INTRODUCTION

Since our beginnings in 1997, the Solidarity Center has been a global leader in the promotion and defense of workers’ human rights. Our work has been guided by the idea of true international solidarity, empowering all workers everywhere. We believe this is best accomplished by workers themselves, coming together in inclusive, democratic organizations able to bargain with governments and employers.

Currently, workers around the world face growing economic injustice and increasing inequality, racism, misogyny and xenophobia. Authoritarian regimes and many employers are leading vicious attacks on worker rights and freedom of association. In the face of these trends, the Solidarity Center stands ever more firm for racial and gender equality and justice, inclusion and the full realization of worker rights for all, including migrant, informal-economy and domestic workers, and youth.

Through the +20 process of internal reflection, we reviewed our accomplishments and clarified our vision for the future. Emerging from +20, we identified five strategic shifts for our work that will help us secure worker rights, equality and justice for all. All our future work will incorporate these five shifts, in whole or in part, to accomplish our vision.

Just as rights are indivisible, these shifts are interconnected. None of them stands on its own. As they are consciously applied to our work, each will reflect and include elements of the others.

THEORY, RESOURCES AND PROGRAM APPROACHES AND ALIGNMENT

We also recognize that to actualize each of these shifts, we need to build capacity in using and developing theory, expand resources and refocus programing, steps that will support each theme and our work as a whole.

❖ Theory – In our vision for the future of the Solidarity Center, we emphasized becoming a thought leader. Our programs will be grounded in theory and research. Jointly with our partners, we will monitor, analyze and assess the results of our work together, and share our learning internally and through writing and publishing (including working with partners to publish their work).
❖ Resources – We will expand our resources including funding, talent, technology and alliances. We will consider the strategic shifts in our hiring, opportunities for professional development, fundraising and the allocation of resources. We will build alliances to increase our capacity for action.

❖ Program – We will develop and justify programming, in part, on the basis of how programs further the strategic shifts. We will actively create space, internally and with partners, for learning, innovation and collaboration on work focused deeply in a particular area, as well as across the strategic shifts.

❖ Alignment - We learn through connection and direct experience. We will seek to maximize opportunities to connect with other workers and organizations in our shared struggle, and to build internal capacity for implementing our vision through hands-on experience with workers, unions and other partners around the globe.

FIVE STRATEGIC SHIFTS

Intersectional Equality and Inclusion

Built into the fabric of our societies are entrenched cultural norms and political, social and economic power structures that both drive and reflect forms of oppression of one group of people to the benefit of another. This oppression takes on many forms and often targets people by gender identity and norms, class, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or disability, or other group identities. Working people belong to more than one of these groups, and therefore carry the burden of multiple systems of oppression.

Using intersectionality as a framework that recognizes the various ways workers’ identities are targeted to deny their rights, we will strive to dismantle the overlapping systems of discrimination that trap and exploit workers and degrade and encumber labor and other progressive social movements.

We will support and engage in the analysis and practice of equality, radical inclusion and intersectionality that is explicitly feminist, anti-racist, pro-equality, pro-worker, pro-migrant and class-conscious, and that works to build connection and collective struggle based on the dignity and value of all workers.

We will build our institutional understanding about how oppressive forces play out in our own organizations and movements, and commit to undertaking the internal work needed for the Solidarity Center to provide consistent leadership on furthering the practice of equality and inclusion as core to achieving worker rights.

Some concrete examples of this work would include:
• Researching and gathering information to identify and clarify systems and mechanisms of
discrimination, and to inform inclusive approaches of building power for working people
• Creating awareness of privilege and consciousness of oppression and exclusion in our
institutions and societies, and their role in denying worker rights
• Supporting leadership in our partner organizations that builds worker power by promoting
worker involvement and ownership of their organizations at all levels and across social
identities, to unleash the agency and power of all workers.
• Removing tools of oppression and subjugation that have specific impact on large groups,
such as cross-movement work to combat gender-based violence at work
• Building the connections and solidarity needed to take on corporate power and the
classist, gendered and racialized nature of its impact, and to secure worker rights for all
workers along and across supply chains
• Advocating for economic policies that explicitly uproot systemic discrimination and
exploitation in labor markets, such as segregated labor markets, entrenched wage
differentials and the exploitation of unpaid labor, and replace them with enhanced legal
protections and decent work opportunities for workers
• Bringing together unions and community groups to identify shared socio-economic
struggles (as in Colombia); analyzing how those struggles are directly linked to systemic
racism; and implementing organizing, legal and advocacy strategies to collectively resist
and overcome the oppression that entraps workers in poverty

Worker Agency and Leadership

We believe that to build truly sustainable social justice, workers must lead their own
struggles through grassroots democratic unions and worker-controlled organizations. We
support unions led by workers, not on behalf of workers. These are organizations where all
workers have a voice and exercise their agency, acting on their own behalf for just wages,
work with dignity and a better future for themselves and their families. We support freedom
of association as a foundation of democracy, and collective bargaining as a primary means
of building the political and economic power of workers.

We will ensure the centrality of worker self-organizing and worker leadership in all our
programs. Implementation of this shift will require a re-examination of our partnerships for
alignment with our vision and values. We will privilege partnerships with democratic unions
and organizations led and controlled by workers, and will encourage movement in this
direction.

Given the rapid pace of change in the world of work and the increasingly fractured,
precarious nature of employment, we will redouble our efforts to secure freedom of
association, collective bargaining and enforceable worker rights for all workers everywhere.
The de-standardization of employment has resulted in gross degradation of work and
rampant growth in violations of fundamental worker rights. This is equally true for youth
employed in the gig economy, migrant workers in temporary visa programs, outsourced
industrial workers and street vendors eking out subsistence earnings. It undermines global
efforts to eradicate poverty and support sustainable democratic development and the rule of law. With our partners, we will develop new forms of organizing to reach workers who have been excluded traditionally from union membership and the benefits guaranteed in collective bargaining agreements. We will seek formalization of their employment and protection of their rights under law. Recognizing the need to lift standards for all workers, we will continue to organize in higher-wage sectors as well, providing access to unions across the full spectrum of work.

Some of the ways we address this shift in our programs could include:

- Centering grassroots organizing in all our programs
- Developing new forms of organizing for workers in diverse occupations, sectors and forms of employment, with particular attention to young workers, women workers, migrant workers and those engaged in precarious and informal work, and aiming to formalize this work and cover it under labor law
- Privileging new ways of working that build connection and solidarity over hierarchy, and is grounded in our intersectional feminist practice
- Facilitating greater understanding of worker struggles (among ourselves, our allies and partners) by fostering direct experience through hiring, training, temporary assignments and other opportunities
- Helping workers organize and bargain around issues they democratically identify as priorities
- Practicing, teaching and supporting worker control of their own democratic organizations, where all workers have a voice
- Working with partners to develop political education for workers at all levels and promoting their participation in improving the policy and legal environment for workers
- Fostering the engagement of young workers and the development of young leaders

**Grassroots Internationalism**

We believe that a global, worker-led movement is necessary to achieve real power for workers, especially given the international assault on workers’ human rights and organizations. We will work with the AFL-CIO and our partners to build an equitable, global grassroots movement for work with dignity and respect for workers’ human rights. We will create opportunities for substantive, cross-border exchanges to generate solidarity, joint action, shared analysis and power building. We will become a global catalyst and facilitator to educate and connect workers from the U.S. labor movement, in all its forms, with workers in other countries. We will help the U.S. labor movement share its skills, knowledge and resources to support workers across the globe. We will bring the strategies and lessons learned in the struggle for worker voice, equality, inclusion, enforceable rights and work with dignity from every region of the world to the United States, where our own labor movement is engaged in the same struggle. In addition to connecting the U.S. labor movement with
workers around the world, we will connect workers together in practical solidarity across all borders, linking them in communities of solidarity and action.

To achieve this, our work may include these and other efforts:

- Develop mechanisms, knowledge and technology to directly connect rank-and-file workers, local unions and worker organizations across borders
- Distill and share with U.S. workers the lessons learned in our work overseas in the fight for worker rights and economic fairness
- Build movement-supporting global networks and promote solidarity in action through exchanges between and within countries and sectors, and around the world
- Engage with, educate and encourage our labor movement and worker organizations to participate in and support direct cross-border exchanges, networks and international campaigns
- Develop a deep understanding of production and supply chains to assist in global organizing efforts and international sectoral campaigns
- Grow and support our field work and capacity to sustain long-term presence and direct relationships in countries across the globe
- Expand our field presence in new countries and regions in both the Global North and South to support the international reach of our work, enabling us to seek new sources of support and to support the struggle against economic injustice wherever it is found
- Create a global funding base to support our large-scale, movement-building work

**Proactive Legal Agenda for Worker Justice**

Many governments around the world have been captured by corporations and the wealthy, which have influenced law and policy to limit or close space for civil society, including workers’ organizations, and deny their fundamental rights. In global supply chains, corporations have structured their relationships to avoid responsibility for the rights violations they cause or to which they contribute. Trade unions have confronted these issues through organizing and a range of domestic strategies and tactics, including the law. We seek to support those existing efforts, but importantly, we will develop and build a transnational rule of law response to the exploitation of workers in all its forms—to afford workers a remedy and to hold corporations and governments accountable. This will include innovative policy-making, legal reform and litigation. At all times, the work will be informed by the needs of working people, as they express them, and be accountable to them.

To achieve this, we will:

- Build an inclusive, international network of worker/union lawyers to foster international learning and collaboration to best serve workers’ interests at national, regional and international levels
- Develop the legal capacity of workers and advocates to engage with domestic legal
processes effectively

- Integrate comprehensive and sophisticated legal advocacy across our programs to secure and expand worker rights, including those of marginalized groups
- Increase access to justice for all workers through the development of avenues of redress resulting in effective remedy and compensation
- Expand our and our partners’ use of human rights and other international legal instruments that reach beyond traditional worker rights structures, including the full range of UN and regional human rights conventions and protocols
- Become a center for legal innovation to develop new responses in law and policy to effectively deal with the needs of workers, including asserting control over corporate power in global supply chains

Building Alliances for Enduring Democratic Societies

In response to the reactionary and authoritarian currents present in today’s politics and culture in many countries, and to the unchecked influence of corporate money in our democracies, we will push assertively to not only maintain but also increase the space for inclusive, democratic civil-society participation in all aspects of public life. This necessarily includes building, joining and actively participating in coalitions that bridge labor movements, other social movements, grassroots and civil-society organizations, and communities in our common struggles for the free exercise of our rights. We recognize that the success of our allies in their struggles is inextricably linked to the success of our struggle for the respect of worker rights (and vice versa).

To achieve this, we will, for example:

- Build and take part in broad, inclusive alliances with progressive social movements, organizations and communities to fight for our rights to participate fully in public life, including through the free exercise of our rights to speech, assembly and association for all, and inclusion in all aspects of governance
- Use collective strategies and tactics to fight efforts by governments and corporations to close civil-society space
- Be intentional in reaching out to organizations, social movements and communities that have not been traditional allies but share our principles
- Support political education with partners, allies and broader society on how economic inequality is a tool and reflection of closing of space for civil society
- Support U.S. labor movement efforts to integrate worker issues into broader civil-society platforms, and vice versa