

# Art for the Future: Artists Call and Central American Solidarities

Spring 2022

## Curators' Overview (Abigail Satinsky and Erina Duganne)

In the early 1980s, a group of artists, writers, and activists came together in New York City to form Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America, a creative campaign that mobilized nationwide to bring attention to the U.S. government's violent involvement in Latin America and build transnational solidarity. They staged exhibitions, performances, poetry readings, film screenings, concerts, and other cultural and educational events in more than two dozen cities across the United States and Canada. All told, more than 1,100 artists took part; together, their efforts represented a political statement against the history of U.S. intervention in Central America—especially those policies used by the Reagan administration to maintain U.S. hegemony in the region.

*Art for the Future: Artists Call and Central American Solidarities* examines this seminal campaign, presenting works and activities from across Artists Call's history. At the same time, the exhibition highlights the movement's legacy through a selection of works by contemporary artists, representing fresh forms of inter-American solidarity networks and visual alliances.

[“Artists Call: For Solidarity and Culture”](#) ✦ by Daniel Flores y Ascensio and Lucy R. Lippard

[“Artists' Activism in '83”](#) ✦ by Eva Cockcroft

[“Photo Retrospective: Central American Resistance, 1980s”](#) ✦ from the North American Congress on Latin America

[“Overview of US-Backed Regime Changes During the Cold War”](#) ✦ by Lindsey A. O'Rourke

We encourage you to reach out to [Liz Canter](#) ✦, Manager of Academic Programs, to discuss your plans for incorporating this exhibition into your curriculum or to arrange a class session.

## Resources

[TUFTS LIBRARY GUIDE](#) ✦

[EXHIBITION THEMES: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY](#) ✦

Calls to Action

Temporality and Counter-temporality

A History of U.S. Intervention

Information/Disinformation

Self-determination and Sovereignty

Making in Community

Feeling Solidarity

[CONTEMPORARY EXPLORATIONS](#)

[CARAVANA: Mobilizing Central American Art \(1984–Present\)](#) ✦

[“Does that come with a hyphen? A](#)

[space?": The Question of Central](#)

[American—Americans in Latino Art and](#)

[Pedagogy”](#) by Kency Cornejo ✦

[Project Solidarity: Preserving Historic](#)

[Memory](#) ✦

[“Sovereignty and Sanctuary: A](#)

[Roundtable”](#) ✦

[“Filmmaking in Central America: An](#)

[Overview”](#) by María Lourdes Cortés ✦

[“In Defense of Solidarity”](#) by Erina

[Duganne](#) ✦

[LOCAL CONNECTIONS](#)

[Community Organizations and Resource](#)

[Guide](#) ✦ compiled by Geovani Alberto

Cruz Alfaro (BFA '23)

A guide to Tufts University organizations and Greater Boston area organizations serving the Latinx community, as well as English and Spanish news sources from Central America.

[Local Solidarities: Video Interviews](#) ✦

A citywide interview platform centering artists, organizers, and community organizations working with the Latinx community in Greater Boston.



Leon Golub, *Napalm I*, 1969, acrylic on linen. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth.

# Broad Curricular Connections

## Solidarity Networks

- What does meaningful solidarity look like when people come from different backgrounds, privileges, and experiences?
- Can art-making itself be a kind of solidarity?
- How have notions and practices of solidarity evolved with the spread of the internet?
- How can solidarity networks from the past inform our practices today?



El Salvador-US OUT!, poster, c. 1980s, Group Material's ¡LUCHAR! An Exhibition for the People of Central America, El Taller Latino Americano, New York. Courtesy of Doug Ashford.

## Learning History While Living in the Present

- How do artists play a role in telling, constructing, and excavating histories?
- How might these roles differ from those of politicians, scholars, journalists, and teachers?
- How can artwork be used as a “source” for teaching and learning social and political histories?
- What might art communicate that other sources or texts do not?
- How has the history of US intervention in Central America impacted today's immigration policies?
- What significances does the built environment have in solidarity movements, especially given the role that churches have played as sites of sanctuary in the 1980s and today?



Installation view, Artists Call benefit exhibition, Judson Memorial Church, New York, 1984. Courtesy of Lucy R. Lippard.

# Glossary

**Anti-imperialism:** A collective effort towards revolution against imperialism, the policy or practice by which a country increases its power by gaining political and economic control of other territories and peoples. Anti-imperialism is guided by the idea of national self-determination and aligns itself against white supremacist capitalism and colonial empire. Gaining currency in national liberation struggles during the mid-20th century and at the onset of the Cold War, it addresses the global reach of capitalism and its oppressive and extractive systems by seeking to build equally far-reaching solidarity in opposition. (See: [Recorded conversation](#) with Manu Karuka, Christina Heatherton, and Lara Kiswani from the 2019 Native Liberation Conference.)

**Cold War:** Lasting from 1945 to 1990, the Cold War aligns with an ongoing shift in U.S. foreign policy “from an American willingness to act pragmatically and to establish an acceptable common ground with the Soviets to an American hardline approach to the spread of Soviet/Communist influence.” (See: Mary Kathryn Barbier’s [Oxford Bibliography entry](#).) During this period, U.S. policy was nominally to intervene with and counteract the spread of communism. Primarily, this served to further its own economic and political interests of political alliances, capitalist land acquisition/development, and trade.

In Central America, the U.S. government supported counter-insurgency tactics to further these interests as well as to attempt to reestablish confidence in U.S. intervention policy without the participation of actual American troops in the wake of the Vietnam War.

The rhetoric of this involvement also worked to further anti-Indigenous violence in Central America and in the U.S. by a manipulative agenda of depicting aspects of various Indigenous cultures and economies as communist, thus collapsing heterogeneous Indigenous-led struggles for land and human rights into a coherent political enemy.

See also Odd Arne Westad’s book *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (see, for example, [his chapter on the 1980s](#)), to learn more about the global context.

**Counter-insurgency:** [Laleh Khalili](#) defines counter-insurgency as “asymmetrical warfare by a powerful military against irregular combatants supported by a civilian population.” David Galula, a French soldier in the 1940s and 50s, is credited as formulating this as a military tactic based on his experiences fighting against revolutions in French colonies.

**Solidarity:** Solidarity has meant many things to many movements. Broadly defined, it means acting in mutual support. In [Cherríe Moraga](#) and Gloria Anzaldúa’s seminal 1981 anthology [This Bridge Called My Back](#), the editors lay a groundwork for building activist/personal coalitions between women of color (a more recent formulation) as sites of recognition of and resistance to the complex ways that these women experience oppressions related to colonialism and imperialism (including sexism, racism, and classism). Significantly, this framework of solidarity acts to intentionally recognize and honor differences between experiences of oppression that may relate to differing geographic, racial, cultural, political, and other contexts. In an interview, [“Solidarity is Not a Market Exchange,”](#) Robin D.G. Kelley elaborates that this recognition and honoring is integral to justice work, as rejecting solidarity/emphasizing individualistic relations siloes oppressed people to the detriment of justice.



**Central America consists of Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Belize. This exhibition (like Artists Call’s campaign) focuses mainly on El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.**

**Indigenous peoples of El Salvador include: Lenca, Nahua-Pipil, Maya, Cacaopera**

**Indigenous peoples of Guatemala include: Maya (such as K’iche’, Kaqchikel, Mam, Q’eqchi’ and Matan)**

**Indigenous peoples of Nicaragua include: the Rama, Mayagna and Miskitu peoples.**

# Selected Timeline

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## 1979

### Nicaragua

- Sandinista National Liberation Front leads insurrection to oust dictator Anastasio Somoza in the capital Managua
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## 1980

### El Salvador

- Right-wing troops assassinate national Archbishop Óscar Romero in the Cathedral of San Salvador
- The Salvadoran National Guard begins an occupation of the University of El Salvador in San Salvador, killing between 20 and 40 students and the university Director, Félix Ulloa Martínez [National Guard maintains the occupation until 1984]
- Several leftist organizations consolidate to form the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in opposition to the government
- Salvadoran troops returning from Nicaragua torture and kill three Maryknoll nuns and one civilian

### United States

- The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) is founded by conventions in Los Angeles and Washington, DC in October, eventually growing into a powerful national grassroots solidarity organization

## 1981

### Cuba

- Ana Mendieta leads a cultural tour in Cuba for artists and intellectuals including Lucy Lippard, Jerri Allyn, Martha Rosler, Suzanne Lacy, and others

### El Salvador

- Salvadoran and Honduran troops, some with weapons that the USA supplied, kill 20–30 Salvadoran refugees as they try to enter Honduras; another 189 refugees are reported missing
- The El Mozote massacre: the Atlacatl Battalion—a branch of the Salvadoran army trained by the USA to repress insurgency—kills around 1,000 civilians in the Morazán Department, a region in the country's northeast

### Honduras

- Contras based in Honduras with CIA backing begin attacks against Nicaragua's Sandinista government

### United States

- Ronald Reagan sworn in as president Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PAD/D) stages a demonstration in Washington, DC to protest the United States' interventions in El Salvador

## Selected Timeline (con't)

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### 1982

#### El Salvador

- A military party kills four Dutch journalists; different governments dispute whose party perpetrated the murders

#### United States

- *The New York Times* and its magazine and the *Washington Post* publish stories about the El Mozote massacre
- A contingent of around 1,000 artists join an anti-nuclear rally in New York City in conjunction with the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament
- Group Material's *¡LUCHAR! An Exhibition for the People of Central America* opens at El Taller Latino Americano (a Latin American community center in New York City); at the show's opening, artist Daniel Flores y Ascencio announces the establishment of the Institute of Arts and Letters of El Salvador in Exile (INALSE)
- In 1982 the South Side Presbyterian Church of Tucson, Arizona becomes the first U.S. church to declare itself a sanctuary for refugees fleeing turmoil in El Salvador and Nicaragua; the sanctuary movement expands rapidly, attracting support from Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious groups

### 1983

#### Grenada

- Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard launches a coup against Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, a leader of the New Jewel Movement, during which Coard's army kills Bishop and 10 of his supporters; the US quickly launches an invasion of Grenada, citing peacekeeping in the Americas as justification. The Reagan administration claims a great victory, calling it the first "rollback" of communist influence since the beginning of the Cold War.

#### Nicaragua

- The Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers (ASTC) organizes the interAmerican Conference on Central America; Lucy Lippard is among ~230 delegates from the USA and Canada in attendance

#### United States

- In New York City, Artists Call begins on January 22, the 52nd anniversary of La Matanza (the massacre), the Indigenous and peasant uprising in El Salvador, brutally suppressed by the military government and ends in March; more than 27 Artists Call chapters across the country take part across the same time period