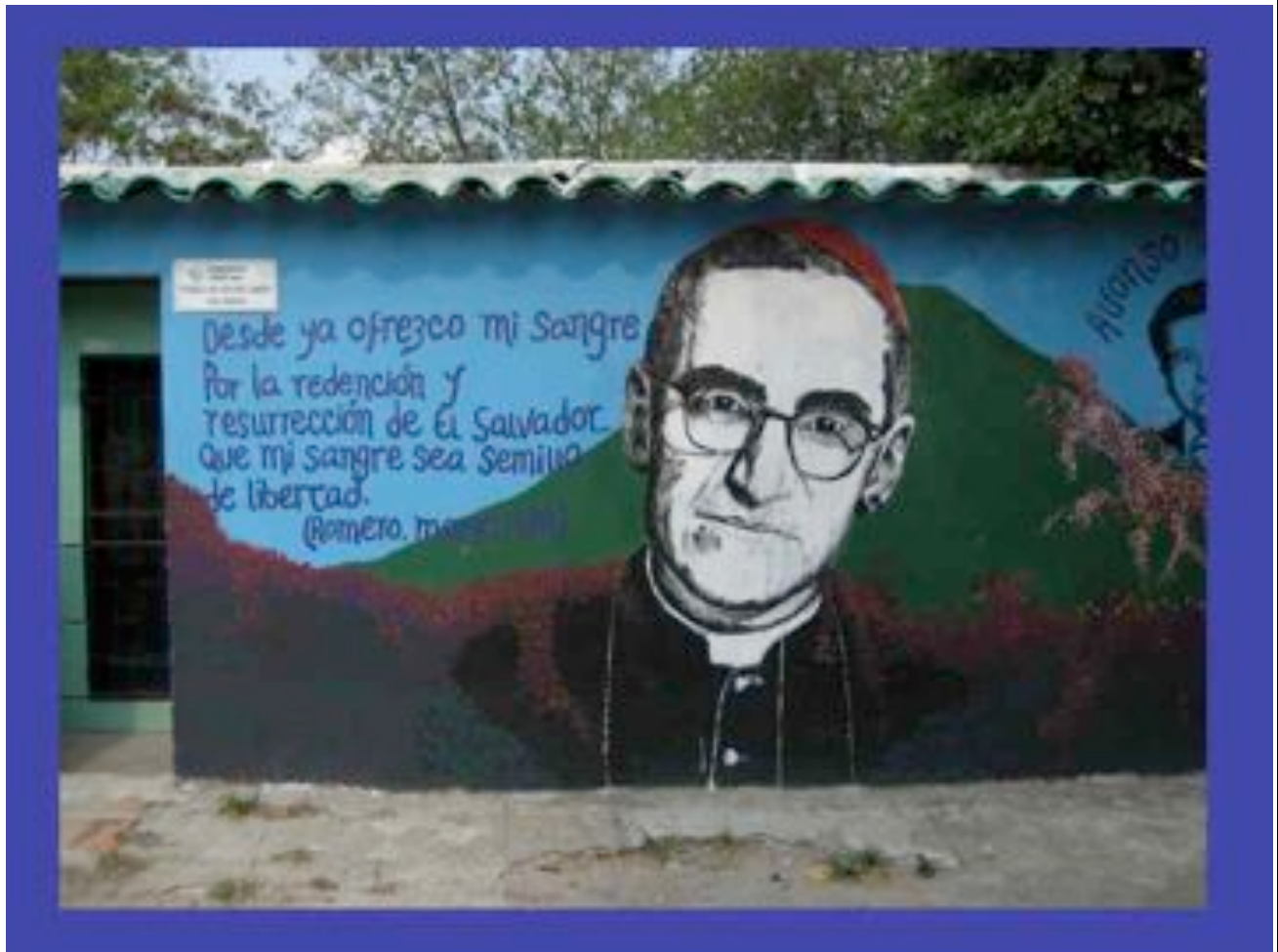


**Romero Justice Week 2011  
They Must Be Educated for Love:  
Romero's Legacy and the Right to Education**



**SHARE Foundation: Building a New El Salvador Today  
Celebration Planning Guide  
March 2011**

**Romero Week 2011: They Must Be Educated for Love  
Romero’s Legacy and the Right to Education**

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**Romero Justice Week 2011**  
**They Must Be Educated for Love:**  
**Romero's Legacy and the Right to Education**

Dear Friends,

Education in all its forms – in the classroom, at home, informally, and through our life experience – plays a key role in shaping our vision of our communities, country, and world, and our role in them. On this the 31st anniversary of Archbishop Oscar Romero's martyrdom, we remember his call to **“train children and youth to analyze the reality of their country. May we prepare them to be agents of transformation... They must be educated for love.”** Each one of us has an opportunity to honor his legacy by weaving his wisdom into our commitment to education for love and transformation.

Salvadorans of all ages struggle to access education, whether formal education in schools or trainings that offer the tools to create new opportunities. During the war, many Salvadorans were robbed of the option to study. Today the average Salvadoran only completes 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In rural areas, a lack of schools makes studying beyond 6<sup>th</sup> grade particularly difficult. Many youth must travel long distances to reach schools offering 7<sup>th</sup> grades and high school. In a country where only 20% of Salvadorans make a decent wage, transportation costs add up quickly. For families struggling to make ends meet, sending youth to high school rather than to work may mean eating fewer or smaller meals. Even when youth are able to study, the quality of education is questionable. El Salvador recently ranked 126<sup>th</sup> out of 131 countries for quality of education in math and the sciences.

As SHARE enters its 30th year of accompanying El Salvador's organized poor, all of our work emphasizes education. Knowledge of human and women's rights, leadership, public speaking, and community organizing are key to development, empowering people and communities to seek sustainable alternatives. Enclosed you will find a host of information on the challenges Salvadorans face to receive an education. We encourage you to use these tools to educate others.

This year, we hope you will host a gathering in honor of the 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Oscar Romero's Martyrdom. As you plan your gathering, please consider the following suggestions:

- Show a movie like Romero or Return to El Salvador. Share a SHARE youtube video of an Interview with high school scholarship students. Use the enclosed questions to generate discussion about Romero's legacy, youth and education.
- Utilize the enclosed sample worship service to plan a Lenten service around these issues.
- Host a community celebration of local youth and educators. Gather for pupusas, discussing the questions enclosed.
- Ask all gathered to sustain efforts for youth education and empowerment by supporting SHARE with a monthly contribution through our Sustainers Program. (See flyer, enclosed)

Gracias – thank you so very much for your efforts! If you have any questions or could use some support planning your gathering, please contact me at [bethany@share-elsalvador.org](mailto:bethany@share-elsalvador.org). Also look for the packet online! Thank you for your commitment to the people of El Salvador!

Bethany Loberg, SHARE Sistering Accompaniment Coordinator, on behalf of all your friends at SHARE

## Romero's Legacy and the Right to Education:

### They Must Be Educated for Love



*“It will be so easy once boys and girls are trained in the heart of each family to aspire not to have more, but to be more, not to grab everything, but to give abundantly to others. **They must be educated for love.** Loving is what the family is all about, and loving means giving of oneself, surrendering oneself to the wellbeing of all and working for the common happiness.”*

*“**May we train children and youth to analyze the reality of their country.** May we prepare them to be **agents of transformation** rather than alienating them with mountains of text books and techniques that keep them from knowing the reality.”*

*April 30, 1978*

*“... We must be aware of educational transformation, when instead of forming autonomous criteria, individuals who are architects of their own destiny, protagonists of the history of their homeland, these transformations only wish to continue creating masses, making use of youth and professions to maintain unjust situations.”*

*April 23, 1978*

*Education should “...reveal the forces of growth, development, national identity within one’s own reality, as well as the troubling impacts of dependency on other nations.”*

*July 23, 1978*

***I wish there were schools for everyone***

*January 22, 1978*

***“Let us try to educate ourselves for peace.”***

*July 23, 1978*



*“From the home must come the man and woman able to **promote the changes needed** in politics, in society, in the ways of justice: changes that will not come about as long as the home life opposes them.”*

*“When one has found the Lord and Teacher who illumines the truth in the intimacy of one’s own consciousness, one is truly free.”*

*“We must not seek the child Jesus in the pretty figures of our Christmas cribs. We must seek him among the undernourished children who have gone to bed at night with nothing to eat, among the poor newsboys who will sleep covered with newspapers in the doorways.”*

*December 24, 1979*

## Education in El Salvador: A Fact Sheet



*“Education is one of the best tools to reduce and put an end to the intergenerational transfer of economic and social inequalities between men and women, residents of rural and urban areas, and between descendents of different ethnicities... Education is a factor that influences the reduction of poverty and social exclusion and promotes construction of more tolerant, peaceful, stable democratic societies.”*

- 2010 UN Human Development Report on El Salvador, p127

- “In El Salvador, investing in the people has never enjoyed a high level of priority.”
- Average Level of Education Reached: 6<sup>th</sup> grade<sup>1</sup>
- Average Level of Education Reached in Urban Areas: 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- Average Level of Education Reached in Rural Areas: 4<sup>th</sup> grade
- 75% of students who enter 1<sup>st</sup> grade complete 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- Quality of Education in Math and Sciences: Ranked 126 out of 131 countries
- Enrollment in Secondary Education: Ranked 101 out of 133 countries
- Enrollment Levels:
  - Grades 1-9: 96%
  - High School: 59.5%
  - University: 26.3%
- 16% of children and youth ages 7-18 who do not study left school in order to work.
- In June 2009, the Ministry of Education reported 742 schools at risk from crime<sup>2</sup>
- On average a person with less than 4 years of education receives a monthly salary of \$184, while those with 12 or more years of education receive a monthly salary of \$631
- Amongst young Salvadorans ages 23-24, those from the top income bracket are likely to have 7 years more schooling than those from the lowest income bracket
- Spending on education as a percentage of GDP ranged from 1.7% to 2.9% from 1990 to 2008, and rose to 3.5% in 2009, mainly because of a fall in the GDP. Levels of spending on education in El Salvador are lower than the average in Latin America and worldwide
- A 2005 Human Rights Watch Report found that in El Salvador, “while schooling is free in theory, in reality the costs for families can be prohibitive.” At the time, uniforms, enrollment fees, school supplies, fees for school events, and transportation came to a total of \$274.86 a year - “or nearly four times the minimum wage for an agricultural worker.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All facts from 2010 UN Development Report on El Salvador pgs 127-133, 149, 200, 264-66 unless otherwise noted

<sup>2</sup> Alvarado, Jeanette, Scarlett Cortez, and Mario Paniagua, “Vulnerability and Violence, Reflections of Poverty.” Social Watch. 2010. <http://www.socwatch.org/node/12077>

<sup>3</sup> “Failing Our Children: Barriers to the Right to Education,” *Human Rights Watch* Sept. 2005 p. 11 [http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/education0905/4.htm#\\_Toc112482160](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/education0905/4.htm#_Toc112482160)

- A year after the government of former President Tony Saca implemented the Red Solidaria program in 2005, in which 80,000 families living in the 100 poorest rural municipalities received \$15 to \$20 a month to keep their children in school, school enrollment increased by 19% in those areas<sup>4</sup>
- In 2009 the Salvadoran government began to provide uniforms, shoes, and school supplies for Salvadoran students grades 1-9. The government employs local sewing cooperatives and businesses for the creation of school uniforms.
- Literacy rose from 40% in 1950 to 85% in 1992 to 95% in 2008. The current government is promoting a literacy campaign to eliminate illiteracy by 2014.
- The 2010 UN Human Development Report on El Salvador shows an inverse relationship between poverty of income and level of education. Of those with no education, 57% live in economic poverty, 43% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade graduates live in a situation of poverty. 20% of high school graduates live in economic poverty. Less than 10% of university graduates live in poverty.
- Likewise, when the head of a household has a lower level of education, the household has a high vulnerability of entering a situation of poverty. Those with a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education or less have a 40% or more probability of falling into poverty, while those who have graduated high school have just a 24% and those who have completed university have a 7% chance.



*“Building an economy that serves the people requires not only a macroeconomy that facilitates growth. More important is a healthy, educated population with knowledge, skills, and abilities, particularly related to the capacity to analyze and problem solve, and with excellent interpersonal communication.”*

- 2010 UN Human Development Report on El Salvador



<sup>4</sup>

“Red Solidaria Increases School Enrollment,” Tim’s El Salvador Blog  
<http://luterano.blogspot.com/2006/02/red-solidaria-increases-school.html>

## Spiritual Service in Honor of Romero: They Must Be Educated for Love



*Note: This is a sample of a spiritual service, based on materials created by the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico. Please shape it to fit your needs. We hope it will help you remember Romero in a way that feeds your soul.*

### OPENING REFLECTION: THE CALL OF OSCAR ROMERO TO THE CHURCH

*Suggestion: begin with the following introduction—or use your own words—as an explanation of what is special about this Sunday and this anniversary.*

**Leader:** Throughout history, the voice of the prophet is one of the vehicles through which God speaks to the community and to the world. Today we are called to listen to the voice of a contemporary prophet, a voice that emerged from the very Americas in which we live, a voice that calls to our churches to be what God has meant us to be in a world fraught with injustice. It faces us with a challenge that is both humbling and yet filled with the promise of redemption. It is the voice of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who gave his life in martyrdom for the people of El Salvador on March 24, 1980. Let us listen to that voice as it tells us what our church must be in this world. Let us open

our hearts that we might repent the failings of our church, and of we who are that church, to confront the injustice in our world; let us allow ourselves to be called to become a church of prophesy, a church of prophets.

**Reader:** The words of Archbishop Oscar Romero

*Christ founded the church so that he himself could go on being present in the history of humanity precisely through the group of Christians who make up his church. The church is the flesh in which Christ makes present down the ages his own life and his personal mission...*

*The church can be church only as long as it goes on being the Body of Christ. Its mission will be authentic only so long as it is the mission of Jesus in the new situations, the new circumstances of history. The criterion that will guide the church will be neither the approval of, nor the fear of, men and women, no matter how powerful or threatening they may be. It is the church's duty in history to lend its voice to Christ so that he may speak, its feet so that he may walk today's world, its hands to build the reign of God, and to offer all its members to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ. (Col. 1:24).*



*Should the church forget this identification with Christ, Christ would himself demand it of the church, no matter how uncomfortable that might be, or how much loss of face that might entail. (8/6/77)*

**Leader:** Archbishop Romero, faced with the urgency of his historical moment in El Salvador, calls us to look at the urgency of our own. And he calls his church, including himself, to the highest standard in confronting our moment in history—to name sin, to uproot sin, to be Christ in the world, redeeming it, building up within it the reign of God. Let us pray then, in the midst of our Lenten fast, our Lent of repentance and redemption, for our church, and for ourselves who are that church.

We are called to repent the failings of our church, the sin within it. This day, we reflect especially on the failings of our church to confront the sin of injustice and its causes. We hear the voice of the prophet enjoining us to uproot this sin from our church, to uproot this sin from the hearts of those of us who make up this church. We are also called to prophesy—for our church, and we who are church, to be prophets, Christ's voice, Christ's hands in a world deeply mired in injustice, violence and fear. As we begin our service of worship, sacrifice and thanksgiving, let the voice of the great prophet of and to the Americas be allowed a space within our hearts where we can let it take root, be nurtured, and come to life. Let us pray.

*The service begins with music and the opening prayer. A processional might include bearers of incense, candles, a poster of Romero, a banner with a Romero quote, a large cross to be placed near the altar, a bowl of ashes as a symbol of penance, a book of Romero's writings, a bible and/or lectionary. A large candle is placed by a photo or poster of Romero at the altar.*

### Opening Prayer:

Leader: God of justice and love, you gave your servant, Bishop Romero, the courage to witness to the Gospel, even to the point of giving his life for it, in pursuit of justice. Today in our liturgy help us to open our minds and hearts to listen to Bishop Romero and be moved by his witness to action.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**All: Amen.**



### Moment for Repentance and Reconciliation

Leader: We live in a world marked by profound injustice. This is not a consequence of fate or chance, but the result of human behavior. It is the world we have made. For this,

**All: Lord we ask your mercy**

Leader: As church, we have often been too afraid, too comfortable, too intimidated, too timid to name this sin of our world. Too often we as church have been part of creating this injustice,

either by commission or omission. We don't want to be made uncomfortable. We don't want to give up the privileged places we often hold in our world, for we, too, have sometimes benefited from injustice. For this,

**All: Lord we ask your mercy**

*Leader:* On this day, we call our church and ourselves as part of that church to repentance. We let the voice of the prophet, Oscar Romero, lead us in this prayer of repentance as we ask God's forgiveness.

**All: May we seek renewal.**

*Leader:* Oscar Romero reminds us that the church's place is by the side of the poor, of the outraged, of the rejected. Loving God, when our church, and we who are church, fail to stand with the poor and oppressed peoples who suffer the fruits of injustice—for this,

**All: Lord we ask your mercy**

L: Romero has shown us what really matters when he said "What good are beautiful highways and airports, beautiful buildings full of spacious apartments, if they are only put together with the blood of the poor, who are not going to enjoy them?" We acknowledge the times that we have focused on the shiny things of the world and forgotten the well being of our brothers and sisters. For this,

**All: Lord we ask your mercy**

L: Loving Creator, look with mercy upon your people, for we are human and overwhelmed by the many difficult challenges we now face in our world. Fill us with the boldness of your servant Oscar Romero. Enable us to denounce sin in our world and pronounce your reign among us, and to lend our hands and our hearts to building that reign in our world. Help us to overcome the

desire for convenience, and do what is necessary to educate ourselves and others for love.

**All: Amen.**



## A Prayer for the Strength to Act with Love:

As we celebrate the life and teachings of Archbishop Oscar Romero, we are conscious of the many challenges, which face our world, our church, our local communities. As we recall these in prayer, let us not be overwhelmed, but strengthened to act with love:

For peace in the places of war, poverty and injustice, that leaders of government will be inspired by the vision of humanity which drove Oscar Romero. Lord hear us...

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For the peoples of Central America, and especially El Salvador, that they may rise above violence, inequalities and injustice in a commitment to the common good. Lord hear us...

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For all people of faith and none: that we may be inspired by the openness of Oscar Romero to embrace all who share core values of human dignity, respect and equality in advocacy for the marginalized in both society and communities of belief. Lord hear us...

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For the church, Archbishop Romero said the liberation of the church demands a conversion of heart and mind. Let us pray that we the church may be liberated in order to become a voice for the voiceless. Lord hear us...

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For each person here: that our strength and commitments may be renewed in the options we take in our lives as we prayer in a moment of silence..... Lord hear us...

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

Loving Creator, hear your people's prayers, for we are human and often overwhelmed by the many difficulties we face in our world, in our Church, in our lives. We call upon the memory of Archbishop Oscar Romero who, in the face of so many challenges, never ceased to act with love. Help us to become instruments of peace in our world, to confront violence and its causes, the toxic roots of injustice, and the vicious hatred that disfigures the human person made in your image.

**All:  
Amen.**



## Prayers for Transformation



### God's plea

God calls to us and says:

As a mother comforts her child, so I long to comfort you,  
I long to comfort you at home.

Don't you remember?  
I taught you to walk,  
I took you up in my arms and healed you.  
I led you with cords of human kindness,  
with bands of love.  
I was like those women who lift babies to their cheeks.  
I bent down to you and fed you.

If only you would return to me.  
Like a hen, I would gather you under my wings.  
I would give you shelter and peace.

*Based on Isaiah 66:13, Hosea 11:3-4 and Luke 13:34.*

*by Linda Gehman Peachey, Director of Women's Advocacy,  
MCC US Peace and Justice Ministries.*



### Becoming Maladjusted

Creator and changer of all being, we pray that you will move in us as you did in our brother Oscar to become your beloved, *maladjusted* daughters and sons.

May we become *maladjusted* to the terrible ways we separate ourselves from you and each other through disempowering structures of war, class, or race.

May we become *maladjusted* to our disrespect for and destruction of the environment for economic gain. May we stop killing this source of all life.

May we become *maladjusted* to fear of "the other" judged by sexuality, homelessness, poverty, immigration status and all inhumane policies.

Help us, O God of change, in order that we may become fully *maladjusted*. May we change that which we have never changed before and try what we have never tried before.

May we remember the magnificent, *maladjusted* example Oscar Romero offers – reminding us to carry out the work of building a better world. We pray in the name of Jesus the ultimate *maladjuster*. Amen.

*Adapted from a prayer by Paula Killough, based on Martin Luther King Jr.'s Lecture "Maladjusted."*

## Listening to Prophetic Voices

*First Reading:* "Everything we shut our eyes to, everything we run away from, everything we deny, denigrate or despise, serves to defeat us in the end. What seems nasty, painful, evil, can become a source of beauty, joy, and strength, if faced with an open mind."  
~Rigoberta Menchú Tum

*Second Reading:* Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my



education began, only I was without compass or sounding line, and no way of knowing how near the harbor was. "Light! Give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.  
- Helen Keller

*Third Reading:*  
I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.  
- Chinese Proverb

*Fourth Reading:*

"It will be so easy once boys and girls are trained in the heart of each family to aspire not to have more, but to be more, not to grab everything, but to give abundantly to others. They must be educated for love. Loving is what the family is all about, and loving means



giving of oneself, surrendering oneself to the wellbeing of all and working for the common happiness."

~Oscar Romero

### Speaking out for Transformative Education for Love

Encourage members of your gathering to come prepared to speak to the group. Discuss each quote and perhaps additional words of wisdom about our commitment to transformative education for love in our communities and beyond. Discuss the inspiration of Romero in the context of your own community's daily struggle.

## Remembering Other Examples of Education

This is a time to remember the many lives that, along with Romero's, have been threatened because of their vision for a more just planet. The leader or leaders should call the names, and the congregation should respond, "¡Presente!" meaning, "he or she is here with us."

You can use this time to lift up people from the community or region where you have a partnership, community leaders who face danger for their efforts to raise awareness around environmental degradation and other issues, or any other group of people whose life you want to commemorate. Some examples may be:

- The members of Radio Victoria, young activists currently facing death threats for their efforts to educate their community about the dangerous impacts of mining, "**¡Presente!**"
- Bishop Samuel Ruiz, who tirelessly advocated for indigenous rights in Mexico until his death in January 2011. "**¡Presente!**"
- Mother Alicia, a founding member of the Mothers of the Disappeared who shared her story endlessly, and passed away in August. "**¡Presente!**"
- Those who died at the UCA, Rutilio Grande, the Four U.S. Churchwomen, and the 75,000 people of El Salvador killed during the Civil War. "**¡Presente!**"



## Prayer for Commitment

*Your group could close this time together by committing yourselves to go out into the world to be agents of change. Here is an example: Start with one central candle in memory of Romero in the center of your circle, then hand out candles to the community, then have representatives of the community light candles from the Romero candle and spread the light to the congregation while all join in a prayer of commitment. Option: Have various readers for the Romero quotes, so Romero's voice comes from throughout the gathering*

Leader: The prophet is a light for our world, a voice that illuminates the darkness of sin and points the way towards overcoming that darkness. We are called to be light. We take this light as a commitment to be prophets in our world, to follow the way pointed out to us by Oscar Romero and other prophets of justice in our time—the way pointed out to us in this Lenten journey by Jesus of Nazareth.

**Leader:** Let us listen to the voice of Oscar Romero as he calls us to be prophets.

**Romero:** The church has put itself on the side of the poor and has assumed their defense.

**All:** Loving God, may our church, and we who are church, put ourselves on the side of the poor.

**Romero:** This means that the church incarnates itself in the world of the poor, proclaims good news, gives hope, inspires a liberating praxis, defends the cause of the poor and participates in their destiny.

**All:** Loving Christ, may our church, and we who are church, become participants in your incarnation.

**Romero:** What marks the genuine church is a word...burning like the word of the prophets.

**All:** Loving Christ, may our church, and we who are church, take this word as our own to burn within us and light a fire in our world.

**Romero:** The church is in the world so as to signify and bring into being the liberating love of God, manifested in Christ.

**All:** Loving God, may we live out your love in this world.

Leader: Romero said that he would be resurrected in his people. May he be resurrected in us today and as we go forth from this gathering to live by his example.

**All: We commit ourselves to educate ourselves and others for love and transformation in El Salvador and beyond.**

Leader: Go out and be light. May your word burn like the word of the prophets. May your voice, your feet, your hands, become those of Christ, building up the reign of God in our human history.

**R: Amen.**



## “He Was El Salvador’s First Teacher”: Remembering Romero Conversations with Individuals Who Knew Monseñor Romero

### **Sister Nohemy Ortíz: Monseñor submerged himself in the history of his people.”**

*Sister Nohemy Ortíz is a member of the Pequeña Comunidad, a group of women religious who take their vows in front of and with the communities they serve, rather than a Mother Superior or a member of the Vatican. Hermana Nohemy served as the Secretary of the Pastoral Vicary in the Archdiocese at the time when Monseñor Romero was Archbishop. A SHARE delegation from Drew Theological School had the joy of meeting with Hermana Nohemy, and hearing her memories of Archbishop Oscar Romero.*

The people of the rural communities had an incredible experience with Monseñor Romero. Our experience with him as a people in general was extraordinary. That’s why Father Ignacio Ellacuría said, “ In Monseñor Romero, God passed through El Salvador.”



Of course he wasn’t always like this. He was chosen to be Archbishop because he was conservative. His nomination meant joy for the rich. What changed him was close contact with the people. The most visible moment in the process of his conversion was the assassination of Father Rutilio Grande. The injustice of the murder of his friend, whose pastoral work he supported impacted him at a very human level. Following the assassination he went through a process of becoming closer and closer to the people. He would visit even the farthest away little communities. The people identified him as their pastor, as their Monseñor. All you had to say was Monseñor and everyone knew whom you meant.



The Archdiocese at that time was not an office, but a home of the people. Everyone came there, mothers of the disappeared, priests facing persecution, religious women who wanted to do what they could to help. Monseñor attended to all the people who came, listened to their stories and problems. Whenever a conflict arose, whether a labor dispute, or someone was captured on a war front, Monseñor would be called on to mediate or intervene. He was seen as a defender of life.

Monseñor Romero submerged himself in the history and experience of his people. He was the pastor of very poor people. He was the most informed of what was happening all over the country, because people would come and tell him. He also always consulted many people on their views. In his homilies he would report and denounce what was happening all over the country. He inspired hope in people to organize, stand in solidarity, to struggle for life. He gave the people spirit. We felt privileged because God blessed us with the gift of Monseñor Romero.



### **José Ángel Monge Orellana: He was El Salvador's First Teacher**

*José Ángel Monge Orellana grew up, lived, and worked as a farmer and catechist in the community of San Antonio los Ranchos. During the war he was forced to flee. Today he lives and farms in the community of Santa María de la Esperanza.*

If you want to talk about Romero, it's important to know what he was like. He was very simple and humble. He attended to all the people, especially *campesinos*. For him, if someone arrived to visit him and he didn't attend to him or her, it was a sin. If it fell to him to sit on a rock to eat, then he would sit on a rock like everyone else. He didn't try to seek out something nicer to sit on. That was how I met him: sitting on a rock in a community.



Monseñor Romero brought a new pastoral vision, one of accompaniment. Pastoral accompaniment for him included spiritual, moral, and material aspects. Accompanying the people was important, because they were used to just praying. He said that Christians are not people that only pray, but that also makes a commitment and lead by example. The duty of Christians was to accompany the people, tend to the wounded, give food to the hungry, and know how to show the way.



We had a radio and I would listen to his homilies. I had never heard a man like him in my fifty-five years. His words would pierce right through my heart. They touched me so that I wanted to struggle with Monseñor Romero, to die with Monseñor Romero. For me he was a prophet and a teacher. He gave courage and inspiration.

At that time it was prohibited to listen to Monseñor Romero on the radio, so we had to listen in hiding. We had to bury our Bible, too, or that armed forces would have ordered us killed. Monseñor told us that the authentic Church was the persecuted church. I believed in him so much that when I walked in the midst of the people that did not eat or sleep, the people that suffered, I felt the presence of God. Monseñor Romero had already died when we had to flee our community. It was a dark night with no lights, yet the way was illuminated before us, as though God had lit the path for the fleeing people, and I believed that much more in Monseñor.

**“Just as Jesus was a teacher, Romero was El Salvador's first teacher.”**

I saw him as a teacher because I felt he was a guide who showed the way. Just as Jesus was a teacher, Monseñor Romero was El Salvador's first teacher. I would like to invite my people to read the books and stories of Monseñor Romero, and to be brave as he was.

### Mercedes Monge: “I remember him like Jesus”

*Mercedes grew up in the community of San Antonio los Ranchos, where she was a catechist alongside her father. She continues to work as a community organizer today.*

One of my first memories is that Monseñor Romero thought it was important for campesinos to learn to read and write. We used to sing a song he taught us:

*Campesino aprende a leer/Campesino learn to read  
Campesino aprende a estudiar/Campesino learn to study  
Campesino levante tu frente/Campesino lift your head up  
Que tuyo es el pueblo donde has de vivir  
/For yours is the people you live amongst*



He also taught us that we should teach children in another way. Rather than punish children by hitting them with sticks and other tortures, when a child had misbehaved we could use more humane methods, like not giving the child money for chips, or having to do chores.

Monseñor said that education had to be transformative, awakening critical consciousness, to learn to discern between good and evil. **For me he was the best teacher, because through him I learned to discern that we must look at the world and ourselves critically.** It's important to be self-critical, to identify one's strengths and weaknesses, and the changes one goes through. The same applies to our communities and country.

**With his actions and words Monseñor taught us that people should help one another.** He taught us to always study the happenings in our lives and that the Word of God should be read in the context of the present moment and in every moment. Monseñor Romero learned from books – from great philosophers and theologians – and from life. Life gave him a heavy blow that caused him to awake from another world.

He was a man of great faith and hope. I remember him like Jesus. I imagined Jesus when I saw him. I always felt great peace when I saw him. He was able to love everyone, and make each person feel he loved him or her best.

*I believe if Romero were here today, he would be giving profound messages applying to the moment we are living, of consumerism and economic crisis. We have gone through a process of dehumanization in which the human being has become only the third or fourth most important thing while everything revolves around the economy.*



The situation youth face of violence expanding at exaggerated levels would worry him immensely. He might say, “I don't know where this country will come to, with the increase of violence in the family, in the streets, political violence, social violence – like hell itself.” He would tell us, “Within the darkness there is a light of hope to continue forward.” He used to say that the world is like this because of a lack of love. With love there would not be war or destruction, but humanity.

## Romero, the Person

### *A Delegate Reflection on visiting the Divina Providencia*

By Thomas Funk

UCC Salem Youth Group Delegation 2009

On the second day of the trip we visited the *Divina Providencia*, which includes Oscar Romero's house and the chapel he was murdered in. When we arrived at Romero's house, a nun greeted us. She started talking about Romero and his life. She told us about how when he became Archbishop he turned down an offer to live in a mansion. Instead he came to the Carmelite sisters at the *Divina Providencia*, where they ran a small cancer hospital and a chapel, and asked to live in a small room behind the chapel. The sister told us that Romero lived in that small room for most of his time as Archbishop. Romero believed that if he was going to represent the people then he was going to live like the people. The sisters at the *Divina Providencia* built him a house, but had to trick him into accepting it by having the cancer patients give him the keys on his birthday. The sister also shared with us that after receiving numerous death threats, Romero said that the honor of being a martyr was too much for him, but that if it was God's will he would gladly lose his life so that his blood could unite the people of El Salvador.

As a youth group we watched a film about Romero and all he did for El Salvador, but the sister told us more about who he was than what he did. After hearing the sister speak, we went through the house and saw everything Romero owned. We saw his bed, his personal library, his car, his bathroom, and the clothes he was killed in. It's not like we just saw the clothes he was murdered in, but the clothes stained in his blood. After seeing all this I stopped seeing Romero as a historical figure or as a leader for human rights, but as a person. I realized that although Romero had the will of God burning in him and did so much for the people of his country, he was still just a man and all he did was do what he knew was right.

After our time at the house we went to the chapel that Romero lived in and died in. We sat in quiet reflection in the chapel and all I could think about was how truly humble Oscar Romero was. He chose to live for others rather than himself. That he even thought that death was too much of an honor for him amazed me. I knew after hearing more about him that he was a man who had opened up to God's will, and that I wanted to be like him, that I wanted to be used by God to help others and to do the right things.



## *Learning the Power of Accompaniment*

By Gretchen S Colby

March 2009 Romero 30th Anniversary Delegation Participant

You need to hold someone's hand when you cross the street. This is a simple concept we learn when we are small. Yet, it is when we have grown to the point of reaching out to help someone else cross the street that we can consider ourselves grown up, at an age where we are capable of accompanying someone else, of keeping someone else safe.

It was recently, during a ten-day trip to El Salvador with the University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley and SHARE this past March that I realized the importance of accompaniment not only in crossing the street, but in life. The idea of accompaniment has shifted us from the missionary goal of descending loftily from our perch of moral superiority to save people with our great knowledge to the relationship-building concept of reaching out our hand and holding on as we "walk together in solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality" (ELCA, Accompaniment is Relationship).



During my time in El Salvador I experienced and participated in a variety of forms of accompaniment. At times we were literally walking with our Salvadoran brothers and sisters, like in the Romero march on March 20<sup>th</sup> when we walked the three miles from the Salvador del Mundo square filling the four lane street until we reached the Cathedral in the center of town. We walked with church groups, with families, with President Funes behind trucks playing salsas and cumbias into the darkening night. We stopped for prayers and for announcements, next to businesses and monuments and parks and finally in the central square where thirty years ago people attending Archbishop Romero's funeral were gunned down by the military. We stood with the Salvadorans as they reclaimed this space and held a peaceful mass in honor of the Archbishop.

Sometimes accompaniment meant being with our brothers and sisters and listening to their stories. Sunday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, our group attended a mass to gather awareness against mining industries in the northern part of El Salvador, in Victoria, and then went to visit a town half an hour away called San Isidro. San Isidro was a small town with windy cobblestone streets where a man named Marcelo Rivera, an anti-mining activist, had been kidnapped and killed in July 2009. We were walked around the town where Rivera had organized a community center, offering kids art, dance and cooking classes.



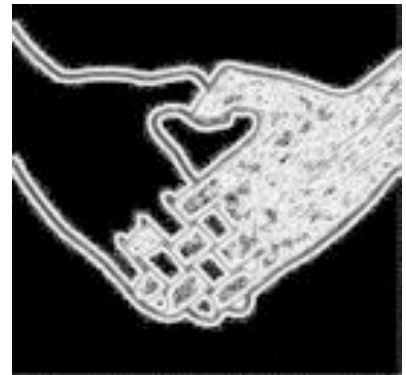
During this tour, we were shown four murals that students had painted on walls of houses throughout the town to commemorate their teacher and to show the problems going on in their town and country. Orelia, a young man in his twenties with long curly hair pulled back in a ponytail and sad deep brown eyes, softly explained to us the significance of the murals. He then quietly informed one of our leaders that since Rivera's death, he had been receiving death threats weekly, that

he didn't stay in his home anymore, and that everyone thought he would be the next to "disappear." Jose Artiga, our leader, with his own story of violence and survival, told us the image he had seen:

50 US citizens walking through and filling the streets of San Isidrio, seen by both the good guys and the bad guys, showing all who watched that Orelío was known by people outside of the city and country. Jose told us that for this day, and possibly longer, we had kept Orelío safe merely by accompanying him.

Later that week, ten of us went to meet with Medardo Gomez, the Salvadoran Lutheran Bishop. He told us that the church in El Salvador was still at risk, and as an example of this he explained that the Anglican bishop, Martín Barahona, had had an attempt on his life the week before. In awe of this news and eager to help, we asked how we could strengthen the relationship between our synod in Northern California and our sister synod in El Salvador. Bishop Gomez replied that the Salvadoran church didn't want money from us, what they wanted was for us to keep coming to El Salvador. He told us that our delegations and visits were the greatest service we could do; he urged us to keep building relationships between the synods and the countries. To bring home the importance of the relationships built by accompaniment and to share with us the direness of the situation at times in El Salvador, Bishop Gomez, who was very closely accompanied during the 80s and 90s, told us that for him, accompaniment didn't mean being safe or that he wouldn't be killed, for him accompaniment meant not dying alone.

Through my short time in El Salvador, I learned how much a person's presence can mean. The Salvadoran people have been through so much in the past hundred years, and they continue to fight and stand strong and pull together with one another. How lovely, that in Christ and through the church, we can do the same. The first day we were in El Salvador, Jose told us that during our delegation there we wouldn't be able to solve any of the problems we saw, we wouldn't be able to change anything, but we would be able to be there and accompany the people there. And that that would be the greatest gift of all.



#### Cited Works:

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. ELCA Global Mission. How We Work.

“Accompaniment is Relationship.” <<http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Global-Mission/How-We-Work/Accompaniment.aspx>>



## Questions for Group Discussion: *"We Must Educate Them For Love: Romero's Legacy and the Right to Education"*

1. How do you think Romero would respond to the difficulties Salvadorans and many others across the world face to access quality education?
2. What does it mean for the economic and social development of a country if students do not have access to education, and the education available is poor quality?
3. How can education be transformative? What does it mean to educate for love?
4. Whose responsibility is it to ensure people are educated for love? Whose responsibility is it to ensure that people have access to education? Whose responsibility is it to stand up for the right to education when it isn't accessible?
5. Where and how does education happen? What have been meaningful educational experiences in your life? Who has shown you what it means to act with love?
6. Romero was converted by the injustice he saw around him and then called others to a conversion that would open their eyes to the injustices in the world. What can we do to open our eyes more to injustice and be more receptive to the suffering of others?
7. In your travels to El Salvador, what experiences of love have you received? What image of U.S. Americans have you presented to our brothers and sisters in El Salvador? What image would you like to project?
8. Who in your life represents the same ideals and displays the same commitment to social justice as Oscar Romero? What have you learned from this person?
9. How do you emulate Romero and other martyrs like him in your life? What can you do to incorporate his teachings in your life this year?





### **It's in your hands**

Help us to sustain hope for a new El Salvador today!

Become a SHARE Sustainer!

We invite you to participate directly in the creation of a new model for development. Your monthly contribution will enable hardworking Salvadorans the support they need to overcome the challenges they face. We need your pledge to contribute a sum to SHARE regularly. We make it easy by setting up an automatic monthly deduction from your credit card!

Your donation can provide transformative education for love!

- \$15 could allow 20 youth to participate in a regional youth exchange
- \$25 could allow 15 youth leaders to visit the Museum of the Word and Image to learn about Romero's legacy
- \$35 provides school supplies for a high school student for a year
- \$50 could cover transport to and from school for two students for a month
- \$100 per month could support several nature walks that help youth and women to appreciate the natural beauty of their region.
- \$250 could provide a scholarship to one young woman and trains her to be a sexual health educator.

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**¡Sí! – YES!**

**I'd like to sustain SHARE's work for a better environment in El Salvador!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Pledge:      \$15    \$25    \$50    \$100    \$250    per month | quarterly | annually

Please mail to:  
The SHARE Foundation  
2425 College Ave  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
510-848-8487

**Thank you for your pledge! We'll be in touch soon!**

**TAKE ACTION!****What You Can Do to Support Transformative Education in El Salvador**

1. Sign up for SHARE's newsletter and action alerts by contacting [laura@share-elsalvador.org](mailto:laura@share-elsalvador.org) for the latest updates on advocacy activities and action alerts. Write letters of support and solidarity on behalf of your parish, school, sistering committee, solidarity group, etc., to your sistering regions and communities and to the anti-mining movement.
2. If you have a Facebook account, make Monsignor Romero your profile picture during Romero Week. When your friends ask you about your new picture, talk to them about Romero's life and legacy and talk to them about access to education in El Salvador.
3. Write Romero quotes on the sidewalks of your school, church or other public, trafficked spaces.
4. Support transformative education in El Salvador through the SHARE Foundation. Hold a fundraiser during Romero Week and donate the funds to support the work of CRIPDES San Vicente, UCRES, the CCR, The Institute of the Women, and other SHARE counterparts in training Salvadorans in human and women's rights, leadership, organizing, and health. Contact SHARE for more information.
5. Educate your community by showing a documentary, interviews with Salvadoran high school students, and/or news clips about the impacts of mining and the anti-mining struggle. Hold a discussion afterwards. See the resource list in this packet for ideas!
6. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper on the struggle for quality education in El Salvador.



**In Their Own Words:**  
**Reflections and Stories from Youth Leaders in CRIPDES San Vicente**

Interviews conducted on November 15th, 2010 by Faithweavers/Friends of El Salvador delegation and SHARE

*Through our Grassroots Program, SHARE partners with sistering groups in the U.S. to sponsor youth leadership development in three organized CRIPDES regions here in El Salvador. One of SHARE's oldest partners, CRIPDES is a nationally and internationally recognized grassroots organization with a base of approximately 300 rural communities in El Salvador, working to support community, regional and national organization for policies, practices, and resources which promote increased access to development, basic services, employment, and improved living conditions for inhabitants of El Salvador's countryside.*

*Youth leadership development projects coordinated by regional teams in CRIPDES San Vicente, UCRES in Northern La Libertad and San Salvador, and the CCR in Chalatenango include high school scholarships, youth assemblies, and trainings in leadership, community organizing, public speaking, the national reality, and nonviolence. Youth participants also make a commitment to participation in their communities through youth committees, community councils, literacy trainings or other community work.*

*In November, a delegation had the opportunity to speak with six youth participating in the leadership project in the municipality of Tecoluca through CRIPDES San Vicente. Here are their stories, in their own words, of their experiences with the project, what education means to them, and their dreams for the future.*

**Rosemery Alfaro Valladares**

I would like to share a little bit about my life as a scholarship student. This year has been my first in the program. At first I felt strange and shy participating in meetings with such a big group of students. I felt nervous about talking in front of everyone. As we kept meeting, I felt more and more comfortable with everyone. Going on field trips, like the one to the Museum of the Word and Image especially helped me to get to know everyone, feel part of the group, and no longer be so shy.

I facilitate a literacy circle with five people. It is beautiful to teach people to read and write. I feel I can be useful sharing something that I have learned. Sometimes it's difficult though, because adults don't learn as easily as children.



I really appreciate the moral and economic support given through the program. It would have been really difficult for me to attend high school otherwise. We don't have the money. It makes me feel important to know that people in another country help support me.

### **Ruth Noemi Ramos Pineda**

For me, participating in the youth leadership program has been a beautiful experience. Before I entered the program, I had never participated in workshops or educational field trips. I just studied. I have been part of the program for three years now. Once I began, I became involved with my community council. My parents had always been involved, and had always gone to the community meetings, but I had not. I did not really know what they were about. I loved all the field trips we did to museums and other places. We always learned something new.



This year I am facilitating a literacy circle. Twenty-six people participate. Not everyone comes every week, but around nineteen always participate each time. I have enjoyed facilitating the literacy circle, because it allows me to share something that I know, and something that I really had to work hard to learn.

I attend the José Simeón Cañas institute in Zacatecoluca. I graduate from high school in December with a vocational focus on health. I did my internship in a hospital, which I really liked because I could help people. That is why I chose to specialize in health. Being able to help people in my community, like through vaccination campaigns, really motivated me to continue studying and participating.

My dream is to be able to continue my studies. I would love to get one of the FMLN sponsored scholarships to study medicine in Cuba. Even if I am not able to go on to college, I want to do something with myself, do something different, not to get pregnant at a young age, but to set goals that I can achieve. I want to become a professional and help my parents, and to always, always help others, because that's what I truly love.

### **Eliseo Alexander Merino**

It is cool that people want to support youth; it can be really hard to continue studying because of the pressure to work and help support your family. I have learned a lot in my participation in this program, through school but especially in different activities and outings, including the trip the Museum of the Word and Image, and through activities like the cleaning campaign we organized in the community La Pita with other youth. In my community, I facilitate a literacy circle of six people, and it is really cool to be able to use, to put into practice what I learn in school.





### Guadalupe Sanchez

I was elected in a youth assembly on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November of 2007 and began my high school studies in January 2008. I felt so much joy when I heard that I had won. I just couldn't believe it. I would not have been able to continue studying. It's just me and my mom at home; my dad died during the war.

For me it has been such an honor and a privilege to participate, and now to be able to say that I am a high school graduate. This program has helped me a lot. When I began, you could say that I was hiding, afraid to go out into the light of the sun. This program really helped me

find myself. I quickly became part of the youth committee in my community, as well as the pastoral team and the soccer team. I have also participated in committees at the regional level here in Tecoluca. Forming part of this program has allowed me to learn all that I know now, and to become who I am today. I have learned so very much. I believe that there are true angels on earth present with us: those that have helped me, and the other scholarship youth, to do even these small things.

I am facilitating a literacy circle. Some of the participants know absolutely nothing about reading and writing, not even how to draw a circle. Now they can read, add, subtract, and write their names, their kids' names and their grandchildren's names. For me this is a great success. Those of us facilitating literacy circles have not been formally trained as teachers, but nevertheless that is what we are doing, we are teaching members of our communities.

I am very thankful for the economic help that the program provides, as well as the moral, spiritual, and psychological support offered. To continue forward, one needs not just money, but also motivation and energy. Knowing that others care about my education motivates me.

I hope to keep studying. My plan is to look for a job, hopefully one that will allow me to afford university as well, and help my mom out. My dream is to be a lawyer.



**Juan Carlos Hernandez**

For me it has been great to be part of the scholarship program. Last year I was going to end my dream of studying, because we did not have the money for me to continue. However, thanks to this program, I was able to continue with my studies.

This program doesn't just support students, but the families that are behind those students, too. On Friday (at the last youth assembly of the year), parents were asked how they were benefitted by this project, and they shared that they are able to save money or invest it in other kids. That's really important, because it isn't just one kid in a family.

Apart from the academic piece of the program, there is also personal development. We learn leadership skills and other diverse skills through vocational workshops, like to make bread.

Next year I hope to continue studying and achieve my dream of being a high school graduate.



### José Neftaly Valencia: Youth Leader for Peace

*Meet José Neftaly Valencia, participant in the SHARE-UCRES High School Scholarship and Integral Youth Development Program in Northern San Salvador. Thanks to SHARE's accompaniment and the support of our US Grassroots base, Neftaly is able to continue his studies and work for community development.*



Neftaly is from La Joya, a small rural community repopulated by people who fled their homes during the brutal civil war in El Salvador. He lives with both his parents and two sisters. Currently in his third year of technical high school, Neftaly studies accounting at the National Institute of El Paisnal, the final resting place of Father Rutilio Grande. A very dynamic young man, Neftaly makes one feel immediately at ease and in *confianza*. He is the President of La Joya's youth committee and loves soccer.

Neftaly identifies two main benefits of his involvement in the youth program: the financial support he and his family receive so he can continue his studies at the high school level, a feat only the minority in El Salvador are able to achieve, and having the opportunity to be more involved in regional organization, including being organized as a young person, and participating in youth development.

Neftaly receives a monthly scholarship that covers the costs of transportation to and from class every day, school materials, and a uniform. The program he participates in places emphasis on integral youth development and provides active support and guidance for his youth organizing work in his community. To make all of this possible, SHARE provides a mere \$375 a year per student.

**“Being organized... is a way for youth to see and know the ways they can participate democratically.”**

As the President of the youth committee, Neftaly helps organize many community activities. One example: the youth committee organizes community movie nights, and uses the proceeds to hold Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations. Neftaly emphasizes that the funds the youth committee raises are not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the community. Neftaly shares that he really likes being organized because, “I feel called to help others. Being organized doesn't mean limiting oneself to just one area. It means getting involved in everything that affects the country and especially our communities. It is a way for the youth to see and know the ways they can participate democratically.”

As an evolving leader, Neftaly was invited to participate in an intense three-day training to become a Culture of Peace facilitator. With a focus on youth development, the main objective of these workshops is to prevent violence in the zone. El Salvador has one of the highest homicide rates in the world, an epidemic according to World Health Organization's standards. In a country where youth have few options—migrate to the United States in search of work or join the gangs—youth working together to seek alternatives make a powerful statement.

Culture of Peace workshops, true to their name, focus on building skills for conflict resolution and peace building, taking the place of anger and violence. These popular education circles also deal

with issues relevant and of interest to youth, including sexual and reproductive rights, STDs, and youth organizing. Neftaly now leads youth groups in twelve communities in his municipality through this transformative process.

When we ask Neftaly what he likes to do in his free time, he smiles and hesitates. “It’s really hard for me sometimes,” he says. “With my studies, sometimes the clock hits one in the morning and I still haven’t gone to bed.” But despite his own sacrifice and the many challenges he faces as a youth leader, he likes working in organization and supporting others: “so that young people learn, and are able to share their own perspectives, to see that there are benefits to being organized, and that we have no limits as youth.” His dream? To study medicine at the university level and work in his community as a health promoter, to provide this basic service to those who need it but cannot offer financial remuneration.

With the support of sistering groups in the U.S., SHARE is able to accompany this amazing young leader, who in turn is able to accompany dozens of other young people as they develop and grow. This work is changing the future of El Salvador and the lives of thousands of people!

### **Juana Elizabeth Torres: Active Community Member at Age 17**

*Meet Juana Elizabeth Torres, participant in the SHARE-UCRES High School Scholarship and Integral Youth Development Program in Northern San Salvador.*

Juana lives and studies in the rural community of Huisislapa. Juana shares that she loves to play soccer, dance, and read. She just finished her second year of high school. As a participant in the scholarship program, Juana says, “I feel I have grown a lot. Just knowing that I have a scholarship motivates me more to make good grades.” In addition to her studies in school, she also values the workshops she and the other youth have received, learning about the economy, key problems in El Salvador, their causes, and how youth can work to solve them. Juan comments that, “There are things they don’t teach in school and it is good to learn about them in other spaces. It is helpful to know about the economy because it’s something we live every day. We, the poor, suffer most because we don’t have access to money for many things.”

Juana loves her community and believes “it’s important to always support the community in the things we do, and in this we better ourselves together.” She takes part in a variety of groups and activities in her community, including a group of artisans, a youth group called Youth in Solidarity for Hope, and any activities organized by the Community Directive, like commemorations of the community’s founding. Together with Youth in Solidarity for Hope, Juana organizes activities for Mother’s day, Youth day, and other events, and participates in community projects. Juana feels proud of her contributions to her community, and her academic achievements, and hopes to continue forward with both.



*Listen to interviews with Neftaly and Juana at*

<http://thesharefoundation.blogspot.com/2010/10/ucres-scholarship-students.html>

### Youth Building Democracy: September 2010 CCR Youth Assembly

*The Association of Communities for the Development of Chalatenango (CCR), the largest of CRIPDES' six regions of organized communities, has been working in the province of Chalatenango since 1989. It currently works with 110 communities in 22 municipalities of Chalatenango "to promote grassroots organization, education, leadership formation, social struggle, civil participation, and empowerment in the organized communities and sectors of Chalatenango, in order to achieve: economic, social, political, and cultural development; the protection of natural resources; gender equity; and the democratic transformation of the country." The youth coordinator for the CCR provides organizing support to many youth and scholarship students throughout Chalatenango. SHARE supports a group of 16 high school scholarship students in the CCR.*

In September the CCR organized a regional youth assembly in Arcatao, Chalatenango. Over 200 youth ages fifteen to thirty filled the community center with clapping, laughter, and encouragement. Well designed to keep the youth engaged, the assembly included brief talks on the current national reality and the history of organizing in Chalatenango, a skit about migration presented by a local youth theatre group, an academic competition, and *dinámicas* throughout.



Facilitators and presenters often wove in reminders of the roots and reality of organizing in Chalatenango, while maintaining the focus on youth as the light of the present and future. The Assembly opened with the national anthem and the anthem of unity: *El Pueblo Unido Jamás Será Vencido*. A moment of silence followed to remember all of the students who have died and all migrants currently trying to make their way to the United States. Milton Monge, a representative of the local government in Arcatao, began his brief address stressing the need for doctors, nurses, future mayors and legislators, engineers, priests, nuns, and agronomists. At the same time he called on the youth to remember all those that deserved to be present at the assembly, but continue disappeared since the time of the war.



After a few short initial speeches on Chalatenango past and present, various participatory activities ensued, including a youth skit, an academic competition, and In their skit entitled *American Dream: Emigration*, local youth depicted various Salvadoran individuals and families talking in their every day Salvadoran slang, making the hard decision of what to do following the loss of a job and the loss of the bean crop. In one family a friend suggested that the father go to "The North." His wife and daughter begged him to stay, but he maintained his resolve to leave, find a job, and send them money. Eventually a group of eight migrants formed. Each shared his or her dream - "I'll buy the newest model of car." "You'll see me in the movies soon." "I'll be rich, because they say they throw away money there." Their coyote only

shook his head and said, “You're daydreaming, the lot of you.” Along the way they jumped on to a train, crossed a river, ran out of food, and ran afoul of *la migra*. At the end just three made it across the border and went their separate ways.



The youth particularly enjoyed the academic competition. CCR Youth Coordinator Lucio Cruz Anaya divided the youth into four teams based on the regions they hail from. Each team chose a representative to answer questions on their behalf. One young leader had prepared five questions in six different subjects: science, English, math, history, language arts, and organizing work. Correct answers won ten points, while incorrect answers deducted ten. Each team cheered on their

representative with deafening shouts and whistles as they vied to raise their hands first and answer the questions. Silence reigned only at the moments when youth ventured their answers.

In the afternoon came elections for three candidates to serve as the new CCR Youth Coordinator for the next two years. Various youth stood up to nominate each other, pointing out Idalia's various leadership qualities, or how hard César had worked as part of his community council. Each time an individual was nominated, everyone would turn to see what his or her reply would be. Idalia declared, “I accept because I like to work with youth, I get along well with everyone, and I consider myself a leader.” César responded, “If the assembly chooses me, I would be happy to serve.” Loud shouts and clapping bounced off the plain concrete walls. However, when Alex said, “It is an honor to be nominated, but I am currently very dedicated to a project in my community, and will not have the necessary time to give,” everyone cried, “Awwww.”

**Everyone has a chance to share his or her opinion**

Once the youth had nominated six individuals from amongst themselves, everyone had a chance to vote. At the end, three highly motivated youth, César, Idalia, and Salvador, graciously accepted their election as candidates. In late October the final round of voting will be held, with the opportunity for all community members to participate.

At the close of the afternoon, one young woman commented that she liked the assembly and the way that the voting was facilitated because “everyone has a chance to share his or her opinion.” A true example of democracy. The assembly beautifully illustrated the value, love, and investment that the CCR and the communities of Chalatenango give their young people.



## Where Drumming and Sex Ed Meet in El Salvador

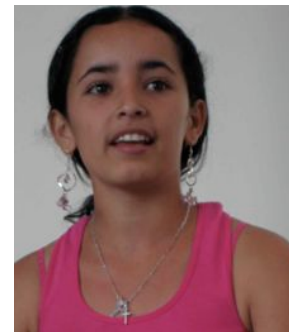
By Sara Schultz, Operations Manager  
November 2010

About an hour northwest of San Salvador, in the small community of La Ciudadela Guillermo Hongo, a group of high school girls meets to do two things: discuss sexual and reproductive rights, and play the drums. They attend trainings on how to educate their female peers about pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS, and the rights of women to make decisions that affect their bodies. In turn, each young woman replicates these trainings with at least 3 other female peers in their community. On Saturdays they rehearse as the *Sihua Batucada*, the only all female rural youth drum band in the country of El Salvador. A few minutes with these girls will remind even the most cynical that another world *is* indeed possible.



Fifteen young women ages fifteen participate in the program. As an integral part of the leadership development component, they have formed the batucada (drum band). According to the girls, being part of the batucada boosts their confidence and reinforces their sense of belonging to a team. One girl explained that her new self-assurance helps her in talking to the peers she trains. Another stated that playing music is a way to for her to enjoy her sexuality in a safe space. A third expressed that “It feels really good to be really good at something.”

But neither drumming nor talking about women’s sexual rights are typical or widely accepted activities for a Salvadoran high school girl. As a result, the girls’ pioneering work has not gone unnoticed—at least one girl has been threatened with expulsion for talking about condoms at school, and critics have called the girls “prostitutes” and started nasty rumors about them. People criticized them for drumming at marches and demonstrations, spreading lies about the causes they were supporting. But amazingly enough, these setbacks have only deepened their commitment to their work and helped to clarify the important reasons behind it. When asked how the rumors and the critics have affected them, one of the girls smiled and responded, “Well, it was hard at first, but really they just made us stronger and brought us together.” Their persistence and dedication has paid off. Now their communities and their families are proud of them, and more young women in their area have knowledge of their rights and choices when it comes to their sexual health.



These young women are an inspiration and a model for girls everywhere. SHARE is lucky to be able to accompany them and learn from them. ¡Viva la Sihua Batucada!

## Organic Veggies and Powerful Women Tucked away in the Chalate Mountains

By Tedde Simon, Grassroots Program Coordinator

*Currently, in the CCR, SHARE sponsors the project **Strengthening Women's Leadership**, which seeks to strengthen women's education and the organization of 70 women's committees, working towards the inclusion of more women in community organizing, and opportunities for women's development. The Women's Secretariat, composed of Rubia, Women's Secretariat Coordinator of the, and promoters for each of six sub-regions, carries out the project, amongst many other responsibilities. The project includes funds for women's committee meetings, leadership workshops on national reality and gender issues, monthly meetings of the Women's Secretariat, and training, supplies and support for home vegetable gardens for 100 women. The home vegetable gardens have played an important role for women to work towards food sovereignty and have access to nutritious meals in the midst of the ongoing food crisis. **Read about the experience of one women's committee in receiving trainings, organizing and planting a community vegetable garden:***

Los Pozos, Carasque. From Chalate proper, its another two hour drive down roads that remind one of the many corners of El Salvador long abandoned by may consecutive governments. To get there, near the border with Honduras, one must drive along a more-than-bumpy road and pass over the Río Sumpul. The bridge was seriously damaged during Tropical Storm Agatha, the first time in anyone's memory that this bridge has been damaged.



We make it to Los Pozos, but only about halfway up the mountain to the vegetable garden, where the women are waiting for us. We leave the Share-mobile and, in our flimsy flip-flops, hike our way up. As we emerge from the brush, we see the vegetable garden, encompassed by cyclon fence, overlooking the view that could make even a lifelong city slicker fall in love: every shade of green imaginable, with the shadows of the clouds lazily making their way over hills and through valleys. Out here, there are no telephone polls, electric wires, bus noises or pollution.

What they do have are pipianes and ayotes (two kinds of squash, pipian right), mora and chipilín (leafy greens), basil, jicama, cucumber, radish, and watermelon, growing like wildfire in the women's committee's vegetable garden. The land, loaned by one

of the group's nine members, is the site where these women are learning to plant and care for fruits and vegetables. It is their first time planting something other than corn and beans, and their first time executing a project as a committee. Gloria, who leads our tour of the vegetable garden, explains: "Where there is no organization, projects don't work." She emphasizes that this project has helped them strengthen their organization as women: "This project is helping us to be more organized and responsible... we have to keep the the plants healthy. We know that if we are chosen for a project, we have to be responsible to ensure its success."



As they harvest, the crop will be divided between all nine women for their families' consumption, and, if there is extra, will be sold. With the price of fruits and vegetables high, this garden will allow families to expand their diets of rice, beans and tortillas with lush greens and sweet fruits.

A local farmer, Chepito, led the nine women through the process. Chepito has experience in organic farming, and offered to train the nine women not only in basic planting and plant care, but also in the preparation and application of organic pesticides. Made from easily accessible inputs, including hot peppers and garlic, the organic pesticide has worked in keeping worms and other bugs off of the budding plants. In Los Pozos, they also add a plant, called ipasina, which, according to one of the women as she scrunches her nose, “smells horrible and scares away the insects” after about 10 days of fermentation.



The women, who come to the vegetable garden together about once a week, depending on the need, take advantage of our visit and put us to work. The radishes look just about ready, and we all happily go to work pulling them gently out of the soft, damp earth. As we heap them in a pile, the two children accompanying us see the instant results of our work, and join in. They're with us this morning because, for National Teacher's Day, all schools are closed. But they are getting a valuable education in organizing, women's empowerment, organic gardening, and growing in their connection to the earth.



**A Public School Teacher's View of Education in El Salvador***Excerpts From an Interview with Carlos Alarcón*

By Erica Thompson

Upside Down World, May 14, 2009

Carlos Alarcón is a public high school history teacher, community activist, and board member of ANDES 21 de Junio, a historic teachers' union. His work spans three decades of turmoil and uprising in El Salvador - specifically in Santa Ana, the second most populous department in the country, which borders Honduras and Guatemala.

**UDW:** Tell us about the state of public and private education in post-war El Salvador.

**CA:** First, as you know, education has never been a priority for the ruling class. Since the mid-90s, hundreds of private education projects have been approved with the absurd opinion that Salvadoran teachers are lazy workers and only private institutions will solve the education problem. At the same time, the ARENA government has punished teachers, claiming we are to blame for high illiteracy and student drop out rates. Because of the laws Congress has passed over the past decade, teachers no longer feel as though their jobs are secure.

Teachers' salaries continue to be the lowest in Central America. We have no right to health care; teachers can only get sick within the first three days of each month. Why? Because medicine is only available to us within those three days. If a teacher is sick the law turns them away without pay until they are able to work. Can you imagine this - you're a teacher for 25 years and this is how the government treats you? Many Salvadoran teachers have very serious health problems. The Ley de la Carrera Docente (National Teacher's Law) says that we're supposed to have health benefits but they're rarely given.

Just as they've tried to privatize water, health care, pensions, social security, and everything else under the sun, the U.S. and the Europe have helped the ARENA party to practically destroy public education. As foreign aid has increased, so have the number of foreign teachers and education programs. One example is Escuela Americana, which is a corporation based in the United States that runs dozens of schools throughout the country at every level of education. [5] They're also teaching teachers. I use the term 'teaching' lightly because they say that they teach methodology and all of this stuff but they mostly teach very basic concepts through free market principles.

All of the Escuela Americana teachers I've seen are gringos and they're politicized. Their organization, FUNDESAM, is a right wing institution [yet there is virtually no public information to be found about the organization, nor do we know the source of its funding]. During the election period, we (the teachers who were enrolled in the class) were talking a lot about the campaign and reminding people to vote. The teacher came up to me and said, "Ok, Carlos, so what. If Funes wins you will have nothing. Is that what you want?"

**UDW:** How does Escuela Americana recruit teachers?

**CA:** They go through the Salvadoran government, the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education sends you a memo saying "You are a teacher, so you have to go through this program. They will train you to be a better teacher." That's the way they come to you. And if you don't do it,

you're in violation of the Teachers Law and you can be punished. We're supposed to be the best teachers in El Salvador now (laughs).

The teachers from Escuela Americana try to put all of these corporate things in your head. One day they told me, "Well you don't have to be very strict in English classes. They can learn English in the United States. They just have to be prepared to go to work." We have been taking classes there for one year. We're supposed to be receiving international credentials, which will allow us to work anywhere. They're graduating 600 teachers in El Salvador every year.

**UDW:** What are your expectations of the FMLN government?

**CA:** Well, here is a statement we're bringing to the FMLN as the International Forum of Teachers, Janitors, and other Workers in the Education System. Let me read it to you. It says:

Salvadoran Peoples' demands of the FMLN government in its transition to power:



The electoral victory on March 15th ended a long historical process - hopes, fears, victories, defeats, blood, work and tears that our people have suffered in the historical process. Step by step we've opened another path in our country and the possibility of justice, human rights, life and peace.

The electoral victory is resonant of the people's will. But politically, the victory by itself doesn't ensure anything. The new government must do things differently. The Salvadoran people have to see tangible change. The economic situation in our country right now is that the system subjugates the people.

The FMLN victory represents the will for change in this country. It represents the demand for medicine in the hospitals and more doctors, schools, teachers, jobs, food, opportunity, dignity and respect.

The Salvadoran people demand a strong fight against corruption. This means that we need honest public workers and for justice to prevail. During this time in which the new government is sharing the cake (making new appointments, allotments and concessions in its transition to government), the FMLN must share it equitably among the people and all of us should pay taxes, even the wealthy.

*Erica Thompson is a media correspondent for CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador). Visit <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/el-salvador-archives-74/1861-what-we-want-voices-from-the-salvadoran-left-carlos-alarc> for the full interview.*

## What We Want: Organized University Students of the FURD Speak Out

Written by Erica Thompson  
Upside Down World, June 4, 2009

Corporate media's two-dimensional depiction of Salvadoran youth leads us to believe that most are caught up in a vicious cycle of gang violence; it has failed to convey the full picture, which involves hundreds of youth moving thousands more into political activism and shepherding a new generation of leftist thinkers in El Salvador.

The Frente Universitario Roque Dalton (FURD) has been in the forefront of student organizing in San Salvador. Formed in 2002, the FURD works with students, campus workers, and professors to unify these sectors under the common goal of University reform. They envision a University that reflects, critiques, and transforms Salvadoran society. A compañera and I recently spoke with several members of the FURD to get a better understanding of the group's work within the National University of El Salvador and its vision for the country.

**Upside Down World:** Tell us about the purpose of the FURD.

**Jackie:** The FURD was founded as a means to organize youth at the University to transform its goals and purpose. What interests us, as an organization, is the possibility that the University will return people to the path of commitment - to a society that really identifies the University as a place where people are developing new critiques and solutions. So our goal is to build an organization that engages young people who believe we can change society through our work within the University.



**Oswaldo:** The FURD is a space we use to analyze, debate, share, propose and question. We question the conditions we experience as young people. We come to this space to be able to know each other and to explore each other's experiences in society. Later we plan to create projects that help other youth do the same.

**Sonia:** We all come from different places and realities, different conditions. It's really beautiful... the FURD is a family. We debate, we share and we laugh. We have a holistic formation because we take time to understand each other. Each of us arrived with different motives but when we came to know the organization, how it worked and organized, we were able to unify around similar ideas and a common means of struggle.

**UDW:** What are some of the critiques your organization has of the University's method and curriculum and what are some of the changes you're working to implement?

**Sonia:** Most urgently, the university needs a change in structure, and to develop more creative programs. In fact, the University should have three main goals on which it rests its entire policy - that students receive quality instruction, have opportunities to do extensive research, and are given

support to do outreach. In order to actually achieve this, all of the University's programs or areas of study have to be integrated and encouraged to give life to the University as a whole, if it is to serve society. That is the role of the University, after all.

**Jackie:** One factor that has been forgotten - because the point is that young people come to study here - is that the purpose of the University it is not to merely create professionals. If one does not truly get involved at the University, they will not know or be able to be involved in what is happening in society. Colleges used to play a very important role in societal events, not only inside the University but outside too, nationally. Universities had a role in solving problems people were experiencing at the time.

Now the University creates professionals who go out and do nothing more but work. We need to reawaken the commitment we have to others - not only to ourselves. Many people have forgotten that we have to be interested in this country in its entirety, not just dependent upon the system for our own needs. Then we only live superficially and never create a more objective look into what is happening and consider, as a young person, what we can truly give to society.

**Mauricio:** When youth enter the University, they don't understand the importance of solidarity and social integration; they're only looking for a title. So it's difficult to organize at the University and that's why we only receive one percent of the national budget. This is a very important factor that hinders the development of the University. The reality is the market absorbs people and since private universities have a much larger budget and are more modernized, we are at a market disadvantage in competing with them.

**UDW:** What do you think of the media's portrayal of Salvadoran youth?

**Sonia:** It's really unfortunate. The media sensationalizes youth with tattoos and tries to convince people that the majority of youth live violent lives or belong to the gangs. I recently heard about an 18 year-old who went to jail for killing someone. What is interesting is that this particular person was a rich kid, an artist. Much of the violent crime in El Salvador is committed by upper-class youth but the media doesn't explore this tendency. Many believe that poor people are to blame.

**Jackie:** There is no positive media representation of our communities, the barrios, the neighborhoods we come from. When they do come to our communities, they look down upon them. They claim that our communities are saturated in violence, danger and drugs. There is very little space in the media and the public for youth participation. All of this power is concentrated in the hands of the Right. When there is a little space it is because of our own efforts and demands.

**Oswaldo:** As politically conscious youth, we have a lot of distractions. We're bombarded with issues and are also victimized, criminalized and faced with the threat of violence. There is a lot of insecurity that threatens us outside of the University. We can easily be killed. We carry a lot of fear when we're in the street or on the bus because youth are the main victims of crime in El Salvador. At the same time we are thought of as criminals. Random young people without fault are often blamed for the deaths of compañer@s, friends and gang members. This is a very complicated society and rarely does the media shed light on our situation.

**UDW:** Prior to the elections, El Salvador hosted two summits exploring the condition of youth both nationally and regionally. What did you think of the issues and discussions that were raised?

**Jackie:** The Youth Summit was solely focused on students from private colleges and the themes discussed were far too general. They didn't talk about the lived reality of the majority of Salvadoran youth. At no moment did we see a student from a public institution say, "These are the problems I face." Many students at the National University have to work AND study and support our families. Sometimes we don't eat because we don't have money. We would like to know why the youth have not been entrusted to be the directive force of the summits and to put our own issues forward.

**Sonia:** The summit profiled youth who already have all their lives planned, whose studies are guaranteed, and who will live off of large inheritances. The problem is that they put these faces out to the world to show that the youth of El Salvador are doing well. But if they really came and started to explore our communities, they would see that many people aren't able to access more advanced education programs. If someone has only a basic education, they will probably not work in the formal sector. A youth who only has studied through ninth grade has little opportunity; you have to be lawyer, a doctor or a professor to even be considered for a much smaller position. So this is the problem: we see ourselves represented by people who really don't know the situations of youth in El Salvador. It's just a smokescreen.

**Jackie:** Few youth organizations exist and there is far too little support for those groups to expand their bases. Furthermore, young Salvadorans, overall, have had very few opportunities to develop a political analysis. What often happens is that older generations in society, including people on the Left, want to support youth but they also want to impose their ideas on our thinking, processes and agendas.

**UDW:** What are some of the challenges you think the Funes Administration will face in their first term?

**Jackie:** These elections are historic because they present a scenario of probable change. As a social organization we are promoters of this change. Social organizations are a very important element in El Salvador's transition. We are going to be the promoters of this change the FMLN is advocating and we will also be the ones to sustain the change, not those who are at the top of the party or within the party, the functionaries or future functionaries. Power originates in the people, in the social organizations - not a blind people, rather a conscious people. Conscious people will channel the transformation.

One challenge that the new government faces is to truly turn over power to the people so that the people can defend what they have achieved. The FMLN must help people to understand how the consequences we've faced have been generated by political, economic, and repressive means. Through an education where people are truly empowered, the lights won't come from above; rather the lights from below will rise upwards. This is a big challenge for the FMLN. Hopefully they will be able to visualize this.

**Sonia:** The real challenge before the FMLN is to know the people - to know the real needs - because only from there can they start to transform society. If the government doesn't know the people, it will

be really difficult to generate these conditions, which is what has happened with the different governments we've had.

**UDW:** What are the first, most critical issues the FMLN government should focus on?

**Jackie:** I think the FMLN should have a few areas of focus right now. The first proposal the party highlighted is this idea of returning to self-sustainability by creating investment in agriculture and giving us the ability to produce from the land... for El Salvador to become an agricultural country. Another idea is to completely reform education in a way that will give the new generation of youth the potential to think differently.

**Sonia:** If we have a good, holistic education system and are self-sustaining, we can generate work because we will be a producing country once again. A good educational system, on its own, will generate much more employment. For example, we could have more painters, actors, and ballerinas and open more of these kinds of opportunities. Our culture would grow again. If we recuperate these agricultural activities, we will find ways to live sustainably. We are a country that lives from grains and should not be exporting them to other countries. It's really a shame.

Finally, we will see what happens in the United States and what Obama's approach to El Salvador will be. Will it just be a continuation of the pattern of U.S. dominance and exploitation?

*Erica Thompson is a media correspondent for CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. To read the full interview, visit <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/el-salvador-archives-74/1891-interview-members-of-university-front-of-roque-dalton-from-the-national-university-of-el-salvador>*