



## Gulf South Leaders Response to the Bezos Earth Fund Grant

We are in unprecedented times. We are experiencing more intense storms and climate crises fueled by extractive economies. We are witnessing a democracy on the brink of collapse fueled by racism, individualism, and fear. We are living in a pandemic that exacerbates health, social and economic inequities. We face unfettered poverty rooted in unjust economic systems. All of this is happening with a deep sense of urgency to build the world we want to see for this generation and the next.

The Gulf South for Green New Deal formation arose in resistance to these crises. We offer frontline solutions rooted in climate justice, the practice of collective governance, and a vision of sustainable and healthy economies. Across the Gulf South we have moved with a shared commitment to frontline communities impacted by these crises. It is this commitment that is central to our consideration of funding from the Bezos' Earth Fund.

We met the opportunity with critique and concern. And we also met this opportunity with readiness. The Gulf South for Green New Deal (GS4GND) formation has agreed to receive these dollars with the gravity and seriousness of the moment we are in. Based on our collective values, **we believe that these dollars belong to the community** where the violence and long-term consequence of extractive industries, extractive economies, and extractive policies has taken its toll.

We believe that these dollars must be used to serve the affirmed regional strategies to address the climate crisis rooted in an unjust economic system. We are in a moment of transition and we choose now to leverage our collective power to shape the solutions — knowing full well that the United States non-profit structure has critical limitations that we must transform.

We acknowledge that taking philanthropic dollars to do this work - be it from foundations or individuals - is complex and often requires intentional conversations, with careful consideration and assessment of each source, as well as strategy. We understand that surplus dollars given by the wealthy quite often comes from extractive and exploitative labor practices. As community organizations rooted in the US Gulf South, we know the harms of the extractive economy too

well, but we are committed to building a Gulf South and a world where people, sustained communities and a healthy planet are at the center of our society.

We understand that engaging in this system has the potential to perpetuate the very problems we are trying to solve. To address this, we use the power of the collective rooted in the values of a movement for change. With these dollars we will continue to resist energy extraction and the unfettered pollution of our water and air. We will actively support the dignity of work and worker's rights. We will continue to prepare for and respond to climate disasters by providing energy, time, labor and care for our communities.

Transforming our current system requires a redistribution of collective resources. GS4GND practices collective decision-making, accountability, and self-determination at a time when our public institutions are being dismantled and privatized. This is how we will equitably and collectively distribute funds to community groups across the Gulf South:

- **Build & Catalyze Collective Power.** The only way we will truly solve the global climate and economic crises is to build and catalyze power among the people. Through the practice of collective governance rooted in self-determination, local knowledge, accountability, and justice, more than 250 organizations across the Gulf South are committed to transforming these unjust systems. For over 3 years, GS4GND has practiced collective decision-making processes, working through tensions, debating strategies and priorities, and coming together to affirm our work in our states and at a regional level. Our commitment is to continue this work for our people.
- **Advance a just transition** away from extractive economies and focus on community sustainability, wellbeing and workers' rights;
- **Ensure equitable access** to healthy, affordable, resilient and sustainable housing with an emphasis on decreased individual burdens to access energy, water and safety;
- **Reimagine land stewardship, fair labor, and sustainable agricultural practices** that decrease pollution to air, water, soil and political processes;
- **Innovate and implement equitable and sustainable disaster planning and recovery processes** valuing all human lives equally, starting from the frontlines; and
- **Buildout strategic communications** to increase civic engagement, advance language justice, and advance regulatory reforms in service of a sustainable future.

We understand that some will be challenged by our decision to accept these dollars and we welcome the conversations that will come. Now is the time to engage in tension, discomfort, and complexity with deep accountability to our communities. Our people are suffering from an unmitigated climate crisis and disaster and we must move to address the urgent crisis ahead which includes moving resources to the frontlines. We know that true change comes from the

people, not the money. Money from the Earth Fund or another foundation will not change how we move, nor how we act. Our commitment is to continue to lead with accountability. We will continue to move as a region rooted in the dedication to and the power of our people.

Rooted in love of the Gulf South,  
Gulf South for Green New Deal