to organize within the community affected by local chemical plants.

South Bay Communities Alliance

7385 Highway 188, Coden,
Alabama 36523

A grassroots organization in the heart of the Gulf Coast, South Bay Communities Alliance has worked to unite community leaders from five multicultural maritime villages to organize their own communities to advocate for sufficient Katrina rebuilding assistance and fair recovery policies. Since April, the organization has been thrust into the middle of the BP Gulf oil disaster.

RESIST's grant of \$3,000 will allow South Bay Communities to continue to engage in community organizing in the tremendously affected Gulf communities.

Warehouse Workers for Justice

37 S Ashland, Chicago, Illinois 60607
www.warehouseworker.org

Warehouse Workers for Justice is a new organization founded to win justice for warehouse and logistics workers in Illinois. An independent workers center, WWJ was founded by the United Electrical Workers after the successful plant

occupation at Republic Windows and Doors in December 2008.

RESIST's grant of \$3,000 will help WWJ continue to provide workshops so workers can educate themselves about their rights and unite warehouse workers to defend their rights on the job.

Western South Dakota Native American Organizing Project

919 Main Street #3201, Rapid City,
South Dakota 57701

Western South Dakota Native American Organizing Project was created to specifically address the social challenges of the Native American community in South Dakota. Their work involves issues such as food insecurity, which bridge urban and reservation tribal communities and unite diverse low-income individuals and families in the state and region.

RESIST awarded WSDNAOP a grant of \$3,000 to continue to develop a unique, culturally-appropriate membership model that honors Native people's first membership identity with their Tribes and reinforces the 12 core Lakota qualities.