

STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE ASSESSMENT 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | JUNE 2016

In early 2016, Standing on the Side of Love (SSL) conducted an assessment with traditional SSL stakeholders and external social justice movement leaders on the relevance and future use of SSL to multi-faith movement building, current intersectional social movements, people of faith working for justice, and Unitarian Universalism. Our broader question was: **“How could a banner like ‘Standing on the Side of Love’ that has historically supported and mobilized a set of people of faith into social justice movement work be of most use now in our current moment?”**

Key findings are that stakeholders want SSL to:

1. become an organizing and communications hub that does not do policy or advocacy work, or replicate existing work of either the UUA or secular social justice organizations.
2. focus on outreach and bridging the institution to organizing, with an emphasis on millennials and ‘nones’.
3. hold a cutting edge politic which is not “too centrist” or “watered down politically”.

Stakeholders also want a continued place for all the people who see the theological idea of ‘Standing on the Side of Love’ as their faith calling, and who might not be ‘in the loop’ of movement leader conversations. They want the next chapter of SSL to:

1. raise the level of debate to values and soul work, not just ‘policy issues’; not only concentrate on assumed ‘blue states’ or places where organizing might be assumed to be ‘easier’; and
2. train organizers to be better at cross-race, cross-class, cross-age organizing work.

Additionally, they want to see SSL connect organizers seeking to work from a spiritual space to each other; deepen the spiritual resiliency of organizers through iterating and teaching new practices; and seek to ‘fortify’ (a term used by Elandria Williams) organizers, activists, and new social justice leaders through a strong network.

As the SSL team, we understand organizing as bringing people together to advance social justice work. We therefore see SSL as positioned to do transformative organizing rooted in spiritual communities. Why? First, SSL’s roots in Unitarian Universalism may make the campaign more welcoming for new leaders who don’t identify as Christian. SSL now has a Director who is a recognized movement leader from outside Unitarian Universalism and this increases trust for new partnership and alliances (across faiths and secular organizations). Second, SSL can frame organizing as a means for people to live their faith, while reaching a base hungry for spirit-based organizing outside of congregations.

Based on these findings, SSL’s future work will prioritize organizing, network building, and communications (including a podcast and online course on organizing). It will seek to build a dynamic relationship between movement organizations, other faith organizing, and Unitarian Universalism. It will emphasize outreach to new audiences with an emphasis on ‘nones’ and millennials, while working to maintain its vibrant base.