



PRESENTATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

MARCH 3, 2023

Excellencies:

Good afternoon, I am Deborah Stoute Lynch, outgoing president of the Organization of Women of the Americas (OWA). With me are some members of the final Board of Directors – Stefano Sciolli – Vice President; Monica Revilla – Corresponding Secretary; and Charmaine Ramdin – Advisor.

As you are all aware, OWA has been dissolved and sadly so, in this its 25th year of existence. As has been its *raison d'être*, we take this opportunity to share remaining funds after settlement of existing liabilities with deserving entities - five in the Caribbean and seven in Latin America - the work of which focuses on assisting women and children in need. OWA's contribution to charities in Peru – the host nation of the 2022 General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) was made on February 8th, its 25th birthday.

It is therefore our pleasure to formally present OWA's contributions to you this evening as representatives of the charities in each of your countries.

Presentation of letters and cheque to Caribbean Countries – Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago

***Presentation of letters and cheque to Latin American Countries
– El Salvador, Guatemala and Suriname***

Thank you all for your support of OWA over the years.

I now take this opportunity to share the following on the dissolution of OWA, written by Charmaine Ramdin – a member of OWA for its entire existence.

OWA’s Dissolution Statement

“The Organization of Women of the Americas was founded with lofty ideals of using the collective status and unique proximity to the levers of power accorded to the spouses of the Permanent Representatives and those of Observer States of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Our goal was to use our influence and close connections to raise awareness and to raise funds to help needy women and children up and down the hemisphere.

We launched the organization in 1997 with broad support from North, Central, South America and the Caribbean. For many years, we maintained a large, diverse, and active corps of members who accomplished some pretty amazing feats, including intimate teas, large formal galas, several other events and most notably, an annual Food Festival Of The Americas that attracted thousands of visitors, and allowed us to showcase the beauty, diversity, and remarkable talent of our hemisphere, and our fabulous cuisine!

These events raised tens of thousands of dollars that we proudly distributed to a myriad of causes, from our first donation to the Mary Center here in DC to numerous other organizations in the rest of the Americas and to the OAS itself including the Museum of the Americas.

But over the years, the time, effort, bureaucracy, and expense of holding such events have swelled, while contributions of Member States have become smaller and smaller. But it is the most precious of resources - volunteer time - that has suffered the most. The capacity and the willingness for Member States and their representatives to contribute the critical hours necessary to maintain OWA has fallen to critically low levels. The responsibility of running the entire organization and its ambitious programs began falling to just a very small number of Board Members, who quickly became overwhelmed, and burned out.

Concurrently, the enormous output of time and resources needed to continue the level of excellence we demand of ourselves as spouses and close associates of the Ambassadors, simply cannot justify the decreasingly small amount of funds we have to give away after paying all the expenses incurred even to use the facilities of the OAS itself.

And so, after several years of ongoing discussion and deep evaluation, especially in the past two years of Covid, we have come to the solemn conclusion that keeping OWA running is simply not sustainable. It has been a remarkable two decades-

plus for which we can all take great pride in our accomplishments, but the time has come to put our individual and collective energies elsewhere, and gracefully dissolve the Organization.”

Parting is such sweet sorrow. Thank you, Charmaine, for your time, interest and passion.

Again, to all who have served OWA, those who have supported and patronized the various initiatives, we express our sincere gratitude.

It remains our hope that as an important hemispheric organization, the OAS will not only consider - but develop its own charitable foundation that through the combined membership of Permanent and Observer Missions, staff and their families can continue the work of OWA to the benefit of charitable and non-governmental organizations across the Caribbean and Latin America.

Thank you.