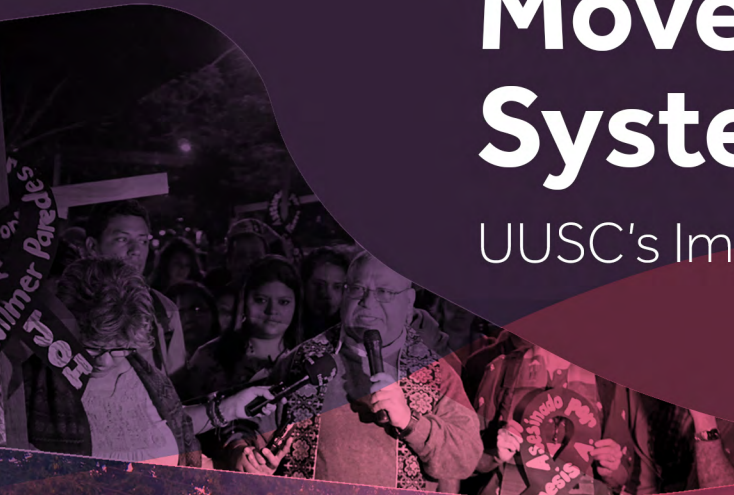


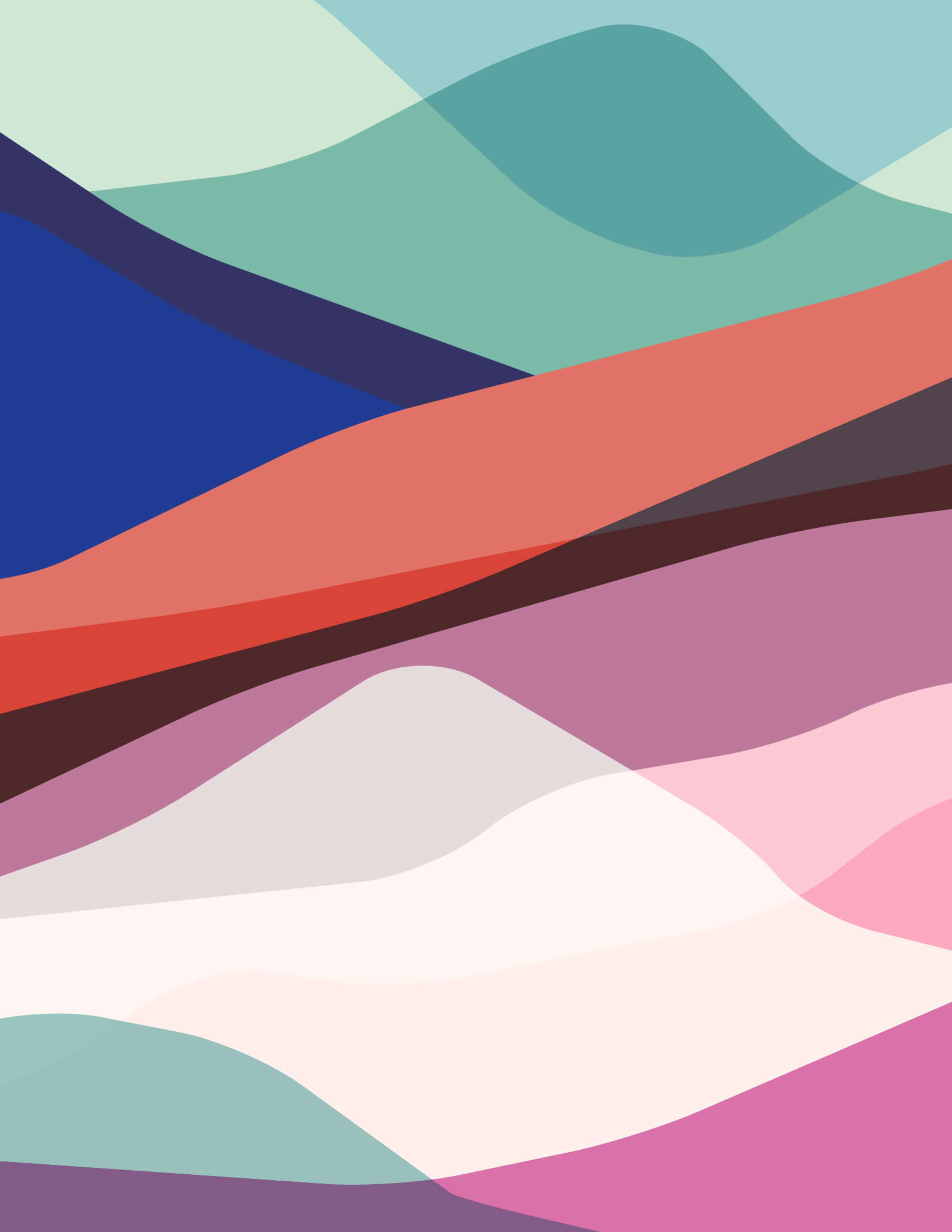


UUSC

Strengthening Grassroots Movements for Systemic Change

UUSC's Impact for Fiscal Year 2019





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FOREWORD

Rachel Freed, Vice President and Chief Program Officer, and Michael Kourabas, Associate Director for Grantmaking and Impact

At UUSC, we believe that a more just, equitable, and regenerative world is not only possible, it is necessary. To create that future, we must do more than just address the symptoms of injustice—we must also treat “**the groundwater**.” This means dismantling the systems that were designed to oppress – colonialism, racism, extractive capitalism, and patriarchy to name a few – and replacing them with alternatives that allow every human life to flourish without destroying our planet. Of course, the systemic solutions we so desperately need are unlikely to come from our institutions. More often, change arises from principled, interconnected social movements pursuing dynamic actions and alternatives.

Yet, activists and grassroots organizations around the world – including many of UUSC’s partners – often do not have the time or resources necessary to build and strengthen those movements by themselves. Overworked and on the verge of burnout, selfless movement leaders **need more opportunities** and resources to connect and build relationships, learn from each other, and plan together. Access to funding is itself a significant hurdle for many grassroots groups, and those who receive it are frequently hamstrung by overly restrictive and purely transactional relationships with funders that begin and end with financial support.

UUSC strives to be different. We aim to be a true movement partner, in eye-to-eye relationship with the grassroots organizations we support. As one of our partners told us, “*We don’t consider UUSC as our donor, we consider UUSC as our longstanding partner..*”

That is our impact.

This year, our partners lifted up their collaborations as examples of “*broader movement-building, including efforts to build a formidable base [] of directly impacted communities and allies...*” Others told us what a difference it makes that UUSC “*actually understands well the work we do and the challenges that it brings and accommodates the requests we may have arising from the changes in our legal and political environment.*”

Because successful movements must be led by those most impacted by injustice, **over 90% of UUSC’s partners this year** were led by women, immigrants, Indigenous Peoples, people of color, people identifying as LGBTQI, and/or people living with disabilities. Most are **leading smaller, emerging organizations** – more than two-thirds of our partners operated with annual budgets of less than \$500,000 this year. Yet, many have been able to use our support to expand the scope of their work, strengthen their organizations, and increase their impact, growing from “emerging” leaders to **powerful forces for change**.

These are just some of the ways we support grassroots movements working for systemic and transformational change. For others, please read the full impact report and explore the impact section of our website at www.uusc.org/impact.

Another world **is** possible, one that celebrates the inherent dignity of every human being and one where everyone has a place they can call home. And the good news is: we already have all the tools we need to create it. With your support and collaboration, UUSC will continue working alongside those grassroots groups around the world who are challenging injustice, defending human rights, and fighting for a more just, equitable, and regenerative world.

PART ONE:

Strengthening Grassroots
Movements & Centering the
Experiences of the Communities
Most Impacted by Injustice





Answering the urgent calls of our grassroots partners

Last year, “as [rights defenders] exposed corruption, documented and reported injustice, and investigated corporate misconduct, they were met with well-coordinated responses by states, sometimes in collusion with corporate interests” (source: [Front Line Defenders](#)). The result was more than 320 reported killings of human rights defenders in 2018.

It was against this backdrop that, after disputed elections in Honduras returned the post-coup government of Juan Orlando Hernandez to power, the people responded with country-wide protests and peaceful demonstrations. This resistance sparked a wave of repression and political violence; Honduran security forces, many of which [receive U.S. aid](#), have been directly implicated in human rights violations, including excessive force against protesters and attacks on human rights defenders and media workers, including UUSC’s local partners, [Radio Progreso](#) and [Foro de Mujeres Por la Vida](#).

In response to the violent crackdown, Honduran civil society organizations **issued an urgent call for faith leaders to come and stand with the human rights defenders**.

In **January 2018**, UUSC **joined its first interfaith solidarity delegation** to the country to accompany those brave enough to turn out for demonstrations in the face of unrelenting state violence. On that trip, we were told repeatedly that the only reason beatings, arrests, and live ammunition had not been used against the demonstrators was because of our presence and the assurance that international attention would prove too costly to the government. We followed-up this first trip with a second emergency delegation in **May 2018** to accompany human rights defenders on their return home from a U.S. speaking tour to raise awareness about the continuing crisis affecting their country. The May delegation gathered witness testimonies related to

human rights violations in Honduras as a root cause of the refugee crisis, leading to the publication of a [report](#), co-authored by UUSC and the *SHARE Foundation*, that was distributed to the U.S. Congress as part of an advocacy campaign to end U.S. support of Honduran security forces.

In **November 2018**, in direct collaboration with *Foro de Mujeres*, UUSC and the UU College of Social Justice (CSJ) **co-organized and recruited participants for a third delegation to the country**. The women of *Foro* used our presence on that trip to bolster their messaging and to push for the release of an unjustly charged and imprisoned community leader at press conferences and community and government meetings. We again saw firsthand the power of an international presence when the delegation's participation in a meeting with the Honduran Public Prosecutor's Office led to the release of new information in a four-year-long murder investigation of feminist campesina leader, Margarita Murillo, and put further pressure on the ministry to prioritize the investigation.

On this trip, we also spent two days in the rural communities of the Aguán Valley and saw how land theft by corporate palm oil companies leads to displacement of whole communities, feeding directly into the exodus that arrives at the U.S. border. We listened as women

shared their own experiences of violence and misogyny and understood more vividly the stark choices that drive so many women to flee Honduras and brave the dangers of migration.



In **February 2019**, twelve community leaders and human rights defenders from the Aguán Valley community of Guapinól were

detained by the Honduran military (the "Guapinol Twelve") — a response to their direct nonviolent organizing against an illegal mining project on their land. The human rights defenders were charged with six serious crimes — including illicit association, a charge used almost exclusively against drug cartels — and faced prolonged detention until the trial, which could take up to two and a half years.

On the date of their arrest, ***Radio Progreso* reached out to UUSC asking for emergency in-person accompaniment for the initial hearing in Tegucigalpa**, scheduled for later that week. UUSC relayed the request to delegates who had traveled to Honduras in earlier emergency delegations (described above), and UUSC's Director of Activism & Justice Education flew to Tegucigalpa the following day to accompany our partners and the human rights defenders in court.

While we were in Honduras, dozens of representatives from our partners, *Foro de Mujeres* and *Radio Progreso*, told us how important it was that UUSC was able to respond to their request and be present in the courtroom. In fact, UUSC was the only international organization with an on-the-ground presence there in that critical moment.

Back in the U.S., UUSC staff worked to raise awareness of the crisis and pressure Congress to speak out against the actions of the Honduran government. After we submitted a letter to Congress and urged our members to contact their representatives, a [tweet](#) by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) received international attention — including inside the courtroom in Honduras. At the same time, UUSC's [blog post](#) about the issue was widely shared and became a high-ranking search result on Google.

Here is how UUSC's Director of Activism & Justice Education described what happened next: "At around 2 a.m. on March 4, the judge dismissed all the charges against the defendants! No one expected that.... Everyone here is very sure that the presence of international observers and the constant PR about it in the US [] made a big difference."



First Peoples' Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement

Girdwood, Alaska • Oct. 1-4, 2019



Fostering connections

Strong, interconnected social movements are critical to achieving the deep, systemic change we seek.

Yet, the organizations on the frontlines of this fight are often overworked, on the verge of burnout, and lack the resources necessary to build movements, such as the time to connect to, learn from, and strategize with their peers. This year, UUSC continued its practice of supporting and strengthening movements by fostering collaborations among our partners and creating spaces for them to convene, connect, and strategize.

As our partner *Justice in Motion* told us last year, by connecting our partners within and across movements and geographies, UUSC offers *"phenomenal learning opportunities" that are "crucial to [developing] collaborative strategies," leading to work that is "both better informed and better connected to potential allies."*

Our partner *Grassroots Leadership* lifted up its collaborations with other UUSC partners, *Austin Sanctuary Network* and the *Texas UU Justice Ministry*, as examples of *"broader movement-building, including efforts to build a formidable base [] of directly impacted communities and allies who are deeply invested in advancing bold, progressive efforts to end the criminalization of immigration and ongoing attacks on undocumented communities."*

Other highlights of our movement-building work this year included the First Peoples Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement, which brought together First and Indigenous communities most impacted by climate-forced displacement; support for *MuslimARC's* convening of black Muslims, who are twice criminalized by the U.S. criminal justice system; and support for growing grassroots movements in Texas, following Hurricane Harvey, and in the Balkans to support refugees.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #1:

A Participatory Convening of First & Indigenous Peoples Impacted by the Climate Crisis

UUSC is addressing the human rights violations that First and Indigenous communities are experiencing from the climate crisis, by helping to build and support an international network of affected communities that can support one another and advocate for their rights at the local, national, regional, and international levels. In early October 2018, UUSC brought together more than 60 representatives from impacted First and Indigenous communities in Alaska, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Bangladesh, Washington State, and Louisiana to Girdwood, Alaska, for a three-day gathering to discuss the impacts of climate change that they are experiencing, build community, and share strategies about how to address the devastating effects of the climate crisis, particularly the threat of displacement.

Our goal during the planning stages was to ensure that we **aligned both the process and the event with the principles of climate justice**: that they be community-led and informed; respect the voices, ideas, and feedback of our partners; and leverage the collective wisdom of the community.

Over the course of three powerful days, participants discussed the commonalities between different communities facing displacement and tackling climate change and **wove a narrative of shared experience**, including the anxiety and heartbreak that comes with being displaced; the loss of cultural practices and identity that comes with having to relocate; and reflections on the need to listen to the warnings of ancestors about the changing climate and the desire to pass on a healthy, sustainable earth to future generations.

During the convening, participants developed a set of shared principles (the "Declaration") to inform the group's advocacy and partnership going forward. Already, several of our partners have engaged in local, regional, and international advocacy around climate justice and displacement **using the Declaration as an advocacy and communication tool to educate decision-makers about what is required by frontline communities**. For example:

- In the Solomon Islands, our partner *Ecological Solutions Foundation* shared the Declaration at a regional climate change conference which was hosted by the Church of Melanesia.
- In Fiji, our local partners shared the Declaration with the Pacific Island Climate Action Network as they plan advocacy opportunities related to Fiji's Planned Relocation Guidelines.

In Alaska, our partner *Alaska Institute for Justice* shared the Declaration at the International Platform on Disaster Displacement, and at the State of Alaska Forum on the Environment.

Following the convening, UUSC's research team produced *One Story: A Report of the First Peoples' Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement*, **centering the words, stories, and experiences of First and Indigenous Peoples** to illustrate the ways climate change threatens communities' wellbeing and very survival, and the resilience and leadership of First and Indigenous Peoples that can offer lasting solutions. The report is a resource for UUSC and all the convening's participants to share their collective vision and demands in a wide range of advocacy forums.

Our partner in Alaska, the *Alaska Institute for Justice*, expressed that it was **"hard to find the words to convey the significance of"** this convening, noting that it was a **"very tangible demonstration of [UUSC's] commitment to the communities"** with which we work.

Narratives We Shared

First and Indigenous Peoples shared stories of:

The anxiety and heartbreak that comes with being displaced

The loss of cultural practices and identity that comes with having to relocate

The need to listen to the warnings of ancestors about the changing climate and the need to pass on a healthy, sustainable earth to future generations.





IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #2:

Convening Black Muslims to Combat Criminalization

For two years in a row, UUSC has supported the Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative's (MuslimARC) convening of more than twenty black Muslim leaders, including another UUSC partner, the UndocuBlack Network. The goals of the convenings are to facilitate the sharing of information about the criminalization of black Muslim communities, build power and community, and engage in strategic planning. Participants take part in storytelling and networking, and this year they developed several key strategies for advancing systemic change.

The convenings have strengthened MuslimARC's organization as well, leading to **"deeper relationships across the country."**

MuslimARC is also a part of UUSC's participatory research program studying criminalization, which has provided it with much needed **"space to think about the issues and how [to] develop trainings to prepare [its] community to organize to address systemic injustice."** (Margari Hill, Programming Director, MuslimARC)

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #3:

A Sanctuary Movement in Texas

For the last two years, our partners in the Austin, Texas area — *Texas UU Justice Ministry* (TXUUJM), *Austin Sanctuary Network* (ASN), and *Grassroots Leadership* — have collaborated in a fight to prevent the prosecution of migrants in sanctuary in Texas. These groups include the only known organizations to have won this

form of prosecutorial discretion during the current administration. Among those migrants for whom our partners fought this year include the leaders of the *Austin Sanctuary Network* itself, Hilda Ramírez and Alirio Gámez, as well as Hilda's son, Iván, all of whom were living in sanctuary in Austin churches last summer.

Their story

was shared with us by *Grassroots Leadership*. In September 2018, Hilda and Alirio left the protection of their sanctuary churches and began a fight for their lives. After it was discovered that Alirio had developed serious health issues, which could not be treated while living in sanctuary, Hilda and Alirio traveled with *Grassroots Leadership* to San Antonio, seeking immediate relief from the threat of deportation and the confinement of sanctuary, which had already taken a toll on their health and prevented them from living their lives with freedom and dignity.

Over the course of two days, *Grassroots Leadership* staged direct actions alongside Hilda and Alirio at the San Antonio offices of Representative Will Hurd and Representative Joaquin Castro, calling for them to intervene and pressure ICE to stay the deportation. Members of *Austin Sanctuary Network*, including former *TXUUJM* board member and ASN founder, Peggy Morton, even occupied Representative Will Hurd's office.

Following these actions, Representative Lloyd Doggett and Representative Castro contacted ICE field director Daniel Bible, asking him to consider relief for Hilda and Alirio. Ultimately, in October of 2018, Hilda and Alirio were determined not to be a priority for deportation, and were granted a temporary stay of deportation to allow them to remain in the country.

On March 19, a day after their temporary stay expired, Hilda and Alirio were scheduled for an ICE check-in at the San Antonio ICE field office. Fearing arrest, they decided to not attend their ICE check-in and instead to re-enter sanctuary in Austin churches.





IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #4:

Contributing to a Growing Grassroots Movement After Hurricane Harvey

Nearly two years since we launched our response to Hurricane Harvey, there remain significant unmet and unidentified needs in the Houston area. Yet, we have also **seen the growth of a robust grassroots movement**, collaborating to advocate for a just recovery and filling the gaps when the government falls short.

Since April 2018, UUSC has supported the *Coalition of Community Organizations* (COCO) work to identify and provide relief and recovery assistance to those living in low-income, predominantly black neighborhoods impacted by Harvey. After Hurricane Harvey struck in August 2017, COCO began working to secure and distribute donations to residents in need of short- and long-term support, and has collaborated with other relief providers to repair and rebuild homes.

Aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is often the only source of support for these communities, and residents have little recourse if their claims are denied for any reason. **With UUSC's support, COCO has been able to help facilitate the repair or rebuilding of the homes of at least 40 people in Houston.** COCO described their most significant impact as *"providing hope to those who feel hopeless. The individuals and communities that felt that some of their needs were met and that someone cared, gained a new sense of self-worth and possibilities."*

COCO was able to amplify its impact by connecting and collaborating with another UUSC partner, *West Street Recovery (WSR)*. Formed in the aftermath of Harvey to galvanize communities toward an equitable recovery,

WSR connected with COCO and offered their time and labor to muck and gut several houses so seriously damaged by flooding that they had to be almost completely rebuilt.

In addition to engaging in the manual labor of rebuilding homes destroyed by the hurricane, WSR has offered a wide range of case management services for those

most impacted. WSR's approach, which it sees as a form of "accompaniment," is critical, helping identify resources that families need and leading to better outcomes. By "*walking alongside these clients*," WSR amplifies its impact by "*advocat[ing] for ... changes that will increase access for all households with [similar] economic and social characteristics. ...*"

In Houston's

Fifth Ward, the house belonging to Sergeant Boudreaux — a Vietnam War veteran in his late sixties, battling post-traumatic stress disorder and cancer — was badly flooded during Harvey, damaging its floors and walls. When he applied for assistance, however, his FEMA claim was denied because the house was legally in the name of a deceased parent — a common theme in post-Harvey recovery.

It was at this point that COCO's founder and director, Reverend James Caldwell, learned of Sgt. Boudreaux's situation and introduced him to *West Street Recovery*. While COCO was able to offer \$2,000 towards some small repairs, this amounted to "*putting a band-aid on a gunshot wound*," as Rev. Caldwell put it. For one, Sgt. Boudreaux had been living without hot water for 18 months. With an additional \$21,000 and critical labor facilitated by WSR, combined with donations of appliances and furniture from other aid organizations, COCO and WSR were able to rebuild and refurbish Sgt. Boudreaux's home.

Living Hope Wheelchair Association (LHWA), another UUSC partner, donated the materials and time to build a wheelchair ramp. Initially suspicious and "*on the brink of losing all hope*," Sgt. Boudreaux is now transformed. Rev. Caldwell describes him as changed mentally, psychologically, and physically, having seen *West Street Recovery* "*go the extra mile*" for him and his home.

In May 2019, Sgt. Boudreaux moved back into his home.





IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #5:

Building a Movement to Support Refugees in the Balkans

Fueled in part by UUSC's 2017 partner convening, virtually all our Syrian Refugee Response partners in Eastern Europe have **established meaningful connections and collaborations with each other**. For instance, Center for Peace Studies (CPS) (in Croatia), Legis (in Macedonia), and Asylum Protection Center (APC) (in Serbia) have formed a network aiming to coordinate advocacy, awareness raising, and direct services across the Balkans migration route. The group aims to expand to include additional civil society organizations from other countries in the region and in nearby regions, as well as with receiving EU countries.

The work of these organizations has led to some incredible outcomes. In Serbia, for instance, APC estimates that it **reached nearly 7,500 migrants** using its mobile response teams, in part because they were able to travel more than 80,000 km using two vehicles—one of which was provided by UUSC. In just one year, these teams **conducted nearly 1,000 visits to local sites across Serbia**.

APC also supported Kiki, a 17-year-old trafficking victim from Nigeria, to become the first unaccompanied minor

in Serbia to receive asylum. She is now working with APC's integration team and planning for the next steps related to her education, language, work, and housing. And APC has begun a collaboration with UUSC's partner in Guatemala, *Asociación Pop No'j*—an example of the global solidarity and knowledge sharing made possible by UUSC and our network of international partners.

In Croatia, CPS and Are You Serious? continued their tireless support of the family of Madina, the six-year-old Afghan girl who died on the train tracks on the Serbia-Croatia border as the result of a pushback conducted by the Croatian border police in November 2017. During 2018, CPS was in continuous contact with Madina's family, supporting them and their lawyer in filing a criminal complaint against unknown perpetrators in the police. CPS publicly denounced the family's 75-day detention (after they managed to enter Croatia and seek asylum in March 2018), and supported them when they were denied access to their lawyer. Together with the family's lawyer, CPS has accompanied Madina's family to court hearings and supported the preparation and submission of their application to the European Court for Human Rights.

Striving to live our "eye-to-eye partnership" model

Listening to the grassroots; incorporating their feedback into our strategies; radically trusting our partners; amplifying their voices; answering their calls to action; showing up for them on the frontlines whenever possible. These are the actions grassroots leaders have identified as most helpful to their organizations and movements — and are just some of the ways we **practice being in "eye-to-eye partnership"** with those groups, communities, and movements most impacted by injustice. While we will continue to ask ourselves how we can deepen our relationships and solidarity with our partners, we are proud of the partnerships we have built and are deeply humbled by how our partners see us.

This year, to evaluate how we are showing up as partners, **UUSC offered our more than 60 grassroots partners around the world the opportunity to provide direct and anonymous feedback to UUSC about "how we partner."**

We are thrilled that nearly half of our partners responded to the survey, and we are proud to share some of their feedback below:

"[UUSC was] not just very supportive, they really understood the challenges we were facing [], and they helped us to overcome those barriers."

"When our needs or time frames have changed [UUSC has] always been very understanding, when staff changes they are proactive about reaching out to get to know each other and check in, and have been willing to work with us so that our needs and theirs match."

We appreciate "[t]he emotional support of having an ally [like UUSC] that understands our work and how and why we do it."

"We enjoy[] working with a [funder like UUSC] who actually understands well the work we do and the challenges that it brings and accommodates the requests we may have arising from the changes in our legal and political environment."

"First of all, [we appreciate the] openness of the people. ... We really appreciate that. We don't consider UUSC as our donor, we consider UUSC as our longstanding partner organization. What I really like when it comes to the UUSC, there is no mistake when it comes to our participation in any part of the process – we are asked and listened to regarding all the necessary things. This makes us [feel like an] equal and free to exchange everything. ... And we really liked people that were coming to visit us. We felt more stable and secure, because we meet them in person."

"We have appreciated connections UUSC has made to other organizations, as well as program staff's willingness to travel to the region to meet our partners in person and better understand our work."

We most appreciate "the continued support from a funder that truly believes in our work."

"We are always brought into any consultations...."

"[UUSC has] helped by being able to understand our struggles as women, our challenges. Their sensitivity has been helpful... in our fight against structural inequalities that oppress us as women."

"With all our heart, we want to say that [UUSC has] exceeded all our expectations. Congratulations."



Supporting the leadership of directly impacted communities

Over 90% of UUSC's grantee partners this year are led by women, immigrants, Indigenous Peoples, people of color, people identifying as LGBTQI, and/or people living with disabilities. In addition, **nearly half** of our partners are **led by members of the communities who are most affected** by the human rights violations they are addressing.

These types of partnerships are critical — they help

build and strengthen movements and directly challenge systems of oppression by supporting the leadership of communities who have historically been denied their rights, equal access to resources, and participation in decisions affecting them and their future. Partnering with "directly led" groups also ensures that UUSC's programs and strategies will have the most impact because they are informed and led by those most proximate to the harms we are addressing together.



More than 90% of UUSC's grantee partners this year are led by women, immigrants, Indigenous Peoples, people of color, people identifying as LGBTQI, and/or people living with disabilities. **Nearly half** of our partners are **led by members of the communities who are most affected** by the human rights violations they are addressing.

Today, UUSC's partners include organizations led by:

- Campesina women in Nicaragua
- Women activists and human rights defenders in rural Honduras
- Low-income people of color impacted by Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas
- Immigrant organizers, including Latinx women, in multiple U.S. states
- Burmese human rights defenders and exiled Burmese activists
- A Rohingya woman and former political prisoner
- Indigenous Carteret Islanders who have relocated due to climate change impacts
- A trans immigrant from Poland
- Indigenous People living with disabilities in Kiribati
- A TPS holder from El Salvador
- A woman of color organizer in New Orleans

Supporting emerging grassroots leaders

Due to our size and approach to grantmaking, UUSC establishes partnerships with smaller, emerging organizations for whom our support is likely to make the most impact.

This year, **more than two-thirds of UUSC's grantee partners operated with annual budgets of less than \$500,000.** We were also able to maintain the same proportion of "emerging" organizations as we had last year, despite adding 11 new partners. This consistency is reflective of our deep commitment to channeling resources to the types of organizations most likely to benefit from our support.

We also marveled this year at how some of our grassroots partners were able to use our support to expand the scope of their work, strengthen their organizations, and increase their impact — growing from "emerging" leaders to powerful forces for change.

One inspiring example is the [Center for Social Integrity \(CSI\)](#), a Rohingya-led grassroots organization working

in Rakhine State in Burma and in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Earlier this year, Aung Kyaw Moe, the founder and leader of the CSI, told us that, ***"without UUSC, we would not be here today."***

Just two years after UUSC provided CSI with its first-ever grant, CSI now has programs operating in Rakhine State and Karen State in Burma, and in Bangladesh, providing humanitarian aid, peace-building support, and research. Yet, the organization hopes to keep its partnership with UUSC, valuing our strategic advice and the flexibility of our support. For example, in Rakhine State, while humanitarian aid funds are plentiful, the bureaucracy and large grant amounts are not appropriate for human rights organizations doing long-term grassroots work. Therefore, UUSC's support remains critical to CSI, and we look forward to continuing and strengthening our partnership.





Sharing power through participatory processes

We have been inspired this year by **the growing movement to bring stronger anti-oppressive practices to philanthropy and the other structures and systems that perpetuate colonialism and white supremacy**. As a part of this movement, UUSC is exploring some of the ways power can be relinquished by funders and mainstream human rights organizations, and recognized and amplified in our grassroots partners and movements.

A key part of that effort at UUSC has been **the participatory approach piloted by our research team. In partnership with frontline organizations** who are addressing issues related to criminalization, for example, UUSC's participatory research initiative is exploring the ways that research, carried out collaboratively by organizers and researchers within grassroots organizations and UUSC's researchers, can support mobilization and advocacy efforts to combat criminalization. That research centers questions about the impacts of a complex web of federal and local criminalization efforts and how impacted communities resist, including "What are examples of ways that communities and organizations create space to survive or thrive under surveillance?" and "How do individuals and organizations resist, disrupt, or stop these mechanisms and methods?"

Critically, our partners have shared with us the value they find in the participatory approach:

"I'm truly grateful to ... UUSC for believing in Indigenous-driven research in the increasingly crowded international dialogue surrounding the fate of small island communities."
(Marshall Islands Conservation Society)

"[We] are pleased about the participatory approach of UUSC's research," as opposed to the "academic research teams [] who ... ultimately kept power within the academic research team and simply extracted things from communities." (Living Hope Wheelchair Association)

"Being in a learning community [like UUSC's participatory research group] helps me gain a deeper understanding of the field. ..." (MuslimARC)

"When UUSC offered funding to participate [in its participatory research project on criminalization] – that was really significant for the organization. ... [Muslim Justice League] is constantly asked to participate in research that doesn't help [our] work. [We] are also excited about this project because we aren't approaching this from an academic angle — i.e., we plan to produce something that helps the movement." (Muslim Justice League)

Bringing grassroots leaders to the table

Another way UUSC uses its power to support its grassroots partners is by **giving them access to decision-making spaces from which they have traditionally been excluded**. In our work on climate-forced displacement, for example, those partners represent the First and Indigenous Peoples most impacted by the climate crisis, and UUSC has worked hard to ensure that their voices are heard when decisions are being made about their future.

As UUSC has learned from our partners and the communities with whom they work, the impacts of the climate crisis on First and Indigenous Peoples are particularly acute because their communities rely on the local species, habitats, and ecosystems devastated by a changing climate. Indigenous Peoples are resilient and have preserved their traditional ways of life for thousands of years, and it is precisely this traditional knowledge that must be incorporated into any durable solutions to climate change adaptation.

Yet, First and Indigenous Peoples are **often not meaningfully consulted, if not ignored entirely, by government agencies considering adaptation or relocation measures that directly impact them**. Similarly, as policy decisions are made at the national level, often the voices of those most impacted, such as people living with disabilities, are ignored or disregarded.



IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #1

Amplifying the Voices of Indigenous Peoples Living with Disabilities

With UUSC's support, *Te Toa Matoa* has been working to bring the voices of people living with disabilities (PLWDs) to the negotiating table in Kiribati, as the government considers revisions to its disaster management policy. This year, when the Kiribati Disaster and Climate Change Unit began reviewing the Climate Change Act (1993) and Disaster Bill, *TTM* was able to participate in the discussions and highlight the perspective of PLWDs. Ultimately, *TTM* aims to ensure that the revised laws comply with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. As they put it to us, ***"the ball is rolling and the journey has just begun."***

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #2

Uplifting Partner Voices in International Advocacy

In December 2018, for the third consecutive year, UUSC staff traveled to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's 24th Conference of the Parties (COP 24), this year held in Katowice, Poland. UUSC co-organized an event, Climate-Forced Displacement: Advancing Human Rights and Justice, to emphasize the importance of centering human rights and voices of communities in addressing climate-forced displacement — **one of just a few NGO-led side events approved by the UN**. The panel featured at the event was moderated by UUSC staff and **included our partners**, Robin Bronen and Maina Talia, from Alaska and Tuvalu, who shared the experiences of their communities grappling with the prospects of climate-forced displacement.

PART TWO:

Addressing Immediate Harms
While Working Toward
Systemic Solutions



Leveraging all our resources in an ongoing fight against the deportation and detention system

This year, as the Trump administration continued its torrent of oppressive rules, policies, and programs aimed at the criminalization of immigrants, **UUSC leveraged all its strategic resources to fight them at every turn.**

While this struggle will not end anytime soon, we are proud of what we and our partners and allies have done

to create a compassionate response to the exodus of Central American migrants unable to remain safely in their home countries; fight to end the immigration detention system; resist the continued separation of migrant children from their families; and fight the administration's ongoing efforts to detain children.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #1:

Creating a Compassionate Response to the Border "Crisis"

In the fall of 2018, as large groups of asylum-seekers began making their way from Central America to the U.S., the U.S. government sent more than 5,000 troops to the U.S.-Mexico border. **UUSC helped create an alternative response of compassion, solidarity, and support for migrant rights.**

Emergency Assistance Through Coordinated Volunteer Placement

As part of an interfaith coalition in regular communication with people accompanying the exodus through Guatemala and Mexico, UUSC's immediate response through CSJ was to coordinate the recruitment and placement of volunteers with organizations on the ground in Mexico and the U.S. whose shelters were being overwhelmed by asylum-seekers. We promoted these volunteer opportunities through direct outreach to congregations interested in migrant justice and to UU State Action Networks.

Our first volunteer partnership was with RAICES in San Antonio, TX, where we began sending volunteers in 2016. But as the numbers of refugees escalated in the fall of 2018, we also sent volunteers to Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas, which had been receiving more than 1,000 asylum-seekers a week. By January, we had **recruited over 120 new volunteers**, and by June 2019 our total pool of **potential volunteers was over 600**. We recruited **more than 20 additional volunteers** to work with long-time UUSC partners RAICES in San Antonio and FM4 Paso Libre, which runs a shelter in Guadalajara, Mexico, and sent a steady flow of volunteers to Al Otro Lado, based in San Diego and Tijuana, helping migrants with the challenging task of applying for asylum.

Our partnerships with all of these organizations have continued, even as the rate of migrants arriving at the border has ebbed and flowed. In total since July 2018, we have **sent more than 100 volunteers and three interns to Annunciation House, RAICES and FM4 Paso Libre**, and directed countless more to Al Otro Lado. We

also supplemented our volunteer support to *Al Otro Lado* with funding to hire a volunteer coordinator based in Tijuana.

Not only do these volunteer placements directly benefit our partners and the migrants they are supporting, they also have a **transformative effect on the volunteers themselves**. Past volunteers have described how the “eye-opening and heart-rending” experience made them “more deeply aware than ever of the enormity and complexity of immigration justice” and sparked or reinforced a commitment to “continue to work locally to bring awareness and attention to the humanity of those who are seeking a safe home.”

Emergency Assistance Through Grassroots Support

At the same time, **UUSC responded to the critical legal and humanitarian needs facing migrants in the exodus** by partnering with new grassroots organizations in Mexico and the U.S., and deepening support to existing partners. This helped provide emergency supplies to migrants, such as backpacks and shoes, covered the cost of humanitarian calls from detention centers, supported legal advice and know your rights information in Tijuana, provided accompaniment and trauma support, and outfitted a new migrant community center and shelter in Tijuana.

FM4 Paso Libre, for instance, used UUSC’s support to **provide clothes, emergency supplies, and coordinated volunteers to support many of the migrants and asylum-seekers that reached Guadalajara, Mexico**. *FM4* is part of a network of 23 shelters across Mexico that share information and strategize to try and reduce the dangers of migrants’ journeys and ensure that they are armed with accurate information about their options. **As *FM4* put it to us, thanks to UUSC, “it was possible to dignify the transit of migrants” during this critical time.**

We supported another partner in Mexico, *Scalabrinianas Misión con Migrantes y Refugiados* (SMR), to promote coordinated efforts with various sectors

of Mexican civil society to ensure that migrants in the exodus received food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, and legal advice along their route. SMR also pressured the Mexican federal and state governments to take responsibility for the humanitarian emergency and disseminated information to counteract xenophobia in Mexico. The SMR team helped coordinate shelter along the route, physically accompanied the parts of the exodus that remained behind the main group to ensure their safety, and is now providing holistic accompaniment to people who have requested asylum in Mexico.

As part of its “Bridges to Belonging” (“*Puentes Para la Pertenencia*”) program, we helped *Activate Labs* bring art-based actions and trauma workshops to families in the exodus and in detention at the border. *Activate* sourced local art supplies and canvases, and created large graphic banners for parents and children to fill with color, tell their stories, and “bring people back to themselves.” On International Migrants Day in December, *Activate Labs* brought these banners to Washington, D.C., and presented them to legislators.

UUSC also supported *Activate Labs*’ production of a short participatory documentary film with Salvadoran asylum-seekers on their journey to the U.S. This video documented the reasons why a family was forced to flee El Salvador, and accompanied their journey to the United States. After the father was detained at the border, UUSC drafted a letter of support, arguing for his release on bond from detention.

In May 2019, we received some amazing news from *Activate*: **“Yesterday we got the call we have been waiting for — the call from detention to say that some of our friends whom we have been supporting since we met them [during the exodus] in November 2018 in Mexico City had finally received parole. After more than 130 days in immigrant detention, four (the women of the family) can now be released!”**



Showing Up on the Front Lines

As the border “crisis” continued, **UUSC also showed up for our partners on the front lines**, in active resistance to the xenophobic and inhumane policies of the federal government. On one weekend in December, for example, we traveled to San Diego to participate in the “Love Knows No Borders” direct action at the border wall in Friendship Park, in solidarity with the migrant exodus.

This incredibly powerful, non-violent public witness in direct confrontation of U.S. border agents resulted in the arrest of 32 faith leaders, including six UU ministers, and it helped to **shift the public conversation about the struggle of migrants to tell a new story** about the

administration’s responsibility in creating a crisis at the border. The UU presence at this action was extremely strong, with approximately 50 UU leaders engaged in the action, including **several alumni of CSJ programs** on immigration justice.

Following the action, UUSC staff crossed into Tijuana with Monica Curca of *Activate Labs*, meeting asylum-seekers with the exodus as well as organizers with *Al Otro Lado* and *Espacio Migrante*, both of whom became UUSC partners during the exodus response. We were struck by how resilient and self-organized the migrants were in the shelter and inspired by the beautiful artwork of love on the other side of the wall.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #2:

Showing Up to Fight for the Shutdown of Immigration Detention Centers

“Homes Instead”

In the summer of 2018, the US government began construction on a child detention camp 45 minutes from El Paso in Tornillo, Texas. Originally meant to hold fewer than 400 people, the Tornillo detention center would eventually hold 7,000 children, many of whom were separated from their families as a result of the administration’s “zero tolerance” policy. **UUSC joined on-the-ground actions there to raise awareness of the facility, ensure that the voices of local activists were heard, and push for Tornillo’s shutdown.**

After a wave of public pressure forced Tornillo’s closure, a new facility in Homestead, Florida, became the largest child detention center in the country, and the only one

run by a for-profit company. Reports soon emerged that the children held there were “extremely traumatized,” some of whom could “not stop crying over what they’re experiencing.”

UUSC responded to the opening of the Homestead detention center by mobilizing staff, volunteer leaders, and clergy representatives to visit the detention center to expose and protest the flagrant violations of U.S. law and human rights standards at these facilities, as well as to connect with local organizers in the Homestead farmworker community organizing to oppose the detention center.

On behalf of UUSC, Rev. Dottie Mathews joined a faith leader tour of Homestead as a UUSC Clergy Representative, a role we piloted to expand our capacity and the reach of our activism. Following Rev. Mathews’ trip, UUSC joined a national coalition to end child detention and shut down the Homestead facility. UUSC



was a leader in co-organizing a national week of action in June 2019, which included staff participation in on-the-ground actions in both Washington, D.C., and at the facility itself in Homestead, FL.

Over one weekend in June, **UUSC staff were among the more than 1,000 who showed up in Florida** to bear witness and demand the closure of the facility. In the pouring rain, the group walked along the fence that marks the perimeter of the prison. As UUSC's Director of Activism & Justice Education observed, "*The fence itself is covered by an opaque canvas, making it impossible to see or make direct contact with the children held within.*" As she and other protesters walked, they chanted and sang in Spanish, "*Los vemos, los queremos!*" ("*We see you, we love you!*"), in the hope that their presence "*might offer a little hope and the awareness that they are not forgotten.*"

In August, we got the incredible news that **all unaccompanied minors previously held at Homestead had been placed with a qualified sponsor or transferred to a licensed state-run child care center.**

This victory was made possible by the work of many partners and allies, including the many UUSC supporters who took action to provide children with *homes instead of detention*. It is a testament to the power of grassroots organizing and advocacy to make change, even with a hostile administration occupying the White House.

Raising Awareness of River Correctional Facility & the Rapid Expansion of Louisiana Immigration Detention

In April, our partner, *Activate Labs*, learned about a human rights crisis unfolding at an "off-the-map" immigrant detention center in rural Louisiana, known as the River Correctional Facility ("River") – one of a growing number of secretive detention centers popping up across Louisiana. Once asylum-seekers arrived at this facility, they disappeared from ICE's online locator system that families and lawyers use to determine where someone has been transferred. At this "black site," over a hundred people had gone on a hunger strike to protest the mass denial of parole and bond by the judge overseeing all cases at the center. This facility was not just hidden from public view – it was a deportation mill.

Activate Labs first learned of all this when they received a phone call from inside the facility. The call came from a father whom *Activate Labs* and UUSC knew well – his journey from El Salvador to the U.S. had been documented by *Activate Labs*, with UUSC's support, earlier in the year as part of a participatory documentary filmmaking project.

Activate Labs requested UUSC's support to raise awareness of what was happening inside River, so **we traveled to Louisiana to visit with immigrant leaders organizing inside of the facility and to support coordination of efforts with local organizations**, including UUSC's partner, the *Center for Ethical Living and Social Justice Renewal* (CELSJR), on nationwide advocacy.

Another UUSC partner, *Freedom for Immigrants* (FFI), joined the effort to publicize what was happening in River after it acquired a donated house in Jena, Louisiana, near the River facility. There, *FFI* is hosting volunteers, visiting family members, and employing a staff member to coordinate the work whose role is supported by funding from UUSC.

During our visit we learned that, in the three months of the facility's existence as an immigration detention center, *no asylum-seekers were released on bond or parole, and there had not been a single successful asylum case*. In other words, nobody leaves River unless they're deported. In the subsequent months, at least 3 other facilities like River began detaining immigrants, more than tripling the number of immigrant detainees in Louisiana to over 10,000. Part of UUSC's migrant justice strategy includes amplifying the routine injustices of the immigration courts and exposing the widespread abuses occurring in ICE detention. The blog we wrote upon return, documenting the abuses we witnessed and learned about while at the River facility, was **noticed by a number of major media outlets** ranging from *PBS Frontline* to *Reuters* and the *AP*, as well as a local media outlet in Glasgow, Scotland! We hope this publicity will contribute to public outcry and an end to these facilities.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #3:

Powering Grassroots Efforts to Change the Immigration Detention System

Once again this year, we were inspired by the incredible impacts our long-time partner, *Freedom for Immigrants (FFI)*, was able to achieve with UUSC's support, providing a range of critical services and engaging in sustained policy advocacy aimed at systemic change.

But FFI is more than a lifeline to individuals and families. Using the data and stories they collect, *FFI* joins with allies to **push for changes to the system**, using a combination of detailed reports, class action lawsuits, and policy advocacy. For example, with the support of UUSC last year, *FFI* released a report documenting "at least 800 complaints of abuse motivated by hate or bias in 34 immigrant jails and prisons between January 2017 and June 2018." Likewise, after noticing an increase in calls from the Otero Processing Center in New Mexico,

as well as disturbing trends being reported through *FFI*'s visitation program, they released a report documenting ongoing abuse at that facility. *FFI* timed the release of the report to coincide with a series of hearings the state legislature was conducting on immigration detention. This led to interest by legislators to push for a Dignity Not Detention Act in New Mexico. *FFI* is currently working with a visitation program member and the state legislature to craft language for a bill.

"UUSC is an amazing partner that provides us not only with financial support, but connections to new volunteers and opportunities to share more about our work with a wider faith-based audience." (Christina Fialho, Co-Executive Director, *FFI*)



FFI

shared with us the story of Luis, a 57-year-old father who was separated from his family and detained in California, after presenting himself at the border with his wife and three children seeking asylum. From detention, Luis **reached FFI using its national immigration detention hotline, which UUSC helped launch and support**. Around the same time, Luis' wife filed a missing person's report with *FFI* using "REUNITE," a new tool *FFI* launched this year to locate people who have disappeared into the system and reunite them with their families. *FFI* immediately notified the family of Luis' location, "raised and paid [Luis'] \$5,000 bond, picked him up at the jail, and paid for a flight from California to Texas to reunite with his family." They also connected Luis and his family to a volunteer host family who has been housing them — **a practice UUSC and FFI have been promoting through the joint-creation of an Asylum Sponsor Handbook**. Currently, *FFI* has over 900 host family volunteers.



IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #4:

Strengthening a Movement to End Family Separation

In the summer of 2018, the Trump Administration formalized its policy of family separation and the closely related “zero tolerance” policy of criminally prosecuting migrants and asylum-seekers who cross the border between ports of entry, while seeking to erode legal constraints preventing the long-term detention of children and families. This practice continued and intensified throughout the rest of 2018, into 2019, and shows no signs of abating. **From the beginning, UUSC and our partners have been an important part of the resistance— fighting the administration’s policies in court, demonstrating our people power in the streets, and helping to reunite families in Central America and here in the United States.**

Throughout the family separation crisis, *Justice in Motion* and its UUSC-supported “Defenders Network” have been instrumental in reunifying deported parents with their children in the U.S. The organization was also appointed to the Steering

Committee for the critical ACLU lawsuit, *Ms. L v. ICE*, which successfully challenged the practice, and has been working closely with national partners to find parents to support the suit. The *Ms. L* litigation includes a group of families who were deported without being given the chance to apply for asylum. Another of UUSC’s partners, *Al Otro Lado*, brought 29 of these families to the border and they are now in the U.S. and applying for asylum.

Justice in Motion described to us how the rapid, regional mobilization of the Defender Network in response to the family separation crisis was “**made possible by the hard work [UUSC has supported] to improve trust and coordination among Defenders and Defenders’ commitment to the network model; without that, we could never have jumped so quickly to find and serve the parents deported without their children.**” Since our support began, *Justice in Motion*’s work on family reunification has received widespread recognition in the press.

The *Ms. L* litigation includes a group of families who were deported without being given the chance to apply for asylum. Another of UUSC's partners, *Al Otro Lado*, brought 29 of these families to the border and they are now in the U.S. and applying for asylum.



With a focus on Indigenous youth, *Asociacion Pop No'j* works at the intersection of the rights of Guatemalans to stay at home, the rights of returnees (those deported back to Guatemala), and the rights and safety of migrants passing through Guatemala. With UUSC's support, *Pop No'j* plays a key role in the Child and Adolescent Protection Network of San Pedro Necta, which **aims to protect the welfare of children and adolescents who have been returned to Guatemala.**

In March 2019, following pressure from *Pop No'j* and other members of the Network, the government

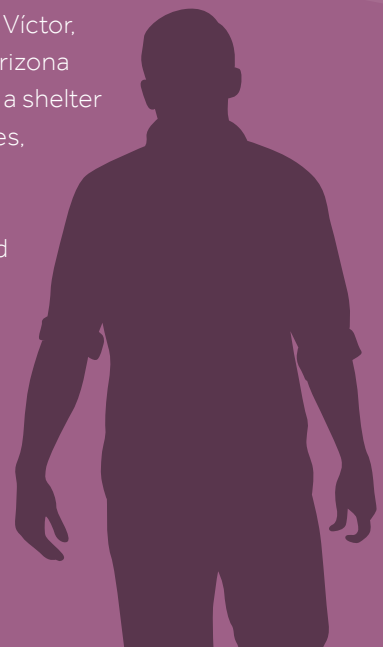
announced the opening of the Office for the Protection of Children and Adolescents in San Pedro Necta, to help support returned children.

The impacts of this victory are sure to reverberate over the long-term, but some were also immediate — **the Office has already worked with *Pop No'j* to coordinate support for a returned adolescent.** *Pop No'j* hopes that, through continued advocacy and awareness-raising, all municipalities will integrate the rights of migrants into their work.

Pop No'j

Pop No'j shared the heart-wrenching story of Victor, a 17-year-old whose 15-day journey to the Arizona border ended in his detention and transfer to a shelter in Phoenix. There, Victor spent seven months, suffering from severe headaches, panic attacks, shortness of breath, dizziness, and anxiety. When he sought medical care he was given an anti-anxiety medication — but no treatment. He told of feeling as though he were going to die if he didn't leave, so he requested the right to return home to his family.

When *Pop No'j* learned of Victor's return to Guatemala, they accompanied his reunification with his family and the organization has continued to support his reintegration into the community. After months working with *Pop No'j*, Victor has managed to smile, his self-confidence has improved and his headaches have disappeared.





Going beyond funding in the pursuit of justice and accountability

At UUSC, we believe that achieving the changes we seek in the world will require the redistribution of financial resources to grassroots organizations and movements. We also understand that this alone will not be enough. While funding is a critical component of this work, we maximize our impact by supplementing funding with support for activism, justice education, research, and other forms of partner and movement support.

As our long-time partner, *Freedom for Immigrants*, said of UUSC last year, ***"It is rare to find a funder who also works alongside us in this struggle for justice. Thank***

you so much for being our champion, our funder, and our partner." In addition to many of the other highlights included in this report, below are just a few examples of when we have gone beyond funding to deepen the support of our partners and advance our human rights goals, including efforts to resist the criminalization of humanitarian aid at the U.S.-Mexico border, advocating for accountability in Burma, and developing a nationwide accompaniment network to support UUs and others in their migrant justice work.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #1:

Resisting the Criminalization of Humanitarian Aid

Last August, as part of a solidarity action called "[Faith Floods the Desert](#)," UUSC organized 60 faith leaders from around the country to bring jugs of drinking water to leave in the Sonoran Desert, in support of [No More Deaths](#) (NMD) and the migrants who regularly make the perilous journey to the U.S. border.

For similar acts of humanity, nine of NMD's volunteer human rights defenders were charged with federal crimes. One of the volunteers, Dr. Scott Warren, was even charged with three felonies. His arrest, which came just hours after *No More Deaths* released a UUSC-funded report, [The Disappeared](#), documenting the sabotage of humanitarian supplies by Border Patrol agents, was most likely intended as retaliation for the report.

As our partnership with *No More Deaths* has deepened, **UUSC has engaged in an ongoing effort to amplify the demand that U.S. federal prosecutors drop all charges against their volunteers.** In solidarity with *No More Deaths*, Dr. Warren, and the other volunteers charged with crimes, UUSC has:

- Urged our members to contact their Congressional representatives and pressure them to take action in support of *No More Deaths*, Dr. Warren, and their volunteers.
- Organized a vigil outside of the federal building in Boston.
- Coordinated the writing and distribution of "solidarity letters" to the aid workers on trial.

- Showed up in-person at court in Arizona.
- Recruited clergy to "pack the court" during Dr. Warren's felony trial, as part of the "[Faith Floods the Courtroom](#)" action.

Earlier this year, intense public pressure led federal prosecutors to drop the charges against four of the volunteers. The powerful *Faith Floods the Desert* action has had a lasting impact, as well, allowing *No More Deaths* to introduce concrete evidence of selective prosecution (unlike the NMD workers, none of the action-takers were arrested or charged with any crimes) in support of their cases. Moreover, journalist Ryan Devereaux of [The Intercept](#), who embedded with UUSC for the *Faith Floods the Desert* action, has written a number of thoughtful and widely read articles about the trials, helping to shape the public narrative around the targeted criminalization of humanitarian aid, solidarity, and compassion.

In June, the felony trial against Dr. Warren ended in a hung jury, and despicably, the government recently announced its intention to retry Scott. In his testimony, Scott asked, "*If you live in a place where people are dying by the dozens every year around you, how could you not respond?*" UUSC continues to stand with Dr. Warren, *No More Deaths*, and all of our partners and allies in seeking justice and dignity for migrants.



IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #2:

Strengthening Immigrant Accompaniment Nationwide

Accompaniment is one of the most powerful tools we can use to support asylum-seekers and immigrants at risk of deportation. In addition to showing our solidarity with their struggle for justice, accompaniment can provide meaningful support – emotional, legal, financial, logistical, or otherwise – to individuals in need.

As UUSC's Senior Organizer [describes](#), accompaniment is a way of "using [our] privilege as a tool to flank the[] fight" of those seeking asylum or fighting deportation. CSJ's Senior Associate for Justice Training puts it this way: "For those of us who are not directly targeted by ICE, [accompaniment] brings us more proximate to the violence of our immigration and criminal punishment systems..." As a result of that proximity, "many folks who engage in accompaniment become deeply transformed" and "mov[ed] to deepen [their] commitments to collective action to disrupt these harmful systems. ..."

Responding to continued requests from individuals and groups for more information about accompaniment programs around the country, UUSC and *Love Resists* (a collaborative campaign between UUSC and the Unitarian Universalist Association) spearheaded an effort within the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) (IIC) to develop **the first national directory of immigrant justice accompaniment programs**, eventually compiling information on more programs than we even knew existed. The accompaniment directory, which we are working to build out into an active network, now includes **more than 70 groups nationwide**.

To support this growing network, UUSC staff **founded an IIC working group to coordinate the accompaniment and border response work of faith-based organizations** across the country. Working with *Love Resists*, we have also hosted a series of webinars on accompaniment, asylum sponsorship, and how to become a host home, all of which had over 100 in attendance and are compiled [online](#) for ongoing use. Additionally, UUSC and CSJ, in conjunction with our partner *Freedom for Immigrants*, are providing guidance

and support for sponsors in the U.S., in part by creating an "Asylum Sponsor Handbook," which aims to guide individuals in the sponsorship process. **More than 100 UUs have signed up to host asylum seekers so far.**

The power of this accompaniment network is more than just theoretical. Across the country, clusters of neighbors have organized to accompany asylum-seekers to immigration hearings, ICE check-ins, legal and medical appointments, and more. For instance, when the IIC group received the news that hundreds of asylum-seekers were being released in El Paso, the network arranged for a bus of **more than 100 asylum-seekers** to travel from El Paso to Denver, where a group in Denver was able to support them with a pop-up shelter at a UU congregation, and then help them travel to other parts of the country where they have family and could receive long-term support.

UUSC's contribution to all of this has been to continuously resource a larger movement, which has had real, life-changing impacts for asylum-seekers and immigrants challenging deportation. Some of the benefits to individuals and families include: being released from detention; being released with a lower bond; receiving funding support for bond payments; being able to attend court hearings and immigration appointments without having to drive through high-risk areas on the way; receiving moral and emotional support while in detention; obtaining free housing upon release from detention; being sponsored by a U.S. citizen, which can result in release without bond; support for families of immigrants in detention; and connections to low-cost, reliable legal support, among others. In some cases, where individuals in their final deportation hearings have not had legal representation for the process, members of our accompaniment network have even been able to stay their deportations by testifying that we are in the process of finding a lawyer to take their cases.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #3:

Fighting for Accountability in Burma

This year, in the wake of further damning evidence, UUSC and our local and international partners continued to call upon the international community and the U.S. government to **demand accountability for crimes against humanity and genocide in Burma**.

One of our demands was for U.S. officials to use their presence on the UN Security Council to refer Burmese officials to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for investigation and prosecution. As part of this effort, we created and circulated a petition with **almost 1,500 signatories** to the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations to support justice for the Rohingya. When then-Ambassador Nikki Haley resigned, **UUSC members sent more than 1,700 letters to the White House**, urging the appointment of an Ambassador who would be a consistent proponent of human rights.

As the movement for accountability grew, the ICC Prosecutor requested that the ICC's judges allow her to open an investigation, and the ICC's Independent Investigative Mechanism began collecting and preserving evidence for future prosecutions – critical steps forward in the long quest for accountability and justice. More encouraging news came in June, when the government of Gambia took steps to take Burma to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), a move that was applauded by UUSC's partner, the Burma Human Rights Network, and Rohingya leaders. UUSC has also paid a **critical role in efforts to pass legislation** in the U.S. Congress to hold Burmese officials accountable through

sanctions. In July 2019, the key targeted sanctions provisions of the BURMA Act (2018), a bill which UUSC helped shape and worked to mobilize pressure for passage through several e-Actions, media, and coalition work, **finally passed the House**.

Days later, the U.S. State Department imposed sanctions on the four top Burmese generals, including the country's commander in chief and his deputy, **barring them from entry to the U.S.** Finally, in August 2019, UUSC urged its members in Kentucky to use the Congressional recess to lobby Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) – the primary roadblock in the Senate – to allow a floor vote on the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act (2019).

Meanwhile, UUSC **continues to support Rohingya people organizing themselves** to provide education, conduct peacebuilding, and advocate for their community before international agencies. Internally displaced people are continuing to organize and demand their rights as well, and UUSC's partners are working to provide education in the Cox's Bazar camps in Bangladesh (where nearly 1 million Rohingya now live, having fled genocide in Burma), build coalitions, and represent their communities on the international and domestic stage.



Building power to change policies

One of the hallmarks of a powerful movement – whether small or large, local or international – is the ability to make or change policy. This year, UUSC and our partners were able to do just that. Not only are these policy changes **indicative of the kind of powerful**

movements necessary to change systems, they have the potential to immediately improve people's lives. Key victories include the passage of the American Dream and Promise Act and creating Welcoming Schools in Pennsylvania.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #1:

Organizing to Pass Landmark Citizenship Legislation

In June 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives **passed the American Dream and Promise Act**, “a groundbreaking bill to provide a path to citizenship for more than a million immigrants at risk of deportation and family separation.” This marked the first time any legislation including permanent protections for undocumented immigrants has passed the House or Senate in almost a decade – and the **first ever time a bill containing permanent protections for holders of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) has passed** a chamber of Congress in any form.

This historic victory was made possible through the tireless organizing of directly affected immigrant communities, including UUSC's partners the *UndocuBlack Network* and the *National TPS Alliance*. In the weeks leading up to the bill's passage, leaders with both *UndocuBlack* and the *TPS Alliance* addressed members of Congress in person. They amplified the voices of more than a million immigrants whose temporary immigration status is in jeopardy because of the current administration's attempts to cancel TPS and other forms of protection for undocumented immigrants.

In February 2019, UUSC joined our partners for the TPS Peoples' Summit in Washington, D.C.,

which brought together TPS holders from all 13 TPS nationalities to fight for a collective path to permanent residency. Following the Summit, we joined members of the *TPS Alliance* in visits to Congressional offices on Capitol Hill to lobby for a comprehensive legislative solution for TPS holders and Liberian holders of Deferred Enforced Departure (a program similar to TPS). Together, we sent the message to Congress that, as the *TPS Alliance* put it: “Our lives are not temporary.”

Since the beginning of the Trump Administration, UUSC and our supporters have joined these and similar efforts, by condemning attempts by the administration to end TPS (for people from *Somalia*,

Yemen, *Syria*, *Haiti*, *El Salvador*, *Honduras*, and *Nepal*)

and by advocating to legislators around the country to enact permanent protections. In the weeks leading up to the vote in June, hundreds of UUSC supporters told members of Congress that TPS holders deserve permanent protections. *This time, we know that message was heard.*



IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #2:

Creating Welcoming Schools in Pennsylvania

Through its sustained immigrant justice work in Eastern Pennsylvania, *Make the Road PA* (MRPA) has become known as *the* place for immigrants of color to go for assistance confronting injustice in their communities.

This year, MRPA reflected on how, with UUSC's support, its members *"not only come to [them] with questions, but those that received [MRPA's] trainings went on to share the information with their neighbors and families."* MRPA made its most significant impacts in the communities of Reading and Allentown, where its members organized with their local school boards to pass "Welcoming Schools" resolutions to protect immigrant youth from ICE raids.

One of MRPA's members who also serves on the Allentown School Board, for example, took the information and advocacy tools provided by MRPA to its School Board meetings, where they were able to use these resources to advocate for and succeed in passing a "Welcoming Schools" resolution. As MPRA explained to us, *"These resolutions not only impact the students in these school districts, but also contribute to our longer-term goal of ensuring that the geographies we're located in are welcoming to immigrants and celebrate immigrants rather than scapegoat them."*



Facilitating personal transformation

UUSC recognizes that the transformative changes we seek in society require the dismantling and reconstruction of the mental models, habits of thought, and belief systems that influence the actions we take, how we think, and how we talk. As part of both UUSC and the UUA, the [UU College of Social Justice \(CSJ\)](#) offers a range of dynamic programs to inspire and

sustain effective activism for justice rooted in personal transformation. This year, UUSC supplemented those efforts by offering a variety of collaborative learning and training tools, including a four-month e-course, [*Changing Systems, Changing Ourselves: Anti-Racist Practice for Sanctuary and Accompaniment*](#).

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #1:

Inspiring Activism through Personal Transformation

In order to educate UUs about systems of injustice and effective methods of resistance, CSJ offers a range of opportunities “to learn from the people most impacted and on the frontline[s] of community-based organizing.” CSJ’s premise is that, when we become more proximate to communities of resistance, “we have not simply learned something — we can also become transformed in the process,” inspiring “new commitments to and deeper engagement in the work of justice-making.”

This strategy was a critical component of UUSC’s response to the ongoing exodus of migrants fleeing Central America for the U.S. As part of that response, CSJ coordinated the placement of more than 100 volunteers with border organizations, who worked for between one and eight weeks directly benefiting our frontline partners and the migrants they support. The experience was also transformative for the volunteers. They described how the “*eye-opening and heart-rending*” experience made them “*more deeply aware than ever of the enormity and complexity of immigration justice*” and sparked or reinforced a commitment to “*continue to work locally to bring awareness and attention to the humanity of those who are seeking a safe home.*”

Personal transformation and the activism it inspires are also central to CSJ’s immersion learning journeys. One of CSJ’s longest running journeys is the “BorderLinks: Sanctuary and Solidarity” program, which is co-led with longtime partner, BorderLinks, and has been taking groups to the Arizona-Mexico border since CSJ was founded in 2012.

Since its launch, CSJ has sent almost 40 groups on the BorderLinks journey. On those trips, participants are introduced to the many injustices related to U.S. immigration policy and the border, as well as some of the powerful social movements in the area who are fighting back. While every trip varies, a typical BorderLinks experience includes a walk in the desert where so many have lost their lives; they are accompanied by with a humanitarian aid organization, such as UUSC partner No More Deaths. They often spend a day in Mexico meeting with organizations supporting deportees; interactive workshops to better understand the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the root causes of migration; a visit to immigration court and “Operation Streamline”; and presentations from grassroots groups organizing for immigrant rights in Tucson, such as Mariposas sin Fronteras (an LGBT asylum-seeker support project).

The transformative potential of programs like “Sanctuary and Solidarity” shone through during the First Unitarian Church of Dallas’ Young Religious UUs’ recent trip to the border. UUSC’s Jennifer O’Rourke, who traveled with the group, described how the trip helped her realize “*how the intersection of youth engagement, grassroots expertise, and hand-in-hand partnerships can culminate in enduring acts of solidarity.*” Following the journey, we heard how the youth participants had returned home so inspired to action that they **convinced the adults in their congregation to request their own BorderLinks journey** (which they did!) so that they could engage more deeply in migrant justice organizing in their community.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT #2:

Changing Systems, Changing Ourselves

One of the most encouraging trends we have observed in the last few years is the **growing number of people of faith and conscience who are willing to put their bodies and resources on the line to resist criminalization**. To harness this energy, UUSC has committed to training and supporting individuals, grassroots organizations, and congregations engaging in direct and impactful forms of solidarity and resistance.

As mentioned above, one example of these efforts is our collaborative, four-month e-course with the UUA and American Friends Service Committee, "*Changing Systems, Changing Ourselves: Anti-Racist Practice for Sanctuary and Accompaniment*." This pilot course, which will be repeated later this year, had **over 1,200 registered participants**, with **more than 100 teams** participating together. This number includes **38 UU congregations**, 30 Quaker congregations, and groups from dozens of other faiths and spiritual traditions. By posting the entire course online, this resource has the **potential to have an ongoing impact**. In fact, the YouTube videos of the webinars have already been **viewed more than 1,100 times!**

Participants have described the course as **"transformational"** and, since taking the course, congregations and individuals have:

- Collaborated with grassroots groups on "Know Your Rights" trainings for allies and impacted communities.
- Accompanied asylum-seekers and undocumented individuals to court appearances.
- Provided housing and sponsorship for asylum-seekers released from detention.
- Participated in actions at the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Written letters of support for asylum-seekers to use in court appointments.
- Visited immigrants in detention.

To build off the momentum created by the course, organizers are developing a system of mentorship for experienced sanctuary and accompaniment leaders to support the development of new programs, and informal "learning community" calls for participants to continue to convene and share stories.

Following

the course, one participant, who called it **"an invaluable learning experience,"** decided to sponsor two transgender women from Central America. She told us that what she and her husband learned from *Changing Systems, Changing Ourselves* **helped them decenter themselves, be sensitive to important cultural differences, and recognize the power dynamics** in their relationships with each of the trans women they were sponsoring. Most importantly of all, she better understood that she and her husband were **"merely facilitators of the quest for safety and freedom of these two amazingly strong young women."**





Fulfilling a commitment to long-term recovery in Haiti

It has been nearly a decade since the deadly earthquake that destroyed much of Haiti's capital, impacting nearly 3 million people and killing upwards of 200,000. UUSC's response, which is **in its ninth year** and has included partnerships with **more than a dozen grassroots organizations**, serves as an important counterpoint to the humanitarian "crisis caravan" that left Port-au-Prince long ago.

In each of those years, we have been in partnership with Mouvman Peyizan Papay (Papaye Peasant Movement) (MPP), Haiti's largest peasant organization. Together, we have **developed a network of six sustainable villages in Haiti's Central Plateau, and a national school to serve the villages**. By committing to this work for the long term, in the face of endemic corruption, political instability, devastating drought, and other unforeseen challenges, our work together stands out a model for post-crisis recovery and development.

After a 7.0 magnitude earthquake leveled much of Port-au-Prince in 2010, our partner, MPP, used its headquarters in Haiti's rural Central Plateau to shelter nearly 1,000 people who had been displaced from the capital. Despite their limited knowledge of agriculture, many people did not want to return to the city. So, with a significant amount of available land, an expertise in agroecology, and a long-term focus on peoples' rights to healthy, culturally appropriate food, MPP asked UUSC to help create sustainable rural livelihoods for those who wanted to stay.

What emerged was the construction of a series of six "EcoVillages," each with ten households practicing sustainable agriculture. As construction drew to a close, UUSC and a group of Presbyterian churches (the "Atlanta Church Group"), raised money to build a school to serve the many children now living throughout the EcoVillages.

When UUSC traveled to Haiti in June 2016, the then-two-year-old school served children from kindergarten through the fourth grade. Because of construction delays and limited space, two grades were sharing a classroom and another was using a storage room for classes. Moreover, though the first village supported by UUSC after the earthquake was thriving, other villages faced ongoing struggles. In two of the villages, the wells were not yielding any water, so villagers who wanted drinking water had to walk 30 minutes to another village, where a UUSC grant had recently repaired another broken well, and then carry it back home. Every village but the first also lacked electricity, the absence of which prevents anyone from doing much of anything after the vast darkness blankets the area each night.

But what a difference a few years makes. From 2018-19, using emergency assistance from UUSC, MPP was able to connect *all six EcoVillages* to the electrical grid and to fix both of the broken wells. **Now, all villagers have access to clean water and electricity, improving well-being in the villages and leading to new ambitions among the villagers.**

MPP said the electrification of the villages *"destroyed the barrier of access to electricity in rural areas."* This project has *"changed the lives of all residents and families in the villages,"* MPP told us, *"from the moment [they] get up early in the morning [and] work until they*

[go] to bed at night." Life is now *"safer and better for all residents."* In fact, the changes have been so dramatic that *"most [of] residents of the EcoVillages can remember and describe the wonderful instant the lights came on."*

When UUSC has visited with the EcoVillage residents in the past, we have been reminded that they all came to rural Haiti from vastly different lives in the busy capital of Port-au-Prince, where their homes—those destroyed in the 2010 earthquake—likely all had electricity. As MPP put it, *"For most of [the villagers], the instant they turned on the lights still carries a lot of emotion for them, because since they left Port-au-Prince after the quake, this is the first time they are able to see light in their homes."* We only wish we could have been there for that moment.

In addition, the EcoVillage School was recently granted a **certificate of nationalization from the Haitian Ministry of Education**, and the school is now known as "The National School of the EcoVillages of Colladere." **This means that, if and when the state has the funds, all teachers will be compensated by the Ministry, making the school viable for the long-term.**

These are critical steps toward sustainability for both the EcoVillages and the EcoVillage School—neither of which would have been possible without UUSC and our committed members.



Today, UUSC's partners include organizations led by:



Women activists in rural Honduras



A campesina woman in Nicaragua

Immigrant organizers across the United States



Indigenous Carteret Islanders who have relocated due to climate change impacts



A Rohingya former political prisoner



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