



# *Stories of Hope*

2025-2026

*Planting Seeds of Justice*



# **Contents**

*Story 1: Victoria Sirois.....1*

*Story 2: Ruth López and Noah Bullock....5*

*Story 3: Katia Bonté.....9*

*Story 4: Juan López.....13*



*Learn more!*



*Give today!*

Dear friends,

Amid so much strife and upheaval in the world, it can be challenging to remember that justice is cultivated by many hands over many years. What may seem like a small or insignificant act of love and commitment today can grow, with time and care, into a mighty force for change.

UUSC's partnership model centers the solutions that come from grassroots communities most impacted by injustice. Relationship—listening deeply to, following the lead of, collaborating with, and resourcing these grassroots organizations on the front lines of resisting oppression and advancing change—is at the heart of our work at UUSC. These relationships are made possible by the support of our congregations and by individuals of faith and conscience.

UUSC's Guest at Your Table program has been both a beloved multigenerational tradition and a timely call to action for 50 years. This opportunity to learn deeply from a few of UUSC's grassroots partners invites you and members of all ages to expand the borders of our compassion and recognize the ways we are all called to plant seeds of justice so that love can flourish everywhere.

Thank you for sharing in this important tradition and for spreading the word in your circles about UUSC's partners and our collaborative work for human rights.

In fellowship,



Rev. Mary Katherine Morn,  
President and Lead Executive Officer

Dear fellow justice-seekers,

This year's Guest at Your Table program, centered on the theme *Planting Seeds of Justice*, presents stories from leaders of four of UUSC's partner organizations. We are excited to introduce you!

You will hear from migration justice leader Victoria Sirois, housing LGBTQ+ asylum seekers in Philadelphia.

You will meet political prisoner Ruth López, fighting for government accountability and human rights in El Salvador.

You will learn about a Honduran community of water defenders carrying on the legacy of the late Juan López.

And you will be introduced to Haitian activist Katia Bonté, fighting for the rights of people in migration to be treated with dignity.

Thank you for joining UUSC for Guest at Your Table to learn more about our global partners who are embodying hope and transforming lives. We invite you to help advance community-led change and support Victoria, Ruth, Katia, and Juan's communities and others like them by making a gift at **[uus.org/givetoguest](https://uus.org/givetoguest)**. Together, we can find new points of connection and sources of inspiration as we all continue planting seeds of justice.

In faith and solidarity,



Rev. Laura Randall  
Director of Congregation Relations



---

## **Story 1**

---

### **Asylum Pride House**

### ***Victoria Sirois***

When the seeds of justice are planted with care, they spread and multiply. Like an oak tree and its acorns, strong, well-tended movements generate networks of self-sustaining growth. Victoria Sirois planted one such oak when she founded Asylum Pride House (APH), a nonprofit organization in Philadelphia, PA that supports LGBTQ+ asylum seekers through transitional housing and case management services.

In its five-bedroom home, APH welcomes LGBTQ+ people in migration from around the world. APH residents have come from Honduras, Guinea, Sierra Leone, China, Venezuela, and more. Some are referred through national agencies or immigration organizations, but others find APH on their own.

For the past three years, APH has functioned as a pilot program. As

the only U.S. organization providing communal housing and innovative case management for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, Sirois and her team had to start small. Sirois needed to confirm that APH's service model worked and that the programming was responsive to the community's needs.

Now, several rounds of the organization's clients have successfully obtained work authorization, jobs, independent housing, and social support, transitioning out of the APH house. "Just this summer we had five folks that we were able to place into our house because other individuals were moving out...that's a huge turnover in our program," Sirois said.

APH doesn't measure success by its number of transitioned residents alone. The team is equally invested in creating a true community, ensuring that past, present, and future residents have a hub of connection and sense of belonging. Past APH residents return to the house to volunteer with spring cleaning. They'll throw potlucks with current residents and attend organizational events.

"Within the queer community and the immigrant community, there are a lot of challenges around isolation," Sirois said. "The whole purpose of why we went with a more community style housing model is because we wanted

to combat that type of isolation. We want to help address the mental health issues that come along with the process of seeking asylum...We want to see folks make truly lasting friendships and bonds.”

With the success of its pilot phase, APH is now focused on growing the organization. In the past six months, staff has been contacted weekly by LGBTQ+ asylum seekers looking for housing and case management. The organization has had to turn people away due to their lack of capacity.

Funding is also an ongoing issue. “We work within...a community that has historically never been well served by the philanthropic community,” Sirois said. “We rely on individual donors, small family foundations that trust us, UUSC, and faith communities that really see that this work is needed and trust that we’re capable of doing it. It’s very hard to grow a case management program that’s not federally funded.”

Sirois and the APH team, however, continue to innovate to address these limitations. APH’s partnerships with faith communities have resulted in potential growth opportunities. Sirois is currently in talks to convert an inactive convent to house LGBTQ+ asylum seekers. “The way that UUSC, the Sisters of Saint Joseph, and some other Philadelphia-based faith communities

have always stood beside us has been truly unbelievable,” she said.

The seeds that Sirois and the APH team have planted continue to spread—whether in the form of past residents returning to volunteer or faith communities offering opportunities for expansion. The founder never loses sight, however, of new ways to grow APH’s network of welcome.

“I really encourage other faith communities that want to connect with our organization to reach out because it spreads the impact,” Sirois said. “A lot of what we do is direct service, but a huge portion of it is also education and awareness...When people feel like they can talk about what we’re doing and the community that we’re serving, it amplifies the impact that we have. I always like to leave an open door for faith leaders, congregations, and even individuals to reach out and learn more.”

### **Go deeper and take action:**

- Learn more and watch a video from Asylum Pride House at **[uusc.org/guest](https://uusc.org/guest)**.
- Make a donation to UUSC today at **[uusc.org/givetoguest](https://uusc.org/givetoguest)**.
- Engage in needed human rights advocacy at **[uusc.org/network](https://uusc.org/network)**





---

## **Story 2**

---

### **Cristosal**

### ***Ruth López and Noah Bullock***

The seeds of justice do not sprout into orchids. The movement for collective liberation isn't fragile or easily struck down by bad weather. The seeds of justice develop into hearty plants like dandelions or cacti. Their growth cannot be trampled down by any regime. As one movement leader said, "Repression has never been able to turn out the light of people who are seeking freedom."

That movement leader is Noah Bullock, the Executive Director of Cristosal. Founded in El Salvador in 2000, Cristosal defends human rights and promotes democratic rule of law in Central America. The organization supports and assists civilians who are victims of human rights violations. Cristosal pioneers models for intercultural human rights education,

victim protection, research, and strategic litigation.

Cristosal's work has grown increasingly urgent and complex since Nayib Bukele became president of El Salvador in 2019. "It's been a return to the authoritarian governments of the past," Bullock said. "Elite groups of families control the country and govern with impunity, without restrictions, without transparency, and without dialogue."

The regime's repression, however, cannot stop Cristosal's work. "Our role has been to resist the development of dictatorship," Bullock said. "We did that by accompanying victims of abuses of power, challenging what we could in the courts...and investigating and documenting human rights violations and corruption."

As the regime ramped up its abuse, targeting grassroots organizations and human rights defenders, Cristosal's work grew increasingly dangerous. The organization's staff carried on, motivated by the urgency of their advocacy. Cristosal's Chief Legal Officer in Anti-Corruption, Ruth López, was one such team member who went above and beyond in the fight for justice. "She would spend her weekends doing workshops at churches and in different communities teaching about transparency, democracy, and

corruption,” Bullock said.

Then, on May 18, 2025, the Bukele regime arrested López, arbitrarily detaining her and depriving her of any form of communication with her colleagues or family. The state targeted López both for her extensive anti-corruption work and for her positive reputation in the community. “People thought that if they arrest Ruth, they can arrest anyone,” Bullock said.

“I am innocent. I am a political prisoner,” López said on her way to the closed court hearing. “They want to accuse me because of my accusations against the corruption of this government,” she said.

The movement for justice is in solidarity with Ruth López. While incarcerated, she was awarded the American Bar Association (ABA) 2025 International Human Rights Award. “While [the regime] generated fear with her arrest, they also generated a mass response,” Bullock said. “Ruth has become emblematic of the human rights defenders that are imprisoned in El Salvador. [The ABA award] is a powerful recognition that no autocratic regime or mechanism of repression can destroy our work.”

Cristosal has been forced to work in exile, leaving their offices in El Salvador and relocating staff to Guatemala and

Honduras. Still, as the regime's abuses continue, so does the work of justice. "Even with this level of repression, there is resistance," Bullock said. "There's no guarantee that tomorrow everything will change, but the actions we take today contribute to a longer process, even if we don't see the outcomes in our lifetime. Even if we never enjoy the results of our advocacy, we have a historic responsibility to push forward."

As for Ruth López, she continues to endure unlawful incarceration as a political prisoner as the global justice community fights for her freedom. While her family and colleagues cannot contact her, they attest to her strength and faith.

"The people deserve to know," López said before her trial. "God and the truth are with me."

### **Go deeper and take action:**

- Learn more and watch a video from Cristostal at **[uusc.org/guest](https://uusc.org/guest)**.
- Make a donation to UUSC today at **[uusc.org/givetoguest](https://uusc.org/givetoguest)**.
- Engage in needed human rights advocacy at **[uusc.org/network](https://uusc.org/network)**.



---

## **Story 3**

---

### **Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés Katia Bonté**

Haitians fleeing poverty, violence, and insecurity in search of a better life often cross the border to the Dominican Republic. But for many, the journey ends in calamity. Dominican immigration officials subject Haitian migrants to arbitrary imprisonment, abuse, and deportation, leaving them with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

For more than three decades, Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés (GARR) has provided support for returning Haitian nationals who have been forcibly displaced. GARR sits at the critical juncture where hope seems lost, providing essential aid to those who have been cast out and left to fend for themselves. GARR ensures that people not only plant their lives in fertile ground but that they have a genuine chance to grow and thrive.

In the words of GARR's Coordinator, Katia Bonté, "Migrants are repatriated and arrive at the border in a deplorable state. They are tired, dirty, hungry, penniless, indigent, many times barefoot and without identity papers." It is in these moments of utter despair that GARR steps in, offering not just food and shelter, but a chance for people to reclaim hope and live in safety, with dignity. At their center in the Beladère commune, GARR provides shelter, food, sanitary kits, and transportation to help migrants return home. But their work goes beyond immediate relief; GARR also offers support to help migrants process the trauma of their experiences.

GARR's partnership with UUSC has been instrumental in expanding their reach. In 2024 alone, with the assistance of UUSC and other partners, GARR provided over 16,000 migrants with the resources they needed to rebuild their lives. But beyond the numbers, it is the personal stories of resilience that underscore the impact of GARR's work. Katia shares the story of a woman who, after being deported from the Dominican Republic with her four children, was reunited with her family in Haiti thanks to GARR's relentless efforts to locate her relatives. It is these moments of reconnection and hope that fuel GARR's ongoing fight for justice and dignity for all people in migration.

The challenges faced by Haitian migrants are not just about governments defining their borders—they are about human rights. GARR is on the front lines of the battle against discrimination, xenophobia, and the systemic injustices that plague migrants. One powerful example of their commitment to justice: their work with the Inter-American Court to hold Dominican soldiers accountable for the shooting of Haitian migrants in 2005. The court’s ruling in favor of the victims, resulting in a \$927,000 fine against the Dominican state, was a landmark victory for human rights.

But the fight for permanent freedom and security for displaced Haitian families is far from over. GARR continues to advocate for the protection and promotion of migrants’ rights, from ensuring access to identity documents to fighting human trafficking. Their vision is clear: a world where people who have been forced to migrate are treated with the same dignity and respect as any other human being. As Katia emphasizes, “A migrant is a person like everyone else.”

Haitian migrants set out to plant their lives in new soil, only to find that harvesting the fruits of their labor is a hard-fought process, but GARR is there every step of the way. UUSC is proud to partner with GARR in this vital work, nourishing the growth of those who

have been persecuted and cast aside.  
Together, we are building a world where  
every person has a rich, fruitful place  
to grow.

**Go deeper and take action:**

- Learn more and watch a video from Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés at **[uusc.org/guest](https://uusc.org/guest)**.
- Make a donation to UUSC today at **[uusc.org/givetoguest](https://uusc.org/givetoguest)**.
- Engage in needed human rights advocacy at **[uusc.org/network](https://uusc.org/network)**.





---

## **Story 4**

---

### **Fundación San Alonso Rodríguez Juan López**

When will the seeds of justice sprout? In the fight to advance human rights, movement leaders often plant, tend, and defend freshly sown seeds knowing that they will never witness the harvest. Planting seeds of justice is not a practice of instant gratification but rather one of diligence and faith in future stewards. Sometimes the gardeners of a more just world are struck down by those who feel threatened by resistance and liberatory imagination.

Such is the story of Juan López, a courageous leader in the effort to defend the Guapinol River in Honduras from extractive mining. “The people refuse to die at the hands of the extractive corporate empire and the government that promotes and protects it,” Juan López said. He was a leader of

UUSC's partner Fundación San Alonso Rodríguez (FSAR) in Tocoa, Colón and a steward of environmental justice. He was targeted by state and corporate powers and assassinated on September 14, 2024.

López was murdered for his defense of Guapinol and the San Pedro Rivers. In 2012, the Honduran government declared much of the area protected land, reflecting both the community's spiritual and cultural reverence for the ecosystem and the rivers' production of potable water for more than 40,000 residents. Despite this protection, the Inversiones Los Pinares (ILP) mining company requested to extract iron oxide along the Guapinol River in 2013, and the government granted its permission.

While the state revoked its formal authorization in 2014, the company continued without consequence. By 2018, the water had turned the color of chocolate. Corporate mining poisoned the precious ecosystem and polluted the water residents drank and bathed in.

Juan López and fellow movement leaders took action. FSAR organized legislative advocacy efforts, demanding an end to mining in the Guapinol area. In 2019, López and fellow river defenders set up camp in the national park to protest and impede illegal extraction. In response, the Honduran government sent 1,500 military and

police personnel to violently attack the defenders with tear gas and live ammunition, injuring many and killing one person.

Despite state violence and menacing corporate powers, Juan López and FSAR persisted. The river defenders were honored with the 2019 Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award. In his acceptance speech on behalf of the group, López said, “Long live the hope and rebellion of the communities who are the true owners of the award that we are receiving today.”

Juan López expected that the hope and rebellion of the Guapinol community would outlive him, but he could not have known how soon it would have to do so. Fundación San Alonso Rodríguez and movement leaders deeply grieve the barbaric murder of López and the loss of his vibrant leadership. The seeds of justice that López planted, however, continue to grow, tended by the steadfast care of FSAR and the river defenders.

Today, FSAR fights for legal action and government accountability for the destruction of the Guapinol ecosystem and the assassination of Juan López. FSAR supports the construction of environmentally conscious, traditional homes for members of Guapinol’s indigenous community. The organization is educating youth

on environmental law and the climate crisis. FSAR's members uphold and model values of solidarity, mutual aid, reverence for ancestral knowledge, and commitment to the community.

Through their efforts and values, the Fundación San Alonso Rodríguez and the Guapinol community continue to steward the seeds of justice planted by Juan López. While we mourn the loss of López, may we also take action to tend to the growth of his liberatory vision. "We dream of a world free of violence, free of drug trafficking, free of corruption and empire," López proclaimed. "Empire that imposes exploitation, poverty, misery, and war in the name of democracy and freedom... Wake up humanity, there is no more time!"

### **Go deeper and take action:**

- Learn more and watch a video from Fundación San Alonso Rodríguez at **[uusc.org/guest](https://uusc.org/guest)**.
- Make a donation to UUSC today at **[uusc.org/givetoguest](https://uusc.org/givetoguest)**.
- Engage in needed human rights advocacy at **[uusc.org/network](https://uusc.org/network)**.



Please join UUSC in our work with these partners — make a contribution to support our efforts.

Your donation of \$40 or more earns you and your loved ones annual UUSC membership benefits. In addition, all individual and family unrestricted contributions of \$150 or more are eligible to be matched dollar for dollar by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y. — doubling the impact of your gift!

Visit **[uuscs.org/givetoguest](https://uuscs.org/givetoguest)** or complete the form on the other side of this page and mail it to the following address.

**UUSC**  
**PO Box 808**  
**Newark, NJ 07101-0808**

All donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. UUSC's tax ID is 04-6186012. UUSC's CFC number is 11685.

## USC thanks you for your generous gift!

Your donation of \$40 or more earns you annual USC membership benefits and a gift of \$150 or more is eligible to be matched — doubling the impact of your gift! Please list all who are included in your gift.

Total gift enclosed

☐ **Individual** Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\$

☐ **Youth** Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to establish a monthly pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

↳ ☐ Transfer funds each month from my checking account OR ☐ Charge my credit card every month

↳ Enclosed is a check for my first monthly contribution to USC. I authorize my bank to transfer my pledge from my checking account each month. I understand that a record of each gift will be included on my monthly bank statement.

☐ Check enclosed (payable to "USC")

☐ Charge my credit/debit card:

↳ ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa

☐ American Express ☐ Discover

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder signature \_\_\_\_\_

Print cardholder name \_\_\_\_\_



UUSC is an independent, nonsectarian 501(c)(3) nonprofit member organization. We are a leading voice for human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. Please support our work — begin or renew your membership today!

As a member of UUSC, you join a community of over 30,000 supporters who share your principles and passion for justice. You also stay up to date on pressing human rights issues through periodic mailings, action alerts, and our semiannual newsletter, *Rights Now*. And most importantly, you join a coalition of others who put their hands to the arc of the universe and help it bend toward justice.

Advancing human rights is the work of many joining hands. Join us — with a gift that earns membership for you and your loved ones this year!

For more information about UUSC, visit [uusc.org](http://uusc.org).



**Unitarian Universalist Service Committee**

689 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02139-3302

tel: 617-868-6600 • fax: 617-868-7102

[development@uusc.org](mailto:development@uusc.org) • [uusc.org](http://uusc.org) • CFC#11685