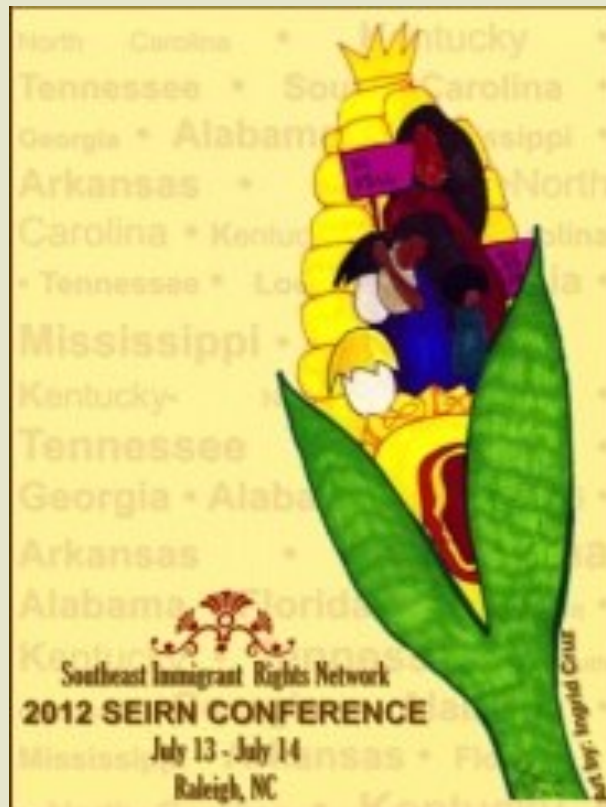


Southeast Immigrant Rights Network



2012

Conference Report

September 20, 2012

Dear friends,

On behalf of the conference planning committee, we would like to thank you for joining us at the 2012 SEIRN Annual Conference and helping to make this our most successful gathering to date! This year we had 177 participants from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, and we were also joined by friends from California, Washington DC, Illinois and New York. This is more than twice the participants of our previous conferences. Even more significant, we had the largest participation ever of both youth and immigrants. The gathering combined practical capacity building sessions, a powerful action in downtown Raleigh, an inspiring panel sharing critical stories about overcoming barriers and building relationships to forge a movement for dignity and justice, and strategy sessions to advance our work both at our own organizations as well as regionally.

Since the conference, we have been revamping our website and adding conference content, including photos, videos, audio and a toolkit to plan your own polimigra wedding in your community. Look for more content on our website in the coming weeks, including notes and reports on conference sessions, and how you can get involved with our activities. You can go to seirn.org to check it out. Also check us out on Facebook and Twitter.

We are happy to attach a SEIRN 2012 Conference Participant Directory and brief conference report (with lots of pictures)! We hope that you will reach out to old and new friends and colleagues and continue to build on the conversations and ideas sparked during our time in Raleigh. As part of our follow up, we had three initial calls with the people who volunteered at the conference to further discuss the priorities you identified when we were together and to create mechanisms that will facilitate your involvement and participation in SEIRN throughout the year, and not just at our annual convening. We agreed to form a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) work team and to hold bilingual monthly membership calls. Our first membership call will be on Thursday, October 11 at 6:30 pm ET/5:30 pm CT. Please contact Nayely at 919-341-9796 if you would like to join either the DACA work team or our first membership call.

Once again, thank you so much for helping to make the 2012 conference a huge success. We look forward to working closely with you as we move forward during this exciting and significant phase of SEIRN's history.

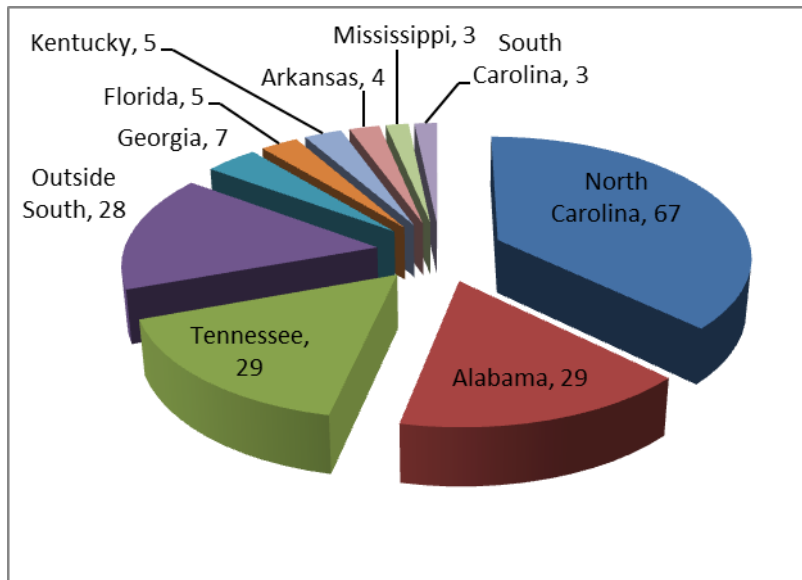
In solidarity and with gratitude,

Mónica Hernández
Regional Coordinator

Nayely Pérez-Huerta
Regional Organizer

2012 SEIRN Annual Conference

The 2012 SEIRN Annual Conference took place July 13-14 at the Doubletree Brownstone Hotel in Raleigh North Carolina. This year, 177 people from 13 states participated:



Conference goals

- To develop a regional strategy in response to the U.S. v. Arizona Supreme Court decision
- To intensify the region's capacity and commitment to do cross sectional/intersectional work
- To have participant groups leave with a greater investment and commitment to SEIRN as a network and for groups to strengthen their relationships with each other
- To create a space where grassroots community members can learn, build relationships and partner with each other, with advocacy groups and with coalitions.

Conference agenda

Friday, July 13: Organizational Capacity Building

8:00am – 9:00 am	Breakfast & Registration
9:00am – 10:00am	Welcome Plenary
10:00am – 12:00pm	Simultaneous Skills Training Workshops: Fundraising for Organizing Organizational Development Organizing 101 Strategic Communications – Basics Civic Engagement Organizing Comités Populares Using Social media/ Audio storytelling
12:00pm – 1:30pm	Lunch and Open Caucus Time —organize your own discussion, conversation or session.
1:45pm – 3:45pm	Organizational capacity sessions continue
4:00pm - 4:30pm	Assemble & travel to ACTION location
4:30pm –6:00pm	March and ICE-Police Wedding in downtown Raleigh
6:30pm – 9:15 pm	Dinner Keynote panel: Storytelling about Successful Alliances

Saturday, July 14: Strategy Discussions-- Taking Our Work to the Next Level

8:30am – 9:00am	Breakfast and Welcome
9:00am - 10:00am	Plenary: Non-profits and Elections
10 am – 1:00pm	Simultaneous Strategic Issue Tracks: Strong institutions/strong campaigns Power building Integrative change models Alliance and relationship building
1:00pm – 2:00pm	Lunch: Open caucuses
2:00pm – 4:30 pm	Plenary: Building a stronger regional voice
4:30pm	Closing

FRIDAY, JULY 13

Capacity building trainings

Fundraising for Organizing Participants learned how to build a culture of fundraising within their organizations to become stronger and more sustainable. Topics included: how fundraising is organizing, why raise money from individuals, including those with wealth, where to find major donors, timeline and elements of a major donor campaign, and practicing asking for money. *Facilitated by: Marjorie Fine, The Linchpin Campaign*

Organizational Development Participants had an opportunity to attend small group Organizational Development Coaching Circles around a variety of topics focused on strengthening their organizations, talking with organizational development consultants and also learning and exchanging ideas with peer organizations. *Facilitated by: Elsa Rios, Omisade Burney-Scott, Folami Randolph and Meredith Gray, Road Map*

Organizing 101 Participants explored how organizing differs from other social change approaches, what are the differences between a problem and an issue, and how to more effectively organize by discerning the differences between problems vs. immediate vs. root causes. *Facilitated by: Rusia Mohiuddin, Universal Partnership and Center for Popular Democracy*

Strategic Communications – Basics This workshop focused on the basic elements of strategic communications and how they support successful organizing, and it was tailored for Southeastern groups. *Facilitated by: Chuy Sanchez and Julie Rowe, Opportunity Agenda*

Civic Engagement Workshop participants discussed the importance of having electoral clout in order to win or protect their organizing and policy gains. They explored how to begin a civic engagement program. *Facilitated by John Miyasato and Esteban Garces, Crossroads Campaigns*

Organizing Comités Populares
This workshop was led in Spanish and highlighted the



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National Day Laborers Organizing Network's Comités de Defensa del Barrio (CDB) model and how it has been implemented in various communities across the South, including Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama. *Facilitated by: Francisco Pacheco, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, Megan Macaraeg, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, and Elvia Orozco, Comité de Mujeres*

Using Social media/ Audio storytelling Participants learned how to incorporate social media into their organizing and how to use audio technology to capture and disseminate powerful stories of social change and social justice. *Facilitated by: Will Coley, Aquifer Media*

Local Action

On Friday afternoon, conference participants and community members joined together for a march and POLI-MIGRA wedding (a wedding between ICE and local law enforcement). We marched across Raleigh downtown chanting, singing, and demanding that North Carolina's legislators and lawmakers throughout the Southeast stop fabricating anti-immigrant laws that separate our families and criminalize our communities. We also demanded an end to the 287 (g) and Secure Community Programs. The Poli-Migra wedding ceremony exposed dangers of police and ICE collaborations. We heard voices from Georgia, Alabama and North Carolina who spoke about the importance of our community remaining strong and demanding an end to these programs. Luckily, we were able to stop the "wedding" and stopped NC from becoming another "Show-me-your-papers State!" [Click here](#) to view a video of the wedding. If you are interested in hosting a Poli-Migra Wedding in your city, [click here to access a toolkit](#) we have developed with the script and other information to help you organize the wedding.



Photo by Steve Pavey

Keynote panel

On Friday evening, participants attended *Storytelling about Successful Alliances*, a powerful and inspiring panel about how three groups were able to cross boundaries and build bridges to advance social justice in North Carolina. Monona Yin from the Four Freedoms Fund introduced the session and Megan Macaraeg from the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition moderated the panel.

The Rev. Nelson Johnson from the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro provided the opening remarks, reminding the audience that although our communities face harsh attacks from lawmakers, they have failed to divide us with laws such as HB 56 in Alabama, but instead have united us. After his opening remarks, Lidia Victoria, Terry Slaughter and Keith Ludlum, of UFCW Local 1208-Smithfield and Gene Bruskin, formerly with the Smithfield campaign shared their experiences organizing at the world largest hog processing plant. They described how black, Latino and white workers inspired and supported each other as they worked together towards one of the biggest union victories in decades.

Wooten Gough and Valeria Cobos talked about El Cambio, a youth led group that has overcome barriers in rural churches across the state and opened up spaces for dialogue among older white residents with Latino youth.

Finally, Jade Brooks, Emily Chavez and Sabrina Sebring, three members of Southerners on New Ground (SONG), described how they organized Amendment One, which bans same-sex marriage in North Carolina, in the rural areas. Although the Amendment ultimately passed, SONG considers their campaign a victory, because they built strong relationships with other communities under

attack and successfully lifted up the stories of the LGBTQ community across the state.

Attendees shared their own experiences around alliance building in small groups and made a concrete commitment to further alliance building in their own communities. Rev. Johnson offered closing remarks and everyone joined together to sing “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Us Around.” To watch or listen to these incredible stories, go to our website or [follow this link](#).

Photo by China Lozada



SATURDAY, JULY 14

Plenary Session: Non-profits and elections

Isaiah Castillo from the Alliance for Justice provided an important and timely overview on the laws that govern non-profits political and electoral work , including what is and is not permissible under 501(c)(3) regulations and other guidelines to help social justice organizations as they prepare their work during current and future electoral campaign periods.

Strategy sessions

Power Building (facilitated by Nayely Pérez-Huerta and Andrew Friedman)

The Power Building Session brought together a diverse group of organizations and organizers to look critically at our work to understand where and how we build power through issue organizing, leadership development, coalition building, and civic engagement. Participants were able share experiences and analyze how to build power differently in grassroots organizing, advocacy, and direct service work. Through small group discussions, participants shared and reflected about the times when they felt powerful, when they wished they had more power and things they could have done to get more power. Session participants were also able to draw from the diverse experience in the room to build a common analysis on how organiza-

tions build power and identify needs for the region such as leadership development, community education, and more trainings on, and for, Comités Populares. Participants also identified ways in which SEIRN could help develop more power in the region. Some of this ideas were for SEIRN to share leadership models and provide leadership trainings; gather stories of community members

so that they can serve as inspiration; establish a committee that would help groups to develop a plan for leadership development; provide more opportunities for gatherings; and develop working groups that would help develop connections among the different groups.



Photo by Steve Pavey

Towards a more integrative model of social change (facilitated by Isabel Vinent and Amy Carroll)

This session began with participants exploring how their organizations tackle community issues and identifying their major activities used to address these issues. Facilitators then presented a continuum of 3 approaches to social change and their respective definitions, methodology and strategies:

- service provision (assistance): the goals are to alleviate suffering and meet immediate needs for individuals and families
- advocacy (reform): the goals are to improve or reform public policies and institutions, to better serve communities, further equality and deliver justice
- structural change (transformation): the goals include addressing the underlying structures (economic, political, cultural, social, etc.) that perpetuate inequality and injustice in the local, national and international spheres.

Participants categorized their organizations' activities along this spectrum and then reflected that the majority of these activities fell within the models of service provision and advocacy. Very few organizations are currently trying to achieve structural change through their work.

During the last part of the strategy session, participants worked in small groups to discern how to more effectively integrate the three models into their organizing work, how to make



Photo by Steve Pavey

their work more transformational, and how can SEIRN support its member organizations as they move forward with these key strategies.

For a full report on this strategy session, follow this link.

Alliance and relationship building (facilitated by Francesca Menes and Rusia Mohiuddin)

This session started with a one on one dialogue about dignity and what it means to each of us. Through these dialogues, participants Identified common values, such as mutual respect and trust, accepting others like they are, transparency and honesty, and willingness to work together. The exercise and discussions lifted up dignity as the core of building strong relationships and lasting alliances. Combining these shared values with participants' past experiences building successful alliances, the group came up with a set of best practices essential to building strong relationships among groups and communities:

- Set up ground rules
- Begin alliance building meetings with how we feel
- Develop a decision making model and make sure everyone has the same information to start with
- Create principles of unity. Ask: why are we meeting. Practice reviewing and revisiting our shared mission.
- Build in time to have fun. Mingle in a non-work environment. Share cultures, i.e.,



Photo by Steve Pavey

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food, music, history

- To maintain alliances you have to not just fight for you, but support others with their causes.
- Prioritize building one-on-one relationships.
- Build agenda by rooting yourself in shared values
- Work on accessibility (jargon, interpretation, meeting space).
- Focus on your goals and objectives, why we are here and that each participant is important and has a contribution to make.

Strong Institutions / Strong Campaigns (facilitated by Mireya Reith and Nisha Agarwal)

Participants at this session identified some of the challenges that lead organizations to be reactive instead of setting a proactive, agenda, such as:

- Negative state laws
- Federal programs – e.g. S-Comm, 287g
- Issues affecting students such as in-state tuition, but also including positive laws (deferred action)
- Issues that impact individuals – e.g. notario fraud
- Not enough allies (organizational/coalitional and lawmakers)
- Internal institutional factors, such as lack of infrastructure
- TOO MUCH! People are reacting to everything that comes their way; overwhelmed (maybe some capacity & prioritization issues)
- Lack of resources – may have good leadership skills, but lack resources to do what you need to do
- Perspective: see things as a lot of little battles, not as one big battle, though the same group of people are behind the many little battles (implications for messaging, framing)



Photo by China Lozada

We react because:

- Motivation/perspective of community
- Instinct is to react; much easier to act in the moment, if you can't see the problem then tendency to be apathetic.
- Someone has to! If not us, then who – someone needs to stand up.
- People in organizations have access to workshops, information, but community does not always have that access until there is a crisis
- Many people feel that avoiding more harm is preferable/more important than affirmatively acting for good.

Some tools/strategies to be proactive:

- Build infrastructure to support campaigns:
 - ◊ Creating more Comites de Defensa del Barrio
 - ◊ Build coalitions
- Set realistic and long-term goals and develop a workplan grounded in affirmative campaigns and be intentional about ongoing work
- Develop pro-active strategies, such as:
 - ◊ Think of elected officials as allies – identify folks that can be moved, don't waste time on those that can't
 - ◊ Get to politicians early – before they make up their mind
 - ◊ Think of counter-attacks—be prepared for, think through different scenarios, especially for legislation
 - ◊ Use creative tactics, such as organized civil disobedience
 - ◊ Go local – county, city – even if there is option at the state level, can make things happen locally
- Specific pro-active campaigns could include
 - Education campaign – education is not a privilege but a right
 - In-state tuition
 - Driver IDs
- Be inclusive and find opportunities to bring communities together
- Develop a cohesive Southeast regional strategy including:
 - ◊ regional communication – like list serves
 - ◊ regional campaigns – around common priorities, like education, cradle to prison pipeline, specific/unique to Southeast, that would include allies, like civil rights activists, LGBTQ, etc
 - ◊ Organize working groups around issues or campaigns

- ◇ Grow leaders to be trainers – see each other as resources
- ◇ Shared language to take to our states
- ◇ Follow up calls/check ins with each other about 1 commitment we can make

SEIRN Priorities

Following a brief report back from the strategy sessions, conference participants broke up into four groups to identify the most important needs and for the region's groups and to choose key priorities for SEIRN over the next year. The groups were: service provision, advocacy, and grassroots (divided into two groups because of size). In addition, the youth decided to form their own caucus, and the LGBT caucus, which had met earlier, was asked to share their priorities, as well. The priorities identified by each group were as follows:



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Service provision

- Leadership development
- SEIRN should play a role demonstrating the diversity of the immigrant community
- Mini-grants to help states better engage in regional work and priorities
- Support/storytelling circles and skills exchanges.

Grassroots group 1

- Develop more leaders
- More access to communication and information for group leaders
- More civic participation



Photo by Ingrid Cruz

LGBT Caucus

- Form an LGBT team/working group as part of SEIRN.

Grassroots group 2

- Organize a regional communication system
- Identify regional needs that are rooted in local needs
- Form a team or working group focused on expanding the focus of our movement to justice for all

Advocacy

- Develop a regional strategy to fight against anti-immigrant laws/287 g/ S-comm
- Develop an alliance building strategy that includes identifying who's missing at the SEIRN table.
- Recruit different organizations to expand the network
- Doing a detailed analysis of the current political moment and use it to develop a regional strategy
- Put together a directory of conference participants

Youth

- Use the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program as a tool to organize
- Make sure that DACA is implemented properly
- Support 2 days of regional action: August 15 / August 25 "Dreamer Application Day"

Next steps/Follow up

For the final step of the conference, the participants caucused by state and chose representatives who agreed to participate on a conference call to follow up on the priorities identified and to brainstorm around how to keep conference participants connected to each other and to SEIRN throughout the year.



Photo by Ingrid Cruz

Since the conference, SEIRN staff has updated the website as well as Facebook to include conference photos and links, and have facilitated two of three follow up conference calls with the state representatives, who identified DACA as a key priority for SEIRN and its members during the next few months. At the final call, the representatives and staff will discuss the idea of holding a monthly conference call and forming working groups around specific issues of concern to SEIRN members. In the coming months, as we begin planning for next year's conference, we will consult this year's participants and seek their input.

Evaluation

Highlights

- Networking from people across the region
- Meeting people who are in the struggle, and the youth who were here, learning how to move forward
- I enjoyed the march: I walked, jumped, yelled, and enjoyed it
- That I had the opportunity to meet more people to help each other

- The trainings (specifically mentioned were: community organizing, how to fundraise, how to build alliances, how to build new leaders, organizational development, power building)
- The icebreakers
- The sessions made me think more



Photo by Steve Pavey

- deeply about the issues and evaluate my beliefs and ideas about these themes
- The simultaneous interpretation.
- I have never been to a bilingual conference and it was amazing to be able to communicate with the Spanish speaking attendees.
- Listening to strategies from those who have experience and meeting people knowing that we all are fighting for the same purpose
- The diversity of groups and participating organizations, the mix of ideas, the testimonies and the excellent quality of the presenters
- Friday night's panel. It's always the most touching to listen to others' stories. It helps you understand other people's struggles. We all need to be together.
- Ability to connect with people from organizations all over the region, and to learn about these organizations and communities. Helped contextualize my work.



Photo by Steve Pavey

Recommendations

- A little more time devoted to state caucuses to build up those networks
- Be clearer about the goals for the action. It's an amazing opportunity to show our power but felt disconnected
- Every session should have a "brainstorming solutions" section
- More diversity among participants:
 - ◊ LGBTQI immigrants, Arab immigrants, Haitian immigrants, API
 - ◊ More representation of labor
- Concentrate exclusively on immigration and leave other issues for another time, specifically LGBTQ
- Specific space for youth to meet
- Deeper racial justice analysis, framing, tools
- Concrete next steps
- More music and art
- Better time management
- Coffee and candy

Conference Planning Committee

Mónica Hernández, Cathy Montoya, Nayely Pérez-Huerta, Monona Yin

Local Action (Polimigra wedding) Planning Committee

Raul Granados Gamez, Nayely Pérez –Huerta, Ada Volkmer

Thank you

Four Freedoms Fund

Veatch

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Facilitators and trainers: Nisha Argawal, Jade Brooks, Gene Bruskin, Omisade Burney-Scott, Amy Carroll, Isaiah Castillo, Emily Chavez, Valeria Cobos, Will Coley, Marjorie Fine, Andrew Friedman, Esteban Garces, Wooten Gough, Meredith Gray, Rev. Nelson Johnson, Keith Ludlum, Megan Macaraeg, Francesca Menes, John Miyasato, Rusia Mohiuddin, Elvia Orozco, Francisco Pacheco, Nayely Pérez-Huerta, Folami Randolph, Mireya Reith, Elsa Rios, Julie Rowe, Chuy Sanchez, Sabrina Sebring, Terry Slaughter, Lidia Victoria, Isabel Vinent, Mayra Yu

Interpretation team: Roberto Tijerina, Tony Macias, Patty Adams, Murtado Bustillos, Catalina Nieto, Raul Granados Gamez, Carolyn Campbell, Susana Duncan

Interpretation, sound and audiovisual equipment: El Centro Hispano, El Pueblo, Mountain Bizworks, Student Action with Farmworkers, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition

Childcare team: Isabel Arguijo, Rosa Hernandez, Elizabeth Perez-Huerta, Maribel Perez-Huerta, Nadia Villafana, Karla Salgado

Logo design: Ingrid Cruz

Photos: Steve Pavey, China Lozada, Ingrid Cruz

And thanks to all 2012 conference participants for your energy, enthusiasm, and commitment!