2014 SEIRN Conference Report

Building a New South

Auburn University-Montgomery
Montgomery, Alabama
October 15-17, 2014





2014 Conference Host Organization

Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice

2014 Conference Sponsors:

Southern Poverty Law Center National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities Center for Community Change Florida Immigrant Coalition Coalición de Líderes Latinos Center for New Communities Highlander Research and Education Center Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights Southerners On New Ground Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition



Southeast Immigrant Rights Network www.seirn.org



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Compañeras and compañeros,

Thank you very much to everyone who participated in SEIRN's 2014 Conference in Montgomery, Alabama on August 15-17, and thanks so much to our friends and colleagues from the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice for your great work and effort to make the 2014 conference a success. We are happy to report that this conference had the largest number of grassroots leaders participating in the history of SEIRN, representing 80% of all participants. More than 150 leaders, activists and allies from 14 states, including 10 Southeastern states, participated.

The SEIRN 2014 Conference had a great interpretation team which allowed us to have a fully bilingual conference. In addition, we were able to offer childcare and registration/travel scholarships to allow more grassroots leaders to participate.

Undoubtedly, this conference offered great opportunities for collective learning, participation, relationship building and consciousness raising. This report shares more about how the 2014 Conference gave us the opportunity to:

- ❖use popular education to discuss why it is important to create more languageequitable spaces and how to do so;
- ❖ have a conversation about DACA for All and the power that the President has to provide administrative relief to our communities;
- learn about the history of racism and discrimination in the South;
- briefly analyze the roots of migration and the humanitarian crisis at the border;
- ❖ celebrate our work and share our accomplishments and victories;
- ❖learn new tools for communications, community organizing, popular education, how to be a better ally, and more through diverse workshops;
- ❖ take collective action and share our vision for a new South through social media;
- ❖ learn about local campaign strategies;
- ❖create community by dancing and sharing our many cultural talents.

We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to <u>join SEIRN</u> so that together we can build a stronger movement with our communities and build that South that we envisioned together during the conference.

With deep gratitude,

Nayely and Mónica



Thank you very much!

The 2014 SEIRN Conference would not have been possible without the support of the following people and institutions:

Planning team:

Evelyn Servín, Sharada Jambulapati, Ingrid Chapman, Cindy Escoto, Julio Fernandez, Meredith Cabell, Cathy Montoya, Arturo Burciaga, Vanessa Stevens, Lucia Hermo.

Language Justice Institute facilitators:

Ada Volkmer and Catalina Nieto

Interpretation team:

Ada Volkmer, Gwen Ferreti, Helen Rivas, David Valenzuela, Luis Robledo, Catalina Nieto.

Child care team:

Yolanda Ambrosio, Hilda Miguel, Lucina Hernández and María Bautista.

Social media collective action team:

Chuy Sanchez, Arturo Burciaga, Cathy Montoya, Meredith Cabell, Isabel Vinent, Banner Tomas, America Gruner, Iris Mercado, Kyle Tharp

Conference fundraising team:

Flora Tapia, Evelyn Servin, Marisela García, Michelle Morales, Herlinda León

Organizations that provided interpretation equipment:

Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC) Coalición de Alabama por la Justicia del Inmigrante (ACIJ) Fund for Democratic Communities

Facilitators, presenters and trainers:

Isabel Vinent, Lecia Brooks, Leticia Álvarez, Alysa Medina, Evelyn Servin, Adelina Nicholls, Cindy Escoto, Julio Fernández, Chuy Sánchez, Lauren Taylor, José Bautista, Jessica Vosburg, Cathy Montoya, Meredith Cabell, Jennifer Rosenbaum, Mónica Hernández, Nayely Pérez-Huerta, Ada Volkmer, Catalina Nieto, David Lubell, Ingrid Chapman, Hermelinda Cortes, Cristina Garcia, Terence Courtney and Salem Acuña.

Foundations:

Four Freedoms Fund,
Fund for Democratic Communities,
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Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program
at Shelter Rock

And a heartfelt thanks to this year's sponsors and host organization, ACIJ; the staff and cooks of Auburn University-Montgomery for their hospitality; and all of you for making the conference a unique experience full of friendship, learning and solidarity.

contributed to our fundraising campaign before the conference (and those who donated anonymously): Allyn Steele, Nina Gregg and Doug Gamble, Charlie Biggs, Chantaine Rhoe-Bulluck, Angelica Otero, Maria Isabel Earrlington, Emily Goldfarb, Tricia Hernandez, Fran Ansley, Karen and Mark Hernandez-Mullins, Kathleen Tajeu, Marga Cassini y Demetrio Alvarez, Jade Brooks, Fernando Martinez and Angeline Echeverria, Víctor Álvarez, Yolanda Ambrosio, Martha Garza, Alma Patino Martínez, Eleanor Wright, Tania Pérez Huerta, Lisa Moyer, Astrid Silva, Faustino Hernández, Helen Rivas, Catherine Tactaquin, Melissa Murrell, Tommy Morgan, Martha Hernandez, Lisa Sahulka, John Howell, Brenda Jaimes, Amy Shannon, Liz Bradley, Emily Martin, Lori Khamala, Raul Gamez, Stephanie Teatro, Kathryn Kevin, Alexis Perez, Alejandro Perez, Octavio P. Huerta, Freddy and Isabel Rubio, Javier Duran Tolentino, Daniel Cortes, Victor P. Huerta, Naomi Tsu, Octavio Perez, Elizabeth Huerta, Elvia O., Victor Alvarez, David Lubell, Gregorio Morales, Barbara Mott, Roberto Tijerina, Meghan Conley, Rose, Florence M. Siman, Diana Pei Wu, Meredith Cabell, Vanessa Stevens, Maritza Pérez, Rev. Fred L Hammond, Catherine Han Montoya, Edgar Jaramillo, Eunice Cho, Mónica Hernández, Nayely Pérez-Huerta, Evelyn Servin, JJ Rosenbaum

Individuals that

FACILITATED BY:

ADA
VOLKMER
and
CATALINA
NIETO



We began on Friday morning with a Language Justice Institute where more than 35 people participated. Using participatory activities, we discussed why it is so important to create linguistically equitable spaces and how to do so. One of the first steps that we are taking to follow up on the recommendations that came out of the Institute is to create a database of interpreters, translators and interpretation equipment in the Southeast. If you are an interpreter and/or translator, or your organization has interpretation equipment that you can rent/lend, please fill out this survey.

Here are some key discussion points:

Interpretation vs. Translation:

- •Interpreting and translating is not the same. Interpretation is verbal, while translation is written.
- •A person who is good translating documents does not necessarily have the skills needed to interpret, and vice versa.
- •If someone who is interpreting says, "I am a translator," you might want to make sure that they have the skills to do the job.
- •Summarizing is NOT interpreting. Imagine if you shared your opinion and someone summarized your words: they would be taking away your voice.
- •Ideally, you should have two interpreters working together, because they can help each other to make sure they are using the correct vocabulary or terms. It also allows for breaks. Interpreting is very tiring and stressful.

Consecutive vs. Simultaneous interpretation

- •Consecutive interpretation: someone speaks and the interpreter listens and then interprets. This allows the interpreter to understand the message clearly and to use the most appropriate vocabulary. However, retaining the message can be challenging, especially if the person speaking is not pausing regularly.
- •Simultaneous interpretation: a person speaks and the interpretation happens at the same moment. One of the advantages is that it does not take too much extra time, and the message flows better. On the other hand, the interpreter does not have much time to process the message or think about the best vocabulary to use.





Interpretation Equipment:

- •Advantages: facilitates understanding and interaction between people in a multilingual space, saves time, etc.
- •Disadvantages: it can be difficult to understand what the interpreter is saying if s/he is not speaking directly into the microphone; the technology can falter at any moment; interpretation equipment is expensive.

Paying interpreters:

- •Depends on their credentials, level of training, etc. .
- •Rates range from \$25 to \$100 per hour, depending on the area.
- •It is important to reimburse the interpreter for mileage.
- •There are not many people who do simultaneous interpretation; usually those services are more expensive.

Participants identified key elements to create a multilingual event:

- •As soon as you begin planning the event, you need to think about interpretation needs.
- •Interpretation logistics: budget, location, how many people, how long is the event, space where event will take place, participants' languages, simultaneous or consecutive interpretation, small group activities, type of audience, materials that need to be translated, music should represent all participants' cultures, etc.
- •Language needs: who is participating? What languages do they speak? Think about translation of materials, publicity, etc. Are we having interpretation for everyone? How many people will be presenting a topic? Do the presenters speak one language or more?
- •Equipment: do we have equipment? Do we have equipment for all the sessions? Do we have batteries? If not, do we have a budget to buy batteries? How are we going to keep track of equipment distribution and collection? Do we have a plan in case the equipment doesn't work?
- •Staffing: how many interpreters do we need? Are the interpreters volunteering or are we paying them? Do we need to train the interpreters on the vocabulary that is going to be used? Is the person doing registration bilingual? Do we have a space for interpreters to rest/take breaks? Do the interpreters need lodging?
- •Translation: who is responsible for translation—press releases, flyers, key vocabulary, social media? Are the signs directing people to locations translated? How much are translation services going to cost? What if there are Power Point presentations? Do we need subtitles for media?



Next Steps:

Participants divided up in small groups by state and were asked to make recommendations on how SEIRN can support and promote language justice:

- •Offer more language justice workshops in other states (like Georgia and Tennessee)
- •Create a data base of interpreters and translators in the Southeast
- •Share and facilitate the sharing of <u>interpretation equipment</u> with organizations/groups in the region
- •Share interpretation and translation resources



We opened the space with English and Spanish versions of the song "Ain't Scared of Your Jails" and we asked participants to help us create a more inclusive space by writing their preferred gender pronoun on their nametags.

Ingrid Chapman and Irma Álvarez of ACIJ welcomed us to Alabama as conference hosts. Mónica Hernández welcomed us on behalf of SEIRN. She invited us to acknowledge the tragedy happening in Gaza, the humanitarian crisis at the border, as well as the memory of Michael Brown and all those who have suffered from violence against black and people of color communities. She also lifted up how the struggle for immigrant rights in Alabama was transformed by immigrant communities in the wake of HB 56.

A group of Language Justice Institute participants re-enacted key learning moments with the rest of the

conference participants.

We reviewed group agreements for the duration of the conference:

- Speak and act from your heart
- •Recognize and respect our differences
- ·Listen and be open to learning something new
- •Seek intentional learning, not perfection
- Speak your truth
- Lean towards discomfort and seek support from your peers
- •Help create a safe and confidential space



PEOPLE POWER AND PRESIDENTIAL POWER: FIGHTING FOR BROAD ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION



Cathy Montoya and Jessica Vosburgh facilitated a session on administrative relief, sharing information about the authority and the range of options that the president has to offer relief to millions of undocumented families that live and work in the U.S. There was also a discussion about existing proposals and the types of administrative relief that could be offered, and we evaluated how those existing proposals would affect the community.

Key discussion points:

- •It is important to remember that administrative relief would not be a complete victory, since many members of our communities would be excluded. We need to continue demanding the broadest administrative action possible.
- •It is important that the president has the legal authority to pursue a wide range of options so that we are not fooled and so that we can think strategically about what we can do in our states and in the region to prepare ourselves and continue to demand more.
- •The president or executive branch has the power to offer administrative relief to our communities. This could put into practice a new policy without needing to turn to Congress.





- •The executive branch has broad powers to change policies and the discretion to do so without interference from the courts. The Bracero Program is an example of something that was implemented without congressional action to bring in temporary workers to fill jobs that could not be filled because of the country's involvement in World War II.
- •Congress makes and approves laws.
- •The Judiciary is in charge of implementing and enforcing laws; it has a great deal of power.

PEOPLE POWER AND PRESIDENTIAL POWER: FIGHTING FOR BROAD ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION



Some possibilities for administrative action could include:

- •Being eligible to apply for a program like DACA and for a work permit.
- •Ending programs such as 287(g), Secure Communities, border militarization, etc.
- •A proposal similar to Bill S 744- which was approved by the Senate- requires continuous presence for 3 years, that the person not have felony convictions, that they have a stable job. A proposal such as this would exclude many people, including many women who are homemakers and care for their families. This proposal would include 4 to 5 million undocumented immigrants.
- •There are questions about what would happen to people in detention.







Participants broke up in groups by state and discussed the following questions:

- What would be the impact on our communities if some people are excluded (at a personal level and in our work as activists and organizers)?
- What are your organizations or groups doing to prepare and respond in case some type of administrative relief is announced?
- What are we missing? What should we be discussing in order for members of our communities who are being ignored to be included (for example, domestic workers)?

Group reports:

Florida and Texas: we are organizing actions against politicians who are against the Dreamers, we are organizing marches related to deaths at the border, taking action around the children at the border. We can educate people about potential fraud, hold educational events and clinics around DACA, stay informed about organizations that have resources to help, maintain solidarity.

PEOPLE POWER AND PRESIDENTIAL POWER: FIGHTING FOR BROAD ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

South Carolina: E-verify is a problem, everyone has to have a Social Security number, so many people need to use false IDs to work, which is a crime. There is a lot of fraud. As a team we want to inform the community, organize starting with the churches, gain the community's trust, team up with lawyers and other people that can help the community, organize a resource bank for loans.





Georgia: Many people would be excluded. Employee verification would be very difficult. We are worried that community members are working with false Social Security numbers and that our people be further criminalized. If DACA is extended to parents, it should include the LGBTQ community. BAJI is educating and working to offer support in case something happens. For the last two years GLAHR has been working to educate the undocumented community so that they are prepared in case there is some type of reform. Lutheran Services of GA is working to find temporary homes for the children at the border once they are in detention centers.

Alabama: people are going to realize that this is a Band Aid and that we need to keep fighting. It would be difficult to tell people that they don't qualify, it would affect relationships. Worried about fraud. What will happen to people who won't be able to return to the country in 3, 6 or 10 years? Will people who qualify for administrative relief be able to travel to see their families? Next steps: meet, gather resources, prepare community members so that they can be their own spokespersons, there needs to be communication between state leaders in order to have consistency, share information.



Tennessee- the people who do not qualify will be disillusioned. We are trying to end Secure Communities in Davidson, Knoxville and Memphis. There would be many people who would possibly not qualify. It is important to have a list of qualifications that is clear for everyone. It is necessary to work with schools and other institutions to provide adequate information.



Lecia Brooks, from the Southern Poverty Law Center offered a powerful presentation about the history of racism and the struggle for civil rights in the South. Lecia used the video, "Soundtrack for a Revolution" to highlight key moments of the struggle in the South through music and song. Events highlighted by the presentation included the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which was sustained for 382 days; the sit-ins by young people, and the Freedom Riders, who were mixed groups of black and white young people who rode interstate buses to challenge segregation, often risking their security and their lives.

Terence Courtney from the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), told us about the roots of migration, including slavery and the exploitation of human beings to meet labor needs, and how this system of exploitation continues to impact the global South.



Cristina García from the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC) shared the background to the border crisis with the children from Mexico and Central America, sharing that this is not a new pattern, because since 2009 we have seen children crossing the border. However, the accelerated rate is due to the increasing waves of violence in different countries. She explained how border militarization impacts border communities, and how racism and marginalization affects African American and Latino communities.

We asked conference participants to bring newspaper clippings, photos and other visuals reflecting their accomplishments and/or victories as organizations grassroots groups. During the activity, participants divided up by state and created a visual map, illustrating it with their images and other materials. Each state then shared one event or activity that made them proud.



❖North Carolina:

We felt powerful when we convinced the community to participate in meetings and actions.

❖Arkansas:

We reached 50,000 voters

❖ Alabama

We won our lawsuit against HB56 We stopped the deportation of Santos * Florida

⊹Georgia

We organized the community We visited detention centers Working to stop ICE collaboration with local law enforcement

❖Tennessee

We participated in a DC protest and were arrested in a civil disobedience One person from our group adopted a refugee child We did not allow 287g to be implemented in Knoxville

❖Louisiana

A Jesuit organization is establishing dialogues between undocumented immigrants and people who know little about the problems that immigrants face

The Day Laborers' Congress exposed raids in our community that used racial profiling

❖South Carolina

We have increased membership in the Young Immigrants in Action coalition

We were able to pass in-state tuition for undocumented students





Communicating for Change: Spokesperson Skills

This Spanish language workshop will focus on audience, immigration messaging and how to be an effective spokesperson for your organization. Put your skills to the test with a TV interview exercise and improve your abilities through immediate feedback from peers. Facilitated by Chuy Sanchez, Opportunity Agenda

Keeping Immigration Enforcement Out of Labor and Civil Rights Disputes

Too often employers, law enforcement, and ICE act to threaten workers from organizing to defend their rights and retaliating against workers who do courageously stand up. Organizers will present on campaigns from across the South on how to push back and defend movement leaders and their right to organize. We will also present on the POWER campaign which is creating innovating tools to support local organizing campaigns and helping push for national legislation and administrative policy to protect workers' ability to defend their civil and labor rights from interference by immigration enforcement.

Facilitated by Julio Fernandez, Mid-South Organizing Committee; Jennifer Rosenbaum & Jolene Elberth, New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice

Meeting at the Intersections: Connecting Our Work for Black, Immigrant, and LGBTQ Liberation

Join Southerners On New Ground (SONG) as we discuss how we put our politics of collective liberation in practice with on the ground community organizing. We'll share stories and examples of our work to connect the fight against criminalization of LGBTQ and Black communities to the fight for immigrant rights through the #Not1More Deportation Campaign. We'll offer concrete tools and strategies for building across communities as well as create space for others to share their successes and challenges in organizing across issue and identity.

Facilitated by Salem Acuña & Hermelinda Cortés, Southerners On New Ground

www.seirn.org

Grassroots Organizer Exchange

The goal of this workshop is to share organizing experiences that have led to changes for immigrant communities in the Southeast. Three organizers from Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia will offer their own unique experiences, and share practices and concrete strategies that have worked in their states while organizing the Grassroots in the South. By sharing their own experiences, participants will build relationships with other organizers and community leaders around the Southeast and leave the workshop motivated to continue pushing their grassroots organizing work (this workshop was offered twice)

Facilitated by Leticia Alvarez, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, Adelina Nicholls, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, and Evelyn Servin, Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice

How to Design a Popular Education Workshop

Participants will explore their own practice and knowledge about popular education, reflect on how popular education can be used to research, educate and act collectively, and how to design a popular education workshop.

Facilitated by Isabel Vinent, Popular Education Consultants and National Alliance of Latino and Caribbean Communities

Tools for Allies: Lifting up Grassroots Immigrant Leadership

Join us for this interactive discussion about how to be strong allies and lift up the leadership of directly affected immigrant communities in our organizations and movements for immigrant rights. Through collectivizing our knowledge we will share tools and experiences on how to overcome challenges and barriers within our organization and coalitions to centralizing the leadership of grassroots immigrant communities.

Facilitated Ingrid Chapman, Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice) and Alysa Medina, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition

Reclaiming the Debate: A Guide to Oppositional Messaging

Anti-immigrant groups use sophisticated messaging platforms to win the American public over to their controversial agenda. In this workshop, participants will break down the talking points of their opponents and build messaging frames that push back on racism and bigotry and successfully reclaim the debate.

Facilitated by Lauren Taylor, Center for New Communities

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTION



At the last two SEIRN conferences we decided to include an action to highlight a specific issue. This year, we included a social media action to visually share our vision of the South that we want to see. Our inspiration for this action was the #weAreTheSouth campaign that we are collectively implementing as part of the Better Together Cohort. We asked participants to write their vision for the South on a sheet of paper. Click here to watch the video and here to see more pictures.



During the talent show, we were able to appreciate the wide range of talents that we have, besides being incredible leaders, activists and allies. The talent show and dance were a great opportunity to celebrate our culture and our relationships.

TALENT SHOW AND DANCE



On Sunday we held a panel facilitated by Evelyn Servin of ACIJ focusing on how different groups are working to make change locally. The panel was comprised by:

José Bautista from the Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC) who spoke about their recent in-state tuition victory. José shared how this struggle lasted more than 10 years and how important it was to form a state coalition, inform the grassroots community about the bill and how to talk to their representatives, and have a strong presence at the General Assembly.

Cindy Escoto from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) spoke about how to fight discrimination in public schools. Cindy shared that there are still schools that ask for a Social Security card to enroll children or youth, and that it is against the law. She also spoke about the alarming trend of putting immigrant youth on the track to prison because of discrimination and hostility in the schools.

David Lubel1 from Welcoming America spoke about their work to make more municipalities in the South welcoming to immigrants. He spoke of the work the organization did in Tennessee and how after Nashville proclaimed itself as a Welcoming City, the local economy became stronger. He also shared his analysis around how important it is that local communities begin to be proactive to obtain more victories by working with local governments.

Adelina Nicholls from the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights spoke about the work they are doing to halt collaboration between ICE and local governments through the Georgia Not One More campaign. She shared how they have worked to create public pressure so that the sheriffs stop honoring agreements with ICE and release detained persons after 48 hours so that they are not processed by ICE.



Small group discussions





After the panel, participants broke up in small groups based on the topics presented in order to ask the panelists more questions and to share what their respective states are doing around these issues. The groups made the following commitments:

Drivers' licenses in the South group:

Learn from the Florida campaign to obtain licenses

ICE detainers:

Participate in the September 22 action against detentions. Participate and support Nashville and Miami actions against CCA in May 2015

In-state tuition:

Stay in touch to share information

Welcoming Cities:

Work with companies, schools, hospitals and businesses in our states to help our communities be more welcoming to immigrants

EVALUATIONS



Participants broke up by state to evaluate the conference and shared the following:

What we liked:

- •The social networks action and being able to sign petitions to support people in the Southeast
- The workshops
- Meet other organizations and organizers in the South and learn more about the great work that others are doing
- •Celebrating our work and the struggle
- Participation
- It wasn't boring
- Good interpretation
- The activities
- The workshops
- Making commitments
- The diversity of workshops
- •Being able to connect with other groups and people
- Inclusiveness
- ·Being able to exchange ideas and strategies
- Language access/bilingual space

What we didn't like or liked less:

- •Not enough time for the workshops
- •The room was too cold
- •We got lost getting there- we needed better directions
- Lack of organization in some workshops
- The problems with technology

What could be done to improve future conferences:

- •Inviting other communities and organizations
- •More time to understand what others are doing and to share our work
- Provide a map to the conference location
- Better preparation for the presenters
- Improve the organization and logistics



How to get involved with SEIRN

If you are part of a community group, grassroots committee or a non-profit organization we invite you to become a **SEIRN member**. Learn more about the benefits of membership and how to become a member here.

Join our <u>monthly calls</u> every second Thursday of the month. We share the call date and topic a week in advance by e-mail and Facebook.

We invite you to "<u>Like</u>" our Facebook page and follow us at <u>Twitter</u> @SEIRN. You can see more pictures from the conference in <u>this album</u>.

<u>Make a contribution</u> today and consider becoming a <u>sustaining donor!</u> We need your support to continue our work in the South!

Thank You!