

Core Strategies for Rural Organizing in this Pivotal Time

Mark Schultz (Land Stewardship Project)

Rhonda Perry (Missouri Rural Crisis Center)

Note: *Adopted originally in January 2017 by LSP's management team, these strategies were expanded in a joint statement (<https://bit.ly/2IUG06K>) by LSP's Mark Schultz and MRCC's Rhonda Perry. Schultz then used them in his remarks at Farm Aid's "Forward From Here" meeting in September 2019.*

Both Land Stewardship Project and Missouri Rural Crisis, through our own processes, have identified key strategies that must be prioritized now to help build healthy communities, racial equity, and a shared prosperity in our country. Simply put, these are:

- Organizing white rural Midwesterners, leading with values and winning on issues that matter to them, that affect their lives and communities, while being explicit that we stand for racial justice, and linking to the new progressive movement we are helping to build.
- Directly identifying excessive corporate power as a core problem that hurts all of our communities, both urban and rural; and, intentionally lifting up a pro-democracy frame in which ***everyone is in and no one is out***.
- Racial justice training, education, action, and analysis with our staff and member/leaders.
- Movement organizing—joining with, sometimes following and sometimes providing leadership to, emerging statewide, multi-racial movements that are working to achieve economic and racial justice.
- Show up and stand with allied organizations and communities that come under attack, especially black, indigenous, and all communities of color.
- One of the most important things that we can do as organizations that are grounded and based in rural America is to create opportunities that bring together, in the same room and on an ongoing basis, people who look different, are from different backgrounds and cultures, and have different experiences — to listen, learn, and identify where we have common values and goals. Without these kinds of experiences, opinions are often based on a narrative of isolation and exclusion.