

## SNAPSHOTS FROM 2008

- **January-March:** STITCH works with newly formed coalition working with the AFL-CIO and NDLOM to create a Vocational Center in Washington, DC.
- **February:** STITCH brings together workers from across Central America to evaluate our training curriculum and our process for writing it.
- **March:** STITCH helps create an education committee that formulates and writes trainings for local communities and unions to discuss black/brown issues.
- **May:** In Central America STITCH assists the newly formed Women Schools to plan local and regional labor schools for women.
- **June:** STITCH held a highly diverse delegation to Guatemala utilizing a new format enabling participants to see more women's groups across the country.
- **September:** STITCH attended the Teamster's Women's Conference.
- **November:** STITCH's Director was featured on a local TV show in Arlington, VA.

## STITCH 2008 YEAR END REPORT HARD TIMES AND BIG RESULTS

2008 was a great year for STITCH. Our programs are more integrated and we have been building a stronger team to keep moving forward in 2009.

### Building Central American Women's Unions and Leadership

This year in Central America, STITCH and our partners begin publishing our curriculum on Women, Labor and Leadership. The trainings are also available on discs to be shared with feminist and labor organizations in Central America. The publication of the project represents 5 years of hard work by our staff as well as the women that make up the women's committee in Central America. They were very proud to see a professional representation of their labor. The booklets will be used to train more women in the region utilizing the tools and skills developed through a participatory model.

STITCH also participated in radio broadcast by the SITRABI banana union of Izabel, Guatemala and COSIBAH, the coalition of banana unions in Honduras to broadcast to women

about the work STITCH is doing with local groups and to share information on topics ranging from domestic violence assistance to women's rights as workers and how to be a part of the union.

Carmen Molina works at a Del Monte packing plant in Guatemala and has been a proud union member for 15 years. For 10 days in July, she traveled throughout the Mid-south region of the US with a STITCH staff member



STITCH also worked to hold local and regional meetings and begin the next step of our leadership program in Central America. We will continue to train hundreds more women over the next 3 years through the Women's Labor Schools that we are organizing in 4 countries in partnership with a variety of unions.

### Immigrant Worker Rights in the US

This July, STITCH combined workers from a Banana plantation in Guatemala with poultry workers in the Southern US.

meeting with Latina immigrants working in food processing and manufacturing.

Throughout the trip, Carmen and STITCH made connections between the struggles of union banana workers of Guatemala and the poultry workers of the south who are fighting to organize into workers centers and unions. The common struggle of workers knows no boundaries. Our discussions and trainings with union women helped foster ideas of union solidarity and sisterhood across borders.

## Working Together: Building Black Brown Solidarity

This year STITCH broadened our focus on building solidarity to include not only women supporting each other across borders but also looking at building solidarity across the boundaries of race among women of color.

Early in the year we partnered with DC Jobs with Justice, NDLO (National Day Laborers Organizing Network,) and other community groups and activists on a local taskforce to discuss and plan a multifaceted approach to creating a multicultural vocational center. However, early in the process the group realized there were existing tensions between the mostly Latino day laborers and the largely African American neighborhood that would have to be tackled if this project would succeed.

The District of Columbia has long been plagued with high unemployment and underemployment in low income communities. The center would provide training and services to the community and partner with labor unions to steer workers



towards apprenticeship programs. However, many did not see the center as geared toward their struggle.

A key part of the plan is educating the workers and community on solidarity and how this center could help both old and new residents, no matter their race. STITCH is one of the main forces on the education committee that is working with local community organizations and workers to give a series of trainings to open an inter-ethnic dialog and build strategies for solidarity across racial and ethnic barriers.

STITCH is having similar conversations in Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas and is looking for other partners across the US.

## Building Bridges Across Borders

This year STITCH held its delegation to Guatemala with six amazing and diverse women. This year's participants included union workers from Unite/HERE, Teamsters, and UFW and community activists for Latinas, youth, healthcare, and employment services.

Several changes were made to the delegation to give participants a wider perspective of women fighting for economic justice in Guatemala. We visited with the SITRABI banana union and helped them celebrate 61 years of struggle.

A delegation first was a visit to the Lake Atitlan region in the western highlands, where we met an indigenous women's co-op de-

veloping a business to market their weavings. We incorporated teachings from our Central America training programs to foster unity among the participants and expose them to new techniques for organizing.

## Violence in Central America

Unfortunately, all of our great work happened in a time when more violence is targeting unionists in Guatemala and Honduras. We are continuing to advocate in Washington, DC and with the Guatemalan government to stop violence. We are also working in coalition with other groups to provide President-Elect Obama with information about these important issues.

## Taking Action!

STITCH worked with our allies and activists to send alerts to our email network. We launched a new Facebook page and continued our important work on our joint blog. These steps are important ways for us to continue to communicate our message and get activists engaged on our important issues. For more information: [www.stitchonline.org](http://www.stitchonline.org)