

# Preparatory Workshops for the 4th Congress of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) SYSTEMATIZATION DOCUMENT

April 12 to 15, 2021



WITH THE SUPPORT OF:

FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG

FES SINDICAL



Organización  
Internacional  
del Trabajo

# Trade Union Confederation of Workers of the Americas - CSA

## Secretariat CSA

Fred Redmond - **President**

Francisca Jiménez - **Deputy President**

Toni Moore - **Deputy President**

Rafael Freire Neto - **General secretary**

Cícero Pereira da Silva - **Secretary for Trade Union Policy and Education**

Jordania Ureña Lora - **Secretary of Social Policies**

Bárbara Figueroa - **Secretary of Sustainable Development**

## Content and Writing

Danilo Urrea

## Style correction

Equipo CSA

## Translation

Victoria Brown

## Graphic design and layout

Gervasio Della Ratta

**This publication was produced with the support of** the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and its content is the sole responsibility of the CSA.



# GENDER WORKSHOP

12 april

## Gender Perspective and Justice: Where is the trade union movement heading?

As stated in the Resolution of the 4th Congress, “the TUCA is getting ready for a period of intense political, social and economic complexity in the Americas, rooted on the strength and mobilization and combating capacity of our affiliates, with a trade union political formula based on the actualization of the Development Platform of the Americas and fortified by the deliberations and determinations of the 4th Congress”<sup>1</sup>.

The approach the gender perspective and justice is of utmost importance to in the formulation of a strategic plan for the period, which responds to the current challenges of the context for trade unionism of the Americas to fight for a sustainable development program, with social and environmental justice, in which gender justice plays a central role.

In the period of multiple tensions and instability analyzed by the Resolution of the 4th Congress, recent crises have unprecedented facets for women. The Covid-19 pandemic generated by neoliberalism undermines women through the exploitation of their bodies and their workforce. Reactionary forces are taking advantage of the instability for structural attacks, such as the discrimination and threats produced by the anti-abortion laws in countries like Brazil, which favor the hegemony of neoliberal and conservative policies.

The present times are characterized by the advance of the right, fundamentalist, conservative, military, business religious groups, governments that have joined



forces to control political systems, as well as women's bodies and work. In recent years there have been coups d'état in Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Honduras and Haiti). There are new political and legal frameworks to attack peoples' rights and to control the commons based on the neoliberal project, and put an end to the transformation processes achieved in recent years.

Fully addressing the gender issue, the TUCA relies on fundamental analyses, elaborations and lessons learned nourished by women's struggles and the feminist movement in recent years, in which women have been the most dynamic political subject.

---

1. Final Resolution of the 4th Congress of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA).

2. Ibid.

**“ Their demands and slogans for political, sexual and reproductive rights, against violence, the patriarchal culture and inequality in all its forms, multiplied and replicated in all social strata and generations, and expanded regionally and globally, energized by social networks and cyber-activism” <sup>2</sup>.**

The pandemic has exacerbated structural problems for women in relation to domestic violence, the rise of informal and precarious conditions for women workers, as well as the multiplication of care jobs, which must be performed by women, exacerbating their workloads and taking away the possibility of partaking in the political spaces conquered by women's historical struggle.

As presented in the Workshop, as of 2019 the situation of women has worsened. ECLAC points out that improvements in women's living conditions, as well as in women's labor rights, have been put on hold.

A recent ILO publication on how women are left behind in the quest for decent working conditions, notes:

- 1.** The loss of jobs for women is greater than for men: 64 million women have been left jobless.
- 2.** Unpaid care work is a structural obstacle to women's participation in the labor market and at all levels. During lockdowns, women's work became mainly remote work.
- 3.** Women have fewer opportunities than men to work formally, they work mostly in the informal sector and without social protection or protection mechanisms against dismissals.
- 4.** An increasing percentage of young women interrupted their educational cycle.
- 5.** The pandemic revealed the fundamental nature of health services, which are performed mainly by women. They work in precarious conditions with poorly paid jobs, long hours and structural stress.





**Consequently, domestic work is not visible and, therefore, is not recognized. Our vision is a society that aims at the reproduction of life, not the exploitation of labor. This struggle for the visibility of reproductive or domestic work dates from the post-war period. However, after the Covid-19 pandemic, women, who had accessed public, salaried and visible spaces, are on the verge of losing these spaces as we have been, and will continue to be, frontline workers (doctors, nurses, cleaning, etc.), and will also be the first leaving said salaried positions and, if that does not happen, will have to multi-task (workers, caregivers, healers, etc.)”<sup>3</sup>.**

At present There is currently a care crisis and the violation of women's rights and the fundamental rights of the working class ends up being justified under the guise of arguments appealing to the economic crisis resulting from the global health crisis. There is a very strong increase in capitalist accumulation, with new strategies and technologies, but it should be noted that, before the pandemic, rights were already in patent decline.

Despite the difficulties and this obscure scenario, women continue to appeal to their resistance and tenacity at the time of facing adversity. In Brazil, for example, common caregiving resources have been organized and managed collectively. Women are fighting for daily survival, not only with their families, but with collective organizational experiences. This is essential to maintain some degree of women's autonomy. Women have to face the lack of services in popular arrangements and are managing community kitchens to support food, supply and access to water.

Also in Brazil 50% of women began to take care of another person during the pandemic, number which rose to 62% with women's unpaid work. Their economy deteriorates and every day survival becomes more complex. Women have experienced a work overload during the pandemic, not just in the household as women are frontline workers in the fight against Covid-19.

The production and consumption model is structured as though nobody was going to get sick and have nothing else to do but produce for accumulation purposes. This model disregards the domestic care work traditionally carried out by women, also disregarding that this work helps to sustain the capitalist, patriarchal and racist society at the expense of the exploitation of women's bodies and work.

Black women are overexploited, they were the majority working in informal jobs which they lost, so they cannot meet the food

---

3. Ibid.

needs of children's who also have no open schools to go to. It is difficult to achieve autonomy and fight when you are hungry. The care crisis reveals the fragility of this model's organization that does not take into account the nature or sustainability of hu-

man life. The growing inequality is not only social and has increased violence against children and women. This is a huge problem for the construction of autonomy, equality, because violence is a mechanism to subordinate women.



**To the extent that current adjustment policies, wage reduction and public spending shift the responsibility of the crisis to the population, women's work intensifies dramatically due to the rise in precarious paid work, as well as the reproductive work that ensures living conditions. This situation is reinforced by a scenario of privatization and dispossession of rights that hinder access to basic health, education, water or energy services. Thus, during crises, women's time continues to be used as the main adjustment variable.”<sup>4</sup>**

The above shows that so far, in the dialogue between the main precepts of the TUCA described in the Final Resolution of the 4th Congress and the interventions of the sisters invited as panelists to the Gender Workshop, a common denominator of the construction of gender justice is care work.

A concrete experience in this regard was developed in Uruguay by the government of the Frente Amplio, which created the National Care System (SNC) with the participation of the PIT-CNT and various government agencies. The SNC was created to assist low-income households to support the care of children from 0 to 3 years of age and people over 65 with some sort of physical and/or mental impairment, and also for retirees to access care. Unfortunately, with the current neoliberal government in the country, the SNC continues to meet but no substantial progress or tangible solutions

have been achieved in the face of the challenges of the pandemic. This example shows that the difficulties related to care depend on the political stance of governments and the reactionary and conservative vision of the neoliberal model.

Poverty has a woman's face in this pandemic. The already existing differences in this male chauvinist and patriarchal society have been exacerbated. In the world today, women are caring for children and adults, while teleworking. Women are dedicated to caring for the family and their children because schools are not active. They have had to accept salary reductions with teleworking, and have had to work in the same family environment and space.

---

4. Ibid.





Care work must be recognized as a component of social protection and ensure equitable right to care and be cared for. Public investments in infrastructure, social protection and care services are essential to close gender gaps in the labor market. Therefore, and in accordance with Resolution 4 of the 4th ITUC Congress (2018), the TUCA is committed to supporting affiliated organizations to improve the situation of women in the workplace, calling for investment in quality public services for child care, the elderly, people with disabilities or dependents.”<sup>5</sup>

The elements indicated so far in this document on the results of the Workshop held on April 12, show the profound inequalities faced by women in a context of historical injustice, exacerbated by the global health crisis resulting from neoliberalism and the COVID-19 pandemic it has generated. Simultaneously, we have presented the fundamentals of the TUCA to address these issues based on analytical reflection and the construction of solutions and proposals made by organizations and social movements of the Americas and various parts of the world through their ongoing dialogue with the TUCA and which nurture its theoretical-practical constructions, also enshrined in tools such as the PLADA.

It is also relevant to underscore the TUCA's efforts to advance towards gender equality, as stated by Rafael Freire “Victory organizes, defeat does not. We have victories in the participation of women in the TUCA and we must communicate them to the federations to show that it is possible. We need consistency between the theory and the practice of our discourse. How do we achieve that in our federations, in our structures?”

The TUCA considers that gender equity is a major challenge for trade unions and affiliated federations. *“Reverting to the historical inequalities between men and women, particularly manifest in the world of work, also requires advancing towards parity in the leadership and representation of trade union organizations [...] As part of the agreements reached at TUCA Congresses, the results of the 2019 Women's Conference and what was approved at the Continental Conference on Self-Reform, gender parity (50% women) needs to be promoted in the different bodies of trade union structures and, in particular leadership structures, promoting self-reform through grassroots bodies and spheres.”*<sup>6</sup>

---

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.





## Core aspects of the interventions of Workshop participants.

Women who are part of the trade union movement emphasized the need for a stronger approach to the gender issue, taking into account that the pandemic has compounded the issue suffered by women throughout history. Co-responsibility in the family environment needs to be addressed as a core issue of the ongoing quest for women's autonomy. Self-care is a necessary condition to be able to take care of others, and can be approached as part of the theoretical-practical construction of the trade union movement.

Access to communication, connectivity, is also affecting women and their possibilities of decent work. It is necessary to assess the different possibilities of communication, access to tools, preparation for teleworking, etc.

Unfortunately, violence against women in the region, as noted above, is increasing dramatically. According to the World Bank (WB), Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most violent region in sexual matters in the world. In the first months of lockdown, violence against women increased by

223%. In Colombia, every 25 minutes a woman is victim of sexual violence. So... the answer to the question 'where are we going as trade union movement?' involves continuing the construction of actions to dismantle the sexual division of labor and the execution of campaigns against sexual violence.

However, it is not only Latin America and the Caribbean that suffer of brutality against women in various ways, there are similarities in other countries (for example Canada) in terms of structural discrimination. A very high number of femicides (8) occurred in a few weeks in Quebec. Violence against women in the conjugal context has increased as well. Lockdowns increase violence. There is a housing crisis, the costs are very high and, as wages are very low, it is very difficult to access housing, which leads to living in isolation, in situations that lead to death. There are major problems of violence. Men must also fight against violence and inequalities, because in many cases they are culprits or accomplices.

Regarding the possibility of men's participation in the Gender Workshop, we underscore its great importance as the issue of discrimination, inequality, violence, etc. against women is not for women to solve. Dismantling patriarchy and working for gender justice implies the commitment of men in the union organization, as well as in family settings, fundamentally with regard to the equitable distribution of care work. It is important to insist on the construction of Care Systems at national level, based on an inter-institutional approach.

**Workshop participants expressed the relevance of a three-pronged approach to their work for the future:**

- 1.** Within the trade union movement, behavioral changes in the management of verbal expressions towards women unionists. Appreciation of women's work and their participation in the trade union movement. It is a major challenge for men and women.
- 2.** At the national and regional institutional level, the formulation of specific public policies for gender justice and with budget allocation for their implementation.
- 3.** Addressing violence and femicides with concrete actions, based on a constructive dialogue between social movements and government entities, with an institutional framework that must assume its role in the Social State of Law and guarantee women's right to life, with dignity.



# Recommendations and Elements of the Discussion

As expressed in the Final Resolution of the 4th Congress, and reiterated in the sections of this systematization in the core postulates of the TUCA regarding gender, there is widespread political will to work together for women to achieve fair conditions, together with global and regional political tools to address the structural causes of gender violence and the widening gender gaps exacerbated by the pandemic, and the historical continuum of the male chauvinist and patriarchal society.

A gender policy approach is a priority at the level of trade unions, and political negotiation and effective social dialogue are areas par excellence to address the gender wage gap and to guarantee women's participation in areas of political representation.

**Among the recommendations and needs expressed in the Workshop, the following are noteworthy:**

- ▶ It is urgent to promote a campaign to implement Resolutions 190 and 206.
- ▶ Efforts must be made to ensure a balance between women's personal life and work life, taking into account that they carry the burden of care work, and we must work hard to protect women from workplace harassment.
- ▶ Job need to be recovered for women based on the construction of a comprehensive and consistent set of measures that underpins the insertion of women in decent employment.
- ▶ A formalization process is required to address the needs of domestic and informal workers, and attack the restrictions women face for their insertion in the labor market.
- ▶ It is a priority to develop labor programs focusing on women through the formulation of labor policies emphasizing production.
- ▶ The region is experiencing a major technological lag. There is limited connectivity and mismatches between the qualifications required and workers' possibilities. It is important to en-

sure access to new technologies and digital training programs, and the expansion of the range of employment for women, taking into account the new challenges of digital implementation.

► Important policy recommendations on promoting decent work in a changing landscape will be presented at the next ILO conference, to be held virtually in June. Inclusive policies with a gender perspective must be developed to address the crisis. The countries must make equal opportunities and treatment between men and women a reality, taking into account conventions 100 and 111 on remuneration and salary.

► We need a project that recognizes the relationships supporting the work and reorganizes the processes. Networks are built based on community, collective concepts. People are already contributing their experience and alternative proposals to another model does not involve oppression and advances towards autonomy. Other ways of recomposing and caring for life are arising, based on overcoming the dichotomy between production and reproduction that is fostered by capitalism. The sustainability of life, the self-determination of bodies and territories, the self-determination of Afro-descendants, changing the way of producing and reproducing life are fundamental.

► We must work together in the trade union movement and allied with other sectors and social movements to achieve justice systems that do not reinforce oppression, that do not attack sexual diversity, that consider that we are sovereign peoples and that defend the democracy against neoliberalism is destroying in Latin America.

► Public services are needed for social reproduction. The States must strengthen the values of self-management and of solidarity economy so that women may strengthen their economic systems.

► It is imperative to reduce and confront the power of transnational corporations over bodies and lives, i.e. the power that impedes autonomy. It is necessary to face the financialization of life and strengthen the real economy in harmony with nature. The sustainability of life must be at the center of politics and must confront racism.

► For people to be autonomous, it is essential for the sustainability of life to be at the center of politics. The trade union movement must reach the poorest sectors of the population, with women domestic workers. More than a million women domestic workers were unemployed during the pandemic.

► A fundamental issue for trade unionism is to address the sexual division of labor. It is important for the strength of the trade union movement to help stop all criminalization and see this project in its entirety, not separating the structural aspects. All the issues: the issue of housework, abortion, etc., are women's issues and issues of the working class. They are challenges for the working class as a whole, therefore, workers' issues must be addressed jointly.





► It is important to seek the empowerment of women advancing towards the shared responsibility of family work. It is necessary to include this sort of clauses into collective bargaining. Caring is not solely a task for women; women are part of a society that needs to take care of itself, that has single-parent households with women heads of family, but this does not mean women must perform all the care tasks.

► A basic aspect for the transformations is training: the importance of political training in trade union settings for clear understanding of the co-responsibility of care. Men have the capacities for this, but do not want to leave their comfort zone. The flag of care must now be carried by men, women have carried it for centuries. Women give care and work as of the moment they are born. When speaking of equality, equity and advancement of the global trade union movement, the flag of care must be carried by men, in concrete practice and not just as a mere discursive element.

► It is important to insist on the construction of Care Systems at national level, based on an inter-institutional approach and the formulation of public policies to sustain said systems.

► In the current situation, it is essential to build a comprehensive strategy to strengthen women in all production

chains. A strategy that includes training and communication as central bulwarks, building new capacities, with a unitary construction at the level of the trade union movement, between men and women.

► Trade unionism must continue analyzing and dismantling the sexual division of labor. Discussions on working hours are substantial. Capitalism demands an amount of time that women cannot possibly manage. The issue of amount of time is central: people must demand working hours bearing in mind the proper production and reproduction of life.

► Trade union federations must advance towards their concrete declaration as feminist organizations.

► Federations must demand care work to become a component of the countries' GDP, and be recognized as real work.



# **SOCIAL PROTECTION WORKSHOP**

**April 13, 2021**

## Trade union strategy on reforms to social security systems based on the future of work

According to the TUCA, *“regressive policies are the result of pressure from international financial institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the World Bank (WB) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD). Once the pandemic began, these institutions continued to operate as instruments of action for international finance capital, representing those interests in the territories. These organizations renewed their presence in the continent hand-in-hand with those who impose and support conservative economic programs that are already underway. In 2020 the new cycle of foreign debt of the countries of the region was exacerbated, strongly conditioning the sovereign decisions of democratic governments as the destination of the funds obtained clearly shows, which were mainly used to bailout the business sector, and not necessarily to meet the true needs of their population”*<sup>7</sup>. These impositions act against ILO guidelines in crucial aspects, such as social protection and social security, aggravating the impacts and consequences on workers.

**The TUCA reaffirms its commitment to defend social security and occupational health as human rights and strategic elements of decent work.**

Based on the reaffirmation of this commitment, the TUCA advocates for a universal, supportive, public, non-discriminatory, inclusive, comprehensive and redistributive social security model under the responsibility of the State, in order to guarantee that protection is delivered to all people and build on a binding participation of workers in the creation and strict implementation of this model.



7. Ibid.





**The TUCA rejects any proposal to privatize social security in the region. Social security and pension systems based on individual capitalization reproduce and enhance existing inequalities in the labor market, and have been shown to impoverish workers of retirement age. Today, informal, temporary or discontinuous workers are not able to integrate a system and remain in it. In addition to this, the work trajectories of women affected by non-shared care responsibilities, unemployment or wage gaps, have a considerable impact on the density of their contributions. Distribution systems based on solidarity and redistributive, contributory and non-contributory mechanisms are an instrument to reduce such inequalities”.<sup>8</sup>**

Several elements that have been thoroughly worked on during the last year. The global health crisis has shown that social security and social protection suffer of structural problems. In the region, privatization of social protection has been going on for decades and, once again, the pandemic has revealed that this privatization model does not serve the majority of the working class or of the population.

The TUCA reaffirms the need to work for public social security and to link social protection with trade union organization. Social protection for workers requires strong trade unions able to ensure public social security and protection. It is a core issue on the trade union action agenda in the region.

The crisis has exposed the painful precarity of health systems in the world, the precarity faced by informal workers, most of whom are women, and migrants.

Given this harsh reality, in which only 45% of the population enjoys social security, and considering social security and protection as fundamental rights, the quest for solidarity must contribute mostly to the informal sector and women. In addition, social security must be aligned with occupational health. The reference to Convention 102 on minimum social security standards, which will turn 70 next year, must be upheld.

To advance the perspective of decent work and contribute to the future of work, four aspects must always continue to be analyzed and implemented: gender justice; an effective system of lifelong learning and education for all; universal access to comprehensive and sustainable protection; and effective measures to help people cope with transitions throughout their working lives.

---

8. Ibid.

Regarding universal access to sustainable social security, social protection systems must be adopted that are adapted to the world of work today and of the future. With a social dialogue to ensure that the gains of today are not lost, and for trade unions to continue participating in political decisions. The concept of social protection includes social security, the need to move towards a new horizon includes social security.

The global community also prioritized social protection. Target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) calls on States to implement social protection and security measures for all.

The ILO Regional Office in Lima has given much attention to this issue in the document *Harnessing social protection during pandemics*, highlighting the importance of a multi-pronged strategy including:

- 1.** Contributory systems of sustainable protections.
- 2.** Unemployment insurance covered on a contributory and non-contributory basis.
- 3.** Non-contributory social protection programs for the elderly.
- 4.** Public social health protection policies with universal coverage that does not depend on the household income, but on needs.
- 5.** Active role of central governments in the regulation of health providers.
- 6.** Full incorporation of occupational health and safety mechanisms as part of employment and social security policies.

Trade unionism must accompany the ILO in the new multiple social protection structure to address workers' challenges and have and will have during the pandemic and post-pandemic.

**“ Social security for all must be sustained on a basic public pillar financed by progressive taxes to generate a universal pension and a public contributory pillar of tripartite financing, based on the principles of universality, inclusion and solidarity of fringe benefits, that must be integrated with social justice. Care systems for all those requiring them (children, the elderly, people with disabilities), and the policies to reconcile work and personal-family life, should be included as one more element of social security”<sup>9</sup>**

9. Ibid.



Regarding social security, it is also necessary to address occupational health. People die as a result of accidents on the job, and these deaths are preventable. This shows how the rights system operates in the workplace that does not provide adequate protections for women or men, and does not define protection priorities. A central slogan for workers must be to demand the recognition of safety at work and occupational health as fundamental rights. This means that the States must take responsibility and secure the implementation of the different agreements and conventions ensuring occupational health throughout the chain.

As part of these analysis, discussions and construction prospects based on the trade union movement, the **universal basic income** (UBI) plays a prominent role and is a complex proposal. It would be better to firstly include aspects relating to the right to economic security of the population. This cannot be measured exclusively based on conditional cash transfers, it must be analyzed from the various facets of the right to economic security.

There is confusion as it seems as though there were widespread consensus in political-ideological terms on the need for a universal basic income as a sort of transfer that is especially provided in the context of an emergency, which the pandemic even underscored as a substitution in the face of the cessation of many economic activities and family income.

Below some elements to consider in the discussions on the UBI.

Firstly, over the last decades there has been a constant substitution of universal social protection systems by a fragmentation that generates space for the capitalization and financialization of social protection. After the privatization of the 90s, a much finer ideological work emerges in the 21st century. They refer to human rights, to equity, but what is proposed as alternative to the public systems devastated in the 90s is a universalization based on a blended system, where insurance firms and providers can be both public and private, participating comprehensively or not in public structures. In the absence of a universal health, education, and pension system, the growing financialization through insurance and the transfer of resources lead to these transfers becoming a factor of access to insurance and not as a factor to protect economic security.

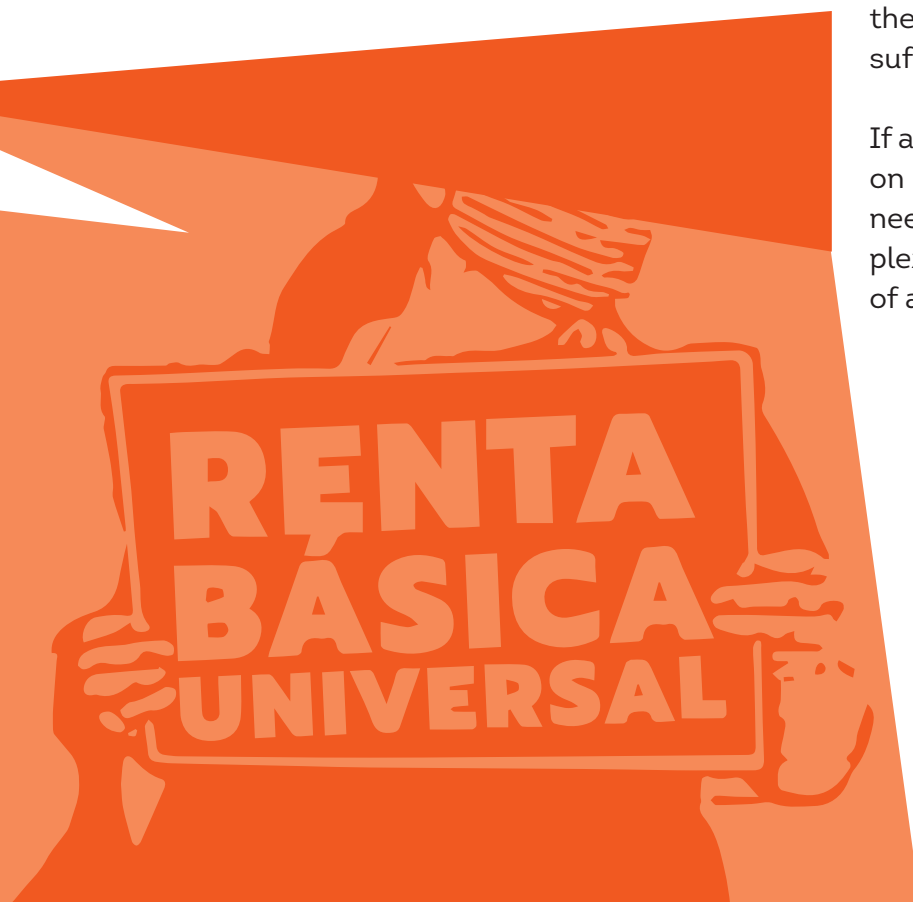
Therefore, it is difficult to speak of a basic income strategy if the context in which it occurs in each national system and in regional systems is not taken into account, and care must be taken not to substitute the integrality of a social protection system by a system mostly anchored in economic transfers, whether conditional or not, which then generates a sort of access to the consumption of certain services impacted by financialization.

It is an issue rooted in a historical process in which the discussions on development, which cover the 50s to the 70s, shifts and is replaced by discussions on poverty, where poverty becomes the core element of social policies and, therefore, it is not assumed as poverty in its multidimensional, structural sense in order to combat fundamental inequalities in society, but rather the definition of poverty is adjusted and becomes a matter of creating within what is jocularly called poortology -poverty measures, poverty lines- and is about mobilizing populations beyond the poverty line through transfers that allow a locative per capita that goes beyond the total poverty line.

This has generated a very artificial dynamic in social policies. Enough resources are transferred to be a slightly above the adopted poverty line and this is celebrated as people being lifted out of poverty. This has had a very negative effect on the conception and organizational logic of social policy and on the discussions on class identity.

If the idea of a universal income is not dealt with as economic security where several elements concur, such as universal access to health without contributory criteria, universal access to education, system of subsidies for needs in terms of transport, energy, housing, etc., if a set of social protections is not put together, the cash transfer becomes a compensatory, mitigating element, and not a constitutive element of an economic and social security arrangement. Thus, the value of that transfer relates to the global income and not to the prior condition of being or not being employed, for example. There can be a massive amount of employed workers, but with insufficient income to meet their needs and, hence, the issue of needs cannot be based on the poverty line, its value would have to be like in Brazil, where discussions refer to a value even four times higher than the value of the national minimum wage as sufficient for a basket of basic goods.

If a more demanding criterion is used, based on the various fronts of the population's needs, this would require a much more complex strategy that would be the constituent of a social protection system.



In addition to questioning poverty as centrality and putting the debate on wealth in its place, Robert Castell's concept of what a social protection system or an expanded social security system would be is very useful, because it would include the assurance of civil and political rights as civil and political security system, the economic and social security system, and increasingly an environmental security system, which would also include the issue of health and safety in the workplace as part of environmental security and, therefore, integral part of a comprehensive social protection system.

The purpose of the above elements is to shift the discussions on social policy from poverty towards the production, distribution and redistribution of wealth in the countries. We need to be open to the contingency needs of the pandemic, but today we are fighting against the recent historical tendency to limit social protection systems, especially due to the impact of austerity policies and the acceptance of a structural fragmentation of what should be the entirety of social security or protection. This has led to many setbacks and to a separation in the world of work where the large mass of workers work in informal and formal conditions.

Although the statements of the trade union movement include the discussion on informality, the mechanisms installed are still very much based on the narrative of social security linked to formal work.


Furthermore, regarding the redistribution of wealth, the most effective way would be to sustain - through progressive general taxes- an entire system of universal public services, and also fight ideologically for the middle cadres that, at present, are ensnared with neoliberalism, as well as a good part of the popular sectors that also believe that there is an individual solution to the individualistic crisis and that equal opportunities

will suffice in lieu of an essential equality in the solidarity in the *modus operandi* of the State and how it sustains its social policies.

As has been proposed in general, and perhaps superficially, by some governments, the solution of a basic income and a common differential value that could be distributed throughout society, in this historical context does not seem to create a strategy able to effectively respond to structural inequalities. It generates in the collective imagination an idea of substitution of fraternal solidarity systems - based on the contribution of all for the enjoyment of all - with a much more segmented logic whereby, in the end, everybody receives the same but the capacity to access what they need will continue to be different.

So we must beware of the seduction of some universal basic income approaches. Basic income, as component of economic security, as a right, requires another type of political and institutional organization. How to move from the emergency response, now very necessary and targeting the more exposed groups, towards a universal dynamic, involves revisiting historical fundamentals.





**“We demand the ratification of ILO Convention 102 as the minimum social security standard. We demand its effective compliance with clear criteria and rules for the coverage of basic contingencies: healthcare, illness, unemployment, old age, work accidents and occupational diseases, family, maternity, disability and widowhood allowances.” <sup>10</sup>**

It is a transition in which, historically, the TUCA and trade union organizations have played a key leadership role because of their authoritative voice based on the historical conquest of social security linked to work and that can now target and promote a much broader vision that encompasses all societies in this redistributive aspiration.


A vision of social protection as human right would function as lever for effective social transformation. A democratic social protection policy could change the mechanisms that generate inequality and exclusion. Therefore, it is a priority for trade unions to continue creating alliances with social movements and organizations that represent populations without social protection. Alliances can occur between trade unions and other organizations of youth, women, migrants and peasants.



---

10. Ibid.





The issues of the pandemic should not be confused with the structural issues of access to social protection already existing before the global health crisis. Recommendation 204 allows the inclusion of workers into protection, and according to the international consensus, workers have made it a priority. Unfortunately, in a globalized economy these consensus can be understood, but the imposition of austerity policies prevails. International organizations promote economies that allocate 3% of GDP to protection expenses, which impedes the expansion of coverage. In addition, the privatization of systems continues even when their absolute failure has been proven.

All workers must enjoy a genuine protection system. There is full conviction that the social security system is fundamentally linked to the State, which must act forcefully for social security to reach everybody. It is imperative to insist dynamically and creatively on the inclusion of informal workers in the social security system.

The State is responsible for ensuring social protection and security and not delegate such responsibilities to the private sector and its profiteering. ILO Resolution 202 is clear and forceful, and we need to make the resolution become a reality across the continent. Today, more than ever before, we need to overturn the privatization of the social security system and ensure a system to live with dignity, not allowing the private sector to turn the system into a business by eliminating the notion and guarantee of the fundamental right.

A comprehensive protection, safety and health system must integrate the gender perspective organically. Trade unions must internalize the notion of joint health committees, including trade unions and companies, to ensure the

population's health systems. Covid-19 must be a declared occupational disease.

For the most part, young people have access to precarious and informal work, and trade unions must ensure their training and formal working conditions, for youth to access their rights. A care economy system is necessary. Trade unions must continue their efforts for the redistribution of wealth, and implement mechanisms such as the tax on large fortunes. Fight for access to universal healthcare and more government investments in healthcare systems.

Social security is a human right. Many countries of the region have ratified Convention 102 and adopted Recommendation 202. We need to work for countries to build their capacities to advance in these aspects. There are ways to open the fiscal space to finance the systems, but they require the political will of governments to work towards universal social protection. This process is progressive and countries have an obligation to commit to it. Trade unions must continue to push for Convention 102 and Recommendation 202 which complement each other, and provide a roadmap for universal social protection.

Why social protection? Protection is essential to overcome inequality. The measures must be evaluated based on whether structural inequality is overcome. We must abandon the discourse of the vulnerable and analyze protection structurally. The discussion on progressive taxation gains importance, as well as the way in which budget aspects are understood outside the neoliberal imposition.



# Recommendations and Elements of the Discussion

The interventions and discussions during the Workshop are fruitful in the projection of the TUCA's work beyond its 4th Congress. Based on the aspects analyzed and the approaches delivered in relation to social protection and security, we can ratify that *"the trade union movement of the Americas will continue to work for public, universal and inclusive social security models. This is one of the main rights under attack globally. The response of the trade union movement of the Americas to this setback requires the prioritization of this issue in the upcoming period".* Therefore, we can point to the following consensuses, recommendations and/or elements for the discussions and future implementations:<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, we can point to the following consensuses, recommendations and/or elements for the discussions and future implementations:

- ▶ Social protection and social security are fundamental human rights.
- ▶ The trade union movement must forcefully demand the implementation of the conventions. The TUCA has always opposed workers paying for the costs of the crisis.
- ▶ The TUCA continues to demand and formulate public and democratic social security policies. Large fortunes must be taxed to find ways to finance social security and social protection.

- ▶ Prevention of occupational hazards must be applied in national contexts, based on a universal protection approach. Workers must also consider environmental health as basic condition to ensure the human right to life.
- ▶ The care system required by children, the elderly and people with disabilities must be included as basic element of social security. The recognition of unpaid work needs to be incorporated as an equitable approach. Co-responsible care must be included based on the gender perspective.
- ▶ The right to social protection requires advancing in the universality of solidarity, public social protection, based on the gender perspective, harnessed into union movements and seeking to harness with other social movements, involving civil society and all movements that recognize that the right to social protection is a human right.
- ▶ The right to social protection will only be universal when the rich pay, as part of a just transition. The redistribution of wealth is a guarantee to achieve social protection for all on equal terms.

---

11. Ibid.

▶ We must move towards a concept of a social protection system that works more directly with the production of wealth and its forms of distribution and re-distribution. The way in which the productivity in terms of salary and the wage bill is appropriated in the distribution of wealth it is extremely important; this has been lost globally in recent decades. Among the aspects of digitization of the economy, 4.0, remote activities, labor productivity has increased. However, profit is incorporated into capital, especially the financial capital that mediates all processes, and not into the salary, not into the purchasing power of salary.

▶ Recommendation 202 can be an anchor to call for a broad vision in which the entire discussion on guarantees of a new social protection system based on a trans-post-pandemic framework provides an important political opportunity. Inertially and unfortunately, what is being installed today is a strengthening of the tendencies of austerity policies, and financial capital is penetrating with more force in multiple dimensions of social protection.

▶ After the crisis, we face the expanded austerity since the 2008 crisis with general limitations, limited decent work and almost no dialogue. Therefore, an effective social dialogue is required for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

▶ Countries must work towards the adoption of basic social protection, maternity care, social protection for all and child care. All working age persons who cannot earn sufficient income, as well as the elderly, must be given basic access to social security.

▶ In the upcoming period, the trade union movement must demand the extension of protection, mandatory coverage, digital transparency, a unified system, financing through taxes, informed and effective social dialogue, and ensure sufficient investment in social protection by the State.

▶ ***Social protection based on the gender perspective.*** Most of those not covered are women and sectors where women account for the majority. Ensure that systems are designed to address discrimination necessarily involves working based on the gender perspective.

▶ ***Sustainable financing.*** In October 2020, the ILO noted the region's large financing void. According to ECLAC, tax evasion accounts for 6.3% of GDP. We must work to reduce tax evasion. We need to reinforce the contributory base of social protection and the challenge is how to involve informal workers.





▶ ***Social and solidarity economy as strategy to access the right to social protection.*** The social and solidarity economy is no longer marginal, of the poor: it is a very powerful alternative economy. In recent years it has grown much more than the ordinary economy, 20% of people work more in the social and solidarity economy than in transnational corporations.

▶ Comprehensive and public health must also be recognized and regulated as fundamental human right and as commons.

▶ Social infrastructure is a key element to end the crisis, which undoubtedly predates the pandemic. We must demand the State to play another role: the State should not give emergency aid as if it were an NGO, the State is obliged to ensure rights.

▶ The most important challenge of the 21st century is to re-politicize by eliminating the neoliberal notion of expendable lives. The report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty clearly points out that all the measures of the so-called emergency aid and the transfers are not effectively resisting the austerity policies and do not address the issue of unmet needs. The right to development which the trade union movement must join is now under discussion.



# JUST TRANSITION WORKSHOP

April 14, 2021

## The regional perspective of just transition: Where are we heading?

The TUCA considers that the relationship between the environment and work is a relationship between people and nature that must be mediated by harmonious and sustainable work. What should a development model that does not plunder nature look like? A just transition towards a sustainable, non-predatory model should underscore the substantial asymmetries between countries and regions. Workers have acquired a glocal vision, based on which it is essential to deliver the solidarity and shared outlook, and build an agenda that questions the consumption model.

The TUCA is working to build a trade union movement in the Americas that spearheads the just transition discussions, for which it is necessary to further the trade union training on the transition and the environmentally sustainable model. It needs to be a comprehensive and organic trade union agenda, not simply one part of it, and that relies on the social alliances with which the trade union movement has been working, in concrete practice, for several years. We have actual experience: Rio+20, the environmental summits, alliances within the Conferences of the Parties (COP), experiences in the coordination with the Continental Day for Democracy & Against Neoliberalism.

Together and united, trade unions, social organizations and movements can make a difference in said discussions and become a planetary force that truly cares about sustainability. The TUCA has come a long way in the Energy, Environment and Work Conferences, and this can greatly contribute to trade union strategy of action.

**“Reflecting on sustainable development involves challenging the current economic order, the commodification and financialization of the commons and the inequalities that cement the patriarchal and discriminatory system. We propose a model that places care and sustainability of life at the center, producing a profound change in the social metabolism and a new relationship with the environment. Territorial conflicts are gaining prominence in the region evidencing the need to once again discuss the meaning of sustainable development in close coordination with social movements and with women playing a leadership role.”<sup>12</sup>**

---

12. Ibid.

The TUCA's criticism of the model has pointed to false solutions, the structural causes and the solutions proposed by the working class.

Just transition is a disputed concept and justice must be its main goal. The climate crisis places energy at the center of just transition. Energy for what and for whom? Energy use, the energy system and the need for transformation: it is not simply about changing sources, it involves a profound transformation of the energy model. Discussions on the change of energy model requires the recognition of workers' and community expertise.

Economic and social recovery from the pandemic also places environmental discussions at the forefront. Discussions are still required to prevent the reappearance of false solutions that intensify the consequences for the working class.

**With regard to the ITUC, it is important to understand the perspective of international trade unionism on climate based on the outlook of the working class. Work has focused on 5 fundamental pillars, namely:**

- 1.** Creation of jobs compatible with the just transition. Reaching zero emissions.
- 2.** Rights at work, working hours, fair wages.
- 3.** Universal social protection. An adequately financed social protection fund is required, especially for poor countries.
- 4.** Equality. Fight against discrimination. All people should be able to live in peace.
- 5.** Inclusion.

Just transition is a powerful instrument for social demands and their relationship with climate issues but, as a concept, other sectors are usurping it, and this must not be allowed.

Just transition must be based on public policies resulting from regional and local processes. Many Latin American countries are using the concept of just transition, but in an equivocal manner by the right, for example. The idea of a new social contract entails the need to continue insisting on a just transition that takes into account the specificities of each country and specific ILO support in relation to labor and human rights.

Along with other allied movements, the TUCA has been denouncing that the coups d'état in the region in the last two decades are related to projects of exploitation and expropriation of natural heritage, where transnational corporations are clearly interested in controlling strategic resources for their value chains: either favoring energy mining projects in Honduras, invalidating public policies that prohibit transgenic corn in Paraguay, handing over reserves and dismantling the national oil industry, as in Brazil and as has been attempted for years in Venezuela.

Interestingly, the ecological discourse, or the ecological organizations not committed to the class struggle and internationalist solidarity, have acted as accomplices of the military and police forces of the fascist right, as in the coup in Bolivia reversed by the popular forces, or as in the recent catastrophic result of the elections in Ecuador.

In addition, the climate agreements risk that a little green varnish will be enough to legitimize an asymmetric and colonial trade relationship, in which more soybeans, livestock and minerals will be exported without tariffs, in exchange for pesticides and cars. As in the times of the defeat of the FTAA, intersectoral and massive resistance is necessary to denounce and block contents related to the privatization of services, de-industrialization or interference in public procurement policies. The latter is of great relevance for a just and feminist recovery, for food sovereignty, and even more so in a global context where

not even the commercial model allows the breaking of patents for the universalization of vaccines, whose “right to purchase” is a privilege of companies.

Based on the climate justice agenda, trade union organizing and mobilization built the just transition agenda, historically creating political contents based on the perspective of the working class, articulated with the peasant, feminist, ecumenical and environmental movements through the PLADA, as instrument contributed by trade unionism of the Americas. This has allowed us to continue questioning the development model and its asymmetries at the conferences on climate change, without obliterating the principle of shared, yet differentiated, responsibilities from the UN Framework Convention nor allowing the hegemonization of the climate emergency to reduce the political issue of climate - and the necessary just transition - to carbon accounting or to a set of fake low-carbon, clean energy, payments for environmental services or extensions of land for “nature-based business” solutions.

Regarding the construction of proposals for a just transition and the democratization of energy models, which the TUCA has historically called for and guided, processes to strengthen strategic alliances also converge with other social movements of the region and, in the framework of the Continental Day, mainly with the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB in Portu-

guese), a member of the Latin American Coordinator of Rural Organizations (CLOC Via Campesina) and the Movement of People Affected by Dams in Latin America (MAR), with the Women Moving Millions (WMM) March which, in 2008, led to a large national meeting of women for Food & Energy Sovereignty in Brazil, one of whose themes was the defense of oil and of women workers of the energy sector and their means of production as heritage of the Brazilian people.

It is the duty of the State to ensure rights and promote the conditions for their exercise. Much of this is ensured by the State and state-run companies, public-community partnerships, workers and employees of the sector, so it is relevant to challenge public energy policies in an organized manner as popular movements and asserting the rights gained through the struggles of trade unions, feminist movements and the affected population, and also constructed based on environmental justice.

This involves resisting neoliberalism, as well as building popular power to defend democracy. This is built through alliance, through the creation of political proposals for a just and feminist energy transition.





**“In the short-term, the TUCA is determined to address the challenge of building a just transition based on regional diversity, by and for the working class, with social justice and employment at the center, in order to respond to the main urgencies currently affecting workers, such as the anti-union culture, the absence of social dialogue, authoritarian and anti-democratic tendencies, precarity and informality, the digital economy, the climate crisis, global production chains, among others.”**

**The building of intersectoral alliances for the construction of a just transition proposal needs to respond to the interests of the working class and addresses the structural problems of patriarchy, predatory developmentalism, and the current climate and health crisis. Currently the TUCA has been implementing 6 basic contents with its strategic allies:**

**1.** Just Transition has different contents in different places and will be used in different ways. A key part relates to access, use and control of energy. The just transition must be visible in certain social contexts and parts of the world.

**2.** Just transition is a class issue. To bring together agendas shared by workers. Provide a shared response on who should control and benefit from energy resources.

**3.** Just transition is a gender issue, women are more affected by the impacts of the climate crisis. We need to understand their energy needs in the household and the solutions proposed by women.

**4.** The just transition must be anti-racist. It should be used to reorganize and expose the injustices of the current system. This work is already underway.

**5.** The transition relates to more than climate. The environmental crisis is much more the collapse of biodiversity. It is not simply a matter of reducing carbon, environment issues go much further.

**6.** The transition relates closely to democracy, protecting people's democratic rights for them to defend the transition. Who decides which energy and how to use it? There are different views on how to use more responsible energy systems. The fundamental premise is that the transition must build workers' capacities on how to use energy.



The meaning of the just transition for the region's working class must vindicate the legacy of the struggle for public services, also calling into question and demanding their ownership.

The approach to the commons opens the discussion on access, control and use of energy, water, land and seeds, as human rights. Public control and ownership of all sources of energy is an essential condition for the construction of a grassroots, just transition for the working class. For this purpose, any commitment to just transition must necessarily incorporate social dialogue and allow core discussions on energy ownership, the role of the State and human rights. The just transition cannot ignore the need for energy democracy as integral part of a sustainable development model with social justice.”

One of the aspects to highlight in the workshop and the process developed by the TUCA to date, is the construction of the **Regional Energy Environment and Work Conferences** (CREAT) that have completed 3 editions.

Since its foundation, the TUCA has organized a series of discussions on energy, environment and work. The first CREAT played an important role in Managua for a more systematized work towards the working class. 15 countries, 7 continental movements and 4 civil society organizations were present at the 3rd CREAT in Costa Rica. Alliance building was intense at said conferences.

In the 3rd CREAT, the consequences of the official exit of the United States from the climate change agreements and a loss of prominence of Brazil with the government of Jair Bolsonaro, were already perceivable. Later, an onslaught of green capitalism appeared in different countries and in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

A central development of the CREAT process is the fight for energy democratization: it is not simply about decarbonizing or creating new jobs. In the concept of just transition, we were able to introduce the centrality of energy democratization and understand the discussion on energy sovereignty.



The need to discuss energy based on its de-commodification, the decentralization of the energy sector and energy as a fundamental right, a commons and public asset, collectively brings about a discussion on a transition based on democracy and social and environmental justice. Exercising sovereign control in scenarios captured by the States continues to be fundamental.

It is also important to emphasize that the PLADA has restructured the TUCA as a core agent of energy and environmental discussions in international settings. It became a stage for collective discussion in the Americas, in harmony and in alliance with the other partners. It allowed an important concep-

tualization process in which the TUCA advanced towards collective understandings about the commons and the approaches determined by languages, the importance of discussing other concepts and visions also emerged when the PLADA was updated and in the construction of the position and disputes on the development model. The discussions on trade union self-reform were a positive point, with correct interpretation by the TUCA that incorporated the discussion and conceptualization of the environmental issue.



## Core aspects of the interventions of Workshop participants

Three important topics were presented in the Workshop. The development model, the need to discuss the transition, and how energy is used. These issues must be considered as fundamental rights and in terms of what they mean for workers. Many difficulties are faced at the time of seeking to change the economic model. The UN appeals are very ambitious but, in reality, its goals are not being reached from scientific or social perspectives.

The social dialogue between the different actors is decisive. It is not possible to solve the current situation without the development of effective social dialogue, in addition to political construction with social movements. The principle to analyze just transition is that it can only be done in conjunction with workers. Just transition goes far beyond the negotiations on climate change. The rank and file of the trade union movement needs to own that concept for workers to feel they can contribute to its accomplishment.

When discussing just transition, it is clear, in the PLADA and in spaces for the construction of the trade union movement, that the pillars are social dialogue, social justice and distribution of wealth.

In the framework of the pandemic, the affluent accumulate more and more, and workers' existence becomes more and more complicated. Trade union solidarity became stronger during this period. Inside trade union must work intensely on the concept of the common good, and the access to the gamut of commons identified by the PLADA needs to be better understood.



Present times teach and reinforce that the perspective of the fight for a just transition is global, much the same as the effects of the pandemic. In many parts of the world, progress is being made in initiatives to improve the situation of workers, but only in certain parts of the world and this is not enough. It must be a global advance.

The start point of a just transition must be the minimum established by an effective social dialogue. Without trade unions and workers, there can be no just transition.

Just transition involves gender equality, poverty eradication, social protection and more resilient communities.

Dreams of win-win situations for companies will not become true with crises and climate change. How to represent workers and make their voice heard is key.



The discussions held as part of the workshop help strategize on how to gain the necessary power to achieve the goals. The construction of intersectoral alliances, and alliances with non-unionized workers who might be affected by climate change, should always be highlighted and valued.

The TUCA continues its efforts on the relationship between the environment and work, and in practice, the Workshop is progress in the construction of the PLADA's perspective. It is clear that the perspective of a just transition is here to stay. How it will become a reality depends on the national and regional scenario and on the characteristics of the different countries. Ultimately, we have to fight for this approach. The corpora-

tized perspectives for the just transition do not include social dialogue. The generalized reality in the region is the instrumentalization of the environmental issue by reducing climate concern to a "zero emissions" approach, the absence of true change in the production and consumption model, the imposition of solutions that, in the end, are false because they renew the capacity of the system to commoditize and privatize the commons under the guise of addressing climate change.

# Recommendations and Elements of the Discussion

The contributions made by each guest at the Workshop, as well as the discussions with broad participation of trade union organizations, coincide with the structural stances of the TUCA that are entirely valid in these times of crisis in the region, and which project the struggles in the political arena for a just transition built with the democratic participation of the working class, allied organizations and movements based on an intersectoral methodology where the political subjects are protagonists.

For these reasons, the TUCA has pointed to a fundamental element that is worth emphasizing at the start of these recommendations and that is expressed in the Final Resolution of the 4th Congress as committing *“to trade unionism of the Americas approaching youth and developing actions to achieve environmental justice, which is also a trade union struggle. Therefore, we need to work to impact these mobilizations so they increasingly become mobilizations of the working class. The political interpretation of the pandemic and its impacts should also serve to prioritize the great threats to life caused by the environmental crisis and reinforce the crosscutting nature of the fight for the sustainable production and consumption model”*<sup>13</sup>.


## Other relevant aspects of the Workshop are:

- ▶ An effective social dialogue is necessary to combine the objectives of social and environmental justice.
- ▶ Intersectoral alliances, strengthened in processes such as the Continental Day for Democracy & Against Neoliberalism, which we have built as of Cuba in 2015, allow us to experience and continue the struggles based on an internationalist perspective and class solidarity, recognizing ourselves as collective political subjects committed to popular organization to change the system, mobilizing every day to dismantle its patriarchal, imperialist, colonial, racist, heteronormative parameters, and collectively confront violence against bodies, territories, peoples, forms of life and means of production, to ensure that the capacity to organize, fight and champion the sovereignty of the peoples and their emancipatory popular political projects in Latin America and the rest of the world is not snatched away from us.
- ▶ The construction of processes and proposals for the just transition with democratization of the energy models

---

13. Ibid.





entails resuming and intensifying the proposals of regional trade unionism on issues of democratization of energy, production and consumption models, as well as aspects related to leadership that the just transition must implement to be really fair for the working class.

▶ Beyond classifying the source or form of energy production as clean or dirty, or even communal, energy must be defended as a right, and energy sovereignty as a struggle of the peoples for the means of production and social control of energy policies.

▶ It is not enough for each community to decide and control its own energy, energy needs to be organized by a political project for its initiatives to emancipate peoples, countries, regions.

▶ The just transition must be achieved in alliance with indigenous territories and indigenous peoples. The anti-colonialist character of the just transition must be recognized if social justice is to be achieved. This is possible in terms of energy.

▶ We must not fall into the trap of governments, companies and large capitalists who use the challenges posed by the just and energy transition to attack workers and destroy the alliances generated in pursuit of social contradiction.

▶ It is necessary to recognize the inequality and the history of colonialism and imperialism, as well as the demands of the working class that were accomplished in each case. Responses to climate change cannot intensify energy poverty and inequalities.

▶ It is extremely relevant to generate different intertwined perspectives to consolidate the just transition: the contributions of the feminist economy, the need to consider differentiated impacts in racialized communities, the perspective of environmental justice, the defense of food sovereignty.

▶ It is important to underscore the need to discuss the status of public issues. Public ownership, management and control of public services. In the midst of a health crisis such as that affecting the region, the failure of neoliberal policies and the need for a stronger presence of the public sphere, of the State, is now evident.





# **RACIAL EQUALITY WORKSHOP**

**April 15, 2021**

## The fight for racial equality in trade unions and in the world of work

Several years ago the TUCA decided that racial equality should be at the center of its agenda. This issue is more visible today, especially with the Black Lives Matter movements in the United States and in other countries that have joined the popular struggle for racial justice. The fight of the black population is a historical continuum, but now it is more visible as a consequence of the murders, police brutality against the black population, young people in prison, and those who, for the most part, cannot access employment.

The TUCA advances in practice with the political representation of the black brothers and sisters as the efforts to build racial equality cannot remain simply as lip-service.

Racism arrived from the colonizing countries. Over 500 years ago, but the struggle and resistance arrived at the same time, from the Brazilian quilombos to the Haitian revolution. In the 1960s, struggles for civil rights and equality developed in the United States, as well as various struggles for racial equality that have now intensified, transforming the political agenda in certain countries.

**“According to ECLAC, Afro-descendants account for 21% in the territory and are lagging behind in most socioeconomic indicators. They are the most persistent segment of the region’s population living in poverty as a result of their history of structural and endemic marginalization and subjugation, discrimination and racism. Inequality is historical and has been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic.”<sup>14</sup>**

---

14. Ibid.



**The TUCA recognizes that racism affecting Afro-descendants has deep historical roots, it is structural, and propagated and perpetuated through the work of State and non-State institutions, and also includes cultural, economic and social facets. Therefore, Afro-descendants are disproportionately impacted by poverty, unemployment, the absence of public investment in social health, housing and education programs.”<sup>15</sup>**

The issue of racial justice must be analyzed from a global perspective. The global health crisis and Covid-19 pandemic triggered by neoliberalism have been felt in workplaces and homes across the world. The direct impact has been devastating, especially for non-white people. In terms of health, workers of color suffer unequally due to the denial of their rights and other aspects that contribute to stronger impacts on black workers and workers of color. Exposed the workers are those that cannot work at home: they experience more complications during the pandemic, in addition to being among those who are paid the lowest wages.

These are times to reflect on the global fight for equality and on the challenges faced by the black population in relation to equal pay. The legacy of colonialism and the slave trade came from across the Atlantic, affecting populations that have different struggles. The Haitian revolution was inspired by black peoples and paved the way for the pursuit of racial justice.

Now blacks and whites are experiencing intersectionality and global solidarity after the assassination of George Floyd. Many people of color have died in the United States and, because of this situation, there has been a

response against this centuries-old racist attitude in the country. This is a light along the path for the struggles of the black community with the consolidation of an international movement of black resistance against oppression and injustice.

The death of George Floyd also drew attention to the arrest of over 200,000 people, many affected by COVID-19 and many women. It is impossible to think of a racism-free society. The anti-racist struggle must be present in all spaces, and mainly in the trade union structure.

Some countries of the region have pioneered these discussions, and proposed alternatives. For example, 57% of the Brazilian population are blacks. In Brazil, the trade union movement held these discussions in the early 1990s. The working conditions could not be discussed without pointing to violent racist attacks suffered by the black population.

Consequently, work was initiated with other social movements to confront racism. If 57% of Brazil's population is black, then the working class is mostly made up by black

---

15. Ibid.

people. Slave labor was included in work-related discussions and analysis in Brazil, and became part of trade union struggles and the formulation of anti-racist policies. The trade union movement participated actively in national campaigns and the implementation of black workers' rights, and in the campaign for public labor policies to include the black population.

In most countries, blacks work in the most precarious jobs and are paid the lowest salaries. The black population has been historically inserted precariously in the labor market.

It is still considered natural for black women to be victims of sexual harassment and black bodies are victims of violence. Therefore, it is necessary to work on the deconstruction of these negative racial concepts.

People should not only to discuss the issue of racism, but should also participate in concrete anti-racist actions. Racism in the Americas and in the world will only end when it is clearly understood that a just and egalitarian society can only exist when anti-racist policies are formulated. Racism and sexism are structural oppressions still reflected in the trade union world, hence actions to confront them must be on the rise.

Racism has been present in the darkest moments of history. It is persistently obvious, albeit not so evident in some cases. Cultural inequality is not only evidence of discrimination, it also shows structures and systems that maintain cultural inequality and racism. This happens in the world of work and, unfortunately, it still persists in trade union structures.

The world today is dominated by an economic system that hides the instruments of racism and concentrates economic power in a small minority. The economic model and the world of work are characterized by over

exploitation and inequality. Despite technical and scientific progress, the world today is highly unequal and workers are direct victims of a globalization that engenders the idea of utopian growth, growth without restraint for the accumulation of wealth.

In countries such as Haiti, the informal economy is growing, and is lagging behind socially due to the indifference of the Haitian government. Those developing in the formal sector also experience difficulties. Integration into the world of work is very difficult without political contacts. Socio-economic scenarios are complex and black workers always suffer difficulties in terms of their economy, access to health, education and decent housing.





**The TUCA is committed to combating all forms of racism, and recognizes its colonial origins and the various forms in which racial violence and discrimination undermine the capacity of Afro-descendant workers to exercise their rights. Racism has only served to violate the rights of Afro-descendants and impede their insertion, with rights, in the labor market.”<sup>16</sup>**

## **Core aspects of the interventions of Workshop participants**

Unfortunately, trade unionism still suffers of racial discrimination. In 2004, studies in the trade sector showed disturbing results: when the blacks are employed, their salary is always lower than that of a white person. Given this situation, it is important to search for alternatives, such as the first agreement on quotas for Afro-descendants at the level of commerce. This process began with the agreement in one business and was then gradually adopted. 20% of workers in a business must be black, with the same working conditions as any other person, and must change from lip-service to concrete practice.

For example, in Peru, racial discrimination is also deeply rooted towards blacks, and towards Andean and native peoples of the country. The TUCA champions the flag of an equal society, and this struggle must be as continuous as possible. Racial equality is of utmost importance in trade union structure, in the trade union movement. It is very important to look outwards and inwards, and reflect on to be accountable.

---

16. Ibid.

## **Which action can the trade union movement undertake towards a fairer economy in relation to racial equality, and to provide individual opportunities to access appropriate forms of work?**

In the United States, trade unions decided that racial justice should be part of all aspects of the trade union movement. Racial justice must be as important as collective bargaining.

Those most open to participating in trade unionism are black women, black men and Latino women. Those who are closest to and join the trade union movement are people of color, women and the young: they are the most aware. They are the future of the trade union movement.

Trade unions must influence and work together with leaders to address theoretical or discursive aspects, in addition to acting, because people of color must be welcomed in the trade union world and in the world of work with all guarantees and fulfillment of their rights.

Racism and discrimination are closely related to the denial of equal opportunity. Quality of life is also a reflection of the inequality of the black population in America, as well as of the migrants moving from Africa to Europe. The pandemic has exacerbated inequality and inequality characterized by structural racism. We see today how the majority of the deaths in Brazil (4000 per day) are mostly of black people, as well as in Colombia and other countries.

Racism has been a negative factor at the core of the construction of society. Fighting against racism in trade unions is to fight against the concentration of power. Racism operates brutally within society, regressing some sectors of the population

into the global map of hunger and misery, and the black population, black women and black single mothers are at the base of the pyramid.

Trade union structure can act to minimize this dire situation and implement policies to combat racism, assuming that, in actual fact, racism organizes power relations.

Despite progressive governments that have contributed as of the formulation of public policies, there has been no structural changes in economic pyramid of Latin America. At the top are white men and women and at the bottom are black women who continue in precarious jobs, receiving lower wages and suffering brutal violence. Changing this reality requires a change of mindset, understanding that racism is cruel, and that it kills and makes people sick. It is not the sole responsibility of black trade unionists, but of all to build a decent and egalitarian society. This involves an anti-racist struggle at the level of collective bargaining and policymaking.

We live in a capitalist society, the pillars of which are racism and male chauvinism. Black women suffer twice as much. They have the least purchasing power. In some way, along its history, the trade union movement ended up reproducing male chauvinism and racism in its structures. Black and non-black men and women are taking steps to address these circumstances. Most importantly people need to understand that an egalitarian society will be achieved when blacks are included in the world of work in a non-precarious manner.



**The TUCA stands for the cultural self-determination of native and Afro-descendant peoples and respect for plurinationality. Our development strategy will encourage the adoption of laws and policies to foster respect for plurinationality, cultural diversity and interculturality under just and mutually respectful conditions, especially in relation to their languages, tongues and dialects, and their ancestral territories. For this purpose, the TUCA will promote intercultural education at all levels.”<sup>17</sup>**

The black population is located where access to health and education are precarious. Another society cannot be built without all social and political movements fighting against racism.

The fight for social equality is fundamental for society in its entirety. All communities should work towards the same goal. It is a matter of creating inclusive governments everybody to be able to access their rights. People of color mostly live in peripheral communities where services are lacking. As society we must demand the same advantages to prevent the marginalization of the black population and their second-class treatment.

Much needs to be learned from the structures already created in Brazil. The white population must understand that they created racism and are responsible for its elimination: It is their historical responsibility and must not leave that assignment to the victims.



17. Ibid.



# Recommendations and Elements of the Discussion

The Workshop provided analyses and discussions that will undoubtedly nurture the actions of the TUCA in particular, and of the social movement in general, to fight for racial justice. The TUCA understands the importance of enhancing the fight for justice and of formulating policies to achieve racial equality. The pandemic showed how the impacts are always differentiated and the worst consequences are suffered by Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples. The following recommendations and aspects to be discussed arose from the Workshop:

▶ The trade union movement must promote respect for Afro-descendant communities, and contribute significantly to the economic and cultural development of the marginalized population.

▶ The TUCA must continue and reinforce its efforts to implement policies addressing employment, education, health, and avoiding the precarious employment of black communities.

▶ It is a priority to formulate public policies for the insertion of the black population in the labor market with equality, and for these policies to include specific clauses to ensure the rights of black workers.

▶ We need to consider the possibility of creating and launching a campaign to de-naturalize racism.

▶ Interaction with whites to work together to improve the standard of living of each and every one, regardless of nationality, color and sexual orientation.

▶ The movement for racial equality must be nurtured at the global level.

▶ The relationship between the environment and racism must be considered and strengthened: black and indigenous workers are also affected by environmental racism, while suffering dispossession of land and loss of their livelihood simply because of their skin color or cultural roots.

▶ Actions are required against racism towards blacks and towards indigenous people who are socially excluded due to racial discrimination, related to their skin color. Trade union action is a must.

▶ The trade union movement is not only built by white workers, it has been built by slave labor that was then marginalized. Together, federations must prioritize the fight against racism in their agendas.

▶ The trade union movement must formulate anti-racist policies and implement actions to reach the social utopia of trade unionism.

▶ Policies must be transformed to reflect support for workers persecuted by racism. These workers unionize in order to address their precarity.



► The ILO works on inequality, which encompasses the gender issue. We need to advocate to integrate the fight against racial inequality.

► Children and young people must be taught to love each other because society sends messages telling them they are inferior because of their skin color. This discussion should at the global level. Heart disease and these health aspects are the result of the stress generated by discrimination. The duty of the trade union

movement is to address these situations related to the physical and mental health of the marginalized population.

► The TUCA must continue to denounce the brutal racist situations in the region by informing the population and building the awareness of the working class.



[www.csa-csi.org](http://www.csa-csi.org)  
[twitter.com/csa\\_tuca](https://twitter.com/csa_tuca)  
[www.facebook.com/csa.tuca](https://www.facebook.com/csa.tuca)