

## Highlander's Education Team



**Esmeralda Baltazar** – Esme first became associated with Highlander through Southern Grassroots Economies and then Seeds of Fire, and joined the staff in early April this year. She came from her home community of San Antonio, where she worked with Fuerza Unida, a Latina-led organization supporting the organizing of women workers and their families. In Chicago, she co founded The Crib Collective, a youth-led organization that became a center for artistic expression and cross cultural alliances. She is an accomplished visual artist and holds an MA in Educational Leadership, Politics and Advocacy from New York University. While in New York, she also worked with the Rural Development Leadership Network, Do Something.org. At Highlander, she leads the Seeds of Fire program and also works with the economics program and cultural work.



**Tufara Waller Muhammad** - Tufara coordinates Highlander's Cultural Program and supports the work of the We Shall Overcome Fund. She is an organizer and artist with over 15 years of organizing experience. She has worked with the Arkansas Equality Network on their "Safe Schools Campaign," with ACORN on housing and Community Reinvestment Act issues, and with the Women's Project on the "Hate Free Arkansas Campaign." She is also a certified HIV/AIDS Peer Counselor who had done youth training throughout the South. In 2007, Tufara worked on the United African Caravan from Cape Town to Kenya for the World Social Forum. She was honored with a Mission Service Pin by the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. She is a member of the Executive Committee of Alternate ROOTS, and marked her 10th anniversary with Highlander this past spring..



**Kierra Sims** - Kierra comes to Highlander from Spartanburg, SC where she worked over seven years as an organizer, recruiter and fundraiser. She received her Bachelor's in Religion from Wofford College, where she later worked as resident Director. She co-founded Glendale Community Action, the first neighborhood association in the rural former mill village. Kierra first became involved with Highlander through the Seeds of Fire program in 2010 and returned in 2013 with youth from Imagine That Improv Theater Troupe, where she as program director working with youth to use theater to address issues. Kierra works primarily with the Appalachian Transition Fellowship as well as Seeds of Fire. She came to Highlander in late May of this year.



**Elandria Williams** - Elandria is Co-Coordinator of Highlander's Education Team, and is the project director for the new Appalachian Economics Transition Fellowship program. Elandria has a long history in popular education and organizing on anti-oppression, anti-racism, nonviolence, education reform, the prison military industrial complex, and intergenerational education and organizing, including work with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. She served on the Coordinating Committee of the US Solidarity Economy Network and on the National Council of Churches Ecumenical Young Adult Ministries Team. January marks her 8th year at Highlander.



**Susan Williams** - Susan is Co-Coordinator of Highlander's Education Team. She manages Highlander's Library/Resource Center/Archives and supports multi aspects of the program work, with a long history in popular education. Before coming to Highlander, she worked as a community organizer for Save Our Cumberland Mountains and the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network. She has served on the steering committee of the Economic Literacy Action Network and the Board of United for a Fair Economy. In 2012 she received a Masters degree in Information Science from the University of Tennessee. Susan came to Highlander in 1989 and marked her 25th anniversary this year.



## Highlander Research and Education Center Current Work & Recent Accomplishments

### 2014 Program Update

*"We the people. What can we become if who is the we is still a problem? Abraham Lincoln's conundrum of who is the we is the same conundrum we face today.  
We the people. We have to own it."*

**Bob Moses, Highlander Homecoming, 2014**

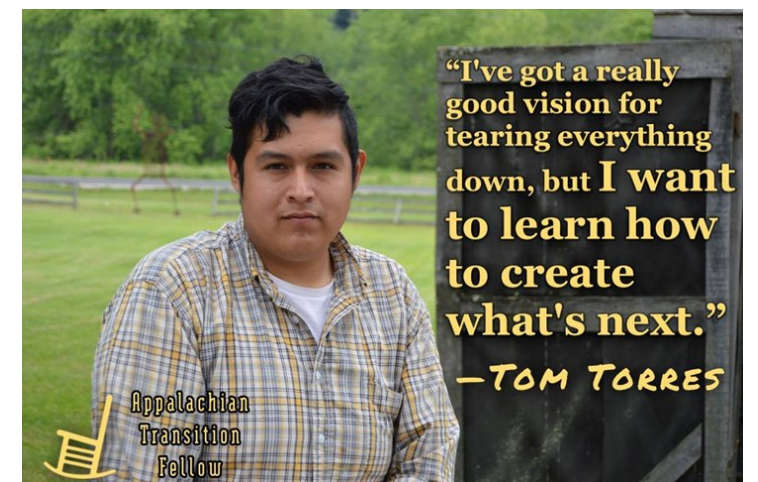
**H**ighlander Research and Education Center serves as a catalyst for grassroots organizing and movement building in Appalachia and the South. We work with people fighting for justice, equality and sustainability, supporting their efforts to take collective action to shape their own destiny. Through popular education, participatory research, and cultural work, we help create spaces — at Highlander and in local communities — where people gain knowledge, hope and courage, expanding their ideas of what is possible. We develop leadership and help create and support strong, democratic organizations that work for justice, equality and sustainability in their own communities and that join with others to build broad movements for social, economic and restorative environmental change.

Since its founding in 1932, Highlander has been in the forefront of social justice organizing in the region and nationally, playing a vital role in the southern labor movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the environmental justice movement, and the global justice movement.

#### What's New at Highlander

- Highlander is anchoring a major new program, the **Appalachian Economic Transition Fellowship**. The program was launched in collaboration with Rural Support Partners, following research and community-informed design. Thirteen young adults have just completed their 6th month of paid fellowship experience in 13 host communities across central Appalachia communities in Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia, and a regional alliance working out of Virginia. The host communities had to apply in cross-sector partnerships, and the collaborations are positioned to help develop new, innovative ideas as well as take existing partnerships to new levels. The fellows receive weekly mentoring, monthly workshops, and quarterly regional gatherings for fellows, host communities and others in the region. In October, the regional gathering took place in Abingdon, VA and focused on local foods. The upcoming December gathering will take place in Benham, KY and will concentrate on energy, and the winter session on alternative economics. The fellowship began with an orientation and week-long tour of Appalachia.

- Based on our experience at Highlander's 75th and 80th anniversaries, we have amped up our annual **Homecoming**, organizing a 2-3 day event with plenaries, methodology institutes, workshops, strategy conversations, films, author-activist sessions, reunions for program participants, singing and great food. This year special guest Bob Moses was joined by 200 from across the south, country and world, learning from each other to strengthen all our movement building efforts. Stay tuned for Homecoming 2015.
- Based on the **Strategic Assessment and Action Process** undertaken by Highlander, we have completed the first 15 months of work on the priorities and strategies developed from that process. **Democratic Participation/Governance** and **Economics** were two key points of leverage for focus as central to the forward motion needed for on several issues facing communities in our region. Toward that, we convened a small group of leaders to collaborate with our Education team to develop a new curriculum on governance and economics. The working group will reconvene after the first of the year to pilot the curriculum in local communities and conduct a train the trainers for its multiplying use. Modules will be adapted for youth. Highlander also increased its role as co-anchor of the **Southern Grassroots Economies Project**, helped staff *Coop Econ 2014*, and was active in the planning and support of *Jackson Rising*, a conference to explore the potential and promise of cooperative economics to address Jackson's pressing needs.



Meme from App Fellow Tom Torres, working with the University of Tennessee and collaborative partners.





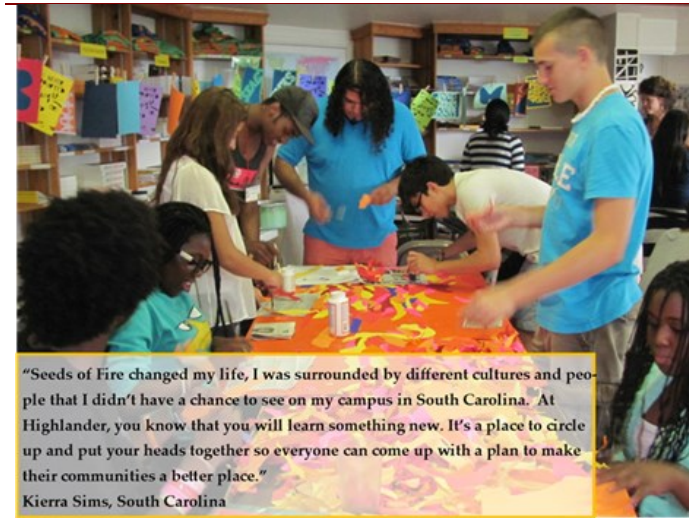
### Highlights of Highlander's Ongoing Work

- The **Seeds of Fire** program expanded its annual camp this year and conducted a 4-day intensive call *Youth on the Move*, with over 70 youth from across the South and country. Participants were able to strengthen their leadership and organizing skills, make connections across issues, build relationships with other youth and integrate cultural organizing more deeply in their tool kit. The SOF Advisory Committee gave out \$7,000 to youth groups from a re-granting pool we have had. We also worked with groups in their local community including Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance.
- Highlander was pleased to coordinate the United Association of Labor Educators **Southern Summer Women Workers School**. A group of 35 women from unions and worker centers from ten states across the south (see photo above) came to the Highlander for workshops on leadership and organizing, popular economics, social media and building solidarity. Women came from 9 unions, labor education programs as well as non-union groups, including the Domestic Workers Alliance, Dignity in Schools campaign and Workers Dignity. The workshop was interpreted in English and Spanish. Multiple facilitators, from UFCW, rank and file members from the Teamsters, faculty from labor education programs, and the AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics came to lead the sessions.

Highlander continues to support other labor and worker organizing efforts, including an organizing boot camp for teachers and parents in Knox Coun

ty, TN; co-creating a curriculum to fight student loans and debt with *Jobs with Justice*, *American Federation for Teachers* and *National Education Association*, and others; and support of Jobs with Justice chapter in East Tennessee.

- The third class of the **Greensboro Justice Fund Fellowship at the Highlander Center** started their year long fellowship experience. This program selects 5 people each year in a special fellowship in honor of the five activists who were murdered by the Klan and Nazi's in Greensboro in 1979. GJF Fellows began by participating in Workshop Work Week, came back to Highlander to meet with members from cohorts 1 and 2 at Homecoming, and will return in the winter for a weekend session with just their class.
- Our **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Wild and Wonderful, Witty and Wacky Workshop Workweek** kicked off the summer with people from around the country and 6 special guests from Haiti, 4 organizers and 2 interpreters. This annual event provides Highlander-style popular education experience to a wider audience and is a draw for an intergenerational, cross issue group of people including community workers, organizers, students and educators. In the Spring of 2015, two fellows from the Fred Edwards Trust in Scotland will be joining us.
- Highlander is a **strategic gathering place** where new formations or alliances are created, and this year we worked in collaboration to host and co-facilitate a region wide gathering on *Energy, Equity and Opportunity*. Much great work is going on in communities across the south to address energy, sustainability, and climate justice. This convening brought together groups, many of whom did not know each other, and is continuing to work together to amplify our own efforts and bring a much needed southern voice to this work.



- At Highlander, culture is a methodology woven into everything we do as well as specific program activities. Last spring, we conducted a 3-day **Zilphia Horton Cultural Organizing Institute** at Paul Quinn, historic Black College, bringing together community activists from San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. Modeled on the SNCC Leadership Academy, the intensive included sessions on cultural organizing, organic discussions of organizing across race and culture, and lots of singing. In cooperation with and supported by the **We Shall Overcome Advisory Committee**, Highlander conducted 3 strategy session at Highlander, Raleigh, North Carolina and Jackson, MS to further strategies for addressing the challenges and needs of Black communities in the South.
- Highlander's strengths in popular education and cultural organizing and our training and facilitation skills are great resources, and we respond to requests for support. This past year, among numerous others, we conducted a two day residency of workshops and conversations at **Miami University** to kick off their Freedom Summer commemorations; a four day residency of workshops, community meetings and conversations in Scotland with the **Fred Edwards Trust** to help build stronger community participation; and with the **Dream Defenders** at Highlander and in Florida, for organizing, leadership development and strategies.
- Highlander continues to provide a **learning space** on and off site for social change workshops, methodology sharing, as well as through our onsite and on-line bookstore, library and archive. Nearly 1,000 activists, college students, and researchers visit Highlander every year, along with diverse social change groups. Groups that we have hosted at Highlander or provided educational support, workshops, consultation or facilitation for from Nov 2013-Nov 2014 include:

African American Heritage Alliance of East Tennessee  
Appalachian Voices  
Ball State University  
Bethel University  
Bridges Program  
CAC, Knoxville  
Charlotte Action Research Project/Reid Park Neighborhood Association  
Class Action  
Coalition of Immokalee Workers  
Community Economic Development Network of East TN  
Dream Defenders  
Fielding Graduate University  
Fourth World Movement  
Future Generations Graduate School  
Jobs with Justice  
John McCutcheon Song-writing workshop  
Leadership Knoxville  
LGBT Alumni, Carson Newman College  
Media Action Group – Media Justice Gathering  
National Congressional Hunger Center  
National Juvenile Justice Network  
Nature's Way Montessori School  
Our Wal-Mart  
Project Hip Hop  
Reclaim Yoga Retreat  
Resource Generation  
Rural Youth for Progressive Action  
Southerners on New Ground  
Southern Appalachian Writers Co-op  
Stay Together Appalachian Youth  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Freedom Ride  
TCAC Americorps  
Three Rivers Market  
UALE Women's Committee – Berger Marks Foundation  
United for a Fair Economy  
University of Tennessee Department of Sociology  
U.S Human Rights Network  
We Shall Overcome Advisory Committee  
Winona State University



Staff and Workshop Work Week participants with hand tools and popsicles.