

## Justice for Berta Campaign

Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ) / World March of Women-US (WMW)

### Context of the Current Moment (Coyuntura)

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016, people around the world grieved the loss of social movement leader Berta Cáceres, co-founder of COPINH (Civic Council of Grassroots and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras). Berta was assassinated at night in her home because of the organizing she did to defend the Lenca Indigenous Peoples' land, rights and territory, and to protest transnational corporations and the government. Berta's death comes after her tireless fight to protect the Gualcarque River from the illegal attempts from the Energetic Developments Company (DESA) to build a hydroelectric dam called "Agua Zarca."

Berta was a key leader against the US-backed 2009 coup which ousted the progressive President Manuel Zelaya. Honduras had been a repressive place for decades, but the coup directly heightened conditions for repression against activists protecting their communities. Combined with the criminalization of protest, there have been death threats to Berta and countless other organizers. In fact, on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 another COPINH member, Nelson García, was also murdered on a day that he had been supporting people who were being forcibly evicted by the government.

The assassinations of Berta Cáceres and Nelson García have put in the spotlight former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's role<sup>1</sup> in legitimizing the Honduran coup which empowered the military to defend transnational corporations' interests with impunity. The US played a role in training the military, and still has a heavy hand in the political affairs of the country. Within the context of the 2016 presidential elections, we have the opportunity to hold the US accountable for the consequences of its interventionist foreign policies.

The presidential campaigns have not only raised discussion about US foreign policy, but they have also galvanized the most reactionary forces among the white working class, activating and normalizing long-accumulated "white rage" against gains that people of color have made in past decades, and threatening the future of all relatively progressive politics. This growing cultural norm of unchecked white rage has long-term implications for people of color and indigenous peoples beyond whoever gets elected as President.

**We know the dual impact that whoever becomes the next US president will have on communities, not only here in the US, but also on people around the globe.** We need to challenge the growing culture of unchecked racism, fear and hatred, as well as the military and economic conditions and policies that set the stage for brutal and inhumane repression like the assassination of our dear sister Berta to occur.

Women in leadership have been at the forefront of these struggles, and have also been the targets of violence. Berta was a symbol for not only the Honduran movement, but for movements around the world. She embodied the kind of leadership that we strive for. She was an indigenous feminist, environmental activist, land rights defender in her community, and internationalist renowned around the world. She believed that everyone deserved to be happy, and she was an inspiration to so many others across different movements.

**¡Berta Cáceres Presente!**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/9/hillary-clinton-honduraslatinamericaforeignpolicy.html>

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### Background

This work came out of conversations within the membership of Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, World March of Women US Chapter, and a call we co-hosted with Black Lives Matter Network and Mijente/#Not1More in mid-March entitled “White Rage and the State of Our Movements.” With 36 hours notice, nearly 300 people showed up to participate in a video conference call. The call grew from informal conversations amongst movement leaders of color questioning why nobody had yet put out a national call to action from the perspective of communities of color to confront the growing acceptance and public condoning of racism, xenophobia and misogyny especially from the Republican presidential candidates, and to mobilize to the Republican National Convention and the Democratic National Convention, both happening this July 2016. We are still assessing next steps in terms of whether the three convening networks/alliances will collaborate around joint action at the conventions this summer, but we know that in this coming period the continued growth of unchecked white rage and misogyny calls upon us to build more joint practice with each other, no matter who becomes the next president.

We think this moment calls for a more unified movement response and strategy. Given the dynamics of the presidential race up to this point, it’s becoming more clear that both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions will likely be contested spaces in ways that we haven’t seen before. With both major political parties under scrutiny in their race to lead the country, and within an atmosphere of national debate on critical issues of how the next US president will govern, we have an opportunity to build stronger joint practice across people of color led movements and to elevate some of the most pressing issues of communities of color, particularly women & trans people, to the international stage.

### Goals

- 1) Join the international calls for justice for Berta by supporting the family’s demands of independent investigation, immediate stop to the harassment and criminalization of COPINH and other activists, end US military aid and training to Honduras.
- 2) Call on all presidential candidates to take a position on this issue by opposing the Agua Zarca dam and the coup.
- 3) Mobilize WMW committee members to action, connecting their local work to the national elections and this global call for justice.
- 4) Educate the public about the impacts of US foreign policies abroad, why women’s issues go beyond equal pay and access to abortion, and promote the kinds of policies we want that will address women’s issues in the US and abroad.
- 5) Strengthen the chapter at a national level and provide concrete connections to build the local work.

### Outcomes

- 1) Increase international pressure for an independent investigation into Berta’s assassination.
- 2) Presidential candidates respond publicly to this issue (Berta Cáceres assassination, Honduran coup, Agua Zarca dam) and acknowledge the impact of US foreign policy on women around the world. The question of US military intervention gets elevated in the presidential campaigns and raises the bar of expectation to affirm and protect human rights & dignity.
- 3) GGJ/WMW-US clarifies articulation of WMW politics through public action.
- 4) GGJ/WMW-US builds relationships with other women’s organizations (WECAN, WEDO, AWID) and other solidarity groups that also take on the call for Justice for Berta.

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### Key Activities

Some of our ally solidarity organizations are focused on bringing Justice to Berta in Honduras, using tactics such as lobbying senators to write letters calling for independent investigations, and sending delegations to Honduras. As GGJ and the WMW US chapter, our contribution will focus on highlighting the role of the US in Honduras, using the elections as an opportunity to educate the public about the impacts of US foreign policies abroad, about the violence women face when they defend their lands and confront multinational corporations, and to demonstrate the kind of US foreign policy we want from whoever becomes the next president.

### **May 8-10: Mother's Day actions**

We honored Berta's legacy on March 8th, International Women's Day, and we will honor her again on Mother's Day (May 8th in the US, May 10th in Latin America). Our members are organizing actions in front of Honduran consulates, on indigenous land where there are land struggles, and in other places that represent women's, anti-militarization, land, immigrant rights and environmental struggles.

### **May 21-24: WMW Feminist Organizing School in Albuquerque, NM**

GGJ and WMW-US chapter is planning our very first Feminist Organizing School in Albuquerque, NM, co-hosted by the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP). In the context of the right-wing attacks on women and social movement gains in the last few decades, we are excited to bring together organizers and leaders who want to think about the kind of movement that will provide a feminist response to the current moment. Curriculum will include looking to Berta as an example of the kind of feminist politics we want to build. The goals for this school are to 1) conduct a Training for Trainers on the GGJ WMW curriculum 2) deepen our gender justice framework, and 3) develop skills to build out local branches of the World March of Women.

### **Late July: Mobilize to the Republican National Convention in Cleveland and the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia**

We are exploring two main angles of mobilization to the conventions:

- Convergence to fight racism and patriarchy: organize actions with white allies and POC front and center uplifting the the real violence we face daily. Make clear that there is another choice for white people beyond the growing culture of white rage.
- Organize creative actions highlighting Berta Cáceres, impact of US military intervention, link to criminalization of women of color and detention/deportation.

### **August to November: Communications Campaign demonstrating the real costs of foreign policy**

focused on how women are impacted by issues of war, occupation, UN climate negotiations, trade deals.

### Budget Projections

*These are rough initial estimates which do not include GGJ staff time, and fluctuate primarily based on level of mobilization to the RNC & DNC.*

Minimum Scale	Mid-Range Scale	Maximum Scale
\$125,000	\$270,000	\$500,000