



CAPACITAR—Women Planting One Heart

An International Project of Empowerment and Solidarity

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. CAPACITAR shares techniques of healing, team building and self-development with women leaders to encourage physical and spiritual transformation. We act so that all women involved are empowered to take control of their lives, inspire communities, and struggle for liberation and peace in the world. CAPACITAR connects women through an international network of solidarity, building relationships of cultural and personal understanding. Our name, CAPACITAR, is a Spanish word meaning to empower, to encourage, to bring forth.

We join with the earth and with each other, with our ancestors and with all beings of the future, to bring new life to the land, to recreate the human community, to provide justice and peace, to remember our children, to remember who we are. . . We join together as many and diverse expressions of one loving mystery, for the healing of the earth and the renewal of all life. . .

At this moment in history as we collectively face problems of war, violence, deterioration of values and environmental degradation, the role of women is essential to redirect the vision, creativity and energy of the global community. Official policies and decisions can be effective and far-reaching only if they inspire and empower people at the grassroots, as well as touch, heal and transform people at a deeper personal level. In this process leaders must recognize within themselves their own need to heal, to return to the deeper wisdom of soul and body, to connect with Nature, to rediscover and re-envision what it means to be a member of the human species at the end of the 20th Century.

The September NGO World Forum on Women in Beijing is a crucial time to address this process. As leaders meet at the Forum and at the UN Conference, and as women around the world unite in preparation for the global meetings, it is important that we all look deeply within ourselves. As we discuss policies and ideas which will affect the lives of many for years to come, we must also look at our own persons, at our uses of power, at how we are attempting to live out and model the visions and the forms needed to heal and transform the human community.

Twenty-seven CAPACITAR women will be going to Beijing. We comprise a most interesting group, with an age range of 26 to 66—grassroots leaders, educators, psychotherapists, bodyworkers, religious, spiritual leaders, writers, facilitators of nonviolence and conflict resolution, activists for political and social change. As we travel together and unite our energies, strengths and weaknesses, we will endeavor to empower and nurture each other, taking moments for Tai Chi, for exchanging bodywork, for processing our experiences, for celebrating with ritual, while we attend meetings, teach workshops and network with women from around the world.

We recently received the funding to enable nine women from Latin America to be part of our CAPACITAR delegation. Anabel Torres is Founder and Director of CANTERA, Center for Popular Education in Nicaragua. Our first CAPACITAR workshops in Central America started with Anabel's groups almost seven years ago. Carmen Lucia Pellecer (Guatemala) founded and directs the feminist center, Tierra Viva, which works with issues of violence, sexuality, land issues, and spirituality. Carmen García Hernandez is a Guatemalan union leader of COMFUTAG and FESTRAS-UITA, the federation of unions connected with the food industry. Sister Rebeca Cervantes (Mexico) directs CONFREGUA, the National Federation of Religious of Guatemala. Isabel Ascenció (El Salvador) is a feminist

WE LIVE IN A TIME OF RARE PRIVILEGE: A TIME WHEN NEW EDGES AND NEW HORIZONS AND NEW POSSIBILITIES ARE EGGING US ON. . . WE NEED THE COURAGE TO LEAP FROM ONE EDGE TO ANOTHER. FROM A WALL TO NO WALL AT ALL. FROM CONTEMPLATION TO COMPASSION. FROM I TO WE. FROM LADDER TO CIRCLE; FROM CLIMBING TO DANCING; FROM CONTROL TO CELEBRATION; FROM HOME AS NATION TO HOME AS GLOBAL VILLAGE!

—MATTHEW FOX



theologian and a leader of grassroots women's groups. Zenaida Velasquez is the Founder of the Families of the Disappeared of Honduras and is living in asylum in San Jose, California. Sister Magdalena Castro (Peru) founded UCOFAE, the federation of Comedores Populares (family kitchens) in the shantytowns near Lima. Victoria Martinez (Chile) is the co-leader of the CAPACITAR-Chile team, co-founder of the Casa de la Mujer in Recoleta and member of the team of CRP—Center for Reflection and Popular Education. Mary Judith Riss co-leads the CAPACITAR-Chile team and founded Con-Spirando, the international eco-feminist theological publication. Judy also is co-editor and author of Del Cielo a la Tierra (Sello Azul, 1995) the first Latin American anthology of eco-feminist theology.

As a CAPACITAR international team we hope to learn, to model and live out what we teach, as well as to be of support and service to the Forum. We will carry you all with us in spirit to Beijing and commit ourselves to sharing what we learn with our local communities.

—Pat Cane, Executive Director

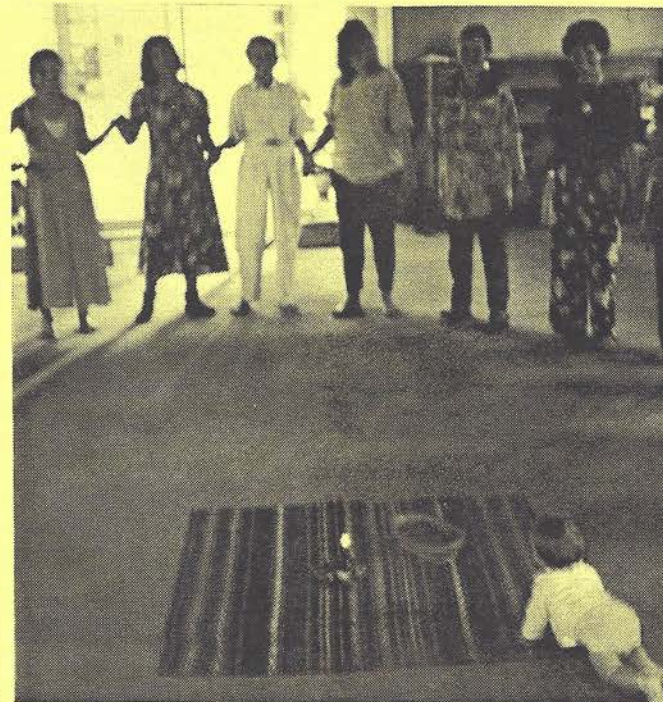


CAPACITAR—Growing Nationally and Internationally

Eighty women from five states recently participated in a CAPACITAR workshop sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in St. Louis, Missouri. Participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds—religious, Hispanic women from Texas, African Americans, teachers, doctors, health workers, psychotherapists, women working with literacy programs and women in prison. Organizer Sister Sharon Schmitz RSM commented, "I was particularly delighted that there was such a beautiful network—women who were financially wealthy with women who were very poor, women highly educated with women who have difficulty reading and writing in their primary language, women from a variety of cultures and traditions. And...all became one in the process."

In a followup reunion in April, a number of the women shared what they had been doing to multiply the spirit of "capacitar" in many new places. Sister Sharon has been using many of the workshop materials with her groups in the women's prison. Sister Rosie Welch RSM and some of women from Laredo, Texas led their own workshop with poor women from the colonias and border towns. Therapist Pat Wyman found the body movement and visualization most helpful in her Inner-Child Therapy "helping to build deeper trust levels with clients and fostering their feelings of safety in therapy." Therapist Robyn Keough shared how she has used the acupressure points with classes of first and third graders for centering and getting their bodies ready to learn. "The children love being able to "fix themselves" and feel more empowered. They especially enjoy guided imagery and were amazed to learn they could go places in their minds. The teachers were impressed with the fluid movements of Tai Chi and how the children took to the mantras."

At the conclusion of the workshop Robyn read to us her reflections "Polarity": "The sacred is a word that doesn't often enough emit from my mouth or shine forth from my fingers. We women witness the sacred seasonally, daily, hourly, yet into our lives we've lost it, unlearned it, simply forgot what we once knew, stuck its power and perfection away from our shadowed selves and walked on... without it... but left almost crazy from wanting—craving the warmth in the space where it was, crying into stranger's arms that we have a right to it. Sacred leaves me speechless, renders me mute in trembling peace. To know I can touch another woman and be in awe of her presence, her past and her power."



Top left: Women celebrating together at the Mercy Center, St. Louis workshop. Top right: Verónica Aravena, who is blind, and her mother and friend who plan to start a center for families with drug problems in La Victoria, Chile. Center: Celebrating International Women's Day with ritual and song in Santiago, Chile. Bottom left: Guatemalan religious, members of CONFREGUA, enjoying a workshop. Bottom right: Indigenous and community leaders of Quetzaltenango in a circle of massage.



Chile—

Returning to Chile this March and working for the third time with the same group of women leaders was a great joy. The growth and development of each person over two years' time is truly amazing. Through the committed work of 30 women, the spirit of "capacitar" is moving into many new areas of Chilean society—women's centers, centers for healing the abused and tortured, centers for victims of AIDS, centers working with children, with men, with the elderly and marginalized. Some of the women who two years ago had come with little self confidence, were now able to speak with presence and dignity, as well as to listen to and learn from other members of the group.

One woman in particular has always stood out—Verónica Aravena, a blind woman from La Victoria. Two years ago Veronica, barely able to see shadows, was lovingly guided by her mother, Eliana, and other team members until she could feel in her body the spirit of Tai Chi and Polarity. Soon she was moving on her own with a unique grace and beauty known only to those who deeply feel the soul of the movements. At the recent workshop she enthusiastically shared how she and the Women's Collective "Araucaria" in La Victoria were going to start working with families suffering from drug addiction. In a recent letter she describes their situation: "poor women and families like so many in my country, with anxiety, drug addiction, alcoholism, delinquency, without hope of finding or developing oneself, without a place for sharing, relaxing, communicating, playing or dancing. In this small corner of Santiago, how beautiful is La Victoria in spite of the hard reality. Behind the tired faces is so much life. We have discovered this through our workshops with the people. We have shared what we have, but have received so much more in return. We aren't just communicating techniques, but are awakening the hearts and souls of the women, helping to realize their own power and energy, helping to see how we all are one. Through this growth of our spirits together, we have been better able to relate with others becoming "integrators" and "liberators" in the community. When the women first arrived, their movements were tense, at first fearful of surrendering to the music and to their creativity. But they were discovering and building a beautiful dance with their spirits. Now they dance for themselves, for other women, men and children, they dance for life, they dance for Love!"

Guatemala—

CAPACITAR's work in Guatemala has grown to interconnect many different grassroots groups—union leaders, feminists, religious. Sister Rebeca Cervantes, Director of CONFREGUA, the national federation of religious of Guatemala, has organized workshops to include members of many different congregations who work with the poor, the marginalized, returnees, and internal refugees. Because of CONFREGUA's work with refugees, they have received death threats and their offices have been vandalized. But the religious continue their commitment to peacemaking and to healing Guatemalan society.

A recent workshop sponsored by Nuevos Horizontes, a Center for Women in Quetzaltenango, included 35 men and women representing 15 organizations who are working to better the lives of the very poor in Guatemala.

USA—

Meg Randolph led a first CAPACITAR workshop in May for women on parole in Atlanta, Georgia. The women were apprehensive at first, but grew to love the Tai Chi and the music. Meg hopes to help the women adjust to society and to improve their family relationships. Pat Cane and Doris DeVilliers recently facilitated a small workshop for adolescent girl scouts in San Jose, California. The girls had surveyed 3rd and 4th graders and found out that they were suffering greatly from stress with family problems and school pressures. The girls plan to teach the children some of the simple relaxation and meditative techniques. A May workshop is planned for Mexican women at the Sisters of the Presentation Learning and Loving Center in Morgan Hill.

1995 CAPACITAR Journeys—Call for more information:

CAPACITAR Women's Journey to Central America (from San Francisco)—November 23-December 8, 1995 408-761-5893

Men and Women's Journey to Nicaragua and Guatemala (from Atlanta)—December 5-December 16, 1995 404-758-4850



A Dream. . . Amy McFrederick OP

(Shared during the workshop at Mercy Center, St. Louis- January '95)

I am standing near the top of a large chimney. Out of curiosity I look into it and see a marble-like statue of angels intertwined, surprised to see a movement of muscle, amazed that what I touch is not made of stone, but of living flesh. A woman begins to fall. . . I catch a glimpse of her face—very old, but her body seems young and healthy, yet vulnerable. I feel awe as if I am watching a miraculous birth. As soon as the woman touches the earth she transforms into a huge spider, strongly grasping the earth, staring intently at me. Slowly and mysteriously she turns back into a woman, tall, slender, strong, regal, goddess-like, her face ageless, her eyes clear and steady. She smiles, thanks me, and tells me she has a gift for me. I realize she is thanking me for allowing her simply to unfold herself before me, for not running away in fear, and for standing firm before her. I thank her and promise to return. I go to a house where other women are waiting for me, and we agree to go together to find the Spider Woman. As we approach she is walking toward us, dressed like a contemporary woman. She smiles at each of us and her face is radiant with warmth, joy, friendship, good humor. I am energized by her presence. Turning to the woman accompanying me, I start to ask her name, but she touches my hand. With the Spider Woman, she joins hands with me. We pull into a circle, a group hug, and our bodies merge. The two women seem to unite as one with me, until I am standing alone. I look down at my body. All feels and looks natural, but by my feet is a small antique oval mirror with gilded frame. I know this is the gift from the Woman. I peer into it and see myself looking back. But now I notice that the same look that so warmed me and energized me, is now looking back at me from my own eyes. *Several women were crying as I finished telling the dream. One woman stood and said "I had planned to give this to another woman after the workshop, but I think I should do it now." She went over and placed around the woman's neck, a chain from which hung a small gilded oval mirror. It seemed to many in the group that this dream was a parable of what "capacitar" has become for us. May we each become like the Spider Woman, falling from our statuary state, strongly grasping the earth, standing in our full strength and potential, and assisting others to stand in theirs.*

CAPACITAR International Team for NGO Beijing Forum: USA—California: Sr. Carol Bialock, Julianne Boyajian, Hilary Bendon, Janet Boggia, Pat Cane, Doris DeVilliers, Larissa Keet, Joan Lohman, Barbara Richmond, Laura Scott, Joan Seybold. St. Louis—Mary Jo Brauner. Atlanta—Meg Randolph, Elizabeth Groepper. **Europe and USA**—Sr. Mary Litell, Sr. Jeanette Gaudet. **Latin America:** Isabel Ascencio (El Salvador), Zenaida Velasquez (Honduras), Anabel Torres (Nicaragua), Sr. Rebeca Cervantes (Mexico and Guatemala), Carmen García and Carmen Lucía Pellecer (Guatemala), Sr. Magdalena Castro (Peru), Victoria Martinez, Mary Judith Riss and Bridget Cooke (Chile).

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

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Pat Cane, Executive Director

Name _____

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____ I would like to be part of the CAPACITAR network.

____ Please send me information on the '95 Women' Journey to Guatemala and Nicaragua, Nov. 23–Dec. 8, 1995.

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____ I would like to order a CAPACITAR Manual:

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Cost per manual: \$12, plus \$3 for postage and handling.

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