



2023 Highlander Impact Report

Dear Friends,

We are honored to be in community with you. We see the brilliance and resilience of Southern freedom fighters and grassroots organizers every day in our work, and as Co-Executive Directors of the Highlander Research and Education Center, we are so proud. Our people are resisting fascism on the frontlines through community care, cultural organizing, and electoral justice organizing; creating beautiful systems of mutual aid in the face of manmade climate disasters and late capitalism; and putting political and popular education to action by building strategies and bridging generations across the globe. We see you and appreciate you — it's what makes Highlander such a special place.

For almost a century we've gathered, listened and learned from one another, and built a tested, proven practice to fight for freedom and stability. Grassroots organizing is powerful and we know that movement training is critical to address the issues of our time. As we move through the challenges and opportunities facing movements in 2024 and beyond, we've been reimagining the next era of Highlander and building a vision big enough to carry us into the next 100 years.

From training more than 5,000 grassroots organizers to moving \$14 million into Southern organizations this year through our fiscal sponsorships, our work has supported and empowered leaders and organizers to lead us into a new world. We are excited to share this Impact Report—a snapshot of what you can expect from Highlander this year and a look back at how much we've grown together in 2023.

You'll notice we have a new look. Part of our work this year has been reinvesting in the brand to ensure our collective visions take up the space that will propel us into the next chapter of our journey and resonate powerfully with our community and those who will lead the radical transformations that come next.

Thank you to our amazing staff, board, donors, and broader communities.

In love and solidarity,

Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson and Allyn Maxfield-Steele



SECTION 1

| | |
|---|----|
| Highlander Homecoming 2023: Foundations for the Future | 05 |
|---|----|

SECTION 2

| | |
|--|----|
| Stewardship Through Radical Hospitality | 09 |
|--|----|

SECTION 3

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Education for Action | 14 |
|----------------------|----|

SECTION 4

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Powering the Movement | 19 |
|-----------------------|----|

Table of Contents



this is how our radical
visions were made
possible with your help

This is the collective work of our comrades within communities across our region, the country, and the globe. We are so grateful for your continued support as we journey together through the final decade approaching Highlander's 100th year, from the world we inherited to the one we deserve, where our radical visions have become reality.



Photo by Seed Lynn

Highlander Homecoming 2023: Foundations for the Future



This year's Foundations for the Future celebration drew 200 participants to Highlander for a day of enriching discussions, workshops, food, healing practices, and building connections. We welcomed many first-time visitors, expanding our movement-building even further with the broader community. Videos, photos, and workshop resources from this powerful gathering can be found on our website.



Photo by Seed Lynn



↳ Photos by Seed Lynn





Photos by Seed Lynn



Stewardship Through Radical Hospitality



Our Radical Hospitality team deepened Highlander's food justice practices in 2023, expanding our relationships with local farmers and vendors to nourish our guests and provide hands-on educational programming.



765

guests

Whether participating in affiliate events or engaging in research, workshops, and training facilitated by our organizing leadership, we ensure that guests of Highlander enjoy a welcoming environment with clean and cozy spaces to gather and rest while visiting.



40

organizations

We opened Highlander to our partners and community to hold their own strategy sessions and meetings during their time here.





“...people always feel like they’re fighting right now for what they’re fighting right now and forget the really deep roots and timelines of our fights. Highlander is important in showing you your place in the time and on the timeline because it makes your work feel less isolated and feel more like it’s having an impact, to have those threads connected in various ways as you’re working on an issue with your group.”

▮ **MEGAN DOUGLASS,**

Managing Editor at Riverwise Magazine in Detroit, MI

Guest at Highlander with the National Council of Elders in Fall 2023

186

acres



Through
land justice
& stewardship,
Highlander
provides and
preserves a space
to gather in New
Market, TN for
generations to come.

Education for Action

SECTION 3



As a movement school and home for grassroots organizing in the U.S. South and Appalachia, Highlander's popular education programs build leadership, capacity, and collective power to support strong, democratic, grassroots organizing in our region that transforms systems, structures, and society.



5,000+

organizers trained

We conducted a high volume of trainings to help our community deepen their organizing skills and network-building, transforming personal experiences into active solutions.



* SPOTLIGHT

People Practicing Power

Our Economics and Governance programming is launching a second iteration of the People Practicing Power series, which will be held in every Southern state during the 2024 election season. This initiative aims to support hundreds of Southern organizations and community members in protecting themselves during the election season, halting the spread of fascism within our governing bodies, and exerting pressure at the federal level to address nationwide demands that disproportionately impact the South. Additionally, we will provide support to electoral justice partners in North Carolina and Tennessee as they endeavor to shift governing power through emerging grassroots organizing campaigns.



* SPOTLIGHT

Fascism 101

Highlander spearheaded anti-fascist resistance with 4,500 participants in “Fascism 101” workshops, co-facilitated with Media Justice, Vision Change Win, and Right to the City. These monthly sessions delved into the current political climate, examining the threat of rising fascism in the U.S., the influence of authoritarian actors, and strategies for building effective resistance movements.

* SPOTLIGHT

Intergenerational Organizing

In 2023, Seeds of Fire created a stronger, safer, and healthier space for youth in the U.S. South, Appalachia, and beyond, supporting 22 youth organizers in the East Tennessee Fellowship program, a 10-month training and network-building intensive. Fellows deepened their skills and practices in organizing using Highlander’s methodologies, and planned and implemented community-based projects. Each fellow received a \$5,000 Highlander mini-grant to resource their work. Children’s Justice Camp welcomed 19 campers aged 6-12 for a week-long intensive on the Hill, fostering political education and organizing concepts and strategies through art and play.

50 fellows

From training youth organizers in East Tennessee to community building with movement veterans, we’re committed to bringing together the collective wisdom of ancestors, elders, and young people to inform new approaches to movement building.



* SPOTLIGHT

Cultural Organizing

Our Cultural Organizing program centers art, culture, spirit, and wellness to shift policies and practices. In 2023, it engaged 88 cultural workers and 14 organizations, hosting a gathering to develop a Train-the-Trainers curriculum for broader community education, set to roll out in 2024. Additionally, Highlander's Participatory Action Research Institute is equipping BIPOC cultural workers, researchers and allies with the resources to shift society away from white supremacist culture.

* SPOTLIGHT

Southern Memory Workers Institute

Highlander's librarians and archivists launched a digital Highlander timeline and online research tool and hosted the inaugural Southern Memory Workers' Institute, convening 16 memory workers from nine states across the South for five days of training on archival, documentarian, and other memory work skills, with ongoing support and networking throughout the year.

\$185K

granted

With your help Highlander Center granted \$185,000 to support our 2023 youth fellows and to supports grassroots groups' and organizers' community-based projects through Movement Support and Accompaniment funds.



Powering the Movement



Highlander is increasing capacity and strengthening infrastructure for social movements, incubating rad work by providing fiscal sponsorship and technical assistance to emerging groups, resourcing grassroots organizing with mini-grants, and supporting regional, national and global networks that build collective power for transformative justice.



12+

coalitions

Highlander is an active partner in multiple coalition spaces that form the foundation of multi-sector, multi-tactical strategies for social change today. They include Movement for Black Lives, Rising Majority, and the Southern Movement Assembly, among dozens of Highlander partnerships and collaborations.



\$14M

raised

In the 6 years since our Co-Executive Directors took leadership, Highlander's annual budget has increased from \$750,000 to more than \$8 million. Highlander managed over \$14M in funds in our 2023 fiscal year on behalf of 12 fiscally sponsored projects, most of which are grassroots community groups.





“I want to brag about our legacies of resistance, the current state of lifesaving work, about the victories that are changing realities in marginalized and targeted communities in the largest geographic region of this country. I want to illustrate what thriving looks like in the midst of and beyond the trauma that folks incorrectly misidentify as synonymous with the South.”

▮ **ASH-LEE WOODARD HENDERSON**
Co-Executive Director

\$22M

redistributed



Highlander is one of four anchor groups for the Southern Power Fund that, since its establishment in 2020, collectively raised more than \$28 million for the frontline — redistributing more than \$22.5 million of those funds and supported more than 400 frontline groups in 13 southern states and Puerto Rico.

Highlander's community has moved mountains over our 91 years, and we are so grateful for the radical and transformative ways we continue to work together across generations to make our radical visions a reality. Thank you to all of our program participants, partners, fiscal sponsorees, supporters, donors, guests, and co-conspirators who are bringing our collective future stories to life with your brilliance and investment in Southern-led freedom fights.



Let's
get free.

EST



1932

thank you for making 2023
another historical year