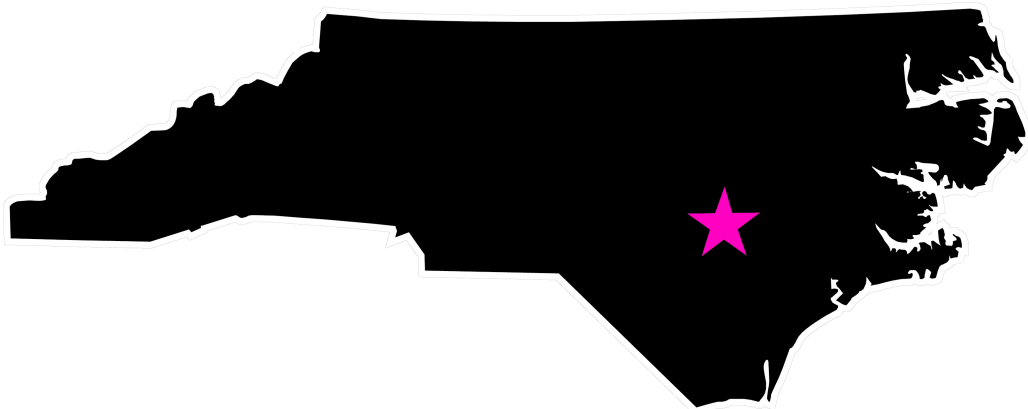


SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND
ONE MILLION
CONVERSATIONS
ON PORCHES

A REPORT ON SONG'S ORGANIZING
DURING THE **AMENDMENT ONE**
BALLOT MEASURE IN NORTH CAROLINA



**OXFORD GREENSBORO RALEIGH GRANVILLE CO
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Note: In this report, you will read the term '**intersectionality**' often. Intersectionality refers to the places where our many identities and realities meet--it means that we work for justice across more than one identity and/or one community. We are part of each other, and we are affected by multiple oppressions--at the same time. SONG believes that when we organize for LGBTQ justice, we must also be breaking new ground for the liberation of all marginalized and oppressed people.

****SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OF US NC AND SONG MEMEBERS FOR THE PHOTOS.**



INTRODUCTION

In 2011 and 2012, North Carolina progressive forces worked to defeat a ballot amendment to the state constitution called "Amendment One". Amendment One, which passed on May 8, 2012, states that marriage between one man and one woman will be the only recognized domestic legal union in the state—no other types of relationship will be recognized, including civil unions, common law marriages, or domestic partnerships.

Many of us who worked to shift culture and organize during the amendment fight don't consider gay marriage to be the most pressing issue facing North Carolina. We did not do this work, even, because we felt at all sure we could win at the polls. The reasons we organized against it became clear when we look at the outcomes, including: groups and organizations (some of which had never worked together before) forming new coalitions and alliances; LGBTQ students, parents, and teachers--in cities and rural communities-- mobilizing as volunteers during the campaign and leading rallies, workshops, and press conferences; the intersectional message SONG raised in the media coverage; the visibility of LGBTQ people of Color that SONG made sure was prioritized throughout the campaign; and leaders from the faith community--including SONG staff and members--forming new relationships and bonds of trust with social justice organizations. In particular, many African American religious leaders raised a crucial voice against the amendment--combating the media perception that African American and LGBTQ communities are separate, divided and in opposition to one another.

More than 840,000 people voted against Amendment One, and the North Carolina News Service declared the fight against Amendment One to be one of the biggest grassroots efforts in the history of North Carolina. More than 16,000 people registered as volunteers in this campaign: this does not include the thousands of people who were moved to act against Amendment One independent of the formal campaign. The most active among those 16,000 were not just making calls at phone banks or passing out fliers—they were holding meetings at their churches, talking to their neighbors on their porches, and asking the waitress at their local pizza place to oppose hate and division in our state.



All the best things about this campaign came from the courage of the people of North Carolina to talk openly about equality and dignity for LGBTQ people—not from pollsters, big national organizations, or politicians.

Organizations did play an important role in the campaign by building flexible and responsive scaffolding for the many layers of the organizing. Too often at the national level, stories like the organizing effort around Amendment One are focused on briefly in the media, explained poorly, and then ignored (especially when we lose). **The purposes of this report are to be able to explore and reflect on lessons learned and expand the conversation about the significance of the Amendment One campaign in order to serve our future work--not for marriage equality, but to expand Queer Liberation throughout the South, mobilize and empower local leadership, and strengthen our coalition relationships with other organizations.**

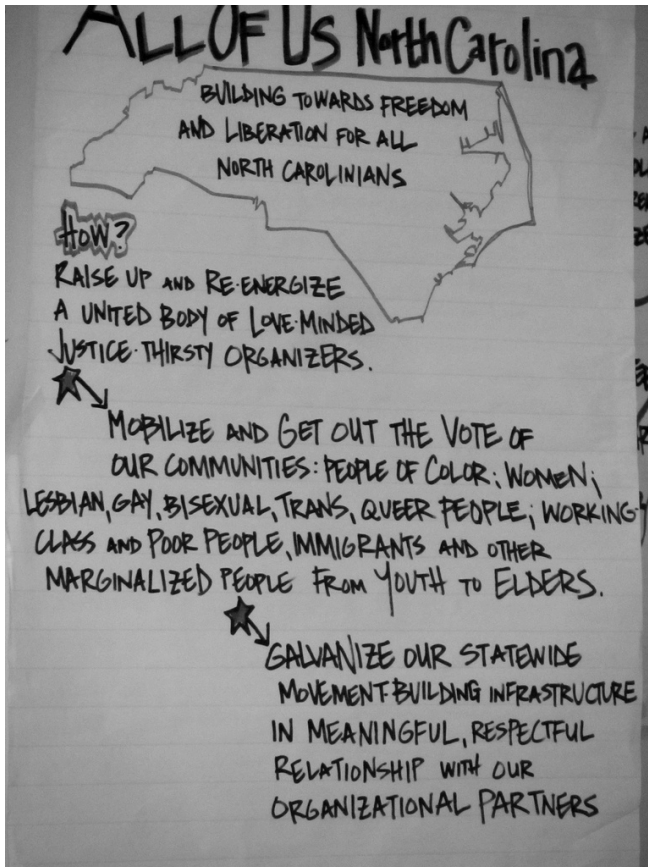
After Amendment One passed on May 8th, many progressive forces move on tiredly, declaring our work a loss. However, by calling Amendment One a loss in this case means our forces measure a win at the ballot only—and **the voting booth is a place where LGBTQ people cannot currently win around marriage rights in the South.** Instead, SONG suggests that a win can be measured more in movement-building metrics. Especially since SONG did not play any direct lobbying role, but rather used community organizing and voter education to further base building and connect communities across the state. We see our wins as:

- The pushing out of an intersectional message and a liberation-based worldview to thousands of North Carolinians.
- Activation of allies (both individuals and organizations) who were previously unconcerned with LGBTQ rights.
- Organizing activity and agitation around LGBTQ issues in rural areas where there was little or no LGBTQ visibility before.
- Profound culture change on a statewide level that transformed spirits and minds.
- Sustained momentum, as indicated by new coalitions, for future work.
- The emergence of new organizers who will play a critical role in shaping future work in North Carolina.

WHO WE ARE

SONG was founded in 1993 in Durham, North Carolina, and is now a membership-based organization of LGBTQ Southerners. SONG works to unite communities across race, class, culture, gender and sexuality to organize for liberation. One of the ways we do this is by building a base of LGBTQ people to organize for justice, dignity, and safety for all people. This is in direct resistance to the divide-and-conquer strategy pushed on the South by the right wing--pitting oppressed groups against each other so that our resistance is fractured. For more information about SONG please go to: www.southernersonnewground.org

SONG's relationship to North Carolina is an important one in order to understand our work during Amendment One. We were founded in North Carolina and have had some form of organizational presence in the state for twenty years.



Individuals and organizations recognize SONG's name, many have respect for the work we have done and are doing, and many SONG members work for other progressive organizations throughout the state--making it easier to form coalitions quickly. Additionally, in relationship to the rest of the South and the other states where SONG works, North Carolina is the most resourced state in terms of progressive funders and infrastructure (leadership, groups, organizations, networks, and resources). This is not necessarily a point of tension within SONG, but it is important context for how North Carolina galvanized resources and support during the campaign.

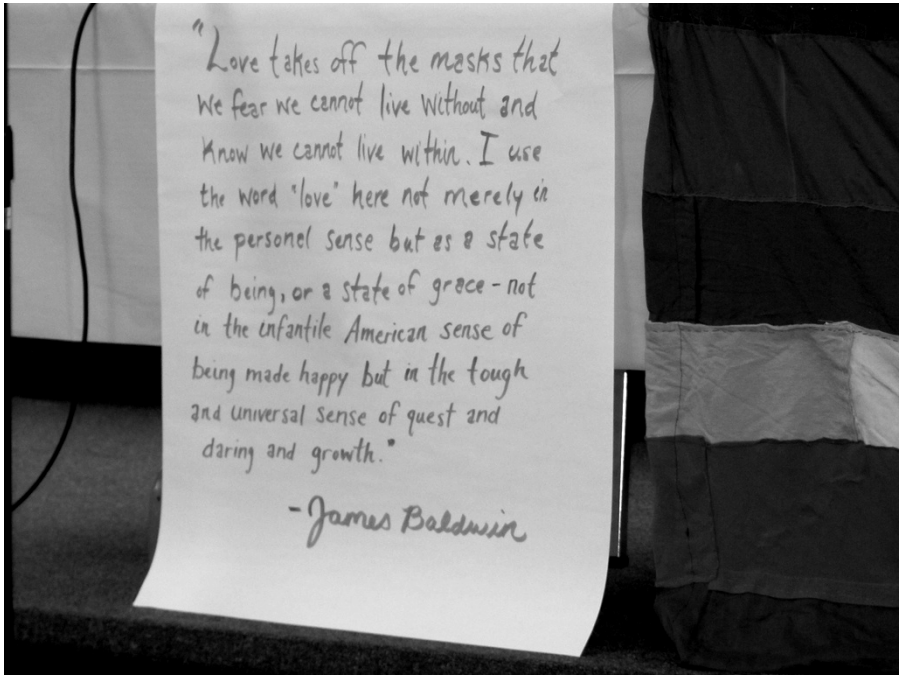
It is also important to note that the Amendment One campaign work drew on staffing and financial resources from inside and outside the state, similar to past campaigns in the South during similar marriage amendments. While some key leaders of the statewide organizing came from North Carolina, we also experienced what it was like to have outside funding come into the state for a short-lived campaign. Having dealt with a similar dynamic which played out in previous marriage amendment fights in Kentucky and South Carolina, SONG staff and members tried from the beginning to think about how we were building for the long haul--supporting the rural people brave enough to come out to their community in order to have conversations about the amendment; being intentional about our presence in coalition work since we knew we'd continue to build with those groups after May 2012; and continuing to lift up an intersectional message to the new members and leaders coming into SONG through the campaign (there was talk of anti-immigrant legislation already in the works for later in 2012, a voter ID bill, and an anti-union amendment to come, as well--all fights we knew we'd need to mobilize our new organizers for in the future). Thus while there was outside funding and resources that did come into North Carolina during the Amendment campaign, SONG and other organizations specifically positioned ourselves to leverage those resources to benefit and support local organizations and organizing efforts long after the campaign we completed. It is also important to note that while the Coalition to Protect North Carolina Families (CPNCF: the large coalition that worked against Amendment One) did raise \$3 million for its work, which is actually only a fraction of the money raised in some states for this kind of work.

WHY SONG GOT INVOLVED

Before September 2012, the idea of a ballot measure banning gay marriage and domestic partnerships had come up before in the North Carolina state legislature, but lobbyists and policy groups had been able to keep it at bay and off of the ballot. SONG had been involved in ballot campaigns around domestic partnership and family rights in South Carolina, Kentucky, and Georgia. We knew what they were all about then and we know it now—riling and mobilizing a right-wing base before a big election. It was just another time LGBTQ people and other marginalized communities were being scapegoated, pitted against one another, and used by the right wing. We had seen how difficult it was for our Southern LGBTQ communities and allies to lose at the polls in these kinds of campaigns again and again. Most of the campaigns related to LGBTQ issues in the South in the past decade have been initiated by national organizations. SONG's constituency was recruited into campaigns that they did not choose, and told that the options were to watch the state 'lose big' (80-20) or 'lose less' (70-30), just like in previous marriage amendment campaigns. These situations have left SONG with a Southern base that is largely turned off from national organizations and their efforts--feeling heartbroken and let down after what was, for the majority of our base, their first or only experience with campaign organizing. The irony is sharp, because we have never directly lobbied in any of this organizing—our work has always been to build within LGBTQ communities and educate the public. Nonetheless, informed by this history, SONG regional staff made the decision **not** to get involved in the North Carolina Amendment One campaign in early 2011.

**SILENCE
IN THE SOUTH
STILL = DEATH**

WWW.SOUTHERNERSONNEWGROUND.ORG



However, in the fall of 2011, the right wing opposition organized a press conference with four very conservative African-American pastors. One of these pastors produced a lock and a key to symbolize "traditional marriage", and encouraged Black voters to vote for Amendment One. Many North Carolinians were offended. African-American SONG members and supporters, both LGBTQ-identified and heterosexual, asked: **"Where is SONG in this conversation? Where is SONG when Black communities and LGBTQ communities are being set up as separate and in opposition? When Black Christian men in leadership are using sexist imagery that conjures images of slavery to ignite homophobia?"** As calls from concerned SONG members in North Carolina kept coming in to SONG's regional staff members, and as our field organizer in the state reported deeper and deeper frustration at the lack of SONG's presence—we had to re-consider our decision not to get involved. We realized that it was not always on us to pick our campaigns. Sometimes our work must follow where there is momentum—as long as we see opportunities to move a liberation agenda forward.

Many groups asked why SONG would get involved. There are so many issues to work on across intersections and this was seen as public education around a losing battle. Membership interest in an issue is not the only criteria we hold for where we put resources towards work. Here are some of the other opportunities we saw for this work:

- We saw that the campaign against Amendment One was a key opportunity to shatter perceptions that set people of color and LGBTQ communities up as separate and opposite.
- We saw that there were the resources coming together (both financial and in terms of people power) that could actually accomplish a good amount of base building in North Carolina.
- We saw the chance to do media work that could reset the norm about what it means to be LGBTQ in North Carolina.
- We saw the opportunity for rural LGBTQ people to come out and create culture change in small towns.
- We saw the chance to move the conversation away from "gay marriage" and towards dignity and justice for all people-- allowing us to define who our families are.
- We felt frustrated that although intersectionality is becoming a central part of the national LGBTQ conversation, there is a real lack of intersectional strategy being moved on the ground. In the Amendment One campaign, we saw the opportunity to engage in coalitions that bridge hard differences, take on shared risks, and build trust so that different groups could take on different roles.
- We saw an opportunity as a grassroots economic and racial justice organization to experiment with scale--the amplification of SONG's intersectional messages and strategies from the more progressive urban areas (concentrated around Durham and Greensboro) outwards across the state as a whole.
- We saw an opportunity to build up the leadership of our members in North Carolina--the very people who were calling us, urging SONG to take on this work.

NEW COALITIONS

Much of the story of the new coalitions and alliances that became visible during the campaign against Amendment One had roots in work that had come before. Progressive organizations nationally and within North Carolina had been moving towards intersectional organizing and broader coalitions of many different kinds of groups in the past ten to fifteen years. Leaders and groups that are far too numerous to name here were part of bringing about this kind of coalition. One example of the kind of recent moment that began to galvanize us towards this work was in November of 2011, when the LGBTQ civil rights group Equality North Carolina hosted Rev. Dr. William Barber II, the head of the North Carolina NAACP, to keynote their annual conference. Along with Rev. Dr. Barber, Equality NC asked two other pastors and SONG's Co-Director Caitlin Breedlove. Breedlove spoke the following words that day, in an attempt to call LGBTQ people to the broader table for justice in North Carolina:

"This proposed amendment clearly attacks us as LGBTQ people—our families, our dignity, our rights. We share the grief many of you feel that our humanity would be put to the ballot box to be voted on in the state we love and call home. We share the history of silence that we know so many of you have endured, existing in the fear that to live out loud would be to risk our families, our jobs, and our actual lives. We share in your anger that we continue to be de-humanized, bullied, and murdered. All these feelings can cause a community to turn inward, to contract and not expand. These feelings can lead a people to believe that we can only seek our own piece of the pie, only protect and defend our own families. But, let us tell you something as long and eager students of LGBTQ people's history: at our best, we are a people bent on liberation for all—a people who love joy, creation, self-determination"

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

SONG's work in the Amendment One campaign happened through two very different organizations--one at the grassroots level and the other at the statewide, grassroots level.

All of Us North Carolina was an all volunteer, grassroots alliance made up of SONG members and social justice groups from Durham and Greensboro. Two LGBTQ women of color and longtime SONG members, Manju Rajendran and Afiya Carter, along with another SONG member and queer white woman, Beth Bruch, spearheaded this alliance in the fall of 2011. All of Us NC developed a statewide relational organizing strategy that focused on having conversations with people we are connected to (friends, teachers, neighbors, and family members), rather than relying on advertisements or cold calling to change people's minds about how to vote. The group designed a workshop on how to have these types of conversations using popular education methods. They drew on a long tradition of Southern organizing: incorporating an intersectional message about how the North Carolina constitution is meant to protect rights for all people and singing Freedom songs from the civil rights movement to build courage for these hard conversations.

All of Us NC's goal was to hold workshops in relational organizing in all 100 counties in the state--informed by mistakes during previous fights (like against Measure 9 in Oregon in the 1990s) where LGBTQ organizing had focused only on the urban areas and neglected the chance to change the culture and narrative in rural areas. To meet this goal, All of Us NC divided the state into three regions--the Mountains, the Rivers, and the Sea--and held trainings for trainers throughout these areas. Regional coordinators then helped support multiracial teams of four people in planning and facilitating workshops in counties throughout their region. Additionally, All of Us NC mobilized a large group of folks (visually unified in light blue t-shirts) to participate in the HK on J parade in February of 2012 in Raleigh, NC, the May Day march in Durham, and other marches and rallies throughout the state. By working in close coalition with Democracy NC--a voter's rights non-profit--All of Us NC were able to train trainers and workshop participants in voter registration and early voting rules and regulations. The majority of the work SONG did in rural communities during the campaign was through All of Us NC.



The Coalition to Protect NC Families (CPNCF) emerged as a statewide coalition of over 160 organizations working against Amendment One. Some of the groups lobbied directly, and did voter persuasion. Others, like SONG, did voter education, messaging, media work, and grassroots organizing. CPNCF ran the statewide electoral campaign--with field offices throughout the state, paid staff, thousands of volunteers, a \$3 million dollar budget, and an integrated paid media strategy (TV and print media ads, etc.). This arm of the campaign (like many electoral campaigns) primarily identified "sympathetic" or "persuadable" voters by looking at voting and polling records and then worked to contact those voters to convince them to vote against Amendment One or remind them to vote against Amendment One. This type of campaign relied heavily on polling, phone banking and door knocking in order to reach NC residents. SONG's role within the Coalition was not to lobby or persuade voters, but rather to work on building public dialogue about basic human rights for all North Carolinians.



Learn how to talk to your friends about Amendment One over brunch (provided!), and then at noon we'll caravan together to go early vote against the amendment!

Let's make history in Iredell County and the South!

RSVP to hkhardin@gmail.com OR 919-271-5990
for location details.

WHAT WE DID: SONG'S ROLE

SONG worked on the ground by supporting the grassroots organizing of All of Us NC and on the statewide level as one vote on the steering committee of the Coalition to Protect North Carolina Families.

SONG supported the organizing of All of Us NC by providing staff members who attended meetings, and communicated between All of Us and SONG throughout the campaign. SONG also funded and helped to plan a strategy retreat in Durham in the fall of 2012--facilitated by SONG co-founder and SONG Internal Education Coordinator Suzanne Pharr--that nearly 50 progressive leaders from across the state attended. It was at this strategy retreat where the decision was made to focus on relational organizing and to have a goal of being a presence in all 100 counties.

Because of SONG's twenty-year history and trusted reputation in North Carolina, we were asked to join the steering committee of the CPNCF and sat as the only grassroots racial and economic organization on the committee. Other voting members included Equality NC, Blueprint NC, Self Help, Replacements, Ltd., Faith in America, Human Rights Campaign, and the ACLU of North Carolina.

One of the main shared goals of the steering committee was for the campaign to lead and ignite one million conversations with North Carolinians about the divisive truth of Amendment One, conversations which advocated for basic human dignity and rights for all North Carolinians (similar to All of Us NC's strategy of relational organizing).

By working with two very different organizations, SONG played an interesting, and in many ways rare, bridging role. We saw the opportunity to experiment with scale--by supporting grassroots organizing led by longtime members and by pushing the mainstream LGBTQ statewide organization to incorporate a more intersectional, liberation-seeking message.

On the grassroots level, we focused on supporting organizing that was led by LGBTQ people ourselves—particularly LGBTQ rural people, people of Color, people of faith, and working class people. On the steering committee, we focused on pushing for intersectional alliance building, messaging, and ground organizing. In some moments we were more successful than others. Two examples:

##1

We worked very hard on the preparation and execution of the press conference that kicked off the CPNCF campaign. The representatives who spoke and appeared on television news coverage were 50% people of Color, of many different ages, and included many faith leaders. The message was extremely intersectional. One of SONG's members was quoted on the 5 o'clock news that night saying, "this amendment hurts my family." This was the first time we know of that an out, rural African-American lesbian from North Carolina was visible in the North Carolina press in that way.

##2

Another important example of the kind of work that SONG did was our participation in the annual HK on J march in February of 2012 (led by All of Us NC). This march is the largest annual progressive march in North Carolina, convened by the North Carolina NAACP. All of Us NC mobilized more than 200 people to our contingent--primarily LGBTQ people of Color, youth, immigrants, rural people, and poor people. Additionally, SONG's North Carolina field organizer, Bishop Donagrants McCluney, became the first LGBTQ person of Color to speak from the stage. To open his remarks, Bishop McCluney sang a Freedom song that had been written for the campaign by All of Us NC co-founder and SONG member, Manju Rajendran: "We do it for our ancestors, all of us/We do it for the ones to come, all of us." Then, he said, "together we declare that every North Carolinian is worthy of freedom and justice whether they be rich or poor, gay or straight, people of faith or not of faith, undocumented or U.S. citizen."

HOW THE CAMPAIGN PROGRESSED

As the campaign progressed, it expanded. A variety of self-organized groups around the state--including All of Us NC--came to feel a sense of ownership of the campaign, making bolder and bolder claims away from the approved messaging coming from the CPNCF. The CPNCF message had been very contentious within organizing communities from the start, because it focused on potential outcomes of the amendment for all unmarried families, rather than naming this as an attack on LGBTQ people in particular. Some factions believed, due to polling data, that this was the only possible path to victory. Others believed this was "de-gaying" the campaign. As the campaign went on, SONG saw our different communities take the narrative as their own and create their own messaging. Many people in rural communities centered the conversation around outing themselves as LGBTQ and demanding that their neighbors recognize their humanity. Some African-American church leaders spoke distinctly to Black communities, saying that "Black folks should never be for any type of discrimination" (the NC NAACP ran ads with this message on Black radio stations).

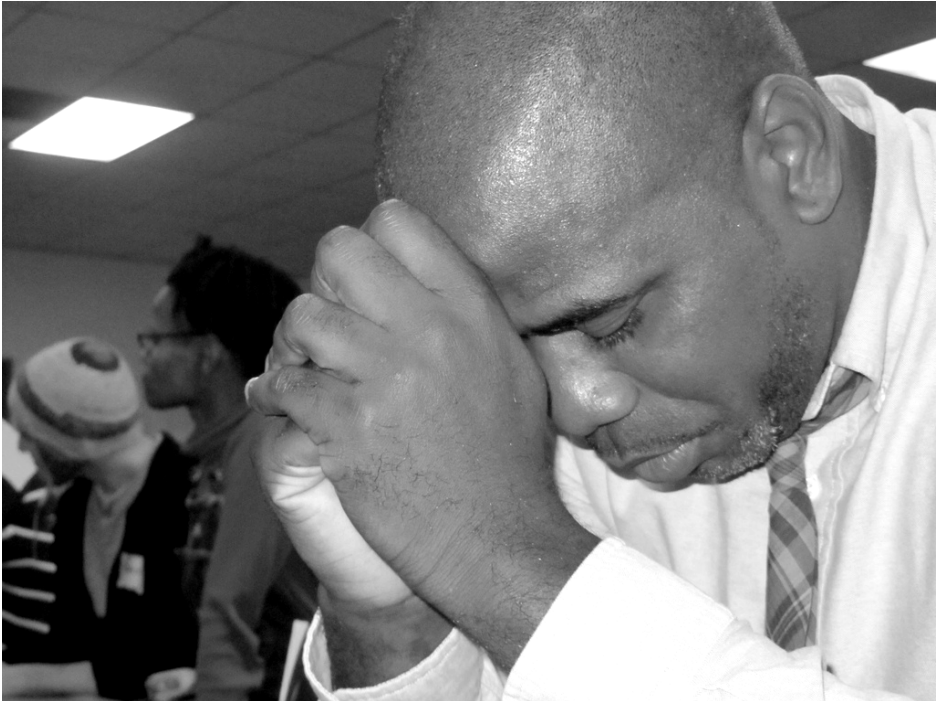
In our e-mail blasts, SONG used messages with our own base such as this:

Amendment One is a tricky right wing plot to take domestic partnership benefits from all unmarried people, hate on LGBTQ people, take health benefits from kids of all unmarried people, and restrict rights of domestic violence survivors who are being hurt by people they are not married to.

When we started the campaign it looked like the amendment would pass 70 to 30. By April 2012, the CPNCF's lobbying and voter persuasion arms had collected 16,000 signatures from "supporters of equality" committed to vote against the amendment and to tell others to do the same; had some presence in almost every county in North Carolina; and had accrued 9,000 donors--mostly in small donations from North Carolinians. On the CPNCF steering committee level, SONG continued to push hard for the message of the campaign to be about families, about the truth that LGBT people are not the enemy, and that we were tired of being treated as a wedge issue by the right wing.

SPIRIT AND CULTURAL WORK

Back in January of 2012, SONG held a summit in Charlotte, NC at the Freedom Center for Social Justice. Over 100 SONG members--mainly LGBTQ African Americans who are members of affirming faith communities--convened for fellowship and organizing training. This was an incredibly momentous gathering--one that solidified the relationship between SONG and the Freedom Center, which is led by the powerful Bishop Tonyia Rawls. The first night of the summit was a ball where SONG members vogued, danced, and clapped for one other--celebrating in community together. All of Us NC led a workshop on voter registration the next day and SONG staff led workshops on how to organize with an intersectional analysis and on the importance of storytelling in our work. Caucuses were formed of students, elders, people of faith, and members of the ball community. That night, we held a Revival, with all 100 participants worshipping or witnessing worship together--building collective resiliency, trust, and momentum for the coming campaign.



Art made throughout North Carolina was crucial to the organizing effort against the amendment as well. One example was a song written by Laurelynn Dossett and several local musicians from the Greensboro, NC area. The video they recorded was watched more than 50,000 times and won international acclaim. The quote from the song shows another messaging angle on the realities of Amendment One:

Love thy neighbor, good and true
Your neighbor is my neighbor too
Work beside and lean upon
Vote against Amendment One...

We cannot see for red or blue
But your state is my state too
And when the 8th of May is come
We'll vote against Amendment One

This multi-racial group of musicians demonstrates a tone of music deeply rooted in the traditions of North Carolina. This song was performed all over the state in the last weeks of the fight against Amendment One. It was particularly moving at a rural rally of about 100 residents in downtown Wilson, NC (which is in the poorest, eastern region of the state). Residents gathered on their lunch break in a ghost town where half of all store fronts are closed and shuttered and the remaining business are barely surviving, to sing in protest together. The campaign became infused with the culture of North Carolina. While some of the ads and polling may have been funded by national organizations, the ground game had the feel of our state. It was multi-racial, religious, and musical. There were constant civic activities—concerts, prayer vigils, discussions in small rural community colleges, race to the ballot events, dance parties, food truck-sponsored lunches, rallies, YouTube videos, and activities for kids.

Although the organizing started in urban areas, rural people began sticking their necks out in small towns and taking risks as the campaign went on. As they grabbed media attention, they spurred morale for the whole campaign. The sentence: "I prayed and then I voted against Amendment One" was repeated again and again on Facebook with pictures of North Carolinians with hands over their hearts. More and more politicians felt pressure to come out against the amendment. **Jim Crawford, the Democrat who first co-sponsored the amendment, himself came out against it after an unidentified, rural white lesbian in her 50's confronted him during a town hall in his own Granville county district. She said that she was from Granville County and had always been a contributing citizen (though never out as lesbian). But, she said, the time had come for her to come out to her community because of Amendment One. She told Jim Crawford that by co-sponsoring Amendment One he slapped every gay person in the state in the face and that she would never forgive him for that.**



Signs popped up for and against the amendment in every county, town, and neighborhood. While driving in the most rural part of eastern North Carolina, SONG members saw two family farms across a gravel road from each other. On one side was a sign for the amendment and on the other a sign against. This was the first we had seen this level of engagement in rural communities on these kinds of questions and issues.



Why African American Clergy Must Stand Up and Speak Out

As agents of justice, healing, and unity among all people of all races, God has positioned us to be the heirs and guardians of a long history of *unearned suffering*, including slavery, lynch law, and Jim Crowism. Our people are, even today, the victims of random hate crimes. Many of our teenagers and young adults are languishing in prisons, while

millions of others are without work and live in poverty. After careful and prayerful consideration, we are persuaded that the proposed Amendment One to the North Carolina Constitution would further impoverish and punish so many innocent people. Therefore, we have no choice but to stand against this unnecessary and unjust proposed amendment.

Rev. Arnette Beverly, Pastor, St. Matthews United Methodist Church*
 Bishop George Brooks, Pastor, Mount Zion Baptist Church*
 Rev. Carden Brown, Pastor, New Light Missionary Baptist Church*
 Apostle Wayne Clapp, Pastor, Breath of God Assembly*
 Rev. Edward Chubb, Pastor, Providence Baptist Church*

Rev. Michael Fretcher, Pastor, Trinity AME Zion Church*
 Rev. Joseph Frierson, Youth Pastor, Faith Community Church*
 Rev. Gregory Headen, Pastor, Genesis Baptist Church*
 Rev. Nelson Johnson, Pastor, Faith Community Church*
 Rev. Diane Given Maffett, Pastor, St. James Presbyterian Church*

Dr. Abdel Nuriddin, Resident Imam, Al Ummat Ummat Islamic Center*
 Rev. Evo Ratliff, Pastor, Guiding Light Ministries*
 Rev. Clarence Safford, Pastor, St. Phillip AME Zion Church*
 Rev. James Woodson, Pastor, St. James Home of Fresh Start Ministry*
 Rev. William Wright, Pastor, New Zion Missionary Baptist Church*

On May 8th VOTE Against Amendment One

Ad Sponsored by the Pulpit Forum of Greensboro

* For Identification Purposes Only

As stated before, the NC NAACP and Rev. Dr. Barber were major leaders in the fight, taking up the cause before it was popular or gained momentum. They fought publicly and behind closed doors of churches against the amendment. Like SONG, their messaging struck a strong, intersectional chord from day one, with statements like: "The real marriage we should be worried about is the marriage of right wing politicians to corporations."

The forces against Amendment One were led by the people of North Carolina. As momentum grew, the CPNCF was really just resourcing it by providing a platform for people to speak their mind. Young kids in schools, black rural pastors, white country singers, small business owners, Rabbis, politicians, domestic violence advocates, Republicans, white rural librarians, and black college fraternity pledgers all came out against the amendment in videos, on Facebook, in blogs, and letters to the editor. It was many versions of the same message: this fight was never just about gay marriage, it was about dignity, fighting discrimination, protecting health rights for kids, unmarried poor people, fighting capitalism, loving our neighbors, fighting a right wing agenda of greed, ending right-wing policing of our personal lives. The work SONG and other groups had led in lifting up this message from the beginning of the campaign had taken off.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Some of the challenges and lessons we learned during the campaign are:

- Grassroots organizations can have significant impact when playing a decision-making role on a steering committee for a state-wide, grassroots effort.
- Statewide political efforts can have great national significance. While there were many factors that influenced President Obama's timing in his announcement of support of Gay Marriage--it is no coincidence that was the day after the North Carolina vote on Amendment One.
- Intersectional messages can be game changers in these kinds of campaigns for long-term political education in our grassroots communities. Their resonance can go wider and deeper than most single-issue messages.
- Single issues messages can do long term harm to progressive base building in states when these messages miss their mark and create deeper wedges between marginalized communities.
- Social media efforts play a large role in amplification of organizing--communicating messages, facts, and actions from rural site to rural site, towns to cities, states to other states, local work to national entities. It also remains hard to quantify and measure.
- There is still a need to strengthen organizing infrastructure in terms of campaign follow up; building membership and tracking it; and general base building quantification. The role on our steering committee afforded us a database of 122,000 names (state wide and national) who had supported our efforts in North Carolina during 2011 and 2012. In order to maximize usage of this list, we need resources devoted to working with this list.



•We were reminded yet again that interesting and engaging online fundraising combined with the very real timelines of a campaign, could raise a lot of grassroots money very quickly!

•In our efforts to build up our base through two different kinds of organizations, it was a challenge to make sure these new members felt connected to SONG. For example, many people joined All of Us NC, and then SONG had to re-engage those people to become involved in our work after the campaign ended.

•We wish we had had more resources to support the rural people who came out during the campaign. Limited resources and staff time made it difficult to be a regular presence in the rural communities where people were taking such large.

•The campaign was also an opportunity to train up organizers from throughout the South in popular education, outreach, and event planning (who traveled to North Carolina to work with All of Us NC).

•Acknowledging the central leadership of the faith community in the fight against Amendment One is crucial. And, SONG members and staff struggled with the over-representation of Christianity in the spiritual messaging of our work. We wanted to be able to raise a critique of patriarchy, for example, without disrespecting our allies in the church community. We wanted to acknowledge and hold space for the pain, trauma, and hurt that many members of our base have surrounding religious space--especially those who were kicked out of their families, churches, or spiritual practices because of homophobia or transphobia. Religious spaces are still uncomfortable or unsafe for many of our members, and yet these communities were crucial for our work during this campaign (All of Us NC held many workshops in donated churches, for example).

•The video SONG wrote and produced in the final week of the campaign--lifting up the theme that "Our Win is Bigger"--was seen by people all across the country and SONG received a large amount of positive feedback on that messaging. The video was watched over 13,300 times. Many rural SONG members who could not be at SONG's gathering on election day expressed appreciation that the video was made, saying things like: "Because of that video, I was able to get out of bed the day after the election." But, we also heard that some local leaders--who had poured over a year of their time, energy, and raw emotion into what was ultimately a losing campaign--were hurt by the video. Their experience didn't feel like winning; it felt like the grief that comes after a personal loss. Was creating the video still worth it to build on the momentum and blast out our messaging? We think so. But this was a moment where the tension of balancing local/regional/national needs of our organization became clear. This tension also helped us brainstorm more ways that we can work with local membership to feel connected to (and supported by) broader regional, national, and international liberation goals.

THE DAY AFTER AMENDMENT ONE: OUR WIN IS BIGGER

<http://vimeo.com/41802835>

"WE CHANGED THE LANDSCAPE OF PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT BUILDING IN NORTH CAROLINA PERMANENTLY..."

At the start of the campaign, national pollsters said that our campaign would need 508,000 votes against Amendment One to win at the ballot. In the final count, more than 840,000 North Carolinians voted against the amendment. CPNCF had said that we wanted to have one million conversations with North Carolinians about Amendment One—about why it was a wedge issue and why it hurt families--and we did. We changed the landscape of progressive movement building in North Carolina permanently, by building an incredible base, strengthening local leadership, and showing how powerful intersectional messaging can be. Through our visible organizing presence, we helped hundreds of rural LGBTQ people feel safe enough to be able to come out—knowing that they had support of other LGBTQ people and that they were valuable members of their families and communities. We helped introduce the message that we are worthy of liberation, just the way we are, and that we are willing to struggle for all people to have justice. We changed thousands of people's assumptions about who LGBTQ people are in North Carolina--showing our diversity and the beauty of our many types of families. And, from the beginning, we knew this fight would be part of our longer struggle in North Carolina and throughout the South against racism, misogyny, anti-immigrant policies, poverty, and violence. SONG is proud to continue to build on this momentum in North Carolina, creating the freedom we all need.

For more information about SONG
and our work please visit
www.southerneronnewground.org

ADDITIONAL MEDIA RESOURCES

Rev. Dr. William Barber II of the NC NAACP speaking out against Amendment One:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GrnJQ83zIo>

Accomplished columnist and blogger, Kenyon Farrow, writes about Amendment One:

http://colorlines.com/archives/2012/05/north_carolina_amendment_1.html

Musician Laurelynn Dossett and comrades music video against Amendment One: Your Family is My Family Too Vote Against Amendment One, <http://youtu.be/AUus62WK3Jg>

Rural Lesbian in Oxford, NC outs herself and speaks out against Amendment One democratic co-sponsor, Jim Crawford:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzqYxsSc8nM&feature=player_embedded

Interview on Pam's House Blend: Honoring more boots on the ground: All of Us NC organizes against Amendment One,

<http://pamshouseblend.firedoglake.com/2012/05/04/honoring-more-boots-on-the-ground-all-of-us-nc-organizes-against-amendment-one/>

"The Day After Amendment One: Our Win is Bigger" video released by SONG on May 9th

<http://vimeo.com/41802835>

"All of Us North Carolina," a documentary directed by Sowjanya Kudva, will be released in the spring of 2013 with a website that provides tool kits on relational organizing and ways to plug into intersectional political work. To find out more, contact sowjanya.kudva@gmail.com

All of Us NC was also honored with a Citizen's Award from the Independent Weekly of Durham, NC

"All of Us NC: Shaping the charge against the gay marriage amendment"

Have questions or feedback about this report?

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