



# Spirits Unyielding

2019

Soulforce Strategy



# Our Mission:

Our mission is to end the religious and political oppression of LGBTQI people through relentless nonviolent resistance.

We work at the intersection of systems of power and religion to combat Christian Supremacy at all levels of violence: internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological.

Our specific and unique superpower is decloaking and demystifying the ideological “morality-based” attacks of the Religious Right, and then defanging them by offering political education, liberating theological resources, and public moral witness through strategic direct action against the Religious Right and the political forces of Christian Supremacy.

# Soulforce Commitments & Values:

**We believe in Relational Organizing.** As communications strategist Mervyn Marcano of the Movement for Black Lives phrases it, we “move at the speed of trust”. We trust each other and our people. We go deep into building relationships with people, always looking for ways to live into cooperative models rather than competitive models of collaboration.

**Our values are not for sale.** We strive to always put our morals and values ahead of money and fundability. We prioritize programming that meets the needs of our people and matches our mission, skills and capacity.

**We welcome our people's complicated, intersecting, ever-changing identities.** Our bodies and spirits are precious. We deny the lies

that have been told on our people by Christian Supremacy. We cannot be placed in neat binaries. We are not disposable. Our identity is not one of brokenness; we do not come from broken places or broken peoples. Our people take many approaches to sabotaging weaponized religion: inside and outside religious institutions, through a spectrum of faith traditions and spiritual identities, by acting in solidarity with the marginalized, or acting as someone affected directly by violence.

**We believe in local leadership**, and we make ourselves available for local work whenever possible. Rather than parachuting in as a national organization with a plan for how local work and direct actions should go, we show up only when our people ask for our support.

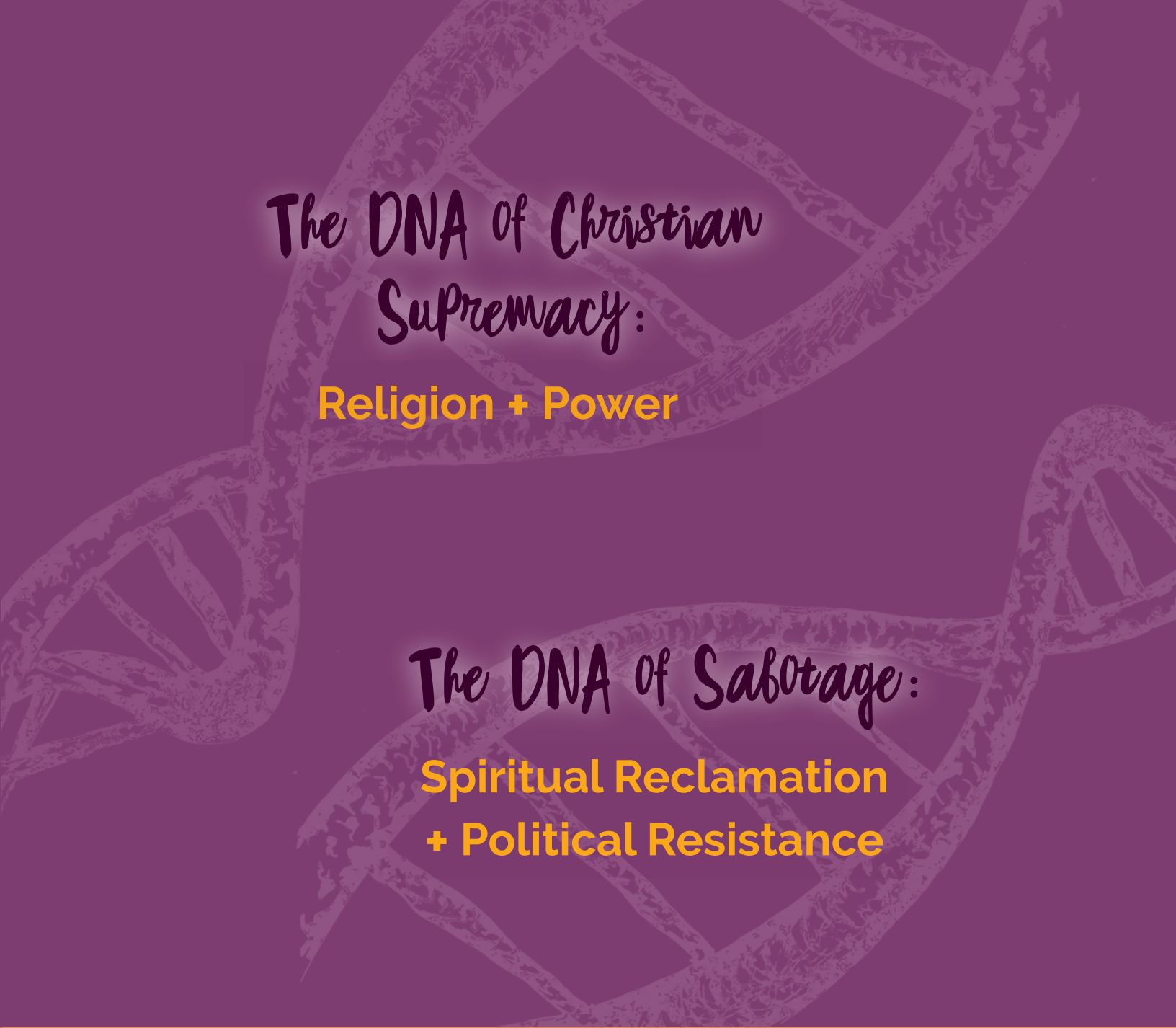
**Hospitality is foundational to our work.** We put significant time and energy into building and holding space with our people, and continuously look for creative ways to create community.

**We tell the truth, and we do not shy away from naming evil.** We believe the violence we are calling out is too dangerous to be left uncontested. We speak our truth because we can't unknow it, because we have experienced the effects of Spiritual Violence on our bodies and spirits across generations.

**Spirit work and political work happen together always**, never apart. Even in spaces and funding scenarios in which only one is prioritized, we will keep them moving in tandem in our work.

**We move with the moment, rather than run to catch up.** We prioritize being agile, intentional, slow when we need to, in the spirit of deep investment with each other as Soulforcers and in Movement. We reject a framework of cultivating "efficiency" and production-driven outcomes, and we center the value of process and organic growth.





# The DNA of Christian Supremacy:

Religion + Power

# The DNA of Sabotage:

Spiritual Reclamation  
+ Political Resistance

“No Religion without a ***Power Analysis.***

No Activism without ***Spirit.***”

– Rev. Alba Onofrio,  
Spiritual Strategist & Co-Executive Director

# Defining the Issue:

**Christian Supremacy** is what happens when the sacred text, church history, traditions, culture, and language of Christianity are used in the service of systems of power like white supremacy, patriarchy, imperialism, etc. to promote certain characteristics as God-given and morally superior, while justifying and moralizing the domination of all others who do not share those characteristics.

Christian Supremacy acts as a tool of control for systems of power and those who profit from them, by justifying the actions of systems of domination so that violence against marginalized people – LGBTQI people, Women, People of Color, Working Class People, Immigrants, and other targeted groups – is seen as normal and morally acceptable. **These Christian Supremacist “morals” are the bedrock of U.S. laws, social infrastructure, and dominant culture, even when they don’t use religious language.**

Christian Supremacy is a generations-old ideology of hijacking religion to justify systemic violence. The Religious Right and the political forces of Christian Supremacy uphold a centuries-long project of empire and all the systems of violence that empower it, including heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and colonization.

**Spiritual Violence** is emotional, psychological, and spiritual harm caused by religious and social ideologies that deny the authenticity and sacred worth of a person. Whenever the language of God and morality causes damage – intentionally or unintentionally – to the spirit, authentic sense of self, or sacred worth of a person, Spiritual Violence occurs. If our ideas of right and wrong are formed within a Christian Supremacist moral framework, we will self-regulate and repress our own bodies, minds, and behavior in order to minimize shame, guilt, fear, and isolation – even to the point of death.

# Statement of (some of) Our Beliefs:

We believe that we must sabotage Christian Supremacy at every level of oppression, from how ideas are internalized into our bodies to how they play out systemically, and everywhere in-between.

## Our Theological Ethic of Life:

We believe that no religion or sacred text is infallible. They cannot exist independent of human interpretation, interpersonal communication and dissemination, and communal and personal practices of faith.

At Soulforce, we use an ethic of life to determine what is good and what is evil. A good theology, sacred text, or moral position is one that fosters abundant life for all Creation, and specifically for LGBTQI people. An immoral position, sacred text, or theology is one that leads to suffering, oppression, or death. Solidarity with other communities of marginalized peoples is key to being able to understand the ways we are each impacted by religion-based violence and bigotry.

Soulforce strives to increase, fortify, and amplify liberating theologies, while combating Christian Supremacy through rigorously contesting and delegitimizing bad theologies, doctrines, policies, and “moral” positions that harm our people and prop up structures of domination and death.

Our primary response to the “moral” arguments of the Religious Right is to live boldly into our own moral witness and tend to the spirits of LGBTQI people and others who have been harmed by Christian Supremacy.

We know that religion of empire is used to justify violence against all of us at the margins, and so in order to win, we must work and live collaboratively across movements and organizations. Just as our oppressions are multi-faceted and interdependent, so must be our strategies of resistance and perseverance.

We believe that there can be no just religion without a power analysis, and no political action without Spirit. The healing justice of spiritual reclamation intertwined with strategic action for justice is the formula for liberation that we are staking our lives on every single day.

We believe that our people are powerful beyond measure, resilient and capable of using our agency to live, love, and survive. We believe in amplifying each other's work and adding our knowledge, skills, and labor whenever possible to move the work. We believe in the possibilities and potential of our people to create worlds beyond our wildest imaginations.

**We believe that we will win.**

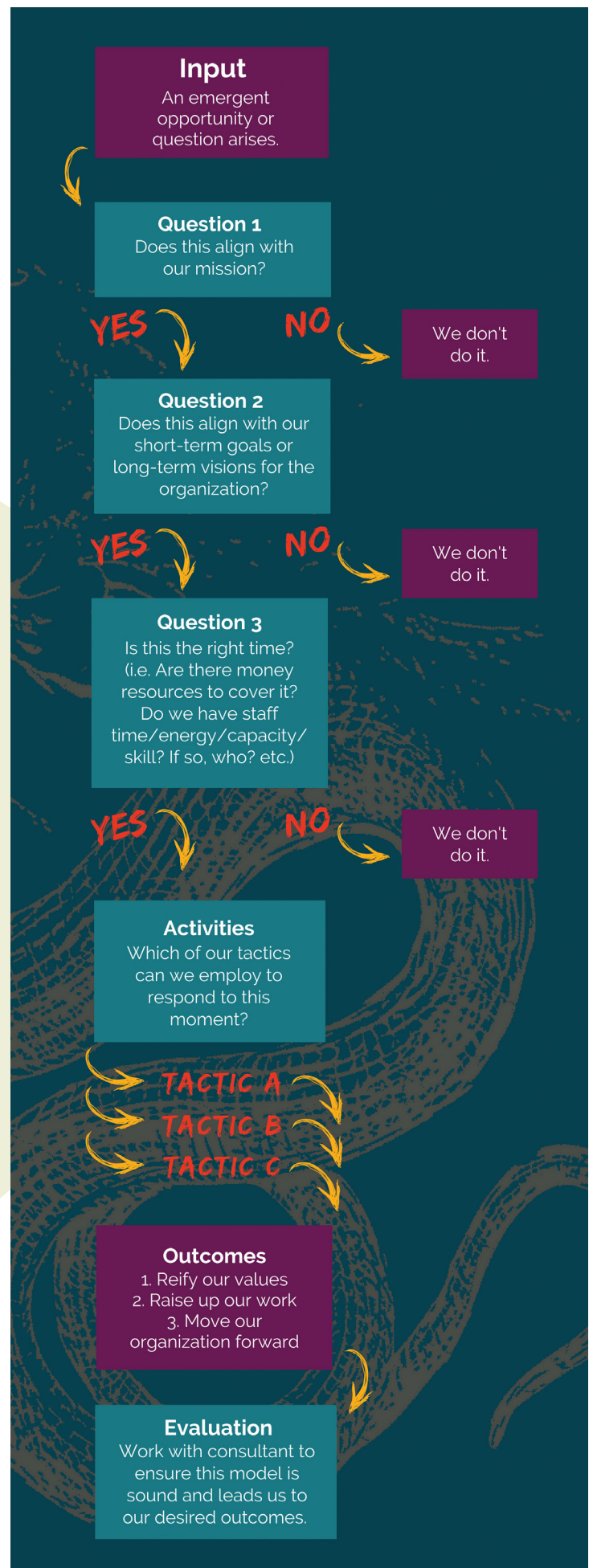
## *Our Theory of Change = Indomitable Spirits:*

Our theory of change rests on the idea that building up Indomitable Spirits in our people will give us the spiritual resiliency and political know-how we need to end systems of violence that attack our people. When we reject the shame and coercion of Christian Supremacy, we can free our minds and heal our spirits from these death-dealing forces and live fully into our true agency and power. You might call this indomitable spirit one's own soul-force – an English translation of the concept of satyagraha and the legacy through which our founders birthed the concept of Soulforce over 20 years ago.

In 2017 we began articulating our work and mission through a theory of change with four interdependent priority areas:

We deploy **Research and Strategy** on the pervasive ideologies of Christian Supremacy and corresponding political power and actions of the Religious Right, studying the connections among ideologies and institutions that morally justify and reinforce oppression together in movement with other communities and organizations.

We create analysis, educational resources and spiritual and political strategies on how to combat Spiritual Violence and transform internalized oppression or privilege through **Political and Theological Education** programming. We weave together histories of empire, domination, resistance, and religion (specifically Christianity) to create content that synthesizes political analysis, theological research, and activist praxis.





We expose the tactics, power centers, and religious and political leaders perpetuating evil theologies that moralize the domination and death of our peoples through strategic **Campaigns and Direct Action**. Whether we lead the action or follow and support the leadership of Movement partners, we engage direct action to mobilize our communities to act on their politically-informed spiritual activism and moral witness. Soulforce provides meaningful opportunities for participation in nonviolent direct action and broader campaigns to challenge institutions and systems while emboldening our people to find their place in social justice movements of this moment and reclaim their moral convictions within their authenticity.

We fortify our people's resilience and sense of agency through **Spiritual Reclamation and Community Healing**. Soulforce supports our communities' self-work to decolonize our minds and spirits by developing resources and fostering spaces that center our healing from generational and individual traumas, all while celebrating the ways that our peoples have resisted, survived, and thrived forever. Prioritizing healing and spiritual reclamation as an act of political resistance and sovereignty is at the crux of our activism and theory of change.

## The Work:

### 1. Research & Strategy

Our research and strategy focuses on the ideologies and logics of Christian Supremacy, and assigns meaning to the violence that comes from weaponized Christianity. The goal is to infuse our movements with critical information needed for us to dismantle Christian Supremacy and its insidious effects on our bodies, minds, and spirits. We find that many of our comrades in movement either:

- 1) are confused or frustrated by the hypocritical and seemingly illogical ways Christian Supremacy shows up in our lives and dismiss the power of the Religious Right by labeling it as fringe, irrelevant, or “crazy”.
- 2) are overwhelmed by the enormity of this kind of violence, and leave it (and people of Christian faith and churches) out of their analysis/resistance work, intentionally or not.

For Soulforce, this research and strategy work has been a decades-long commitment to recognizing weaponized Christianity so we can name it, confront it, and heal from it. It is grounded in a history of gathering knowledge through observation of, and direct engagement with, toxic ideologies and the institutions and individuals that perpetuate them. We do this by a variety of means: from identifying and mapping the collusion of White Supremacy and LGBTQI oppression at Christian colleges and universities on the Equality Rides, to attending and observing Southern Baptist Convention meetings to pinpoint evolving theological arguments we will have to combat in our movements in coming years.

We respond to movement partners who ask us to help to connect the dots between Christian Supremacy and an impending threat or violence on their community. We know analysis-building strengthens the intersectionality of our movements by offering a deeper understanding of how all oppression is connected – in our case, through the ways violence is moralized against all of us at the margins.

We are not the only organization doing research on the political and theological mechanisms of Christian Supremacy. We are grateful to be in collaboration with several groups and organizations who do brilliant research and tracking of the Right Wing; our particular work is to contextualize opposition research for activists in affected communities.



When we collaborate with dedicated organizers and opposition researchers, we seed all our movements with a deeper understanding of weaponized religion and a greater imagination for how we can resist. We want social justice movements that can confidently articulate the ways Christian Supremacy operates in our current conditions, what would it mean for the Religious Right to win, and ways we think our people might push back effectively against this religion of empire.

For that reason, we offer our movements a specific analysis of Christian Supremacy that weaves research and scholarship into a **narrative of oppression and resistance that is intersectional, accessible, and margins-centered.**

## **Examples of relationships for research development & strategizing we've grown in the last five years:**

### **Racial Justice organizations:**

Showing Up for Racial Justice  
Columbia Law "Public Rights, Private Conscience" Project

### **Reproductive Justice organizations:**

SisterSong

### **Organizations countering the Right Wing:**

Political Research Associates (PRA)  
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

### **Southern-based organizations:**

Highlander Research and Education Center

### **LGBTQI Justice organizations:**

National LGBTQ Taskforce  
Campus Pride

### **Progressive faith-centered organizations:**

Our Bible App  
Rural Faith Leaders Organizing  
Brave Commons  
The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries

### **Healing Justice organizations:**

The Fireweed Collective

### **Global Solidarity organizations:**

International LGBTI Association (ILGA)  
Global Interfaith Network

### **Social Justice Organizing at Colleges and Universities:**

Biola University  
Azusa Pacific University  
Vanderbilt Divinity School

## 2. Political & Theological Education

For Soulforce, Political and Theological Education is not just what we talk about, but how we talk about it. Our members feel spiritually and politically strong when they're able to reference their own ethics, theology, and politics in response to the ways toxic theologies roll out violence and oppression onto our people. We build capacity for individuals, groups, and organizations willing to work through a process of politically-informed ethics formation, providing principled onramps to the many strategies and tactics of sabotaging Christian Supremacy.

Through Political & Theological Education, we offer form-and-content appropriate responses to that is spiritually healing, theologically astute, and ethics-driven. Our political and theological education work centers the creation of resources that respond to political moments where the ideology and logic of Christian Supremacy is undergirding violence against marginalized people. For example, we have developed a body of scriptural analysis resources called the Breaking Open Series: a series of print resources and videos with tools for activists to engage with scripture in the face of Bible-based violence. We aim to create resources that are timely, easy to read, and offers activists and organizers practical tools for examining the cause and effects of weaponized religion.

As is true with our research and strategy, **we develop our resources by being in relationship with directly-affected communities** and with organizations who are engaging in work and communities on the ground. We value and rely on direct feedback from partner organizations and program attendees to continue the development of resources.

We work hard to ensure these resources are accessible to people across various ages, identities, education levels and class backgrounds, familiarities with social justice movements – but especially in solidarity with human rights defenders in the Global South as they resist Christian

Supremacy and Spiritual Violence in their own contexts. For us, acting in right relationship has looked like creating Global South Advisory Councils that help shape the scope and language of our theological resources to apply to the contexts of many Global South-grounded activists. The resources we were able to build together have since been used by activists around the world: from Ugandan activists' presentations to national legislative bodies, to relationship building between members of LGBTQI-affirming churches.

### *Different kinds of Political and Theological resources and activities we have created in the past five years:*

- **Theological & scripture-based resources** Breaking Open: Sodom & Gomorrah; Biblical Literalism & Inerrancy; and Genesis 1: The Gender of God & Creation
- **Workshops and analytical resources on Christian Supremacy** "What is Christian Supremacy?"
- **Opposition research briefs and toolkits** 2016 Know Your Neighbors briefs with Political Research Associates; Religious Exemptions 101 Webinar
- **Resources to accompany activists with tools and tactics in their resistance** Refreshing Nonviolence Series; 2016 Campus Organizing Toolkit

## **3. Campaigns & Direct Action**

The campaigns we choose reflect a great deal about Soulforce's priorities and ethical positions. **Our goal in undertaking campaigns and direct action is to live out a moral witness that contests religion-based violence where it would otherwise go uncontested.** Direct action is one tool of a larger campaign that helps to educate our people, gives us legitimacy, and offers a powerful moral witness that inspires and emboldens others.

We do direct action because there are times when we can no longer sit idly by while our LGBTQI people's lives are being extinguished from the spiritual and physical effects of Christian Supremacy. It is our moral imperative to take action to save the lives and souls of our people.

As a capacity building organization, we endeavor to support and expand the work of our movements. Sometimes that means leading our own actions where it makes sense, and sometimes it means publicly participating in and partnering with others' campaigns and direct actions to amplify existing work and offering analysis on the ideologies of Christian Supremacy.

## *Why we do direct action:*

- **It educates our people** on the issue and expands our reach
- **It invites the participation/engagement of our members** in person and from afar
- **It offers opportunities for spiritual activism:** politicized expressions of faith, proclamation, spiritual reclamation and healing
- **It models relentless nonviolent resistance** from a position of moral witness
- **It expresses our integrity** as an organization willing to put our bodies on the line in resistance to violence

**CAMPAIGNS** include research, targets, strategy plans with winnable goal(s) and specific tactics, a political and theological analysis of the issue at hand, a communications plan, and partner organizations and community groups, all placed within a larger narrative about Christian Supremacy and how it operates.



# Our Model for Ethics Centered Activism:

Because we believe in sustainable, long-term, community based activism, we do not plan one-off direct actions – online or otherwise. Every direct action (in-person or online) must be connected to a larger Soulforce campaign within an overarching narrative OR must be an action in solidarity with/supporting a collaborating partner that is positioned to do the groundwork and follow-up to the action we are participating in.

Because we believe in moving intentionally and in ways that fit our capacity as a small and mighty organization, we do not lead more than one large on-the-ground direct action per year, unless there are additional human resources to manage and lead those actions. Therefore, we must be diligent and intentional about which actions we choose to engage in.



**Because of our political and spiritual orientations as an organization, priority will be given to actions that:**

- Act in solidarity with LGBTQI people in the Global South and combat the exportation of Spiritual Violence from the Religious Right in the U.S.
- Target the center of power in the Religious Right and/or the power brokers of Christian Supremacy (for example, Focus on the Family, or the right wing media conglomerate National Religious Broadcasters).
- Show up in extremely hostile environments (i.e. the belly of the beast) to contest the status quo of injustice that would otherwise go uncontested.
- Support partner organizations in their intersectional justice work related to our mission.
- Employ tactics that match our capacity as a small organization and can have great impact with a few numbers of people on the front lines.

## 4. Spiritual Reclamation & Community Healing

We know that the most insidious tactic of Christian Supremacy is in the way that it has provided a moral justification for violence against marginalized people. **Spiritual Violence occurs whenever the language of God and morality causes damage – intentionally or unintentionally – to the spirit, authentic sense of self, or sacred worth of a person.** More often than not, Spiritual Violence goes beyond the internalized or person-to-person level, and becomes the widespread basis for unjust laws, hate-driven violence, and discrimination by institutions and governments. We must reclaim our spiritual power and build up our resilience as a Movement if we are to end Spiritual Violence.

Our Spiritual Reclamation and Community Healing work accompanies people and communities as they take on the long process of naming and healing from spiritual trauma. This spirit work focuses on replacing Christian Supremacist ideals with self-chosen ethics that center the lives and experiences of those most impacted by interlocking systems of oppression. We know this kind of spiritual transformation – accomplished through the process of understanding Christian Supremacy and taking action against it – is what will be strong enough to resist and refuse spiritual terrorism at all levels of oppression, ultimately undoing the cultural power of the myths of this weaponized religion.

We center Spiritual Reclamation and Community Healing because **it is work our movements need to respond to the physical and spiritual effects of Christian Supremacy on a daily basis.** And the only way we will defeat Christian Supremacy as a Movement is to heal the sites of trauma, where weaponized religion lives in our bodies and souls as we replace fragile, death-dealing ideologies with strong, ethics-driven convictions that center life abundant.



This has been true from the founding of our organization, in the very concept of “soul-force.” It is rooted in a long legacy of justice-seekers who point toward what Gloria Anzaldúa names as Spiritual Activism. It is the idea that transforming one's own spirit will be what changes our systems, because the activism that follows comes from a spiritually-grounded and body-centered resilience.

Our approach asserts the right for the bodies, spirits, and communities of all our people to be cared for and treated with dignity and respect. Cultivating a greater understanding that healing work and spiritual reclamation on an individual and community level are not only powerful resources, but also a political imperative as we continue to resist violence from systems of oppression that try to kill us every day.

## *Some of our Tactics & Activities:*

**Host regular online strategy sessions** in partnership with organizations that provide an analysis of Christian Supremacy's role in our current political realities. Prioritize topics include spiritual healing, Religious Exemptions, the role of Christian Higher Education in national political discourse, and combating white supremacy.

**Produce a political education series**, offered on our website, on what Christian Supremacy is and how it impacts all of our lives within a variety of issues, including racial, gender, economic, and immigration justice.

**Provide political analysis** alongside the tools to increase the confidence of secular groups to speak to bankrupt theology and challenge it on moral terms.

**Host workshops, online and in-person**, that assist activists in connecting theological and ethical beliefs to their social justice work, especially for faith groups, legal and policy advocacy groups, and other constituencies with access to institutional and systemic power such as chaplains, pastors, and educators.

**Work with our partners in the Global South to expose and undermine the U.S. Religious Right** actors that are globally dominant, especially those that frequently travel to spread their bad theology.

**Build partnerships with organizations in the U.S. that can effectively track the movements of the U.S. Religious Right** in the Global South so that action can be taken to curtail their travel and ideological incursion.

**Create an online political education curriculum** that politicizes faith groups and secular grassroots organizations toward queer, trans, racial, reproductive, and immigration justice by building spiritual and theological premises to their logical conclusions, thereby cultivating broader commitment to intersectional work.

**Train human rights advocates in how to disrupt Right Wing theological arguments** and reframe gender justice issues in progressive moral terms.

**Develop "Christian Left" responses to the AWID Rights at Risk report and other tools** that outline the issue of Christian Supremacy in formal Human Rights bodies. Work in tandem with Muslim groups to create a similar Muslim response. Include a training toolkit so that secular human rights groups can confidently implement these messaging skills.

**Create artistic, public expressions that are participatory, accessible, and aggressive** in the spirit of Soulforce's history of nonviolent direct action. Our primary aims are to expose the spiritual and physical violence perpetrated by Christian Supremacist organizations, inspire our community, and demonstrate the practical application of strategic direct action. We target the bad actors who enjoy the most secrecy and the strongest broadcasts in the U.S. South and Global South.

**Develop a curriculum on nonviolence that divests from white supremacy** and proposes nonviolence equally as a spiritual reclamation framework and a tactical guide. Offer this education through an online self-education series and as workshops to faith groups, schools, and affinity organizations.

**Create online curriculum that engages white activists, as a matter of soul reclamation, in the work of ending white supremacy** so that all our movements are strengthened.

**Provide theological and political training, spirit care, and seed grants** to youth in hostile contexts, with a particular focus on LGBTQI students on Christian campuses and LGBTQI Youth of Color in the South.

**Provide collaborative support on public events and direct actions** led by the Youth among our constituency, including media support, nonviolent direct action skills training, graphic design, and moral support.

**Seminars, fellowships, and one-time online and in-person gatherings** on spiritual leadership and healing justice with an amplified focus on youth in hostile spaces, People of Color, and Trans/GNC people.

**Turn moments of celebration, memorial, or violence** – such as Christopher Columbus Day and holy days – **into moments of transformation and reclamation** through online political and spiritual gathering spaces.

**Create tools, videos, and resources** that integrate creativity, joy, spiritual expression, and learning for people of all ages and communities available for download and through hard copy distribution.

**Broaden access to our theological education by creating booklets** that are reviewed by panels of U.S. South and Global South activists and translated per request for workshops in the Global South and U.S. South.

**Expand the Vacation Bible School program** to become a regular onramp to Soulforce membership, an outreach tool, and a training community for activists around the world.

**Bring our skills in altar-building, ritual, and ceremony to physically and spiritually challenging moments of protest and direct action.** Establish Soulforce as a ready and willing partner to be regularly called upon for this service at events and movements within and beyond the LGBTQI movement. Make this our low cost or free consistent offering to organizations working on police and prison abolition, demilitarization, immigration justice, trans justice, racial justice, reproductive justice, and queer justice.

# Why we do CAPacity Building, Who we do it for:

After 20 years of practicing relentless nonviolent resistance against the Religious Right, we are positioned to offer our unique analysis and experiences to map and track how Christian Supremacy moralizes violence against many, if not all, oppressed people in a Christian Supremacist context.

Soulforce today is a small and mighty organization, and could never respond to all of the ways in which religion moralizes evil – nor should that be our end goal. We strive to live into collaboration as necessary for our collective liberation, rather than working in a capitalist model of competition with other organizations for resources.

In order to overcome the embedded ideologies of Christian Supremacy in our cultures, laws, and psyches, our social justice movements need a shared analysis of Christian Supremacy and how we resist it.

It is most strategic for us to use our experience and knowledge where they have the greatest potential impact. Building capacity at an individual, community, and organization level, both domestic and abroad, is how we can infuse all of our social justice movements with a language and analysis of Christian Supremacy in order to create shared strategies of resistance.

We seek values-aligned, strategic partnerships with organizations, communities, and activists where Soulforce's analysis, strategies, and resources can complement the work of activists and communities combating Christian Supremacy on the ground.



**Soulforce** We work to end the political and religious oppression of LGBTQI people. Our activism at the intersections of religion, race, gender, and sexuality pursues healing, catalytic nonviolent change, and liberation for all our people.

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