

connecting generations for social justice



This *Bulletin*

celebrates generations coming together to keep social movements vibrant and alive—and highlights young activists rebuilding and reshaping our world. In Guinea-Bissau, Colombia, Guatemala and Burma, youth are building on the struggles of their elders, using storytelling to preserve historical memory and prevent injustices, and uniting like never before to decry the status quo.

Connecting Generations for Social Justice offers us hope for a more just and equal future.



Since 1993, Tiniguena has trained over 200 youth in Guinea-Bissau on issues such as climate action, biodiversity conservation, and women's rights through their program *Geração Nova da Tiniguena*.

Photo credit: Tiniguena

The cycle of change

Around the world, leaders and decision-makers are approaching the latest stage of the pandemic with a pledge to “build back better.” From the Canadian government to the United Nations, we hear promises of a post-COVID world that improves upon what existed before. At the same time, grassroots social justice movements are calling for a “just recovery”: one that addresses the inequalities and injustices exposed and exacerbated over the last two years.

Everywhere, people feel that change is inevitable – and that by working with others, this change could be transformational.

The repercussions of COVID-19 are far from over. In some regions, populations are widely vaccinated and governments have lifted many restrictions. In other parts of the world the pandemic continues its toll; global inequalities play out in lack of vaccines, and catastrophic



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◀ loss of livelihood and access to food. In yet others, the danger posed by the pandemic is exacerbated and exceeded by that of civil war, political violence and crackdowns by authoritarian regimes on movements for democracy and justice.

Across the globe, a new generation of activists is engaging to help rebuild and reshape our world, infusing movements for change with fresh energy and ideas. They see the world that exists and know it could be better. For their elders, for themselves, and for those who will come next.

In Colombia, generations of young activists have built upon the struggles of their parents and grandparents. Social movements advocated for the current peace

accord, which sought to address the root causes of the armed conflict. With its implementation stonewalled by the current government, citizens – led by young people – are pushing back, advocating for profound social change and an end to police violence. Building on the achievement of the accord, youth are demanding more than the absence of fear. They insist on equality and justice for women, for peasants, for ethnic communities, and for LGBTIQ+ people.

Young people's vision for the future builds on the gains and losses of past generations. Engaging a new generation of activists fosters both change *and* continuity.



It is the organic rhythm of continuity and change that keeps movements vibrant and alive. As Tiniguena (a counterpart) celebrates 30 years of educating youth in Guinea-Bissau through their program *Geração Nova da Tiniguena*, early participants are now returning to teach and learn with the next generation. In Guatemala, generations are coming together to heal from intergenerational trauma, and share stories of their fights for justice.

The work of the Canadian Health Coalition (of which Inter Pares is a member) reminds us that time brings both progress and regress. As they organize to address the inequalities and injustices within our healthcare system, they note that our hard-won public services have been eroded over decades with the encroachment of privatization and corporatization. The solution they present is not new: universal public healthcare needs to be restored and expanded. Old and young together remind us that what was won before can be won again – and won better.

As cracks within our current world widen, so does what shines through: a bright light of hope for the future. The process of transformation is enriched and enlivened by collaboration across generations: we learn from our past, better our present, and fight for our future. 🌍



The *Batukada Estallido Feminista*, an LGBTIQ group of drummers, plays during a water festival in Medellín, Colombia. The festival is a form of resistance and protest against socio-environmental conflicts in the region and highlights water as a fundamental human right.

“You messed with the wrong generation”

Htoo Myat and Mai Ra* smell smoke and tear gas, and hear military planes overhead. They join millions across Burma flooding the streets in defiance of the bloody military coup that on February 1, 2021 quashed what fragile democracy existed in the country. They hold signs and tweet slogans like “How many dead bodies are needed for the UN to take action?” and “You messed with the wrong generation”.

Htoo Myat is 21 years old. He grew up in the city and is a Bamar Buddhist, the dominant ethnicity and religion. He had heard from his parents about living under dictatorship, but that world was largely unfamiliar to him. The coup is what politicized him.

Mai Ra is 23 years old, Indigenous Kachin, and lives close to the China border. Mai Ra inherited the trauma of her parents and grandparents, and still lives with civil war, discrimination and state violence - the case for most of Burma’s Indigenous peoples. Burma’s highly centralized government violently suppresses Indigenous people’s rights and



Photo credit: KESAN

struggles for self-determination. Mai Ra believes the coup opened Bamar people’s eyes to this reality.

Today youth across the country decry a return to military rule. People of diverse backgrounds – ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity – have shown a united front while educating others about their struggles. Youth are leading the intergenerational uprising, using creative tactics and social media to garner the world’s attention. The emerging leadership in Burma is not only younger but is more gender- and ethnically-diverse.

For decades, Inter Pares’ counterparts have sensitized their communities about human rights and democracy, including leadership programs for Indigenous youth, some specifically for young women. When the

coup struck, Indigenous youth built on this foundation to help shift the messaging away from a return to the status quo, and towards a complete political restructuring: calling for a federal democracy that accommodates differences and respects Indigenous peoples’ rights, including the rights of Rohingya.

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Inter Pares acts in solidarity with our counterparts and the youth of Burma, who are courageously seizing their future and refusing to accept the coup as a *fait accompli*. 🇲🇲

**Given the security context, we have not named counterparts. The stories shared are a collective representation of experiences.*



Despite Burma Army airstrikes, Karen Women’s Organisation continues to offer training for young women at the Karen Young Women Leadership School.

Photo credit: Karen Women’s Organization

Understanding the past, redefining the present

“I want to put my energy into talking with them.”

Quimy de León is a researcher and long-time activist. She is also co-founder of RUDA, a new Inter Pares counterpart. RUDA was born in 2017 out of this desire for dialogue and collaboration between different generations of Guatemalan feminists. It also grew out of the need to tell the stories of Latinas and Guatemalan women differently so as to allow youth to create their own narratives when describing the environment around them. One of RUDA's young coordinators, Andrea Rodriguez, explains: “We want to highlight those who are taking part in the struggle, and we use digital media which has its own specific way of communicating with a younger generation.” The stories told are not only those of femicides, disappearances and criminalization of human rights activists, but also stories sharing voices that are not typically heard.

RUDA reinvents spaces of social struggle, including women's bodies, their identities, their land and their stories.



RUDA works to preserve historical memory, so that past injustices are not repeated.

Photo credit: RUDA

The RUDA team is intergenerational, and so are the stories the organization shares. They work to preserve historical memory, viewing this as a space of struggle for women to understand and reinterpret past injustices and to prevent them from happening again. With this in mind, RUDA tells infamous stories of Guatemala's civil war, such as that of Sepur Zarco or the case of the 56 girls from the Virgen de La Asunción orphanage. Content creator Marco Juracán says: “Memory is a transformative power that guides us.” In sharing these stories, RUDA reminds listeners that those responsible for these events are still close to power.

RUDA's intergenerational work promotes healing. They tell these stories without revictimizing women, and allow young people to measure the impact of these traumas on their generation and their community. Abuses are recounted and then transformed; it is an act of proactive resilience and is not based on the ability to bear the unbearable. RUDA is a meeting place between the body and the land, the personal and the political, between women born after the peace accords and those who survived the war.

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With the support of thousands of Canadians, Inter Pares works in Canada and around the world with social change organizations who share the analysis that poverty and injustice are caused by inequalities within and among nations, and who are working to promote peace, and social and economic justice in their communities and societies.