

Report from the Executive Director
Recharging Soulforce

Dear Friends & Allies of Soulforce:

As I complete my fourth month of service as the ED of Soulforce, I want to update you regarding our activities.

The First 120 Days

The first 120 days of my tenure have been focused on:

- Negotiating deadlines and terms with prospective grantors
- Preparing our SAR (Standard Accounting Report) annual report for 2009 to submit to the Movement Advancement Project (www.lgbtmap.org)
- Stabilizing cash flow by reducing expense and increasing net inflows
- Supporting staff transitions (underway before I came on duty)
- Securing interim/bridge financing and small grants for the PC(USA) Action in Minneapolis
- Developing a plan to upgrade the technology platform for our web services of all types, including e-mail, online donations, blogs vs. forums, video streaming
- Developing a current digital publication for donor education, "What Soulforce Means to Me."
- Stabilizing our branded "look and feel" to standardize publications for actions and stakeholder communications
- Continuing to support the transition plan for our co-founders
- Analyzing our portfolio of actions/programs, donors and public/market awareness of who we are and what we do
- Establishing relationships with LGBT affirming organizations in Washington, D.C. including HRC and the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network
- Working with our Director of Development to understand and refine the plan for development for 2010-2011.

We have made great progress as a team in a very short time thanks to the support of our co-founders, Mel and Gary and our Board of Directors and staff.

Our Chair has asked Peter Drake, one of our new Board members, to take on the role of Development Chair for the Board. (Thank you, Peter!).

We are quite behind on the fund raising goals for this year and, thus, I recommended a reduction in our budget at the July meeting which was approved by the Board. I think the goal is now realistic, but we will have to accelerate our development plan to achieve the new goal. Our Director of Development is working very diligently to achieve our plan and we want to thank you so much for your faithful support of Soulforce.

Other

We have completed the PC(USA) Action successfully. We are continuing to work toward future collaboration on the PC USA LGBT National Ratification campaign with affirming groups within the denomination.

Mel White, Chuck Phelan and I also conducted a short non-CD protest at the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) final rally in Washington, D.C. and facilitated individuals/small groups in organizing their own actions in the 20 cities where NOM toured. We were joined by one of our Soulforce Riders who lives in the area. Details of this action are also on our website. Mel and Bill Carpenter just attended Rev. Janie Spahr's heresy trial in Napa, CA. Please watch our web site for a report on these proceedings.

Perspective & Recommendations

I would like to expand on the aforementioned activity of analyzing our portfolio of actions/programs, donors and public/market awareness of who we are and what we do. I believe it is time to recharge and adapt Soulforce to the next generation of spiritual activists. We have an extraordinary heritage created by our co-founders, Rev. Mel White and Gary Nixon along with thousands of volunteers, including, most recently, 166 young adults who served as Equality Riders on our tours to 75 colleges and universities.

We have solid and well-tested core values and methodology to share.

Now that our co-founders have retired, it is up to the rest of us—the stakeholders in nonviolence and justice--our Board Members, Staff, Donors and tenured volunteers-- to ensure a sustainable legacy and transformative organization that can continue to change the world and honor the contributions of our co-founders.

Significant progress has been made on many religious fronts for LGBT equality. And, there is so much yet to be done. It is also increasingly apparent that our work must expand at the intersections of oppression in order to really change the patriarchal power dynamics present in religious practice. And, people under 30 years of age are unwilling to commit their time and treasure and talent to "single issue" organizations anymore. We must be able to effectively work within the area of intersectional justice to appeal to them.

I attended the HRC Faith & Religion Council annual meeting in Washington D.C. last week (Soulforce now holds a seat on the Council) and we heard more about the intersections of oppression than ever in the history of these meetings. The really good news is that our young adults are well versed in these dynamics and they are amazing role models to the world.

What Does It Mean to Recharge?

When an organization goes through a major transition like the retirement of a charismatic founder, there are always “break-down” and “break-through” moments. Soulforce is no exception.

When the transition is complete, it is very important to “recharge” our batteries as we gear up for the next era of work. Our Board has done a great job of knowing how to help us “recharge” and in responding to the “typical” challenges of transition as well as the extraordinary impact of the economic crisis in the United States. For example, several of our long-tenured board members were scheduled to rotate off the board at the same time that our co-founders were retiring.

Fortunately, these board members were willing to renew their terms until the strategic plan for Soulforce was completed and a new Executive Director was hired after the resignation of Jeff Lutes.

Bill Carpenter assumed the role of Interim Executive Director and accompanied the Equality Riders in 2010. These individuals helped provide continuity and valuable experience and knowledge. We now have new board members and open seats to fill. This provides an opportunity to recruit with intention for those skills and abilities that we need. We were able to recruit one of the Equality Riders as our new Director of Programs and he is off to a great start.

Further, the Board restructured the operating budget to reduce expenses and revenue projections. Most organizations that go through the retirement of a charismatic founder experience some attrition in donors. Soulforce has experienced some attrition. If you’ve “dropped” off in your giving to Soulforce and you have the ability to “recharge,” now is the time! We’ve never needed you more than now to secure a just future for the next generation.

We weathered a challenge this year when the second half of a two-year grant for the Equality Ride arrived three months late. The Board responded to this challenge when we were notified of the delay in the last quarter of 2009 and trimmed the operating budget by 17 percent. This reduction was still not enough to avoid a deficit and the organization ended the year with a loss of \$217,000.*

Several board members and donors very generously granted funds to Soulforce for specific actions in 2009 and 2010 as well as extended bridge loans to help span the gap of time before the final grant payments were made in May 2010.

A new development director, Jim Rainbolt, was hired in 2009 and I was hired on April 24, 2010. The board convened in July 2010 and as stated earlier, reduced the operating budget an additional 36 percent for 2010. This reduction was possible, in part, due to (1) the adoption of a new technology platform for all of our web services, including our on-line donation system; (2) utilizing contract services that can be flexibly scheduled to meet times of peak demand; and, (3) moving the Equality Ride to the Fall of 2011 rather than

the Spring. In boxing terms, I now feel that we are at a good “fighting weight” in terms of budget.

Our grant applications for 2010 and 2011 are underway and, as stated, we are fully participating in the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) in order that we can effectively compete for new dollars within the LGBT and human rights funding community (www.lgbtmap.org). Our financial statements will soon be posted on our web site for review by our constituents at (www.soulforce.org/financials).

Plans for 2010-2011

Equipping the Next Generation of Spiritual Activists

For more than 12 years, Soulforce has stood in the gap for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in nonviolent relentless resistance to religion-based bigotry resulting in discrimination against LGBT persons and their allies.

No where is this discrimination felt more acutely than in the hearts and minds of vulnerable young adults coming out to their families and to their peers and to their teachers. The rejection that young people experience because they choose to live with integrity about their sexualities and/or gender expressions is so deeply felt that many of them leave their homes, leave their churches and, often, without choice, leave their schools. Indeed, some choose to end their lives rather than try to deal with the oppression and depression that comes with it.

In 2006, Jake Reitan, a young resident of Minnesota, and Mel White, the founder of Soulforce, decided that they could help these young people find “safe space” on the 200 college and university campuses in the United States with openly discriminating policies against LGBT students. Mel encouraged Jake to pursue his dream of an Equality Ride that would stop on these campuses-- a bus tour across America similar to the Freedom Rides sponsored by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his followers. In addition, he wanted to create a leadership camp where young adults could learn about the 17 steps of nonviolence, form cohorts and practice their skills.

Jake’s dreams grew into reality. Today, the Soulforce Equality Ride is the leading human rights organization program in offering intensive leadership training and field experiences in the principles and practice of nonviolence to young adults. No other US based human rights organization has taken to the road and the streets in this way with such success. Soulforce now has a highly skilled cohort of professional facilitators and leaders who represent some of the best and brightest young adults in our nation. They understand the intersections of oppression and justice. They are thoroughly adept in addressing the negative impact on people and civil society of racism, classism, ageism, ableism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia. They are entering the work force and the political arena and the pulpits of churches throughout our country. We believe that they will be largely responsible for helping people stop the hate, patriarchy and heterosexism that limit the opportunities for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all citizens. They have

already influenced the hearts and minds of thousands of students, faculty members, administrators and community members across the United States with their stops at 75 institutions of higher learning and military academies with openly discriminatory policies against LGBT students.

Soulforce is well-equipped to engage and support a generation of young people ready and hungry to create and support communities and organizations where their inclusive values are respected and they can live without the rigidity and exclusion of fundamentalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, misogyny, bigotry and discrimination. Many of them reject traditional church and tenured human rights organizations as places to find meaning.

Soulforce has something to offer youth and young adults that is transforming---the chance to learn a different way of being in the world, a chance to serve at the intersections of oppression and justice, to understand and embrace the principles of nonviolence and to take what they represent “to the streets” as nonviolent relentless resistance when injustice happens. Like the disciples who were drawn to the prophetic witness of Jesus and the way that he chose to be with people in the midst of their oppression, the emerging leaders of our communities are drawn to the prophetic witness that Soulforce represents.

There is so much work to do. The culture in which we live is shifting, yet the mission of Soulforce has never been more important. People need the principles and practice of nonviolent relentless resistance to oppression more than any time in our recent history. They need to know about our work and they need to join us as part of their own spiritual transformation.

There are several ways through which we will increase awareness and expand our reach, which I feel is a major priority for 2011.

We will take our proven methodology into a digital format that can be readily accessed by people all over the world. We have a request to provide this training in Eastern Europe and in Uganda in 2011 and we hope you will help us meet that goal. We are implementing a new platform for our web site to make this possible.

We will host an annual event in Washington, DC (tentatively scheduled for February) where we will honor a Soulforce volunteer who has made a difference in all of our lives as well as an organization which has partnered with us to make a difference. This will be a high-profile sponsored event and we hope you will help us reach out to many people who don't know about Soulforce and invite them to learn about us on this occasion.

We will increase awareness of Soulforce through the media and collaborations with other organizations

We will expand the reach and curriculum of our leadership camps for young adults (now called EQ Camp)

We will expand the Ride into additional historically black universities and colleges as well as fundamentalist evangelical institutions

We will launch the Soulforce delegate program and adapt the “ex-gay survivor’s conference” to a more current format that engages a broader group of people

We will expand our denominational work to provide technical assistance and training to internal LGBT affirming groups

Our work is not done. Our opportunities are most obvious at the intersections of oppression where we can use everything that we have learned to teach people how to use nonviolent relentless resistance within their own communities. Our Equality Ride and EQCamp will continue to attract and train emerging leaders of all faiths and offer very real opportunities for our legacy to be taught and our curriculum to be revised and adapted to current cultural demands.

The rest of this document outlines what has been accomplished programmatically in 2010, what is scheduled for the remainder of the year and for 2011.

We hope you will choose one or more of the upcoming activities that interest you and plan to volunteer. You can send an e-mail to jason@soulforce.org to express your interest.

If you can’t volunteer, we really hope you will consider making a donation to one of these programs. The ones that are complete still have outstanding expenses and we hope to close all of those out by November 1, 2010.

Activities Update

January-June 2010

Equality Ride 2010

The Equality Ride is a two-month social justice bus tour, bringing young adult activists on a sustained journey to ignite change. The fourth Ride was planned over a nine-month period spanning 2009 and first quarter of 2010 and went on the road in April 2010, with 25 justice-seekers on board. For 8-weeks, they initiated dialogue at 15 institutions of higher learning where discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students is engrained in school policy. To each community the Ride visited, they brought a message of justice and inclusion, examining carefully the intersections wherein faith meets gender identity and sexual orientation. They collaborated with student activists and allies, and encouraged administrators to consider the value of inclusive policies for the sake of their students’ wellbeing.

The fourth Equality Ride placed a special emphasis on community engagement, partnering with community members in efforts to make a sustainable impact. In a change of course from previous Rides, this year the Ride was permitted entry onto nearly all of the campuses it visited. Riders elected meaningful alternatives to civil disobedience at the few schools that barred their access. The 2010 team set out prepared to address injustice wherever they saw it, recognizing the importance of an intersectional approach and the need to discuss oppression in all its forms—whether it be transphobia, homophobia, racism, classism, ableism, sexism, or xenophobia. The Equality Ride adheres to the 17-step process developed by Rev. Mel White that embraces the idea that honest exchange about social justice and inclusion leads to sincere understanding and positive transformation for all.

June 2010

I traveled to Lynchburg and spent three days with Mel and Gary “downloading” their perspectives, reviewing archives and meeting with 11 LGBT groups in D.C. on one of the days. These archives will be used extensively in the development of curriculum.

July 2010

Soulforce collaborated with four internal affirming to LGBT groups of the **Presbyterian Church (USA)** denomination to engage in dialogue with the General Commissioners and Assembly on four issues involving our community. Comprehensive coverage of this event is on our website.

August 2010

I attended the **Mindful Leadership seminar** conducted by Mingyur Rinpoche and Bill George (head of the George Family Foundation) and was able to introduce them to Soulforce. I plan to continue building this relationship in order that we can be invited to apply for sponsorship. I also evaluated their leadership curriculum for our EQ Camp and Institute.

Action in Washington, D.C. on the steps of the Capitol, August 15 from 2-3 o’ clock. We stood in silent vigil to protest the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) anti-gay hate campaign. Founder Mel White, Board Chair Chuck Phelan and I then joined with HRC, GetEqual and other local agencies at a separate action at Freedom Plaza 3-4 in solidarity and protest of the NOM action. Soulforce was acknowledged by the hosts of the events for our role in nonviolent resistance.

I joined the **Human Rights Campaign Faith & Religion Council** in Washington, D.C. for the 2010 Retreat of the Council. Soulforce now holds an official seat on the Council. We hope to create a collaboration on the Equality Ride and EQ Camp using resources from their college/university program. I also spoke with the Director of Facilities about the possibility of a small space in their building in D.C. to support our archival assembly

and our work with groups there. This would be a good location for Mel to work on the curriculum and HRC has an in-house studio which we may be able to rent.

I am also visiting with Mitchell Gold about ways for Soulforce and Faith in America to collaborate on the camps and the Ride. FIA has just announced that they are expanding their work into the evangelical mega-churches and with youth and we believe that it is important for them to have benefit of Soulforce's long tenured and successful experience in these areas, to minimize redundancy and to expand the reach of both of our organizations.

We stood in solidarity with Janie Spahr at her heresy trial in Napa, CA August 24, 25-26, 2010. Janie has been at the forefront of advocacy for LGBT people within the PC USA and paid a huge price for her loving and fully including life of ministry. Rev. Mel White and Bill Carpenter were there with her.

September 2010

Preparation for the Affirmation (Mormon) event October 8-10 in San Francisco and the Soulforce Symposium in Philadelphia.

October 2010

Affirmation (Affirming Mormons) Conference (Oct 8th-10th 2010) in San Francisco. Soulforce serves in a training and advisory role, providing technical assistance to the internal action by Affirmation focused on the LDS (Mormon) Church, known for extremely oppressive silence regarding it's LGBTQ members.

November 2010

Soulforce Symposium

The NARTH 2010 Conference will be held in Philadelphia November 5-7, 2010. For the past three years, Soulforce has hosted a "counter-conference" to engage LGBT persons and allies, survivors of "ex-gay" ministries and reparative therapy, professional therapists and clergy in challenging the misinformation and harm perpetuated by NARTH (the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality). While the NARTH conference is in session, Soulforce has produced the Anti-Heterosexism Conference to advance awareness, understanding, affirmation, and inclusion of LGBT people in the full community of faith and society without discrimination. In addition, participants learn about nonviolent principles of resistance, the intersections of oppression that impact the lives of people within and outside the LGBT community and ways in which more people can be encouraged to resist the coercive and damaging effects of anti-gay organizations.

This year we are changing the format and will be collaborating with six local/regional groups to host the Symposium as well as a “For Life” walk. Our goal is to register 200 participants. The conference will use local resources in the Philadelphia area, including a street vigil for LGBTQ suicides and hate crimes. Dr. Daniel Helminiak will be a keynote speaker.

December 2010

Launching of The Soulforce Delegates Program: This program will allow us to spread our programs and presence to all fifty states in a way that is effective, and will not overstretch our resources. The basic idea is that throughout December 2010 we will be asking people to nominate themselves or others they think would be qualified to represent Soulforce in their state. We will provide the role definition for a delegate.

The concept is that these delegates will be our ‘on the ground eyes and ears and logistics coordinators.’ People in local communities can seek out these delegates to report political and spiritual injustice in their home states, and these delegates will act as liaisons for our centralized Soulforce leadership. Initially we would have two delegates per state, with the intent that one would be representative of our under-30 constituents, and the other representative of our over-30 constituents.

These delegates would be trained in non-violence and our Soulforce methods through conference call courses and/or web based discussions and classes. It is anticipated that each delegate will serve a one-year term, with options open to serving future terms. Final official decisions, actions, and statements regarding Soulforce come from Soulforce staff under the direction of our Executive Director. This delegate program would give us people trained in the principles of non-violence on the ground in all fifty states, and allow us to be a participating force in hundreds of conversations across the country simultaneously. It would add 100 well trained and committed volunteers to our ranks. People would have localized support with which to interact, and it would provide us with an organized way to develop programs and actions all across the country. This delegate program would enhance our ability to provide long-term support, and to allow long-term follow-up to Direct Actions.

What is a Soulforce Delegate?

A Soulforce delegate is a local volunteer that has been trained in the principles of non-violence and acts as a liaison between centralized Soulforce leaders and local efforts to fight political and religious violence and oppression.

What are the expectations/requirements of a Soulforce Delegate?

(a preliminary list)

- A commitment to relentless nonviolent resistance against political and spiritual violence and oppression.

- The ability to communicate effectively the needs of localized people and organizations to Soulforce leaders designated by our Executive Director.
- The expectation that each delegate will raise at least \$100 a term to help Soulforce resist political and spiritual violence and oppression, with the ultimate goal of each delegate raising \$1000 a term for our cause.
- A commitment to fighting oppression everywhere and in every form. (intersectionality)
- The expectation that each delegate will complete all training programs and participate in all conference calls and/or web-based classes required to perform as a Soulforce Delegate.
- A commitment to, and love for the people within your constituency.

January-February 2011

Annual Awards Ceremony and Banquet

We plan to host our first annual awards ceremony and banquet on February 12 2011
(Please save this date!)

Three awards/recognitions will be given annually. The first award will be named for our founder(s), and in the first year will be used as a tool to honor our founder(s), and in subsequent years to honor those who have given considerable time and resources to our organization. The other award would be to honor a young adult who has contributed time and resources to our organization as well as to the general pursuit of equality. This award will be accompanied by a grant or award to help offset the cost of education. (ex: \$5,000 to pay for future education or to assist with existing student loans) Finally, there will be an award honoring another organization or group that has contributed to help move our work forward.

March-September 2011

We will be working on the launch of the Fall 2011 Equality Ride and EQ CAMP (Young Adult Social Justice Camp (Summer 2011): The long term goal is to host 10 camps (ranging from 3-7 days) training the social justice leaders of tomorrow in major markets across the country.

Our initial goal for each camp would be 30 participants. Our market testing for the broader goal would begin in the summer of 2011 when we would hold camps in 2-3 cities. The camps would focus on using non-violence principles while working to undo injustice with an intersectional lens. The information would be presented in a fun and empowering way.

September-December 2011

The Equality Ride 2011 is scheduled pending funding allocations. We are planning to link it with a Town Hall meeting in each community and a celebration concert at select stops.

2012

We will have an action at the United Methodist Conference, repeat the NARTH Conference, repeat EQ Camps and Equality Ride and other activities not yet planned.

Summary

As you can see, there is a lot going on at Soulforce and we need your help to both recharge our financial position but also our spirits as we take on this work. Please take time to review the web site. There is something new posted every 48 hours. And, I want to tell you about a specific way that you can help us right now.

An anonymous donor has issued a \$250,000 matching estate bequest challenge to help secure the future of our training in the world. We have to raise \$250,000 by February 12, 2011 for this bequest to be given to us. I hope you will consider making a specific gift to help us obtain this bequest. You can make this gift on-line and mark your donation "Future." If we are not successful raising the amount, your donation will be returned to you unless you specify otherwise. Please contact our Director of Development or me if you want to discuss your plans to help us meet this goal.

Thank you!

Blessings and Peace,
Cindi