Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing

Meeting hosted by Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ), Jemez, New Mexico, Dec. 1996

Activists meet on Globalization

On December 6-8, 1996, forty people of color and European-American representatives met in Jemez, New Mexico, for the "Working Group Meeting on Globalization and Trade." The Jemez meeting was hosted by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice with the intention of hammering out common understandings between participants from different cultures, politics and organizations. The following **"Jemez Principles" for democratic organizing** were adopted by the participants.

#1 Be Inclusive

If we hope to achieve just societies that include all people in decision-making and assure that all people have an equitable share of the wealth and the work of this world, then we must work to build that kind of inclusiveness into our own movement in order to develop alternative policies and institutions to the treaties policies under neo-liberalism.

This requires more than tokenism, it cannot be achieved without diversity at the planning table, in staffing, and in coordination. It may delay achievement of other important goals, it will require discussion, hard work, patience, and advance planning. It may involve conflict, but through this conflict, we can learn better ways of working together. It's about building alternative institutions, movement building, and not compromising out in order to be accepted into the anti-globalization club.

#2 Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing

To succeed, it is important to reach out into new constituencies, and to reach within all levels of leadership and membership base of the organizations that are already involved in our networks. We must be continually building and strengthening a base which provides our credibility, our strategies, mobilizations, leadership development, and the energy for the work we must do daily.

#3 Let People Speak for Themselves

We must be sure that relevant voices of people directly affected are heard. Ways must be provided for spokespersons to represent and be responsible to the affected constituencies. It is important for organizations to clarify their roles, and who they represent, and to assure accountability within our structures.

#4 Work Together In Solidarity and Mutuality

Groups working on similar issues with compatible visions should consciously act in solidarity, mutuality and support each other's work. In the long run, a more significant step is to incorporate the goals and values of other groups with your own work, in order to build strong relationships. For instance, in the long run, it is more important that labor unions and community economic development projects include the issue of environmental sustainability in their own strategies, rather than just lending support to the environmental organizations. So communications, strategies and resource sharing is critical, to help us see our connections and build on these.

#5 Build Just Relationships Among Ourselves

We need to treat each other with justice and respect, both on an individual and an organizational level, in this country and across borders. Defining and developing "just relationships" will be a process that won't happen overnight. It must include clarity about decision-making, sharing strategies, and resource distribution. There are clearly many skills necessary to succeed, and we need to determine the ways for those with different skills to coordinate and be accountable to one another.

#6 Commitment to Self-Transformation

As we change societies, we must change from operating on the mode of individualism to community-centeredness. We must "walk our talk." We must be the values that we say we're struggling for and we must be justice, be peace, be community.

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