



MASCP

Madison Arcatao Sister City Project

U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities



OUR PARTNER:
CRIPDES

U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities

October 2005

José Isabel Membreño: 30 years of Community Organizing Experience

Salvadoran José Isabel Membreño has been involved in grassroots community organizing since the early 1970s. During the Salvadoran civil war, Membreño helped to coordinate rural refugees forced to flee their homes and communities, and helped to lead the return of refugees to the Chalatenango region (which led to Madison's sister city relationship in the region). Following the Peace Accords Membreño has served in a number of local and regional elected positions serving as an advocate for health care and education in the region's under-developed rural communities. Membreño also has two grown sons from his first marriage that opted to pay a "coyote" to get them illegally into the US, where they applied for legal status. He will speak of the trials of family disintegration (caused by the war and the poor economy), the life of undocumented immigrants in the US, and the many aspects of rural development and community organizing in El Salvador.

There are two opportunities to meet and here José in Madison:

Dinner Among Friends

A community meal open to all

Sunday, October 23 6:30pm

Friendship Hall, St. Marks Church
605 Spruce St.

(Please RSVP ~251-9280)

Voluntary Donations for Family Farm
Defenders and MASCP)

Broken Families?

Broken Policies !

Tuesday, October 21, 7pm

Pres House, 731 State St.

UW Library Mall

Sponsors: Community Action on Latin
America, Family Farm Defenders,
Madison Fair Trade Action Alliance,
MASCP, Student labor Action
Coalition and others

Letter to Arcatao

Here are excerpts from the letter sent to Arcatao from the MASCP committee in July 2005. Together with the reports from Kate McCormack (long term volunteer living in Arcatao) and Erin Conrad elsewhere in this newsletter, it serves as an update to what is going on in our sistering relationship.

July 5, 2005

Friends and Compañeros of Arcatao,

Greetings from Madison, where we have just met with Kate McCormack to get up to date with what's been happening in Arcatao in these last few months. We are happy that Kate is with you and that she can be the point-person for communication between Arcatao and us.

She has told us all about the latest initiatives you are involved in. We really appreciate the many efforts you are making to improve the life of the community. **She told us about the plans for a home for the elderly, for children's civic education, the sistering office, the clinic, the deeds of property ownership, the regional project for the disabled, mental health, the new sistering committee, and the local radio station. So many valuable and important things!**

With this letter, we pledge to write to you every month in future.

We wish to express our continuing solidarity with all sectors of the Arcatao community, with whom we have maintained a long, historical relationship. We want to reiterate our desire to include everyone in the sistering relation and not lose contact with any of the sectors.

We want you to know that lately our financial resources have gone to the following projects, to fulfill commitments that we made for 2005. So far, we have completed a total of \$1800 for the Arcatao Scholarship Fund and \$1000 to the regional Chalatenango Youth Organizing fund. **These funds have come from the generosity of Madisonians particularly with the help of teacher Erin Conrad and her Eagle School students.**

Another delegation of Edgewood College students will come in March 2006. We also hope to organize another delegation in 2006 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of MASCP.

Creetings in solidarity,

Your friends in Madison.

BROKEN FAMILIES? BROKEN POLICIES!

Witness José Membreño's personal story about the harmful affects of immigration on families. Hear from this dedicated community leader from El Salvador who, despite all his organizing efforts, watched his two sons leave for the United States to find jobs.



Tuesday, October 21, 7pm
Pres House, 731 State St.
UW Library Mall

My Options in El Salvador:

~~Farming~~ Can't compete with
U.S. farm subsidies!

~~Factory job~~ Unsafe working
conditions!

~~Service job~~ Doesn't pay a
living wage!

Leave for USA?

MY LAST RESORT!

Wisconsin Acts on U.S. Foreign Policy

School of Americas Watch comes to Madison

Madison and MASCP have long been aware of and active in the campaign to close down the U.S. Army School of Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. The **School of Americas Watch** (www.soaw.org) held its regional conference in Madison the weekend of September 23-25, 2005. Sister Maureen McDonnell at Edgewood College collaborated with other Wisconsin-based activists to plan and host this meeting for folks from a 5-state Great Lakes Region.

MASCP's Erin Conrad and Students from Eagle School (recently returned from El Salvador) spoke on the panel "Forging a Deeper Awareness and Analysis of SOA/WHISC as a Tool of U.S. Global Hegemony."

SOA Vigil



November 17–21, 2005 marks the date of the **annual SOA Vigil at Ft. Benning, Georgia**. Sister Mo is reserving a 49-passenger bus for this trip to take Wisconsin delegates. To join the group, contact Sister Mo at mcdonnel@edgewood.edu.

U.S. Again Looking to Police the Hemisphere

The SOA Vigil becomes all the more important with the news that repressive police/military strategy is again rearing its ugly head in El Salvador. Recently there was an announcement that the U.S. has persuaded the



Salvadoran government to allow the establishment of an **ILEA—International Law Enforcement Academy**—on Salvadoran soil. For more information, and competing points of view, see The State Department's description of ILEA at <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/ilea/> and a July 2005 Press Release by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs at <http://tinyurl.com/c9aqt>

For This Newsletter: Gracias to
Ian Davies Carol Bracewell
Barbara Alvarado

From Arcatao

Realities Coming Together....

(Reflections from long-term sistering volunteer, Kate McCormack)

Hello to everyone in the Madison community. I have been living in Arcatao for about 4 months now. I am from Milwaukee but graduated from UW Madison last December. I went to El Salvador for the first time with MASCP in 2001 and have worked with Sister Cities throughout my time in college in addition to being active in the anti sweatshop movement through United Students Against Sweatshops.

My work theme in El Salvador is fair trade (*comercio justo*) and I am working with the different artesian workshops and sewing workshops in the Chaltenango region. Living in Arcatao I am representing MASCP and working on communication with our two sistered communities. Being a young person from the city it has been fascinating for me to be part of a community and culture that still grows and makes the majority of what they consume.

I had a jar of peanut butter in my room and one day one of the neighbor girls was trying some and floored me with the question, 'how did you make this? Where did you grow the nuts?' I did not know how to begin to explain that where I am from everything comes from the grocery store and we rarely have any idea beyond that. It makes one really question the skills that we value. It is crazy that I quite literally do not know how to feed myself but other more abstract skills, like typing, are far more valued in some places.

In more difficult news, the passage of CAFTA is of course a blow although we have not seen any clear changes yet. Gas prices are skyrocketing and as of today, the price of non-premium gasoline was \$2.84 a gallon. This in a country where a good majority of the people live on less than that a day.

It has become almost a weekly ritual that one of the young people from Arcatao leaves as a *mojado* with a *coyote* to work in the United States. I have had a hard time meeting people my age because most of them have left for the US or San Salvador. Between CAFTA and Coca-Cola and American celebrity gossip, the people are intimately aware of the presence of our country every day. Seeing what a role the US government and US corporations have here makes it even clearer just how important the work of building citizen relationships and alternative networks is.

—Kate McCormack

"Movement Building" for 2006 !

Free trade agreements, multinational corporations, and corrupt officials dominate the political landscape, perpetuating the erosion of labor standards, environmental protections, and social safety nets. For many years now, the rallying cry of the economic right has been, "There is no alternative."

But we beg to differ.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial that we band together, sew the seeds of a new left and realize the commonalities of our struggles. The lines between laborer, farmer, and immigrant are blurred. Grass-root people in the US and in El Salvador are facing many of the same difficulties and fighting the same foe. It is only in recognizing how these struggles are intertwined and learning from each other that we will be able to create the alternative.

In celebration of MASCP's 20th anniversary, we are planning a movement building delegation to El Salvador in 2006. There are many amazing organizations here in our community and although the sectors for the most part support each other, the struggles are still often viewed as somewhat isolated. MASCP looks to the example of our friends in El Salvador to build stronger community organizations here in Madison and to promote the cross-border solidarity that is of mutual benefit to us all.

Contact MASCP to learn more about how to "move forward" movement building with our delegation in Spring/Summer of 2006 ! (608) 251-9280 or mascp@charterinternet.net

—Liana Dalton



¡ Adelante, Esperanza !

Esperanza: One of "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize"

By Kate McCormack in Arcatao

Last year the international committee of "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize" informed leaders in Arcatao that the region could choose one woman to be one of the 5 nominees from El Salvador. The project is an international effort to choose important women leaders to represent all the women worldwide who struggle for peace. Apparently, the women in the region had a terrible time deciding who it should be—not one of them wanted the recognition. In the end at the nomination meeting Esperanza Ortega from Arcatao—ever the leader—stepped forward and said "Well, if no one else will do it, I'll do it."

And so very fittingly, a woman named Hope, is nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. It feels right and symbolically important that in a region where the people have suffered so much, where nothing has ever been easy, where the two things the people have had the most are hope and organization, that an organizer named "Hope" should be the one to bring some global recognition to the post-war struggle.

Esperanza is a small woman but well muscled and quick in both movement and thoughts. She gives one the sense of a spring constantly coiled, ready to propel forward at any moment. Esperanza moves forward with a brassy love for her community and is a true organizer in the sense of being able to both

Congratulations to Esperanza on her nomination, which recognizes her role in the heroic, inspirational and necessary struggle for justice, peace and human rights in El Salvador and around the world.

Nobel Peace Prize nominee Maria Esperanza Ortega with her newborn grandson (1994 Photo by Carolyn Ann Gantner)

During the armed conflict of the 80's Esperanza founded the Chalatenango Communities and Repopulation Association (CCR) to help organize civilians trapped in the war zones. She is currently the CCR's sistering representative, coordinating solidarity relationships of 17 communities.



conduct meetings and develop ideas and projects and also connect with and support people socially.

It is hard to choose stories that give any sense of what Esperanza is truly like. At a fiesta for elderly people, Esperanza and a host of helpers were handing out ice cream to the 40 elderly persons and then she and the others literally had all the *ancianos* dancing and laughing. Just one of the moments when Esperanza's real charisma and finesse were truly in evidence.

I think too often, in the US at least, we have very specific ideas of how work gets done- of what important people like. I imagine

boardrooms and suits (and men) making decisions importantly with all the facts- manipulating events and economies like chess pieces. But this Nobel Peace Prize nomination gives us a chance to acknowledge people like Esperanza who embody a different kind of power. She is an important person who continues to make great changes in her community and country. She does not do it in a boardroom but rather with her daily life. The way she lives her life is organizing and through this supports people, loves them and forms community with them. *¡Adelante, Esperanza!* Go Forward, Hope!



Madison to Arcatao to Madison to Arcatao to Madison to Arcatao to Madison to Arcatao to Madison to Arcatao

Your contributions support the following:

- Arcatao Community Service Scholarships
- Young People's Organizing Workshops in Arcatao Region
- Esperanza Ortega's regional organizing position
- Volunteer work of Kate McCormack in Arcatao
- Two full time sistering representatives based in San Salvador
- Our national US – El Salvador Sister City network coordinator
- MASCP's office, part time coordinator, local organizing

~ Enclosed is my contribution of _____ ~ I/we would like to volunteer with MASCP _____

Name _____ e-mail _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

MADISON ARCATAO SISTER CITY PROJECT
PO Box 259205 Madison WI 53725 mascp@charterinternet.net (608) 251-9280

More Sistering News

Celebrating Solidarity from Latin America to the Middle East

February 25th saw some 350 people gather at the Barrymore Theater for a fundraising event in support of three solidarity organizations: the Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua, the Madison Rafah Sister City Project and MASCP. The three groups worked in partnership with Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program of the UW Madison as it organized its 6th Annual Cinefest. Iconoclast film-makers Saul Landau and Haskell Wexler were on hand to celebrate Latin American solidarity with a showing of three politically powerful documentary films: *The Sixth Sun: Mayan Uprising in Chiapas*; *Syria: Between Iraq and a Hard Place*, and *Rock Down Central America*.



More Sistering News

- Ian Davies and Marc Rosenthal are once again teaching the **Edgewood College Human Issues Seminar on El Salvador** for the academic year 2005-2006, including a delegation to San Salvador and Arcatao in March 2006. Contact Ian for more information (idavies@edgewood.edu)
- The Romero Memorial Tree Project originates from the **Foundation for Self Sufficiency in Central America** (www.fssca.org), an NGO based out of Austin, Texas. Its director, José “Chencho” Alas, a Salvadoran and former Jesuit priest who, throughout the 60s and 70s in El Salvador, struggled alongside Archbishop Romero will be in Madison to from **October 27th – November 1st**. Contact Ian Davies (idavies@edgewood.edu)

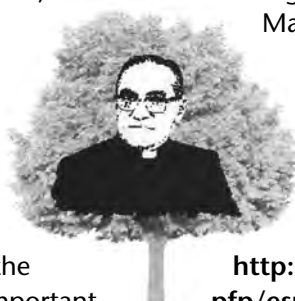
- The work of USESSC (US-El Salvador Sister Cities) received a boost with the publication, in the July 11th 2005 issue of *The Nation* magazine, of a detailed article on El Salvador’s social movement “**Letter from El Salvador: At the Edges of Empire.**” Full of informative facts and analysis, and featuring an interview with USESSC staff member Jesse Cates-Chinoy, the article, by Peter Davis, can be found at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050711/davis>

An Interfaith Passover Seder: *Milk for Palestine and Trees for El Salvador*

On May 1st several community groups, including MASCP, came together under the leadership of Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman to celebrate a **Passover Seder** at St Mark’s Lutheran Church. The interfaith Seder was a great success, bringing together diverse groups such as Madison Rafah Sister City Project, WCCN, the Archbishop Oscar Romero Celebration Committee and Shaarei



Shamayim (Jewish Reconstructionist and Renewal Committee). The event supported two main causes, raising funds for the **Rafah Milk and Vitamins Project** (to improve the diet of children living in the occupied territory of the Gaza Strip) and, most important for El Salvador, the **Romero**



Memorial Tree Project. This event raised \$1210 for milk and trees. A huge thanks to the many Madisonians who participated in this peace-giving project!

To honor Archbishop Oscar Romero, give a tree to be planted in El Salvador, go to <http://www.justgiving.com/pfp/esperanza>

LIFE Style

Monday, Aug. 22, 2005

Eagle School students experience life in El Salvador



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Madison students Brielle Sprecher (left) and Sarah Maslin enjoy getting to know young El Salvadoran children on a recent trip to Central America.

A different world



Making hammocks is a common activity in the El Salvadoran village of El Jicaro.

By Debra Carr-Elsing

The Capital Times

Cultural differences quickly fell by the wayside when a Madison delegation of seventh- and eighth-grade students recently visited El Salvador.

It was a journey of a lifetime when Erlinda Conrad, a Spanish teacher at Eagle School in Fitchburg, took a group of 14 to Central America last month.

Most of the trip was spent living with families in the poor, rural community of El Jicaro, which is near Madison's sister city of Arcatao, El Salvador.

"None of us experienced culture shock, even though there certainly are differences in our standard of living," Conrad says.

"The focus was on connecting and developing caring relationships with people outside the United States, and that certainly happened."

It was a trip that also brought the impact of world events closer to home, putting names and faces to

international news, Conrad says.

Time was spent helping villagers with a recycling project, cooking over open fires and playing soccer with young children. Cows were milked and the village school visited.

When it was time to cool off, everyone went to the nearby Sumpul River. It also was learned that the river was the site of the country's worst massacre during its civil war, which ended in 1992.

"We saw the scars of war everywhere," says Steve Erdmann of Madison. "In the family I stayed with, the father was missing an arm from a war injury."

Another student, Andrew Muir, was impressed with the ability of El Salvadorans to see people apart from a country's government.

"Our president signed a trade agreement that will doom El Salvadorans to increased poverty — because their businesses are unable to compete with American companies — yet they fed us dinner that same night," Muir says.

"They saw us as individuals who

See SALVADOR, Page 4B

Salvador

■ Continued from Page 1B

had come to get to know them," he adds. "We were welcomed with open arms — and hearts."

It was a lasting impression that also stuck with Nick Erdmann, a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, who made the trip with his younger brother, Steve.

"You can't walk down State Street and say 'hi' to people without getting weird looks here, but El Salvadorans were so friendly and open to us — every greeting was met with big smiles," Nick Erdmann says.

"It was real refreshing to know that villagers were happy for us to be there."

A memorable moment for Eagle student Sarah Maslin was dancing during their last night celebration in the village square.

"Everyone had fun sharing talents, even if we didn't think we had any," she quips.

"Seriously, I learned so much on this trip. I saw how people living in poverty didn't need designer jeans or the latest iPod to be happy."

El Salvadorans wear the same clothes every day, and nobody really cares, she adds. "Their joy comes from close family bonds and relationships within their community."

American affluence also is being seen differently nowadays by Cory Muir, who is Andrew's mother and went along on the trip.

"Twenty years ago, I had previously lived in Mexico for a year, so the standard of liv-

ing — and lack of facilities — in El Salvador didn't surprise me," Muir says.

"My biggest adjustment was returning home to our culture that is so materialistic and now knowing about the little resources that El Salvadorans cope with on a daily basis."

Muir adds that she met and established a relationship with a "soul sister" in the peasant village of El Jicaro, which is in the province of Chalatenango.

"El Salvadorans are generous, loving and kind," she adds. "These are human connections that I want to maintain for the rest of my life."

Her son Andrew remembers how there is one CD player in the entire El Jicaro village, "and all the teenage boys just share it," he says.

"They're just happy with what they have and being a part of a community."

What's missing, however, is an entire generation of young people in El Jicaro, says Conrad, who lived in El Salvador from 1998 to 2003 when she coordinated the U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities program.

"There are no options for youth beyond the ninth grade because they can't afford to go on to school, and there is no work," Conrad says.

Many young people go elsewhere to find minimum wage jobs so they can send money home to their families, she adds.

"To help keep families together, we need to find ways to help support economic life in poor, El Salvadoran villages," Conrad says.

Human kindness and generosity, she adds, transcend all language and culture barriers.

E-mail: dcarreising@madison.com

SISTER CITY PROJECT

The Madison Arcatao Sister City Project (MASCP) is a link between the people of El Salvador and local residents. It's a caring relationship that focuses on affordable housing, living wages and access to education and health care for El Salvadorans.

Last year, MASCP helped support 14 students in El Salvador through its scholarship program.

For more information, e-mail to: mascp@charterinternet.net or call 251-9280.

MASCP is a member of the national network of U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities. Go to www.us-elsalvador-sisters.org.

The national network has assisted and befriended people in El Salvador for 20 years with the help of the Association of Rural Communities for the Development of El Salva-

Arcatao, El Salvador & Madison: Approaching 20 Years of Friendship (Arcatao en Madison: Hacia 20 Anos de Amistad)

Photographs by Carolyn Ann Gantner & Heather Kenney Opland, mother & daughter.

October 15–November 1, 2005
Michelangelos Coffee House, 114 State Street
Open daily from 7AM – 11PM



"The cry for liberation of these people rises up to God and nothing and no one will ever stop it."

Words of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero on a mural in the main square of Madison's Sister City of Arcatao, El Salvador.
Photograph by Carolyn Ann Gantner, 1994

MADISON ARCATAO SISTER CITY PROJECT

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US-El Salvador Sister Cities Home Page: www.us-elsalvador-sisters.org



The Madison Arcatao Sister City Project (MASCP) is a member of the U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities Network (USESSC). As a member of this Network, it is partnered with its sister community of Arcatao through the Association of Rural Communities for the Development of El Salvador (CRIPDES). These sisterings began in 1986—the year that MASCP was founded—as a response by U.S. citizens and residents to U.S. government intervention in the civil war in El Salvador.

With others in the Network, our purpose is to join our Salvadoran partners across borders to provide mutual support and raise awareness about our common struggle for peace, justice and democracy. Together as organized groups on a local, national and international level we seek to build "globalization from the grassroots."

Madison, WI and
Arcatao, El Salvador
2006
20 years of friendship

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