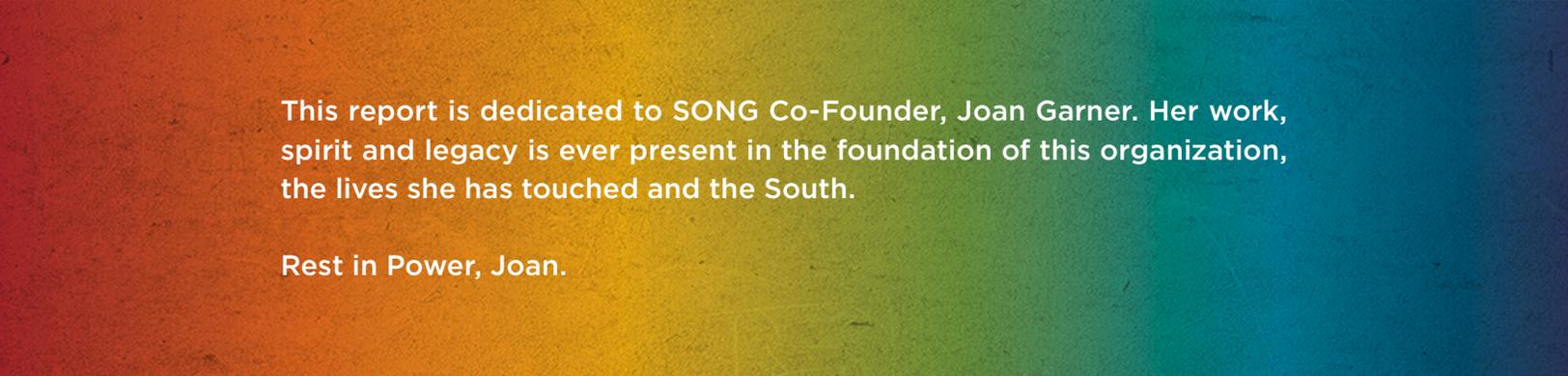


2017 END OF YEAR REPORT





This report is dedicated to SONG Co-Founder, Joan Garner. Her work, spirit and legacy is ever present in the foundation of this organization, the lives she has touched and the South.

Rest in Power, Joan.

Beloved SONG family,

Towards the end of each year, SONG prepares an End of the Year Report. A raven with a message of hope and reflection and with critique of our collective work. In 1993, the Right recognized and exploited the strategic importance of the South, while the Left and the mainstream gay movement had written it off. Three Black and three white lesbians dreamed of a kinship network of Southern queer and trans folks building power across the South.

As SONG enters its 25th year of organizing in the South, we continue to anchor our current work in the guiding principles laid out by SONG's founders: there is no victory in the fight for gender and sexual sovereignty without fighting for racial and economic justice; everyone does not have the desire or choice to leave small town and rural communities; and steeped in the legacy of resistance that started during colonization, we — Black, Latinx, people of color, indigenous, white, immigrant, rural, poor and working class, queer, transgender, and gender non-conforming people — have everything we need within and among ourselves to get free. This year, we collectively made strides in hope of liberation. We continued to lean into learning how to run campaigns, trying new strategies, and giving folks areas to plug in. We sat at the feet of our elders and learned from new folks in the work. This year, we did what we said we were going to do. Our people bailed out Black people and honored those lost with a renewed call to fight. Those who denied our humanity increased local immigration raids, targeted Black organizers, and marched in the streets with torches. They doubled down on targeting our communities, so we doubled down on our mandate of getting our people free. In order to fulfill the mandate, we trained, developed and sharpened each other's swords. When we could have chosen fear over fighting, we dug our heels in, held onto each other and chose collective liberation and interdependent struggle.

This year has also been a big year of internal transitions for SONG. As our 11-year Co-Director, Paulina Helm-Hernandez, transitions, we are reminded of what she has told us over and over again. As a base building organization, "if we're not growing, we're dying." While we are sad to see her role shift in SONG, her work, contributions and leadership within SONG and this region cannot be overstated. Also, after 7 years of small town, rural organizing while leading SONG's regional communications strategy, our brilliant Communications Director, Hermelinda Cortés has transitioned off the staff. We are so grateful for her fierce spirit, commitment, smarts, and strategic clarity, which will be imprinted on all we do for years to come. As Paulina and Hermelinda join the Forever SONG family, we are blessed to welcome new family into our field and infrastructure work allowing us to better support our base and vision.

We write a letter each year to let you know what we have been up to, but most importantly to say THANK YOU. SONG has always been about looking for those who are looking for us. Thank you for your hard work, the nourishing meals, and long hours keeping vigil. Thank you for seeking us out and showing up with open hands and generous spirits.

Mary Hooks

Roberto Tijerina

SONG Co-Directors



SONG'S AGENDA

AT THE TOP OF THIS YEAR, SONG, like many of you, found ourselves contending with malicious leadership that continuously brought fear and pain to our communities, rammed through terrifying policies, seeded chaos and national infighting as our government at all levels and world grew more and more starkly defined. We patiently answered calls and emails as national figures, organizations and think pieces began to name the role of the South. We saw time and time again the courage of our people outpace elected leadership, who are still somehow hoping that safety will come with moderation or compromise. We have been pushed, tested and forced to protect and defend all things sacred. This year not only tested us, but also proved that our people, our agenda and our faith in this work is unshakeable.

From gay bars, to board rooms, to community meetings, and dinner tables, we collectively asked ourselves: *What does this moment call upon us? When we all are under attack, how do we remain clear on the vision of our ancestors, our dreams for the present and hopes for future generations?*

We decided to focus our Free From Fear campaigns on one demand: to end money bail and pretrial detention across the South. We stepped into our vision of using the bail outs as a tactic to learn the terrain of our campaign fights. Black Mama's Bail Out and Black August Bail Out gave us a chance to not only renew our faith in each other and our communities, but to make a tangible impact in lives across the region. From our Bail Out Actions to saying the names of those we lost in cages and detention centers, we made an intentional effort to honor the tradition of collectively buying each other's freedom and those who came before us.

As we complete this year and look onward towards 2018, we reflect on 25 years of multi-issue and multiracial organizing in the South. SONG's legacy and future lies within the fabric of our kin, strength of membership and depth of our vision. For 25 years, we have found home within each other while remembering the importance of building power across states. As this current administration labels Black organizers as identity-based extremists for working against state-sanctioned violence, strips immigrants from the only lives and communities they have known, and continues to set a breeding place for anti-trans, anti-queer hate bills on the basis of religious freedom, we cannot forget the South has historically been used as a testing ground for anti-trans, anti-queer, anti-Black and anti-immigrant policies and sentiments for national political leverage and combat. The rhetoric and tactics of this current administration is not unprecedented. This land, our elders and our ancestors have seen this before in a variety of manifestations. But just like those who have come before us, we also have an agenda.

SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR



11,000 Members & Supporters



4,500 folks contributing across the region



150 SONG Member Leaders



9 SONG bail out sites over 2 Rounds



3 active campaigns: Atlanta, Durham, and Richmond

FREE FROM FEAR CAMPAIGNS + DIRECT ACTION ORGANIZING

End Money Bail Campaigns

- Through Black Mama's Bail Out and Black August Bail Out, we bailed out over 120 Black people from Southern jails and reunited them with their families and communities.
- Current #EndMoneyBail campaigns in Atlanta, GA and Durham, NC
- #EndMoneyBail campaign development in Eastern NC, Richmond, Virginia, Tennessee and Louisiana

Dismantle ICE and Polimigra

- Honoring those lost as a result of the Prison Industrial Complex on Dia de Los Muertos
- GA Not1More Deportation Coalition
- Collaboration with Mijente

Local Anti-Criminalization Campaigns

- Currently active in Richmond, VA

COALITIONS AND ALLIANCES

Transgender Law Center @ SONG Collaboration
 Movement for Black Lives
 National Bail Out Coalition
 Cultural and Political Partnership with AgitArte
 Mijente

TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND KINSHIP

Building, Connecting and Training our Base:

Gaycation, Queer South Revival (Annual Membership Meeting), Out South (LGBTQ + Anti-Criminalization Coalitional Convening), and Bayard Rustin (Black and People of Color Membership Convening)

Regional Membership Calls, Trainings and Webinars

- Participatory Defense Training by Silicon Valley Debug
- Social Service Skillshare by Dr. Nubian Sun

Cultural Organizing

- Collectively developed Cash Bail Blues Cantastoria (picture storytelling)
- Developed guerilla theater techniques learned from AgitArte



4,183
DONATIONS
this year



3,661
FIRST-TIME
donors



170
SUSTAINING
monthly donors



REFLECTIONS OF 2017

FROM OUR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

“We ended up working on one woman’s case who was denied bond initially, appealed, had her bond set at \$75,000. We were planning to use \$7,500 to pay the bondsperson, but the judge set additional conditions that the family could not meet including home electronic monitoring (which costs \$420/month) and her mother living in Charlottesville with her (the family is in Chicago). The mundane and dehumanizing denial of this woman’s bond at her first hearing communicated a very powerful message of the urgency of this work here.”

- SONG’s Charlottesville, Virginia crew post-Black Mama’s Bail Out

After 6 months, the crew was able to utilize skills learned from the Silicon Valley Debug’s Participatory Defense webinar offered to SONG members to get this woman free and home to her family!

“We recognized that these mamas had NO ONE, but us. They’ve been homeless and struggling with addiction and other traumas for such a long time that no one believes in their humanity anymore. Seeing the difference that it makes to just have one person believe in your humanity. They were ready to fight for their lives and they have so much on the line. Recognizing that when we say prison abolition, we really mean prison is not a good system for anyone regardless of what you’ve done.”

- SONG’s Charlotte, North Carolina crew post-Black Mama’s Bail Out

“Initially, our campaign was calling to end for-profit policing. Now, the profits we’re targeting are not citation quotas, but the actual money bail system. We were able to highlight the crisis that money bail inflicts upon our people by anchoring 2 bailouts wherein we raised funds and helped bring home dozens of Black mothers and caregivers. While there are no current plans for any bailouts in this last quarter of 2017, we have had court watching training sessions and started circulating a petition to end money bail in the Greater Atlanta area.”

- Amina Abdul-Jalil Atlanta, GA Organizing Fellow

“We have created work around 3 different areas of interest including cultural organizing, protect and defend work and campaign development. The Free from Fear campaign in Richmond has been a long learning process in how to create campaigns and how to keep our members motivated. Along with that work we’ve joined a coalition that created a trans-affirming police training for police officers to help reduce the everyday harm our people face. We’ve gone from focusing on creating a Community Review Board to being a part of the Black August Bail Out and looking for ways to combine those two efforts.”

- Micky Jordan, Richmond, VA Organizing Fellow

“In January, I started as a Cultural Organizing Fellow. We are still on a trial and error journey to encapsulate our regional brilliance and passion, but have made significant strides in bringing forth our membership’s creativity to base build, providing political education and moving our campaigns forward with creative direct action. Our cultural production and training has facilitated healing, connection, respite, and rejuvenation. Most notable is the creation and distribution of the Cash Bail Blues Cantastoria (picture storytelling with a song taught to us by AgitArte). The full cantastoria debuted at Gaycation and four sites received panels to perform the cantastoria with their own local flare including Richmond, Asheville, Atlanta, and Durham. Cultural organizing will remain an important element of SONG’s work as a means to activate our base in the collective vision for liberation in our lifetime.”

- Grace Nichols, Cultural Organizing Fellow



SONG'S WISHES

YOU ALL ARE THE REASON SONG IS REACHING ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2018.

Because of countless members and supporters, the Forever SONG family, sister organizations, and comrades across the country who said that SONG's vision, work, and leadership is deeply needed in this time. This year, the depth of our people's generosity fueled SONG's organizing like never before. From passing the hat and collection plate, to honoring those who have mothered them, and to giving tribute to traditions of Black liberation, thousands of people were moved to give to the vision of the Black Mama's Bail Out and Black August Bail Out. Hundreds more of you have fed the coals of our work through donations that sustained our crucial infrastructure. Your support literally keeps the lights on, brings us together, allows us to find our people, grow our team, and build our political home to build our collective power to transform our region.

In honor of how far we have come and how far we have to go, we ask you to renew your commitment to movement and to SONG. In honor of our 25th anniversary of organizing in the South, we are working to raise \$125,000. If you are able, can you give \$125 today? If you are not yet a SONG member, now is the time to become one.

DONATE

**AND BECOME A MONTHLY
DONOR OF \$25.**

SIGN UP

**TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP
OR BECOME A LIFETIME FOREVER SONG MEMBER**

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a dark t-shirt, is pointing her right hand towards a wall. The wall is covered with several posters or drawings. One poster on the right has the text 'UN CUENTO DE' visible. The background is a mix of dark and light tones, with a diagonal split between a dark blue/black area on the left and a lighter grey area on the right.

THIS YEAR AND EACH YEAR, WE CALL ON EACH OTHER TO...

EMBRACE LEADERSHIP THAT BUILDS THE VISION OF FREE FROM FEAR AS A CAMPAIGN, AS A CONCEPT, AND AS A DREAM

Wage grace and humility instead of ego and scarcity. Be generous with each other while practicing accountability.

GRAPPLE WITH HOW TO ADVANCE, ESCALATE, AND WIN CAMPAIGNS EVEN WHEN WE DON'T AGREE

Find clarity in the urgency of the moment of police and state violence of worldwide white supremacy and xenophobia.

AVOID THE ALLURE OF LIVING IN TEXTBOOKS AND THEORY AT THE EXPENSE OF MOVING TOGETHER IN ACTION

Build and enact strategies that match the depth of the violence we face.

TAKE RISKS AND MOVE BOLDLY FOR BLACK LIVES, FOR TRANS AND QUEER LIBERATION, FOR NOT ONE MORE DEPORTATION

Believe in the power of innovation and creativity to combat cynicism and heartbreak.

ACKNOWLEDGE OUR BRUISES AND SCARS WITHOUT RELYING ON THEM TO DETERMINE OUR FUTURE, THE SCAFFOLDING OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS, OR OUR TYPE OF LEADERSHIP

Deny fundamentalism as a pathway forward.

BRING CRITIQUE WITH PROBLEM-SOLVING AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS NOT MASKED BY SHADE, OUR HURT OR OUR INJURY



**THANK
YOU!**

SONG IS PART OF AN ECOLOGY OF MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS. We encourage you to support the work of social justice organizations in your town or city. We have always understood leadership to be those that do what they say they are going to do, those that come early and stay late, that show up time and time again. Those who approach SONG and this work with open hands. We are blessed that there are too many of these leaders inside of SONG to name. From our Campaign Crews who understand our people are worth the day to day grind, to our Bail Out Crews making necessary interventions on the Prison Industrial Complex, to our members and supporters who have shouted their love of SONG across the region, to our Forever SONG family for their unconditional love, to our donors who financially support our vision, and to our founders who continuously pour into SONG’s leadership, membership and vision.

