

**Comité Pro Uno * Hermandad Mexicana * Pilipino Workers Center * Transnational
Institute for Grassroots Research and Action**

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**Immigrant Groups Launch Western Union Boycott
Groups Announce Boycott at Press Conference in Los Angeles**

Los Angeles, CA – On September 10, Los Angeles area immigrant and community organizations joined the Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA) to launch a nationwide boycott against Colorado-based money transfer giant Western Union. This boycott comes two days before a general consumer boycott by immigrants. Groups accuse Western Union of charging exorbitant fees while failing to adequately reinvest in immigrant communities. A year's worth of negotiations with the company has not yielded results. Immigrants demand that Western Union abandon its predatory financial practices or face an ongoing boycott.

Francis Calpotura, Executive Director, Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA): “Last May, we gave Western Union 100 days to respond to our request that it abide by the Transnational Community Benefits Agreement, and exercise its leadership in the money transfer industry. Western Union ignored our demands. Their silence forces us to amplify our voices and our actions, and use our power as consumers to defend the interests of our transnational families and communities. Today we are launching the boycott campaign on Western Union and its subsidiaries Vigo and Orlandi Valuta. In the current political climate where immigrants are the scapegoats for failed economic and social policies, we choose to stand up for our right to live in dignity and fight for our families.”

Gerardo Vasquez, “Tres por Uno” Project Coordinator, La Federación Oaxaqueña: “‘Tres por Uno’ is a drop in the bucket. Western Union makes billions from Mexicans and they give us pennies. It’s time for Western Union to reinvest meaningfully in our communities.”

Hashi Abdi, Director, Somali Action Alliance: “An immigrant worker earning minimum wage must work a full week to pay off a year’s worth of the company’s fees and commissions. Although an individual money transfer costs Western Union less than \$5 (dropping to \$3.27 for second and subsequent transactions), the company charges more than \$20. The World Bank estimates Western Union could cut its fees by one-third and still retain profits comparable to its competitors.”

Gwen Gampon, Local Trustee of the United Steel Workers of America (USWA): “I sent a thousand dollars to my family in Hawaii and was charged \$79.99 by Western Union. This is grand theft.”

After the press conference, more than a dozen organizations marched to a nearby Western Union, one of 42 L.A.-area Western Union stores owned by Fred Kunick. Representatives from these organizations delivered to him a letter they had signed, asking Mr. kunick to pull Western Union from his stores and honor the boycott. The Western Union boycott will be launched in immigrant communities nationwide beginning September 17. See www.boycottwesternunion.net for more information on local boycott activities.

Comité Pro Uno, Hermandad Mexicana, and Pilipino Workers Center are part of the Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA), a national network of 158 immigrant organizations working together to clean up the practices of the money transfer industry to ensure community reinvestment. Mujeres Unidas, Union de Vecinos, and USWA – Local 675 were additional co-sponsors of the Sept. 10 press conference in Los Angeles.

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