

## One Nation Working Together/Peace Table

### After Action Review

October 29, 2010

We have divided this document into two sections. In the first section we address several issues we believe are important as we all consider the future of the One Nation Working Together coalition. In the second section we offer specific feedback on the 10.2.10 mobilization.

#### Section One: Moving Forward

*We believe that it is important for the coalition that came together under the umbrella of One Nation Working Together to continue.* With the midterm elections upon us it is time to start looking at the challenges the progressive movement will face in the coming months and years. No matter the outcome of the Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> elections, a strong movement of people working to bring about the change we seek is needed or other forces will bring about the change they seek.

Once the outcome of these elections is known the progressive community will need to make decisions about how we do our work in this new period and how we press the Administration and Congress on progressive issues: What is our common vision? How do we access opportunities that might be open, and/or difficulties we will face? And how does the balance of power in Congress relate to and impact on the agenda of the Obama Administration?

One of the great strengths of ONWT is the broad range of constituent and issue groups and movements it pulled together. The breadth of participation in the 10.2.10 mobilization is a testament to the strength of the coalition, as well as an indication of the potential power that can be harnessed to work for a progressive agenda.

Keeping a broad coalition like this together is not easy. *The very first step is to see if the coalition partners—the initiating groups, the core organizations, and the other participating groups – are prepared to continue to work in this coalition.* If so, developing a coherent message and a shared purpose of coalition work will require that several important steps be taken. The policy documents drafted for 10.2.10 need to be reviewed to see how they might be strengthened. For instance, can the call for jobs be made stronger and communicate a greater sense of urgency? Are there recommendations for other issues related to the economic crisis that can be sharpened?

*We believe the work of this coalition will only be enhanced with a clearer articulation of how bloated military spending – including the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – damage our economy and make a full recovery all that much harder.* In addition, the global climate and environmental crisis must be addressed more fully. We need to also look again at how to best raise our common concerns about immigration and other critically important issues.

*Additionally, if the coalition is to stay together there will be a need for some restructuring, creation of representative leadership bodies, and further development of programmatic focus.* We assume the executive committee of ONWT will be meeting soon after the Nov.2<sup>nd</sup> elections and we hope that they can develop a process for further discussion with coalition partners. One idea is to convene a day-long steering committee meeting sometime in December or January, either in Washington, DC or New York City. At such a gathering there could be discussion of program, priorities, organizing plans and agenda. Depending on the number of people participating, the day could use breakout sessions and full group discussions to cover its agenda.

At the same time, there should be a review of the local steering committees to determine which of these want to stay together and where new committees could be created. It would be helpful to suggest some common programmatic issues around which local steering committees could develop work. For instance, the federal budget is one place where almost all of our issues come together and as such that could become a focus of local organizing efforts. Defense of Social Security and Medicare, and more generally the social safety net, is another.

## **Section Two: Review of 10.2.10**

### Summary

*On the whole the organizations which participated in One Nation Working Together as part of the Peace Table believe 10.2.10 was a success in bringing together an unprecedented progressive coalition. While we wish the crowd was larger, the 175,000 in attendance is not a number to be ignored and the ethnic, age and color diversity of the crowd was excellent. We were able to promote our message to the attendees and make our positions visible to the media and viewing public. We were reasonably pleased that some of the speakers took up the issues of war and military spending and how they contribute to our problems here at home. The large number of people who brought their own signs with a peace theme or slogan, and the enthusiastic response to Harry Belafonte's and Bob King's passionate antiwar speeches are evidence that the peace issue enjoys widespread support and had it been a more prominent element of the mobilization, would have brought out even more people.*

*However, we have deep concerns about the decision making process, the lack of transparency from the Executive Committee and the lack of input for the program. All constituencies should have had a voice in the executive decision making process. Obviously all organizations are not equal in money and influence, but all people are equal in working together and developing a shared vision. A fully representative Executive Committee could have provided space for each constituency to share its vision. This would have fostered greater communication with each other over issues in an effort to deepen our unity. We all have much more in common than not or we would not have been able to come together for this unprecedented mobilization.*

### Successes

- Table organizers had autonomy in outreach to their constituency, developing their own slogans, flyers, posters, website and messaging for the respective tables.
- The mobilization allowed for a broad spectrum of participation, which included organizations on the left that the right demonizes as un-American – and ONWT took a principled stand in defense of their participation with others in the “big tent”.
- The One Nation organizing team provided a sense of momentum, excitement, discipline and accountability by requiring daily reports and holding weekly meetings and updates.
- With little time and nearly from scratch the One Nation organizers fielded an effective, capable and creative national organizing team.
- Technical and logistic aspects of the day such as transportation, tabling, staging, Jumbotron, sound, port-o-johns, meeting the needs of disabled people and seniors, and bus parking all appeared to go very well.

- The ethnic, age and color diversity of the crowd – as well as the fact that people came from across the country - was excellent.
- Diverse constituency literature tables and an open policy in which any organization that wanted a table and applied in a timely fashion got one.
- The One Nation Working Together national organizing team was very friendly, enthusiastic and professional.
- Spirit of interaction was good.
- The “tag team” style with paired speakers worked out really well.
- 175,000 attendees was a good size crowd, and would have been larger had all the buses promised been provided.

### Concerns

- **Messaging:** The overall messaging during the organizing period was not as strong as it could have been. *The focus on the need for jobs made sense, but the jobs demands in the program fell far short of what is needed to solve the country's jobs crisis.* In addition, we believe the messaging would have been strengthened had peace and environmental issues been more fully integrated into the whole. Climate and peace were barely mentioned, especially in the literature, website and promotion in advance of the event. Not doing this made the message weaker and also made it much harder to mobilize people working on these two issue areas. We appreciated the opportunity for feedback on policy and other documents, but never knew how the drafting committee was put together or how to join it.
- **Policy Process:** *The overall plan for creating a policy document as the centerpiece of the coalition's political unity was not inclusive.* Each constituency needed to be represented and the policy development process open so that everyone knew who adopted the policy document and after what input and discussion process. Instead this was completely murky and led to problems. For instance, we had, and still have, no answer to give our members who continually ask, “Why isn't peace listed prominently in the ONWT agenda?”
- *The membership of the **Executive Committee** was never identified, nor was it responsible to the Steering Committee.* Participating organizations never knew exactly how decisions were being made. It is assumed major decisions were made by the Executive Committee. But since it was never clear who was on that committee or when it met, the committee had little accountability to other members of the coalition. Each Constituency Table should have been represented on the Executive Committee to establish stronger relationships and greater trust between constituencies; and to discuss hard questions that need to be addressed between constituencies to develop a strong coalition with a more unified vision. (The lack of a unified vision is a huge weakness of the progressive forces, especially at a time like this when such unity is so needed.) A transparent, respectful and lively discussion would have been satisfying to most parties and laid a foundation of trust. Lack of information about the Executive Committee sowed seeds of distrust. Distrust can be poison to a coalition. The impression was that only organizations that invested substantial amounts of funds had a voice in decision making. This “pay to play” approach disadvantaged grassroots organizations and those that provided significant human capital, which came close to replicating the class divide in society.

- *The **Steering Committee** did not steer.* It may have been too big and the participation threshold too low. Steering Committee meetings provided a great opportunity to ask questions and obtain information but there were few opportunities for substantive input for decision-making. As a consequence the organizing operation and program decisions were too top-down. Having representatives of each table on the executive committee would have helped address this problem to some extent.
- **Budget:** *The Steering Committee and the coalition's participating organizations never saw a budget for this effort.* Had that information been shared there might have been opportunities for participating organizations – especially those with significant experience in mass mobilizations – to offer suggestions for ways to reduce spending or to make in-kind contributions.
- **Program:** *Constituencies did not have enough opportunity to provide input for the program.* We were asked to send in any ideas we had, but there was no follow-up. Program speakers were not known until the day of the program. Lack of program information hindered our organizing efforts. People were constantly asking who is speaking and performing. We raised this question at the last 3 steering committee meetings before 10/2.
- **Seating:** *It was never clear who would be given passes for some of the seating and standing sections on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.* It might have been good to have someplace where representatives of all of the participating groups could have been together. This might have helped deepen the solidarity amongst the groups, thus further strengthening the potential for an ongoing coalition.
- **Lack of a March:** *The schedule and activities of the day did not provide an opportunity for everyone to gather together.* Many people were leaving early - by 2pm - while there were more people still heading in. Organizers of the Peace Table believe that a March followed by a rally (90 to 120 minutes) would have kept more people engaged to stay for a rally and provide time for people who could not make the March to attend the rally.
- *Both in the organizing and at the rally itself, there was little to **energize** activists for action after the midterm elections.* The rally at times felt more like a pep rally for getting out the vote rather than an empowerment rally to organize and energize activists for the long haul struggle which includes education efforts, local coalition building, local and national policy development, lobbying after electoral efforts, and, when necessary, protest activities. The progressive movement needs to present a clear alternative. *Offering few specifics, 10.2.10 was more an appeal for jobs than a demand.* As a result the day was neither a demonstration of our coalition's power nor did it operate to build our strength. Frederick Douglass's admonition that "power concedes nothing without a demand" comes to mind. The speakers should have been asked to drive home the points in the policy document.
- *A lot of people did not know this mobilizing was happening – there was not a street buzz in our cities.* Major cross-sector outreach with our **principals touring major cities** and doing public events would have helped publicize the rally. This was originally talked about back in June but it never happened. In addition, urging the local organizing committees to do posterage, leafleting on the street and other activities to create that buzz could have gone a long way in terms of generating much greater awareness of and participation in the mobilization. The **local organizing list** for One Nation was spotty and appeared to never be complete. This hampered local organizing. It was difficult in some places to identify who spoke for One Nation or could convene a local steering committee.

- **Bus organizing** had its strong points as evident by the large number of buses that brought people to the event. However, finding buses to the rally was very difficult for individuals who were not already connected to strong organizations like unions and the website transportation interface was difficult for many to understand. People who were not familiar with Google maps often had a hard time with it.
- We very much hope there is follow-up with the bus companies on failing to provide the number of buses they promised and an overall ONWT evaluation of the bus plan.
- Some of the **literature tables** were right in front of port-o-johns blocking the view and interfering with people perusing the tables. It would have been nice to have the literature tables on both sides of the Mall.

We would like to thank the whole coalition for the incredible work that has been accomplished. To reiterate, we believe that it is important for the coalition that came together under the umbrella of One Nation Working Together to continue. We are very excited about the prospect of continuing to work together to develop ideas and strategies that will bring about the change we all seek. Thanks to all once again for your efforts.

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Leslie Cagan – United For Peace and Justice,

Lisa Fithian – Alliance of Community Trainers, United For Peace and Justice

Medea Benjamin – Global Exchange, Code Pink

Jackie Cabasso – Western States Legal Foundation

Michael Eisenscher – U.S. Labor Against the War

Cole Harrison – United for Justice with Peace

Gael Murphy – Code Pink

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