

SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND

Membership Guidebook



APRIL 2015



THE ONLY MAGIC WE HAVE
IS WHAT WE MAKE IN OURSELVES,
THE MUSCLES WE BUILD UP
ON THE INSIDE, THE SENSE OF BELIEF
WE CREATE FROM NOTHING.

DOROTHY ALLISON

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ADDENDUM: SONG Key Documents

Role of White People in this Time: <http://wp.me/a1CBWf-q3>

Theory of Change: <http://wp.me/a1CBWf-q0>

Our People are Worth The Risk: <http://wp.me/a1CBWf-78>

Code of Conduct: <http://wp.me/a1CBWf-73>

Intersectional Coalitions and Campaigns: <http://wp.me/a1CBWf-pU>

Coalitions and Alliances Conduct: <http://wp.me/a1CBWf-pT>

Glossary: <http://wp.me/a1CBWf-pE>

All Supplementary SONG documents can be found on the Members Only section of the website.

Layout design by Naomi Ullian with editing by Hermelinda Cortes + Kate Shapiro.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook is a first attempt to centralize and document SONG's work and approach when orienting new members and member leaders. We hope it can serve as a touchstone for SONG leaders to build off of as they engage with SONG throughout the South and on many fronts of struggle.

It is also an overview of SONG's work and methods. If and when you and your crew begin to build a SONG organizing site, there are additional resources and processes you will go through with SONG staff and leadership to support your local work. This Guidebook is by no means exhaustive.

Finally, this guidebook is for our members, the people who give meaning to SONG and who are engaged in the collective, life-giving work of organizing for Queer Liberation.



SONG'S VISION, MISSION AND HISTORY

VISION

SONG imagines a sustainable South that embodies the best of its freedom traditions and works towards the transformation of our economic, social, spiritual, and political relationships. We envision a multi-issue southern justice movement that unites us across class, age, race, ability, gender, immigration status, and sexuality; a movement in which LGBTQ people – poor and working class, immigrant, people of color, rural – take our rightful place as leaders, shaping our region's legacy and future. We are committed to restoring a way of being that recognizes our collective humanity and dependence on the Earth.

MISSION

SONG is a home for LGBTQ liberation across all lines of race, class, ability, age, culture, gender, and sexuality in the South. We build, sustain, and connect a southern regional base of LGBTQ people in order to transform the region through strategic projects and community organizing campaigns developed in response to the current conditions in our communities. SONG builds this movement through leadership development, intersectional analysis, and organizing.

HISTORY

The first conversations about forming Southerners On New Ground came about in 1992, when a multi-racial group of six Southern lesbians came together at Creating Change in Durham, NC, and dared to talk about LGBTQ people and economics in the same breath. Many told them that talking about things like poverty, racism, and solidarity between oppressed people worldwide was a “waste of time,” but the group insisted that these conversations were critical LGBTQ issues, vital to the South, and could not be ignored. Their insight, courage, and belief that every human being matters and that we are part of one another led to the founding of SONG in 1993.

Since that time, SONG has been known both regionally and nationally for its organizing and training work across issues of race, class, gender, culture and sexuality with both LGBTQ people and allies. SONG works to build and maintain a Southern LGBTQ infrastructure strong enough to combat the Southern-specific strategy of the right wing to divide and conquer Southern oppressed communities. During SONG's 20-year existence, it has served as a hub and an igniting force for many organizing, political analysis, and leadership development projects. The organization is currently moving forward with greater focus on campaign work than ever before, and with a renewed push to build power through the recruitment, expansion and retention of a base of Southern LGBTQ organizers and visionaries.

WHY IS SONG A REGIONAL ORGANIZATION? WHY DO WE HAVE A REGIONAL STAFF?

SONG believes that the South is a key region for building movement power in the 21st century, as it has been in other times. Oppressive forces have had a regional strategy for the South—so we have one, too. That means that instead of pitting state against state, or Appalachia against the Deep South, we seek to build leadership, base, alliance and organizing in sites and between them. While it is very difficult to build and resource a regional infrastructure, our time, conditions, and communities need one in order to achieve the kind of change we believe necessary.

SONG PRINCIPLES: BELIEFS OUR WORK IS BASED ON

- Every person is worthy of dignity and respect.
- We are all part of one another.
- People are experts on their own lives, and have the right to self-determination. It is through people's stories that we learn the conditions needed for change, hope, resiliency, and survival.
- Community Organizing is the best way we know to build power for oppressed people. SONG supports organizing that builds collective power and leadership among all involved and that begins with people who are most targeted by injustice.
- Race, Class, Culture, Gender and Sexuality are intrinsically connected. Oppression is systemic and intersected, as are its methods and the people targeted by it. Alignment and solidarity among those who experience injustice provide the possibility of broad-based social change.
- Unjust power divides and harms us. Shared power and resources are the foundation of liberation built on justice. As Gandhi said: "Every step towards liberation must have liberation in it."
- There is no liberation, not even survival, in isolation. Our liberation depends on us coming together across lines of difference. Our hope for change is bringing people together in multi-issue, multi-cultural community organizing.
- As people, we are often asked to fragment our multiple identities. We believe everyone should be able to bring their full selves to this work.
- In LGBTQ organizing, people of color, women, trans people, rural people, immigrants and low-income people are often marginalized. We believe WE must be central.
- Attacks on LGBTQ people threaten the entire social change agenda, and we work to put LGBTQ issues into a rightful place. Likewise, as classism, racism and ableism threaten the LGBTQ movement, we work to put all of these social justice issues in their rightful place.
- Rural areas and small towns are integral to building a strong movement and we work to bring appropriate resources and strategies to these areas, as they are traditionally under-resourced.
- SONG develops holistic spaces and practices that welcome each person's whole self, create a culture of hope, encourage the development of one's best self, and inspire vision for the combined individual and collective good.
- Our work is about transformation. We seek to build a just, fair, and liberated society that meets the needs of its people. SONG chooses to organize around longing, desire, and hope before anger and fear. Sometimes we are angry and heart broken, but our work comes forth from a place of celebration and love for our communities.

SONG'S 5 PRIMARY METHODS FOR MOVEMENT BUILDING

The following methodologies are HOW we go about the process of Queer Liberation, according to our theory of change. These are the tools we use to build a Southern intersectional LGBTQ justice movement. SONG's Theory of Change can be found in the members only section of the website. A Theory of Change is philosophy of how different organizations or movements believe social change happens.

BASE BUILDING

SONG is a base building organization. This means that we are always working to increase the amount of people who are connected to SONG, affected by our issues, who know about SONG and want to be part of building a Queer Liberation agenda in the South. Our base is our foundation and the experiences, work and leadership of this base is what makes SONG possible. Once people are part of our base they can move into and through the organization in a variety of ways - as members, member leaders, supporters, or allies. This is also what gives us our power - the connecting and building of relationships and work amongst thousands of LGBTQ people, not just a few people.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications plays a vital role in our work as a Southern regional organization. It is a way that we break isolation, connect our base, and share what we believe with the broader Southern, and sometimes national, LGBTQ Community. Communications includes many methods and many audiences. It includes writing and analyzing email updates about SONG's work, maintaining our website, working with the mainstream media (i.e., getting articles and pieces printed), producing SONG videos, establishing a social media presence, and more. These are all ways that we can amplify or INCREASE our impact, make sure that our membership in different areas of the region and organization knows what's happening in other places, and to make key interventions and shift the stories told about our communities and our lives.

DIRECT ACTION ORGANIZING

Community organizing is one of the greatest tools we have to build people power and change the course of our lives. At its simplest organizing is 'Unite to Fight,' meaning we bring together institutionally oppressed peoples to work collectively to demand changes of institutional power.

POLITICAL EDUCATION

Political education is a key part of SONG developing leadership. Political education means building our shared consciousness or a deeper understanding of what is happening in the world, how it came to be, and what the heck we can do about it. We build our collective consciousness through political education by studying and analyzing power, history, social movements, etc. We reference political education in this way: 'developing a base of conscious leaders acting as catalysts and incubators of collective action.'

COALITIONS & ALLIANCES

Movement-building organizations must join forces in order to leverage the power we need to have the impact we want. As Mandy Carter always say, "We must believe in Team Justice versus Just Us." This is especially important as our different communities facing structural oppression have been falsely and strategically separated across issue and identity for too long. Because SONG's work has always been to build trust and alliances across communities and issues, we use the methodology of formally partnering with other organizations in coalitions, alliances, and partnerships.

CURRENT AREAS OF WORK (2015)

REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP

SONG's membership structure connects Southern LGBTQ people to each other and to a regional movement for justice and safety for all LGBTQ people. SONG's membership work incites culture change, breaks the isolation so many of us feel, helps us to live our truths out loud, and helps us develop or leverage organizing skills, connections, and know-how to transform our hometowns and cities. Overall, we work to build, connect and amplify Southern LGBTQ leadership for liberation. Key areas of regional membership:

COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA & ANALYSIS

- * Regular updates on relevant regional happenings to members via SONG's website and social media.
- * Periodic release of intersectional analysis pieces about timely and urgent issues. This includes shorter communiqués about current events and in-depth reports based on both strategic listening and intentional reflection of our organizing.
- * Amplifying the work of SONG members through our website and social media as appropriate.

TOOLS & TRAINING TO SUPPORT LOCAL ORGANIZING

Contact Team Membership: takeaction@southernersonnewground.org

- * LGBTQ Film Series [Toolkit!]
- * People's Movement Assemblies & Town Halls [Toolkit] work to engage local LGBTQ people to build collective consciousness and solutions to the conditions of criminalization.
- * Organizing Schools: This three-day training builds concrete organizing skills, shared political analysis, and culture and resiliency tools for new to experienced organizers who want to develop and sharpen their leadership skills.
- * Technical Assistance: We provide specific support to our membership who organize or hope to organize around criminalization in their town. In addition we recognize the different needs and climate for small town southern organizing and provide specialized support for our members and base in towns of 50,000 people or less.

REGIONAL CONVENINGS AND GATHERINGS

SONG membership convenings are a key way for us to come together as a regional organization. Different convenings have different functions but all serve to build our consciousness, strengthen our organizing, break isolation and be debaucherous.

Gaycation brings together between 90-120 SONG members for three nights of intergenerational, multi-racial, LGBTQ Southern magic. From elder story circles, to late night twerking competitions by the pool, to political discussions and skill shares, it is also a place where we hold our annual regional membership meeting in order to build and share work with our regional membership.

The **Bayard Rustin Convening** brings together 30-50 LGBTQ people of color from SONG's membership. Building on the legacy of Bayard Rustin, this convening centers the leadership and experiences of LGBTQ people of color in order to build organizing skills that work to challenge white supremacy and build collective power for ALL communities of color.

Out South is multi-racial gathering of Southern LGBTQ leaders [with a reach far beyond SONG's membership] who come together in order to build shared strategies, analysis, and organizing skills for Southern LGBTQ-led organizing.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE:

SONG staff help to coordinate a number of working groups and individual members who contribute time, expertise, brilliance and capacity toward SONG's Regional Infrastructure, which benefits all parts of the organization, in the following areas:

- o Make It Rain Fundraising Crew
- o Tech and Communications
- o Multi-Lingual

Staff Contact: Elias Lyles, elias@southernersonnewground.org

FREE FROM FEAR CAMPAIGNS

SONG is building local Free From Fear organizing campaigns that both address issues of criminalization and connect to regional and national strategy to shift the power and culture in Southern cities. Currently, SONG is:

- Piloting a campaign in Durham, NC, to pass a Free From Fear anti-discrimination ordinance through the City Council that would hold the police and city council accountable for profiling based on race, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, and immigration status. This campaign seeks to institute policy at the municipal level and change local understandings of public safety.
- Working with SONG membership in other cities across the South to assess the possibility of changing policy and culture around criminalization in those places.
- Joining the Get Your Rights Network nationally to work with and learn from other LGBTQ people of color-led organizations that have been combating criminalization through organizing campaigns for decades.

Staff Contact: Salem Acuña, Regional Organizer, salem@southernersonnewground.org

STRATEGIC COALITIONS & ALLIANCES

SONG must work with other organizations, groups and leaders in order to build mass-based people power and social change. We are committed to advancing regional, national and international liberation movements and we understand that much of the policy, culture and systems change work we seek to advance has to happen in collaboration with other organizations and groups that share our values and represent other affected communities. We recognize that there is brilliant LGBTQ leadership in every movement, not just the LGBTQ-specific movement.

Some of the alliances within which SONG is currently working in order to advance social change include:

Black Lives Matter

Southeast Immigrant Rights Network (SEIRN)

Get Your Rights Network

Transgender Law Center

[Note: See Coalition & Alliances Documents (both of them)]

membership

southernersonnewground.org

SONG builds, sustains, and connects a regional base of LGBTQ people to each other and to a regional movement for justice and safety.

We offer our membership...



TOOLS
&
CURRICULUM

TRAININGS

GATHERINGS
&
CONVENINGS

REGIONAL
COMMUNICATIONS

LOCAL
ORGANIZING
SUPPORT

ANALYSIS

to help build
collective
power

THROUGH

SONG

southernersonnewground.org

Southerners On New Ground is a home for LGBTQ liberation across all lines of race, class, abilities, age, culture, gender, and sexuality in the South. We build, sustain, and connect a southern regional base of LGBTQ people in order to transform the region through strategic projects and campaigns developed in response to the current conditions in our communities.

5 METHODS

SONG LEADERS (MEMBERS, BOARD & STAFF)

Carry out the work to make SONG's vision a reality.
We play different roles at different times to make this possible.
Our work grows and shifts according to the needs of our communities.

base building
communications
direct action organizing
political education
coalitions & alliances

INFRASTRUCTURE

Working groups contribute time, expertise, brilliance and capacity toward SONG's regional infrastructure, which includes fundraising, tech and communications, and multilingual.

FREE FROM FEAR CAMPAIGNS

Local Free From Fear organizing campaigns address issues of criminalization and connect to regional and national strategy to shift the power and culture in Southern cities.

KINSHIP & CULTURE

SONG's membership work incites culture change, breaks the isolation so many of us feel, helps us to live our truths out loud, and helps us develop or leverage organizing skills, connections, and know-how to transform our hometowns and cities.

THE LIFE & TIMES OF A SONG MEMBER ON A MISSION: HOW YOU NEXT LEVEL IN THIS VIDEO GAME!

1. Meet SONG.
2. Interact with SONG.
3. Become a member.
4. Build a crew and start doing things [so many options!]
- Shared Project, Assembly, Organizing School, Mini-Campaign!
5. If you want to take it to the next level: Work with SONG Regional to help you and your crew establish a more formal SONG chapter
6. Within your chapter you will have Members and Member Leaders - member leaders are the ones developing, executing and evaluating the plan!
7. If for SOME reason you and your folks are interested in starting a chapter and haven't talked to SONG about it - now would be a great time to do so!



MEMBERSHIP ROLES CHART

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION + COMMITMENT

	BENEFITS	COMMITMENTS & ROLE	GOVERNANCE
SUPPORTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to participate in Southern LGBTQ liberation movement - Regular work updates - Volunteering with SONG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support of SONG's regional vision + values 	
DONOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receive SONG communications via email or over social media - Opportunities to for involvement in organizing and convenings - Volunteer with SONG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support of SONG's regional vision + values 	
GENERAL MEMBER	<p>Benefits above, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receive member packet + mailing, as well as Members Only resources on Website + Membership Guidebook - Priority for training + gatherings - Connection to Queer Liberationists across region + country - Offer input at General Membership meetings or Regional Membership Assemblies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signed up as a SONG Member - Understand and adhere to SONG's regional vision and values - Pay dues or commit to contribute to the life + work of SONG annually - Take action with SONG at least 3 times / year! Supporting Local Campaign Work, throwing a house party, Queer Liberation Film Screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informed of SONG's annual priorities + plans - Provide input + direction at General Membership Meetings or Assemblies - While out of region members are welcomed, the council + experience of LGBTQ Southern people are prioritized in SONG's direction + decisionmaking.
MEMBER LEADER SONG members who are LEADING local organizing with SONG and/or are part of a SONG Regional Working Group	<p>Receive the benefits of Members, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receive training in LGBTQ organizing - Ongoing leadership development + support [Organizing School, Organizing 101] - Access to communication systems as appropriate - Connection opportunities to work with movement elders + leaders in network - Opportunities to attend convergences hosted by other organizations on behalf of SONG - Occasional Member Leader gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand and adhere to SONG regionals vision, values - Signs SONG's Core Leadership Agreements and Code of Conduct - Demonstrated ability and work ethic for shared work including: Base Building, Political Education, Meeting Facilitation, Planning + Evaluation - Work with other member leaders to develop some local leadership body - Work with regional to shape direction + strategy of local work and its adherence to SONG's regional scope - Engage in broader regional movement building (ex. Black Lives Matter Cohort, Not 1 More, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consulted on SONG priorities and plans - Informed on Regional Campaign + Programmatic Goals + Plan - Decide on and lead SONG work that adheres to SONG values + strategies in sites without SONG staff or board members - Represent SONG in local, regional, national places

SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO AS A MEMBER, EVEN IF YOU ARE FEELING ALONE

Join our Regional Conference Calls. SONG member conference calls happen at least 6 times a year! Because we are a regional organization, conference calls are one of the best tools we have to stay connected. These can be great opportunities to get updated, build analysis, hear what's going on in the region, connect around a shared area of work or interest: Free From Fear Campaigns, SONG's work with Black Lives Matter, Queering Immigration, Anti-Criminalization, and more.

Attend a Regional Convening or Convergence. SONG member convergences are our regional gatherings (see above). SONG members receive priority.

Join our calls to action. Numerous calls to action go out to our membership throughout the year from #BlackLivesMatter to Trans Day of Remembrance to #Reclaiming MLK Day. These are great ways to raise visibility around the issues that affect our lives and demonstrate support and connection to other SONG members in other parts of the region.

Check out the Member's Only Section of the Website. Here, you will find tools specifically designed to support you in doing work in your town. It covers everything from how to plan your own event, make puppets, hold a film screening, hold a people's assembly, etc. See something you are interested in or looking for something you don't see? Give us a call.

Host a LGBTQ Film Screening. Whether you host it in your home, at the library or at a different venue, we have found films to be a great

Want to organize against criminalization?

Give us a ring and we can support you in taking the first steps - building a crew, getting the pulse of the community, setting some goals and doing the thing!

Our People's Assembly Toolkit and Organizing School are designed to help you build a Free From Fear Campaign in your town!

Join a Regional Working Group. We know you have talents and skills to share and we would love for you to share them with SONG. We have a number of working groups you can join from Multi-Lingual Capacity Building to Tech and Design to Communications to Fundraising (Make it Rain!) Team

Host a house party. Sign up some of your friends as monthly donors! Have a dinner and discussion around Queer Liberation. Pass the hat to fund a local Film Series

Get up in social media! Check us out on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter! If you are in SC, GA, NC, VA or AL join our facebook groups. You can follow us on Instagram and Twitter @ignitekindred.

See if there is SONG work happening in your area. Give us a call and we can tell you what we know and connect you with local folks!

THE COMPLICATIONS OF A MOVING TRAIN: LEADERSHIP ROLES & STRUCTURE

In this section we attempt to lay out in as clear a way as possible SONG's current leadership structure, including members, staff, and board. As SONG's work priorities evolve to meet each new political moment, our structure shifts to best meet the needs of the work. So, our structure is always evolving. However, many functions remain the same--we continue to have the same core mission, follow the same proven methodologies to accomplish each new goal, and build the depth and breadth of the membership.

As SONG's Theory of Change states, the purpose of our work is to build a critical mass of LGBTQ people in order to transform the hometowns and fields we call home. There are multiple leadership roles needed to actualize this goal.

SONG believes that social movements are one of our main hopes for liberation. Organizations are one of the key building blocks of social movements. As institutionally oppressed peoples, we also must build organizations run for us and by us. We need political organizations in addition to personal or social networks in order to develop leaders/organizers and build a base of leadership that is moving in the same direction. Organizations are made up of people—leaders. We build membership (or our base) as a way to build the skills, connection and leadership of thousands of Southern rural LGBTQ people of color, immigrant people and working class people – united together in the struggle for dignity and justice for all people. In order to transform the South we must build our collective power, our people power, which comes from thousands and thousands of us uniting to make the South the home our communities need it to be.

SONG's membership is made up of people committed to building freedom movements rooted in southern traditions like non-violent social justice activism, storytelling, music, breaking bread, resistance, humor, performance, critical thinking, and celebration.

SONG STAFF WHAT IS THE ROLE OF STAFF IN A MEMBERSHIPBASED ORGANIZATION?

- Staff serve to coordinate, anchor and move SONG's organizing and movement building
- Staff also bottom-line key administrative functions to strengthen SONG infrastructure
- Staff work to include, increase and develop members and other organizers

SONG staff work in teams to support the work of the organization. The three teams are Infrastructure, Regional Membership and Free From Fear Campaigns. In order for the organization to function smoothly, all three teams overlap and work together.

WHAT IS INFRASTRUCTURE AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF STAFF IN THAT?

- Infrastructure is the systems, long-term functions, and day-to-day tasks that must be accomplished in order for SONG to continue operating and maximizing staff and

- member capacity to carry out activities that move us towards our political goals.
- SONG has three primary areas of work that make up our infrastructure: communications, fundraising, and administration. While staff carry out the primary activities in terms of infrastructure, board members, general members, donors, supporters, and member leaders also impact and help to carry out, at times, key parts of this work.
- Infrastructure keeps our organization strong and includes the more ‘invisible’ internal work
- All staff play a significant role in maintaining and expanding our infrastructure.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP STAFF TEAM?

The staff membership team works to both FACILITATE and DIRECT our membership’s leadership, input and participation in all areas of the organization. This helps strengthen SONG as a regional organization that is working to build locally-rooted and regionally-connected organizing strategies and program. This team watches and helps coordinate all the “moving parts” by:

- Orienting and welcoming members to SONG
- Co-collaborating and connecting you with SONG tools, resources and other members so you can initiate SONG work in the place you live or to what is hap-pening at a regional level.
- Providing phone and skype support, as well as in person visits to train and build with you all in your hometowns.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FREE FROM FEAR CAMPAIGN TEAM?

Currently SONG Campaign organizers work with members and member leaders in 2 sites to developed and supported by SONG regional to anchor and advance key campaign organizing in a particular site.

- Build, execute and coordinate local campaign work
- Build, retain, sustain and mobilize SONG’s base in the site
- Connect campaign sites to each other across the south to coordinate strategy, offer peer support and relationship building.
- Develop and co-develop our membership and member leaders into powerful, adapt able, strategic organizers
- Maintain and bottom-line administrative, communications, budget and coordination of local campaigns
- Document, evaluate and capture key lessons learned in campaign development and execution.

WHAT DO THE CO-DIRECTORS DO?

- Manage SONG personnel including supervision, hires and fires
- Communicate with the SONG Board of Directors
- Develop SONG’s budget, money spent and the allocation of funds
- Watch and direct the operational big picture (Finances, Fundraising, Admin, Systems, Program, Strategy, Personnel and Supervision, etc.)
- Provide political and strategic leadership in development of SONG’s overall work
- Direct our SONG’s national strategy

You can find out more about current SONG staff at <http://southernersonnewground.org/about/staff>

SONG BOARD OF DIRECTORS: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE BOARD?

SONG's board of directors is a key decision-making body in SONG's leadership. Board members are responsible for making sure that SONG's work adheres to our mission and vision. They play a key role in making sure that we are fiscally sound and financially accountable and sustainable. The board members also provide big-picture political advisement and strategic guidance to the overall organizational direction. The board is also responsible for hiring and firing of the Co-Director positions.

Board members are nominated and formally invited to join the board by current SONG board members. You can find out more about current board members at <http://southernersonnewground.org/about/board>

SONG MEMBERS & SUPPORTERS: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MEMBERS IN SONG?

SONG's membership is a structure for the interchange of ideas, shared commitment to social and economic justice, and support between the staff and board of SONG and those who support LGBTQ liberation in the South. This interchange takes place in all of our programmatic work through:

- Personal and group communications**
- Leadership development and political education**
- Strategic partnerships**
- Contribution of resources**
- Member meetings and gatherings**
- Collective action, campaign organizing and short term projects**
- Shaping of SONG work through campaigns, assemblies and regional convergences**

Folks tend to do our best playing our position when we know what that position is meant to accomplish and push forward. SONG members & supporters play key leadership roles in SONG's work every single day. Below is a nuts and bolts break down of how that happens.



WHY IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEMBERS AND MEMBER LEADERS? WHICH AM I?

Member leaders are members who build local SONG organizing sites in Southern states in order to run anti-criminalization and culture change campaigns and/or are part of a regional working group.

Local sites are made up of SONG members and SONG member leaders - which both play vital roles! As of winter 2015 - our member leaders are people that are the core local leadership body working to develop and run Free From Fear Campaigns.

We make a leadership distinction between our general membership and folks in our membership who are able and willing to do more in the service of the work: developing local strategy, being involved in the decision making that leads to a local game-plan, etc. - to honor that there is a difference, but also to create more avenues for a broader base of leadership beyond our board and staff.

SONG site member leaders receive an extra layer of leadership support from SONG and an extra layer of responsibilities. They are often the key point of contact for coordination and communication between SONG chapters and SONG regional. Member leaders are expected to sign and renew Leadership Agreements, the same leadership agreements that SONG staff sign.

MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENTS & PROTOCOL

Full SONG leadership agreements can be found in the Addendum. We require all member leaders to sign and uphold that document and we expect that all members and member leaders hold ourselves to the following standards.

CORE MEMBER AGREEMENTS & STANDARDS SONG HOLDS ITSELF TO

Respect decisions and positions taken by SONG. We agree to disagree and still respect SONG's position. We are not all going to get along or agree with everything all of the time. We ask each member to agree to respect the mission, political messaging, and the process for consensus of the decisions at SONG.

Representing SONG. We invite SONG members to publicly and formally represent SONG if and when you are accountable to a collective of members and member-leaders who are working together to build SONG's local work, chapter and campaign in your town. As a result of the blood, sweat and tears of primarily LGBTQ Southern women of color for more than 20 years, SONG has a highly respected name and reputation. We get TONS of requests from folks wanting to represent SONG or wanting SONG's representation. If you are an individual SONG member who is interested in representing SONG publicly, at an event, on a panel, in a coalition, or in written form (op-eds, blogs, essays, etc.), please contact a SONG staff person to discuss the circumstances and get formal approval. This does not mean you should not publicly identify yourself as a SONG member, or reference things you have learned at/with SONG, but if you are planning on writing or speaking on behalf of SONG we request that you contact us first, especially if you are an individual member (aka a member who is not part of a SONG site).

For questions and permission to represent SONG, contact: salem@southernersonnewground.org
For more info on representing SONG in Coalitions see Coalitions Document

THINKING COLLECTIVELY

As leaders of SONG, we agree to take on the responsibility to put the organization's needs and priorities at the center of our attention when we are doing SONG work. Of course, we must take care of ourselves as well; however, we agree that a central and driving force behind our leadership in SONG is our desire to support and build our communities, and never put ourselves first at the expense of the collective. We are not leaders in SONG to serve our own egos; we are leaders to be whole and help build whole communities; we agree to always keep this in mind in our decision-making.

CONDUCT

We do what we say we were going to do. If we cannot do what we say we are going to do, we take responsibility to tell other leaders while there is still time to pick up the slack. We are willing, at all times, to give an account of all of our actions as leaders of SONG; and to hold our actions up to the standard of SONG's agreements and code of conduct. We also agree to provide caring feedback that supports mutual accountability and responsibility; and to hold a space that furthers the collective vision and allows us to bring our best selves to the work. We commit to using tools (like group evaluations and self-reflections) which we know help build more transparency and accountability in groups.

CONFLICT AND DRAMA

We as leaders in SONG - as staff, members and board - commit to timely and direct communication as (not if!) conflict arises (as opposed to undermining each other's leadership). We see conflict as a necessary and inevitable part of any group or collective process; conflict creates possibility for tremendous growth and/or tremendous destruction. We choose to approach it as an opportunity for growth. We are open to our own disagreements among leadership, but we agree to participate in SONG conflict resolution processes as needed.

SONG recognizes 'drama' in LGBTQ communities as connected to our oppression. Institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression all manifest in our work and our interactions. In LGBTQ communities, we sometimes have a tendency to take our pain out on each other interpersonally. Meanwhile, the hard work of dealing with internalized oppression and institutional oppression (organizing) is not prioritized. SONG does not support organizing work being hijacked by interpersonal drama.

DECISION-MAKING

We know that SONG leadership, in every arena, take decision-making around work, strategy, direction and resources very seriously. We do not believe that, in the interest of 'equality,' everyone should have a say in every single decision. Just as there is a path to trust and leadership, there is also a path to decision-making. In all areas of the organization we strive to be transparent about how decisions are made and work to create entry points for new leadership to earn their way to more and more decision-making power. We do not believe it to be principled for a brand new member to have decision-making power, which if wielded badly, could sabotage the entire organization. We also believe that some decisions simply need to be localized—chapter by chapter—and we work to have structures that allow for as much self-determination per site as possible, while also holding all locations accountable to the vision, mission, and principles of SONG.

SONG is not a collective. While we believe in sharing power and decisions, we also believe that as a regional organization different leaders play different roles. Decision-making is often fundamentally misunderstood; it is not only about who gets to make certain decisions, but it is also about who has access to the information to make decisions (this includes risks, threats, and people's lives) that they can live with. Sometimes experience is part of this and it always includes who is most directly affected. The role of experienced and informed leadership is not to assert their individual opinion, rather it is about a willingness to be disciplined enough to make decisions based on synthesizing a great deal of information, based on prior mistakes, and an assessment of the region. That said, a Co-Director, for example, will never have the same information as a field organizer or member leader in a site, therefore, their role should not be to make day-to-day decisions in sites



APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES & CONSENT

We at SONG are in the business of Queer Liberation and know that attraction, desire, and sex are natural and should be celebrated. We are also in the business of organizing for power and building a mass-based organization. At the end of the day, we are here to organize for Queer Liberation and should not be confused as just a social organization, though relationships are a core part of who we are as an organization made up of people who are constantly in the process of redefining and building family and community. We know that all kinds of relationships between people – including best friends, enemies, partners, sweeties and boo-thangs – have power to impact a group. We have seen the potential all of these relationships to both rip organizations apart and to fortify them.

It is our responsibility to work to make sure that our personal relationships do not hijack, undermine or jeopardize the group's work. We don't make assumptions about why people are in the space, and we ask that everyone be respectful of people's boundaries. As a cross-class, cross-race organization, we also know that many of us are deeply isolated, have different ways of engaging, hollering, flirting, etc. To that end, if you are not sure about someone's intent, or if they are flirting with you or if you are flirting with them – ASK. Make sure that you all are engaging in sex/intimacy/hooks in a way where everyone is all the way in – aka its consensual.

As leaders, we will not come to SONG events just to hookup; however, if we do engage in sex, we will still uphold our other commitments to the collective.

Got questions on any of this? We are happy to talk it out! kate@southernersonnewground.org

MEMBER GRIEVANCES AND DEACTIVATION

We commit to timely and direct communication as (not if!) conflict arises and to not undermine each other's leadership. We see conflict as a necessary and inevitable part of any group or collective process: conflict cre-

ates possibility for tremendous growth and/or tremendous destruction. We choose to approach it as an opportunity for growth. We are open to our own disagreements among leadership; but we agree to participate in SONG conflict resolution processes as needed.

SONG aims to transform conflict using a harm reductionist approach. If conflict occurs among members we encourage members to follow a process that includes direct one on one dialogue. One on one communication is usually a good way to clarify intentions, apologize for mis-steps and identify a path for remedying the situation. If conflict continues members or member leaders are encouraged to speak with a staffer from the Membership Team to help with tools or resources for communication and accountability. If conflict arises between members and SONG staff, members are encouraged to bring grievances to SONG's Membership Director, Kate Shapiro or if the conflict is with Kate Shapiro to bring the grievance to one or both of SONG's co-directors.

If a conflict cannot be resolved and or when SONG members consistently violate SONG's principles and membership core agreements their membership to SONG may be deactivated.

RENEWAL

For many of us, SONG membership may feel life-long; however, it needs to be renewed annually. If your membership is not renewed it is considered lapsed. You will be invited to renew your membership every year. Just like your membership to the YMCA or to the library, we believe membership is active and engaged, so it is important organizationally that we collectively create strong ways of building our base. This also helps us keep track of who is actively invested in SONG and what you all think and believe about the direction of the work. After all, you are the ones creating SONG in your home communities.

OFFSETTING TRAVEL & FOOD COSTS FOR GENERAL MEMBERS TO ATTEND REGIONAL SONG CONVENINGS

SONG's funds are always either directly from our communities or taken in the name of our communities. Therefore, we commit to a high standard of ethics in how we raise and use funds. We agree to be transparent in raising funds and we will use money we raise for what we said we would use it for. We will be honest and transparent in how we use SONG funds and never use SONG funds for individual gain. We will utilize the best of a "working class ethic" in how we use funds.

SONG prioritizes the participation of active members in attending SONG's regional membership convergences and convenings. SONG staff work to raise funds in order to reduce the barriers of travel costs. Below are our guidelines for how members can request for SONG to help offset costs. These guidelines reflect our organizational and collective politic of stewarding resources, respecting each other's time, and upholding and building alignments through shared agreements that all parties honor.

Travel Stipends: When possible, SONG provides travel SUPPORT to attend regional convergences or trainings:

- * Forms need to be filled out correctly.
- * Deadlines need to be respected and agreements upheld.

Travel Food Costs: When possible and appropriate, SONG will provide support to members in order to attend regional events:

- * Members will follow SONG's current procedures for expense reporting
- * SONG cannot reimburse members for food if costs are not agreed upon ahead of time
- * Reimbursement cannot occur without receipts

ALL THAT YOU TOUCH
YOU CHANGE.
ALL THAT YOU CHANGE
CHANGES YOU.

OCTAVIA BUTLER



TAKEACTION@SOUTHERNERSONNEWGROUND.ORG