

Cuernavaca Centre for Intercultural Dialogue on Development



EL CCIDD Newsletter



CCIDD MISSION- *To provide opportunities for churches and other groups from the U.S. and Canada to encounter the presence of God in the struggle for Justice in the Americas and to empower them to work for social transformation*

*“My Cid spoke spiritedly,
-I pray to God and to the spiritual Father,
you who leave homes and lands for me,
that before I die, I may do something good for you,
what you are giving up, you recoup two times over.”*

Excerpt from ‘The Song of the Cid’, 12th century, Author unknown

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GREETINGS FROM SR. KATHLEEN LONG, DIRECTOR OF CCIDD

Greetings to all CCIDD participants from many years!

I write to share some events here from our center in Cuernavaca. As always I am grateful to God for the many blessings which have come our way at CCIDD.

This year we welcomed a new parish group, St. Bonaventure Catholic Church from Calgary, Alberta. Fr. Wilbert Chin, Pastor of the group accompanied a group of adults in March. One of their action plans is to send another group here this year and to continue to send parish groups in 2012. This idea was generated earlier by Fr. Wilbert and Fr. Fred Monk who visited CCIDD in October 2010. We are grateful for this new partnership. This was a group of professional adults who opened their hearts in new ways to global justice.

Another new adventure for us is to welcome Renessa Tang Pack who hails from Trinidad in May 2011 as part of Dominican Volunteers International. As a Dominican sister I have connections with this organization which is centered in Rome. Various volunteers make a year commitment to live with Dominicans and work with them. Each volunteer is sent by a Dominican group and received by Dominicans in their work and daily life. Enjoy Renessa's introduction to herself in the newsletter. We also welcome two students from the USA- Ryan Wilson and Jessica Keating who just arrived at CCIDD this month. Ryan is a student of Global Christianity at Mercer University/ McAfee School of Theology and also a Youth Minister at Parkway Baptist Church who will be at CCIDD as an intern for three weeks to fulfil his university practicum. Jessica Keating is enrolled in the University of Notre Dame Master of Divinity Program and will be a CCIDD volunteer for two months.

In gratitude I recognize Maggie Kaiser from our program staff. Maggie has just returned to the US after 21 months with us at CCIDD. Many groups enjoyed Maggie's expertise and excellent professional skills on our staff. She opened her heart to everyone she met here. Like other staff members who come for short term service she immersed herself in the Mexican culture and facilitated learning for our group participants. We at CCIDD wish many blessings upon Maggie as she continues further studies.

In faith and resistance our Center promotes sustainable change and systemic change to make the world more just and equitable for all. We have encouraged groups to engage in promoting the UN Millennium Development Goals. A few years remain as 2015 is the goal for completion. Check out their web page in Canada and the US to see your government's commitments to this significant matter to work to eradicate extreme poverty, promote primary education and gender equality, and provide for those with HIV AIDS and other valuable goals. Check out their web page in Canada and the US to see your government's commitments to these significant issues; to work to eradicate extreme poverty, promote primary education and gender equality, and provide for those with HIV AIDS and other valuable goals.

All people are called to promote these goals and act to make your governments accountable for attaining them. The Mexican people who struggle to meet basic needs will be positively impacted if these goals mature over the course of the next few years. Your effort is needed now.

Additionally many US citizens and others from Canada to Latin America are working to close the infamous SOA, School of the Americas (WHINSEC as it is called). Currently the strategic plan is to encourage President Obama to sign an executive order to close down this military training school for Latin Americans. As a Nobel Peace Prize laureate he is called to make a change! Contact the web page, to see the immediate actions needed!!

A system of violence has permeated Mexico these last years. Significant Mexican groups have been organizing and working to promote peace and nonviolence. At CCIDD we educate our participants about these various endeavors for peace. Mexico does not need more military assistance or military equipment from the US. We need a change in the system of domination with arms. How can we who believe in nonviolence promote this change? The selling of arms, weapons of all kinds is a lucrative business and it is part of U.S. national policy. US and Canadian travel alerts against Mexico have negatively impacted the country economically. Tourism and schools for international students, youth and adults is a major economic reality for Mexico. Could it be that that these travel alerts are another form of oppression against the Mexican economy as NAFTA has been? We at CCIDD are working against this ethic of violence as we promote systems of dialogue and collaboration to foster change to a culture of peace and compassion. Join us to promote the dignity and well being of all citizens through peace and nonviolence. Be informed, come join us at CCIDD.

Thank you for your solidarity with us at CCIDD and our Mexican partners. God bless you! Enjoy the newsletter.

Sister Kathy Long O.P.



Welcome to CCIDD:- l-r: Ryan Wilson, Jessica Keating and Renessa Tang Pack

COMMUNITY CLEAN UP DAY AT LA ESTACION, CUERNAVACA

By Molly Porth



On April 20, 2011, a typically scorching Cuernavaca afternoon, more than 40 people of various ages and nationalities gathered in the La Estacion section of Cuernavaca to pick up trash and recycling off the streets. It was the day before Earth Day, and what is known as National Community Day (NCD) at my alma mater, Saint Joseph's University (Phila., PA). The NCD committee had asked me to organize a chapter of the worldwide day of service in my current home of Mexico. I went directly to CCIDD, and we collaborated in planning a day of trash pickup in the impoverished neighborhood known as La Estacion.

The day fell during Holy Week, and therefore we were pleasantly surprised and encouraged when droves of children showed up during their school vacation, to help beautify their dusty streets. Besides school children, parents showed up, along with many women from El Proyecto, the community center in La Estacion. Even a few elderly women came with their buckets and brooms, hardly lifting their heads as they worked away the afternoon.

The group convened at El Proyecto, began the activities there, and then snaked through the neighborhood, ending on the original road in the community next to the abandoned train station. Smiles abounded and laughter sounded from all directions; who knew picking up trash could be so fun? The group grew larger as outsiders observed and joined in on the fun.

By the end of the afternoon, piles of recycling had been collected and sorted into plastics, cardboard and metal, put aside to be sold later. The profits of the recycling efforts will go toward a community cultural outing to the town of Cuautla, which was another stop on the train that passed through La Estacion throughout the 20th century until its suspension.

National Community Day 2011/Earth Day/La Estacion Trash Pickup 2011 was a definite success, and will go down as one of my favorite memories from my year in Mexico. Thanks CCIDD!

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA STUDENTS ON ASSIGNMENT AT CCIDD

By Patricia Cabello Capistran



A group of university students from the University of British Columbia at CCIDD (From left to right Jordan Wong, Jonathan Tang, Danisa Blaser, Parveen Sehra, Alexandra Knott, Kayli Koep and Kathleen James)

This summer we will be hosting a group of seven students from the University of British Columbia, Canada. They came to CCIDD with many hopes and expectations and a very interesting project about immigration. The group will be here for 3 months, and during this time they'll have the opportunity to have a better understanding and critical appreciation of complex issues such as poverty, the effects of immigration on family and at a community level and also the immigration policies of Canada and USA. The group will be here for 3 months and during this time they will have the opportunity to develop a better understanding and critical appreciation of complex issues such as poverty, the effects of immigration on family and at a community level and also the immigration policies of Canada and the USA.

During their stay at CCIDD, the UBC students will find ways to use their knowledge and skills and immerse themselves in the social, political, cultural and economic reality of Mexico. ~~ia-~~

CCIDD'S goal is to provide them with tools to utilize in order to enhance their theoretical knowledge of social justice and human rights issues, to assist them in gaining a greater awareness of social injustices, thereby equipping them to promote education for social change when they return to their homes and the University of British Columbia community.

All CCIDD programs focus on individual and community empowerment to promote social justice and to create an awareness of human rights. CCIDD has meaningful connections with Mexican families in different communities here in Cuernavaca. The UBC students will be developing their project in urban and rural areas, visiting families and discovering tangible ways to contribute to nongovernmental organizations (such as CCIDD) to implement social justice. This will enable them to make positive changes in Mexican communities while learning the meaning of community life

The UBC students will also have the great opportunity to learn Spanish and to practice the Spanish they already know. It is the opportunity of a lifetime for them!

Hopefully by the end of their project they will have developed a better understanding of the struggles people face being a foreigner in another country, irrespective of their various nationalities, races, languages and gender. Furthermore I hope they engage with this complex issue in an atmosphere of respect while working together to transform the world into a better place for every human being.

UBC STUDENTS SHARE ABOUT THEIR SERVICE EXPERIENCES AT LA ESTACION AND JIUTEPEC COMMUNITIES

By the UBC group - Kayli, Alex, Jordan, Jonathan, Kathleen, Parveen and Danisa



Hello and Saludos a todos!

It has been a little over two weeks since we arrived here at CCIDD and so much has happened in that time! The staff has been so kind in welcoming us into their community and we feel very at home here already. We are here for three months working on a project surrounding the theme of immigration. Our project requires that we get to know the families that CCIDD works closely with so that we can develop a deeper understanding and their realities and discover their stories.

In order to build these relationships and connections, we have been participating in various service projects in the surrounding communities. These experiences have been extremely rewarding for us and we hope our work has been equally valuable for those we have worked with. We spent a day getting our hands dirty, working in the compost center in Jiutepec, and we were deeply moved by the passion of the volunteers who ran the centre and their dedication to preserving the earth. In Jiutepec we also volunteered to paint the walls and fence of a primary school - Primaria Jose Maria Morelos y Pavo. We created quite a stir there attracting the curiosity of the young children and teachers. Additionally we have participated in breakfast programs in both Jiutepec and La Estacion in which we helped the mothers of the communities to serve breakfast to over 150 children. We also had an interesting experience in Cuentepec, where we spent the day assisting the local women in a family to source earth including clay from the ground, to sift it and then mix it. The highlight of the day was actually moulding our own creations- from decorative ornaments to pottery from the clay.



Jonathan and Kayli assisting by sifting earth



Our group moulding clay with local women of Cuentepec

We find it is in these moments, where we are truly immersed in everyday life in Mexico that we are beginning to form genuine relationships with our new extended community members. These service days have been invaluable learning experiences for us. Furthermore, they have provided us with the opportunity to collaborate with people in various communities around Cuernavaca while learning about their lives and the reality of life in Mexico. Inevitably, these service days are about making connections, and strengthening community bonds. Despite the language barrier, or perhaps even because of it, we find things to laugh about every day. We are incredibly excited to be here in Cuernavaca, contributing to the amazing work that CCIDD does and we are eager to absorb all we can during our time here!

REFLECTIONS OF A VOLUNTEER WITH DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL ON MISSION AT CCIDD- CUERNAVACA CENTRE FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE ON DEVELOPMENT, MEXICO

By Renessa Tang Pack



At CCIDD, (From left to right Sr. Aline, Me, Sr. Rosa and Sr. Kathy)

After an entire day of travelling from my home country Trinidad (a Caribbean island north of Venezuela) from early in the morning of Saturday 14th May 2011, through Miami, I arrived at my mission destination – the CCIDD the Cuernavaca Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Development in Cuernavaca, Mexico around 11 pm. I departed from Piarco International Airport Trinidad at about 7:30 am that morning after getting about three hours sleep that night due to all the excitement about leaving and spending time with my loved ones before my departure. I arrived at Miami International Airport at about 11 30 am. This was my first time passing through Miami to get a connecting flight to Mexico City. I was overwhelmed at the sheer size of the airport and I underestimated the length of time it would take me to get to the different checkpoints, clear immigration, claim my baggage, clear customs and board my flight. There was an unusually large number of people travelling through the airport that day resulting in long lines to to clear immigration and one could not easily just push ahead. At around 12:30 pm, close to my flight time of 1:00 pm I was clearing US immigration and being subjected to security checks. Due to my late clearing, by the time I reached the departure gate I missed my flight and was informed that I would have to get the later 3:30 pm flight. After calling CCIDD to inform them of this, I had two hours to kill and spent the time getting better acquainted with the enormous Miami airport and browsing through the airport stores.

One reflection I had during my plane ride to Mexico City was inspired by reading a homily by St. Gregory the Great, which homily on *Christ the Good Shepherd* was reprinted in that Sunday's Trinidad Catholic News. St. Gregory in his homily referred to a *"foolish traveller who is so distracted by the pleasant*

meadows through which he is passing that he forgets where he is going". While St. Gregory uses this in the context of not allowing the charm of success (whether fame or fortune) to seduce us pilgrims on earth from the focus of building and reaching the kingdom of heaven through the gate of Christ, his words spoke to me in my own travel context at the airport. At Miami due to circumstances of my flight delay, I was able to put myself in the shoes of the foolish traveler passing through the pleasant meadows of Miami, momentarily losing sight of the fact that Miami was not my final destination. My final DVI mission destination -CCIDD, Cuernavaca awaited and Sor Lucia of DVI and my hosts at CCIDD in Mexico would not be amused if I got lost and went astray. I had become distracted and overwhelmed by the many attractions Miami airport had to offer. After this distraction I regained focus in time and left the alluring sights of the airport and smells of the Miami restaurants to ensure that I caught my next flight and would not forever remain a lost sheep in the complex maze that was the Miami airport. After clearing the departure gate and boarding the plane to Mexico City, the flight was delayed for an hour and a half which resulted in me not arriving at Mexico City Airport until around 9:00 pm.

Isabel Reyes Armella, a program staff member at CCIDD kindly met me at Mexico City Airport and accompanied me on a two hour bus ride to Cuernavaca during which I mostly slept and chatted with Isabel. Upon reaching the Cuernavaca bus station I was warmly welcomed by Sr Kathy of CCIDD and transported to the CCIDD – a five minute ride from the Cuernavaca bus station. During my first night in the City of the Eternal Spring – nickname for the city, strangely enough, other than the need to adjust my ear drums to the change in altitude in this hilly city, I did feel comfortable as if I was at home. All of the persons I have met so far have been so friendly and warm. On Sunday I officially meet the group of seven students here from University of British Columbia Canada who are here for three months to study immigration which is a subject that interests me immensely. I was previously interested in the DVI Ciudad Juarez House of Immigrants' project which was recently terminated due to the lack of viability of the program. So here is a new opportunity to delve into the topic!! For the three months that they are here I will be sharing my knowledge and ideas on immigration with them and I will also be enriched by their research and ideas. Also I met the retired Dominican Sisters of the Incarnate Word, Sisters Aline, Jacqueline and Rosa who reside at CCIDD and the other persons on the CCIDD staff. Contrary to what I expected previously, I was eased into the program – so rather than being a Program Staff Member right away I was allowed to be a participant in my first ten day cross cultural immersion experience to be exposed to what is entailed. During the first four days of this experience which started on Monday, two days after I arrived, I was exposed to the critical education philosophy of Paulo Freire, social analysis in a cultural context, field trips to an impoverished community in Mexico, an exciting Mexican history lesson by Professor Ross Gandy who is a History and Political Science professor at UNAM, Base Christian Communities, United Artisans cooperative and the Zapatista movement.

For the next three days of the immersion program i.e. from Friday to Sunday I had to excuse myself to accompany Sr Kathy and Sr Rosa to Puebla for the 15th meeting of the Dominican Justice and Peace Commission in Mexico. I had an enjoyable time meeting all the members of the Dominican family-priests, nuns, sisters and laypersons and I believe they were equally pleased to meet someone from Trinidad and to be exposed also to the culture and religious contacts of my home country. I was exposed not only to understanding and sharing ideas in Spanish on how to move forward to implement justice

and peace in Mexico but also tasted some delicious food central to the Mexican culture such as ‘pozole’ and ‘chulapas’.

After my three day trip to Puebla I came back in time to do a service exercise which entailed assisting a poor family in Cuernavaca in building a wall of their home and meeting Ray Plankey, the founder of CCIDD. His personal life story inspired me and confirmed that I was following the right path in leaving my job and going on DVI mission. Interestingly , Ray Plankey, after quitting his boring yet very well- paying job as an engineer started off mission as a papal volunteer being sent by the Benedictines and making his life work that of a Catholic lay missionary. He eventually founded CCIDD in 1977 to sensitise North Americans and Canadians about social justice issues in Latin America. I also had the opportunity to listen to talks by Sr. Kathy Long O.P and Miguel Garcia and share from my own knowledge and spirituality about the central figure in Catholic Mexico- Our Lady of Guadalupe who is the hope, strength and protecting mother of the Mexican people and a unifying aspect of their culture. My retreat ended on Tuesday and there was a final celebration with the program participants (from Loyola University). I believe that they go back to the United States definitely enriched by their time here at CCIDD and eager to spread the word to their family and friends about the reality of the poor and oppressed in Mexico. We were also enlightened as to the misrepresentation of the Mexican situation by the media and the need for critical thought. What stood out for me in my retreat experience was the concept of caracoles – snails in the Zapatista movement in Chiapas where independent communities have been formed with their own education, health and communication systems related to their culture. Unlike modern democracies their rate of turnover of power is much faster – every three to six months they change leaders – who are elected by all the members of the community so that power does not become centralized in any one person for too long.

During my year on mission my responsibilities as a Program Staff Member at CCIDD will range from assisting in the planning and facilitating of cross cultural immersion experiences for university students, church groups and Dominican family members, conducting spiritual reflection sessions for some of the groups, being Editor of the CCIDD Newsletter and generally assisting at the Center. For the year I will also be assisting Sr. Kathy with the Dominican Justice and Peace Commission here in Mexico and attending the various meetings. Also some of the students and staff at CCIDD have also taken up an interest in learning to play the guitar so there are also plans ahead here to formulate a guitar club which I hope to be a part of. I look forward to the rest of my year ahead with Sr. Kathy Long O.P, Sisters Aline, Jacqueline and Rosa, my fellow program staff members Isabel Reyes, Carlos Cruz , Michelle Flores and the rest of the CCIDD staff sharing in community, learning and imparting information about social justice issues especially as pertains to Mexico. I also wish Maggie Kaiser, past Program Staff Member who I was able to meet and chat with before she left on 28th May 2011 for the United States, God’s richest blessings in her future endeavors.

COMMUNITY IS A DESIRE

By Carlos Alejandro Cruz

Community is a desire that is manifested in direct or indirect ways. Community relations take on certain definite characteristics depending on the social, economical, political location of the community and the broader society. This article is about community relations and organizing in La Estacion- a squatter settlement in downtown Cuernavaca. Even though Mexican society is experiencing the militarization of the state and heavy social unrest due to the extreme levels of violence, the social fabric of this community has not been broken.

CCIDD has been working with the community in La Estacion since 1975. During this time CCIDD has gotten to know and work with many families. I have had the chance to work with Juan Manuel a social worker with whom CCIDD has been collaborating. One of the many things I've learned has been a new and innovative approach to community building and organizing called social illusionism.

It basically takes an organic approach to building relations and community projects. There are no rules, times or schedules and the main motivator is enthusiasm. Different community actors come together to collaborate and participate. The most important thing is that nothing is impossible.

Our community building adventures have taken us to many places. One of our trips was to a local water park, which the community is trying to make come back alive. A few of us CCIDD members and our partners Juan Manuel and Eric Friend attended this trip along with some of the women and children from La Estacion. It was nice day to come together and to share food, sun and some quality time together.



(Some of the La Estacion community and CCIDD members at the water park - Photo courtesy Juan Manuel)



Our group at Juan Manuel's house in Ocotepc



Mushroom house in Ocotepc

On our second adventure as a group we went to Juan Manuel's house in Ocotepc, Cuernavaca. His house is eco- friendly. There is a water retention and storage system and water recycling. He also has a dry bathroom, that uses ash and sand which is a better alternative to using gallons and gallons of water every day to flush down waste. With a dry bathroom human waste gets turned into compost that can be used for many things. The community of La Estacion was very interested and fascinated at the same time. What really caught their attention was the mushroom house. The mushroom house maintains the heat and the moisture needed to grow edible mushrooms. A key aspect of this project is to develop an interest in ecology and self sustainability though interaction and community building.

On our latest adventure we went to a natural water spring called Ojos de Agua which is about an hour's drive south of Cuernavaca. Mothers and their children from La Estacion and our University of British Columbia students all embarked on this adventure. It was a chance to build memories, relations and bonds to make a better working and collaborating dynamic between UBC, CCIDD and La Estacion. Everyone went swimming and explored the ecological beauty of this place. To finish off the day we had a shared meal of tacos and mangoes.



Our group bathing at the Los Ojos de Agua natural water spring

Despite the horrible news about Mexico in the mass media, in general people continue to strive to make their communities places of shared desires and interests with other communities. We at CCIDD hope to continue develop our community relations together with our students from Canada and the U.S to make Mexico and the world a global community.

The late Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia and his involvement with the Zapatista movement

By Isabel Reyes Armella



Samuel Ruiz García was born in Guanajuato in 1924. Samuel Ruiz entered the Seminary in Leon at the early age of thirteen. In 1947 he was sent to the Gregorian University for his studies in theology where he became a priest. For 40 years, starting in 1959, he was the bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico. This was an extremely impoverished diocese and the majority of the people there were indigenous. As the bishop of this marginalized diocese he established structures to assist the indigenous Mayan population. He was advocate of the poor and indigenous people of this parish and in 1994 after the armed Zapatista uprising to demand greater indigenous rights from the Mexican government he acted as mediator between the Mexican government and the Zapatista National Liberation Assembly.

In San Cristobal he built one of the most progressive parishes in the Mexican church. This parish was up to date on the implementation of liberation theology, contemporary social justice and human rights issues and generously supported advocates of these issues not only in Mexico but Central and South America. The parish of San Cristobal, under the guidance of Samuel Ruiz, developed a prophetic mission of liberating the indigenous populations from oppression and renewing their spirituality. This mission was facilitated by means of Samuel Ruiz's "autonomous church" project.

Samuel Ruiz was known as the annoying bishop; he annoyed those in power due to his disregard for maintaining the societal status quo and for teaching the indigenous that they had the same rights as others. He also annoyed some of the Mexican clergy because of his decision not to live a comfortable lifestyle as was lived by like majority of the bishops. Samuel Ruiz practiced what he preached and walked in solidarity with the indigenous, the poor and the vulnerable. Samuel Ruiz in his capacity as promoter and supporter of the indigenous causes was viewed with suspicion by the Mexican government as an instigator of the Zapatista movement. Samuel Ruiz also took Catholics out of their comfort zones as he tried to be inclusive of the indigenous in catering to their culture and language by presiding over masses in different indigenous languages.

However much some members of Mexican society considered him a nuisance, he was much more loved by the indigenous communities who derived from him inspiration and strength to continue the struggle for social justice. This is shown from the following excerpt of a letter of the Las Abejas Community to Samuel Ruiz. *"We will keep walking, we will keep fighting for our Rights, for peace and justice. Of course if you hadn't taught us, if you hadn't lived with us, we wouldn't know how to defend ourselves. If you*

hadn't come here to Chiapas, we would keep living as slaves, blind and subordinated by the bad government. We the Civil Association "Las Abejas" thank you a lot for teaching us how to fight in a pacific way as Jesus did. Thanks for teaching us the Indian Theology, thanks for the Liberation Theology. Jtotik Samuel; brother, Father, Grandfather, we hope we would meet with you in our Mother-Father-God's house with all the Actela martyrs."

Samuel Ruiz Garcia, beloved retired Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico passed away about four months ago on 24th January 201 at the age of eighty- six. He died in a Mexico City hospital due to respiratory complications and diabetes. May Samuel Ruiz Garcia rest in peace and may he inspire us to forge ahead with our own missions for peace and justice in Mexico and the world!

LONG SERVICE APPRECIATION AWARDS



CCIDD which has been in existence for some 34 years, with 30 of these years at its present location at 39 Francisco Levy, Cuernavaca could not function without the able assistance of its staff, some of whom have put in many long years of service. Four staff members who have completed twenty years of service and over include Rogelio Damian Nova, Bernadina Martina Lopez, Manuel Flores and Maria Colin Garcia who are respectively shown in the photos below.



Rogelio has been at CCIDD for twenty five years since June 1986 and is well known for his humor, pleasant demeanor and hard work as Head of Maintenance.

Bernadina, as Head Cook, has been here for some twenty- two years since November 1989 and the delicious fruits of her cooking are well known and appreciated here at CCIDD. No wonder that visitors and staff at CCIDD often ask for her recipes.

Manuel, as CCIDD'S gardener has also been here for approximately twenty two years since September 1989 and the blossoming gardens at CCIDD are a testament to his hard work.

Maria or Maru as she is called and who works in housekeeping and in the kitchen has been here at CCIDD for twenty years since October 1991 and is known for her hospitality and warm smile.

Program Staff Member Maggie Kaiser leaves CCIDD for the U.S. - May 2011

Maggie - Thank you for joining us at CCIDD!



DEATH OF SON OF JAVIER SICILIO -POPULAR MEXICAN SOCIAL ACTIVIST, FUELS MARCH FOR PEACE

By Maggie Kaiser



On March 28th, 2011, a fire was set under the Mexican people. It was on this day that seven people were found murdered a in car in Temixco, a municipality just south of Cuernavaca, one of which was the son of poet, activist and journalist Javier Sicilia. Since 2006, under the regime of Calderón, 40,000 people have been killed or have disappeared, Mexicans and foreigners alike. While family members and friends have demanded justice for the death of their loved ones, no one has stirred the pot quite like Sicilia.

A week and a half after the death of his son, Sicilia called for the people of Morelos to join him in a march beginning at the Paloma de la Paz in the north of the city and ending in the zócalo, or city center. Thousands of people joined him in Cuernavaca and in over thirty cities in Mexico and around the

world, including Vera Cruz, Oaxaca, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Paris, Barcelona, New York, Chicago, etc. At 5:00 p.m., we began marching over five kilometers to the zócalo and chanted the whole way: Más poesía, menos policia! (More poetry, less police!), Ni un muerto más, queremos paz! (Not one more death, we want peace!), El pueblo callado jamás será escuchado (A silent people will never be heard), and Que se vayan! –(Get out!), a demand of the inept politicians in power that have started and participated in a war on drugs that nobody wanted. Three hours later we arrived at the zócalo to hear a series of speeches, pleas, songs, poetry, and drumming. Sicilia closed the demonstration by announcing that he would be participating in a sit-in for the next week while he waited for those responsible for the death of his son to be brought to justice.

For a week he sat and waited for news, but nothing came of it. So on April 13th, he ended his sit-in and announced a national march that would end in Mexico City in front of the national palace. Those from Cuernavaca were to leave on May 5th on foot and in silence and arrive in the zócalo in Mexico City on May 8th. He called all of us there to join him—and later that evening, during an exclusive interview with Carmen Artistegui of CNN that was broadcasted from CCIDD, he invited all Mexicans and international supporters to join him either in the march from Cuernavaca or in Mexico City.



Javier Sicilia (in centre) being interviewed by CNN reporters at CCIDD

On May 8th a few of us from CCIDD did join him: Carlos, Michelle, Berna, Maru and myself. We hopped on a caravan from Cuernavaca at 8:30 a.m. and around noon joined the droves and droves of people heading to the zócalo in Mexico City. This time there was no chanting or singing, only silence, because, as Sicilia later stated in the zócalo, “If we have walked and have arrived this way, in silence, it is because our pain is so great and so profound, and the horror that has come forth so immense, that

there are no words with which to express them.” At the end of his address to the people, he announced a national pact, which Olga Reyes, a woman from Ciudad Juárez who has suffered the death of six family members, read. The pact is made up of six points to work toward reconstructing a just, peaceful and dignified Mexico for and with the Mexican people. This pact is to be signed on June 10th in Ciudad Juárez, which is the most apparent site of destruction caused by years and years of violence.

CCIDD DONATIONS FOR FAMILIES

We receive various Service Learning groups at CCIDD each year. Additionally other groups request a day or more of service. These are always excellent opportunities to learn more about the daily struggle of families living in poverty. To do this service we need funding to buy construction materials and pay Mexican workers. Much of the service work is rehabilitating homes in La Estacion. This year to date we have worked on five houses, painted at the Salvation Army Children’s home, helped to build a sewing center for the women’s cooperative in Cuentepec and started a project to build stoves in La Estacion.

Some details on these costs are: Brenda’s house \$ 2,037, new bathroom; Frances’ house \$1,061 new roof for bathroom, new bathroom fixtures; Alicia’s house \$1,064, two new rooms, walls, floor and roof; Sirila’s house \$227, new floor; Teodora’s house, \$ 823, foundation and walls, room division (still in progress); the roof on the Kindergarten playground \$480; the sewing room in Cuentepec \$ 1,439; and the stove at Brenda’s house \$169. **Total on these projects: \$ 7,454 US dollars as of May 31, 2011**

We also help families with health emergencies and we provide educational costs for numerous students from preschool to university. As we end the school year in July we will share the costs for this past academic year.

DONATIONS for this work can be sent to our Pay Pal account. See our web page, www.ccidd.org. You can also send a check or money order to: CCIDD % Pat Lucas, 28613 Isleworth Ct., Lake Bluff, IL USA 60044.

Your generosity is appreciated to help fund our ongoing efforts to enable families to have dignified housing. We hear of the needs of people from the community center and make a decision with the community about the projects. Our only source of income for these projects is the generosity of CCIDD participants and friends. Thank you! Your generous donations touch the hearts of our Mexican partners and friends.



CCIDD FUN DAY FOR LA ESTACION KIDS



CONTACT US AT CCIDD

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Our email address:

ccidd@cableonline.com

Our Facebook page:

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