

# Women Building Power In Kentucky

Planning Meeting  
Report Back  
October 31, 2007  
Louisville, Kentucky

## Women Building Power in Kentucky

### REPORT BACK

1<sup>st</sup> Planning Meeting

October 31, 2007

9:00AM-12:00PM

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### PART 1: What People Are Saying!

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The responses by e-mail to this first meeting have been so positive. Some highlights:

**from Bani:**

*Warrior Women: Thank you so much for the warm reception and positive energy yesterday! I must confess that I experienced a bit of healing already. You all are so smart and sincere. Thank you for being open to all of us who "have issues" including myself. We cannot move forward as a multi-racial force until we understand where they come from. The conversation about identity politics was very helpful; as was the whole damn time and talk together! I am so proud of our youngest sister who kept us on track; of our enthusiastic energizer sister who inspires others to do the work and 'do you'; of our sisters who have hung in there while doing battle w/sisters who don't make it easy; of our seasoned sister who loves to share herself and her wisdom freely; and of our sister who is so rich with grassroots insights; of our sister who slices the pie so many others get a little piece.....a gathering that pried me open a bit. Thank you all! I am limited these days on meeting times but know that this time was what I needed to see some possibilities.*

**from Judi:**

*Well said, Bani. It was healing, restorative and energizing all at once to be with such a fantastic group of sisters. Like Bani says, we all "have issues" so we need the time, space, and trust to really talk so we can move forward together. Peace and love to all, Judi J (turned 60 last Friday).*

**from Shameka:**

*Thank you Bani that was beautiful! It was very moving for me as well! See you soon!*

**from Carla:**

*A big YES, to how empowering AND powerful it was to be with all of you earlier this week. There was a connection going on that cuts across the lines, denies all the ways that we are kept from one another. I am just honored to be part of the process and look forward to what comes.*

**from Mahjabeen:**

*Hey wonderful and beautiful women, I met with Biby, she is very excited about joining our team to BUILD POWER! Just wanted to let you know i did my HOMEWORK. Love you all. When are you coming to see me?*

**from Suzy:**

*Congratulations for pulling together the effective group which met yesterday to talk about a state wide women's forum. I think it can happen, but that it needs to be underwritten by an organization that could provide staffing and some legitimacy. The ACLU of KY (then KCLU ) did one in 1971 when I was the Board president, and perhaps the Commission might do it. Tell me what you are thinking.*

## **PART 2: Report Back on Meeting Goals & Accomplishments**

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Before the meeting, we came up with five goals for ourselves. The following Report back provides notes from the meeting for each of the five goals. Hopefully this will allow us to see what we accomplished and what we still need to accomplish.

### **Goal 1. To begin planning for one of the most powerful retreats for women activists in our state in a long time to be hosted in Spring 2008!**

- By the end of the meeting, we have agreed upon a proposed date of Thursday, April 10 and Friday, April 11. (The group consensus was that we should try to host the retreat during the week in order to not take people away from their families, friends, lovers, commitments on the weekend.)
- We are looking at inviting a group of up to 30 women for this first retreat. These women will include the 15 planners/ facilitators in addition to 15 women from across the state who represent a diversity of social justice commitments, personal and political backgrounds, and geographic locations.
- A second face to face planning meeting will be held in February/March 2008 in preparation for the retreat.
- The current planning group envisions that the 15 planning members will serve as the primary facilitators of the first day of the retreat. The agenda for the second day will be built on a model of flexibility to allow for the group of attending women to add their input into the day's events.
- Long-term vision for this retreat will include using this first retreat hosted in Louisville as a springboard for additional regional gatherings across the state.

### **Goal 2. To open up a space for honest dialogue about intergenerational, multi-racial movement building.**

- The meeting began with Suzy sharing memories and providing context of social justice moments and movements that have taken place in the same space we were sitting together in on the 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Carla, Mahjabeen, Bani, Judi, and Shameka all shared stories about what brought them to social justice, quotes, art, and photographs that inspire them and inspired us, recent experiences that have reinvigorated passions and challenged them.

- Attica shared thoughts on why we have come together, a need for co-mentorship, for support, for new/ old ways of doing movement building in Kentucky. She set forth the vision and the spirit for the day, reminding us all what brought this group of women here and the powerful task that we have set for ourselves.
- We took time to honor who and what has come before us. We spoke aloud names of women who are not in the room, women who are no longer living, who mentored, inspired, fought beside us in the struggle for social justice.
- We made a commitment to each other that as the day went forward we would be honest with one another about our needs, our concerns, our hopes and fears.
- All of this work built a foundation of trust that allowed for more open and honest exchange of ideas and feelings. *See attached notes for more information on the discussion about multi-racial and intergenerational movement building.*

**Goal 3. To define “Movement Building” as women working for social justice in Kentucky.**

- IT IS OUR KIND OF MOVEMENT BUILDING WHEN:
  - It is multi-racial, inter-generational, multi-lingual, multi-gender, multi-religious.
  - It is based on the foundations of PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, it is STATEWIDE, it allows people to bring their WHOLE SELVES to the work.
  - Gatherings are ACCESSIBLE for all people: disability accessible, child care provided, parking paid for, transportation available, sliding scale costs.
  - We have reached out to people who are not already a part of our comfortable “in group”: when we do door knocking, phone calling, street organizing, street theatre, direct action.
  - When we are HONEST and act in RESPECT for each person’s HUMAN DIGNITY.
  - When there is a SHARED UNDERSTANDING of the ESSENCE and ROLES of ALLIES.
  - It is movement building when people act together through an INTEGRATIVE VISION ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCE, always questioning “What are we asking someone to leave outside the door?”

**4. To intentionally create a space to name challenges that we face as women doing social justice work and to share stories of lessons learned and solidarity in pursuit of liberating ourselves from these challenges.**

- We had a lot of thoughts on challenges that we face: Relying on E-mail/ text messages as our primary form of communication; our own assumptions and the assumptions of others; dishonesty or hidden agendas from potential coalition partners or within our own groups; a chorus of “well, that’s not our issue” from people we hoped would stand in solidarity with us; policing ourselves internally before we even move positions or ideas out of our own organizations, fears of openly challenging partners or power structures; grappling with our own privileges and the privileges of others; working with people who have selective agendas; working to identify and change entrenched cultures of our own groups that are dysfunctional; dealing with the reality that some causes were given up on long before today that need to be put back on the table; working to distinguish between effective ways to do the work vs. effective ways to change the world; our pursuits for personal and organizational funding; our defensive trenches; personal health and family concerns; the limitations of our own imaginations of what is possible.

**5. To practice what we preach! Through a commitment to respect, justice, integrity, and co-mentorship. Through a meeting that promotes health and well-being, leaves us better than we were when we entered, understanding one another at a deeper level than we did at its start...**

Some signs that this goal was met are:

- All women’s voices were heard during the three hour session, no one person dominated the conversation;
- Very difficult issues were brought forward, but discussion did not become defensive, there were no personal attacks
- Women were able to hear ideas from all participants about next steps and about what the retreat should look like without shooting down anyone’s ideas; a beginning consensus was reached;
- Food and drinks were available throughout the session, women moved freely to get what they needed throughout the time, breaks happened naturally during the meeting;
- Following the meeting, every woman who participated sent out e-mails that talked about the ways we reached this goal~!!!

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**PART 3: Next Steps & Action Plan**

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Our Planning Team Currently Includes:

**Attica** Scott (Louisville)  
**Bani** Hines-Hudson (Louisville)  
**Carla** Wallace (Louisville)  
**Caitlin** Swain-McSurely (Louisville)

**Judi** Jennings (Louisville)  
**Mahjabeen** Rafiuddin (Lexington)  
**Shameka** Parrish (Louisville)  
**Suzy** Post (Louisville)

1. Please make suggestions of women activists from outside of Louisville who you think should be included in the Planning Team. (Particularly women from the North, West, East--We are very heavily Central Kentucky.) If possible, provide a brief sentence introducing the women you are proposing to the group, since we will not all know them.  
**By November 30.**

2. Please make suggestions of women activists from across the state (including Louisville) who you believe should be included as potential invitees to the *Women Building Power in Kentucky Spring Retreat*. Don't hold back on coming up with names because we can also use this list as a database of activists for our future work. When possible, please provide contact information!!!!  
**By December 15.**

3. We also need people/organizations to take responsibility for assisting in the following action items:

1. Selecting, confirming, and coordinating an accessible retreat site and housing.
2. Soliciting and coordinating sponsorship for food, accommodations, supplies.
3. Creating Database of invitee contacts.
4. Sending Invitations, Receiving and cataloging RSVP's.
5. Coordinating childcare, transportation, scholarship needs, interpreters, and other accessibility concerns as needed.
6. Coordinating documentation and evaluation of retreat, maintaining records.

Please let the team know what you would be able to assist with by **November 30.**

## Proposed Retreat Planning Work Plan Calendar

<b>October 31</b>	<b>1st <i>Women Building Power in Kentucky</i> Planning Team Meeting</b>
<b>November 13</b>	Report back from 1 <sup>st</sup> Planning Team meeting.
<b>November 30</b>	All members of Planning Team confirmed and committed to participate.
<b>December 15</b>	All suggestions of activist women invitees for Spring Retreat received.
<b>December 31</b>	<u>Site</u> and <u>Sponsors</u> confirmed for Spring Retreat. Database of potential invitees completed and shared with planning team.
<b>January 10</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> round of Invitations mailed to potential participants.
<b>January 31</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> <i>Women Building Power in Kentucky</i> Planning Team Meeting at the Retreat Site</b> (10am-12pm w/optional lunch together afterward) GOALS: Agenda setting and identifying any outside facilitation needs
<b>February 8</b>	All RSVP's returned from 1 <sup>st</sup> Round Invitees.
<b>February 10</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Round of Invitations mailed & follow up phone calls made.
<b>March 7</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> RSVP's returned from Invitees; Final list of participants confirmed.
<b>March 10</b>	Confirmation letters mailed with any preparatory information.
<b>March 11-29</b>	Additional Phone Conferences/Meetings/E-mailing on the agenda.
<b>April 10-11</b>	<b><i>Women Building Power in Kentucky Spring Retreat!!!!</i></b>

**Women Building Power in Kentucky**  
**BRAINSTORMING NOTES**  
**October 31, 2007**

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**Movement Building**

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**What should movement building look like?**

- A shared understanding of the essence and principles of being allies
- Multi Gender
- Multi Lingual
- Multi Generational
- Multi Racial
- Foundations = Relationship building
- Movement friendly
- State-wide
- Built on the Personal
- Honesty
- Respect
- Bring our whole selves to work: Personal and Political
- Queer organizing work as model- forcing questions within our movement
- Always questioning: What are we asking someone to leave outside the door?
- ACCESS- for all people –(disability accessible, door knocking, child care, parking, transportation)
- Integrative Vision- across lines of difference
- In theatre together
- A broad vision of Human Rights

**What do challenges to movement building look like?**

- Relying on e-mail
- Assumptions
- Dishonesty
- Hidden Agendas
- Coalition work (difficulties) -“well that’s not our issue”
- Internal policing
- Fears of openly challenging
- Privileges
- Selective Agendas
- What we gave up on long before today
- Effective ways to do the work vs. effective ways to change the world
- Pursuit for funding
- Defensive trenches

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## **Multi-racial/Multi-lingual/Multi-religious Movement Building**

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- Challenge: Position of allies- reciprocity
- Black/White Binary
- The cost of Identity Politics
- The importance of Identity Politics
- Unity based on Vision
- Us-ness of a coalition is built on what?
- Unity Based on Vision-Sisters in struggle
- Understanding Anger/ Resentment/ Confrontations
- Comparing our struggles/ oppressions
- Lack of Mentorship

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## **Intergenerational Movement Building**

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- Living in others shoes: “Today I am out of work and 66”
- Perception: “Young people coming in and taking over our jobs”
- Bani/ Shameka- ally/ mentorship/supporter- good example
- Generation gaps- between young- middle- seasoned
- Respect: Say something when people are still alive!
- Older women can and will be resource people and mentors but need to be asked
- Inter- organization competition vs. inter- organization mentorship across generations
- We need more young people involved
- Why is it so hard to bring changes in? Partly because there is a sense of “ganging up”

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## **Next Steps/Parking Lot**

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How do we support one another SPECIFICALLY?