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1. About going to the US SOCIAL FORUM

What: Field Trip / Workshop
When : June 22-26th
Where: Detroit, Michigan
Who: Everyone

On June 22, 2010 thousands of activists, community organizers, artists, thinkers, engaged individuals, cooperatives, groups, and organizations will converge in Detroit to constitute the 2nd ever US Social Forum. By bringing together a multitude of individuals and meshworks of small organizations to engage in discussions and workshops, the social forum remains one of the most vibrant political forms to emerge over the last decade.

As a part of the upcoming DOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel, And And And has invited 16 Beaver Group to organize the first in a series of events and interventions that will unfold between now and June of 2012 when d(13) will open.

Our contribution is to make our trip to this year's Social Forum a part of this series.

For this 2nd edition of the USSF, 16 Beaver is inviting all artists, cultural workers, and anyone who might be interested in thinking through the relations between cultural practices and political movements today to join us. For those who will be unable to join in Detroit, we would like to invite you to take part remotely, please see (3) below.

Our official participation in the USSF will be a public conversation about the interrelations between art, cultural and intellectual work to social and political movements / struggles. As with most workshops in the US Social Forum, groups need to seek other organizations to build up conversations with. For our event, we will be organizing with Compass, the Brecht Forum as well as our friends in the Interference Archive.

As the USSF takes place between the 22nd and the 26th of June, we also plan to go to talks, meet up with comrades, engage in other conversations, conduct interviews, have fun, eat together, disagree, debate, dance, brainstorm and more: an extension of our past and current experiments in blurring perceived borders between life, work, thought, friendship, politics, and movement building. We as artists, writers, thinkers, filmmakers, musicians, theorists, activists, organizers want to consider together what it means to be working, living and thinking in the context of the current 'economic crisis,' the rise of militarism and privatization, the plundering of material and immaterial resources, the war on the poor and working people of the world.

It is not a coincidence that this year's Social Forum is in Detroit- a place with an important history of activism and militancy as well as the site of many urgent struggles. The city represents an intense site of contestation over space. The problems of gentrification, de-funding of public services, the high rate of unemployment as well as privatized re-investment are extreme. The recent failures of the auto-industry and its subsequent bailouts by the Federal government play out some of the major contradictions confronting everyone subjected to a neoliberal regime of economics.

Governments are expected to create a good business climate. Profits remain privatized, while losses are public responsibility. The welfare of corporations is not correlated with the welfare of the people and in many cases proves an inverse one. It is within this context that we look forward to Detroit. Not only to understand from the various groups that are in Detroit about how racism and questions of class and economics intersect today, but also to understand more generally where we may trace the points of struggle and the social experiments taking place today. And what could be the role of artists and cultural practitioners within such processes.

We would like to take these and other questions into our contribution to the Social Forum in Detroit and are happy to contribute these questions to the public that might be constituted by an event like DOCUMENTA (13).

2. Participating in Detroit

The conversation will take place at 1 Washington Blvd, Cobo Hall room D0-02A on Thursday June 24, 1:00 - 5:00 pm.

For the Social Forum, we provide below a long and a short description:

Short: An open debate about the role of art in the development of diverse social movements and the relation between cultural and artistic work, institutions, and political struggle.

Long: Creativity is important to all vital social movements. With arts and humanities funding cuts in schools and universities, culture is an important site of struggle. The perception among many is that "artist" is not an inclusive category, but one that maintains gender, class, and racial divisions. Gentrification and urban revitalization schemes geared toward the 'creative class' have introduced confusion about the role of engaged art and artists in the city. This has elevated the profile of cultural producers while debilitating artists from picturing their potential role in contemporary struggles. This workshop will seek to address the questions:

What is and can be the role of culture and art within a context of mounting political, social, and ecological challenges?

When and how do cultural practices enter, inform, and conjoin social or political movements?

How are changing definitions of art and roles for artists important to consider in how we understand the role of art and culture in social movements?

How can research and creative work that emerges from within, in relation to, or alongside struggles retain its pertinence or even militance?

What tactics and strategies will conjoin disparate efforts?

How can we incorporate and connect the various scales of living?

How does cultural production factor into building and bridging divisions between people?

If we accept that political struggle unfolds on many fronts, where can we locate those struggles for artists or cultural producers today?

And most importantly, what is the relation between art, various social institutions, and ways of understanding and doing politics?

Individuals from artistic, academic, activist, and community organizing groups will be invited to give responses to these questions. This will ground an open dialogue and debate about the role of art and creativity in the development of diverse social movements.

This part of our participation will depend on the contributions of all of those who wish to join us virtually and literally. More discussion of this event will develop as those who are interested in our project contact us-- we have some ideas for how to frame our discussion but want to leave it open to the contributions of our various collaborators on the day of the event.

3. Participating from Elsewhere

We would like to encourage those who cannot come to Detroit to still take part in our US Social Forum project.

You could do so in one of 3 ways.

1. Organize your own event on June 24 addressing a similar set of questions, wherever you are and let us know about it, so that we can list it on our site. These discussions can be informal, in living rooms, cafes, wherever you find suitable. Just let us know by June 23, if you would like others to find your event from our website.

2. Send us responses to any of the questions you find interesting above. And if these questions seem limited, let us know what we have missed, and why you think your question is important. We will be collecting these responses and making this available in a small online publication associated with our project for the US Social Forum.

3. Connect live to this event. We are looking into the possibility of live streaming through "Detroit Expanded" which is an attempt to bring this year's Social Forum to thousands of people who cannot come (see 6.9 below). Please check our website for further updates.

<http://www.16beavergroup.org/anotherworld>

For any and all of these forms of participation, please write to at:

ussf (AT) 16beavergroup (DOT) org

4. What, Why, Where US SOCIAL FORUM?

The following are excerpted from the US Social Forum Website:

What is the US SOCIAL FORUM?

The US Social Forum (USSF) is a movement building process. It is not a conference but it is a space to come up with the peoples' solutions to the economic and ecological crisis. The USSF is the next most important step in our struggle to build a powerful multi-racial, multi-sectoral, inter-generational, diverse, inclusive, internationalist movement that transforms this country and changes history.

We must declare what we want our world to look like and we must start planning the path to get there. The USSF provides spaces to learn from each other's experiences and struggles, share our analysis of the problems our communities face, build relationships, and align with our international brothers and sisters to strategize how to reclaim our world.

Why a 2nd US SOCIAL FORUM?

The gathering in Atlanta in June 2007 had 12,000 people come together in the belief that "Another World Was Possible!" Movement forces from all over the country took advantage of the opportunity to celebrate, organize, teach, debate and otherwise contribute to a growing sense that "Another U.S. Is Necessary!" The USSF made clear our need for greater convergence among progressives and the left in this country and to begin to articulate our vision for "Another World."

The purpose of the USSF is to effectively and affirmatively articulate the values and strategies of a growing and vibrant movement for justice in the United States. Those who build towards and participate in the USSF are no longer interested in simply stating what social justice movements "stand-against," rather we see ourselves as part of new movements that reach beyond national borders, that practice democracy at all levels, and understand that neo-liberalism abroad and here in the US is not the solution. The USSF provides a first major step towards such articulation of what we stand for.

Why Detroit?

To win nationally, we must win in places like Detroit. The Midwest site of the USSF marks a fierce resistance movement for social, racial, gender, and economic justice. Detroit has the highest unemployment of any major city in the country--23.2% (March 2009)--with nearly one in four Detroiters unable to find work. Michigan has had the highest number of unemployed people in all 50 states for nearly four years. Thousands of living wage jobs have been permanently lost in the automotive industry and related sectors. Some think that it will take at least until 2025 for Michigan to recover from the economic collapse and social dislocation.

What is happening in Detroit and in Michigan is happening all across the United States. Detroit is a harbinger for what we must do in our communities! As grassroots activists and organizers, we work to address the indignities against working families and low-income people, and protect our human right to the basic necessities of life. In Detroit, we can make change happen!

The US Social Forum provides this space--drawing participants from different regions, ethnicities, sectors and ages across the U.S. and its colonies. Community-based organizations, Indigenous nations, immigrants, independent workers organizations, unions, unemployed, youth, children, elders, queers, differently-abled, international allies, academics, and advocacy organizations will be able to come together in Detroit for dialogues, reflection and to define future strategies.

5. About AND AND AND

AND AND AND is an artist run initiative, which will use the time between now and DOCUMENTA (13) in 2012 to consider with individuals and groups across the world the role art and culture can play today and the constituent publics or communities which could be addressed. The series of interventions, situations, and occurrences entitled AND AND AND are part of DOCUMENTA (13) and will compose a map of emergent positions, concerns, and possible points of solidarity.

For more information about AND AND AND please visit:

<http://andandand.org>

For more information about DOCUMENTA (13) please visit:

<http://www.documenta.de>

6. Useful Links

6.0 US SOCIAL FORUM
<http://organize.ussf2010.org/>

6.1 US SOCIAL FORUM Program
<http://www.ussf2010.org/programbook>

6.2 other workshops at US SOCIAL FORUM
<http://organize.ussf2010.org/workshops>

6.3 Detroit: A Place with A History
The first day of the Social Forum is dedicated entirely to Detroit based activism. In preparation for this, many people have compiled quite a great list of articles, videos, books and more related to the history and present of activism in Detroit. The examples of militant research that have developed in Detroit as well as the USSF's own connection to Militant Research will be very inspiring.
<http://www.ussf2010.org/detroitlearnmore>

6.4 US SOCIAL FORUM logistics
<http://www.ussf2010.org/logistics>

6.5 US SOCIAL FORUM housing
<http://www.ussf2010.org/housingneeds>
The links from the USSF describe the various housing options which include diversity housing, camping, and hotels. The hotel rooms are mostly booked but there may still be some space to share.

6.6 US SOCIAL FORUM travel
<http://www.ussf2010.org/gettingtodetroit>

6.7 US SOCIAL FORUM Expanded Format for the US Social Forum 2010
<http://ict.ussf2010.org/wiki/dex>

6.8 US SOCIAL FORUM Detroit Expanded Workshop Event
<http://abc.ussf2010.org/dex-events>

6.9 Detroit Expanded
<http://wiki.ussf2010.org/wiki/DEX>

7.--0 Allied Media Conference -- Detroit -- June 17-20
<http://alliedmediaconference.org/>
The Allied Media Conference advances our visions for a just and creative world. It is a laboratory for media-based solutions to the matrix of life-threatening problems we face. Since our founding in 1999, we have evolved our definition of media, and the role it can play in our lives -- from zines to video-blogging to breakdancing, to communicating solidarity and creating justice. Each conference builds off the previous one and plants the seeds for the next. Ideas and relationships evolve year-round, incorporating new networks of media-makers, technologists and social justice organizers. We draw strength from our converging movements to face the challenges and opportunities of our current moment. We are ready to create, connect and transform.

7.1 The Wayne State Conference -- Detroit -- June 21
<http://irows.ucr.edu/conferences/ussf10conf/ussf10conf.htm>

Contemporary Social Movements and the Social Forum Process: From the Global to the Local
This one-day research conference seeks to draw together scholars engaged in research on the social forum process in order to strengthen our understanding of this important phenomenon, especially U.S. activists participating within it. The World Social Forum (WSF) process represents one of the most important political developments of our time because it has encouraged the mobilization and expansion of transnational alliances among progressive social justice activists and the building of a New Global Left. Social Forums provide "open spaces" where a variety of social actors--grassroots activists, staff within unions and non-governmental organizations, policy experts, students, intellectuals, journalists, and artists--from around the world can meet, exchange ideas, and coordinate actions. ...