

**Grassroots Global Justice Alliance  
World March of Women US Chapter  
Concept Paper, February 2015**

*“When women speak about our histories, they are often stories of terror. But we also have to remember how we have survived. Those experiences of survival become political transformations.” — Sandra Morán, World March of Women, Guatemala*

**REQUEST**

Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ) seeks \$100,000 in FY15 funding to build the first-ever US chapter of the World March of Women, and to integrate a stronger gender justice lens into all of our work.

**ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND**

Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ) is an alliance of 55 US-based grassroots organizing (GRO) groups organizing to build an agenda for power for low-income people and communities of color. GGJ focuses on bringing GRO organizations into a long-term process of relationship building, political alignment and the development of transformational leadership, particularly for working and poor women and gender-oppressed people of color. The membership of GGJ adopted a framework in 2011 that calls for a holistic approach to building grassroots global justice: *No War, No Warming, Build an Economy for the People and the Planet*, echoing the framework of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s philosophy of the Triple Evils of Poverty, Racism and Militarism. We weave and bridge together US-based GRO groups and global social movements working for climate justice, an end to war, and a *Just Transition*<sup>1</sup> to a new economy that is better for people and the planet. In this period, GGJ is integrating a stronger gender justice lens and connection to women’s daily struggles in the ongoing work of our alliance and our members.

In 2001, after a delegation of US organizers returned from the first World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, they identified the need to build an alliance that would connect grassroots community organizers from low-income communities and communities fighting for racial justice in the US with social movements outside the United States. Thus the GGJ journey began with two goals: 1.) Strengthen national grassroots movement building efforts; and 2.) Develop capacity for GRO groups to engage proactively and strategically with international social movements.

GGJ was founded as an alliance of organizations rather than individuals, with clear criteria<sup>2</sup> that prioritize a diverse membership across race, gender, citizenship, class and sexuality, and comprised of people from frontline communities. GGJ was deliberately built to be a multi-issue alliance rooted in poor and low income communities of color, indigenous and white communities. Our estimated combined capacity represents over 300 organizing and administrative staff, annual budgets adding up to roughly \$20 million and reaching over 150,000 constituents across the country. Our members are based in 20 states, primarily in the coastal regions, though we are recruiting new members from the Midwest and the South.

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<sup>1</sup> See definitions of a Just Transition from [Kentuckians For The Commonwealth](#) and [Just Transition Alliance](#)

<sup>2</sup> See <http://ggjalliance.org/membership> for membership criteria

GGJ is co-anchor of the **Climate Justice Alliance (CJA)**, a collaborative of over 35 community-based and movement support organizations that launched the **Our Power Campaign<sup>3</sup>: Communities United for a Just Transition** in June 2013 to bring together frontline communities to "build the bigger we" for a just transition toward local, living economies.

## **ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT MOMENT**

Poor and low-income people, particularly in communities of color in the US and around the globe, are devastated by war, climate destruction and economic disparity. Women make up 70 percent of the world's poor and the majority of the world's farmers, and are often the hardest hit by these crises, from increased militarism, to drought induced by climate change, to rising food prices.

The current economic and ecological crises are deep, long-term and systemic, and in order to confront them we need bold, transformational changes in the way economies are structured and function. The changes we need will require an active, participatory democracy centered on human rights, gender justice, cultural diversity and ecological sustainability.

In order to address the global scale of the climate and economic crises, movements must be collaborating on an international level. Over the past decade, GGJ has been building a politically independent progressive social movement that can coordinate among social movements within the US and around the globe, raise progressive consciousness among the public, and promote grassroots internationalism<sup>4</sup>. We have seen how GGJ members who participate in our global collaborations then return to transform their work in the Grassroots Organizing (GRO) sector. "The same banks that we at Causa Justa::Just Cause (CJJC) confront alongside women trying to save their homes are the ones restructuring Tunisia's economy in a way that impoverishes women," says Maria Poblet<sup>5</sup>, Executive Director of CJJC and Co-Chair of GGJ's World March of Women Development Committee. "Our movements need to reach towards international scale and impact, so these connections and solidarity can take organizational form... It's the only way we can win the internationalist feminist change we need."

In order to truly address women's rights, our work has to confront the root causes of economic and ecological crises that are impacting women at a disproportionate rate. The US is the second-highest emitter of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) in the world, and the US movement has the responsibility to change that, through a *Just Transition* that moves us away from an economy based on dirty energy and toward an economy that is better for people and the planet. The demands for that new economy must have an explicit gender lens, and be informed by organized women around the world, which requires a broad view of women's rights that includes economic, racial and social justice. As Shams Abdi, a Tunisian student leader who participated in Tunisia's revolution said at the **Feminists Unite** workshop<sup>6</sup> led by GGJ and World March of Women at the World Social Forum 2103: "We want a society based on equality, social justice, and economic justice. Feminism that does not embrace the struggle for economic justice, that does not address questions of class, is just an embellishment added to a picture that doesn't fundamentally change. That's not what we fought for, that's not what people died for in the square."

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<sup>3</sup> More information about **CJA and the Our Power Campaign** available upon request.

<sup>4</sup> More information about our **grassroots internationalism** work available upon request.

<sup>5</sup> [Revolution Under Construction](#) by Maria Poblet

<sup>6</sup> For a short video summary of the workshop by Robin Lloyd, visit: <http://youtu.be/IXucT1gjdM>

## LAUNCHING THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN US CHAPTER

The World March of Women<sup>7</sup> (WMW) began as a campaign against poverty and sexist violence in the year 2000 and, following on from this campaign, decided to continue as a permanent movement, organizing in four Action Areas: Women's work (Women's economic autonomy), Violence against women, Common good and public services, and Peace and demilitarization. One of the strongest points of the political identity-building of the WMW are International Actions that are organized every five years.

The International Actions are constructed in a way that promotes the creation of networks to connect the different dynamics of the diverse WMW grassroots groups through a feminist perspective, and to reinforce their capacity to respond to local and national contexts. The main goal of these actions is to express women's strength organized collectively with a common horizon: to overcome the unfair current order, which causes violence and poverty. The 4<sup>th</sup> International Action will kick off on International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015) and continue through October 17<sup>th</sup>. Each region has set a version of the overall theme that fits with their regional conditions. The US theme is: ***We Will Keep Marching Until We Are All Free: Defending the Dignity of Our Bodies, Our Communities and Mother Earth.*** On April 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 there will be a global 24-hour action to commemorate the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the factory fires in Bangladesh, 2013. Actions will be organized from noon to 1pm in every time zone around the world.

In 2014 at our 4<sup>th</sup> Membership Assembly<sup>8</sup> GGJ membership participated in a historic vote to launch the first ever US chapter of the World March of Women. With this launch, the US becomes the 65<sup>th</sup> country/territory in the world, and the 17<sup>th</sup> in the Americas, to build a national WMW chapter. GGJ has been in close relationship with WMW for many years: attending each other's membership gatherings, collaborating to coordinate the Social Movement Assemblies at a number of World Social Forums, informing each other's analysis and supporting each other's work. The WMW operates on the principle that there is no one version of feminism that will work for every community, and so the GGJ membership has been inspired to encourage the articulation of a ***diversity of feminisms.***

GGJ brings unique perspectives and contributions both to our global feminist movement partners and also within our US-based membership. Within our membership we are sparking conversations to reclaim feminisms for the grassroots, working through some of the alienation women of color have experienced from a US mainstream feminism embodied by majority white, middle/upper class academic women<sup>9</sup>. To global feminist movements, we bring a complex gender justice lens that pushes to expand feminism to include the struggles of all gender-oppressed people, including genderqueer, transgender and other gender non-conforming people. Confronting patriarchy has revealed itself as an entry point for many of our members, and our World March of Women Development Committee is exploring ways to approach all of our work with a more intentional grassroots gender justice lens.

The first task of our newly formed World March of Women Development Committee (WMW-DC) was to develop and consolidate GGJ leadership of women, transgender and queer organizers by

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<sup>7</sup> Learn more about World March of Women at: [http://www.marchemondiale.org/index\\_html/en](http://www.marchemondiale.org/index_html/en)

<sup>8</sup> For highlights from the Membership Assembly 2014: <http://ggjalliance.org/MA2014highlights>

<sup>9</sup> [Until Every One of Us is Free: Reclaiming Feminism at the Grassroots](#) by Maria Poblet

organizing a **Reclaiming Feminisms at the Grassroots national tour**<sup>10</sup> with Sandra Morán (International Committee of WMW and Coordinator of Sector de Mujeres in Guatemala). From June 18-July 3, 2014 Sandra and GGJ staff met with nearly 1,000 people through public events, organizer exchanges, and political and popular education workshops in seven US cities: San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Antonio TX, Albuquerque NM, Raleigh NC, New York NY, and Miami FL. Sandra inspired grassroots organizers across the US to explore the integration of a gender justice lens and connection to women's daily struggles into their ongoing work.

The vast majority of members are responding to the call to address patriarchy and sexism not only in the movement itself but also in how we develop our demands and criteria for the next economy. The overwhelmingly positive response to the Reclaiming Feminisms at the Grassroots tour to 7 US cities showed us that reclaiming feminism is another entry point to talking about a Just Transition. For many of our members, there is a need to define what a feminist economy looks like, and now we know that climate and gender are key entry points to the process of building a platform for the next economy, which we will do in 2015 through a series of three Just Transition Assemblies<sup>11</sup>.

In forming the WMW US, GGJ accomplishes a number of things. We:

- connect to social movements, in particular women's movements on the ground in the Global South that put forth demands and actions we can directly plug into;
- strengthen our own understanding of how global women's movements wage fights around war/empire, the ecological crisis, the economy, and gender based violence, and integrate that thinking into GGJ's other programs, particularly the Just Transition Assemblies in 2015 to define a platform for the next economy;
- develop the ability of member organizations to craft grassroots internationalist feminist demands in their day to day work;
- grow the leadership of GGJ members from low-income and communities of color, specifically working class women and gender non conforming people; and
- begin to strengthen the gender framework in the articulation of demands and practice in our member organizations and in the broader US-based justice movements, through taking collective action around WMW demands, integrating gender and LGBTQ analysis, and developing political education tools about undoing patriarchy.

Within the US, GGJ members have engaged in local and national efforts like the People's Climate March, Ferguson October, the fight for the Renter Nation—these are not separate and disparate issues, but are very much connected to each other and are the fights we need to continue to wage

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<sup>10</sup> See report and photos from the tour ([Click here](#)). Watch "Building Feminisms and Gender Justice at the Grassroots" ([Click here](#))

<sup>11</sup> In 2015, in the southern tradition of People's Movement Assemblies, GGJ members will organize a series of three Just Transition Assemblies to develop a platform for an economy that is better for people and the planet. The assemblies will focus on building a bridge to environmental and climate justice for organizations whose work for economic and racial justice such as workers rights, housing, women's rights, are sometimes not seen as being connected to climate change. These assemblies will help build the components, or pillars, of the kind of a racial justice and feminist economy our communities need. Participants will share ideas on what a just transition to a next economy might look like in their community, how current campaigns and activities connect to this just transition, and what kind of local economies they envision as part of the just transition.

*More information about **Just Transition Assemblies** available upon request.*

within the US. Through GGJ, member organizations will be able to continue to wage frontline battles with demands that are internationalist, feminist, and transformative.

### **WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (WMW-DC)**

This past fall, the WMW-DC began deeper planning for building out this work, which will require us to strengthen our feminisms and gender justice analysis across the alliance, to bridge local organizing work to the US chapter of the WMW, and to develop relationships with other women's rights and gender justice groups. In early October, the WMW-DC held their first 3-day retreat with 22 members representing 11 organizations to begin planning the work of the committee over the coming period. Current co-chairs of the WMW-DC committee are: Maria Poblet (Causa Justa: Just Cause, San Francisco Bay Area CA), Jessica Guerrero (Fuerza Unida, San Antonio TX), and Emily Lee (Chinese Progressive Association, San Francisco, CA)

### **2015 GOALS**

- 1) Solidify plans and processes for developing the US WMW chapter
  - a. Structure of the chapter—currently exploring co-chair leadership structure
  - b. Action Planning
  - c. Development of Political Education materials and processes
  - d. Member Recruitment
  - e. Relationship to ally organizations—Explore GGJ and WMW relationship to other national and regional groups like National Domestic Workers Alliance, SONG, Forward Together, INCITE and Move to End the Violence Initiative.
- 2) Begin to align GGJ and WMW politics and program through Leadership Development and Popular Education
  - a. Create a 3-year leadership development and education plan for GGJ members.
  - b. Conduct a political education series to prepare members for the actions and launch in 2015, and also following the actions to lay the groundwork for the development of the committee so it can play leadership in the alliance.
- 3) Organize active participation in WMW calls to action on March 8<sup>th</sup> and April 24<sup>th</sup> and connect local actions to the WMW US and the WMW internationally.
  - a. On the weekend of International Women's Day (Saturday-Sunday, March 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>), GGJ members from around the country in 10-15 cities will either hold public events/actions for International Women's Day and/or member political education/teach-ins connecting the WMW to local campaigns/demands. The theme for March 8<sup>th</sup> is "Planting Seeds". This could be literal or symbolic.
  - b. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, GGJ member organizations around the country in 8-10 cities will mobilize for the public launch of the US chapter of the WMW on the second anniversary of the factory fire in Bangladesh from 12-1pm in each time zone. We will connect this international call to action to the economy, to the international division of labor and how the global south produces while the global north consumes, and to our local demands for racial, economic, and gender justice.
- 4) Integrate gender justice lens into our platform for the next economy, which will be built through our Just Transition Assemblies in 2015 and 2016.
- 5) Develop GGJ-WMW branding and materials, such as flags, banners, shirts, etc.
- 6) Strengthen our relationship with other WMW chapters

- a) Send 5 members to WMW Americas Regional Meeting: Oct. 15-17 2015 in Panama.

## **2015 TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES**

- March 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>** International Women's Day  
Fuerza Unida's annual International Women's Day March in San Antonio  
Public events or teach-ins on the theme of "We Will Keep Marching until We Are All Free: Defending the Dignity of Our Bodies, Our Communities, and Mother Earth"
- March 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>** Delegation to INCITE! Color of Violence Conference
- March 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>** Host workshop with WMW at the World Social Forum, Tunisia
- April 24<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary of the garment factory fire in Bangladesh  
WMW 24-hour international action  
Defending the Dignity of Our Bodies, Our Communities, and Mother Earth
- May 2015-mid 2016** Integrate gender justice framework into collective platform for the Next Economy through three GGJ Regional Just Transition Assemblies
- October 17<sup>th</sup>** UN International Day Against Poverty (WMW members internationally will go to the UN)
- Oct 19<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>** WMW Americas Regional Meeting (in Panama)

## **QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2014 TOUR**

"We came together to discuss what in our midst could be considered "taboo", i.e., feminism. It told me there is hunger, interest and ánimo to keep the conversation alive." — Patricia Castillo, P.E.A.C.E Initiative, San Antonio, Texas

"Sandra's visit to New Mexico allowed us to bring together groups and people we don't generally get to work with to talk about an issue that we don't generally get to bring to light in our work. Talking about Reclaiming Feminisms has allowed SWOP and our allies to open a much-needed discussion around gender justice. Not to mention her spirit and energy contributed to a music-filled night many of us won't soon forget!" — SouthWest Organizing Project, Albuquerque, NM

"This was so inspiring! I think we should organize a 2 million woman march in the United States!!" Gerthina Harris, Causa Justa :: Just Cause member, Oakland, CA