

ONTO THE BALLOT and INTO THE STREETS!

Vision and Strategy Resolution of the First *15 Now* National Conference

April 26, 2014 – Seattle, WA

Our Vision for Building the Movement for \$15

1. **Social and economic inequality in the US has reached historic proportions.** The top 1% increased their income following capitalism's Great Recession while the overwhelming majority of working people are still struggling. We demand social justice and a dignified life for all workers.
2. **The movement for a minimum wage of \$15/hour** is an expression this enormous inequality. The support for the fast food workers actions for \$15 showed that the aspirations of Occupy to fight against poverty and inequality are alive and growing among millions. *15 Now* is part of this wider movement, open for all to join and fight with us.
3. **Every worker deserves a living wage.** The fight for 15 is just the first step towards a living wage. Low-wage jobs are disproportionately held by people of color, women and immigrants so the fight for 15 is also a question of racial, gender and social equality.
4. **We aim to build the widest possible unity in action** of labor, community, and social justice organizations.
5. **Our goal is to empower working people** and activate them into a fighting movement. We aim to build a network of activists, organized in Action Groups in neighborhoods, on campuses and in workplaces, or through allied trade unions, community and immigrant rights organizations.
6. **This is our vision across the US:** People organizing from below can challenge the 1 percent's domination of economic and political system and change the balance of power. The key to winning is building up the power of working people expressed in their level of organization, consciousness, unity and determination to struggle.

Strategy to Win 15

7. **Spread *15 Now* across the country** by building new action groups, new alliances with other organizations fighting for 15 and coordinating national actions including the following immediate steps:
 - (a) **May Day is International Workers Day** with demonstrations all around the world for workers rights and in the U.S. for immigrants rights as well. May Day will be an important event for *15 Now* to raise the demand for \$15 alongside immigrants rights as a key demands for workers both immigrant and native-born.
 - (b) **May 15, 2014, will see international protests** of low-paid workers. *15 Now* supports this day, organized by trade unions internationally, and will mobilize for protests all over the US.
8. **Focus our strength on Seattle** where we have the biggest opportunity to win a victory in a major city this year, following on from the win in SeaTac and Kshama Sawant last year. *15 Now* is at the forefront of the battle in Seattle which is, alongside San Francisco, the best positioned major U.S. city to win \$15 this year. A victory in either or both would have a tremendous impact across the country, raising the sights and confidence of working people and providing a model for how to win.

Seattle: Onto the ballot and into the streets!

9. **Seattle has the most advanced fight for 15 campaign.** Nowhere else has the whole political establishment been forced to commit to \$15, at least in words, due to grassroots pressure from *15 Now* and the wider fight for 15 in Seattle.
10. **Even with all the support for 15 in Seattle we have not won yet.** Big business has now launched a major offensive with the aim of implementing a tip credit, total compensations (tips, healthcare or other benefits deducted from wages), training wages, a 7-10 year phase-in (including big business), and other measures to undermine a real \$15. We stand firmly against all these attempts to legalize wage theft and prevent us from winning a real \$15.
11. **The most dangerous thing we could do is be passive** at this crucial moment or rely solely on negotiations with big business leaders in the Mayor's Income Inequality Advisory Committee or with corporate-backed politicians in City Council. We came this far because of grassroots power and pressure from below. The key to winning is taking our movement to the next level.
12. **Launching a mass campaign to gather signatures for a charter amendment** (like a ballot initiative but stronger) is the most important next step for the fight for 15 in Seattle. This will provide an opportunity to dramatically expand the action groups and mobilize hundreds of activists who can reach out to tens of thousands of people in their workplaces, schools and neighborhoods. Our goal is to collect 50,000 signatures but also reach tens of thousands more with our message, countering the confusion created by big business propaganda.
13. **A campaign for a Charter Amendment will put maximum pressure on the City Council** to deliver, but only if it has a credible chance of winning. We recognize that we must deal with the specific situation of small business and non-profits in an understandable way for Seattle voters, including many workers, who will be concerned about the impact of \$15.
14. **This Conference supports the proposal to begin a signature gathering campaign** for an initiative which includes the following:
 - (a) Big corporations will immediately pay a minimum wage of \$15 on Jan 1, 2015.
 - (b) No tip credit, no total compensation, no teenage or training wages.
 - (c) A 3-year phase-in for small business and non-profits who will start paying a minimum wage of \$11 on Jan 1, 2015 and scale up to \$15 by Jan 1, 2018 at which point all workers will receive a minimum of \$15 plus COLA.
 - (d) The minimum wage will include a yearly cost of living adjustment (COLA).
 - (e) *(Based on discussions with hotel workers and their union about how they can defend the quality healthcare plan which they fought hard to win, the Seattle Organizing Council proposes to collect signatures for the Charter Amendment that includes the following).* Hotel and conference center workers can agree through the collective bargaining process of their union and with their approval to an opt-out if their health care plan of at least \$700 per month – annually adjusted for inflation – is guaranteed in their contract for all workers, including part time workers (average of 80 hours per month), and their whole families (“dependents”).
15. **We reserve the option of going to a vote in the November election** if the politicians fail to deliver a strong \$15 as the workers of Seattle need and want. In June, we will hold a *15 Now* conference to make a decision on whether or not to turn in the signatures we have collected and trigger a vote in November. We must make this decision not only based on what comes out of the City Council but also weighing up the strength of our movement and our capacity to win a majority for our Charter Amendment.

How We Organize *15 Now*

16. **Our movement is based on grassroots democracy** built from the bottom up. Everyone who is helping to build a movement to achieve a significant increase in the minimum wage is welcome to join *15 Now*. Groups, parties and organizations are welcome to endorse, support and fight with *15 Now*. All *15 Now* activists have a role in building the democratic structures of *15 Now* on the following basis:
 - (a) ***15 Now* Action Groups** are groups of activists based in neighborhoods, schools or workplaces which can decide independently the work and activity of *15 Now* in their local area as long as they are in accordance with general guidelines of this statement.
 - (b) ***15 Now* Organizing Councils** are bodies that can be formed city-wide or regionally of Action Group coordinators to help coordinate the work of the action groups in a region.
 - (c) ***15 Now* Steering Committee (SC)** is formed by elected representatives of the *15 Now* Organizing Councils to speak for *15 Now* and to coordinate our overall actions and policies. The *15 Now* National Conference will decide the size and proportions of the representation. Each regional Organizing Council will elect their SC representatives immediately following the conference. The SC is accountable to and recallable by the *15 Now* National Conference.
 - (1) The proposal for this conference is to decide on the formation of a 13 member SC: 7 from Seattle and 6 from outside Seattle: 1 from New England, 1 from the Mid-atlantic, 1 from the South, 1 from the Midwest, 1 from California, 1 from the Northwest. This balance reflects the reality of *15 Now's* strength and priorities. We have an aim of broadening the SC into a National Steering Committee on the basis of the further development of *15 Now* across the country.
 - (d) ***15 Now* Board of Directors** will be elected by the Steering Committee to deal with all financial and legal requirements. The Board is accountable to the Steering Committee which can review and overturn decisions of the Board.
17. **Building *15 Now* will require massive resources.** *15 Now* is completely independent of big business influence and takes no donations from big corporations. All *15 Now* activists, action groups, supporters and allies are needed to help raise the necessary funds to build our movement.
18. **Let's build *15 Now*!** We appeal to all workers, young people, union activists, women, civil rights and immigrant rights movements: Join the struggle and get involved in *15 Now*. Help us build a movement to abolish poverty wages.