

MUJER Annual Report 2014-2015



MUJER

Oct 23, 2015

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Message from our President

This past year has been an exciting and challenging year for MUJER, with many changes in structure and funding. However, this past year, MUJER had an amazing Board of Directors who have been actively involved in running the organization. Each Board Member took multiple roles in organizing and planning events and overall management of the organization. We worked closely together and supported each other in accomplishing tasks. As a result of the amazing contributions from the Board, we have participated in a number of community events and rallies, organized a Latin American/Latin@ Feminisms course, and fostered new partnerships.

The third Latin American/Latin@ Feminisms course (LALFC) was offered in spring of 2015, and we were delighted to have an overwhelming response. This year, we had 16 graduates and we look forward to offering the course again in 2016 – keep an eye out for it! A group of LALFC participants organized a MUJER contingent to participate in the Dyke March this past summer. One of the course graduates, Alexandra Arraiz Matute started a monthly Latinx Feminisms Book Club.

MUJER attended the Black Lives Matter (BLM) rallies and marches in support and solidarity with their demands for justice for those affected by anti-black racism. We also had a MUJER contingent at the BLM rally for Andrew Loku and at the All Black Lives Matter - Take Back the Night event this fall.

At our last AGM in November of 2014, three new board members joined the Board: Madelaine Cahuas, Aldeli Albán Reyna, and Laura Salamanca. They have been an incredible team to work with and I am honoured to be forging a new path for the organization with these amazing womyn. After a competitive application process in 2015, we have five new Board Members joining MUJER thanks to the Human Resources Committee's efforts. Our new Board Members are: Maria Paola Wong, Lourdes Portal-D'Uniam, Sandra Victoriana Concepción Herrera, Marycarmen Lara Villanueva, and Cassandra M. Da Re. Each one of them brings remarkable talents and skills to the organization, and we are very excited to have them join MUJER.

The Executive Committee worked very hard this past year in creating and streamlining new processes, and putting systems in place to ensure efficiency and transparency, which was very important as our resources are limited. These new systems and processes will also be helpful for hiring new staff.



Board of Directors 2015

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President | Carolina Rios

Vice-President | Madelaine Cahuas

Secretary | Aldeli Albán Reyna

Treasurer | Laura Salamanca

BOARD MEMBERS

Cassandra Da Re

Lourdes D'Uniam

María Paola Wong Moreira

Marycarmen Lara Villanueva

Victoria Herrera

The Communications Committee headed by Aldeli Albán Reyna has done an excellent job at keeping our social media active and updating our members and supporters on events, resources, as well as news relevant to the Latinx community. Our numbers for Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook followers have continued to increase over the past year. The Committee took on the revitalization of our monthly newsletter this year.

The Programs Committee chaired by Madelaine Cahuas developed some fantastic program ideas and submitted two grant applications, which we expect to hear about in the fall. As a result, we have also established new partnerships with the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape and Casa Pueblito.

MUJER is incredibly grateful for the fundraisers that have been organized by past participants of LALFC and the Organization for Latin American Students (OLAS) and Palabra y Voz. Thanks to their efforts, we were able to provide child care and snacks for the course.

MUJER would like to extend our gratitude to all our supporters who are following us on social media, participating in our events, and offering to fundraise for us. We really appreciate all your commitment to the organization. We want to also give a big thank you to the women who have recently served on the Board: Susy Pocasangre, Magaly San Martin, and Michelle Dupuis.

This coming year MUJER's full board will participate in a strategic planning process to develop a plan to secure funding as well as revisit the organization's vision and mission to ensure that it is responsive, relevant and accountable to the Latinx communities in Toronto. With five new amazing womyn on our Board, we are excited for the year ahead and look forward to continuing to create spaces and support Latinx community members.

Carolina Rios

MUJER Board President



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Programs

Latin American/Latin@ Feminisms Course

This past April, MUJER ran the third Latin American/Latin@ Feminisms course. A group of mujeres and gender queer folks with Latin American, Afro-Latinx and Indigenous roots came together every week for 7 weeks to learn about our herstories and build community. Engaging themes of Chicana feminism, Afro-Latinx identities, trans-Latinx resistance, Indigenous women's social movements, decolonization, queering Latinidad, and the politics of self-care and self-love were on the syllabus. To cater to different learning styles, MUJER used academic texts, short videos, poetry and other creative works for participants to connect with and express themselves in different ways. Through pláticas y dialogo we arrived at a collective understanding that **WE ARE HERE / ESTAMOS AQUI** – present in the flesh as survivors of trauma, violence and oppression, but also here for one another as a community.

We were honoured to have extraordinary guest speakers: Magaly San Martin, Vannina Sztainbok, Fernanda Yanchapaxi, Silvana Bazet and Mercedes Sharpe Zayas share their knowledge with us. Their presence and stories were integral to making this course a success and are greatly appreciated.

We are very grateful to the Department of Social Justice Education at OISE, the Graduate Geography and Planning Student Society and the Organization of Latin American Students at the University of Toronto for their contributions. With their support, MUJER was able to offer this course free of cost while providing snacks and child care expenses. This increased the level of accessibility for community members to participate.

MUJER also wishes to recognize that this course was co-founded by Lorena Gajardo and Magaly San Martin in 2009 and was offered with the support of Teaching Assistants - Carolina Rios and Silvia Argentina Arauz. This year the course was organized by former students and members of MUJER's Latin American / Latin@ Feminisms Course Committee: Madelaine Cahuas, Carolina Rios, Aldeli Albán Reyna, Laura Salamanca and Mercedes Sharpe Zayas.

We are overjoyed by the wonderful response this course has received! We are in the process of creating a new Latinx Feminisms course that will be offered yearly with the support of new committee members who are dedicated to amplify Black, Indigenous and queer voices of the Latinx diaspora.

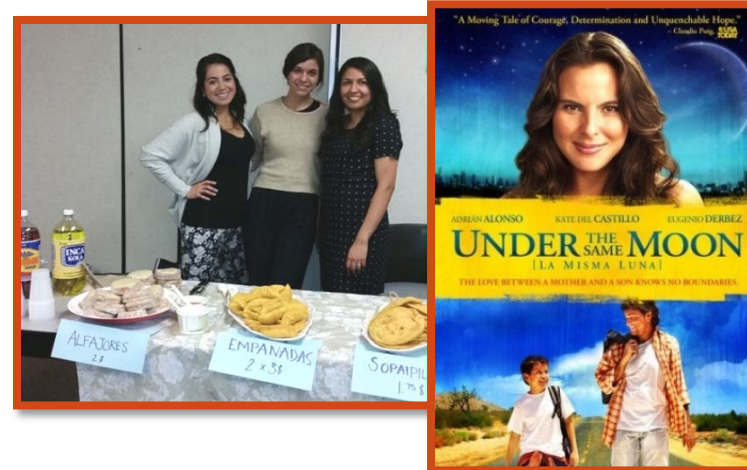
Want to learn more or get involved? Email info@mujer.ca.



Fundraisers

Bajo La Misma Luna Movie Night Fundraiser

On November 29, 2014, MUJER screened *Bajo La Misma Luna/Under the Same Moon*, which tells the story of a family across borders. Delicious alfajores, empanadas and sopapillas were sold to raise funds for MUJER's Latin American/Latin@ Feminisms course. This event was sponsored by the Department of Social Justice Education, OISE, and University of Toronto.



Organization of Latin American Students Open Mic Fundraiser for MUJER

On April 9th, 2015, our wonderful friends at the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) at the University of Toronto and Palabra y Voz hosted an Open Mic Night with all proceeds going to MUJER. Students and community members showcased their talents – from spoken word, poetry, music and dance. The response was astounding and because of their efforts, we were able to offer much needed childcare at our Latin American/Latin@ Feminisms course! Muchas gracias to OLAS and Palabra y Voz! We are excited to continue collaborating and creating positive change in our communities!



Community Engagement & Events

From Dialogue to Action – Latin American Education Network’s Third Annual Education Conference

MUJER was excited to participate in LAEN’s 3rd Annual Education Conference this past February at St. Mary’s Catholic Secondary School! Our Vice President, Madelaine Cahuas, facilitated a workshop with youth who identified critical challenges and potential solutions to creating a more equitable education system. Thank you LAEN for continuing to create these spaces for young people, families and educators in the Latin American community!



Mennonite New Life Centre’s Participatory Action Research

This past April, the Mennonite New Life Centre (MNLCC) invited MUJER to participate in a session, discussing the results of their study examining civic and political participation of Latin American Newcomers in Toronto. MUJER, Vice-President, Madelaine Cahuas, facilitated a discussion on implementing a key recommendation: The City should support the development and implementation of a Civic Education curriculum in the first language of immigrant communities. Thank you to MNLCC for inviting us to take part in this very timely discussion and for developing this much needed research!

Latinx Feminisms Book Club

Alexandra Arraiz Matute, one of MUJER's recent LALFC participants, took the initiative to start up a Latinx Feminisms Book Club in collaboration with other students and community members. The club is reading *El País Bajo Mi Piel/The Country Under My Skin* by Gioconda Belli. A striking memoir that recounts the author's personal and political lives as a wife, mother, lover and revolutionary during the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. Can't wait for the next great pick!

Dyke March

On June 27 2015, MUJER marched for the first time at a PRIDE event! In partnership with the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre / Multicultural Women Against Rape, we formed a contingent comprised of community members, including many past LALFC participants. Braving the cold rain, the contingent marched and danced to the beat of Latinx music provided by TRCC. In the words of Toronto 2015 Dyke March organizers, we were also there “to be out and proud, to take a stand, and to celebrate #DYKERVERSITY”. Participating in the Dyke March was an honour and the start of a new chapter for MUJER. We aim to continue a tradition of bringing together queer Latinx voices and presence through MUJER contingents in future Pride events. We hope you join us!

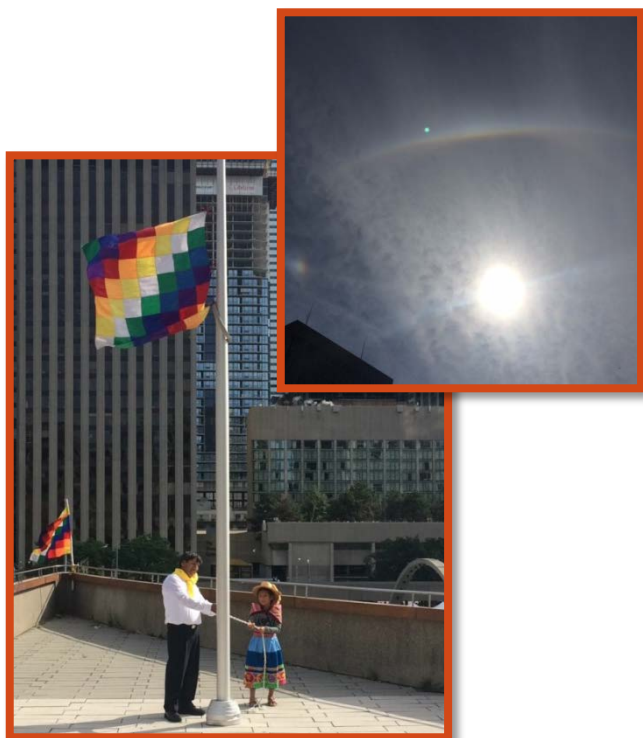


BLM Andrew Loku

On July 27, Black Lives Matter-Toronto (BLMT) organized a march and rally to demand justice for Andrew Loku and Jermaine Carby. Loku was a 45-year-old father of five from Sudan, who was shot dead inside his apartment after an interaction with Toronto Police. Carby was killed by a Peel Regional Police officer following a traffic stop in Brampton in September 2014. BLMT marched along Eglinton blocked traffic on Allen Road until late evening. The event was a powerful demonstration and demand for justice against anti-blackness racism and police brutality that received large public attention. MUJER looks forward to continuing to support BLMT events as we are committed to fighting anti-blackness racism.

All Black Lives Matter – Take Back the Night Rally and March

This year, Take Back the Night – an annual and global march to end sexual violence – organized by the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape was done in collaboration with Black Lives Matter Toronto. The theme for 2015, in response to numerous accounts of police brutality, racial violence against black people, became #ALLBLACKLIVESMATTER. In tandem with the Latin American Queer Education Project, MUJER organized a Latinx contingent to march together during the rally. The event was well planned and included theatrical performances of community approaches to deescalate situations without getting the police involved and instead work from a transformative justice framework.



Wiphala Flag Raising

On September 20, MUJER attended the Wiphala Flag Raising organized by el Consejo Andino de Naciones Originarias / Toronto Andean Council of First Nations at City Hall. The event was celebrated by traditional dances and music from Mexico, Bolivia and Peru, through honouring Indigenous languages and cultures from Abya Yala, Anahuac, and Turtle Island. As the flag was being raised, a rainbow appeared in the sky – it was truly a beautiful way to celebrate Wiphala Day!



Día De La Verdad/ Day of Truth Rally

For many years, community members have raised serious concern over the naming of Hispanic Heritage Month in Toronto. This past May, Hispanic Heritage Month was enacted into law at the Provincial level, pushed forward by MPP Cristina Martins with the backing of "Hispanic" and "Spanish-speaking" organizations. However, there have been no broad community consultations or engagement despite serious opposition from Latin American, Latinx and Indigenous community members.



As a result, the Latin American History Collective (LAHC) was formed. MUJER is proud to be one of the founding organizations of this collective along with the Latin American Education Network (LAEN) and the Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network (LACSN). LAHC demands for the immediate name change of Hispanic Heritage Month to Latin-America History Month as well as community accountability from the Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council (HCHC) and all levels of government.

On October 12th, we came together on Día De La Verdad/Day of Truth Rally at Queen's Park. We celebrate a more inclusive Abya Yala, Anahuac and Turtle Island, or what is now known as the Americas, by centering our Afro-descendent and Indigenous roots and by calling an end of all forms of colonialism.

Thank You

MUJER thanks the following individuals, organizations, groups, and funders for their generous in-kind, financial, volunteer contributions, and more! Your valuable contributions and support enables MUJER to continue our work in the community.

Remarkable Volunteers

Alexandra Arraiz Matute
Lissette Perez
Lourdes D'Uniam
Mercedes Sharpe Zayas

Community Organizations & Groups

aluCine
Black Lives Matter Toronto
Casa Pueblito
Joint Development
Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network
Latin American Education Network
Latin America History Collective
Latin American Queer Education Project
Las Perlas TV
Mennonite New Life Centre
Organization of Latin American Students at the University of Toronto (OLAS UofT)
Palabra y Voz
Pisco 1641
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape
Working Women Community Centre

