

Pushed, Pulled — and Exploited

The vast majority of migrants leave their homes, their families and their communities because of violence. Sometimes that violence is outright war, as has been happening in Syria. Other times, it is state-sponsored aggression and violent oppression, as with the Rohingya people of Myanmar. In Mexico and Central America, people are often caught in the deadly crossfire of narco-trafficking and the ill-fated “War on Drugs.”

“We need to become producers. It’s about touching the pocketbook, the surest way to overcome our enemies. It’s also about recovering and reaffirming our connections to the soil, to our communities, to our land.”

— Miriam Miranda, a leader of the **Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH)**, a Grassroots International partner

And all too often, greedy and violent people take advantage of chaos — whatever the original source — to drive people from their lands at the point of a gun. Our government’s response is typically more military aid and training that makes the situation worse. For example, many drug gangs include former members of Latin



American special forces originally trained by the US military.

Violence combines with exploitative market forces to rob smallholder farmers of the ability to feed their children. Mega dam projects and destructive mining led by multinational companies steal land and water from farmers in the Global South. Meanwhile, mechanized, industrial farming has replaced subsistence farming with cash crops, while displacing small farmers, leaving them landless and hungry. It’s no surprise then, that people

are pulled toward the false hope of opportunities in the US, Europe and elsewhere. Agribusiness and capitalist labor markets are all too willing to exploit the labor of these migrants, paying them slave wages and treating them as if they don’t have rights.

Continued on page 3

Inside

Through a Donor’s Eyes	2
Migration Facts	2
From the Executive Director	2
Updates from Grassroots International.....	3
The Dream of a World Without Walls	4

Through a Donor's Eyes

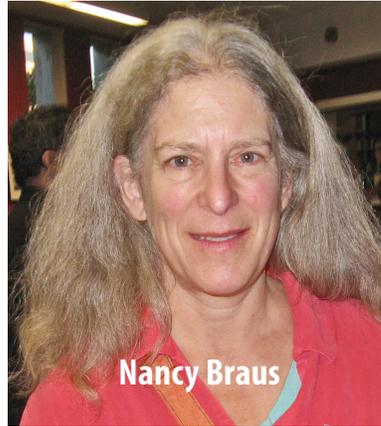
Dear Fellow Grassroots Supporters,

In 2010 I had the privilege of going to Honduras with Grassroots International's donor delegation. I will never forget meeting a group of women and children living in rough lean-tos in a small community around a corn field. They told me that the police had burned the field when it was about to be harvested because they were squatters on unused land. They lived in fear that the police would again return and destroy their only source of food and income.

People are fleeing countries like Honduras and coming to the US because they fear for their lives, because the corrupt police and judiciary ignore their plight, because they have no land to grow food on due to land grabs, and because many have no other choice. The more we learn about Central America, the more it is clear the US has always been on the wrong side — the cruel and inhumane, the anti-Indigenous, the disruptive side in these conflicts. Never on the side of the people.

I believe that people like you and me have the responsibility to stand in opposition to these US policies and to stand in solidarity with the people. That's why I support Grassroots International and I hope you will join me.

Sincerely,
Nancy Braus



Migration Facts

- The United Nations counts more than 200 million people as migrants worldwide.
- In the US, there are as many as 2.5 million migrant farmworkers.
 - The average farmworker earns less than \$6,000 per year.
 - Four out of five have no employer-provided health insurance in one of the most dangerous industries.
 - Most are young, married, foreign-born males, but as many as 100,000 children as young as 10 are working illegally on US farms.

“Many migrants ... are peasants who are displaced, involuntarily, by the US industrial agriculture. The irony is that they then become cheap labor for the ag-industry that produces more cheap products to the South, to then displace more workers. It's the same with African workers in Europe.”

— **Carlos Marentes, Sr.**, director of **Centro De Los Trabajadores Agrícolas Fronterizos** (the Border Agricultural Workers Center, a member of La Via Campesina) in El Paso, Texas, a Grassroots International ally

From the Executive Director

Before coming to Grassroots International, I spent years organizing and advocating for immigrant rights and dignity. That work remains dear in my heart and connects directly to the work of Grassroots International and our global partners in many ways.

While politicians often talk about the “pull of immigration” — i.e. yearning for better opportunities or freedoms — few acknowledge their role creating the overpowering “push” that drives people from their lands, communities and homes. Among the most affected are small farmers driven off their land by big ag or mining companies, climate change and policies that undermine a healthy food system. The Trump administration stokes the fires of fear of migration while simultaneously contributing to making communities around the globe uninhabitable or impoverished.

This issue of *Insights* celebrates the grassroots movements and organizations engaged in claiming their rights to land and home, as well as the communities and movements working everyday to tear down walls — both physical and political.

One of the reasons Grassroots International has endured for 35 years is the connection we facilitate between people in the US and global movements solving the root causes of inequality and climate change. The amazing donors and activists who sustain Grassroots International frequently tell me how vital that connection is to them, for which I am humbly grateful.

In gratitude and solidarity,
Chung-Wha Hong
Executive Director

Pushed, Pulled — and Exploited *Continued from page 1*

If you listen to the people who are forced to flee their homes, they don't ask for more military or capitalist economic development. They want an end to violence. They want land reform to protect the homes and farms they have, as well as a return of land taken from them. They want training to learn more effective and sustainable farming techniques. They want protection of their individual human rights, and they want the ability to organize and win representative democratic governance. And they want infrastructure to support their communities — including schools, clinics and other public services.

“People should be free to live and choose a place where they can be well with their family.”

— Flavio Barbosa, the
Landless Workers Movement,
Grassroots International
partner in Brazil

For 35 years, generous Grassroots International donors have supported these heroic efforts to resist violence and exploitation. This work is the real solution to the issue of migrants. It doesn't build walls. It doesn't jail tired, hungry and frightened men, women and children. It contributes to a better world by restoring the right of the affected people to create their own solutions.

Here are a few ways we are putting donor generosity to work ...

- You support **Mixe Peoples Services (SER Mixe)**, an Indigenous organization serving more than 130,000 people in 30 communities in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. SER Mixe provides organizing and conflict resolution skill-building, as well as legal assistance to build

community-based mechanisms to protect land, territory and natural resources.

- Another Grassroots International partner, **The Peasant Unity Committee (CUC)**, works in over 200 communities facing displacement or environmental damage by mining, dam and industrial agriculture corporations in Guatemala. CUC empowers impoverished women, men and youth leaders to defend land, water and food rights through organizing, political education, agroecology training, advocacy and alliance-building to advance rural development with gender equity.
- **The Stop the Wall Campaign** is a coalition of Palestinian civil society organizations to mobilize efforts on local, national and international levels to stop and dismantle the Wall in the West Bank. They also resist Israeli occupation and defend Palestinian communities' rights to their land and water. For example, they are suing to stop the Israeli water utility company Mekorot from stealing water rights from Palestinians.



Gustavo Yaxon (right), coordinator of political education for CUC with his father Marcelo Yarshun, leader of CUC in Solola.

Walls are not the Answer

Walls are not the answer. Not in the Middle East, and not in the United States, either. When we focus on improving lives wherever people live, we move towards a safer, more prosperous world for all. Without walls!

Updates from Grassroots International

A Fund for Solutions:

Since 2017, Grassroots International has hosted the **Building Equity and Alignment for Impact (BEAI) Fund**. The fund supports grassroots environmental justice organizing to defend communities and build greener, healthier solutions. Funded groups have shut down coal plants, stopped pipelines, disrupted plans for new coal export terminals, fought back against fracking, halted the expansion of oil infrastructure and more. They have also created solar energy projects and expanded agriculture markets in communities of color, Indigenous communities and low-income communities.

Funding a Sustainable World: Grassroots International, Thousand Currents, Global Greengrants Fund and Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights created a collaborative fund to help large funders directly reach grassroots organizations and social movements working at the intersection of climate resilience and human rights. The resulting **CLIMA (Climate Leaders in Movement Action) Fund** has made innovative grants to people fighting climate change — from awarding emergency security grants for activists whose lives are threatened, to a first infusion of outside resources for a promising grassroots movement, to grants for multiyear support and capacity-building. For more information, please visit: GrassrootsOnline.org/What-We-Do/CLIMA-Fund

The Dream of a World Without Walls

Separation walls and barriers predate the Great Wall of China, but the industry of wall-building may be traced to Israel's behemoth Annexation Wall, started in 2002. That winding wall grabs more than 70 percent of available Palestinian water resources and half of its farmland. There are nearly 70 walls around the world built to militarize borders or annex occupied lands and support racist policies aimed at criminalizing and blocking migrants, including refugees.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Grassroots International has long funded efforts to bring together people who challenge resource grabs and barriers of all kinds around the world. **Stop the Wall Campaign** is a Grassroots International partner in Palestine that organized a delegation from the US, Mexico and Palestine to travel from Oaxaca to Nogales at the US/Mexico border as part of an International Caravan, while a delegation of activists from Mexico and the US traveled to the West Bank. Along the way, people fighting against walls shared their stories and their hopes.



“The rising number of physical walls around the globe, many of them inspired or built by Israeli technology, are the symbolic centerpiece in a world full of visible and invisible walls of injustice. As Palestinians, we don’t only feel, we are, directly connected to all those struggling against walls of injustice.... We are determined not only to tear down Israel’s apartheid Wall but to join hands with all those that resist walls of injustice.”

– Jamal Juma, Coordinator of the Stop the Wall Campaign

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Grassroots International works in partnership with social movements to create a just and sustainable world by advancing human rights to land, water, and food through global grantmaking, building solidarity across organizations and movements, and advocacy in the US. 