

KGAP

newsletter

20 YEARS of SOLIDARITY

by *Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator*

It has been almost twenty years since I became an international human rights accompanier on a delegation supporting 250 Guatemalan families on their journey out of refugee camps in Chiapas, Mexico, to their homeland in Guatemala. The refugees had lived in Mexico for over 12 years and were ready to go home, despite the fact that the internal armed conflict had not reached an end and a peace accord between the Guatemalan government and the rebel forces had not yet been achieved. They were ready to go home but only with international solidarity and the physical presence of accompaniers. This was their expressed need and their request. I have been grateful for 20 years that I could be part of the response to this request, resulting in the creation of the Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP) and subsequently, the Kickapoo/Guatemala Accompaniment Project (KGAP). The Guatemalans have always been capable of carrying out their own struggle for peace and justice and they knew that our presence could lend them space, moral support, and eye-witness accounts to further the cause.

"International solidarity is not an act of charity: it is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains toward the same objective. The foremost of these objectives is to assist in the development of humanity to the highest level possible." Samora Machel, late Mozambican leader.

I appreciate the above quotation because it clarifies the importance of equitable relationships in solidarity work. Here is another wonderful statement: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."—Aboriginal Activists Group, Queensland, Australia, 1970s

As most of you know we have collaborated over the years with one particular community, Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá, in an effort to provide accompaniment and assist in the areas of education and healthcare. Once again, we have always responded to the needs expressed by the Guatemalans, and have been honored to walk with



Jubinal with his wife Gladys, at his graduation in November.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

by *Jubinal Carrillo Funes, Instituto Básico Director*

Please enjoy this recent letter we received from Jubinal Carrillo Funes, lawyer, teacher and director of the Chaculá middle school (Instituto Básico). COLONIA NUEVA ESPERANZA CHACULA, NENTON, HUEHUETENANGO GUATEMALA.

Hello KGAP supporters,

My name is Jubinal Carrillo Funes. I am 37 years old, born in 1976 in the village of Pinalito, Santa Ana Huista municipality, Huehuetenango, Guatemala. When I was 5 years old we fled to Chiapas, Mexico, because of the violent internal conflict in my country. During the years as a refugee in Chiapas I began my studies in primary school. I returned to my country in 1994, to the community of Nueva Esperanza, Chaculá. That same year I began my studies at the middle school level through IGER, a program specifically for adults who, because of economic reasons, were unable to attend school in a regular educational institution. In 1996 I finished my studies at this level. In June of that same year I remember a bus trip I took from the city of Huehuetenango to Nueva Esperanza when I met Connie Vanderhyden, a wonderful woman who has the spirit of solidarity and

20 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY, continued from page 1

them as they have made significant advances in the services their community provides its members.

Here in the Kickapoo Valley, we have worked as a community to raise funds and deepen awareness about the situation in Guatemala and the part our own government played in the genocide and devastation our friends have suffered. Many students and adults from this area have made the journey to Nueva Esperanza to visit, share, and build relationships. In addition, there are people all over the country who are connected to KGAP and Nueva Esperanza through the accompaniers we have sponsored or because of their own visits to Guatemala. I know that everyone who has come on one of the trips to Nueva Esperanza realizes that the community considers all of us "solidarios" and "acompañantes". We are allies and we are all working together for a better, more inclusive world.

It is with great humility that I thank you all for your support, interest, and solidarity with KGAP and the people of Guatemala over these past 20 years. I am honored to be the KGAP Coordinator and to have the pleasure of visiting Nueva Esperanza every year and taking friends along, increasing the circle, strengthening the network, and doing good work. Following is an update on what KGAP has supported over the years. All of you are responsible for this continuing, thriving relationship. Please accept my heartfelt gratitude!



Photo by Andi Alexander



ARJ President Anselmo Roldan with KGAP Director Connie Vanderhyden during his visit to snowy Viroqua!

KICKAPOO/GUATEMALA ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT

(KGAP) January 1994--January 2014

ACCOMPANIMENT: KGAP is a member of the national organization, NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala) and collaborates with other sponsoring communities in the U.S. to respond to requests for accompaniment in various regions of Guatemala. Accompaniment provides a measure of security and creates space for Guatemalan communities and groups to organize in defense of their human rights. KGAP sponsored 23 trained human rights accompaniers in Guatemala from 1996–2012. Currently we send an annual donation to NISGUA's general accompaniment support fund.

DELEGATIONS: KGAP coordinator, Connie Vanderhyden, has led or co-led 22 delegations to Guatemala to visit, learn, express solidarity, and return to tell the stories and the reality we have witnessed. Of these delegations, 11 included medical practitioners and 9 included local high school or college students. 190 individuals from the region have been participants on KGAP inspired delegations.

NISGUA and ACCOMPANIER TOURS: KGAP has sponsored 6 Guatemalan speakers to our region as part of NISGUA educational tours. In addition, most of the 23 KGAP accompaniers have come back to our region to give presentations about their experiences as human rights workers in Guatemala.

For a description of current KGAP projects, see page 4 of this newsletter.

FROM THE DIRECTOR, *continued from page 1*

social justice toward my community and country. From that day on, a solidarity connection in the area of education was initiated between the Kickapoo/Guatemala Accompaniment Project, the organization that Connie coordinates, and our community.

In 1997 I began my teaching career, graduating in 1999 with a scholarship that Connie was able to find in her state of Wisconsin. My studies were generously supported by many people, including David and Diane Banner who have continued to support me in my university studies. In 2001 I began my university studies in the School of Judicial and Social Sciences, Law and Notary Public. I participated in the weekend program because I always had to work to support my family and to be able to pay for part of my education. The other part was covered by scholarship support from Connie, Jeri Pearson, David and Diane Banner, Dennis and Martha Pierce from Chicago and other friends. In October of 2014 I finished my studies and received my license in Judicial and Social Sciences with the titles of Lawyer and Notary Public.

I have been a primary teacher for 14 years in my community and have also worked for 11 years in the afternoons as director and teacher in the middle school. One of my roles has been to collaborate with community leaders to administer the scholarship program that KGAP supports in Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá.

In general, education in my community has progressed in a positive direction ever since our return to Guatemala in January, 1994. We know that education for individuals and the society is basic to the integrated development of human beings. My community began its struggle for development from the founding day. All of our parents are farmers and that has been the only source of income for generations. This has been an obstacle for thinking about intellectual development. Some years ago, parents began to realize that it was a good idea for their children to study. Because of this, many began to look for ways to make this possible. As a result, lots of parents have gone to the U.S. to work in order to have an income that would allow for their children to not only study in primary school but also middle school and eventually to complete a high school degree, trained as teachers, mechanics, accountants, nurses, among other careers.

All along in this struggle we have had the valuable collaboration of Connie Vanderhyden and Jeri Pearson who have supported the education of our community through KGAP by fundraising in the U.S. for the scholarship program. As I mentioned in my own history, 16 years ago I was one of the first scholarship recipients. Since that time this project has been very productive for our community, supporting 10 students with a scholarship of \$700 per year. The scholarship program is growing and in 2014 will begin to support 25 students every year.

In conclusion, I can say that our community, Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá, has progressed a lot since we have emphasized education as a priority in order to achieve our development as individuals and as a society. Today we have many teachers, accountants, secretaries, agronomy consultants, mechanics, certified nurse assistants, professional nurses, one doctor, and me, a Lawyer and Notary Public. Many students are also beginning their university careers and I expect that with their parents' support and, of course, their own great efforts, they will become excellent professionals who will work together for the progress of our own Chaculá and, of course, to support the development of our Guatemala.

I can testify to the fact that the majority of the students who have graduated now have jobs that support better lives than we had 20 years ago. These successes are partially due to KGAP and the coordination by Connie and Jeri.

I hope that everyone who has the opportunity to read this letter will continue to be in solidarity with the educational efforts in our community because, even though we have improved, we have not achieved sustainability in the intellectual formation of all the youth in Nueva Esperanza. Many students have not been able to continue studying due to the lack of economic resources because our government has not implemented a scholarship program that would give opportunities for all our children to achieve what they desire. We thank you so much for your support for education in our community.

Thank you for your attention and your solidarity. May peace and happiness reign in your families.

Jubinal Carrillo Funes

JUSTICE FOR GENOCIDE: A SURVIVOR'S STORY

by Jeri Pearson, former accompanier

On November 10th KGAP community members had the honor of greeting and hearing Mr. Anselmo Roldán Aguilar movingly speak of his own story as a survivor of genocide, his role within the Guatemalan Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR), and the historic genocide trial that took place in Guatemala this March. Mr. Roldán was in Viroqua as part of a 10-city tour that crisscrossed the U.S. in November hosted by the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA). Ellen Moore, current Guatemala Programs Coordinator for NISGUA, accompanied and translated for Mr. Roldán. Approximately 35 people attended the KGAP event, which included a simple meal of rice, beans, and tortillas and a craft fair from Concern America, a fair trade craft program that assists impoverished communities and refugees in developing countries. Viroqua residents Mary Beth Flurry directed the craft sale and Maureen Karlstad and friends cooked and served the delicious dinner.

Connie Vanderhyden, K/GAP coordinator, graciously introduced Mr. Anselmo Roldán to the gathering. Don Anselmo is a genocide survivor. At the age of seventeen he lost eight family members in the massacre of Cuarto Pueblo in 1982, including his father, brothers, and sisters. After hiding in the mountains for a year with his mother, he decided to seek refuge in Mexico and lived there for over 10 years. Upon returning to Guatemala Don Anselmo became a founding member and is now the current president of the AJR, the genocide survivor's group that in 2000 and 2001 formally filed charges against former Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. Over TEN years later, in March 2013, Ríos Montt stood trial for genocide and crimes against humanity of the Mayan Ixil peoples. Some 100 Maya Ixil members of the AJR participated in the trial as witnesses, providing courageous testimony of the violence that occurred during Montt's regime in 1982 and 1983. After the historic two-month trial, the former dictator was found guilty and sentenced to 80 years in prison. Since then, the Guatemalan constitutional court overturned the sentence and the trial is expected to begin again in January of 2015. While the legal foundations of the ruling continue to be questioned, the sentence remains an internationally recognized historic document validating the search for justice undertaken by the AJR and Guatemalan social movements for over 30 years!

As the AJR's struggle continues, so does NISGUA's solidarity with Guatemala's genocide survivors. NISGUA (and KGAP) have provided international human rights accompaniment to the AJR since its inception in 2000, including critical support for the organization during and after the trial. As Melinda Van Slyke, NISGUA board president, reminded us, "No Guatemalan activists accompanied by GAP

volunteers have been killed, kidnapped, or have disappeared."

Mr. Roldán says he and other genocide survivors have not lost heart. He pledges that the AJR will continue to bring all those responsible in the military to trial for their crimes against humanity. In his words: "Apenas estamos empezando. No nos quedamos callados." ("We are only beginning. We will not be silenced.")

Mr. Roldán asks that people stand in solidarity with Guatemala. "I think it is necessary to accompany the process of the search for justice because what we want for Guatemala is a fundamental pillar to be able to strengthen the democracy in Guatemala. It is important that the laws of a country are fulfilled, and – more than anything – that they respect human rights."

NISGUA has launched two tour actions people can take to support the Guatemalans in their struggles for human rights – a petition calling for NO IMPUNITY! / NO AMNESTY! for war criminals and a postcard campaign collecting messages to send to the AJR in support of the genocide sentence. You can stand in solidarity with the AJR from anywhere in the world by participating in the campaign online. Take action: sign the petition to join in the call for NO AMNESTY and share why the genocide sentence is important to you by going to the NISGUA website: http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/6497/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=15694

We thank Mr. Roldán for coming to Wisconsin and sharing his inspiring story of commitment and hope.

Some messages left by attendees in Viroqua for the AJR (Association for Justice and Reconciliation) include:

Every perpetrator of genocide should know that it will not stand before the law. Your courage brings tears to my eyes. Keep telling your truths. We are behind you.

Without justice there will be no peace. La Lucha continua!

Si hubo genocidio en Guatemala! Estimados miembros de la AJR – hay que saber que estamos con ustedes en solidaridad siempre!

Accountability is part of the healing process. Impunity prevents healing. The voices of the Guatemalan people have spoken the truth. Their perseverance and courage are testament to their truth. Justice requires that the sentence stand.

For all the lives lost, and for the ongoing suffering of the survivors the sentence must stand. The world is watching.

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS TO OUR RECENT DONORS!

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ALL DONATIONS TO KGAP ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE AND WILL HELP FUND OUR ACCOMPANIMENT, HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION INITIATIVES IN GUATEMALA.

Please send donations to:
KGAP c/o Connie Vanderhyden
E9048 PIERCE HILL RD
VIROQUA, WI 54665



At the Justice for Genocide talk in Viroqua on November 10, 2013. Anselmo Roldan with his interpreter _____ speaks to the group.



ABOUT THE KICKAPOO/GUATEMALA ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT (KGAP)

KGAP is a project of the Kickapoo Cultural Exchange, Gays Mills, WI, a 501c3 nonprofit organization registered in the state of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Contributions are tax deductible. In addition, KGAP is affiliated with the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) a national non-profit organization that supports many projects and efforts in Guatemala.

CURRENT KGAP PROJECTS

EDUCATION

Every year KGAP provides a scholarship fund that supports 10 high school students from the community of Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá. They must travel to other towns or cities to attain a high school education.

From 1997–2013 K/GAP has sponsored 53 students (37% female). Ten students are currently in high school and of the 43 graduates we have sponsored, 29 are employed as teachers, mechanics, accountants or are working in social services. Four are pursuing a university education and 10 are looking for employment. K/GAP applied for and received grants to help the community complete three projects at the local school: 1) new school bathrooms; 2) lap-top computer and projector; 3) improvements to the daycare center program.

HEALTH CLINIC

KGAP provides a yearly fund to subsidize the salary of a local health promoter attending patients at the community health clinic, Monday - Friday, from 9am - 4pm and to support health education campaigns in Nueva Esperanza and outlying villages.

BREAKING NEWS!!!

Because of the commitment of an anonymous KGAP donor, our fund for education has increased and stabilized such that beginning in January, 2014, we will be able to sponsor 25 students each year from Nueva Esperanza!!

**ALL DONATIONS TO KGAP ARE
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AND CAN BE MAILED TO:**

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