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Step Up Louisiana Announces Once-in-a-Generation Investment in Grassroots Organizing

Program Aims to Train 50 Organizers, Knock Over 100,000 Doors this Fall

August 21, 2024—Step Up Louisiana announced a once in a generation investment in grassroots organizing in the Deep South, Tuesday. The Fall for Liberation is an organizing drive that will train 50 Southeast Louisiana residents on community, labor and electoral organizing. With plans to knock on more than 100,000 doors and have thousands of conversations with workers and voters in our communities, the project has the potential to reshape upcoming elections in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Jefferson Parish.

Drawing inspiration from the Civil Rights Movement's Freedom Summer, the Fall for Liberation seeks to build on the legacy of other movements like the Fight for \$15 that have used a large-scale investment in organizing capacity to win rights and raises for working class Louisianans. Despite the victories of these movements, Black Louisianans live 8% shorter lives than white Louisianans, and Black residents in communities with industrial plants experience seven to 21 times more toxic air emissions than similar communities with more white residents. Seventy-six percent of students at F-rated schools are Black, while only seven percent are white.

"Kids in Louisiana deserve to be free to pursue their wildest dreams," said Step Up Louisiana Co-Director Maria Harmon. "The civil rights generation marched so that we could be free. But their work isn't complete when kids aren't free to learn in schools that are more concerned about test score statistics than student wellbeing. Their work isn't complete when parents don't make enough working at Dollar General to put food on the table, let alone save for college. We're launching the Fall for Liberation because getting truly free will take people power on a massive scale, and our kids' dreams can't wait."

The Organizers in Training (OITs) participating in the Fall for Liberation will grow the power of Step Up Louisiana's campaigns. These include campaigns to mobilize voters across Southeast

Louisiana in support of climate and education justice, to secure safe workplaces for dollar store workers and to create New Orleans' first-ever Workers' Bill of Rights.

"The Fall for Liberation will mean that if you're an elected official or corporate representative attending a public event in the New Orleans or Baton Rouge areas, there's a good chance there will be someone present who was trained in organizing by Step Up Louisiana," said Step Up Louisiana Co-Director Ben Zucker. "More people knowing how to build power with their neighbors and to hold powerful people accountable is a good thing for responsive democracy and for an inclusive economy. It's how thousands of Freedom Riders won voting rights, it's how fast food workers won higher wages, and it's how Louisiana families are going to win the freedom to thrive in the communities we call home."

More than 350 people applied for the OIT program. The 50 candidates selected are a diverse cohort of community leaders of all ages and backgrounds across East Baton Rouge, Jefferson and Orleans Parishes. Through the unique organizing model of the Fall for Liberation, each of these OITs will recruit new member-organizers who in turn will engage their own networks, creating a ripple effect with a goal of creating a voter mobilization structure of more than 12,000 Louisianans this fall.

The paid training program begins August 26th with an intensive classroom course on organizing theory, history and best practices. OITs will then apply their learnings to organizing dollar store workers, registering voters, building community support for Step Up Louisiana's campaigns and getting out the vote.

The Fall for Liberation was developed in partnership with the Center for Popular Democracy and the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice.

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About Step Up Louisiana

[Step Up Louisiana](#) is a community-based organization committed to building power to win education and economic justice for all. Step Up works with Louisianans of all races and ages to "step up" by campaigning, organizing from a racial justice perspective, and holding public officials accountable. The organization partners with parents, workers, students, and community members to disrupt systemic oppression in our schools and workplaces through voter education, advocacy, and action.