

SOLIDARITY

Feminism at the Core of Liberation

The global problems of racism, violence, and exploitation often fall most heavily on the shoulders of women and girls around the world. So any comprehensive attempt to address the root causes of these problems must be done in partnership with women and girls, taking the lead from them.

Your ongoing support for Grassroots International helps us partner with movements that emphasize the principles of grassroots feminisms (it's plural because there are several iterations of feminism) at the heart of their mission. Here are two examples.



Peasant Movement of Papaye (MMP) - Haiti
Gislaine St. Fleur, coordinator of Women's Programs at the **Peasant Movement of Papaye (MMP)**, first learned of the organization when her husband joined nearly 40 years ago. At that time, women generally weren't

allowed to attend meetings, and if they did attend they wouldn't speak. The movement has come a long way since then in part because of women like Gislaine who demanded their voices—and those of their sisters—be heard. After years of political education and intentional restructuring, now more women than men work in the organization. In recent years, MMP has created scholarship programs for women to become agronomists, technicians, engineers, and doctors.

men and women can live equally. Gislaine believes many of the constraints that hold women back in Haiti are socially constructed and have to be resisted at the societal level.

"We notice that women have less access to work the land. If a man and woman buy land together, they only put the man's name on the title," says Gislaine. As one step forward, MMP created a campaign to address the

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Gislaine St. Fleur director of the Women's Program at the MMP.

Just as important, MMP organizes women's trainings, helps women form community groups, and holds spaces for women's reflection. The group's vision is to change women's economic, political, and social status in Haiti so

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From the Executive Director

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

— Audre Lorde

Today, in 2019, women around the globe live in shackles. We see shackles of poverty and exploitation, sexual assault and trauma, racism and violence. Yet with profound determination, women are rising up to break those bonds, and Grassroots International is honored to witness—and support—their powerful organizing, liberation and leadership throughout the world.

While it might seem “old school” we have a banner pinned to the wall in our office that reads: Smash the Patriarchy! When I see it, I think of the strong, inspiring women’s movements we support that are action-oriented, intersectional, transformative and vibrant. We use the term grassroots feminisms to describe the diverse work and vision emerging from the Indigenous, peasant, Afro-descendent, gender-nonconforming, queer and women of color around the globe. From local organizing to global campaigns, they are breaking shackles and weaving a web toward a more just and peaceful world.

In this issue of the newly named newsletter, *Solidarity Notes*, we feature a few examples of grassroots feminisms from the Caribbean. This includes



rural women in Haiti addressing centuries-old systems of colonialism, and organizing in Puerto Rico to promote a just recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and disabling austerity measures. And you’ll read about the global initiative underway to develop a radical feminist approach to challenging authoritarianism and the right wing backlash globally.

We have an opportunity to learn from and stand in solidarity with women’s movements. Our collective liberation will be possible when the shackles that hold any of us are broken.

In gratitude and solidarity,
Chung-Wha Hong
Executive Director

Through a Donor’s Eyes

Dear Fellow Grassroots Supporters,

For me, nothing says long-term commitment and respect for the people attached to the land more than Grassroots International.

The pictures and stories featured in this newsletter are evidence Grassroots remains true to its work, “to support global movements solving the roots causes of inequality and social change.” I appreciate their unshakable dedication to social justice. It was not eroded by the philanthropic trend toward social entrepreneurship. Grassroots International respects history enough to continue to put people and our planet first because fellow sentient beings are not abstractions. Your contribution no matter how small helps to support more than basic needs.

On a recent Grassroots International delegation to Haiti, in partnership with BOLD (Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity), I bore witness to the work and networks organizers continue to build as we unevenly struggle against a world system that continues to constrain and push our humanity beyond its limits. We met with various members of the Peasant Movement of Papaye, whose motto is “organize or die,” to discuss varied approaches to sustainable organizing. As we began to ask questions, a member stopped us, reminding us that we had not agreed on a vision for this dialogue. What would our pedagogy process entail? As an educator, I was humbled by this intervention. It was a beautiful reminder that critical self-interrogation is fundamental to social justice. Without it we cannot create and sustain collective action.

I think Grassroots is doing fantastic work. I wish I could give more.

— Gina Athena Ulysse



Updates from Grassroots International

Strengthening Grassroots Feminist Movements to Spur Change ...

Supporting grassroots feminist movements is a priority for Grassroots International. That's why supporting grassroots feminist movements is a priority for Grassroots International. We recently launched a special collaboration with several other partner organizations to strengthen feminist work in six countries where right-wing takeovers threaten women's rights: **Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico** and the **United States**.

The collaborative effort with Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Indigenous Environmental Network

and the World March of Women will contribute to a vision for a global diversity of feminisms among Indigenous Peoples, peasants, Afro-descendant communities and other communities of color. The goal is to support efforts to resist the overlapping forces that constrain women's lives, including: systems of oppression based on race, class, sexuality, and gender identity; as well as economic systems and foreign policies that exploit people and the earth.

Activities supported by the collaboration will include on-the-ground



organizing, campaign work, and coalition building to advance grassroots feminisms. We'll also be working to strengthen Black and Indigenous feminist organizing schools, leadership development, skills training, and training of trainers; as well as local and international gatherings to share solutions, develop strategy, and build solidarity.

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inequity that Haitian women face in obtaining identification documents and land rights.

Gislaine understands the connection of her work to the larger feminist movement, but also the differences between the feminist movement in Haiti being driven by elite women and the efforts of MMP. She says, *"At MMP, we work for poor people. I am a peasant woman. I was born from a peasant womb."*

Colectiva Feminista en Construcción (CPM) - Puerto Rico.

The Colectiva Feminista en Construcción is made up of feminists from different walks of life, ages and social groups who recognize that the different manifestations of oppression – sexism, machismo, racism, xenophobia and



capitalism – are interrelated and must be resisted together. Like Haiti, Puerto Rico faces deep economic, political, and environmental challenges related to its colonial past and present. The Colectiva is responding with a grassroots campaign called *"Construyamos Otra Vida"* (Building Another Life). The campaign promotes a national social transformation made by and for the people who have suffered the repressive and austerity policies of the colonial system.

Grassroots International is supporting political training for organizers around the island, study circles, and regional encounters to build a powerful and unifying social movement.

Grassroots International is committed to providing critical resources to these and other grassroots feminist organizing initiatives because we understand that the liberation of women is the key to liberation for all people. We're grateful for donor support for this important work.

Women at the Forefront



Women Leaders from Via Campesina from Mexico and Honduras celebrate their joint struggle.



The World March of Women is an international feminist movement working to eliminate the root causes of violence and inequality of women.



The daughter of slain activist Berta Cáceres holding a sign reading “International solidarity with the Puerto Rican struggle” at a gathering in Brazil.

Principles of Grassroots Feminisms:

1. Emphasizes that patriarchy is a system that needs to be dismantled, because just locking up perpetrators doesn’t address root causes.
2. Insists on intersections and overlaps between systems of oppression, because racism, capitalism and patriarchy need one another to survive.
3. Supports the grassroots leadership of women of color and LGBTQ people.
4. Pushes beyond representation, because it is not enough to elect a woman to office or to push her up a corporate ladder.
5. Celebrates and honors transgender and gender non-conforming people and rejects the construct of a gender binary.
6. Builds solidarity with global resistance, because “nobody’s free till everybody’s free” and together we will win.

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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. 