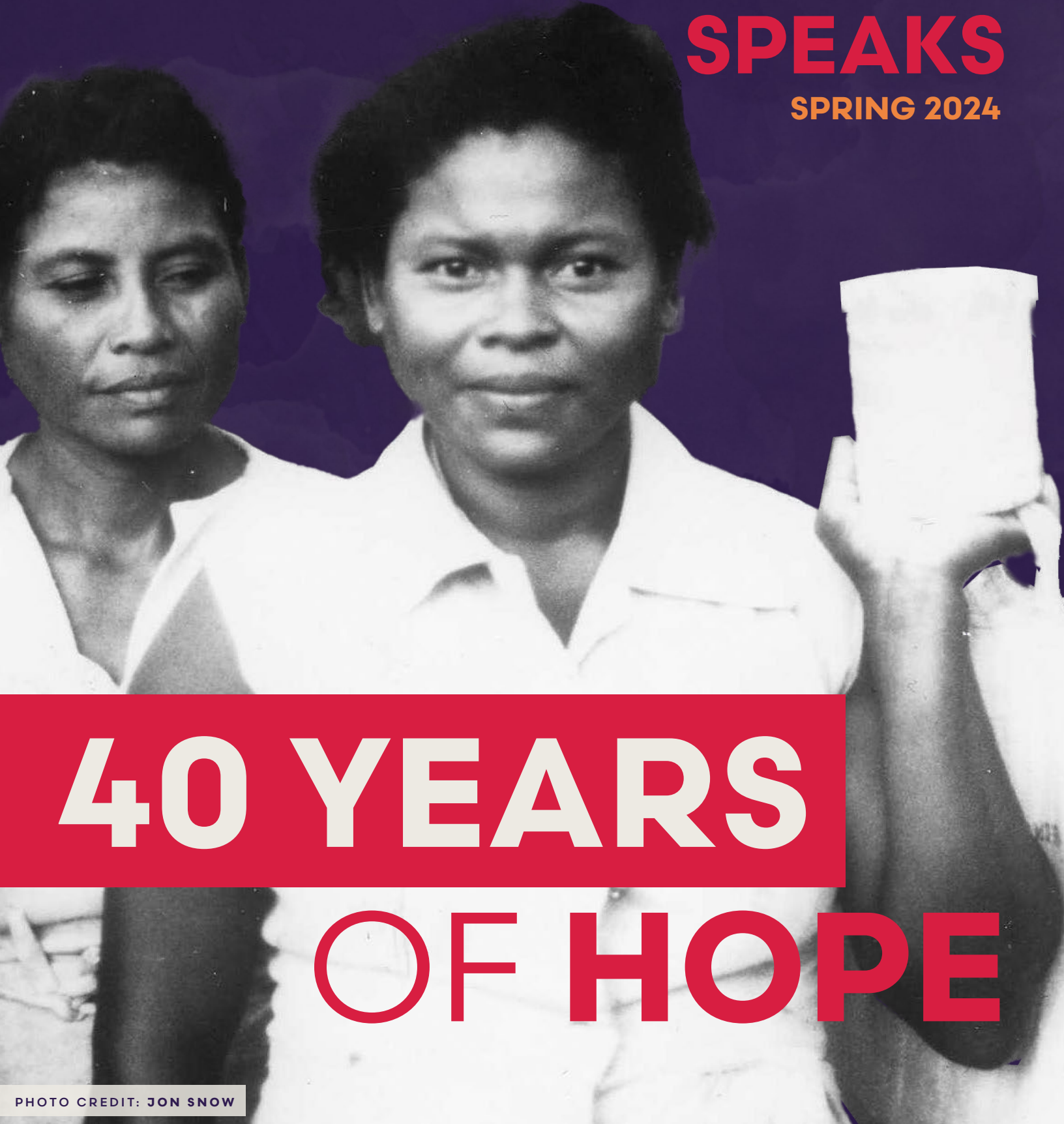


# MADRE

**SPEAKS**

SPRING 2024



**40 YEARS**

**OF HOPE**





# A BOLD BEGINNING

MADRE's beginnings are rooted in the summer of 1983, when Nicaraguan women leaders invited a group of women activists, poets, teachers, artists, and health professionals from the US to Nicaragua to witness the impact of the United States-sponsored Contra violence.

These Nicaraguan women had recently joined a lawsuit in the International Court of Justice, seeking redress for the United States' actions supporting a 10-year campaign of terror in their country.

Three of the plaintiffs agreed to come to the US to take part in the reading. One of them was Dr. Myrna Cunningham, the Minister of Health for Nicaragua's North Atlantic Coast.

But they didn't stop there. They decided to build an organization that would respond to the needs of women and families threatened by US foreign policy and give people in the United States the means to demand alternatives to unjust policies. The organization came to be known as MADRE, in honor of the Women's Committees of Nicaragua.

The US had been illegally training and funding right-wing militias, called Contras, who targeted civilians with mass killings, rape, torture, abduction, the destruction of crops and livestock, and the bombing of daycare centers, schools, hospitals, churches, community centers and homes with the aim of overthrowing Nicaragua's left-wing Sandinista government.

"After the reading," recalls Myrna, "we invited the organizers to Nicaragua. We hoped that they, in turn, would bring more women to see for themselves what their government was doing to our country. We wanted them to look into the eyes of mothers whose children had been killed by the Contras and to turn that feeling into action. We wanted them to see what we were trying to build in Nicaragua at that time. To understand the lunacy of their government's claim that our Revolution was a threat to the United States. Most of all, we wanted them to go home and organize other women. We believed that if women in the US truly understood the misery that their government was causing, they would demand change. And we were right."

MADRE's Founding Director, Kathy Engel, and the women she brought together, had a vision of a unique women-led international human rights organization, dedicated to informing people in the US about the effects of US policies on communities around the world. MADRE resolved to build real alternatives to war and violence by supporting the priorities of our grassroots partners and linking them to the concerns of women and families in the US through a people-to-people exchange of direct relief and on the ground insights and information.

The plaintiffs' testimonies were so moving that Kathy Engel, a young poet-activist in the United States, decided to produce a dramatic reading based on the trial transcript. At the time, Nicaragua was not in US headlines, despite the Contras killing people almost daily and the US covertly mining Nicaragua's harbors.

These women organizers returned to the US with that mandate and set out to bring the stories of Nicaraguan women and children to the attention of the US public and mobilize people to demand a change in US government policy.

"We hoped that the reading would bring public attention to what the United States was doing in Nicaragua," said Kathy.

Thanks to the generous support of our community, MADRE has made that commitment a reality and grown a global network of activists building peace.

**Building movements has been the most successful thing. We give each other strength and we give each other hope.**

**We are not alone.**

LUCY MULENKEI  
KENYA

PICTURED ABOVE AT RIGHT

In just a few words, MADRE partner Lucy Mulenkei, the executive director of the Indigenous Information Network in Kenya, distilled the essence of MADRE's vision — and the reason we can celebrate four decades of building lasting change.

For 40 years, MADRE has established trust-based relationships in countries from Nicaragua to Nepal, building meaningful partnerships with the women and girls organizing their communities, and connecting these leaders to the resources, tools, and decision-makers to amplify their efforts to challenge violence and inequality.

We've connected grassroots leaders and changemakers across the globe and have grown dynamic movements poised to meet this moment to deliver sustainable gender, racial, climate, and disability justice.

Together, we foster a world rooted in our feminist values, where women and girls, and other marginalized groups, fully participate in shaping policies and decision making, their expertise and leadership is recognized and upheld, and they equitably hold power and resources within their communities.



# 40+ COUNTRIES IN 40 YEARS

In the years since that trip to Nicaragua, MADRE has continued its mandate to oppose US militarism and advance gender justice. We also work with local leaders to address the fallout of conflict and build sustained peace.

In Yemen, we're supporting the grassroots group Food for Humanity to meet urgent needs in the midst of a brutal civil war fueled by US foreign policy. With funds provided by MADRE, Food for Humanity has built water stations and equipped community organizers and health workers to carry out their urgent rapid response work.

The women and girls of Food for Humanity have also emerged as drivers of long-term peace — mediating between armed groups, securing the release of prisoners, and negotiating peace agreements. Finally, through partnership with MADRE, they're making that expertise heard internationally, advocating for an inclusive peace process in Yemen and improved delivery of humanitarian aid.

MADRE has also gone far beyond its original mission of resisting militarism — we've built relationships with grassroots organizations in more than 40 countries, advancing the leadership of women and girls, LGBTQIA+ people, Afro-descendent and Indigenous communities, disabled people, and other marginalized groups to foster lasting justice and the respect of human rights.

When Indigenous people in Guatemala were displaced by hydroelectric dams, losing their homes with no compensation, MADRE worked with our partner MUIXIL to organize women in the community to confront the extractive industry. We convened multiple communities facing similar challenges to create alliances, share strategies and organizing models, and access policy spaces to demand recourse. To make sure Indigenous communities are represented in decisions like these before they're made, MADRE and MUIXIL are providing training and support for women to run for political office and participate fully in the political system.

Thanks to support like yours, over the years, MADRE has provided over \$69 million dollars of grantmaking and in-kind support to our partner organizations. We've advanced local efforts in Myanmar, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Haiti, Cuba, Colombia, Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, India, Kenya, Bolivia, the countries of former Yugoslavia, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Brazil, Syria, Sudan, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Nepal, Korea, Philippines, the US-Mexico border, Ukraine, Yemen, and beyond.

## MADRE Now

Today, MADRE is a feminist organization and fund deeply embedded in the movements for women's equality, peace and justice and international human rights. We pursue a holistic approach to change, integrating grantmaking, capacity bridging, and advocacy to achieve gender, racial, climate, and disability justice. Through our partnerships, women around the world rebuild their lives and communities and bring their voices to the halls of power — from village councils to the UN Security Council.

With our supporters and partners, MADRE is building for the next 40 years and beyond.

