

# SOLIDARITY

## Notes

# Achieving a Just Recovery After Disasters Strike

Communities in the Global South are disproportionately affected by the intensified disasters caused by the global climate crisis. After a catastrophe, these communities suffer the most, get less than their share of disaster relief, and wind up poorer because recovery policies favor the elites.

In **Puerto Rico**, over a dozen community organizations — almost all partners of Grassroots International — are showing that another way is possible. They are innovating local, radical self-management, and mutual aid solutions in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

These frontline movements are building a just recovery by addressing underlying political and economic inequalities that magnify humanitarian and climate crises. Grassroots activists are confronting elites profiting off the human misery caused by natural disasters. Key demands include:

- Confer authority on grassroots movements, who understand and care about local needs, to distribute emergency resources.
- Cancel the illegitimate \$74 billion national debt.
- End the financial oversight board imposed on Puerto Rico, with vast colonial powers to squeeze workers and benefit the rich.



Local frontline communities are rebuilding Puerto Rico for the benefit, well-being, and self-determination of the people — thereby inspiring the world.

**Honduras and Guatemala**, already ravaged by COVID-19, suffered

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## Achieving a Just Recovery After Disasters Strike

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massive flooding and landslides after two of the most powerful hurricanes recorded landed back-to-back in the region. Millions of people in desperate need have been receiving practically no support from their governments.



on Just Recoveries to connect our partners in Puerto Rico, Guatemala and Honduras, so they can share insights and best practices, and provide powerful mutual support. This will help Central American social movements benefit from each other's experience while maintaining their local community roots.

*“In Honduras, “there is no disaster prevention plan from the government, nor any national disaster response. ... CORRUPT GOVERNMENTS AND POLITICAL CLASSES DO NOT PLAN TO SAVE LIVES.”*

— Miriam Miranda, Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH)

The Honduran government serves extractive industries that despoil the earth, and it violently displaces communities who protect and live off the land. The result: Honduras' mountains and watersheds are so damaged that every heavy rain event threatens entire populations throughout the country.

In Guatemala, the government's main responses to the crises are beefing up the police and military, seizing peasant and Indigenous community land, and handing it to corporations that intensify the climate crisis.

*“We've seen much corruption with the pandemic, and now the hurricanes, and a lack of disaster prevention and support for the people. ... Under such circumstances, we reaffirm:*

*ONLY THE PEOPLE SAVE THE PEOPLE  
(SOLO EL PUEBLO SALVA AL PUEBLO).”*

— Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations

Thankfully, with generous supporters like you, our partners have stepped in with emergency relief in both Honduras and Guatemala. Equally important, local activists are coordinating strategies for a just recovery built on mutual aid support and radical self-management — the same people-to-people approach used in Puerto Rico.

### Upcoming 2021 Work — A Learning Exchange

A great strength of community activists is their vital link to local populations and conditions. Grassroots International is planning a Regional Learning Exchange

## Notes From the Executive Director

While the transition from 2020 to 2021 may show some glimmers of hope, the issues defining 2020 have not gone anywhere. No one knows that better than the social movements who are consistently the first responders to crisis while continuously pushing forward their transformative visions.

In the midst of the extreme devastation of the COVID pandemic, climate crisis, etc., we've seen an abundance of resiliency, creativity and courage. One example is the momentum around feminist economies that center life-sustaining activities such as care work, and center the leadership of women and gender nonconforming people of color whose essential contributions are often rendered invisible.

Advancement of feminist economies is a main objective of the Berta Cáceres International Feminist Organizing School, just launched as this issue of *Solidarity Notes* comes out. Grassroots International is proud to be part of this effort, including facilitating the participation of many of our partners, made possible by your support. 2020 also saw some of the worst climate-induced disasters on record, including the two back-to-back hurricanes that slammed Central America in November. There too, your support enabled movements to combine emergency relief with transformative efforts, informed by similar experiences of our Puerto Rican partners following Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Together with our partners, grantees and donor-activists like you, let's make 2021 a year of just recovery and transformation.

In gratitude and solidarity,  
Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director



# Strengthening Grassroots Feminisms



Grassroots feminisms are at a global groundswell of activism, with strengthened efforts to end patriarchal systems now and achieve liberation for women. The goals include:

- Equal standing for women of the urban and rural poor, of color, and of the Global South — in a movement no longer defined as white and middle class, but vibrantly diverse.
- Equal standing for women in a society that's no longer exploitative, patriarchal, racist, and in thrall to the rich — a society we'll transform to serve the people.

Grassroots feminisms have always existed, but now, as they become more connected and organized, they are stronger than ever. With the global rise of intensely misogynistic authoritarians, we need powerful grassroots feminists more than ever. Women, trans, and non-binary people, always suffer first and worst.

It's also true that women and non-binary people have always stood at the forefront of resistance, pressing for radical structural change — toward the elimination of unjust power, a root cause of poverty and violence against women and gender nonconforming people.

Leadership must come from the frontlines, from those bearing the brunt of oppression, because none of us are free until we are all free.



## Upcoming 2021 Work — *Berta Cáceres International Feminist Organizing School (BCIFOS)*

To build on the successes of frontline women, strengthen grassroots feminists worldwide, and ensure those on the frontlines continue as leaders, Grassroots International, along with our partners, is starting the **Berta Cáceres International Feminist Organizing School (BCIFOS)**.

The School will enable grassroots feminists — feminists of all backgrounds, identities, and approaches — to deepen alliances and relationships, share experiences, build resources, and develop the best models and methods of resistance.

We are excited to announce that because our recent online BCIFOS pilot program was so successful, we are formally launching the School in March 2021. Our goals are to multiply forms of resistance, build the feminist economy, expand the commons, and boost global feminism to even greater effectiveness — to remake the world.

# Through a Donor's Eyes



I came to Grassroots International with a background in liberation psychology, feminisms, and transnationalism. Throughout my studies and lived experiences accompanying Mayan women in Guatemala, I learned that long-term partnership is critical in working to create deep structural and systemic change. Grassroots' willingness to stand up for its partner organizations' beliefs and its solidarity with displaced peoples around the world first drew me in.

We, in the Global North, need to unlearn much of what we've learned in our Euro-North American schooling to hear and honor the wisdom of those in the Global South. Grassroots International provides one way for us to connect, listen, and learn from social movements most impacted by capitalism, colonialism, and neoliberalism. By contributing to Grassroots International, I know I am supporting the local communities and social movements who are rebuilding and developing new economically and environmentally just systems.

As a long-time supporter, I have been impressed by the organization's willingness to tackle new challenges. I am drawn to its recent focus on the movement building within and across diverse feminisms and its partnership with the Martín-Baró Initiative to support well-being and human rights. Through such work, we accompany social movements' in their struggles for psychological and spiritual well-being as they rise up, tackle the root causes of oppression, and build new ways of being.

—Brinton Lykes, long-term supporter and  
Grassroots International Board member

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. 

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