

Lois Martin (September 1934 – December 2020)



Lois passed away in Tucson, Arizona on December 28th, 2020 at the age of 86.

She was a humanitarian, community organizer, social worker, high school teacher, college professor, and immensely loyal friend. Her compassion has had an enormous influence on countless people, plants, and animals.

Her devotion to community organizing manifested in many roles throughout her life—as a clinical social worker, child welfare worker, and social services coordinator; as a girls secondary school teacher in Tanzania; as a university professor and the founder and co-coordinator of a university peace institute; as an international human rights observer following the military take-over of Honduras; and as a key member of the Central American solidarity and sanctuary networks in Massachusetts.

Lois designed and built a home by hand in Middlefield, Massachusetts. She brought students to India and Central America, where she kept friends across decades. She taught social work for many years at Salem State College.

In her own words

Upon retiring in 2010 from teaching at Salem State College (now University), I moved into the Arizona sun. Aside from the sun, I was drawn to Tucson where I hoped to be able to delve heavily into Latin America activism—a continuation of the focus that had occupied my spare time for many years. In fact, I could not have made a better choice.

I work with Tucson-based humanitarian organizations, particularly with [Humane Borders](#) and [No More Deaths](#), on both sides of the border. Much of my time is spent in activities from walking migrant trails, putting out water and bandaging feet, to developing a national network to assist deported people and their families, lobbying, writing letters, etc.



Comments from those she worked with in Arizona

“Her whole life seemed to be a statement about looking out for others, especially the underdog,” Jim Marx said.

She took water to remote areas with the aid group Humane Borders to help migrants survive the brutal trek through the desert in Southern Arizona, where more than 3,300 migrants have died in the past 20 years.

When officials tried to put the brakes on leaving water on federal land a decade ago, “Lois was insistent that we continue,” Marx said, calling her a “feisty, passionate person.”

She also was a fixture on the wooden benches at the federal courthouse in Tucson, taking notes on the proceedings of Operation Streamline, a fast-track prosecution program for migrants that critics say amounts to assembly-line justice.

“She didn’t care about social justice from a distance. She showed up to do the work where it was needed,” said Leslie Carlson, who volunteers with the [End Streamline Coalition](#).

“She also took time to understand the issues in depth and then made well-informed comments or opinions,” Carlson said. “She was kind but also fearless, and a role model for how to continue to make a difference in the world as an older person. I am missing her a lot.”

Just a week before she died, Martin was out placing water in the desert, said Sarah Roberts, a volunteer with No More Deaths *Excerpted from Arizona Daily Star, January 2, 2021*

Remembrances from CIE colleagues

I remember Lois being a warm, thoughtful colleague – always prepared to share her experience while posing critical questions with warmth and respect. I was impressed, but not surprised, that she continued in her later years to empathize with and work for the poor and marginalized in the southwest. We have lost a friend and an advocate! **Mark Lynd**



Lois dedicated her whole life to selfless service of helping those less fortunate. After years of service in multiple countries, she taught at Salem State College until she retired. Upon retirement she then spent a decade as an activist in helping migrants crossing the border on foot in Arizona. Her life exemplifies in the best possible way the values for which CIE stands. She is an inspiration for all of us. **D. R. Evans**

I remember that Lois brought so much knowledge, experience, compassion and humor to CIE. I learned a lot from her about the many challenges confronting her immigrant and other working class students. I appreciate that Lois never stopped working for justice or building community. Lois Martin *¡presente!* **Mary Jo Connelly**