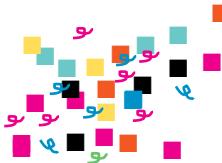


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WINTER 2016

ROCLA UPDATE ON THE AMERICAS



A PUBLICATION OF THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE ON LATIN AMERICA

ROCLA

MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1973, the Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA) seeks to build bridges between the Rochester, NY, community and the people of Latin America. Through its monthly presentations, speakers, films, and quarterly newsletters, ROCLA educates local residents about the culture, economics and politics of the countries of Central and South America, Mexico and the Caribbean and the ways globalization, US trade and drug-war policies impact the lives of their people. ROCLA also supports the work of frontline organizations involved in working for justice and democracy in the global south, including the Latin America Solidarity Committee (LASC), Nicanet, Committee in Solidarity with the people of El Salvador (CISPES), Network In Solidarity with the people of Guatemala (NISGUA), Rights Action and the Pastors for Peace Cuba Friendship. We also encourage our members and others to advocate for US policies that support human rights and reverse the often oppressive history of US involvement in Latin America. Annually, ROCLA presents its international and local White Dove Awards for outstanding leadership and service in the cause of human rights in Latin America.

Steering Committee

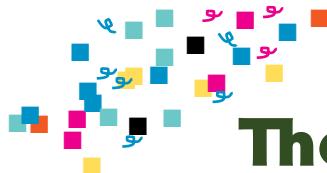
Marilyn Anderson, Paola Betchart, Bob and Marilyn Kaiser, Grania Marcus, Arnie Matlin, Lew Montemaggi, Peter and Gail Mott, Lucienne Nicholson, Callie Rabe, Vic Vinkey, Tom Ward

Publishing Team

Editor: Grania Marcus
Designer: Jim Anderson



2016 ROCLA CELEBRATION & FUNDRAISER



SAVE THE DATE!

The 28th Annual Rice & Beans Dinner and White Dove Awards

Friday, March 11, 2016, 5:15pm
Gates Presbyterian Church, 1049 Wegman Road

This year's celebration will honor two International White Dove Award winners, **Cecilia Moran Santos**, torture survivor, and the **Center for Justice and Accountability** (CJA). Cecilia was a courageous plaintiff in a successful 2005 suit brought to hold the former head of the El Salvador National Police, Colonel Nicolas Carranza, accountable for numerous human rights violations, including Cecilia's, in the early 1980s. **Once Again Nut Butter**, a fair trade democratically-governed employee-owned company based in Nunda, N.Y. that works with many sesame seed cooperatives in Nicaragua, will receive the Local White Dove Award. **See inside for details!**

Please use the coupon below to choose your level of support.
You may also indicate other ways you can help ROCLA. Thank you for your generosity and support!

ROCLA

Please choose your preferred level of support, make your check payable to MJ/ROCLA, and mail this coupon and your check to: **Kathy Goforth, 45 Lynbrook Drive, Rochester, NY 14609**. Your membership gift is tax-deductible.

ROCLA is proud to be a Task Force of the Metro Justice Education Fund.

**YOU ARE OUR MOST
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I/We want to support ROCLA! Enclosed is my/our check.

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Please let us know if you would like to volunteer to help ROCLA:

- I would like to learn more about joining the Steering Committee to help with ongoing programs and work of ROCLA.
 I can help with newsletter mailings
 I can work at the Alternative Fair to help promote ROCLA
 I can help with the Rice & Beans Dinner, Friday, March 11, 2016.
 I want to continue to receive the print newsletter if ROCLA moves to email only communications.

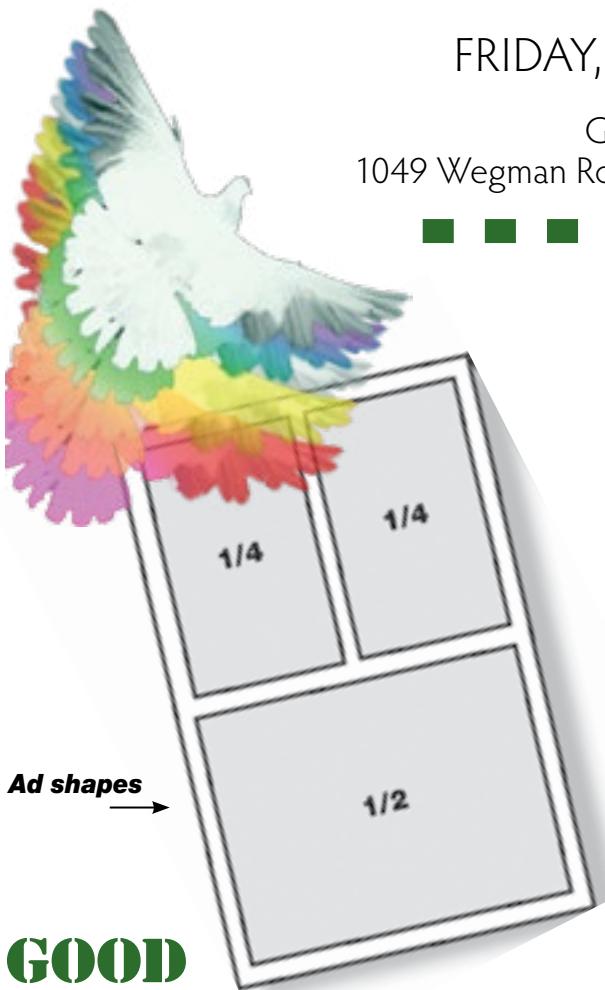
SAVE THE DATE & AD REQUEST

ROCHESTER COMMITTEE ON LATIN AMERICA
CELEBRATION & FUNDRAISER

28th Annual Rice & Beans Gala Dinner & White Dove Awards

FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 5:15PM

Gates Presbyterian Church*
1049 Wegman Road • Rochester, New York



**GOOD
FOOD,
FUN,
SILENT
AUCTION,
& WHITE
DOVE
AWARDS!**

This year ROCLA will honor **Cecilia Moran Santos** and the **Center for Justice and Accountability** with the International White Dove Award for their efforts to hold human rights violators in 1980s El Salvador accountable for their crimes. **Once Again Nut Butter** of Nunda, N.Y. will receive the Local White Dove Award as an employee-owned business that works with numerous sesame seed co-ops in Nicaragua.

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For information or to place an order, please contact **Arnie Matlin**, ahmatlingvcp@igc.org or send this order form to: Arnold Matlin, 2290 Anderson Road, Linwood, NY 14486 to reserve ad space.

Tickets:

Hero: \$100; Champion: \$50; Friend \$30; Student: \$15.

We encourage organizations to buy a table of 8 at last year's price, \$25 per person

For Reservations: Kathy Goforth: kathy.goforth@rochester.rr.com, (585) 467-4091

Please make your check payable to ROCLA/Metro Justice Education Fund and send to: Kathy Goforth, 45 Lynbrook Drive, Rochester, NY 14609

Auction Items to Donate: Margaret Matlin, matlin@genesee.edu; (585) 768-6277

To volunteer to help: Bob Kaiser: RJKaiser3@gmail.com; (585) 293-3194

All proceeds benefit ROCLA's work for peace and justice in Latin America.

*The church is wheelchair accessible and looped for the hearing impaired.

2016 White Dove Award Winners

International White Dove Award: **Cecilia Moran Santos** and the **Center for Justice and Accountability**

By Gail Mott

In September of 1980, Cecilia Moran Santos was a 27-year-old student at the National University and a government statistician, when four men forced her into a taxi and dropped her off at the National Police building. She was blindfolded and led through a tunnel to a small room with a desk—Santos could feel and hear bodies of people on the tunnel floor in pain and crying. Once inside the room, Cecilia, was interrogated, sexually assaulted and tortured with acid and electrical shocks. She was held for eight days and tortured repeatedly. At that time, Colonel Nicolas Carranza was the Vice Minister of Defense, in control of the Salvadoran National Police, who held her.

After three years in detention, Cecilia was released from prison under a general amnesty and allowed to come to the United States. For a year, she lived in Rochester with the Sisters of St. Joseph. Since the early 1990s, Cecilia has worked for the Centro Salvadoreño, an organization on Long Island that works with Latino immigrant communities; she is currently its Director.

The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA), based in San Francisco, California, will share the 2016 International White Dove Award. CJA was founded in 1998 as an international human rights organization dedicated to deterring torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA uses litigation to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develops human rights law, and advances the rule of law in countries transitioning from periods of abuse. CJA recognizes that the need for justice is an integral component of a torture victim's recovery process and that healing cannot take place when the perpetrator continues to live without consequence.

In 2005, Cecilia and four others courageously stepped forward to become plaintiffs in a case brought by CJA against Colonel Nicolas Carranza, who had been a paid informant for the CIA and had become a U.S. citizen in 1991. On November 18, 2005, after a three-week trial, a jury found Carranza liable under the doctrine of command responsibility for crimes against humanity, torture, and extra-judicial killing. He was ordered to pay \$6 million in damages. The verdict represents the first time that a U.S. jury in a contested case has found a commander liable for crimes against humanity. Moran Santos' testimony about her capture and torture by the Salvadoran National Police was key to the outcome. Carranza appealed the verdict, but on March 17, 2009, the Sixth Circuit upheld the jury verdict.

Cecilia Moran Santos will receive the International White Dove Award on behalf of herself and CJA. ■



Cecilia Moran-Santos at CJA's Annual Dinner in 2008.

Local White Dove Award:
Once Again Nut Butter

By Marilyn Anderson

ROCLA has given both the International and Local White Dove Awards to many organizations and individuals, including those supporting environmental, food and agricultural rights in Latin America. This year's Local White Dove awardee, Once Again Nut Butter, was founded in 1976 and is firmly in that tradition. As a democratically-governed worker-owned cooperative in rural Nunda, N.Y., Once Again Nut Butter provides good jobs for local workers, makes and sells several organic seed and peanut butters and supports sesame seed cooperatives in Nicaragua that have enhanced the living conditions of their member-growers.

ROCLA's history of recognizing the importance of sustainable food production as a human right dates back to its support of Kai Clouds, an Ithaca native who in the 1970s taught organic agriculture to Maya farmers and was subsequently murdered by a death squad. Since that time, ROCLA has continued to support Clouds' sponsor organization, EPIC (Ecumenical Project for International Cooperation), which still works in Guatemala.

For years, many ROCLA members have purchased Once Again Nut Butter products at the Abundance Food Coop, but recently it came to our attention that this company has been supporting sesame seed co-ops in Nicaragua for over twenty years. A few acres of successful sesame seed plantings now have turned into the development of 13 farm cooperatives with nearly 2,000 farms in total! Once Again Nut Butter has shown exemplary commitment to the co-ops in Nicaragua and, as an upstate business, to their workers and to their community. It has also received numerous awards from health-oriented magazines such as *Fitness*, *Prevention*, and *Men's Health*.

ROCLA's recognition of Once Again Nut Butter continues its decades of supporting cooperative agriculture in Central America, including coffee cooperatives in Nicaragua during the brutal 1980s Contra War. We are proud to honor Once Again Nut Butter. ■



NEWS FROM ACROSS LATIN AMERICA

2015 White Dove Award recipient thanks ROCLA members and friends

In 2015, Tom Loudon with his wife and co-worker Jennifer Atlee were honored with ROCLA's International White Dove Award for more than 30 years working in solidarity with the people of Honduras and Nicaragua. Tom's letter thanks ROCLA members and other solidarity activists for their support of efforts to establish a UN-sponsored International Commission against Impunity in Honduras (CICIH). **For the text of the letter to Secretary of State John Kerry on December 4, 2015, see <https://serrano.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressman-serrano-and-53-members-call-creation-un-sponsored-commission>.** [Ed. Note]

Dear Friends,

Thanks to your efforts, 54 members of Congress signed a letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, calling for the creation of an independent, UN-sponsored International Commission against Impunity in Honduras (CICIH), modeled on the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

In a press release, Rep. José Serrano (D-NY) stated: "This is a key issue to the future of Honduras. It is time to establish an independent commission to root out corruption and restore trust. The scale of the problem cannot be understated."

The letter explains that, "The goal of the commission is to bring an international,

independent team of prosecutors and investigators to help root out corruption and reduce impunity. We believe this is the only way to ensure justice and the rule of law in Honduras."

Friendship Office staff was in Honduras with a delegation of U.S. churchwomen when the letter was published. Honduran organizations with which we met were grateful for the strong endorsement on the part of U.S. policy makers for a CICIH and repeatedly voiced opposition to the OAS plan, currently backed by the United States.

We will send you the Delegation Report shortly so that you can share it with your members of Congress. Thanks again for all you do to promote human rights, justice and peace.

Tom

To learn more about the work of the Friendship Office of the Americas, go to: <http://www.friendshipamericas.org>.



GUATEMALA - THEN AND NOW

By Tom Ward

At ROCLA's January 2016 program, Grahame Russell and Tom Ward presented a moving documentary titled "Discovering Dominga" by Berkeley Media, 2003. Russell, who is based in Toronto, Canada, is the founder of Rights Action and ROCLA's 2001 International White Dove Award recipient for his work on human rights in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. Ward, a ROCLA Steering Committee member, won the Local White Dove Award in 2013 for his work in Guatemala with the Achi Mayan community.

"Discovering Dominga" chronicles the life of Denese Becker of Iowa, who was adopted by an American family after her family was killed in massacres of her small village of Rio Negro. She married, had two children and was leading a "normal" life in



Victims' remains shown in a small museum at the massacre site in Rio Negro. Courtesy of Tom Ward.

the Midwest. At the age of 29, she decided to return to the Guatemalan village, Rio Negro, where she was born. She begins a journey toward finding her roots, filled with harrowing revelations and self-discovery. It permanently alters Denese's relationship with her American family and brings about a political awakening as she learns about

acts of genocide against the Western Hemisphere's largest indigenous population.

Prior to the screening, Mr. Russell provided a brief overview of the history behind the Rio Negro massacres, which involves U.S. interventions in Guatemala in 1954 and support of right-wing state violence in the 1980s. Russell explained that the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank provided resources to build a hydroelectric dam on the Chixoy River, which would flood the village of Rio Negro. When the people of Rio Negro refused to leave their land for the dam to be constructed, the government of Guatemala began escalating the violence against the inhabitants; Rio Negro became the site of 5 massacres. In 2015, the people of Rio Negro finally received the first installment of the \$154 million owed them by the Guatemala government as part of the Reparations Plan for the loss of their families and homes. The World Bank and the IADB continue

NEWS FROM ACROSS LATIN AMERICA

to ignore their responsibility and participation in the massacres.

Mr. Ward then presented a project, Guatemala Partners, which works with the survivors and their families of the massacres in and around Rio Negro, in collaboration with Gates and Batavia Presbyterian Churches. Recently, they received a grant from the Genesee Valley Presbytery to broaden the number of communities they are working in and to provide more scholarships, build a kitchen and equip it, finance construction of a visitor's center and buy seeds from local farmers for a seed bank.

Another project assists farmers and families in the villages around Rabinal to obtain economic, food and educational security and helps them become self-sufficient, through agriculture, scholarships and micro lending. Originally started in conjunction with Rights Action, it is now working with The Garden's Edge in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

ROCLA helps support both Rights Action and Guatemala Partners. **To learn more about their work and how to support them, visit Rights Action's website at: www.rightsaction.org; The Garden's Edge at: www.gardensedge.org; and Guatemala Partners of Gates and Batavia Presbyterian Church at: www.gatespres.org or by e-mailing Tom Ward at: tomw@rochesterymca.org.**

A SPECIAL APPRECIATION

ROCLA has recently received an unexpected bequest of \$1,000 from Carolee Cobbitt in memory of her father.

Charles and Penny Gardiner also have made a significant contribution to ROCLA in honor of long-time fighter for justice and ROCLA member, John Honeck, who died in October 2015.

The Steering Committee expresses their gratitude for the thoughtfulness of these donors who help our work continue year after year. **See the article about John Honeck's life and work on page 6 of the Fall edition of ROCLA's newsletter.**



JOIN US FOR ROCLA'S FEBRUARY PROGRAM!

The eighteenth century produced two revolutionary wars against colonization: the American War of Independence and the Haitian Revolution. In each case, the oppressed gained their freedom from tyranny. The United States declared its independence in 1776 from Great Britain and Haiti from the French in 1804.

Please join ROCLA on **Wednesday, February 3, 2016, at 7 PM**, at Downtown United Presbyterian Church when Haitian-born Lucienne Nicholson, a member of ROCLA's Steering Committee, will present the film, **Greatest Black Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution (1791-1803)**. The film details the Haitian Revolution and the work of its leaders, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and others to end slavery in Haiti. It also describes the historical bonds that bind Haiti and the U.S. and how that history continues to define Haiti and contribute to vastly different outcomes for each.

ROCLA welcomes new Steering Committee member

In January 2016, Lucienne Nicholson joined the ROCLA Steering Committee. Born in Haiti, where she lived until age 16, Lucienne also lived in Paris, France, and South Florida before moving to Pittsford, N.Y. She is a graduate of The College at Brockport with a Bachelor's degree in Women and Gender Studies.

A passionate human rights advocate and inspirational speaker, Lucienne looks forward to serving on the ROCLA Steering Committee where she can use her fluent native Haitian Kreyol, knowledge of Haiti, and geopolitical understanding of the region, to broaden ROCLA's understanding of the Caribbean.

Lucienne also serves as the New York State American Association of University Women Educational Fund Director and is affiliated with the Greater Rochester Area Branch of the AAUW. You will be able to meet her at ROCLA's upcoming program, where she will lead a discussion of a film on the Haitian Revolution.

Sign-on Letter to the President Opposing DHS Plans to Conduct Nationwide Raids

On December 31, 2015, more than 150 organizations joined the American Immigration Lawyers Association in opposing the Department of Homeland Security's reported plans to conduct nationwide raids in 2016 to round up and deport Central American children and their parents. ROCLA is one of the signatories. (See the article in the Fall 2014 Update on the Americas for our coverage of the migration of women and children from Central America's Northern Triangle in 2014, and the U.S.'s draconian response.) The letter below urges the President to offer greater protection to Central American families fleeing violence. The let-

ter and list of signatories can be found at <http://www.aila.org/advo-media/aila-correspondence/2015/sign-on-letter-opposing-dhs-nationwide-raids> (AILA Doc. No. 15123102 Posted 12/31/15) For two recent articles detailing the increase in refugees fleeing central America since Fall 2015, see <http://www.thenation.com/article/the-number-of-child-migrants-arriving-on-the-u-s-doorstep-has-doubled-since-last-year/> and <http://thinkprogress.org/progress-report/mistakes-matter/>) Unfortunately, the raids and deportations have begun in certain states. [Ed. Note]

December 31, 2015

Dear President Obama,

The undersigned organizations write to express our opposition to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) reported plans to conduct raids in communities nationwide to round up and deport Central American children and their parents.

If these plans are implemented, many families will be deprived of the right to seek protection from persecution. The vast majority of children and families that have been ordered removed by immigration judges were ordered removed in absentia. It is likely that most of these families failed to appear in court because they did not receive adequate information from DHS explaining their obligation to go to court or their right to receive a fair hearing on their asylum, Withholding of Removal, and related claims. Moreover, raids would convey the message that these families are a threat to border security, when the reality is that most are asylum seekers in need of humanitarian protection. Given their high rate of eligibility for asylum-related claims, these children and their parents should be treated as an exceptionally vulnerable population and should not be removed without an opportunity to seek relief before a judge.

We urge you to renounce the use of such harsh tactics against this incredibly vulnerable group that has already suffered horrible, uncontrolled gang violence, domestic violence, and other forms of persecution. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data shows that 88 percent of the mothers and children detained in the three family detention centers in Pennsylvania and Texas are proving to the government they are likely to be found eligible for asylum and other forms of humanitarian relief. This data is consistent with an October 2015, UNHCR report finding that 82 percent of women and girls that the U.S. government interviewed in fiscal year 2015 from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico in the expedited removal context proved they have a significant possibility of winning asylum or protection under the Convention against Torture. The women and girls not placed into expedited removal, and who were released at the border, are fleeing similar situations, yet most were not provided with information about accessing asylum or other humanitarian protection in the U.S.

Despite this growing, and now, overwhelming, evidence that many Central American families deserve protection, DHS has pursued an aggressive enforcement strategy against them. The agency has escalated the use of family detention, placing thousands of children and mothers in massive, remote facilities. DHS and the immigration courts subject families to rapid deportation procedures that deprive them of fundamental due process. The agency's aggressive approach has continued even after two federal courts ruled against these practices (see *Flores v. Johnson* and *R.I.L.R. v. Johnson*). Under the guidelines promulgated by Secretary Johnson last November, individuals "who qualify for asylum or other forms of relief" should not be prioritized for removal at all. Almost all of the families at issue put themselves into proceedings by turning themselves in to the authorities at the border after harrowing journeys of thousands of miles.

DHS has failed to provide adequate information to families about their rights and responsibilities in the immigration system. DHS has also failed to offer community-based services to facilitate appearances at court. Finally, the government has not provided appointed counsel to families who would otherwise go without representation. In fact, most of these families have no legal representation—the single most important factor in ensuring their appearance in court. Each of these steps would increase court appearance rates without resorting to the kind of tactics that will demonize a population in need of care and assistance.

The United States has always been a beacon of hope for asylum seekers. Over the past several months, you have championed the cause of protecting Syrian refugees when many questioned whether our nation should still be providing them refuge. We ask you to send that same signal now with respect to the families fleeing Central America and to be the same kind of champion for their protection.

Please contact Greg Chen, Director of Advocacy at the American Immigration Lawyers Association, 202/716-5818, gchen@aila.org, regarding this letter.

ROCLA UPDATE ON THE AMERICAS



Teach-in and Memorial for Fallen Dairy Worker

By Grania Marcus

When Marco Antonio Ortiz Perez came to Western N.Y. to work hard in the booming dairy industry to support his wife and children in Guatemala, the furthest thing from his mind was that this would be his last job. Sadly, on November 9, 2014, due to unsafe working conditions, he was mangled and killed by an auger that he was cleaning in a silo.

One year later, at St. Mark's Church in Penn Yan, N.Y., the Worker Justice Center of New York, Unitarian Universalist Congregations of Rochester and Canandaigua, Rural and Migrant Ministries, the Workers' Center of Central N.Y., and St. Mark's Church of Penn Yan hosted a teach-in and memorial service to celebrate Marco Antonio's life. Members of Marco Antonio's family attended, as well as farmworkers, members of the Greater Rochester Coalition for Immigration Justice, ROCLA, and other groups. In his memory, those attending the teach-in and memorial shared a potluck meal and learned how to address workplace injustice from experts and worker-leaders that are organizing to change dangerous conditions. A beautiful memorial service followed; participants later laid flowers at the site where Marco Antonio died.

As New York's dairy industry expands, the toll of worker deaths is rising – there have been more than 55 deaths of dairy workers since 2006. Nationally, New York is now ranked 4th in milk production and 1st in yogurt production, and the dairy industry accounts for half of

New York's agricultural revenues. These deaths, as well as the death of Marco Antonio, were preventable.

Current federal law, however, prevents the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the federal agency charged with oversight of worker health and safety, from enforcing health and safety standards on farms with less than 11 workers, such as the farm where Marco Antonio was killed. In fact, it is estimated that the vast majority - 98% - of New York's dairy farms have less than 11 workers and are therefore exempt from OSHA inspections.

Carly Fox, a health and safety expert from the Worker Justice Center, said, "Marco Antonio was a precious brother, son and husband who deserved to work under safe working conditions. The law needs to be changed so that OSHA can inspect smaller farms."

A SCHOOL FOR JIQUILITE

By Dr. Arnold Matlin

Jiquilite is a small hamlet high in the hills near El Sauce in northwestern Nicaragua. Judith Williams is a Catholic Worker in Waukesha, Wisconsin. The story of how Judith improved the lives of the people of Jiquilite is worth telling.

In 2010, both of Judith's parents died. In 2011, she donated \$9,000 of her inheritance to build a school in Nicaragua. One evening, in 2012, I received a call from her, after she had learned I was a Nicaraguan solidarity activist. Judith wanted to know where the money had gone, and why there wasn't any school.

I checked with Magda Lanuza, the Project Director we work with in Nicaragua. Magda found good news and bad news—the money was safe, but no progress on the school had been made. I asked Magda to work on this, and we moved the project to El Sauce, where the Matlin family does its work, and which is Rochester's Ciudad Hermana.

The mayor of El Sauce, Rosa Amelia Valle Vargas, is wonderful. She said, "Jiquilite needs a school. The municipality has some money for it. With the money given by Judith Williams, we can build a school." And, they built a school. In November of 2013, Magda and I went to



Magda Lanuza, children and teachers standing next to their new school.

Jiquilite, and saw that the school was almost finished. We met with the people in the community, many of whom were helping with the construction. They were really happy that they were getting a school. They kept thanking me, and I kept saying, "No doné el dinero para la escuela. Fue Judith Williams. Ella es un Trabajador Católico." [I didn't donate the money for the school. It was Judith Williams. She is a Catholic Worker.]

The municipality constructed a beautiful school, and if you visit Jiquilite, you will see the Lew and Betty Williams Memorial School. But Judith's generosity hasn't stopped—she has donated funds to build a kitchen and construct a pre-school.

These projects have been carried out in the Solidarity Model: Speak to the local officials, speak to the people in the community, ask them what they want, and then work with them to achieve it. The work in Jiquilite has been truly a joint accomplishment—Judith Williams, the Alcaldía, and the people of Jiquilite. I was simply a facilitator.



SAVE THE DATE FOR ROCLA'S APRIL PROGRAM

Professor Ryan Jones, a member of the SUNY Geneseo History Department who has done extensive work on Mexican social movements, will join ROCLA for a presentation on **April 6, 2016, at 7:00 PM at Downtown Presbyterian Church**. Look for further details on our website in March!

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AMERICAS

HELP KEEP ROCLA'S WEBSITE CURRENT!

ROCLA has an informative website (see: <http://rocla.us/>) where webmaster Jim Bearden posts current information about Latin America on an ongoing basis, as well as announcements of programs and other news. If you have information, articles or action opportunities about Latin America that you believe may be of interest to ROCLA members, please email the link or content to Jim at: jeb.bearden@gmail.com. ■

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