

# SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND 20 YEARS NOW MORE THAN EVER



## END OF YEAR REPORT 2013

# COME OUT. DESTROY FEAR. UNLEASH POWER

This year has been marked by SONG's hard work to come together, destroy fear, and unleash power. The heart of the history of the Queer Liberation struggle has been about the will to take our lives back in order to live on our terms. We often say, "We are looking for the people who are looking for us." That has never been truer than this year. People all over the South have come forth out of wood-paneled gay bars, schools, churches, mosques, town halls, immigrant rights organizations, and Black led freedom traditions to build with us. We are finding our people, inspiring them to come out of hiding to see how much is possible beyond the horizon of our fear, and building a base that understands that our true power is collective power. We are strengthening our muscle to confront the systems that brutalize us because they must come down and because it makes us stronger. For the last two years we have been working to build '21st Century BeLoved Community'—acknowledging that the need to build it anew in the South, and strengthen it where it is already growing here, is crucial to our organizing success. To us this means that community building across difference, political education, and collective participation are key to how we organize and that all of these parts must be combined to confront power.



# AMPLIFICATION & COMMUNICATION

SONG partnered with Race Forward (formerly Applied Research Center), to convene the Better Together cohort, a set of organizations working at the intersection of LGBTQ and racial justice to build our collective stories of the South, build our communications skills, and deepen our relationships across the region. SONG Co-Directors Caitlin Breedlove and Paulina Helm-Hernandez also spent the month of July at the CrossCurrents Colloquium studying and writing with a group of academics, theologians and activists at Union Seminary, as guests of CrossCurrents magazine and Auburn Seminary. They are working on a long-term writing project that looks at the intersections of Queer resiliency, spirit building, and a variety of Liberation-based theologies (Queer, Black, Pagan, Latin American, Indigenous, etc.) Finally, as 21st Century organizers and movement builders we are invested in spreading SONG's message and invitation to action in Liberation movements far and wide. This year we did just that by creating and releasing the Marry the Movement and the Queering Immigration videos that went viral. Both videos, with over 20,000 views to date, seek to educate and influence LGBTQ communities and broader circles about a Queer Liberation agenda and how it works in real time.



# QUEERING IMMIGRATION

The Williams Institute now reports that an estimated 267,000 LGBTQ Immigrants in the U.S. are living in fear due to being undocumented.\* SONG's on-going work at the intersection of LGBTQ and Immigrant rights organizing seeks the safety and self-determination of our communities beyond borders and papers. This year we have worked towards these goals by joining the steering committee of the Southeast Immigrant Rights Network (SEIRN) to build power between groups working on immigration in our region and working with the #not1more campaign under the leadership of NDLO (National Day Laborers Organizing Network) and GLAHR (Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights) and in partnership with Project South. Four individual leaders from SONG were arrested with eleven from GLAHR to bring LGBTQ attention to the need to end deportations and to demand that President Obama expand DACA for all, as part of the #shutdownICE actions happening all over the country. Thanks to the support of many of you, all of the leaders were released from the ICE detention center without any arrestees having to show their papers. Finally, in addition to having a strong SONG presence at the largest annual LGBTQ activist gathering in the U.S., Creating Change, held in Atlanta this year, our Co-Director Paulina Helm-Hernandez addressed a 3,000 person audience to cut to the heart of the immigration debate—naming that this struggle is not about proving we are 'Americans', but about building the strength of our people to fight for our own lives on our terms.

*\*[http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/11/how\\_immigration\\_reform\\_could\\_benefit\\_lgbt\\_people.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/11/how_immigration_reform_could_benefit_lgbt_people.html)*

# QUEERING BIG PLACES AND SMALL SPACES

Small town and rural LGBTQ people are among the most isolated in our country and yet there are less than five visible LGBTQ programs for rural people in the entire U.S. SONG is dedicated to finding our people and building our power to create safety regardless of if we live in the biggest cities in the South or the smallest rural counties. This year we conducted research, gathered over 60 people at the Queering Small Spaces workshop at Creating Change, held the Small Town Crossroads Summit to convene other Southern groups doing intersectional rural work, finished our report to document this gathering, and finalized our plan to roll out our small town and rural organizing program in 2014. Because we know, as one SONG member said, "the places we love might not love us back," we are grounding the program in community organizing, resilience training, and SONG's established values and principles to work at the intersections of identities and issues. The goal is to to create BeLoved Community in small towns and rural communities, with LGBTQ people in leadership, using cultural events, a re-vamped SONG organizing school, local and regional media projects, and project and campaign development to build base and build skills.



# OUR CAMPAIGNS

Just as the Social Forum process has called us to the vision that 'Another World is Possible', we believe that 'Another Campaign is Possible' For too long, LGBTQ organizing campaigns in the South have often done little to build our collective strength. They have been named and executed primarily by national LGBTQ organizations that have promptly packed up and left after the campaign was over. We know that there is another way, because we see other groups around the country finding other ways. We are rolling out a regional campaign in four Southern sites (Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia) to reduce the hostile and violent climates that our LGBTQ, of Color and Immigrant youth experience every day. More than 80 SONG members are taking leadership in the campaign and are building with their local communities to create coalitions and sharpen local demands that will be coordinated across the region, defend our people now, and build power for our futures.

# SONG WELCOMES GWEN AND JAZZ

This year SONG has been lucky enough to welcome Jazzmin, our new Alabama organizer, and Gwen, our new North Carolina organizer, to our staff. Jazzmin was a SONG intern before joining our staff. Gwen comes to us out of her substantial work at the intersections of LGBTQ justice and faith work, specifically in African-American communities. We are so lucky to have both of them! These additions bring us to a full and rowdy staff of 11.

# SOUTHERN FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

For many years, we have been building with the Southern Movement Alliance, anchored by Project South. We prioritize the convening and organizing drives as a member of the alliance, because it gives us a chance to build deeply with Black and poor-led forces in the South that believe in our shared collective struggle and are willing to fight together to build our power. This year in addition to building joint Southern Movement Assemblies (with 45 SONG members and staff attending) in both Dothan, AL, and Jacksonville, FL, we joined the SMA in the aftermath of the Trayvon Martin/George Zimmerman verdict for the 100 mile Walk4Dignity to Sanford, FL to build solidarity with Black communities in Florida.

# FIRST ANNUAL SONG GAYCATION

Already on the calendar for next year, the GayCation created a space across race, class, culture, gender, age, and sexuality for the SONG family/general membership to gather for 3 days of organizing, joy, renewal and culture. We made sure everybody could make it regardless of income, and made space for our kids to be wrapped up in SONG for one long, soulful party. This is one way we are working to build a membership with the strength, courage, political education, power and agility to match the moment—and the relationships to each other to make our collective work count.



Photo: 2013 SONG Board and Staff

Each year we build a bigger and more powerful kindred force than the year before. We know that in 2013 we couldn't have done it without you. Our wholeness depends on our collective will to come out, destroy fear, and unleash power. We hope that you will continue to support our work by becoming a SONG member or renewing membership in 2014.

*With great gratitude,  
SONG Board and Staff*

You can support our work by becoming a member or renewing your SONG membership through a one-time annual or monthly donation. Membership in SONG connects you with thousands of other LGBTQ loving and justice minded folks throughout the South. From campouts to membership gatherings to cultural work and convenings, people stay with SONG for decades because we know that we can't be whole by ourselves and that our spiritual resiliency comes from one another.

**SIGN-UP & RENEW ONLINE AT [WWW.SOUTHERNERSONNEWGROUND.ORG](http://WWW.SOUTHERNERSONNEWGROUND.ORG)**  
**-OR-**

**CALL THE SONG OFFICE AT 404.549.8628**

**80 MEMBER LEADERS**      **11 STAFF**

**2500 SUPPORTERS & MEMBERS**

**OUR PEOPLE ARE OUR POWER**

**Thank you to our funders and our major donors for their generous support and to our members, family, friends, and allies who make our work possible.**

*Photos from SONG Staff, Board, and Members: Angela Hill, Jenna Lyles, Hermelinda Cortes, Beck Schillizzi, Jazz Franklin, Mary Hooks, Jessica Jude, and Jillian Brandl*



[www.southerneronnewground.org](http://www.southerneronnewground.org)

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# 2014

MEMBERSHIP GATHERINGS  
SAVE THE DATES

## Second Annual Gaycation

JUNE 12-14  
LOCATION TBA

## Bayard Rustin Convening

People of Color Membership Retreat

OCTOBER 3-5  
LOCATION TBA

Want to be involved in helping to make  
these membership events happen?  
Contact [kate@southernersonnewground.org](mailto:kate@southernersonnewground.org)

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