

# SOLIDARITY

## Notes

# FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A Profound Alternative to Hunger and Inequality

What's FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

It's when the people have abundant healthy food coming from thriving rural communities. And it's when vital decisions about food — ensuring quality, sustainability, and availability to all — are in the hands of the people.

Agroecology's natural methods can lead the way. But peasants, Indigenous Peoples, and farm collectives worldwide must first defend their farms and lives against land-grabbing agribusinesses. These corporate elites have but one plan: seize land by hook



or crook, dispossess farmers, poison the land, hasten climate change, and make a fat profit.

### Resistance Strategies

Grassroots International and our local partners are helping peasant communities keep their land, which they've farmed and cared for through

generations. Depending on local conditions, activists are deploying a range of effective strategies:

from educating and organizing their communities, to mobilizing national direct actions, to building global movements aimed at shifting international policies on food production and protecting natural resources.

### Movement Successes

With your support, our global partners are **growing social movements and creating new**

**alternatives to corporate food.** Here are just a few examples of grassroots power in the Latin American and Caribbean region — in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Brazil.

**Mexico:** The farmlands of peasant and Indigenous communities are often threatened by massive projects like mining, highways, and dams. **SER Mixe and La Via Campesina**, local

*Continued on page 2*

### Inside

Notes From the Executive Director.....	2
Haitian Social Movement .....	3
Combining Solidarity with Giving.....	4

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Continued from page 1

partners, are applying the powerful tool of judicial advocacy to protect them.

As a result, **SER Mixe** recently won a **judicial victory confirming community land rights**. A southern Mexico court compensated a community that was illegally deprived of land in order to construct a dam.

Your gifts to Grassroots International help communities defend their territory, but also their traditions and autonomy. And local social movements in Mexico are looking to the future with their own alternatives to agribusiness, like sustainable coffee farms, community forest management, and eco-tourism.

**Puerto Rico:** In the world's oldest colony, Puerto Rico, colonial dependency is reinforced with continued reliance on expensive, unhealthy, imported food. In response, activists are building food sovereignty by combining the struggle for peasant farming with the struggle against corrupt political elites.



Photo courtesy of Comedores Sociales.

A local partner, Comedores Sociales de Puerto Rico, is tirelessly organizing for both food sovereignty and a people's government. **They helped mobilize tens of thousands of protesters who recently made the governor resign**, a push toward dismantling the colonial economy. Comedores Sociales is also demonstrating additional creative possibilities of food sovereignty with a low-cost community kitchen and self-managed food distribution.



Photo courtesy of Comedores Sociales.

**Brazil:** Rede Social, our partner, has exposed the human and environmental tragedy of the Cerrado — the world's richest savannah in biodiversity, and home to hundreds of small farm communities of Indigenous Peoples and Quilombolas (rural Afro-Brazilians).

The Cerrado is being ravaged by agribusiness pursuing profit regardless of the cost to people and Mother Earth. Agri-corporations are polluting the soil and groundwater, contaminating food, displacing communities, and causing droughts.

Rede Social and other activists are organizing communities to secure collective land rights, and they've just won a **momentous victory benefiting 4,000 people**. These residents of 10 communities are now being legally guaranteed their land rights, protecting them from corporate fraud and violence.



## Notes From the Executive Director

As I write, global hunger rates are alarmingly high, despite decades of promises by world leaders. But we know that hunger is not inevitable. It is the result of intentional structures and policies perpetuating inequality. And we already have a powerful way forward — in the form of food sovereignty advanced by social movements as both a proposal and framework for transforming the food system.



This fall marks 25 years of the global struggle for food sovereignty. We are pleased to share this issue of *Solidarity Notes* featuring some of the courageous work of our partners to bring food sovereignty from vision to reality. As spotlighted in the articles, efforts toward food sovereignty look different from place to place based on local contexts. But they are united in their radical vision and their transformative power.

Accompanying movements in this essential work requires us to constantly push the bounds of traditional philanthropy. One of the many ways in which we do this are through donor engagement groups, such as the current Donor Engagement Group on Black Liberation featured herein. As we forge new paths forward in donor activism, we also pay tribute to those who have paved the way. We thank you for your part in these efforts through your critical support and solidarity.

Together with our partners and donor activists like you, we are building a world free from hunger and grounded in food sovereignty.

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

# Haitian Social Movement Building an Alternative



The Peasant Movement of Papaye (MMP), in the Central Plateau, is Haiti's largest social movement. With your help, MMP is building **food sovereignty: a sustainable and**

land, grows cash crops for export, and impoverishes small farmers.

**Your solidarity support for Grassroots International plays a vital role in building powerful peasant movements.**

## Long-term Survival of Food Sovereignty

Your support helps MMP train farmers in agroecology, making farms productive without unnatural pesticides and fertilizers. The next generation is also getting ready to carry on the movement, with trainings, internships, and a Food Sovereignty Camp.

Haitian deforestation and climate crises have degraded farmland. That's why **MMP has helped to plant more than 30 million trees.**

Now the Central Plateau, a formerly denuded landscape, boasts lush vegetation and demonstrates how

agroforestry combined with peasant leadership can transform not only the environment but also livelihoods.

To ensure movement equity, members meet regularly — the women always commanding a strong presence — and everyone has an equal voice.

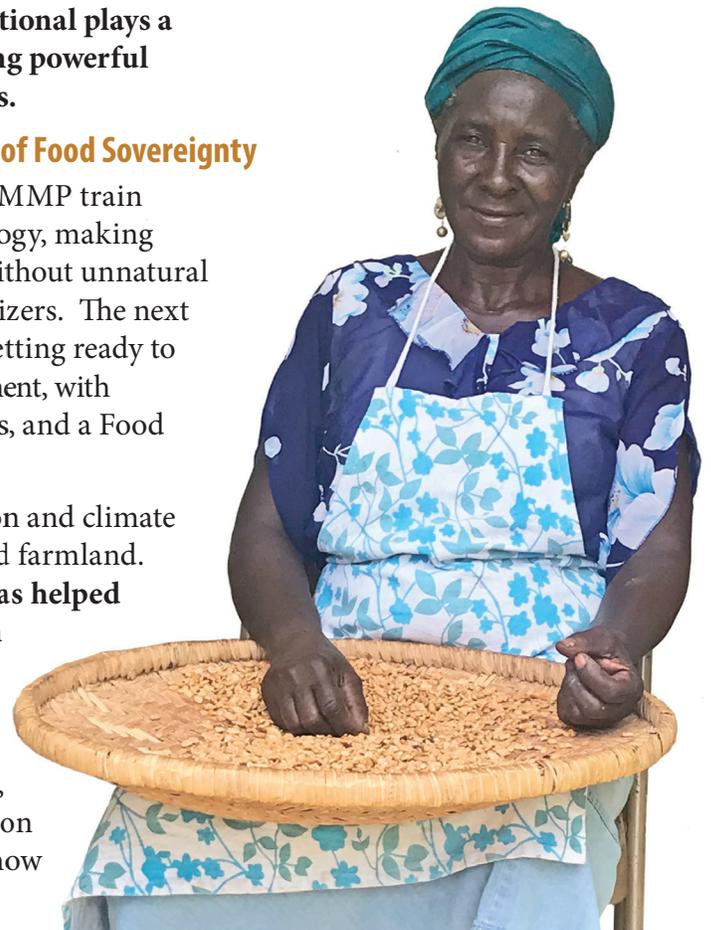
Economics reflects politics. Since agribusiness always tries to undermine food sovereignty by corrupting government officials, MMP also organizes peasant communities for political impact. **Organizing and mobilizing strengthen movement solidarity, pressure the political elite, and advocate MMP's cause to the public.**

Remember, **your generosity** gives much needed support — and gives heart — to peasant movements in Haiti and all around the world.



**equitable food system that challenges the vast inequality suffered by most Haitians.**

Haitians once grew their own food, and actually exported rice and other crops. But after decades of neoliberal trade policies and rampant exploitation, Haitians now import 70% of their food. Agribusiness illegally grabs peasant farms, poisons



# Combining Solidarity with Giving: Transformative!

Donor Engagement Groups (DEGs) are about people coming together to mobilize resources for frontline movements for liberation, while deepening relationships within their communities. The DEGs allow donors to reject the condescending model of charity and embrace solidarity within philanthropy. Donor-organizers commit to a three-day retreat and monthly meetings for intensive rounds of education, discussion, and contact with our frontline partners, the people resisting exploitation and creating viable alternatives.

Our current DEG, in partnership with Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity (BOLD), is serving global Black liberation: the struggles of Black movements for land, grassroots feminisms, food sovereignty, and climate justice.



The participants are deepening their understanding of transnational Black movements with the goal of fostering a strong sense of internationalism, collective activism, and solidarity through philanthropy — all in support of Black liberation.

*“When we decolonize, let’s be aware that our bodies and minds, and even our history were colonized.”*

- Angela, DEG participant

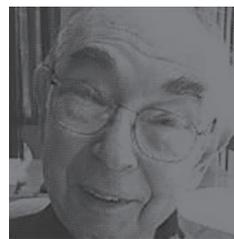
*“We don’t accept money from the World Bank. They’re like Dracula, extracting blood from communities.”*

- Carla, a Garifuna activist

## Legacy of Risk & Resistance – Remembering Louis Kampf

by Carol Schachet, Director of Planning and Special Initiatives at Grassroots International

A longtime supporter of Grassroots International, Louis Kampf was a fierce radical – both intellectually and politically. His accolades continue to impress – narrowly escaping Nazi threats in Austria as a boy, Junior Fellow at Harvard University, professor of literature and of gender studies at MIT, founder of the US funder Resist and the publication *Radical Teacher*, publisher of countless articles. Yet it was Louis’ sense of humor and relentless pursuit of justice that impacted me most. That pursuit was not optional or negotiable, regardless of the risk or the likelihood of success.



Even in his death (May 30, 2020), Louis chose to provide vital support to carry on the necessary work for radical social change. Grassroots International is honored to be among the groups imbued with Louis’ determination that justice must prevail. Louis Kampf, ¡presente!

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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