

Open Letter to the Philanthropic Community

Why We Support the U.S. Social Forum Process

We are funders who care about and support different issues in various places, and share a common belief in the power of social movements to help bring about transformative change. We are therefore enthusiastic funders of the United States Social Forum process, which brought together over 11,000 activists in Atlanta in 2007. In June 2010, more than twice as many are expected at the next US Social Forum in Detroit. Here is why we support this process:

- * **It is at the heart of building a unified, powerful progressive movement in the United States** -- one of the imperatives of our times. We are in a new moment, fraught with economic and ecological challenge as well as great political possibility. We need intentional mobilization across movements to bend our world toward justice, fairness and sustainability.
- * **It builds on the success of the Atlanta USSF** and on the energy and hope of the World Social Forum that "Another World Is Possible." In Atlanta, national networks were launched, including the Right to the City Alliance and the National Alliance of Domestic Workers who are now putting forward creative platforms for national solutions formed from the base. Thousands of organizers and activists met, networked and went home energized and connected.
- * **It is led by the grassroots**, where those most affected by historical injustice and current crises develop leadership, build trust and relationships with each other to find pathways to change, and take new energy to their work at home. The 40-plus USSF National Planning Committee members come from social justice organizations representing diverse communities. The goal is to raise 50% of the budget from grassroots donations and attendance fees.
- * **Youth are in force** and their leadership is nurtured to harness their vision and their energy. From the freedom rides that brought busloads to Atlanta to energizing cross-movement sessions, more than 20% of Atlanta participants were high school or college age. Intentional outreach for Detroit promises the same for a generation central to creating our future.
- * **It is a unique space for honest, open dialogue and learning** across divides of race, class, place and issues. The USSF provides a safe space for groups to celebrate connections and grapple with differences. Because no positions are taken in the Forum's name, it welcomes all to engage in the healthy political struggle needed to foster a 21st Century national agenda.
- * **It aims for a deep and engaged political practice.** Linking across local, regional and global issues, the USSF frame fosters self-reflection on our worldview and dynamic critique of what drives our global economic and political systems that affect us all.
- * **It connects US movements with global movements**, bringing the energy and wisdom of global social change makers to the US. Sixty-eight countries were represented in Atlanta with a focus on connecting global organizers and perspectives to infuse the USSF as part of an international movement building process.

We invite you to join us and other colleagues in supporting the USSF and in connecting your grantees with this powerful movement. There are many ways to support the forum, and we would be happy to share more information. Please contact Mark@fntg.org.

Jeff Furman, Ben & Jerry's Foundation; Millie Buchanan, JS Noyes Foundation; Sarah Christiansen, Solidago Foundation; Harriet Barlow, HKH Foundation; Jee Kim, Surdna Foundation; Hugh Hogan, North Star Fund; Heeten Kalan, New World Foundation.