

Delegation to El Salvador

SUMMARY REPORT

A delegation of 14 members from four Faith in Action federations (ICUC, Faith in East Bay, CAN, LA VOICE), along with the Faith for Liberation team, Faith in Action's Immigration Justice Program, and a representative from Mexico participated in the COFOA Regional Assembly in San Salvador from August 10th to August 14th, 2023. The assembly brought together over 150 delegates from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and the United States, with the aim of strengthening COFOA's regional work. This included conducting political analyses, promoting public actions, and a focus on leadership development.

WHO IS COFOA?

COFOA, which stands for Comunidades de Fe Organizadas en Acción (Faith Communities Organized in Action), is the Central American affiliate of Faith in Action. COFOA's primary mission is to empower and develop people of faith at the grassroots level, enabling them to drive community-oriented initiatives addressing critical issues like property rights, access to water, access to electricity, and migration. Currently, COFOA operates in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.



ACTION OUTSIDE PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE

On August 11th, the US delegation participated in an event outside the presidential residence in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. During this gathering, more than 1,400 COFOA leaders voiced their demands for fair property rights and essential community needs. This action garnered an immediate response from the president, leading to subsequent discussions between the Salvadoran government and COFOA regarding these demands.



"My preparation is solely to **serve my neighbor**, to **work for justice** for an impoverished, humiliated, forgotten humanity and to **assert their rights** with a more equitable justice."

- **Deacon J. Trinidad Porras Lopez**, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mecca, CA, ICUC, US Delegation

KEY LEARNINGS FROM REGIONAL GATHERING


- COFOA organizers and leaders are very well versed on the fundamentals of grassroots organizing, self interest, and power. This intentional focus on the fundamentals has led to major successes as well as powerful base building.
- There is an urgency from leaders in the United States as well as in El Salvador, Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala to connect on the work that is moving locally, as well as an urgency to build bridges amongst the different countries.
- There is a need for a united political analysis amongst the different countries in the diaspora organizing with Faith in Action.



COMMITMENTS & NEXT STEPS FROM US DELEGATION:

Members of the US delegation made a commitment to share their learnings from the gathering with leaders, community members from the diaspora, as well as clergy who can support in building out the Central American diaspora work.

- **Congregation Action Network (CAN)** has built a committee with lay leaders from El Salvador, Colombia, Mexico, and Honduras to begin work around root causes of migration. They will be inviting organizers and leaders from COFOA to hold a conversation about the work being done in Central America, and further explore work with the Central American Diaspora. CAN hopes to build enough momentum around root causes to where they can engage their members of congress in large scale actions.
- **Faith in Action East Bay (FIAEB)** observed the power that was built through house meetings in El Salvador, and brought best practices to their federation. They have already begun engaging multiple new leaders through house meetings, have additional ones scheduled, and plan to continue to strengthen their base through this effective practice.
- **LA VOICE** lay leaders who attended the gathering brought organizing tools which they have begun to put into practice with their own community through 1:1s. LA VOICE worked with Faith in Action to bring COFOA organizers into the Latinx Caucus space to introduce the powerful work COFOA is doing in El Salvador.
- **Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC)** has begun working with a priest from the Salvadoran diaspora, who was excited to learn about COFOA, and will support in building a social justice ministry at his own congregation. Furthermore, the consulate from El Salvador has invited ICUC to participate and engage people from the Salvadoran diaspora in different events and gatherings in the next few months. Lastly, ICUC has also begun exploratory conversations with their Diocese to engage the Guatemalan diaspora.
- **Mexico** lay leader who attended the gathering has already held her first meeting with a group of youth to explore community organizing in Guadalajara. She has also reached out to her Archbishop to begin holding conversation around organizing opportunities.

To learn more, read  [Organizing for Power in El Salvador: A Case Study of a National Land Rights Campaign.](#)