



**Press Statement by Francis Calpotura, Executive Director, Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA), September 10, 2007**

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. We asked them to lower their fees, set a fair exchange rate, and commit to reinvest \$1 per transaction to a Fund that benefits transnational families. We made this appeal directly to its Board of Directors and Shareholders, and through thousands of phone calls, emails, and postcards coming from at least seventy cities in the United States since May.

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.

Today, we ask consumers to use other money transfer services aside from Western Union, Vigo or Orlandi Valuta to send remittances to their loved ones. We understand that this might cause some inconvenience in the beginning, but this is the only way we can deliver a powerful message to Western Union. This is our economic power as immigrants and consumers.

We're also asking those businesses that serve as Western Union agents in our communities to honor the boycott and place an "Out of Order due to Boycott" sign over their Western Union advertisement. They are part of our communities, and we invite them to join us in this historic effort. But for those who choose to support Western Union's predatory relationship with our communities, the campaign will conduct an informational picket of these businesses and urge its customers to boycott the store.

This campaign is about a better life for our families and communities. 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.

As of today, there are 158 immigrant organizations from 66 cities in the United States that are part of this effort, along with migrant networks in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The campaign has coordinators in nine regions in the U.S., and more are in the works. Local coalitions are forming as we speak. We are inaugurating the [www.boycottwesternunion.net](http://www.boycottwesternunion.net) website for the campaign, and we're planning to launch a global remitters' association next year in Mexico City.

The vision for a brighter future for our families and communities that is at the heart of this campaign is gaining new recruits every day. Western Union's intransigence has unleashed a new chapter of immigrant action—one that draws from the power of our money and our love.