



# CAPACITAR—An International Network of Empowerment and Solidarity

**Caring for Ourselves as We Care for the World** — Patricia Mathes Cane, Capacitar Founder/Co-Director

*CAPACITAR is network of people who share a desire to heal and empower themselves, as well as heal and transform their groups and societies, especially those living in areas of poverty and violence; who believe that through nurturing, listening and responding to the deeper wisdom of body and spirit, it is possible to bring peace and healing to our world.*

*The CAPACITAR network includes people from diverse countries, cultures, generations, socioeconomic backgrounds and experiences, who encourage and support a spirit of solidarity and hopeful interchange. CAPACITAR shares techniques of healing, team building and self-development with leaders to encourage physical and spiritual transformation, working in such a way that all involved are empowered to act out of their own source of strength and wisdom. CAPACITAR connects people through an international network of solidarity, building relationships of cultural and personal understanding, responding to needs identified by community groups within a country.*

*Our name, CAPACITAR, is a Spanish word meaning to empower, to encourage, to bring forth.*

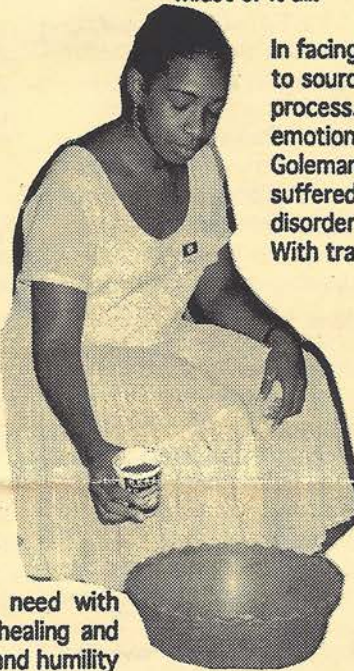
The fear and trauma we are experiencing in the United States with the terrorist attacks and the threat of war are a wakeup call to us all. In the moments of terror and destruction many of the victims and rescue workers, as they faced their own deaths, reached out with care and compassion to call their families and to help those suffering around them. As Capacitar we are asking ourselves: How can we respond? How can we reach out more fully now to care for our people, to care for ourselves and each other, to do this work in the challenging days ahead?

We learned a lot about the need to care for ourselves as we care for survivors of violence during our recent work in Colombia, East Timor and Papua New Guinea. Here our teams came face to face with human violence, pain and desperation in their extreme forms. In committing ourselves to work more fully in the U.S. and other areas battered by war, massacres, disasters and trauma, we realize the cost of this commitment, the toll it takes, and the importance of learning how to care for ourselves as we work for the long haul. Meeting with hundreds of refugees, displaced persons and survivors, we experienced the privilege as well as the overwhelming drain of sharing the pain of so many.

Often it felt like a hurricane of human need with desperate people reaching out for help, healing and support. A great sense of powerlessness and humility swept over us as we witnessed the struggle to deal with dying and living. How to be there in loving compassion and presence in the face of such human suffering without burning out in the process? We were shocked by the enormity of the recent US, death toll, unaccustomed as we are to living daily with extreme violence.

Until now we have felt relatively untouched. In countries where Capacitar works the impact of the violence, as well as the daily degradation of spirit by exploitation, abuse, globalization and poverty, are beyond comprehension. In Colombia we saw the latest reports at the Conference of Religious (CRC). For the first three months of 2001 alone, the CRC Peace and Justice Commission documented: 536 extra judicial executions, 893 assassinations, 100 reported cases of torture, the disappearance of 86 and kidnapping of 401 persons. And this violence is only escalating as the US government promotes Plan Colombia with over one billion dollars in military aid, recalling the strategy and carnage of our involvement in El Salvador. How much more bloodshed and trauma before the human family awakens to the fragile beauty and value of each being?

Trauma is toxic. We know first hand how those who work in the field can vicariously become victims of the trauma they are trying to heal. The literature describes this as "secondary trauma" or "compassion fatigue". One religious in Bogota remarked: "How do you prepare your sisters for working in the conflict zones? We never learned in our years of formation how to hold the tortured bodies of our people, how to accompany those who survive the massacres." In many places we are finding people who are trying to learn how to hold the pain of the world, how to deal with vicarious trauma, how to live with deep peace and compassion in the midst of it all.



In facing this challenge it is important to look to sources of wisdom and spirit to guide our process. The Dalai Lama in an interview on emotional intelligence with psychologist Daniel Goleman, comments that few Tibetan monks suffered symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after torture or imprisonment. With traditional Tibetan practices of meditation, prayer, breathing, and compassionate forgiveness the monks were able to clear their energy and heal the pain associated with violence and trauma. A daily practice to stay grounded and clear, to move blocked energy, and to open to the healing energy of the earth is essential. Empowering people in development of a healing practice is the work of Capacitar. Since many people ask us about this we plan to include regularly in our newsletter a section to share practices found to be helpful for our self-care. See page 3.

In his fine book *Navigating the Tides of Change*, David La Chapelle tells a story about Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, paleontologist and mystic, when he worked in the World War I trenches as a stretcher-bearer. As Chardin picked up the torn and mangled body of a soldier, La Chapelle questions him: "How can you see beyond the blood?" Chardin replies, "I don't see beyond it, I see into it. It is the Earth that bleeds. It is all mankind that bleeds. I do not want to turn away from such a sight, for I believe that there is purpose to all that happens. I will know more of that purpose if I look into that reality."

While we all struggle to look into that reality caring for the bleeding human family, perhaps we have the opportunity to awaken to our purpose at this time on the planet. As Capacitar we, too, find purpose in looking into that reality: offering arms of love and age-old practices of healing as we work for the transformation of our world. And as we care for ourselves and care for our world in the face of so much pain, we are blessed by grace and resilience, and we learn about love, compassion and possibility—the true nature and purpose of the human family.



## Capacitar in Colombia —Patricia Mathes Cane

Colombia with a population of 40 million is called the most violent country in the world. The people live in a climate of fear with a long history of atrocities carried out by military, paramilitary forces, and the guerillas (FARC). Over two million persons have been displaced from their homes because of the violence. A number of communities and geographical areas of the country are also seriously affected by fumigation with toxic chemicals promoted by the US government in its war on drugs. With the development of Plan Colombia, globalization of the economy and the drug war, the majority of Colombians live as victims of this state of terror. The majority of people live in constant fear, afraid to go into the countryside, and suffer some form of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In a two-week exploratory visit in August, Pat Farrell, OSF, of our El Salvador and International Teams, and I studied the reality in four areas of the country (Cali, Buenaventura, Bogota, and Medellin) to see if our Capacitar program would be beneficial for people affected by the violence. During the visit, "las dos Patricias", as we were often called, offered preliminary workshops to several hundred women, men and children, including many displaced persons and survivors of massacres. We also talked with community leaders, women's networks, grassroots organizations, religious, and members of the Franciscan Network in order to assess the situation and Capacitar's potential role. As a result of this first visit, Capacitar received a very positive response from community leaders as well as invitations to continue the work. A plan for 2002-2003 is being developed in collaboration with grassroots groups and religious leaders to address the overwhelming needs in mental health, especially with displaced communities and in conflict zones.

In each place where we worked Pat and I were very moved by the beauty and abundant resources of the country as well as the warmth and hospitality of the Colombian people. We were also impacted by the tremendous hunger of people to learn what they could to heal the woundedness of their lives and communities. This was especially true with groups of survivors and displaced persons who are having to rebuild their lives after losing all their possessions as well as their loved ones. There is overwhelming trauma everywhere and few psychologists and therapists who are able to respond to the immensity of the problem. So Capacitar's popular education approach to trauma healing and self-care will be an effective model to develop. Pat Farrell will be Capacitar's coordinator for developing the work and a team of trainers in Colombia.

## CAPACITAR SELF-CARE CORNER

Welcome to this new feature of the Capacitar newsletter. In our work with people in the US, Central America, and Asia, we again realize how difficult it is for people to find time to take care of themselves so that they can avoid emotional overload, secondary trauma and burnout. As Capacitar staff we also struggle with this. So, we thought that in each issue of the newsletter we would share a holistic practice that we find particularly helpful. These will be practices that you can work into your routine in a few minutes each day or that you can use in stressful situations. You might want to clip out the column and keep it so you can review it.

### FINGER HOLDS TO BALANCE EMOTIONS

Holding the fingers to move and balance the flow of energy is a simple effective way to manage emotions during stressful times. We often hold our fingers unconsciously following our own body wisdom. Babies suck their thumbs for consolation; an anxious woman plays with her ring finger; an angry person gives the finger. The people of Indonesia place their fingers on the earth to balance their energy.

**The Theory:** According to Eastern models of healing, a channel or meridian of energy connected to organs and related to different emotions and feelings passes through each finger. Emotions can be thought of as waves of energy moving through the body-mind-spirit. With stressful or traumatic events, if energy is not released and balanced, it remains blocked in the system resulting in headaches, insomnia, pain and other physical or emotional symptoms.

**The Practice:** Using one hand, hold each finger on the other hand according to the emotion in need of balance and according to the instructions in the box below. You may hold the fingers with either hand. Within a minute you will feel a pulse, which is energy flowing. Usually when our energy flows, the strong feeling or emotion moves through us and passes. Finger holds may be used anytime, in a moment of anxiety, grief or anger, or as part of mediation. This is a good practice to release the concerns of the day and be clear and current before going to sleep at night. (This practice can be found on pages 43-44 of the Trauma Healing and Transformation Manual.)

**Other Resources.** We recommend the following books which have been helpful to the Capacitar staff in caring for ourselves and our world.

David La Chapelle, *Navigating the Tides of Change*

Pema Chödrön, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*

Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*

Thumb	Tears, Grief, Emotional pain	Hold your thumb, breathe deeply and exhale all the grief and sorrow you feel. Breathe in to fill yourself with peace and comfort.
Index Finger	Fear	Hold your index finger, breathe deeply and exhale and let go of fear. Inhale courage and strength of being.
Middle Finger	Anger and Rage	Hold your middle finger, breathe deeply and exhale and let go of all anger and rage. Inhale compassion, energy, and creative passion.
Ring Finger	Anxiety and Nervousness	Hold your ring finger, breathe deeply and exhale, letting go of all worry and anxiety. Inhale a deep sense of peace and security knowing that you are held.
Small Finger	Low Self-esteem, Feelings of Unworthiness	Hold your small finger, breathe deeply, and exhale and let go of insecurity and unworthiness. Breathe in gratitude and appreciation for the gift of life.





*In an evening of crosscultural interchange conference participants shared rituals, stories, songs and dances.*

*Conference participants represented both the differing cultures of the individual countries and the different cultures within the countries.*

Twenty-six Capacitar team members from six countries gathered in El Salvador in July for the 2nd Central America Regional conference. The El Salvador Capacitar team hosted the conference in Suchitoto, where the Capacitar Wellness Center is located. The conference had originally been scheduled for February 14-17 in the town of Candelaria Cuscatlán. It was postponed when funding was not secured in time. This proved providential as the second large earthquake struck El Salvador on February 13 when conference participants would have been gathering. The earthquake destroyed Candelaria.

The conference was planned by an international committee comprised of Nancy Meyerhofer, of El Salvador, Gladys Lanza of Honduras, Carmen Garcia of Guatemala and Capacitar International Coordinator, Joan Condon. Conference activities were selected to fulfill the goals set at the first Regional Conference: to share experiences and cultures, to develop leadership and team building skills and to visualize and plan for the future in the region.

Integral to the conference were Capacitar practices such as body work, Tai Chi, and ritual. The conference opened and closed with a ritual and ritual was part of each morning. The conference closing ritual was especially powerful. Each person had been asked to bring earth from their country. On the final evening, conference participants gathered in a circle with a ritual altar, which included a bowl, in the center. Each person approached the bowl while telling what their offering of earth represented, then poured their earth into the bowl. See page 1 photo of Sylvia Cayetano of Belize. After everyone had made their contribution, the soil was mixed and each person then dipped into the bowl for part of the mixture to carry home as a symbol of the interconnectedness of all peoples and the special interconnectedness of Capacitar.

As part of the activities, teams from each country — Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Chiapas, and the US—shared their work experience. El Salvador spoke about their response to the earthquakes when they worked with rescue teams, children, health promoters, and teachers and in four refugee camps. Honduras emphasized that they work through-

out the country through women's, indigenous, and human rights organizations. In Guatemala, there are several distinct programs with union women, with mental health workers and with the recovery of historical memory project. In Belize, the work is through the National Women's Commission. Chiapas is just forming a team that is presently receiving training. Capacitar US explained the international network and how we decide where Capacitar will work.

The closing day of the conference focused on visualizing and creating the future. Participants explored their own individual leadership gifts and the gifts that they and their team could bring to a regional collaboration. The conference then set goals at both the country and regional level. At the country level, Capacitar members will form a national team in countries which do not already have one and will work to strengthen both the new teams and the ones already in place. Each country also committed to a yearly Capacitar gathering, something which Honduras already does.

The goals set for the regional level include: compiling and distributing a directory (already completed); encouraging the interchange of materials, experiences and formation; publishing a regional bulletin every six months; convening a regional gathering every two years; holding regional workshops on specific themes (the first is early 2002 on trauma); and, forming a regional coordinating committee to assure the goals will be met.

The regional coordinating committee was selected and includes representative from each country. Nicaragua, whose representatives could not attend the conference, will be invited to choose someone for the committee.

Participants judged the conference a success. People were able to share on both a personal and professional level in the spirit of Capacitar. They returned to their countries with a feeling of solidarity across borders which was symbolized by the closing ritual of the mother earth.



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Sr. Mary Hartman  
Martha Cabrera

#### Peru

Sr. Magdalena Castro

### Gifts Made In Memory of

Timothy Maloney      Ruth McCarthy  
Frank Novitski      Simone Schütt  
Mary Peter Claver Schuster, PBVM

## **Remember CAPACITAR In Your Estate Plans**

**Bequests** - Gifts made through your will may be for a specific percentage of an estate or a specific sum.

**Gifts of Life Insurance** - You can transfer ownership of a life insurance policy to CAPACITAR.

The legal name is CAPACITAR, Inc., Watsonville, CA

## CAPACITAR Calendar 2001-2002

### 2001

- September 15-30 Workshops in Chiapas, Mexico
- September 21-23 Level 1/2 Workshop, Dubuque, Iowa
- September 24-25 Workshops in East Harlem, NY
- October 13-14 Binational Trainings, El Paso, TX/Mexico
- October 20 Board Meeting, Watsonville
- October 23 Presentation to Regional LCWR
- October Trainings in Colombia
- October-November Trainings in East Timor
- November 3-4 Trainers Workshop 3, San Diego/Tijuana
- November 30-December 2 Training 1, Milwaukee, WI
- December 3 New Orleans, Paper to International Society for the Study of Dissociative Disorders, International Conference
- December 8 New Orleans, Poster Presentation, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, International Conference
- Monthly No. California Workshops: St. Anthony Farm, Marian Residence, Elmwood Correctional Facility, Seton Hall

### 2002

- January 26 Board Meeting, Presentation Center
- February 18 - March 3 Guatemala Workshops
- March 16-17 Trainers Workshop 4, San Diego/Tijuana
- April 19-21 Capacitar 3, Cleveland, OH
- April Trainings in East Timor and Malaysia
- April Trainings in Colombia
- May 25-26 Workshops, Indianola, Mississippi
- July 3-10 Nicaragua Workshops
- August Trainings in East Africa—Tanzania, Kenya

### 2001-2002 Trainings

- Training/Certification in Multicultural Wellness Education  
Sponsored by the Center to BE, West Bend Wisconsin, Dates of 1-year training with Pat Cane: Nov. 30-Dec. 1; Mar. 8-10; May 31-June 2; Sept. 13-15. For information: Marjorie Wilbur 262-629-1937, [Mwctobe@execpc.com](mailto:Mwctobe@execpc.com). CEUs offered through Marian College.
- CA Trainings/Certification in Multicultural Wellness Education  
—Sponsored by Capacitar, Mt. Alverno Center, Redwood City, CA 2 CEUs per quarter offered through UCSC Extension:  
Feb. 2-3; May 18-19; Aug. 24-25; Nov. 9-10  
—Sponsored by Capacitar, Bi-lingual training, San Diego/Tijuana 2 CEUs per quarter offered through UCSC Extension

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