

**REPORT ON  
LIVING COURAGE EASTERN TOUR AND TRC, JUNE 5-25, 2012  
WOMEN OF COURAGE PROGRAM –**

The 2012 Living Courage Tour brought two KAIROS international partners to Canada in an inspirational advocacy experience that impacted the KAIROS network, civil society partners, and the general public.

**I The Partners**

The Tour took place June 5-25, 2012 and featured two courageous women human rights defenders:

- **Claudia Castellanos Roncancio**, a human rights lawyer and advocate from the Popular Feminist Organization (OFP) in Colombia, and
- **Lucy Talgieh**, the Women’s Project Coordinator at Wi’am: Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center in Bethlehem, Occupied Palestinian Territories

*“We must lose the fear that we have learned in our daily lives in our societies. It is a fear which not only takes away our capacity to think, but also to take action. Fear stops us from asking what is happening to people beyond the doors of our houses. Perhaps to ask ourselves these questions means that we must sacrifice a little bit of our own comfort and tranquility. But as humans, we are all made the same, we have the same origin. This makes us equal and we all deserve the same rights. Not asking ourselves these questions will slowly but surely lead us to disaster.”*

**Claudia Castenallos Roncancio**

These women spoke to Canadians about issues of gender based violence, conflict, militarization and colonization as well as about their experiences as human rights defenders and their roles in building peace in their communities and beyond. In several events, Claudia and Lucy shared the panel with local speakers including First Nation elders, activists and academics, representatives from community women’s groups, solidarity groups and members of local KAIROS committees.



Claudia engages with Mi'kmaq Elder Billy Lewis and other attendees after Halifax public event

Throughout the tour KAIROS looked for opportunities to strengthen the connection between our global partners and women human rights defenders in Canada. Lucy and Claudia also linked the personal with the political. They used the advocacy work and projects of their respective organisations to unite a wider analysis of the impact of military and paramilitary violence with the more personal stories of women facing violence in the home, in the streets,

*Our belief in God does not mean that we passively depend on him, that we admire him from afar and sit at home as if our work were done. No, we must work with God to end injustice and oppression of our people. In other words, I believe in faith in action. Faith without action will not satisfy others or me. We do not want simply sympathy, we need action. As Christians, we must all be involved. We are one body. When one organ suffers, the whole body suffers. We must all work as Christians to end the oppression that afflicts our region. We are not asking you to be pro-Palestinian or pro Israeli, but pro-humanity.*

**Lucy Talgieh, from Sermon at Gower St United Church**

and as a response to their work.

## II The Events, Audience and Outreach

Claudia and Lucy visited communities in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Ontario and Saskatchewan. In Nova Scotia they spoke at public events in Halifax, Antigonish and Bridgewater. In Newfoundland they stopped in Corner Brook, South Brook, and St John's. During this Eastern part of the tour, they spoke at a total of **14 events** in **6 communities**, reaching approximately **650 people** between 5 - 19 June.

In Saskatchewan, following a public forum, they attended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) National Event in Saskatoon between 20 - 24 June. The TRC provides Indigenous peoples in Canada with an opportunity to speak about the impact and legacy of the Indian Residential Schools system. For global partners who have called on Canadians to witness and participate in truth,

reconciliation and justice hearings and tribunals in their own countries, this was an opportunity to reciprocate by providing witness and accompaniment to a truth and reconciliation process here in Canada. Through engagement with TRC participants partners were able to reach out to approximately **350 people** – including Indigenous partners, elders, and activists.

### Community outreach

For this tour, KAIROS deliberately chose communities that do not usually host international partners. In fact, for half the locations this was the first time a KAIROS partner had visited. One of these was South Brook, a tiny community of 500. Remarkably, 70 people came out to the public event. The warm



**Lucy and Claudia in front of the KAIROS display at the TRC in Saskatoon**

reception, engagement and level of participation and commitment at these events reinforced the importance of organizing events in small communities.

KAIROS looked for opportunities to connect our partners with local **First Nation communities and activists**. In Halifax, a meeting with the KAIROS network and local activists was held at the **Native Friendship Centre**. For some, it was their first visit to the Centre. During the meeting we learned that earlier that day federal funding had been cut to vital youth programs at Friendship centres across Canada. By the end of the meeting, there was a commitment to collaborate on actions related to these cuts.

*For me a woman of courage is a woman who is capable of feeling for others, someone who is not only sensitive to the realities of others, but also takes action to change those realities. A woman of courage controls and overcomes fear. She is a woman who hangs on to happiness and life, a woman capable of using happiness as source of energy to defend and protect her rights, the rights of her family and the rights of the entire community. A woman of courage is capable of going beyond the doors of her house and the domestic sphere to engage with the community.*

*Claudia Castenallos Roncancio*

At a public forum in Saskatoon with a much higher than anticipated turnout, the partners worked with Penelakut elder Jill Harris to draw the links between spirituality, human rights, and gender rights. Partners participated in a powwow that marked National Aboriginal Day and the opening of the TRC, in which over 300 people participated. Lucy and Claudia accompanied Jill Harris, a Penelakut elder and member of the KAIROS dignity and right circle, in a dance. Jill has been active in the Women of Courage program, having participated in the Colombia delegation and the Living Courage western tour. At the powwow partners were named and introduced to the crowd.

KAIROS also sought meetings with local **women's groups and organizations**. In Antigonish Lucy and Claudia met at the women's resource centre. Afterwards, a representative of the centre spoke at the public event. Representatives from local women's groups also participated in public events in Halifax, Corner Brook and St John's. Following the tour, KAIROS received a letter from the Status of Women, Newfoundland thanking KAIROS for bringing the Living Courage tour to Newfoundland.

We also explored opportunities for partners to speak in **churches**. In St. John's Newfoundland, Lucy delivered a powerful sermon at the Gower Street United Church. Her sermon can be found at <http://kairoscanada.org/blogs/?p=1702>

### III Documenting the tour

In addition to those who were able to attend events, blogs and media coverage allowed our partners' message to reach a significant number of people.

*Women are most impacted by violence. They are also most effective in changing a culture of violence to one of non-violence at the level of the family and the community. At Wi'am we equip women with peace building skills by raising their self esteem – changing women from passive to active in the process of building peace.*

**Lucy Talgieh**

We also invite and welcome your reflections and evaluation of the tour. Please send them to Rachel Warden at [rwarden@kairoscanada.org](mailto:rwarden@kairoscanada.org)

**The blog:** During the tour, staff, local KAIROS representatives, partners and participants share their reflections and experiences. You can find the blog at <http://kairoscanada.org/blogs/?cat=90>

**Media** - The tour was covered by local and church media including:

South Shore Now

[http://southshorenow.ca/archives/2012/062712/news/020\\_KAIROS\\_Living\\_in\\_Courage\\_Tour\\_comes\\_to\\_Bridgewater.html.html](http://southshorenow.ca/archives/2012/062712/news/020_KAIROS_Living_in_Courage_Tour_comes_to_Bridgewater.html.html)

Halifax Media Coop: <http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/%E2%80%9C-strength-heritage-i-carry%E2%80%9D/11208>

The Norwester-<http://www.thenorwester.ca/News/2012-06-21/article-3014321/Women-of-Courage/1>

The Anglican Journal- <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/nc/other/news-items/archive/2012/06/article/kairos-tour-for-womens-rights-10924//abp/167.html>

CJWW Radio- [http://www.saskatoonhomepage.ca/living-courage-tour-stops-in-saskatoon/itemid\\_21](http://www.saskatoonhomepage.ca/living-courage-tour-stops-in-saskatoon/itemid_21)

**The slideshow** – There are hundreds of wonderful photos from the tour, including some taken by local organizers. The best were selected for the slide show on our website - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kairoscanada/sets/72157630496913442/show/>

**Video interviews** – Powerful interviews with Lucy and Claudia that explore their work, messages, and the sources of their courage were recorded. We will post excerpts from these interviews on the website, and will look for ways to use them in a longer documentary on the Women of Courage program.

#### **IV Follow up and action**

Through the tour we hope to inspire an ongoing, active and diverse movement of people dedicated to supporting the work of women of courage, and to making connections with women human rights defenders here in Canada. We have invited those who participated in the tour to be a part of the follow-up and ongoing work of the Women of Courage program in the following ways:



Lucy preaching at Gower Street United Church, St John's Nfld

**Advocacy** - An important part of our work is bringing policy recommendations to the Government of Canada on how to address violence against women, reduce the gap between impunity and justice when it comes to women's rights, and promote women's role in peace building. Some of these recommendations can be found on our site. <http://www.kairoscanada.org/women-of-courage/>

**Internationally** - Recently, KAIROS joined human rights and women's organizations and partners from around the world in endorsing the **International Campaign to Stop Rape and Gender Violence in Conflict**. This campaign calls on the Government of Canada to act immediately to prevent rape in conflict, to protect civilians and rape survivors, and to advocate for justice by calling for effective prosecution of those responsible. In June, the House of Commons unanimously supported a motion condemning gender violence and rape in conflict. The motion included a reaffirmation of Canada's commitment to implement United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Now we must work with our network and allies to build political will and ensure the implementation of this motion.

**In Canada**, we work with Indigenous partners in calling on the government to address the disproportionate violence facing First Nations, Inuit and Métis women as well as the ongoing impunity surrounding many of the cases of the more than 600 Indigenous women who have been killed or disappeared in the last 10 years. In terms of concrete action we are asking people to promote and attend the Sisters in Spirit events, including vigils and walks that raise awareness about violence against Indigenous women and

girls. Information about upcoming events in October can be found on the KAIROS website under Indigenous rights.

As further follow up and as part of the KAIROS education for action campaign, we are urging people to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings and related events, to raise public awareness of the TRC's work (especially in churches and schools), and to support policies and programs that recognize and address the multi-generational impact of the residential schools, including the links with violence against women.

### **Participate in the KAIROS InterGenerational Gathering (IGG)**

This year KAIROS is organizing an InterGenerational Gathering (IGG) for Eastern Canada (the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, and Ontario) in Cornwall ON, October 19-21. The gathering will foster dialogue across generations and denominations with a strong focus on movement building. It will be an opportunity to continue the dialogue and strengthen the connections made in the Women of Courage program. The exciting and diverse line-up of plenary speakers and workshop leaders includes **Cindy Blackstock**, Executive Director of the *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada*. We are urging those who participated in and supported the tour to attend the InterGenerational gathering. Please check our website for more information on how to register. <http://www.kairoscanada.org/get-involved/igg12/>

## **V Looking Forward: An End to Impunity**

The Living Courage Tour was part of the **KAIROS Women of Courage program**, which focuses on the critical role of women in resolving armed conflict and systemic violence. At the same time, we ask why women are so often the victims of violence, and why they are so often cut out of possible solutions. A key objective of the program is to connect Southern, Indigenous and migrant women to share analysis, strategies, and strengths

As KAIROS plans the future stages of the **Women of Courage program**, we are driven by our desire to **end impunity**. The partnerships strengthened during the past three years will form the foundation for coordinated advocacy to overcome violence against women in Canada and the Global South. We will continue advocating for the implementation of existing human rights and legal frameworks that – if enacted – have the potential to hold perpetrators accountable.

KAIROS is inspired by the traction the **Women of Courage program** has achieved at the grassroots level in Canada, as demonstrated by the levels of engagement and participation with the 2012 Living Courage Tour. Through ongoing generous donation from unions (CAW, OPSEU, PSAC), member churches and individual supporters we will continue to enhance women's leadership and participation at all levels of the peace-

building process. In so doing, we are paving the road to overcoming violence against women and ending impunity for perpetrators – from Bukavu to Bogotá.

### **Building Bridges: International Witness & Transformative Partnerships**

Our Women of Courage partners in Canada and in the Global South face many shared challenges: militarization, corruption, impunity for human rights violators, intimidation, inequality, racism, sexism.

And yet, our partners continue to organize, to respond to needs in their communities and to conceive alternative ways of living in justice and peace. We are blessed to continually learn from the resilience and creativity of our partners. As an organization, KAIROS works to ensure there are means and places for these diverse partners to connect and share.

From 2010 to the present, the Women of Courage program has included multiple delegations, tours and exchanges designed to build bridges and create spaces for social movements to come together.

As part of the 2012 Living Courage Tour, our partners from Colombia and Palestine participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) National Event in Saskatoon. This event was a significant one in the TRC's journey to tell the truth about the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system and its pervasive and continuing impact on Indigenous communities.

Claudia and Lucy were welcomed at the TRC as international witnesses who were present to hear the stories of survivors and subsequent generations. This opportunity to witness shared struggles and hopes among Indigenous communities in Canada builds solidarity and networks on a global level.

Through sustained and intentional bridge building, KAIROS is generating an international web of social movements who can share strategies, amplify the calls for justice and collaborate across borders.