

# KGAP newsletter

## Happy Holidays and Warm Wishes for 2023!

by Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator

I hope this edition of the KGAP Newsletter finds you healthy and happy, anticipating gatherings with friends and family during the holiday season! Recently we have received letters from many KGAP scholarship students, sharing their grades and gratitude for our interest and support. They are also ready to enjoy some time off from their courses with friends and family. I have included one letter in the newsletter which is representative of many students' expressions of gratitude. Thanks to all of you for your support for the KGAP education fund!

We are looking forward to reconnecting with our Guatemalan friends during a visit to Chaculá in March 2023. More than three years have passed since our last trip in March of 2019. This trip will be similar – accompanying students from Youth Initiative High School and including a small women's delegation intent on connecting with women in Chaculá and surrounding villages. We plan to listen to their needs and concerns with the hope of collaborating in the future on a women's initiative of their design.

I would like to encourage you to visit the website of our national organization, NISGUA ([www.nisgua.org](http://www.nisgua.org)). There are updates on many issues confronting Guatemalans and descriptions of the NISGUA projects (including

GAP). In May, 2022, NISGUA collaborated with other organizations to sponsor a U.S. congressional delegation to Honduras and Guatemala. It was an extremely fruitful and informative experience for participating Congress members ([nisgua.org/congressional-delegation-migration/](http://nisgua.org/congressional-delegation-migration/)). You may also wish to visit the website to place an order for the 2023 Calendar: Territories in Resistance. We are grateful to be part of such an active, vital organization and solidarity movement!

We are honored to include the preface and an excerpt from Luisa Rivera's PhD dissertation in this newsletter. Luisa has traveled with us many times to Chaculá, participating in the midwifery workshops. She returned to live in the community several different times to discuss her research goals and then to begin the interview process. Luisa was granted her doctorate in Biological Anthropology from Emory University in September, 2022, and we feel fortunate to share this small portion of her work.

As always, we are extremely grateful to you, our KGAP supporters and friends! May this holiday season bring you peace and happiness!

Sincerely,  
Connie

*The Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) presents the 2023 calendar, "Territories in Resistance," a stunning photographic collection that positions ancestral struggles in Guatemala and beyond. Selections range from lush green lowlands to the eastern Dry Corridor, from Shell River in the north to the black-sand beaches of the south. The calendar features people protecting and celebrating territory on fields and streets, at trials and protests, through dance and ceremony.*

*Calendars are \$20 and can be purchased online at [nisgua.org](http://nisgua.org): [CLICK HERE](#)*



## Letter from Adamaris López KGAP Scholarship Recipient

(Translated and edited by Connie Vanderhyden)

Dear KGAP friends,  
I am writing to you, once again, to let you know that I completed my 3-year accounting program and have received my degree. I would like to thank you for the economic assistance you have given me! It has helped me begin to develop as a professional and I am hopeful I will be able to continue my studies in the future. I hope you will be able to visit us soon and you will be welcomed with open arms.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,  
Adamaris López



Adamaris holding her diploma



Drawing by Doña Cheli:

“She had meant to represent herself as unable to speak, unable to flee, and trapped.”

## Report From Luisa Rivera

From her PhD dissertation on her work in Chaculá

On a warm, bright day in the summer of 2017, I guided a group of predominantly Maya women in a small community in rural Guatemala in a drawing exercise meant to help them express the hopes and dreams they have for their children. I am there to conduct pilot research for my dissertation project exploring intergenerational trauma and resilience in Nueva Esperanza Chaculá, one of several “repatriation villages” founded by former refugees of the Guatemalan Civil War, a genocidal conflict that has deeply impacted the lives of all the women in the room and indeed everyone in the surrounding borderlands in highland Guatemala. Hoping to help overcome their (and my own) shyness, I tried using a technique I had read about in Jennifer Hirsch’s work on intergenerational relationships and hopes in Mexican-American immigrant communities (Hirsch & Philbin 2016). On large sheets of paper, I drew a horizontal line. I asked the four women in the room to draw a picture of their own life, and on the other side of it, the life they hoped their children will have.

I wasn’t quite sure what I had hoped for, but as the session went on, I found myself worried that the exercise was not revealing very much I had not already learned from having worked in the community for several year as a volunteer midwifery trainer. The lives women drew for themselves and their children were linked by flowers and signs of nature, and while their “side” emphasized their homes, gardens, and children, the side representing their hopes for their children were very similar, features suns, flowers, and sports, and school. The drawings were cheerful, and women described hoping that their children would be able to enjoy

*Report from Luisa Rivera, continued on page 3*



Left to right: Jen McGeorge, Luisa Rivera, Kim Dowat at the 2019 midwifery training (photo by Andi Alexander)

*Report from Luisa Rivera, continued from page 2*

education, exercise, natural beauty, and have large families and colorful homes of their own someday, most indicating that they would prefer it if their children could stay in the community and raise their grandchildren there.

Only one of the drawings stood out to me, drawing made by a woman I had known for several years, Doña Cheli. Unlike the other mothers, Doña Cheli focused only on her side of the drawing, using gray pencil and no colors. She drew herself encased in a box with no roof, a wiggle on the ground indicating grass or rough terrain. She drew her hair as if it was blown, and while she made eyes, arms, and fingers for herself, she drew no mouth or feet. As we talked, her young son Jairo came up and drew a heart next to his mother, giving her a small yellow mouth. I joked with Cheli that the amateur psychoanalyst in me was curious about her choices in self-representation—but she told me they were intentional. She had meant to represent herself as unable to speak, unable to flee, and trapped.

The next day, I went to her house to talk more, bringing with me the packet of questionnaires and trauma indices I had prepared for my biosocial research study on intergenerational trauma and mental health in mothers and grandmothers in the community. Cheli endorsed experiencing many war-related traumatic events, but by far the most painful part of her story was her recounting of the dehumanization she felt when she was denied the ability to learn to read by her father. There was no item for this in my packet and so I simply coded it under “other”.

Her body rigid with emotion, she told me of her father’s refusal to let her go to even primary school. “My father told me women who learn to write just write letters to boyfriends. That’s what he said. Just to boyfriends.” She began to weep, describing feelings of being stupid, left behind, and worthless. “Once I was older, I knew that great need in myself, the need to be able to read and write. I went and got school myself. I was so happy when I learned there were teachers for adults, I would work all day and go to school at night. I went and got it myself.”

In this chapter, I argue that what Cheli described—her subjective experiences of gendered discrimination and violence—help illuminate how ongoing structural violence in the wake of the Guatemalan Civil War continues to impact the lives of survivors of the war and their descendants today. As such, I advance the argument that, in contrast with biosocial and psychological models of intergenerational trauma transmission that emphasize behavioral or biological inheritance, intergenerational trauma is better understood as an ongoing process of social reproduction and perpetuation. This chapter links scholarship on intergenerational trauma, the continuum of violence against women and Maya peoples in Guatemala, and anthropological theories of subjectivity in revealing processes of intergenerational transmission and resistance. In it, I analyze how life histories of women in Nueva Esperanza Chaculá reveal the sociopolitical embeddedness and recapitulation of intergenerationally shared experiences of trauma and loss—but also agency, hope, and resilience—from past to present. \*

*\*You can read the complete excerpt from Luisa’s PhD dissertation on the KGAP website: [kgap.org](http://kgap.org)*

## Focus Group Drawings



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