**U.S. Network for Democracy in Brazil**

**Holds Second National Meeting in Washington, D.C.**



Over fifty national leaders of the U.S. Network for Democracy in Brazil met at Georgetown University on Saturday, October 19, 2019 for the Network’s Second National Meeting. The purpose of the gathering was to evaluate the Network’s efforts since its founding meeting at Columbia Law School in New York City on December 1, 2018 and to make plans for broadening and strengthening its activities nationwide.

**Opening Session**

The event opened with greetings from Bryan McCann, Professor of Brazilian History at Georgetown University, who hosted the event. Gladys Mitchell-Walthour, President of the Brazilian Studies Association and Associate Professor of African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, emphasized the importance of doing work to support Afro-Brazilians and denounced the increase in state violence against people of color in Brazil. A representative of the Landless Peasants Movement (MST) described the attacks on rural social movements in Brazil, the fires in the Amazon region, and the need for international solidarity. Natalia de Campos, a member of Defend Democracy in Brazil/New York, related activities in the New York area, including the actions of those who protested the fact that the Brazil-U.S. Chamber of Commerce gave Bolsonaro “The Person of the Year Award” and who managed to block his visit to New York. Andrew Miller of Amazon Watch discussed the nationwide concern about the current deforestation of the Amazon and the assault on indigenous people. Jean Wyllys, former Brazilian Congressman and currently a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, then gave a rousing talk about the importance of resisting the current government, its policies and fake news, and developing international solidarity.

**National Report and Plans for the Future**

These remarks were followed by an overview of the Network’s national activities since December by James N. Green, Professor of Brazilian History at Brown University and National Coordinator of the U.S. Network for Democracy in Brazil. He reminded attendees that the U.S. Network was democratic, decentralized, and non-partisan and that its three main goals were to:

(1) inform the US public about the current situation in Brazil; (2) defend the progressive social, economic, political and cultural advances achieved in Brazil in recent years; and (3) support social movements, community organizations, ONGs, and universities, among institutions, that are currently at risk in Brazil. Green acknowledged people who organized over 50 events throughout the United States around March 14, the anniversary of the assassinations of Marielle Franco and Anderson Gomes, and activists in New York City, especially Defend Democracy in Brazil, who played a crucial role in Bolsonaro’s decision not to come to the City to receive his award. Due to Network links with the group in Austin, Texas, we were also able to support organizing a protest in Dallas, where an alternative event was set up to honor Bolsonaro.

Green explained that approximately 1,400 people receive the Network’s newsletter, which represents contacts in 234 colleges and universities in 45 states, as well as 40 affiliated groups and collectives. The Network has already set up a website, [www.democracybrazil.org](http://www.democracybrazil.org), and a [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/democracybrazil/). He described the International Conference on Democracy in Brazil held at Brown University in April and emphasized the importance of advocacy efforts in the U.S. Congress, where Network members and their allies, especially the Center for Economic and Policy Research, the Washington Office on Latin America and Amazon Watch, have supported seven Congressional letters bringing forth issues about current policies in Brazil. He completed his report with news that fifteen Congressional representatives have introduced a motion in the House of Representatives (House Resolution No. 594) that condemns Bolsonaro’s government.

**Small Group Discussions: What is Happening and What is to Be Done?**

The gathering then broke into small groups to share experiences in local collectives, analyze the current situation in Brazil, and plan for the future. In a report-back session to the entire body, it was agreed that the Network needed to improve communications among different groups, facilitate translations of important material from Brazil, and understand that we face challenges that might requires years of activism.

After lunch, the body broke up into different Working Groups: Afro-Brazilians/Blacks; Land and Agrarian Issues, Environment, and Indigenous; LGBT Activism; Media; Religious Groups; and Working with Congress. (A full report of the results of these discussions will be issued in a subsequent newsletter). The gathering then divided into four workshops—Social, Mainstream, and Alternative Media; Congressional Work; Website/Observatory; and Street Actions and Demonstrations—where facilitators offered skills and ideas about organizing.

**Outcomes of the Meeting**

The gathering then approved four resolutions:

1. Invite Gladys Mitchell-Walthour to be the National Co-Coordinator of the Network;
2. Continue responding to the situation in Brazil with protests, meetings, forums, tours, film showings, etc.;
3. Organize a national campaign to support House Resolution No. 594 on Brazil; and
4. Carry out a major fund-raising campaign to establish the Office for Democracy in Brazil that will operate in Washington, DC. We have a goal of raising $100,000 a year to staff the office. We have already raised $20,000. The Network will also be setting up a GoFundMe campaign to raise money from members and supporters.

There will be a **West Coast meeting** of the Network at **San Diego State University** on **February 7-8, 2020** and a **Midwest meeting** of the Network at the **University of Oklahoma** on **April 16-17, 2020**.

*Prepared by James N. Green*