

MEMORANDUM

Date: 9/14/2011

To: Arizona Immigration Ministry
General Assembly Accountability Group
General Assembly Planning Committee

Cc: MIRA - Migrant, Inner City & Rural Aid
No More Deaths Tucson
Phoenix Urban Health Collective
Tucson Childcare Collective
Valley of the Sun Childcare Collective/Valle del Sol Guarderías Colectivas

Cc: Cyndi Whitmore
Kat Sinclair
Susie Corona

RE: Justice General Assembly 2012

This proposal for the structure of the UU Social Justice General Assembly in 2012 is a collaborative effort of Phoenix and Tucson Unitarian Universalist activists, Arizona-based community organizations and independent organizers working on immigration or human rights/social justice issues. Although we are aware that the decision to not uphold the boycott of Arizona was made at the request of two Phoenix-based community organizations, we also know not all Arizona organizations agree with this decision. Furthermore, we are concerned with the strategy of partnering with only the two or three largest Phoenix-based organizations to decide the direction of the GA. Many organizations make critical contributions to the struggle for justice in Arizona and some incredibly effective work is being done by smaller organizations. We have unique needs, unique perspectives, and unique skills. To truly create change, all of our contributions are needed. We are asking for a decentralized GA structure, described below, that allows a multitude of community organizations to define their own goals based on their own needs and to create service projects that enhance, rather than burden, their organizations and increase the likelihood that their efforts will proliferate across the U.S. A decentralized structure is being proposed for several reasons:

1. We believe that this structure is more likely to create mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships between GA attendees and Arizona community organizations through shared expertise, resistance strategies relevant to attendees' home congregations, and interpersonal relationship building.
2. People who are already involved in social justice organizing in Arizona will be able to determine their own goals and needs.
3. Smaller community organizations can be involved. With this structure, organizations who would like to draw on the resources and expertise of attendees do not need a "seat" at the planning table. All that is needed is the infrastructure described below in order to allow everyone to participate as they see fit.
4. Many community organizers and members are unable to travel to the Phoenix Convention Center (PCC). Checkpoints in the southern part of Arizona make it impossible for undocumented organizers to travel to Phoenix without serious risk to themselves. Even those in the Phoenix metro area face substantial risks when traveling outside their barrios. The risk of harassment or detention is escalated by the proximity of PCC to the Sheriff's offices and 4th Ave Jail. We should also take into account Arpaio's reputation for retaliation against social justice organizers and public officials. Aside from the likelihood that Arpaio remembers the Unitarian Universalists from the last time they came to Arizona en masse, PCC is located in District 4 under Maricopa County Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox, with whom Arpaio has long had a deeply divisive political and legal rivalry.
5. The people who would most need services are also the most likely to rely on public transportation. The inadequacy of our public transit system limits the participation of families with minor children, elderly, differently-abled, and undocumented persons. The light rail doesn't go to the hoods and barrios, many of

which have limited bus routes and service. It takes an hour by bus to travel to PCC from many of the barrios, and depending on the route, transfer wait times vary considerably, especially in summer months when public transportation typically has lighter demand. Even for those who are able to drive, free parking in the downtown area is limited and parking fees may be an expense families cannot afford.

For these reasons, we propose a General Assembly in the addendums that follow which will suit the needs of community members/organizers across the entire state of Arizona. For each point we are proposing below, we provide detailed ideas and concrete examples in the pages that follow. The following points are how we believe the GA may prove most useful to us:

1. We would like people to know what is going on regarding immigration issues and the rights of undocumented people within their own communities (see [Addendum A: Needs and Assets Report](#))
2. We would like people to come prepared to share strategies being used in their own communities to stand with undocumented people and change the narrative regarding immigration (see [Addendum B: Roundtable Structure](#))
3. We would like people to come prepared to participate in community service programs that have been requested from a wide variety of community organizations (see [Addendum C: Service Programs](#))

If the General Assembly is structured in a way that allows us to establish our own goals and needs, we are willing to commit to sharing our time and expertise in a meaningful and reciprocal way. We have many organizers and volunteers who are happy to commit time toward making the GA successful if we feel that the GA will provide us with tools and resources that will improve our ongoing work or further related work in other communities throughout the United States and beyond. In return, we would like the Planning Committee to commit to developing the infrastructure needed for us to build ongoing relationships with attendees, including the online infrastructure. Finally, we are asking the Planning Committee to support a “bring it home” atmosphere wherein attendees are encouraged to consider how immigration issues are being played out in their home communities. In this way, we hope that attendees will realize that we are all Arizona.

Being experienced organizers, we realize that not all of these ideas may be realistically and effectively implemented given the time constraints and somewhat dramatic shift from the traditional GA structure. We have hopes, however, that if the majority of these plans could be executed, it could result in a significant step toward doing more meaningful justice work in the future, both at upcoming GAs, as well as in our home communities.