



CAPACITAR—Women Planting One Heart

An IF Project Connecting Women of North America with Women Around the World

CAPACITAR is a local and international network of women bringing each other to life. Our logo comes from a pre-Columbian design of aquatic flowers of ancient Mexico. For us it symbolizes the creativity and empowerment of women—women coming to life, rooted to the earth, birthing new life, joining together, empowering each other.

By sharing techniques of healing, team building and self-empowerment, CAPACITAR offers disadvantaged women the possibility of physical and spiritual transformation which empowers the women to take control of their lives and to inspire their communities in the struggle for liberation and peace in the world.

As a grassroots organization, CAPACITAR creates an international network of solidarity which builds relationships of cultural and personal understanding between women of North America and throughout the world. CAPACITAR works with a sensitivity toward cultural awareness and responds to needs identified by community groups within a country. CAPACITAR is a Spanish word meaning to empower, to enable, to encourage, to bring forth.

Welcome to the CAPACITAR network and to our first newsletter! Our desire is to connect the growing number of women interested in CAPACITAR here and in other countries. As the human family and its leaders face global poverty, violence and ecological destruction, in barrios and favelas, in cities and townships, women are coming together to empower each other, to heal themselves, to heal the earth, to create anew, to plant a heart in often humble and hidden ways. Through our newsletter we will share with you the joys, struggles, hopes, dreams, projects and rituals of women we meet and work with here and in other countries. And we will also keep you abreast of current CAPACITAR activities, meetings, travel and projects.

As we begin the new year we look forward in hope and expectation to the growth and flowering of seeds that have been planted by CAPACITAR in many places. This past year our work expanded locally in Watsonville, California, as well as in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Chile. We have invitations to start networks in other cities in California, as well as in a number of Latin American countries. As CAPACITAR we have a strong commitment to work with women at the grassroots who live in the poorest and most violent of areas, so we plan to expand our work this year to Lima, Peru, Honduras and El Salvador. In each of these countries the majority of families are kept together by single women. From our work last fall in El Salvador at the International Feminist Congress of Latin America and the Caribbean we saw how hungry women are for creating unity, healing and peace within themselves, as well as for bringing possibilities out of each other. We feel blessed to be able to facilitate some of this healing and growth with the desire to form a community of compassion and service much greater than our individual selves.

As CAPACITAR grows we are also restructuring our internal organization to incorporate the energies of many more women. We need volunteers to help with the office and to serve on our different committees: finance, communication and public relations, activities, resources, domestic and international programs. During the coming year there will be different meetings and fundraisers to help generate funds for our expanding work.

We need your help to make our dreams a reality. Many women have asked us what they can do here or in other places. In this and future newsletters we will share some of the things that other women are doing so as to inspire and encourage the movements of your own heart. It is important that each of us learns to listen to our deepest Self in order to respond with wisdom and compassion to the needs of our larger world.

This newsletter describes the experiences of several participants in our recent Women's Journey to Guatemala and Nicaragua. You will meet some of the people we worked with in these countries. Many friends donated money and supplies to be given to grassroots groups, so we describe the different communities who received these gifts. And we also share one of the ritual meditations that we used during our Journey.



WE JOIN WITH THE EARTH AND WITH EACH OTHER TO BRING NEW LIFE TO THE LAND. TO RECREATE THE HUMAN COMMUNITY, TO PROVIDE JUSTICE AND PEACE, TO REMEMBER OUR CHILDREN. . . WE JOIN TOGETHER AS MANY AND DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF ONE LOVING MYSTERY, FOR THE HEALING OF THE EARTH AND THE RENEWAL OF ALL LIFE.

—UN ENVIRONMENTAL SABBATH PROGRAM

CAPACITAR Women's Journey

On Thanksgiving Day, 1993, sixteen CAPACITAR women, Anglo and Latina, ages 26 to 77, traveled to Guatemala and Nicaragua to build relationships of understanding and solidarity and to share healing skills with Central American women. The following are excerpts of personal experiences:

Ruth Hunter, 77, Santa Cruz, CA (from her article for *La Gazette*, Feb'94)

"Sixteen women on a journey; our vision was empowering and easing the burden third world women carry. We were teachers, counselors, ex-nuns, a nun, peace workers and career women. Expectations varied but we hoped our workshops would help women to learn basic stress-reduction techniques and pass them on to other women whose lives they touch. In this process, we found ourselves also healing, supporting and caring for each other as we shared our own stresses and gradually bonded into a loving relationship. . .

"We had been invited by Marisa Grijalva of Casa CAMI, a popular education center in Guatemala City, to give workshops for union workers, teachers, feminist groups and Mayan peasant women. We taught them to use hand, neck and shoulder massage to relax, and then they practiced on us. We included brief simple exercises of acupressure, ending each session with the graceful movement of Tai Chi. Our final ritual, holding hands in a circle, taking a guided fantasy journey with music, deepened our physical and spiritual presence together, our commonality as women that transcended cultural and national barriers. . .

"Our journey included a trip to the squatter settlement of Mezquital where we met with two social workers in the community center, El Centro de Mujeres. Here, encircling the capital, were tin-walled shacks, the "misery belt", infamous for its open sewer stench and population explosion of 36,000, mostly single mothers and children. At the community center the women have started a sewing project making children's clothes. They form part of a cooperative effort to help them gain economic returns as they claw their way out of the "misery belt", where each sewing machine is a precious possession, where even water is a scarce commodity. . .

"...Witches and goddesses, nuns and nurses, young mothers, union workers, feminists working against violence, together created a spiral of hope. We came bearing gifts, fifty suitcases of material aid to start projects, to help ease the economic burden, to teach stress reduction techniques. . . Our outreach became a spiritual journey. Arms around each other, we savored our profound encounters, women empowering women."

Teresa Padilla and Doris DeVilliers with the children of Cuchupán, Guatemala



Above: Marisa Grijalva of Casa CAMI working with the women of Cuchupán, Guatemala.

*Below: Visiting with Sister Mary Hartman the site near Managua, Nicaragua for CANTERA's new center. L.to R.: Julianne Boyajian, Ruth Hunter, Kate Brophy, Alice Godfrey, Jo-Ann Seiquist, Sr. Inez Sherwood, Sr. Mary Hartman, Pat Cane, Doris DeVilliers, Penny Mann, Paula Powdermaker, Joan Seybold, Peggy Kingman, Diane Klein
Missing: Suzy Marks, Marilyn Robertson, Teresa Padilla*



Joan Seybold. 26. Palo Alto, CA

"About a hundred children at Casa CAMI participate in classes in music, arts and crafts, video production, theater, weaving and Mayan culture. The leaders of CAMI recognize that the children are the hope for the future of Guatemala and they want to empower them by teaching them skills in the arts, as well as in leadership, community building and self esteem. During our stay at CAMI the youth program was in full swing and the house echoed with laughter and singing. I was energized and inspired by the children, and I identified symbolically with them because in many ways I saw myself as a child; raw, ignorant and eager to learn all that I could. Before participating on the journey I had no idea what life was like in Guatemala and Nicaragua; and beyond that, I had no idea how ignorant I was. Not only was the journey an education for me about another part of the world, but I also learned by the example of the children how to open my eyes, my ears and my heart to new experiences. . .

"One night while we were sharing hand massage with some of the CAMI women, a few children were present, and were very interested in learning hand massage, too. The next day we saw them sharing what they had learned—they were giving hand massages to other children. . .

"We also met children at Cuchupán, a very poor settlement on Guatemala's Pacific coast. In contrast to the CAMI children they were far less energetic and more reserved, but they also represent hope for the future. During a workshop with some of the women, one fourteen year-old girl sat with me and held my hand. She was hungry for contact, for education. I showed her some simple hand massage techniques, and she in turn began to massage the hands of some of the older women present. . .

"These children taught me by their example that having an open mind and an open heart is essential for being able to give. The journey opened me up both to the reality of poverty and to the possibilities of my own potential. I am challenged like the Guatemalan children to continue learning, to bring forth the best in myself and to share it with others."

Rosa Escobar, the staff and children of Casa CAMI visiting the Mayan pyramids of Ixchimbé

Teresa Padilla. 50. Watsonville, CA

"I was deeply moved by the people and by so many of the things that I saw in Nicaragua and Guatemala. I didn't expect to see so many communities organized with people working to better their situations. I come from a poor Mexican community here in California, but I realize that the poor here are rich in comparison to the poverty and desperation in Central America. In thinking of the needs of so many of these people, I no longer want to waste my time worrying about things that aren't necessary. My dream now is to organize a CAPACITAR center here in Watsonville and to begin to work with small groups of women. There are so many things that we can do, and I can work with other poor women and teach them sewing and how to work with children and relaxation and some of the things I know how to do."

With gratitude

On our journeys we feel that we never travel alone, but carry with us in spirit many people who support us with their prayers and donations. For this journey many friends gave generously for groups in Central America—approximately \$14,000 worth of art and office supplies, materials for children's projects, fabric and sewing notions, computers, printers, typewriters, medicines, medical equipment, T-shirts, clothing, and money for seed projects. We are very grateful for all these gifts.

One of the special projects we supported was the Seeds of Peace Children's Project at Casa CAMI. Usually the tourists are the only ones who visit the Mayan ruins of Guatemala. So we paid for a field trip for the 100 CAMI children to Ixchimbé, a wonderful archaeological site, so they could learn about their Mayan roots. Art supplies, computers and seed money helped run the summer program at CAMI. Medical supplies went to clinics in Guatemala and Nicaragua and to help start a basic rural clinic at Cuchupán. Seed money was given for the following: an indigenous women's

Continued on back page



**EACH OF US CARRIES
OUR SACRED SPACE
WITHIN US, AND
OUR CHALLENGE IS
TO LIVE FROM IT
THROUGHOUT OUR
LIFE'S JOURNEY,
THROUGHOUT OUR
EARTH WALK.**

—Twyla Nitsch



"REMEMBER YOUR STORY, OUR STORY. CLOTHE YOURSELF IN YOUR TRUE AUTHORITY. YOU SPEAK NOT ONLY AS YOURSELF OR FOR YOURSELF. YOU WERE NOT BORN YESTERDAY.

YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH MANY DYINGS AND KNOW IN YOUR HEARTBEAT AND BONES THE PRECARIOUS, EXQUISITE BALANCE OF LIFE. OUT OF THAT KNOWLEDGE YOU CAN SPEAK AND ACT. YOU WILL SPEAK AND ACT WITH THE COURAGE AND ENDURANCE THAT HAS BEEN YOURS THROUGH THE LONG, BEAUTIFUL AEONS OF YOUR LIFE STORY AS GAIA."

—JOANNA MACY



Close your eyes and enter the sacred space of your heart. Breathe deeply and fill yourself with the energy of the earth, relaxing and letting go of all the tension and preoccupations of your life. Breathe in and let this energy fill you and become a radiant force within you. Breathe out and imagine your spirit moving through your home and community and through the larger world, filling the wounded and torn people and places with your peace and light and healing. Send your love and compassion to these people and places. Then return once again to your sacred space within, breathe deeply and ask for whatever you need in your life to be a person of peace and light. When you are ready open your eyes, knowing that, whenever you need to, you can return to this place within.

1994 CAPACITAR Calendar—Lake Freedom

January 23 10:00-3:00 Executive planning meeting

January 30 10:00-3:00—Women's Journey reunion
4-7:00 potluck and celebration with families

March 1:00-5:00 **Empowerment Day—Rites of Spring**

Watsonville meetings: 7:00pm January 17, February 7&21
Finance and Executive committee meetings TBA

1994 Women's Journey to Guatemala and Nicaragua

November 24-December 8

For information or an application call: 408-724-5526

With gratitude. . . Continued from page 3

project, a video project at CAMI, a sewing cooperative in Mezquital, a very poor rural school in Esteli, Nicaragua, for therapy for an abandoned child living at Casa Alianza in Guatemala, for CANTERA's popular education projects in Nicaragua, to Barrio Batahola, and to Dorothy Granada's Clinic in Molukuku, Nicaragua. Art materials went to the children's programs at Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua. Lotions and shampoos went to many women's groups along the way. Pencils and school supplies went to CAMI, CANTERA, Ciudad Sandino, Cuchupán and many other groups.

Often in our travels we are in the humbled position of giving, but in truth knowing that we are really the poor ones. We give a little, but we receive so much more in return by way of love and values and a vision of what is most important in life. Everywhere we went on the Women's Journey, the people expressed their deep gratitude for the generosity of so many North American friends, knowing they are not alone. As our Guatemalan friends expressed it, "We are united with you all through the invisible thread of friendship and solidarity in our common desire to build peace and justice in our world."

We welcome you to become part of our CAPACITAR network. Please return the form below to:

CAPACITAR

3015 Freedom Blvd. Lake Freedom

Watsonville, California 95076

408-724-5526 FAX 408-722-7680

Pat Cane, Director

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____

☐ I would like to be part of the CAPACITAR network
Please send me future mailings.

☐ I would like to do volunteer work or join a working
committee and can offer the following skills:

____ Our group _____ is interested in a slide
presentation or educational program.

☐ I would like to give a one-time donation of \$ _____

☐ I would like to give a monthly donation of \$ _____

Make tax-deductible checks payable to:

CAPACITAR—IF

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