

COMMUNITY CONVO AGENDA

SAMPLE FOR MEMBERS & MEMBER-LEADERS



SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND

PREP MATERIALS/TOOLS

- Alchemy Tool (Organizing Tools Section--Website)
- Critical Resistance--Harm Free Zones
- Queer Kin Poem available for download at: <http://southernersonnewground.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Queer-Kin-Creed.pdf>
- We Call On Each Other TOOL: <http://southernersonnewground.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/We Call On Each Other.pdf>
- Materials: Sign in sheets / Flip chart (optional), Pens, Markers, Copy of community safety examples, Colored paper or index cards for Queer Blessing, computer to play music and/or poetry, food, flowers, make the space beautiful! Any other handouts or materials

SAMPLE AGENDA

goals

- Hold space for our people to come together beyond facebook + vigils, be eye to eye with each other
- Open doors to folks in base who are moved to be in SONG space at this time
- Help move people - when appropriate, to action

opening & welcome

- Introduce Facilitators/SONG
- Queer Kin Poem or [Umi Selah reading Imagine the Angels of Bread](#) - Dream Defenders
- Introduce Altar(??)/Holding Sacred Space/Reclaiming Sanctuary
- Round of Intros: Name, PGP
- How do we be salve for each other/ How are you healing/ How are you grieving?
- Review Goals / Set Tone and name why are we here today -

queen of clubs ice breaker

- Done in pairs or groups of 3-4 (depending on group size)
- Take turns sharing/discussing your favorite gay bar or club experience/story
- Examples: your first time going to a gay bar? Your first kiss at the gay club? Your first time dancing with another crush?
- Note: for folks that don't go to bars, substitute for any other LGBTQ social space: first gay potluck, first gay wedding, first gay SONG meeting, gay church, etc.
- Facilitator can choose to solicit 1-2 stories to share back out with big group (keep em short + sweet)

how do we build the safety we need?

- Visualization: Remember a time you truly felt safe? At your grandmother's kitchen table, with your cousins playing outside near the big kids....
- Pair share + Reflect:
 - *LGBTQ communities, Black and immigrant communities we have always relied on each other for community and safety and kinship. Of course we are imperfect and perpetuate violence against each other too - we don't dismiss that.*
 - *But we do know that when we look at our memory and individual and collective experience that the police are not named when we remember and name and know safety.*
 - *We are seeing white LGBTQ people take up the mantle of nationalism*
 - *This atrocity and massacre of our kin in Orlando demands that we engage a different convo and do a different level of work.*
 - *What do we HAVE / what's the BEST of our traditions*
 - *Open it up to people first and then add some examples.*
- Print out these examples below and cut up and pass out for people to read aloud and discuss.
- Ending discussion question: What support structures have people created in our community are any of these examples being utilized in our community (ex.ool share, mental health support network, car pools, childcare collectives, cop watches, artist cooperatives, etc.) What do we need to build?



talk about the current work (locally) and SONG's short term and longer term response strategies

- Bring a rec from leadership team of 1 or 2 strategies yall want to move locally [Protect and Defend, Kinship Network, Enemies of the People/Fight the Right + Local Media work]
- Connect people directly to regional points - ex. For COMMZ strat
- Get sign up's + have concrete next step

queer blessing and intentions (15 minute closing for a gathering)

Ask the group to sit in a large circle, close enough to each other to pass cards to each other.

Explain: In many communities and cultures, people bless each other--or intentionally wish upon each other--when they part. This can mean they put towards each other the energy of their God, faith or tradition--it could also mean that they recognize that the strength oppressed people give each other is real and has meaning. All according to their own beliefs.

WRITE: Ask each person to take an index card and a pen and to write an intention that they would want wished upon them as they go out into the world to lead in our liberation struggles. The blessings can be as queer and raunchy as needed :) Give each person 2 minutes to write.

PASS: Have each person pass their card to the left, pass 3 times as a group--so that each person ends up with the blessing written by the person 3 people to the right of them

READ: Have a few people read the blessing they received as so moved to do so. Popcorn style. Have people read at least 5 outloud.

CLOSE: With a general intention to the group--" Go with the power of our history, the sheer and queer pleasure of our collective company, and the will and courage to push forward our work" or whatever you want...Suggest people keep their blessing card as they want. Optional: WE CALL ON EACH OTHER TO...

10 EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY SAFETY

OUR PEOPLE HAVE CREATED
FOR THEMSELVES



THE BLACK PANTHERS

The Panthers were founded as a neighborhood watch program and in doing cop watch (watch *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* documentary for more on that). They also created many community programs, in addition to serving Free Breakfast for Children. Their Seniors Against a Fearful Environment (SAFE) program was a nonprofit corporation started by the Black Panther Party at the request of a group of senior citizens for the purpose of preventing muggings and attacks upon the elderly, particularly when they go out to cash their Social Security or pension checks. Prior to approaching the Black Panther Party, the seniors had gone to the Oakland Police Department to request protection. There the seniors were told that they “should walk close to the curb” in the future, according to a Panther report by David Hilliard, who served as the Party’s chief of staff. The program offered free transportation and escort services to the residents of the Satellite Senior Homes, a residential complex for the elderly in Oakland, California. The Panthers also started the People’s Free Ambulance Service to provide free, rapid transportation for sick or injured people without time-consuming checks into the patients’ financial status or means. The People’s Free Ambulance Service operated with at least one ambulance on a 24-hour emergency basis, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on a nonemergency or convalescent basis, according to Hilliard. People were transported to and from the hospital or doctor’s office in a modern, comfortable ambulance by courteous, efficient and knowledgeable attendants. (Source: [Atlanta Black Star](#))

CITIZENS ALERT AND THE BUTTERFLY BRIGADE IN THE CASTRO

In San Francisco’s gay neighborhood, The Castro, lesbians and gays facing homophobic violence from police in the 1960s and ‘70s organized Citizens Alert to protect each other from the cops. In 1977, LGBT activists in the Castro formed the Butterfly Brigade, which patrolled the district, recorded homophobic abuse and attacks, and distributed whistles with which victims could summon help. (Source: *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* by Christina Hanhardt)



NO MORE DEATHS

Since 2004, No More Deaths has maintained a humanitarian presence in the 262-square-mile corridor where over half of known migrant deaths in recent years have occurred on the Arizona-Mexico border near Tucson. This militarized region, deemed the “Tucson Sector” and treated as a war zone by the Department of Homeland Security, disproportionately plays host to the mass migration without papers of people from the Americas. No More Deaths provides water and basic necessities to people crossing the border. (Source: [No More Deaths](#) website)

HARM FREE ZONES

The prison abolition organization Critical Resistance created Harm Free Zones to build spaces where communities could create safety for themselves, without turning to police. The creation of Harm Free Zones is the historical process of building community autonomy and self-determination in the struggle to abolish the prison industrial complex, and to transform our ways of treating each other, and is inseparable from the process of community building. In Durham, North Carolina, SpiritHouse's Harm Free Zone works to reduce community reliance on law enforcement; foster intergenerational reciprocity within the community; facilitate community-driven strategies and methods to prevent or intervene in incidents of interpersonal conflict and state violence; uncover and document intervention practices that already occur within distinct communities; and push for community driven policies centered around our community's health, safety and sustainability. (Source: [Critical Resistance](#) and SpiritHouse)

SAFE HOUSES IN THE BATTERED WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

In the 1960s and '70s, when husbands could still legally beat their wives, the battered women's movement founded shelters to provide safe harbor to survivors. By making a coalition with Al-Anon programs, Rainbow Retreat (Phoenix, AZ) and Haven House (Pasadena, CA founded in 1964) began treating battered women married to alcoholic men. Out of a recognition of the lack of services for Latina women and the absence of Latina controlled organizations, a multi-racial group of women in Boston's South End funds Casa Myrna Vazquez shelter. Later, after becoming a technical assistance center, Casa Myrna Vazquez produces Doing Community Outreach to Third World Women. Take Back the Night marches have been organized since the 1970s to protest the violence women, trans, and queer people experience walking along at night. (Source: timeline from [Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#))

COMMUNITY SUPPORT HOTLINES AND BAIL FUNDS

Funds for legal defense and bail have been a mechanism to fund people's resistance for years. During the uprising in Ferguson, volunteers staffed a bail hotline around the clock. Suicide prevention hotlines and other forms of mental health support are all examples of community created infrastructure for safety and wellness in our communities.



THE ZAPATISTAS AND ARMED INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE AND AUTO DEFENSAS

Since the 1993 uprising of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) after the North American Free Trade Agreement was signed into law, the Zapatistas have inspired indigenous communities throughout Mexico to also engage in new and innovative practices of armed self-defense. School of the Americas Watch describes the "narco-government" currently in place in Mexico, with over 90,000 dead, 10,000 disappeared, and the world's highest assassination rate for journalists in just under 6 years. Mexico's indigenous nations are taking the lead in defending themselves. Over 13 states in Mexico now have armed community patrols who are actively confronting a fusion between organized crime and corrupt electoral politics. Most notably the state of Guerrero has well over 70 communities, and most recently the state of Michoacan has well over 20 communities that are engaging in armed self-defense. These communities have expelled political parties, military personnel, and local, state, and federal police from their communities and have returned to traditional forms of self-governance, including general assemblies, rotational positions of traditional authority, and armed self-defense patrols. (Source: [School of the Americas Watch](#)).

AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT PATROL

The American Indian Movement Patrol was established in Minneapolis in 1968 to protect and defend the community against police brutality and eventually led to the creation of a legal rights center. In 1987, the AIM Patrol was restarted to deal with serial killings of American Indian women. The AIM Patrol provided free protective escorts for Native women who needed to walk or ride to work, school, and shopping centers (Source: "[American Indian Movement \(AIM\) and the Ojibwe People of Minnesota](#)" by Kavika, "[A Brief History of the American Indian Movement](#)" by Laura Waterman Wittstock and Elaine J. Salinas).

TRANS AND QUEER PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RESISTING POLICE VIOLENCE SINCE THE BEGINNING

From the Compton Cafeteria Riots to Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera's fighting back at Stonewall to the New Jersey Four to Cece McDonald, LGBTQ communities have been resisting street harassment and police violence from the beginning. (Sources: "[Before Stonewall, There Was the Cooper's Donuts and Compton Cafeteria Riots](#)" by Daniel Villareal, [Stone Butch Blues](#) by Leslie Feinberg, [Happy Birthday Marsha](#) documentary, [Out in the Night](#) documentary)



SOUTHERN BLACK COMMUNITIES DEFENDING THEMSELVES FROM WHITE TERROR

Many elders and veterans of the civil rights movement describe the role that self defense played in the Southern Freedom movement. Facing white violence and terror from the state and in their communities, Black communities had guns as a necessity. Faith Holsaert, a SONG member and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee worker in Georgia during the 1960s, tells a story of sleeping in a safe house in a community where she and other volunteers were working. The father of her coworker stayed up all night on the porch with a shotgun, prepared for the violence promised when white people in the town heard SNCC workers were there asking people to register to vote. Akinyele Omowale Umoja, in the book *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* describes the Black freedom struggle in Mississippi and the South as "a fight to overcome fear." Umoja writes: "Blacks overcame fear and asserted their humanity through a variety of tactics. . . [A]rmed resistance was critical to the efficacy of the southern freedom struggle and the dismantling of segregation and Black disenfranchisement. Intimidation by White supremacists was intended to bring fear to the Black population and its allies and sympathizers in the White community. To overcome the legal system of apartheid, Black people had to overcome fear to present a significant challenge to White domination. Armed self-defense had been a major tool of survival in allowing some Black southern communities to maintain their integrity and existence in the face of White supremacist terror." (Sources: *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Judy Richardson, et al, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed* by Charles E. Cobb, Jr., [We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement](#) by Akinyele Omowale Umoja)

For more information on this tool contact kindred@southernersonnewground.org

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