

Perspectives on Move to Amend National Leadership Summit

The first ever Move to Amend “Leadership Summit” took place in early May. Among the nearly 100 MTA leaders from across the country were several POCLAD “principals.” Below are their reflections of the event.

Jim Price (also Co-Chair, Move to Amend in Tuscaloosa, AL)

My foremost impression of the Move to Amend Inaugural Leadership Summit was the seamless way the staff and volunteer leadership worked together. I have been part of many such events and realize that things are constantly happening and adjustments must be made. It is the way leadership goes about addressing those situations that tells a lot about them. This combination of staff and top volunteer leadership handled these challenges with good humor, collaboration and respect. Congratulations!

Another strong impression for me was the success of having over 50 participants lobby on Capitol Hill and obtain three additional co-signers to House Joint Resolution 48. The experience gained in this activity should pay dividends back home as these leaders continue to train their colleagues and expand their lobbying effectiveness at all governmental levels within their congressional districts.

There were many other high points for me. Ashley Sanders’ facilitation of the “Personhood Timeline Exercise” bordered on perfection. She made every word count! The visioning exercise on Sunday morning was a mind freeing experience for me, as I was able to think of a democratic society beyond the constraints of our current U.S. Constitution. To have that serious discussion with like-minded, small “d” democrats was exciting and bonding!

The session on “Building Relationships across Issues and Movements” was nothing less than moving and powerful! The validating response of the audience to the speakers was inspiring. The session on Recruiting and Engaging volunteers taught me skills that can be incorporated into our affiliate’s activities. Relatedly, David Cobb’s facilitation of a discussion on “Communication across Aisles” helped me obtain a better grasp of how to use “conservative” language when speaking to those groups. Finally, the Talent in the Family show was creative and joyful! It brought levity and fun to the often serious work of Move to Amend.

In summary, I feel that all involved should be proud of a well-planned, thoughtfully organized and deftly conducted Move to Amend Inaugural Leadership Summit. Congratulations to all who played a part in making it a highly successful event!

Virginia Rasmussen (also a member of the Move to Amend National Leadership Team)

Conferences, Congresses, Summits -- many of us have been to plenty of these in the course of our years in social change work. Some we remember fondly and others we don’t! Move to Amend’s recent Leadership Summit was uncommonly satisfying in my experience. What made it so? – Content that was on the mark in relation to affiliate members’ needs and growth and organization that was adept and well communicated. There must have been a few glitches, but staff or leadership team rose to intercept them before they hit the ground! No one was the wiser!

Learning took many forms from presentation and discussion to art and drama. We mastered a

few “ins and outs” of effective lobbying from those MTAs with experience, and then put our know-how to work when meeting with Congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. During three of those visits representatives agreed to co-sponsor House Resolution (HR) 48, the We the People Amendment, bringing the current total to 17.

An especially fruitful afternoon was spent “Building Relationships across Issues and Movements,” with panelists from Black Lives Matter, United We Dream, and the NAACP’s Environmental and Climate Justice Program. The session provided an opportunity to find the common ground of our work against corporate rule whether the issue be immigration, mass incarceration, environment, or workers’ rights.

Workshops, panels and networking conversations dealt with such matters as how to recruit volunteers, pass resolutions and ballot initiatives for the 28th Amendment in local and state jurisdictions, include fun and artful Civil Disobedience actions, and communicate/organize effectively on-line. We discussed how to engage across the aisle, learned to use public speaking as a means to organizing, and told our stories about corporate rule through the lively and participatory “Theater of the Oppressed.”

The completed Ten-Year Strategic Plan was unveiled at the start of the Summit. It joins MTA’s vision and mission with a specific agenda and yearly benchmarks in pursuit of

passing the We the People Amendment. This plan was not “breaking news” to most of those present. Affiliate members participated in its development over many months of conversation and phone conferencing. This thoughtful effort is evidence that Move to Amend seeks its goals with intention and means what it says! Check it out at <http://www.movetoamend.org/plan>

Greg Coleridge (also helps coordinate the Move to Amend Ohio Network and serves as Director of the NE Ohio American Friends Service Committee)

The Move to Amend (MTA) Leadership Summit was wonderfully organized.

It was a further step in the growing movement to end corporate rule and achieve real justice in all its forms. Twenty years ago a few small groups of individuals, including POCLAD, were researching, teaching one another, and holding small public gatherings on the mind-numbing concept of illegitimate corporate constitutional rights. This work is now a national force on behalf of a constitutional amendment abolishing corporate constitutional rights and denying that money is equal to political speech. It has turned into a movement that takes on tangible, current problems and, in the just-released 10-year strategic plan, sets a timetable to address them.

Such fundamental change, however, requires a movement that will not and cannot be

coopted or divided and conquered. This was the reason much of the Leadership Summit focused -- through workshops, plenary panels and group exercises -- on not only “getting big money out of elections,” but on “ending corporate rule” (to counter cooptation by those working merely on campaign finance reform) and on creating real democracy by ending oppression in its many forms (to counter being divided and conquered).

It’s very apparent that movements for justice, peace, democracy, and sustainability are tied to directly challenging our nation’s power elite that has an iron grip on economic and political decision-making. Issues must be connected. Dignity and respect of all must be affirmed. Movements must be united.

It was a privilege to co-facilitate two workshops on organizing MTA resolution and citizen initiative campaigns with a leader of the WAmend effort in the State of Washington that collected over 330,000 signatures for a ballot initiative this November. The commitment, selflessness and persistence of MTA organizers all over the country are impressive.

Whether by accident or fate, the personification of the intellectual and integrity connection between POCLAD and MTA joyfully occurred during the Convention when we celebrated the 80th birthday of Virginia Rasmussen. Virginia’s long-time involvement with POCLAD includes having helped unearth the history of public control over the

corporate form and engaged with others on the findings. She also helped popularize the term “corporate personhood” and grappled with others to reapply democratic strategies like revoking corporate charters in the modern era. Regarding MTA, she currently service on its Leadership Team working to enact the “We the People” Constitutional amendment and works with others in the growing movement to rethink and envision a more democratic and just U.S. Constitution.

It was a grand celebration.

It was a good gathering.

NOTE: POCLAD was pleased to provide \$2,500 for a "Richard Grossman and Ward Morehouse Memorial Scholarship Fund" to Move to Amend for the Leadership Summit. The funds were earmarked specifically to assist individuals, especially young people, to attend the event. This was possible because of your support.

A Publication of the PROGRAM ON CORPORATIONS, LAW & DEMOCRACY

By What Authority (ISSN: 524-1106) is published by the Program on Corporations, Law & Democracy. The title is English for *quo warranto*, a legal phrase that questions illegitimate exercise of privilege and power. We the people and our federal and state officials have long been giving giant business corporations illegitimate authority. Today, a minority directing giant corporations and backed by police, courts, and the military, define our culture, govern our nation and plunder the earth. **By What Authority** reflects an unabashed assertion of the right of the sovereign people to govern themselves.

POCLAD is a group of 7 people instigating democratic conversations and actions that contest the authority of corporations to govern. Our analysis evolves through historical and legal research, writing, public speaking and working with organizations to develop new strategies that assert people's rights over property interests.

BWA is a tool for democracy proponents to rethink and reframe their work. To that end we encourage readers to engage us with comments, questions and suggestions.

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