



# JASS

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*Strengthening and sustaining  
women's organizing power*

## **JASS at the III Americas Social Forum Guatemala City, Guatemala October 7-12, 2008**



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## Introduction about the III Americas Social Forum

The University of San Carlos, Guatemala's public university, was host to nearly 10,000 social justice advocates and human rights defenders from throughout the continent who gathered October 7-12, 2008, to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Americas Social Forum.

The Americas Social Forum (ASF) is part of the broader Social Forum process that was initiated in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, site of the first World Social Forum. The objectives of the ASF, as outlined on the Forum's website, are to "further strengthen interconnections between struggles, experiences and critical perspectives across regions of the Americas", to "foster the knowledge and practices, ancestral and new, that support alternatives", to "build greater solidarity with expressions of resistance in Mesoamerica", and to "provide a broad space for building a shared agenda and platforms for emancipation among people of the continent and of the world."<sup>1</sup>

Guatemala was chosen as the convergence site both in recognition of the importance of its long history of indigenous peoples' resistance as well as its strategic location in Mesoamerica, a sort of midpoint where activists from the North and the South could meet to dialogue, share their experiences and perspectives, and continue to visualize and strategize around making real the motto of the Social Forum process, "Another World is Possible".

## Our delegation

As we prepare to bring our movement-building work to North America in 2009, the Americas Social Forum was the perfect opportunity to bring together the *Petateras*, (JASS' key allies working for women's rights in Mesoamerica) and women activists and organizers from the U.S. and Canada. Crossing through barriers of language and geography, women from very distinct backgrounds and organizing experiences were able to dialogue about the issues that affect us all, no matter where on the continent we live, and to begin to envision strategies for mutual support and cross-border exchange.

We began our own activities upon arriving, the day before the Forum, with an informal gathering between some of the *Petateras* present at the forum (including some of the Guatemalan activists who were part of the organizing committee of the Social Forum and were instrumental in bringing together the women's tent and some of the women's activities during the Forum) and the women from the U.S. It was a first opportunity for us to meet as a group and discuss some of our intentionalities during the Forum – a principal one being making sure that women's voices, perspectives and agendas were heard and made present in multiple spaces throughout the Forum.

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<sup>1</sup> From the 3<sup>rd</sup> Americas Social Forum website: [www.forosocialamericas.org/show\\_text2\\_en.php?key=317](http://www.forosocialamericas.org/show_text2_en.php?key=317).

Our U.S. delegation spoke a bit about the type of work they do in their communities, but also the international and cross-border organizing they've each had the opportunity to do. Below is a snapshot of some of their current projects (for a complete list of participants, with pictures and bios, please see the attached Directory):



**Lian Cheun** and her family resettled in the United States in 1984 as refugees from Cambodia. She began doing social justice work as a youth organizer in Oakland, California, later working with the Center for Third World Organizing and with TIGRA, which in 2007 launched a campaign to boycott Western Union. The logic behind this campaign is to leverage the collective power of the millions of people who send remittances to their home countries, to put pressure on the global money transfer industry to lower unreasonably high service fees and to reinvest corporate profits into communities of color.<sup>2</sup> Lian is currently doing regional domestic worker organizing through her work with the Asian Domestic Workers Assembly in Manila, Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

**Jacqui Patterson** is a long time activist and organizer working on issues of women's rights. She is currently a coordinator with Women of Color United (WOCU), an organization which conducts education about the intersections of violence against women and HIV & AIDS with a focus on highlighting and making visible the issues specific to Women of Color globally. During the ASF, Jacqui was able to conduct interviews with a number of Forum participants as part of the 41 Million Strong Campaign, undertaken by WOCU to mobilize the civic participation of women of color in the 2008 Elections.<sup>4</sup> To watch these and other interviews, documenting women of color's perspectives on the issues of most importance to them in this election season, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/womenofcolorunited> .



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<sup>2</sup> For more information on TIGRA's campaign see: <http://www.transnationalaction.org/>

<sup>3</sup> For information on the Asian Domestic Workers Assembly see: <http://www.mfasia.org/mfaResources/ADWA2007.html>

<sup>4</sup> For more information about Women of Color United and the 41 Million Strong Campaign, see: <http://www.womenofcolorunited.org/41-million-strong-road-tour/>



**Cristal Gonzalez** is an indigenous woman from Morelos, Mexico. A long-time organizer, feminist, and activist for indigenous people's rights, Cristal was also a member of the famous guerrilla theatre troupe Mascarones, based in Cuernavaca. Upon migrating to the U.S. with her young daughter in the 1990s, she became involved in the Chicano theatre movement and social justice organizing in rural Chicano communities in California and Texas. She is currently co-coordinator of Paktilkalli, a community space in San Antonio, Texas, that is a gathering place for local artists, activists, and the local Native community.



Jaqui Patterson, Lian Cheun



Cristal Gonzalez



Jaqui Patterson, Lian Cheun, & Alejandra Bergemann

## Our Workshop and Interactive Panel

### ***Rebuilding Women's Movements Across All Borders***

Envisioned as a chance for women from the North to share their stories and experiences with their sisters from the Southern part of the Americas, our workshop opened a bridge for dialogue across multiple boundaries of language, geography, age, race, and class. We opened with a prayer to the 4 directions, led by Cristal and Alejandra, and listened to Lian, Jacqui, Cristal, Marusia & Maria Suarez speak about their experiences organizing for women's rights in the context of the United States and Mesoamerica, respectively.

Issues of women's migration experiences, leveraging the collective power of people who send remittances to their home countries, intersectionality and organizing in different contexts were discussed, as well as a spirited discussion around the current political landscape in Nicaragua, with both pro-Ortega and opposition representatives voicing their views. Seeing the energy around this topic, and knowing that time would not suffice in this space, a proposal was made to organize a dialogue for those wishing to discuss the state of women's rights in Nicaragua.



## ✚ **Weaving a New Social Fabric in Mesoamerica**

Held on October 9, the interactive panel organized by JASS and our allies, the *Petateras*, was an opportunity to explain the Petatera process (begun at a regional gathering of Mesoamerican feminists in Panama, convened by JASS in 2006) and also to hear the voices, perspectives, and the various subjects that women were bringing to the table at this Forum. Some of the issues that came out in the discussion included:

- The importance of the work of traditional midwives (or *Comadronas* as they are called in many parts of Mesoamerica). A traditional Mayan midwife spoke about the racism and lack of access to quality medical care that many indigenous women face, both in rural and urban areas. She spoke about the need to ensure greater respect for indigenous midwives, allowing them access to hospitals and clinics so they can accompany the women, whom they've been caring for throughout their pregnancy, when they go into labor, and also about the right of women to choose how they want to bring their children in to the world, ensuring that all women have access to clean, safe and respectful conditions.
- Two young women from Oaxaca spoke about their fathers, both political prisoners who were among the "disappeared" in the aftermath of the repression that took place against the people's movement that was denouncing government corruption in Oaxaca, Mexico, in 2006 and 2007. The women are demanding from the Mexican government the release all political prisoners, guaranteeing their safe return home to their families and freedom from further harassment.
- Denunciation of the repression carried out by the government of President Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua against civil society groups, including personal attacks in the media against prominent feminists like Sofia Montenegro, and the Autonomous Women's Movement.



Young woman from Oaxaca



Las Comadronas



Patricia Orozco of the Autonomous Women's Movement of Nicaragua



Panel participants sharing their stories.

## Observatorio de la Transgresión Feminista<sup>5</sup>

The *Observatorio de la Transgresión Feminista* is an urgent action political strategy – developed at the JASS Mesoamerican regional institute in 2006 - led by local women's organizing initiatives during pivotal national moments such as elections, free trade debates, state repression, and international forums. Translated as *Women's Transformation Watch/Women Crossing the Line*, the Observatorios utilize media and local-to-global alliances to spotlight the voices and demands of women on the frontline. Combining virtual and physical solidarity – including declarations of support from women Nobel Peace laureates – with creative radio and web communications, this strategy seeks to make women's leadership, organizing and issues relevant and central to national and regional political agendas at moments when global attention may be focused on a country or specific event. In short, the Observatorios are a rapid-response mechanism to mobilize support and visibility during key political moments to highlight otherwise marginalized voices and perspectives.

Central to this strategy is the collaboration with Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE) which, through their alliance with the Petateras and their show *Radio Petatera*, broadcasts interviews and Observatorio updates for allies in the international community who are participating virtually via the radio and the JASS and Petateras blogs.

The Observatorio at the Americas Social Forum was convened by a group of Petateras from Guatemala with the specific aim of monitoring the inclusion of women's issues, voices and agendas throughout the ASF. With this mandate, voice recorders and in hand, the JASS delegates attended panels and workshops on a broad range of topics, from domestic worker organizing in the United States, to violence against women in the context of the 30 year internal armed conflict in Guatemala, to indigenous people's resistance in the face of environmental degradation.

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<sup>5</sup> Please see the attached "Report on the results of the 5<sup>th</sup> Feminist Transformation Watch Developed in the Framework of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Americas Social Forum" for a full description of the Observatorio, including a complete list of the radio interviews conducted by FIRE and Radio Petatera.

Through our participation in the Observatorio, we were able to witness first hand the tremendous power of radio – and specifically of radio in the hands of women – both as a communications tool and also as a bridge enabling diverse women to speak and listen to one another’s stories and perspectives. FIRE’s booth, set up in the Independent Media Center, was a space where women could come and speak about their issues, have their voices, thoughts, opinions heard by those present but also by the wider international audience tuning in through cyberspace. These interviews, available on FIRE’s website, offer a wealth of information and inspiration for women the world over. Having tape recorders with us as we attended the different Forum sessions and activities also afforded us the flexibility to conduct some rich, on-the-spot interviews with a broad range of women, again demonstrating the power of technology in women’s hands.



Maria Suárez interviews Lian Cheun.



Cristal being interviewed by the Bolivian press.



Cristal interviewing indigenous woman leader from Bolivia.



Interview with Mapuche activist and leader Moira Millán.



Radio Petatera in full swing.

## Nicaragua Solidarity



News reached us on Friday, October 10, of the police raid at the offices of the Autonomous Women's Movement (MAM) in Managua, Nicaragua.<sup>6</sup> Declarations of support and solidarity for MAM and CINCO were drafted and circulated broadly at the Forum, condemning the repression faced by feminists and other opposition groups under Ortega's government.

There was a lot of debate at the Forum around the denunciations that feminists and other opposition groups made against Ortega's government, especially his 11<sup>th</sup> hour decision to ban therapeutic abortion in order to gain the support of the Catholic Church and thus assure a victory for himself in the presidential elections in November 2006. (See Lisa VeneKlassen's piece on the JASS blog "Troubling Twists of History in Nicaragua": [http://www.justassociates.org/blog/2008\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.justassociates.org/blog/2008_10_01_archive.html))

In different spaces at the Forum, and especially in our internal and informal meetings with Petateras and other Latin American feminists, we began to hear debate about "the Left" and what kind of Left we want to see in our countries. What kind of domestic and foreign policies and alliances do we want to see our governments put into practice? Within that, how can we ensure that women's voices, indigenous people's voices, and other voices that are often times invisibilized and marginalized, are heard and their concerns met? What to do when a government whose leaders emerged from a people's revolutionary struggle is seen to betray and roll back the progress - in terms of women's rights, freedom of expression - that was achieved during the revolutionary years? These are all questions that we continue to grapple with at this moment and in the current political context of the Americas.

## The Women's Tent

Women's voices, perspectives, and agendas had a strong presence and indeed made an impact at this 3<sup>rd</sup> Americas Social Forum. Organized by a diverse coalition of feminists and women's groups from throughout Guatemala, the Women's Tent was the focal point for many of the activities, discussions, and celebrations. The Women's Tent became the perfect gathering spot, a comfortable space for networking, to take a breather from the hectic pace of the Forum, and to listen to a variety of interesting presentations and artistic expressions that were always Women also gathered there every evening to do a

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on the October 2008 raid of the offices of the MAM and CINCO, see the article "Nicaragua: Protect Rights Advocates from Harassment and Intimidation", published by Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/10/29/nicaragua-protect-rights-advocates-harassment-and-intimidation>

summary of the main events and key points that came out of that day's sessions, collecting these for inclusion in the Feminist Declaration, read during the Closing Ceremony of the Forum (see the appendix below with the full text of the Feminist Declaration).

Especially visible and strong were the presence and voices of indigenous women, who mobilized in large numbers from all corners of Guatemala, presenting on panels, speaking during the opening and closing ceremonies of the Forum, and taking advantage of this opportunity to gather with other indigenous women who had come from as far away as Canada and the southern tip of Chile. Indigenous women organized workshops and spoke on panels on topics ranging from sexual violence during and post- armed conflict to environmental rights and the linguistic and cultural resistance of indigenous peoples.

Of the more than 200 workshops, panels and other activities at the Forum, 72 were organized by feminist and women's organizations or were centered around women's issues. The majority of women's panels and workshops were filled to capacity and beyond, which is indicative of the organizing power and solidarity among women's groups in region, as well as the thirst for more knowledge and to build deeper connections amongst us.



The Women's March, held on the first day of the Forum and organized by a coalition of Guatemalan feminist groups, energized, motivated and inspired us all. Marching throughout the San Carlos University campus with posters, banners and megaphones, we chanted: "*Las mujeres adelante, el machismo para atrás!*" (Women to the front, machismo to the back!), and "*Si la mujer no está, la democracia no va!*" (If women are not present, democracy won't work!).





Marching through the USAC campus.



Women on the move!

## Other activities

### *Morning Ceremonies*

Arriving at the Forum site at 6am to greet the sun, a couple of us participated in the morning prayer ceremonies. Under the guidance of Mayan elders, we prayed that Creator may watch over all of those present at the Forum, guide us in our daily lives, and that we may have the clarity of mind and the right words that we could communicate well with one another, work well together toward the same intention of creating that “Other possible world”. We gave thanks for the opportunity to be there in Guatemala, for still having these ways that our grandmothers and grandfathers left us, and the conscious connection to Mother Earth, always honoring her and putting forth our effort to protect all life and to keep our water, land and air healthy and pure for generations to come.



Morning ceremony at the University.

### *Indigenous Peoples and Environmental Justice*

We also attended several sessions at the IGLU, where the majority of the panels that dealt with indigenous peoples' issues and environmental issues were held. One of the major themes, a challenge faced by indigenous communities throughout the world, was around mining and the environmental damage (in terms of water, air and ground contamination and water depletion as a result of the mining process) caused by mines. Dams and hydroelectric projects were also raised in the discussions, the result of these projects being the forced displacement of entire communities from their ancestral lands.<sup>7</sup>



Session on indigenous peoples & environmental justice at the IGLU.

### *GGJ Reception*

A group of us also attended the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ) reception. GGJ is an alliance of social justice organizations working primarily in communities of people of color and in low income communities in the United States. Their reception, honoring the work of the Hemispheric Council and all of the organizers of the Americas Social Forum, gave us a chance to reconnect with some of the folks who were part of the GGJ delegation, including Rose Brewer of Afro-Eco, and women from PODER, the Indigenous Women's Network, the AIDS Housing Network, and the Indigenous Environmental Network, with whom we want to collaborate as we bring the JASS movement-building to the U.S. and Canada in 2009.



Ruben Solis of the Southwest Workers Union speaking at the GGJ Reception.

<sup>7</sup> See the Indigenous Environmental Network's website for more information about their work around water rights and environmental justice: <http://www.ienearth.org/water.html>.

Through poetic songs and powerful, moving speeches, the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the ASF gave presence and sound to the things many of us were thinking and feeling: hope, solidarity, and renewed energy to keep moving forward, embodying the New World we wish to create together.



Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network speaking during the Closing Ceremony on Oct. 12, Indigenous Peoples' Resistance Day.

## Conclusion

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Americas Social Forum was a fulfilling, challenging, thought-provoking and hopeful experience, most notable for the strong presence of indigenous people and of women, and an engagement with the issues that each brought to the table.

As a group, we bring back with us more stories, names and organizations to add to our growing web of women woven together through a common vision. We've also strengthened our ties to the Petateras in Guatemala and throughout the region, as well as deepened our relationship with our colleagues from the U.S., with whom we'll be working more closely as we bring the movement-building process North in the coming years.

The Observatorio and our workshop on movement-building across all borders reinforced for us the importance of Dialogue and Storytelling as a way of bringing women together. Differences of language, geography, etc, are bridged when we are able to create space for women to sit and talk and listen.

Much work still needs to be done for our collective visions of a better world to become a reality, but every time we are able to gather in this way, we can see growing the seeds of that new, brighter world.



## Appendices

- I. Directory of Participants with bios
- II. JASS at the ASF Flyer
- III. Links to ASF Observatorio info on FIRE's Website
- IV. Listing of articles and media on the web about the Observatorio, and JASS & Petateras' participation at the Forum
- V. Guatemalan Feminist Declaration, 3<sup>rd</sup> Americas Social Forum
- VI. Nobel Women's Initiative's "Declaration in Support and Solidarity with Mesoamerican Feminists Gathered at the Americas Social Forum"
- VII. "Feminist Activists Condemn the Government of Nicaragua at the Americas Social Forum, Guatemala"

Petateras from Nicaragua & El Salvador

**Emely Susana Flores Rivas**  
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**Emely**, a sociologist, graduated from the University of El Salvador specializing in gender issues and public policy. During her university years she worked as a volunteer coordinator with women's organizations collaborating on key actions and training. Her professional focus is on research, community development and development fundraising.

**Patricia Orozco**  
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**Patricia** specializes in reproductive rights and is one of the coordinators of the Autonomous Women's Movement in Nicaragua.

JASS Mesoamerica Regional Team & Petatera Allies

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**Patricia** has worked in development, focusing on a variety of issues impacting Central America. She has worked for various international development agencies and holds various advisory positions within diverse local, national and regional organizations. She is currently the Director of Sinergia No'j.

**Roxana Arroyo**  
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**Roxana** is a Costa Rican feminist lawyer and human rights activist specializing in women's rights. In addition to being a university professor she travels extensively though out the region facilitating gender, violence and human rights workshops.

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**Marusia** coordinates the Petatera network with JASS. She has worked in numerous civil society organizations and published in the areas of youth, human rights, sexual reproductive rights, gender and feminism. She has also presented on the same issues at national and international events organized by governments, NGOs and multilateral institutions.

**Liduvina Méndez**  
**Actoras de Cambio**  
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**Liduvina** is one of the founders of the organization, Actoras de Cambio (Actors for Change) which works on the healing and empowerment, on all levels, of indigenous women survivors of sexual violence during the armed conflict in Guatemala.

**María Suárez**  
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**María** is the founding co-director of Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE) based in Costa Rica. She has had a long career as an activist in women's human rights, social justice and communication and has written several books on these issues.

## Allies from the United States

**Lian Cheun**  
**Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO)  
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**Transnational Institute for Grassroots  
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**Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) Manila,  
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**Lian** and her family resettled in the US in 1984 as refugees from Cambodia. She became involved in social justice work as a youth organizer in Oakland, California. Today, Lian is very active in transnational organizing efforts with (im)migrant families in the US as well as domestic workers in Asia. In 2006, Lian assisted the domestic workers associations/unions in Asia and organized the very first regional Asian Domestic Workers Assembly in Manila, Philippines.

**Jacqueline Patterson**  
**Women of Color United**  
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**Jacqui** has enjoyed an exciting life agitating for change and justice as a researcher, policy analyst, community activist, and teacher. Jacqui currently works with Women of Color United, a grassroots women's alliance, working with diverse women on gender justice issues, including on the 41 Million Strong Campaign to mobilize black women to vote for justice issues in the upcoming US elections.

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**Cristal** is an indigenous woman, thespian and social justice organizer from Morelos, Mexico. She was part of the feminist & indigenous movements in Mexico in the 70's and 80's. Upon migrating to the US, she became involved in social justice activism within the Chicano community. She currently co-runs Pa'htilkalli, a project in San Antonio, Texas, focusing on women's alternative economies, healing & cultural resistance.

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**María Jiménez**, is an immigrant, activist and founding member of Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) (*Women United and Active*) in San Francisco, CA.

## JASS Cross-Regional Team

### **Lisa VeneKlasen**

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Long-time activist, organizer and popular educator in the US and around the world, **Lisa is the co-founder and ED of JASS**. Her political work has ranged from US community organizer to congressional aide, from adult literacy with the Sandinista government to supporting the establishment of women's rights networks in Central America and Africa.

### **Ana Luisa Ahern**

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**Ana Luisa, JASS Communications Associate**, joined JASS after returning from Honduras where she co-founded a fast-growing youth organization called OYE (Organization for Youth Empowerment) which provides education, leadership training, and capacity building to low-income children and young adults.

### **Alejandra Bergemann**

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Born in México, D.F., **Alejandra, is JASS Program Associate** focusing particularly on Mesoamerica. Prior to joining, JASS she spent two years doing grassroots organizing with Fuerza Unida in San Antonio, Texas, empowering women workers and building political consciousness in the broader community.

### **Carrie Wilson**

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**Carrie, JASS's Cross-Regional Program Coordinator**, is a Canadian feminist based in Washington, DC, who is passionate about reproductive rights and ending violence against women. Before joining JASS, Carrie worked with low income women in Bolivia and Chile, and with Human Rights Watch (Toronto) and Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs.



## JASS at the Americas Social Forum October 7–12, 2008, Guatemala City, Guatemala

A global network grounded in local and national women's justice efforts in more than 23 countries, JASS is committed to building the voice, visibility and collective organizing power of women. JASS combines innovative learning, activist leadership development, popular education and communications linked to organizing, action and alliance-building across differences.

### JASS activities at the Americas Social Forum

JASS, Radio Feminista (RIF) and Mesoamerican allies, the *Petateras*, will host two workshops at the Forum, as well as engaging women in an *Observatorio de la Transgresión Feminista* (Feminist Transformation Watch) spearheaded by the Guatemalan *Petateras*.

#### **Workshop: *Rebuilding Women's Movements Across all Borders***

Wednesday, October 8, 11:00am - 1:00pm

Building: S2 Room: 107

**(English-Spanish)**



Replicating a gathering co-convoked by JASS and Radio Feminista at the US Social Forum, women of the Americas are invited to participate in a dialogue about the common threats to women and feminist agendas and about new visions and forms of collective organizing that respect and bridge differences of race, class, sexuality, age and location. We wish to open a safe, inspiring space for diverse women to share reflections and political perspectives, exploring ways to reclaim feminism as an inclusive mobilizing vision for movement-building.

#### **Interactive Panel: *Weaving a New Social Fabric in Mesoamerica***

Thursday, October 9, 2:00pm - 5:00pm

Building: S1 Room: 206

**(Translation TBC)**



This workshop, convoked by the *Petateras*, shares the three years of movement-building experience begun at the JASS gathering in Panama in 2006. *Petateras* from several countries will present their analysis of the current political, social and economic context within Mesoamerica, from a feminist perspective, as well as their collective vision, strategies and challenges faced in re-energizing and retooling feminist movements in the region.

**Observatorio de Transgresión Feminista** is an ongoing feminist “watch” to spotlight and monitor feminist agendas and women's voices within the context of the Forum itself. Mobilized by the Guatemalan *Petateras* supported by *Petateras* across the region, JASS and Radio Feminista, the *Observatorio* involves radio interviews, contributions to the JASS and *Petatera* blogs, and conversations with forum participants. The *Observatorio* will also denounce the attacks on feminists and feminist agendas throughout the region, particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador. As at the US Social Forum in Atlanta, Georgia in 2007, JASS and RIF will explore the theme of “Women Crossing the Line”, asking women how they personally “cross the line”, and how women are “crossing the line” in the context of the forum and in their communities and countries.



## JASS Mesoamerica



Recognize the Petateras participating in the *Observatorio de La Transgresion Feminista* and *Women Crossing the Line* by their Frida Kahlo T-shirts.

JASS launched activities in Mesoamerica in 2006, with a gathering of diverse urban and rural leaders, including indigenous women, trade unionists, and women from other social movements. This group produced a powerful analysis of the impact of economic restructuring and political conflict on women, society and governments, and culminated in a vision for weaving anew the devastated social fabric, integrating feminist values of reciprocity and caring. Inspired by the metaphor of the *petate* (woven mat), participants wove together a strategy, and immediately put it into action. Beginning with the idea of *transgresión feminista* – translated as “women crossing the line” – JASS-Mesoamerica continues to blaze a new feminist path, co-creating with *Petateras* a political understanding and strategy for ‘transformation’ from the inner and personal realms through to the regional and global.

As JASS prepares to expand its movement-building to include North America in 2009, the ASF is an opportunity to introduce the *Petateras* and women activists and organizers from the U.S. and Canada, and for dialogue about issues, strategies and the state of movements. Here, the hope is to find common ground and plant the seeds for future cross-border learning, agenda-setting and alliance-building. Likely common themes are the economic and political causes and consequences of migration and the impact of religious fundamentalisms on women’s lives and rights.



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## Líinks to ASF Observatorio info on FIRE's Website

I. Conferencia de Prensa (Fotos y Audio)

[http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa\\_ruedaprensa.htm](http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa_ruedaprensa.htm)

II. Audios del Observatorio Virtual

[http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa\\_observatorios.htm](http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa_observatorios.htm)

III. DECLARACIÓN FEMINISTA DE GUATEMALA FORO SOCIAL DE LAS AMÉRICAS

[http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa\\_declaracion\\_mujeres.htm](http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa_declaracion_mujeres.htm)

IV. PETATERAS DESIGNADAS PARA REDACTAR DECLARACIÓN DE LAS MUJEReS

[http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa\\_concertacionfeminista.htm](http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa_concertacionfeminista.htm)

V. Calendario de Actividades Feministas y de Mujeres

[http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa\\_08.htm](http://www.radiofeminista.org/oct08/notas/fsa_08.htm)

VI. Actividades de FIRE y JASS en el Foro

<http://www.radiofeminista.org/sept08/notas/observatorio2.htm>

## Audío Interviews and Articles (in English and Spanish)

1. Entrevista sobre Declaración de Mujeres y Feminista en el Cierre del II FSA  
<http://www.aler.org/fsa-2008/?cat=5&paged=3>
2. Tom Goldtooth of IEN speaking at the Closing Ceremony of the Forum  
<http://www.aler.org/fsa-2008/?cat=5&paged=4>
3. Marimba de Niños en la Clausura  
<http://www.aler.org/fsa-2008/?cat=5&paged=2>
4. Che Lopez of SWU at the Closing Ceremony  
<http://www.aler.org/fsa-2008/?cat=5&paged=5>
5. Amandin Fulgiron de Actoras de Cambio – Violación Sexual a Mujeres Mayas  
“Las mujeres rompen el silencio”  
<http://www.aler.org/fsa-2008/?cat=5&paged=8>
6. ENTREVISTA A PATRICIA OROZCO sobre el allanamiento a las instalaciones del MAM y CINCO y el derecho al aborto  
<http://www.aler.org/fsa-2008/?cat=5&paged=9>
7. Entrevista a SANDRA MORAN de Sector de Mujeres y parte del Equipo Facilitador del Foro, bajo “Feminicidio: Reconocer que existe y tomar responsabilidad”  
<http://www.aler.org/fsa-2008/?cat=5&paged=16>
8. Denuncia de Patricia Orozco – Conferencia de Prensa + NWI Declaration  
[http://chiapas.mediosindependientes.org/article\\_159267](http://chiapas.mediosindependientes.org/article_159267)
9. Agencia Pulsar – Cobertura del Foro  
[http://www.agenciapulsar.org/coberturas\\_det2.php?id=45](http://www.agenciapulsar.org/coberturas_det2.php?id=45)
10. AMARC Guatemala – Blog coverage  
<http://www.amarcguatemala.blogspot.com/>
11. Guatemala: Americas Social Forum Rejects Neoliberalism, Celebrates Resistance  
<http://upsidedownworld.org/main/content/view/1524/1/>

**GUATEMALAN FEMINIST DECLARATION**  
**AMERICAS SOCIAL FORUM**  
**Guatemala, October 2008**

As feminists, we know that our everyday realities are marked by the oppressive mandates of a patriarchal capitalist system that reinforces inequality as a natural and inevitable fact of life and institutionalizes control over our sexuality, reproductive rights and economic labor. This system excludes women from decision-making in both public and private spheres, and responds to any challenge with the use of violence against our bodies, criminalization, smear campaigns, and repression against our movements.

In its neo-liberal stage, this system of unchecked wealth positions the market and financial interests as regulators of our lives and our social relations, exploiting natural resources, privatizing and destroying our sources of life, putting millions of people at risk and pushing women into forced migrations, condemning them to further exploitation and poverty.

In order to impose and sustain itself, it resorts to militarization and an ever increasing arms race; it promotes genocidal confrontations that take the lives of women as a bounty of war; it expels women into exile, forcing them to live as political refugees; it treats with impunity the murders of women and other criminal acts against humanity that occur on a daily basis.

**As feminists, we propose** deep and radical transformations in the way that human beings relate to each other and to nature, and by so doing ensure a good quality of life for all. A meaningful quality of life recognizes our contributions in the economic and reproductive dimensions as well as our political participation both in civil society and as part of the State. A Good Life, *Ütz k'aslemal*, must be based on a just and equal distribution of power.

These transformations are made by developing agreements and alliances that respect our autonomy and diversity within the framework of a democracy that encompasses all spheres of life, from the intimate and domestic spaces to workplace, political and public spaces. As women, we demand the right to make decisions freely over our own lives, bodies, sexuality and the lands in which we live, with their natural and cultural riches.

We believe that in order to make these transformations real, we can build alliances only with those movements, actors and individuals

- Who include respect for the individual and collective autonomy of women in their political agendas, as well as possibilities for the full exercise of our rights - especially those most at risk such as sexual and reproductive rights - and will not compromise those rights in order to gain or solidify their own power;
- Who define socioeconomic reorganization in such a way that society's sustainability and reproduction no longer rests on the over-exploitation of women. That they reject slavery and servitude, for example, in factory assembly plants, in household work in particular and in situations where women are trafficked internally and across borders.
- Who refuse to tolerate racist, sexist and macho practices that are part of daily life, or that occur within their organizations; that they commit to a pact of non-violence and equality.

- Who are willing to critically examine their own thinking and transform their ideas and challenge fundamentalisms of all kinds, questioning hetero-reality and the imposition of norms and stereotypes that subordinate women.
- Who fight for a secular state that will guarantee and uphold all rights, protect sovereignties, cover basic necessities and ensure a good quality of life for the entire population.
- Who will recognize and integrate our proposals – proposals made by indigenous women and peoples, youth, black women, lesbians and transgender persons, women with disabilities, women who live with HIV/AIDS, elder women and children. Who will not favor one group or struggle over another because they recognize that all individuals and all struggles for freedom are interdependent in this process of building another world.

We reject all acts of violence against women and oppose the criminalization of abortion and the penalization of all of us who fight for its legalization.

We stand in solidarity with our feminist sisters in Nicaragua who are being harassed and politically persecuted. In condemning these acts, we declare that a government cannot consider itself to represent the left if it holds power due to political pacts made with Somoza's heirs, if it criminalizes feminist actions while treating with impunity cases of sexual abuse in which its government officials have been implicated, and if it condemns hundreds of women to death by eliminating the right to therapeutic abortion.

We also affirm our support and solidarity with our sisters who stand in resistance against mining companies and mega-projects, who are being persecuted for their involvement in local level consultation and community participation efforts and for their legitimate and legal opposition to the exploitation of their natural resources.

We demand the release and safe return to their families of all of the disappeared, as well as the liberation of all political prisoners held by the current regime governing Mexico.

We stand in solidarity with the women of Haiti and we reject the violence provoked by the military forces occupying the country, such as the Kaibil Elite Brigade, well known for its role in the genocide that occurred during the armed conflict in Guatemala.

We recognize and honor the history and contributions of a diversity of feminist activists, particularly of indigenous women activists through their cultural, linguistic, social and political resistance and action.

We believe that when people refuse to discuss the inconsistencies between the discourse and practice of those who claim to be on the left, the transformations that are urgently needed in our societies are only further delayed. The political struggle must be ethical. For this reason, we will continue supporting the development of social movements, providing critical input and analysis, and defending the autonomy and further strengthening of the feminist movement.

**FEMINISTS AGAINST THE WAR, FEMINISTS AGAINST INEQUALITY, FEMINISTS AGAINST RACISM, AGAINST NEO-LIBERAL TERRORISM**



Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976  
Máiread Corrigan Maguire, Ireland - 1976  
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemala - 1992  
Prof. Jody Williams, USA - 1997  
Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iran - 2003  
Prof. Wangari Maathai, Kenya - 2004

*united for peace with justice and equality*

### **Declaration in Support and Solidarity with Mesoamerican Feminists Gathered at the Americas Social Forum**

As women Nobel Peace Laureates we look with great hope to the Americas Social Forum in Guatemala, October 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, as an opportunity for thousands of concerned citizens and social movements across the continents to affirm their commitment to women's rights and gender equality. We are optimistic that a powerful message will be communicated to governments about the urgency of protecting and respecting women's rights and the feminist leaders who safeguard and promote them.

With great concern, we witness the deterioration of women's lives and the unraveling of the social fabric, particularly in Mexico and Central America. Millions of Mesoamerican women live in extreme poverty making them vulnerable to labor exploitation and forcing them, increasingly, to migrate northward to find a better life and leave behind their young children and families. Furthermore, with the privatization and rising costs of healthcare across the region, women's health and maternal mortality have worsened dramatically while one government after another proceeds to restrict and reverse reproductive rights. Violence has become a daily reality for the majority of Mesoamerican women. Femicide has grown at an alarming rate, as has the impunity with which the majority of cases are treated.

We commend the courage and determination with which Mesoamerican feminists have maintained their struggle against these and other injustices. Sadly, the response of many of the governments in the region in the face of just and legitimate demands of feminists has been one of repression, harassment, and political persecution, which sends a dangerous message to the rest of the world.

On previous occasions, we have spoken out about the increase of state-sponsored violence against Nicaraguan feminists in particular; harassment for protesting the impunity with which sexual violence cases have been dealt or for protesting against the criminalization of therapeutic abortion (even in cases where a woman's life is threatened.) More recently, we are troubled by the attacks against the well-known feminist, Sofia Montenegro, who fears for her personal safety.

The Nicaraguan government –known historically for its aspirations to social justice -- is instead intimidating the people and organizations that fight for the defense of human rights. We encourage the Nicaraguan government to stop its repression against the Autonomous Women's Movement and other activists. In particular, we express our solidarity with Nicaraguan feminists who find themselves attacked unjustly for in their continued defense of reproductive rights and basic freedoms.

We share with all of those gathered at this important Social Forum the passionate belief that indeed, Another World is Possible. And that world includes women's full equality and freedom from violence. We urge all those who have come together in the name of justice and peace to stand firm that women's rights and equality is at the heart of our dreams, and actions, for a better world.

**Feminist Activists Condemn the Government of Nicaragua  
at the Americas Social Forum, Guatemala  
October 11, 2008**

As women and feminists present in the Social Forum of the Americas in Guatemala, we energetically condemn the government of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua for recent egregious violations against women's rights including:

- Physical violence and political persecution of feminists and their organizations
- Destruction and removal of files and information from the offices of the Research Center for Communication (CINCO) and from the Autonomous Women's Movement (MAM) of Nicaragua
- A call to the people of Nicaragua to mobilize and take mob-style actions against feminists
- The order of search and seizure against a women's group in Matagalpa called Grupo Venancia

These acts are part of an orchestrated campaign to criminalize feminists for their work to re-instate the right to therapeutic abortion (in cases where the mother's life is at stake) and as reprisal for the denouncements of the sexual abuse of Zoila America by Daniel Ortega generated by many women's organizations.

These acts reflect an institutionalized policy of misogyny and represent serious violations of human rights committed by the Nicaraguan state against defenders of the rights of women.

We hold President Daniel Ortega and his government responsible for all of the physical, psychological and economic damage carried out against these women and the organizations that they are a part of.

We are calling on all those people who believe in democracy and who believe that – in the spirit of this Forum – another world is possible, to condemn these criminal actions and actively support Nicaraguan feminists in their struggles for basic human rights and to put a stop to the violence perpetrated by the Nicaraguan state in the form of a witch hunt.

***THEY FEAR US BECAUSE WE HAVE NO FEAR.***

***A HIT AGAINST ONE OF US IS A HIT AGAINST ALL OF US.***

