



Over 10 Years Advocating for Justice at SOAW

Call To Action continues presence at School of Americas Watch (SOAW) as a founding organization of the Progressive Catholic Coalition (PCC).

Since 2004, Call To Action has been a sponsoring organization of the “Inclusive Catholic Liturgy”—with female and male priests presiding— at the national gathering of the School of the Americas Watch.

The SOA is a U.S. taxpayer-funded military training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia. The military training facility has turned out some of Latin America’s most notorious killers and continues to be implicated in human rights abuses. The school made headlines in 1996 when the Pentagon released training manuals used at the school that advocated torture, extortion and execution. Despite this, no independent investigation into the training facility has ever taken place.

Over two thousand students, prison abolitionists, teachers, nuns, immigrants, musicians, farmers, activists and workers from across the Americas mobilize at the gates of Fort Benning each year to advocate peace and nonviolence. This diverse group joins together to express our humanity and solidarity against the school of death and destruction based there.



This past year, those from Latin America and the Caribbean shared their stories with us about how they experienced and witnessed the bloody, violent and flagrant violations of human rights at the hands of graduates of the “School of Assassins”— a designation adopted by SOAW after the U.S Army changed the name of the school because of the negative attention caused by SOAW’s revealing the notorious record of SOA graduates in carrying out violations of human rights by graduates trained at the U.S. Army school.

Call To Action joins in sponsoring the Progressive Catholic Coalition by jointly funding an information table and the space for Eucharist. The information table at the gates of Ft. Benning shares information about church reform and the call for justice with thousands of participants in the School of the Americas Watch convergence.

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the Eucharistic celebration, representatives of the organizations sponsoring PCC offer materials about each of the organizations. This year, as in most years, SOAW participants came from as far away as Canada and Alaska; they came from as near as Duluth, Georgia. Veterans of, as well as those new to the movement, come with one intention: to overcome the injustice of having a tax-supported U.S. Army training school where hundreds of graduates from dozens of Latin American countries over the years have been implicated in human rights violations and unspeakable atrocities against the people of their own countries.

Over the years, the number of participants has grown. In the past three years funding by the sponsoring organizations of PCC, as well as from individuals, has allowed for reserving larger space in the Columbus Conference Center. In 2013, SOAW attracted a record number of over 300 participants—all ages and various faith backgrounds.

Letter from the Executive Director | New Beginnings



This time of the year embodies the air of a fresh start. As 2015 gets underway, we are invited to both look back and take stock of where we've been and look forward and dream about where we'll go. A better Church, we know, is on the horizon for all of us!

This edition of **News & Notes** does just that: reports on organizational advancements while keeping an eye on the work in front of us.

Also, throughout 2015 Call To Action will engage in an intense strategic planning process that will determine the direction of Call To Action going forward. Conversations within CTA's leadership groups recognize that Call To Ac-

tion needs to reinvent itself if we are to continue our momentum in advancing CTA's mission and vision. Long time chapter leaders, Caryl Callsen from California and Lena Woltering from Illinois offer a glimpse of conversations among grassroots CTA leaders from around the country.

Part of Call To Action's reinvention will include transforming Call To Action's board of directors. Over the last several years, representatives from each of the five CTA leadership groups (board, staff, 20/30 young adults, antiracism team, and CTA chapters) have studied and analyzed CTA's governance structures through a lens of antiracism and anti-oppression. Throughout 2015, CTA will experience a transformational shift from a self-perpetuating board of directors to a vision council where CTA's leadership groups and the wider CTA community choose the majority of representatives. Council discussions and decisions will be more transparent, CTA members will be

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more participative, and the vision council will be more accountable to the wider CTA community.

Additionally, this edition of **News & Notes** provides updates on our "Standing the with Sisters" effort, 2015 conference planning, Call To Action media work, and issues a calendar call for spring and summer events.

2015 promises to be an exciting year; I am so blessed to be on this journey with you!

Sincerely,

Jim FitzGerald
Executive Director

**2015 Call To Action
Conference - Milwaukee**

SAVE THE DATE!

NOVEMBER 6-8 - 2015



**LOVE RADICALLY.
LIVE FAITHFULLY.**

Standing with the Sisters

+ Ellen Euclide

In December, the official report of the Apostolic Visitation of U.S. communities of women religious announced what we already knew: even in the face of changing times, communities of women religious are an important and vibrant part of our Church.



Since it was announced in 2008, Sisters and lay Catholics across the U.S. did not hide their frustration with the demeaning, unnecessary and expensive visitation. Parallel to the Apostolic Visitation, the mandate against the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) further rallied Catholics to “Stand with the Sisters.” CTA chapters have tirelessly organized vigils, letters, online actions and petitions since the visitation was announced. Vatican officials writing the final report no doubt knew that U.S.

Catholics would be waiting to see if they'd heard our many stories of people whose lives had been impacted by the ministry of a nun.

Surely the Vatican officials also couldn't help but be impressed by the Sisters inspiring commitment to their work. Faced with the real challenges of redefining their structures and models in a changing world, and the financial challenges of an aging community, women religious are proud of what they've done and the vision they've mapped for the future. Confronted

with an unnecessary visitation, they found ways to demand respect and sought out opportunities for self-reflection and dialogue in the process. Over half the communities of women religious did not comply with all the demands of the process. Instead they researched their canonical rights, wrote letters describing their ministries, and outlined the ways their leadership structure exemplified the mandates of Vatican II. These are women who've long stood with the oppressed and know when it's important to call out sexism and unjust practices.

As we look toward a time of healing and a more equal dialogue between the Sisters and Vatican, we also know that the power of standing up is evident. The strength and dedication of the Sisters and of the laity who stand with them will continue to help us build a better church!

Ellen Euclide, Director of Programs, ellen@cta-usa.org or by calling 773.404.0004 x261.

Call To Action

IN THE NEWS

- WASHINGTON POST: Parents Don't Have to Choose Between Their Faith and LGBT Kid [Jan. 9, 2015](#)
- NCR: Jimmy Carter's Book & Conference Address Take Prophetic Stand for Women [Jan. 8](#)
- NCR: Bishop's Reflecton on “Racial Divide” [Jan. 5](#)
- PRESS RELEASE: Equally Blessed Coalition Invites Catholic Bishops to “Come Out” & Stand with Belgian Bishop [Dec. 31, 2014](#)
- THE GUARDIAN: Vatican Backs Down & Gives Mild Rebuke to American Nuns [Dec. 17](#)
- BUSTLE: “Nun Report” is Suprisingly Uplifting, But What about Those “Radical Feminist” Sisters? [Dec. 16](#)
- REUTERS: Vatican Report on U.S. Nuns is Conciliatory, Stresses Teachings [Dec. 16](#)

For complete media coverage, visit: www.cta-usa.org/media-center

Regional Chapter Liaison Team Looks to Future

+ Caryl Callsen & Lena Woltering

In preparation for constructive engagement with other stakeholders in the 2015 strategic planning process, members of CTA's Regional Liaison Team (regional chapter leaders and a staff member) met in Chicago in late October for a working retreat led by Mark Leach of Management Assistance Group. MAG is a consulting firm from Washington, D.C. which works exclusively with social justice organization to strengthen their effectiveness in addressing important issues.

Prior to the retreat, each team member conducted individual interviews with a small, but diverse group of people. They discussed their hopes for the future of the church, issues that are important to them, and effective characteristics of organizations. Most interviewees are not involved with CTA, but the themes that materialized were concerns that also engage many members.

The group examined the overall vision of CTA National and discussed its relevance and efficacy in today's world. Realizing the impact of the 24-hour news cycle and ever-expanding social media, it became evident that old ways of doing things no longer work and CTA would need to reinvent itself to meet the challenges that are on the horizon. Future models must include flexibility, a willingness to listen carefully, and effective and timely communication to constituents. The organization



must emphasize future directions in practical terms by being "issue based" and "campaign driven" in developing active programs that build commitment (like the well established Anti-Racism program) that broaden our constituency base.

Mark emphasized that we should not be afraid of failure because failure is an important step toward learning a better way of doing things. "Failing forward," "relevant" and "nimble" became words used repeatedly throughout the weekend. More collaboration with like-minded organizations will be crucial to get our message to a wider audience.

The recent Synod of Bishops on the Family became a focus for possible proactive engagement with other groups. Partnering with other organizations who are involved with diverse family issues

Of utmost importance in shaping and guiding the strategic planning process will be defining key questions to present to other stakeholders. How can we become more relevant? How can we proactively address issues, rather than react to them? How do we build relationships? How do we include flexibility (nimbleness) in our processes? How and what do we learn from failure?

and concerns will give more visibility to CTA's message that the "traditional family" (one mother, one father, and children) is no longer the only valid model.

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More information about chapter development and future directions will be forthcoming in the coming months - stay tuned for opportunities to participate!

For more information about chapters, visit: www.cta-usa.org/chapters

A Single Person's Perspective on Family

There's been a lot of talk this past year about the Synod on the Family! I was grateful when Call to Action invited me to provide a single person's perspective to the conversation on the family. There are so many important programs that happen within our parishes geared toward families with a mom, dad, and kids. How can the church be more welcoming to the many people who walk through the doors of Catholic parishes each week without a significant-other in tow? Here are three quick thoughts:

1. Challenge Your Own Assumptions

As a single person without children, I've learned that my local parish is a great place to meet people. However, it is tough to truly get to know someone beyond the niceties exchanged on Sunday morning! There are so many natural connections for parents – from religious education classes to that knowing glance between parents when calming a fussy toddler at the back of mass. Without those immediate connections, it is easy for singles to get lost in the crowd. As a result, we sometimes make assumptions and lump single people into stereotypes. Not all singles are a replica of the bachelor/bachelorette as portrayed on reality TV. Neither are they all boring, lonely, or creepy.

Most singles are interesting people, because they've had time to develop themselves in a different way. I know so many singles who love to read and travel, they have strong opinions, they like to cook, and they have a wide array of hobbies.

Single people are also incredibly generous, especially when it comes to opportunities for service and ministry. As you get to know single individuals

invite them to promote social justice programs, sing in the choir, lead bible study, or teach religious education.

It may take a bit of effort, but I challenge you to reach out to the single people in your life. You'll be surprised at the joys and struggles we share in common.

2. Use Language that Invites

As much as anyone else, singles want to be invited and involved in an active faith life. Take a close look at your website, newsletter, bulletin, and other communication pieces. Try to see it through the eyes of a single person and ask yourself, "If I was single, would I feel welcome here?" Consider the intended audience for each event or program. Is it for married couples? Families with children? Or is it open to everyone?

Be careful of exclusive language that suggests a program is geared toward families, kids, or couples if it is in fact open to everyone. Also, try to avoid special event ticket prices (ie. \$50/person or \$90/couple) that favors couples. I know a parish where they changed the "Valentine's Couples Dance" to the "Annual Winter Dance" after several recent widows expressed disappointment that they would no longer be able to attend. While they changed the name to be more inviting to all adults in the parish, they maintained their tradition of a special blessing for all married couples, and created a night for singles and couples of all ages to share community and have fun together.

3. Promote the Worthiness of All Vocations

I think one mistake that we continually fall into as a church is that we uphold marriage as the ideal vocation. Certainly, in our society,

there is an over-emphasis on the wedding day, which can minimize the discernment and preparation needed for a lifelong commitment to marriage.

When it comes to vocations, there is a tendency to assume that everyone will someday get married, or uplift religious life as an extraordinary call. No one vocation is better or holier than another. Perhaps then, it is essential to go back to our fundamental call as Christians. Every vocation begins at Baptism! We are all called to be disciples and to conform our lives to the Pascal Mystery – to imitate Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

What would our vocational discernment look like if we were first encouraged to achieve our greatest potential as disciples – to give ourselves fully to God in prayer, to serve the poor with generosity of time and treasure, to welcome those who are marginalized, to show compassion for the lonely and the grieving, etc. Our vocation is a response to the gifts God has given us, and it naturally flows from this call to discipleship – whether that is to marriage, priesthood, religious life, or single life. When we understand this, and live it out as a community, then everyone benefits.

Beth Knobbe is living her vocation as a single person and writes from her home in Chicago. She earned a Master of Divinity degree from Catholic Theological Union. She is the author of *Finding My Voice: A Young Woman's Perspective* (2009) and *Party of One: Living Single with Faith, Purpose, and Passion* (2011). Beth also blogs at www.bethknobbe.com.

Governance Committee Makes Recommendations

+ Kate Ward

CTA's Strategic Plan, adopted in 2010, committed CTA to reforming its own structures and practices to be consistent with CTA's values of transparency, inclusion, anti-racism and anti-oppression. In 2011, the Board formed a Governance Committee to make recommendations on updating CTA's governance structure in light of the strategic plan. The Governance Committee included members from 20/30, the Anti-Racism Team, chapters, and the Board. During a multi-year process, the Governance Committee drafted a proposal, solicited feedback from all these groups, and revised it multiple times. At its June meeting, the CTA Board adopted elements of this governance proposal. This article informs you about upcoming changes to CTA's governance structure that aim to make CTA more inclusive and anti-oppressive, consistent with the change we want to see in the Church and in the world.

The first change that most will notice is that the governing group formerly called the Board of Directors will now be called the **Vision Council**. This language reflects the fact that this group will help CTA discern and adhere to its vision. It will not operate like many traditional nonprofit boards who

focus mainly on fundraising and other operational matters.



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An additional change is that many members of the Vision Council will now be appointed by leadership groups within CTA. Formerly, the Board chose its own new members. This is not considered a "best practice" from a justice perspective because it is not transparent and can lead to overrepresentation of certain perspectives. Under the new governance plan, 20/30, the anti-racism team, and chapters will each appoint two members to the Vision Council. Each leadership group is asked to do this using a process that is as inclusive as possible, such as a consensus process. Representatives do not need to be members of the given leadership group (for example, 20/30 could choose to appoint someone older or younger than their normal age range) but representatives should be

prepared to communicate between the group that appoints them and the Vision Council.

Besides the six Vision Council representatives appointed by leadership groups, five will be appointed by the current Board or, in the future, the Vision Council itself. This will

help elevate leaders who are not located within one of those leadership groups and also help the Vision Council be balanced as to identities, talents and skills.

Down the road, four Vision Council representatives will be appointed by the CTA membership at large. Since this will require significant staff support and work to identify all CTA members, this aspect of the proposal will be implemented later.

Throughout 2015, this process will ask leadership groups to choose representatives so that a new governing body can assume leadership.

As the CTA governance and leadership structure transitions in the coming months, please keep the organization and all those called to serve in your thoughts and prayers. The Holy Spirit continues to guide and support our movement forward!

Call To Action Calendar

Home > Calendar of Events

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Calendar of Events

If you would like your event advertised on the calendar, fill out the [online submission form](#)

To view more information about an event, simply click on the event in the calendar.

Call To Action Event Calendar

Today | September 2014 | Print | Week | Month | Agenda

Sun 31 | Mon Sep 1 | Tue 2 | Wed 3 | Thu 4 | Fri 5 | Sat 6

Share your spring & summer events on the Call To Action Calendar!

See upcoming events & submit items online:

www.cta-usa.org/calendar

CONNECT

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Chapters

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CTA 20/30 Young Adult Community

Faith & Family Network

◀ Calendar of Events

FOCUS AREAS

Church Worker Justice

Lay Engagement

LGBT Justice

Racial Justice

Women and Girls Equality

Now Accepting 2015 Conference Program Proposals

Share your passion and expertise with the church justice movement! Consider presenting at the 2015 Call To Action conference November 6-8 in Milwaukee, WI.

To submit a proposal, please review the proposal guidelines online and fill out and submit the online proposal form at:

www.cta-usa.org/conference

For proposals to be fully considered, a completed program proposal must be submitted by **February 15, 2015**.

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**2015 Call To Action
Conference - Milwaukee**

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CALL TO ACTION

Inspire Catholics, Transform Church

News & Notes



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Thank you for your assistance in keeping our records current.