

Global Youth Connect

El Salvador Program Report

Human Rights Delegation for Young Leaders

January 1 – January 13, 2008

Organized in Collaboration with Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS)



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El Salvador in 2008

In El Salvador, as is the case in much of the world, New Year's Day is a time for acknowledging the accomplishments and difficulties of the past while manifesting hope for the future. At the same time that Salvadoran families were coming together to reflect and share their hopes with each other, participants in GYC's January 2008 delegation shared with each other the varied reasons that had brought them together. As we would quickly discover, the twin themes of acknowledging the past and hoping for a better future would continue to resonate with us throughout our stay.

While our stories were different, we all shared a common desire to better understand the roots of violence in El Salvador and to learn more about what is being done today to help rectify widespread social injustices. For two weeks we had the opportunity to connect with Salvadorans to hear their stories, meet with local organizations working for change, engage in a service project and discuss human rights issues with Salvadoran youth with an eye to what we could do together to help resolve some of these challenges.

Throughout our trip, the past was never far from our daily experiences. In Cinquera we would hear the moving testimony of an elder who witnessed the crumbing of his community during the violence of civil war in the 1980s. Walking through the compound at the University of Central America -- the site of brutal murders of Jesuit priests who were trying to create bridges of peace between the *guerillas* and the government -- we would learn of the daily challenges those working for peace faced during the conflict.

At the same time, by witnessing the work being done in El Salvador today, we were moved by a sense of hope. As one powerful example, we met with community members in Suchitoto who are working to protect the right to water and the rights to freedom of expression and free speech. We were inspired by their commitment to stand up to those who would deny them such rights.

Most importantly, we realized that much work remains to be done to realize the aspirations of many Salvadorans for peace and we committed ourselves to doing what we can to help realize this such a peace.

A Brief History

Throughout most of the 20th century, El Salvador suffered from significant social and political unrest, in large part a result of centuries of tremendous inequality mixed with the violent repression of social movements by the governing elite and their allies in the military. In 1980, the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, known for publicly urging an end to the military's violence against the Salvadoran people, was a major catalyst in the onset of a full-blown civil war between leftist guerrillas of the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and the military, which received considerable financial backing from the U.S. government.



Delegation participant at the civil war memorial in San Salvador's Cuscatlan Park

During the civil war, which lasted from 1980 until the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992, 75,000 Salvadorans died, thousands were wounded, and hundreds of thousands more fled the country as refugees. Many sought refuge in the United States, where a great number of Salvadorans now live. Current estimates are that approximately one out of six Salvadorans lives in the U.S. Remittances sent back to El Salvador

exceed \$2.5 billion a year, representing a major source of income for many Salvadoran families.

Since the signing of the Peace Accords, El Salvador has continued to struggle with on-going social unrest, economic devastation resulting from the war, and growing gang violence (fueled, in large part, by deportations of Salvadoran gang members from major U.S. cities). El Salvador has also been hard-hit by recent natural disasters, including Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and two successive earthquakes in early 2001. The restructuring of the Salvadoran economy via international trade agreements such as CAFTA has also negatively impacted the agriculture sector, resulting in rising rural unemployment and increased migration to cities and to the U.S.

Nonetheless, many Salvadorans, especially young people, remain hopeful and actively involved in working toward building a more equitable and just society. The FMLN (formally recognized as a political party since the signing of the Peace Accords) has been steadily gaining momentum in recent years and many Salvadorans hope that next year's presidential elections will bring a much needed change. Seeing that many of the promises enshrined in the much-celebrated Peace Accords have failed to come to fruition under the current government (led by ARENA), an increasing number of Salvadorans seem to be looking toward the popular and charismatic FMLN candidate, Mauricio Funes. Those who support Funes hope that a leftist government will address pressing issues of economic inequality, as well as increased social services in the areas of health, education, and potable water.

However, many Salvadorans are anxious about the potential for increased political repression and violence in the lead-up to the 2009 elections. Indeed, the ARENA government has twice attempted to prosecute Salvadorans engaged in non-violent political protest under new "anti-terrorism" legislation modeled after the U.S. Patriot Act. Thus, human rights activists are deeply concerned about the need to defend Salvadorans' hard-earned rights to free speech and political protest.



A mural depicting Salvadoran martyr Archbishop Oscar Romero alongside Ernesto "Che" Guevara

Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS)

Center for Exchange and Solidarity

Global Youth Connect has chosen to partner with Centro de Intercambio y Solidarida (CIS) for the two years GYC has worked in El Salvador because of the organization's strong commitment to peace-building, human rights and sustainable economic development, as well as its strong relationship with young human rights activists in communities throughout El Salvador.



CIS was founded in 1993 after the signing of the Peace Accords in El Salvador. The vision of the organization was to develop a center to promote continued solidarity with grassroots movements working for social and economic justice and participatory democracy.

Through its Human Rights Network, CIS actively participates in campaigns to promote respect for human rights in El Salvador, and works to engage the international community in standing up for important human rights issues. CIS issues regular action alerts and publishes a quarterly bulletin on current events, politics, and the economy of El Salvador.

Through its Solidarity Partners program, CIS facilitates international accompaniment for organizations and communities working for economic and social justice, providing support for communities where there is little support by other NGOs or the government. Through the Grassroots Organizer program, solidarity organizations and individuals pay part of the salaries of grassroots organizers with the aim of strengthening civic participation and the defense of citizens' rights. Both of these programs specifically focus on empowering women and youth.



CIS Delegation Coordinator Cristy Ayala

The Solidarity Crafts program works with women, ex-combatants, returned refugees, single mothers, and marginalized communities who have formed artisan cooperatives founded on the principles of fair wages, communal ownership, humane working conditions, and democratic participation. By selling and distributing crafts made by these local cooperatives, CIS encourages both integrated economic development and the empowerment of local communities.

CIS also runs the Mélida Anaya Montes Language School, providing English and Spanish instruction using popular education techniques that highlight social justice issues and human rights themes.

In addition, CIS has facilitated six international elections observers missions designed to: contribute to free and fair elections; generate a safe environment to stimulate democratic participation; support organizing for social and economic justice; deepen understanding of social and economic structures that govern the country and their impact; and to promote people-to-people solidarity. Another such election observation mission is planned to coincide with the upcoming elections in 2009.

To learn more about CIS and how to get involved, visit www.cis-elsalvador.org.

Human Rights Learning Community

During the delegations first week in El Salvador, we gathered together for three days with young Salvadoran human rights defenders for a Learning Community – a space where youth come together across cultures in an interactive workshop to build community, explore issues, and work together toward creative solutions.

The goals of the workshop were to:

- Introduce participants to the “human rights framework,” including key documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);
- Facilitate critical reflection on the meaning of “human rights” in the lives of workshop participants through interactive games and activities;
- Analyze case studies of human rights violations in both the United States and El Salvador; and

- Explore strategies for change and the power of youth in promoting and defending human rights in our communities and our world.

Over the course of the workshop, participants came to a deeper understanding of the ways in which the framework of human rights can help us to analyze problems of social and economic justice and develop a common vision for change. Just as importantly, participants shared their own experiences as young people impacted by human rights violations, forming close personal relationships based on mutual respect and solidarity.

At GYC, we believe this type of relationship-building is an important first step in nurturing a long-lasting commitment to peaceful change. We also believe in the power of providing youth with the opportunity to learn from one another by thinking critically about new issues, engaging in constructive debate, and through sharing new skills to address common concerns.

In reflecting on the idea of human rights, participants agreed that the concept is a very important one. The human rights framework provides a set of shared ideals to guide efforts for change.

At the same time, participants agreed that human rights remain abstract without widespread awareness and grassroots participation in shaping the *practice* of human rights. Participants also identified a need for more legal mechanisms of enforcement of human rights standards in both the U.S. and El Salvador. As one Salvadoran participant noted, “There aren’t any real policies that are directed toward the promotion of human rights on the part of the state, and for that reason there is a lack of awareness of our rights.”

Participants also acknowledged that “human rights” is a complex and, at times, contested idea, one that is defined differently for different people and for different cultures, making questions of enforcement very complicated. Furthermore, participants noted that, in a world where some states possess greater political, economic and

military power, human rights may be manipulated and used as a justification for promoting political interests.



*Learning Community participants
January 2008 human rights workshop*



Small group activity

For all of these reasons, workshop participants expressed a deep sense of the need to take human rights into their own hands, and to use the framework to promote social and economic justice, especially for marginalized groups and individuals.

Participants also selected and analyzed case studies from the U.S. and El Salvador as a means of exploring the specific ways in which our lives and our countries are touched by human rights issues.

Of the many issues discussed, participants chose to focus their energy on:

- Violations of detainees rights on the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba;
- Human rights violations of migrant workers from Latin America working in the U.S.;
- Violation of the rights to free expression and political participant in El Salvador;
- Widespread social violence in El Salvador.

In small groups, participants analyzed the ways in which each of these cases constitutes a human rights violation. In doing so, they found that in each case, many violations were occurring simultaneously. Participants also sought to develop a common vision for change and to brainstorm strategies for achieving the desired change. Perhaps most importantly, workshop participants explored their own power as youth to make a difference.

Posing the question, “What does it mean to be a human rights activist?,” the participants were asked to reflect on instances in their own lives when they had stood up for human rights. What we found is that each person in the workshop felt that they not only had something to offer, but that we were all already working for change in diverse ways. Sharing stories helped us to both connect to our own sense of agency and become inspired the commitment of others in the group.

“I think the most important thing that I learned was that ‘activists’ include many people. Everyone is an activist if they do not ignore the problems of this world and if they do something to change them.”



Participants dramatizing the use of torture to extract confessions from prisoners



Participants dramatizing how to respect the rights of prisoners

As a component of the workshop activities, participants visited the town of Suchitoto where, in July 2007, several community activists from the local development organization Progreso were arrested during a peaceful and non-violent demonstration against the Salvadoran government’s water privatization plan. Progreso is involved in a campaign to draw attention to the government’s abuse of the new anti-terrorism to prosecute those individuals who are now known as the Suchitoto 13.

Through our visit to Suchitoto workshop participants were able to develop a deeper appreciation for the obstacles faced by human rights activists in El Salvador. At the same time, we walked away feeling deeply inspired by the tremendous commitment of community members

to defend their right to political participation and free speech.

Perhaps the most important lesson that our group took away from the visit was a clarity in how human rights are interconnected. In the case of Suchitoto, the respect for so-called “first generation” rights, such as the right to peaceful protest, are fundamental conditions for securing other types of rights, such as the right to water. At the same time, political and civil rights are also curtailed when people’s cultural, economic, social and communal rights are disrespected.



Community leaders from Progreso

Since our meeting in Suchitoto and in part due to the pressure from Progreso and other Salvadoran and international groups, all terrorism-related charges against the activists have been dropped. However, they are still facing serious charges that many believe are little more than a means of silencing the political opposition to controversial new government policy.

For a detailed timeline of the events following the arrest of human rights activists in Suchitoto, including detailed updates on their prosecution under El Salvador’s new anti-terrorism law, see the website of the Foundation for Self-Sufficiency in Central America.

<http://fssca.net/pastreports/suchitoto/timeline.html>

Cinquera

After concluding the workshop, we visited Cinquera, a community deeply transformed by El Salvador’s violent past that is now struggling to build a lasting peace. Upon arriving, we were greeted by leaders of the Asociación de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo Municipal (ARDM), a citizen’s initiative that emerged as a coordinated effort to rebuild the community after the war.

A guided hike and tour in a nearby ecological park provided a unique opportunity to learn about the community’s history. Now second-growth forest, this mountain was once home to a vast indigo plantation, where many residents of Cinquera worked as under dangerous conditions. During the war, with the cultivated lands left fallow, the *guerrilla* fighters who controlled the region made the mountain home. On the hike, we saw vestiges of the old guerilla encampments, including a hospital and a so-called “Vietnamese kitchen,” a cooking site modeled after those built by the Vietnamese during the war in Vietnam and built in such a way as to conceal the *guerrillas* whereabouts. At the top of the mountain, we enjoyed the beautiful view of Lake Suchitlan and, at the end of the hike, a refreshing swim in one of the park’s pristine waterfalls.



Later that evening, in our meeting with members of the ARDM, we learned of the community’s efforts to keep alive the memory of Cinquera’s history, while working toward a future free of exploitation and violence. Ecotourism is one of the many sustainable economic development

efforts promoted by ARDM, which manages the forest and is seeking to government recognition of the forest as an ecological preserve and historical site.

On the morning of the second day of our visit, we began to understand the depths of the community's struggle through the remarkable and devastating testimony of Cinquera's oral historian, Pablo Alvarenga.



Don Pablo shares his testimony

Typical of many of El Salvador's rural villages, Cinquera's residents had lived for many generations in unthinkable poverty, subject to extreme exploitation and abuse by the country's landowning elite and their military allies. In the 1970s, when liberation theology began to awaken the consciousness of Cinquera's poor, the community was subject to brutal repression that eventually drove many families into hiding in the surrounding mountainside. Under rebel control during much of the armed conflict, the village of Cinquera was for many years entirely abandoned by civilians and at one point used by the Salvadoran military for target practice. When residents began to repopulate Cinquera in the early 1990s, nothing was left of the town's infrastructure. In addition, families has been divided and dispersed, and hundreds of people had been killed.



A view of Cinquera's church in the center of town

Cinquera's current population is now a mix of native-born residents and newer residents resettled from other conflict zones after the signing of the Peace Accords. The community is still struggling to recover psychologically, physically and economically from the devastation of war. The ADRM, with the financial support of international organizations and the participation of community members, is working to make this critical work of rebuilding possible.

San Rafael Cedros

As with the previous delegation, GYC participants conducted a fieldwork project in the municipality of San Rafael Cedros, one of the communities in which CIS works to support community organization and economic development through its Grassroots Organizer program. The Mesa Ciudadana of San Rafael Cedros coordinates the efforts of local steering committees working to promote sustainable economic development, women's empowerment, and awareness around economic and environmental issues on both a local and a global scale. The group is also committed to encouraging youth participation in community projects and administers a scholarship program for local high school students.

Upon arriving in San Rafael Cedros, our group was welcomed by members of the Citizens Roundtable, along with scholarship students, their families, and local leaders. We were greeted with local food and a performance of traditional dance,

as well as a skit performed by the students and a tour of our host's sugar processing operation.

For our fieldwork projects in San Rafael Cedros, delegation participants organized and facilitated workshops with local high school students. Building on the skills and knowledge gained in the Learning Community, this fieldwork project served as an opportunity for delegation participants to put new skills to practice. It was also a unique space for youth leaders of San Rafael Cedros to give creative expression to their own experiences and identify ways to take action to improve their lives and the lives of others in the community.

Our group divided into two facilitation teams to conduct workshops with one group focusing on preventing HIV/AIDS and the other on environmental awareness. These two topics were selected by local leaders as areas of great interest to community members, but where they lacked information and resources to address the issues.

GYC participants agreed that facilitating these workshops was both the most challenging aspect of the program, as well as one of the most important learning experiences. After many days of discussing the importance of raising awareness and building community, our group experienced the practical meaning of these ideas and learned that this type of work requires a great deal of skill-building, persistence and dedication in the face of difficulty.

On the final day of our stay in San Rafael Cedros, we brought the two groups of youth back together to share with each other what they had learned in the workshops. We are all impressed with the participants' great enthusiasm and depth of knowledge when asked to present about the issues to their peers.

Both groups put together creative and compelling presentations. The HIV/AIDS group discussed common myths about the disease, the social and political marginalization suffered by people living with the virus, as well as methods of prevention. The group working on the

environment presented a skit demonstrating the interconnections of complex issues such as global warming, CAFTA, industrial pollution, and the common practice of littering and the impact of these issues on the lives in San Rafael Cedros.



Peer education: HIV/AIDS prevention



Participants present a skit on environmental awareness

Before departing for San Salvador, we visited members of Cocobano women's committee who have formed a cooperative to raise chickens and sell eggs to local families and vendors. In January 2007, GYC participants had worked with the women's committee to begin construction on the chicken coop, which now houses close to 300 hens for a total daily production of about 350 eggs, providing a significant source of income for cooperative members.



A member of the Cocobano women's committee

Fieldwork Reflections

By Ashley Roth

Overall I believe the HIV and AIDS workshop was a success. At first I didn't think I had enough knowledge on the topic to help lead a workshop, but as the days progressed I began to understand just how much I had to offer and how important it was for the workshop to take place. It is hard to know exactly how much information the participants will retain, but their presentations were evidence that some of the most important things we wanted them to remember would stick with them. In the very least we got a group of young people talking about a difficult and somewhat taboo subject that is of utmost importance. Hopefully we gave them the building blocks for something greater.

By Stephanie Schuessler

Some of the greatest satisfaction and personal growth comes from the most difficult situations. As cliché as this idea has become, I never realized the extent of its validity until my trip to El Salvador. Each day of the two week trip was difficult in its own sense. There were the horror stories of violence and repression; there was the poverty; and I'll never forget the colony of ants that attacked me in

the middle of the night in Cinquera. But among all these hardships, what stood out the most was the environmental awareness workshop that I helped facilitate in San Rafael Cedros. I did not expect these two days to be the hardest part of the trip, nor did I expect them to be the most rewarding—but that's exactly what they became.

The goal was to facilitate a workshop to local youth in hopes of raising awareness about local environmental problems. Our plan was to discuss garbage, global warming, and the negative effects of CAFTA on the environment. It sounded easy enough...but little did I know. Day one: nothing went according to plan. We had a hard time facilitating a good discussion; the workshop participants didn't seem to know a lot about the topics we were discussing; and we started doubting our ability to communicate in Spanish. Honestly, I am hard pressed to think of another time when I felt like such a failure. Our program directors tried to reassure us, but to no avail.

We woke up the following day, expecting it to be a repeat of the previous. Our participants were to present the material they had learned to the HIV/AIDS prevention group and vice-versa. To our delight, they put on a beautiful three-part play to show what the world would look like if we didn't start making changes. The enthusiasm and thoughtfulness they put in to this production was astounding. It was one of the several times during the delegation that I became visibly emotional.

Our eventual success was rewarding for obvious reasons. But the experience in San Rafael Cedros was significant for less apparent reasons as well. It made me realize just how vital small communities and local leaders are in creating change. A lot of us tend to be idealists; we want to snap our fingers and make the world a noticeably better place. But this is not how change happens. The seeds of change sprout in places like San Rafael Cedros, where a handful of teenagers care

enough to discuss problems facing their community.

Change comes from Suchitoto, where a group of concerned citizens mobilize themselves against unjust government policies. And change comes from San Salvador, where numerous organizations, such as Las Dignas, take small steps every day to make the world a better place.

Despite the somber nature of the delegation, this is what gave me hope.

San Salvador

During our group's final days in El Salvador, we spent time visiting more organizations that are dedicated to furthering the cause of peace and justice in El Salvador through the promotion of human rights. Each visit exposed us to new understandings of Salvadoran history and the ongoing struggle for a lasting peace. Each visit also provided us with different models for engaging in human rights activism.

Las Dignas

Las Dignas is shorthand for the Association of Women for Dignity and Life, a feminist organization that was formed during the period of the Peace Accord negotiations by women affected by the armed conflict who sought to challenge the marginalization of women's issues from the political agenda in El Salvador. During the post-conflict years, the organization has expanded to work with thousands of women to promote both personal healing and the advancement of a feminist political platform to eliminate gender disparity in El Salvador.

www.lasdignas.org

Centro Monseñor Oscar Romero

Named for El Salvador's most widely revered martyr, the Monseñor Oscar Romero Center is housed at the Jesuit University of Central

America (UCA) in San Salvador. The UCA is one of El Salvador's preeminent universities, with a strong tradition of promoting social justice and respect for human rights. In 1989, six Jesuit priests, along with their housekeeper and her daughter, were assassinated on the campus by government security forces in an effort to silence their outspoken criticism of government abuses and their promotion of liberation theology. Today, the center is the site of monument to the murdered Jesuits and houses a museum honoring their lives and that of Archbishop Romero.

www.uca.edu.sv



Women from Las Dignas discuss the challenges of promoting women's rights in El Salvador



Discussing the historic role of the Jesuit community in defending human rights in El Salvador

Equipo Maíz

Equipo Maíz is a center for popular education that strives to contribute to a more democratic society in El Salvador. In addition to providing training workshops for community organizations and social justice activists, the group publishes leaflets, books, and cassettes designed to facilitate a dialogue around important social issues in present-day El Salvador. Through its publications, Equipo Maíz provides educational tools dealing with themes of history, sustainable agriculture, gender equality, economic development, fair trade as well as community organizing.

www.equipomaiz.org.sv

Museo de la Palabra y La Imagen *Museum of the Word and the Image*

The Museo de la Palabra y La Imagen (MUPI) is a non-profit citizen's initiative dedicated to investigating, rescuing, preserving and publicly exhibiting elements of El Salvador's culture and history. On display we found an interesting exhibit about the history of indigenous communities and information about massacres in 1932 that devastated many of these same communities. We also viewed a documentary film about the history of the underground radio station, Radio Venceremos, run by the FMLN during the civil war.

www.museo.com.sv



An installation at the MUPI dedicated to the rebel radio station known as Radio Venceremos

Next Steps

At the end of the program we spent some time reflecting on what we had gained from our experiences in El Salvador and what we were committed to doing to raise awareness and engage others on the issues when we returned home to the U.S.

As one participant noted:

“The most important thing I learned about El Salvador is the complex nature and history of entanglements with the U.S. and how economically dependent El Salvador has become on remittances. I think this is extremely important as we think of ways to organize within our communities and think of how far-reaching the effects are.”

Some of the commitments made included:

- Raising awareness, such as incorporating information on human rights in El Salvador into a student seminar for undergraduate students or organizing a movie night;
- Fundraising to help support the work of GYC's partner organization, Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS)
- Staying informed about what's happening in El Salvador;
- Getting involved with U.S.-based organizations working to advocate for Salvadorans' rights, such as CISPES and immigrants' rights groups;
- Staying connected with Salvadorans we met and continuing to share information, exchange ideas and discuss ways to work together; and
- Organizing a GYC alumni group to serve as elections observers in 2009.

Perhaps most importantly we all reflected on how our experience in El Salvador had given us clarity on how to be more effective advocates for human rights. The friendships we had built, the stories we had heard and the things we had seen impacted us deeply and provided us with inspiration to keep on going despite the challenges. As two participants shared these reflections at the end of the program:

“It’s hard to find the words to describe how deeply this program has impacted me. I feel like I’ve been gifted with the motivation and the self-confidence to take control of my life. And I now know that I will go on to do many positive things and that I can really make a difference.”

“I have gained the knowledge that I can, must and will dedicate my life to helping people that are oppressed and victims of an unjust system.”

Indeed, the start of 2008 was a time for acknowledging El Salvador’s difficult past and manifesting hope for the future. “Changing the world” seems to be top on our list of our resolutions for the New Year.

Delegation Participants

Cesar De La Cruz

Cesar is a volunteer wrestling coach at Freedom High School in Orlando, FL, where he also tutors students and helps them develop techniques that balance their athletic and academic requirements. He studied at West Point Academy for two years and developed invaluable leadership and problem solving skills. In 2006, Cesar graduated from the University of Central Florida, where he became interested in studying Latin America and the development of peoples around the world. He is currently studying for the Law School Admission Test, and hopes to attend law school in the fall of 2008. The idea of supporting a youth organization is exciting to Cesar, and he looks forward to gaining an insiders view into the problems facing El Salvador.

Lauren Dubey

A senior at Lewis and Clark College, Lauren is a sociology/anthropology major and art minor, who has already had the opportunity to travel to Guatemala, Peru and Ecuador. Lauren is currently writing her senior thesis at Lewis & Clark College on HIV/AIDS in Latin America. She loves traveling, meeting new people, speaking foreign languages, learning new traditions, trying new foods, being outdoors and working with children. After graduating from college, she plans to work in AIDS advocacy and education.



Sandra Gutierrez

Sandra was born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, but now lives in New Mexico where she studies at New Mexico State University. She has conducted international IRB (International Review Board) approved research on the patterns of potential young immigrants from Mexico and is the 2007 Honors Scholar of the Year, a McNair Student, and a CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program) alumna. She hopes to write and publish a book on the mentality and behavior patterns of immigrants. She has a strong desire to contribute and to give something back to communities in which opportunities are not always present.

Diana Maldonado

Diana graduated from Rutgers University in May 2006, and is pursuing her Masters Degree in education at St. Peters College. While at Rutgers, she led the largest Latino student organization on campus. Over the past three years, she has been working in the public sector as a public school substitute teacher, with a non-profit/community based organization and in the campaigns for local

politicians. She hopes to continue working with urban youth in an educational context after completing her Masters program.

Meghan Maloney

Meghan is a student at Hampshire College, where she hopes to concentrate in human rights and international development. She currently works at Earth Action as an Administrative Assistant, and she has spent her last two summers volunteering at Organization for Refugees in Buffalo, NY. After studying in Costa Rica during her junior year in high school, Meghan became interested in working with refugees. Her senior year in high school, Meghan worked with APROSCAL in El Salvador, where she educated adolescent girls on sexual and reproductive health. While at Hampshire College, she would like to study abroad and spend her summers doing work in developing countries. After graduating from college, Meghan hopes to live in a developing country and work in human rights.

Patrice Mobley

As a senior at North Carolina Central University majoring in political science, Patrice has a strong interest in international relations. In the summer of 2007, she studied at the Maryland Leadership Institute for International Public Policy, and in the spring of 2007, she studied at the School for International Training in Chiapas, Mexico. Patrice is very interested in community organizing, grassroots advocacy and post-conflict resolution. She has already done team-building workshops and experienced adversity first-hand. She is currently applying to the Peace Corps, where she hopes to serve Latin American communities through direct community involvement with human rights and agriculture.

Linh Nguyen

Linh is a 4th year womens studies major with a Spanish minor at the University of California Santa Barbara. She has traveled to Mexico and Guatemala, and in the spring of 2007, she studied abroad in Chile during. As a first generation United States citizen, she feels that it is critical to analyze the social and political situations that drive people into guerilla action, or drives them

to seek asylum in other countries. Linh is eager to discover tools that open dialogue on human rights and social justice. She hopes to work for Teach for America and to apply for graduate school in the history of consciousness PhD program at the University of California Santa Cruz.



Jessica Reilly

Jessica studies sustainable rural development and Spanish at the University of California Berkeley. Last year, she participated in a study abroad program that consisted of one semester in Peru and the second in Nicaragua. In Peru, her studies focused on identity and culture, and in Nicaragua, Jessica spent much time considering the varying realities of revolution and the resulting political, economic and social transformations within the Nicaraguan context. She has been a volunteer at the Salvation Army, and now she works at East Bay Sanctuary where legal services are offered to unauthorized immigrants. Jessica hopes to be a part of grassroots change, and she believes, the empowerment of youth is key in our common struggle.

Ashley Roth

Ashley is a senior at the University of Wisconsin Madison who has spent much of her time involved in public service within the Latino community. Her focus on the Latino community was inspired by the studies and research she has done as a Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies and Spanish double major, with a certificate in Chicano and Latino Studies. She has volunteered at Nuestro Mundo Community School, assisting first grade students with literacy activities and interpreting at parent-teacher

meetings, and currently works at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in the Bureau of Structures as an Office Clerk. After graduating, she hopes to go to law school to study immigration law. She has studied Salvadoran politics and history, but looks forward to learning more about the Salvadoran people.

Stephanie Schuessler

Stephanie currently works at the University Center for Latin American Studies as a CLAS Ambassador. In this position, she promotes Latin American academics, study abroad, and social activities at the University of Pittsburgh, where she is also majoring in Spanish and History. Over the past summer, Stephanie received a research fellowship to do independent research involving cultural encounters between US Marines and natives of the Latin American countries they occupied during the early 1900s. After graduating from college, she would like to join the Peace Corps and then go to law school. Stephanie makes an effort to visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, regularly to remind herself of the terrible atrocities in our history she hopes to use her idealism and commitment to learning to combat these atrocities.



Salvadoran Workshop Participants

Victor Manuel Andaluz Recinos
Kenis Yaneth Martínez Navarro
Kenny Hernández Henríquez
Ana Cristina Henríquez Torres
Xiomara Natali Sánchez Maravilla
Maira del Pilar Romero
Dora Alicia Alas Menjivar

Joel Rolando Rodríguez Hernández
Gloria Eugenia Muñoz Rivas
Yancy Marlene Peña Arias
Erika Yaneth Argueta Martínez
José Francisco García Mancía
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Executive Director
Global Youth Connect

Jennifer has served as Executive Director of Global Youth Connect since 1999. In addition to overseeing the general organizational and program development of GYC, she has organized and led human rights delegations to Rwanda, Guatemala, Cambodia, Nepal and developed human rights, peacebuilding and activism training workshops for young human rights defenders from around the world. Prior to her work with GYC, Jennifer worked as the international programs coordinator for Street Law, an international organization that runs educational programs in the areas of law, human rights, democracy and conflict resolution, on projects in El Salvador, Northern Ireland, Southern and Eastern Africa, and the Newly Independent States. Her background also includes working with Amnesty International, Children's Rights, Inc., and Global Rights on a wide range of human rights issues such as political prisoners in Cuba, Haiti, and Western Africa and children lost in the foster care system of the U.S., among others. Jennifer also conducted an extensive research project on the impact of the UN World Conference of Human Rights (1993). VOICE International published a practical manuscript she wrote entitled *"To Promote and Protect Women's Human Rights: A Handbook of Mobilization*

Strategies for Women's Non-governmental Organizations." She has also consulted on fundraising and program evaluation and implementation for the Louis August Jonas Foundation, the Artemesia Foundation and Midwives for Midwives/Women's Health International. Jennifer holds a M.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and a B.A. in international studies from American University and concentrated her academic studies on international development and human rights.

Venezuela.

Emma Kreyche
Latin America Program Director
Global Youth Connect

Emma comes to GYC with a history of activism and community organizing experience. As a child, her family's involvement in the Sanctuary Movement exposed her to the painful realities faced by Central American war refugees, an experience that deeply has deeply impacted the course of her life. In high school and college, she volunteered with Amigos de las Americas for three consecutive summers in Mexico and Bolivia, and has since traveled extensively in Latin America. While pursuing her BA in Latin American Studies at Bard College, Emma became deeply involved in the global justice movement and co-founded the Migrant Labor Project, promoting student involvement in direct service, research and advocacy around the issues faced by local migrant workers. After graduating, Emma settled in the Hudson Valley to continue her work with farm workers and low wage-immigrant workers, becoming actively involved in local economic justice issues and anti-racist activism. In addition to her work with GYC, Emma conducts training workshops for organizations, schools, and individuals around the themes of racism, white privilege and community organizing. She has also worked community mediator for the Mediation Center of Dutchess County. This past fall, Emma began working towards her Ph.D. in American Studies at New York University in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. As Latin America Program Director, Emma has overseen GYC's delegation programs in Guatemala, El Salvador and