



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...

Our recent CAPACITAR Women's Journey built bridges of healing and understanding between many people—women and men in Central America, families, friends and generous donors from California and other places in the U.S.. We all were changed and greatly enriched through the interchange. This Newsletter shares some of the experiences of Journey participants.

As the spirit of "capacitar" grows and spreads to many new places, we see our role as that of fanning the sparks of hope and possibility, of encouraging the personal journeys and efforts of people at the grassroots who are trying to heal and transform themselves and their societies. Connecting with these people and sharing their lives has a transforming affect on all of us. We invite you to join us in our journey of reintegration and our common search for a deeper understanding of who we truly are—the sacredness of our bodies and our Earth, our healing role in a violent world and our commitment to societal transformation.

—Pat Cane, Executive Director

Building Bridges of Spirit, Touch, Song, Heart —Joan Lohman

I look around the Tai Chi circle. It is 7:30a.m. here in Panajachel, on the shores of Lake Atitlan. Ten women from CAPACITAR and two Guatemalan women gather to connect to our inner beings and to deepen the connections among us. In our silent movements under tropical skies, we begin to forge a link of safety and kinship.

Our two Guatemalan sisters, full of life, laughter and stories, are committed activists in the movement to organize and empower women through COMFUITAG. I watch Carmen's glowing face and gloved hand. Two years ago her hand was caught in a machine at the Chiclet factory where she worked and was a union official and organizer. Her mangled hand received 15 surgeries. I envision the Tai Chi movements bringing a new flow of energy to her hand and spirit.

How can I, a North American woman whose daily life is safe and predictable, meet, accompany and be faithful to a Central American woman who has seen many friends and loved ones assassinated? How can I comprehend the commitment of a young, vibrant woman to risk her life in order to raise the consciousness of other women?



Riding in the bus from Guatemala towards Lake Atitlan, Rosita sits beside me filling my ears with stories of assassinations and violence in the lush, green countryside dotted with small houses and farms. The beauty and the violence. A constant reoccurring theme here in Guatemala. Later that evening I do neck and back massage on Rosita. She has many headaches. It is very difficult for her to relax. She tells me she must constantly be vigilant. So many friends have died. How can she know all that loss and still be the first one up singing "Las Mañanitas" the morning we head for Chichi? I wonder who is accompanying whom? Who is providing support and courage? The next day as we sip coffee on the patio she speaks more of her lost friends, and cries. Some of my role as witness is simply to be willing to listen.

We go out with our Guatemalan friends for pizza, beer and dancing. Yes, the Beatles are alive and well in Guatemala City. For us North Americans, it is an ordinary event. But it is rare for these union activists to go out together at night. Too dangerous. Our presence may bring them some safety. As our wild collection of women take over the dance floor, I think again of beauty and violence. I learn a new flavor of joy, silliness and celebration in the mist of grief and suffering. A few sweet moments to forget the struggle. "Rollin' on the River." Part of our role is witnessing the pain. Another part is

CAPACITAR—Building Bridges of Spirit, Touch, Song, Heart. . .

✶ accompanying our friends in the ordinary joys that may be unsafe without our presence.

In my training as a Rosen Method Bodyworker, we talk of finding the edge, that place where the moving breath meets chronic muscular holding. This work of CAPACITAR is a new edge for me. Some hardened place in my heart is opening to the courage and pain of my Central American friends. Our simple willingness to witness both their hopes and fears can breathe new energy, new juice into both their lives and mine.

Perhaps my deepest learning arrives in a candlelit laundry room, the only quiet nook of Casa CAMI, our home base in Guatemala. Carmen has had insomnia since her accident. If she closes her eyes, she may die. That is her fear. I do a Rosen Bodywork session with Carmen. Meg, our physical therapist, translates. We work on a mattress on the floor, kneeling. Carmen lets us share her fear that, as a single mother, she will not be able to support her family. She allows me to touch both the hand and the scars on her abdomen where the hand was grafted for many months. I feel privileged, blessed. The tears flow. That night and the next, Carmen can sleep.

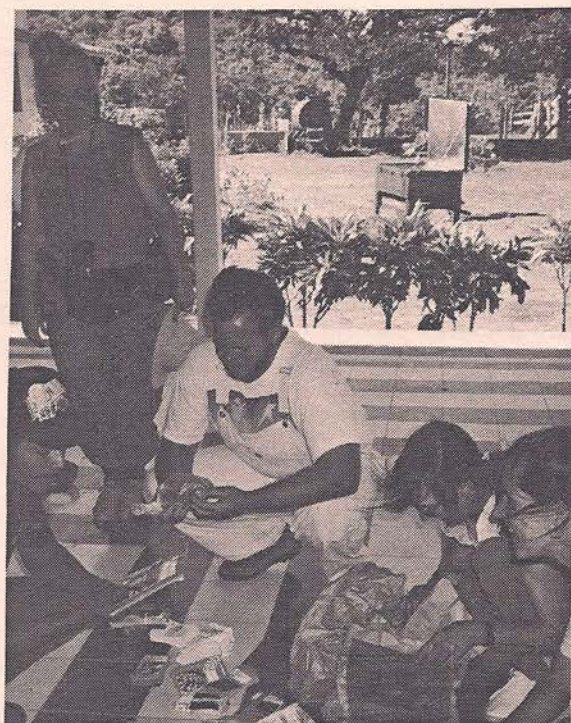
In Nicaragua we hear again and again, "It means so much simply that you are here." The 90's have been hard years for the poor and for those who work with the poor. In the 80's many North American groups visited Nicaragua. Grassroots organizations, collectives and schools received great support and visibility in the U.S.. The combination of the Contra War, the U.S. Embargo, President Chamorro's election, privatization and pressures from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have left the economy and spirit of Nicaragua devastated. But in the midst of that devastation we were privileged to meet organizations and people who have remained faithful and continue to organize effective programs.

"No estamos solos. We are not alone." Wherever our group traveled, we sang. On the bus, in the shower, at meals, in workshops. "Nosotros venceremos. We Shall Overcome." Building bridges of spirit, touch, song, heart. We carry in our hearts the stories and images of each person we met on our journey. And they carry us. Solidarity is no longer an empty concept for me. It is a deep sense of family that lives in my cells.

The 27 suitcases of material aid our group carried to Central America is an important, physical bridge of support. But the enduring bridge is the ten women who return to our winter homes here in the States with a painful, yet cherished understanding of our connection to friends and programs in Central America.

(Joan Lohman is a Rosen Bodyworker and a political activist from Berkeley, CA, who has worked for many years on behalf of the people of Central America.)

'94 CAPACITAR Women's Journey in Guatemala—L. to R. top row: Pat Cane, Iris Arias Flanagan, Carmen García (COMFUITAG), Meg Randolph, Liz Custodio, Luz Martinez, Penny Mann, Rodolfo Robles Jr. (FESTRAS), Isa Dempsey, Kay Harrison. Front row: Augustín de Leon and Rosita Escobar (FESTRAS) Joan Lohman and Daisy Thompson.



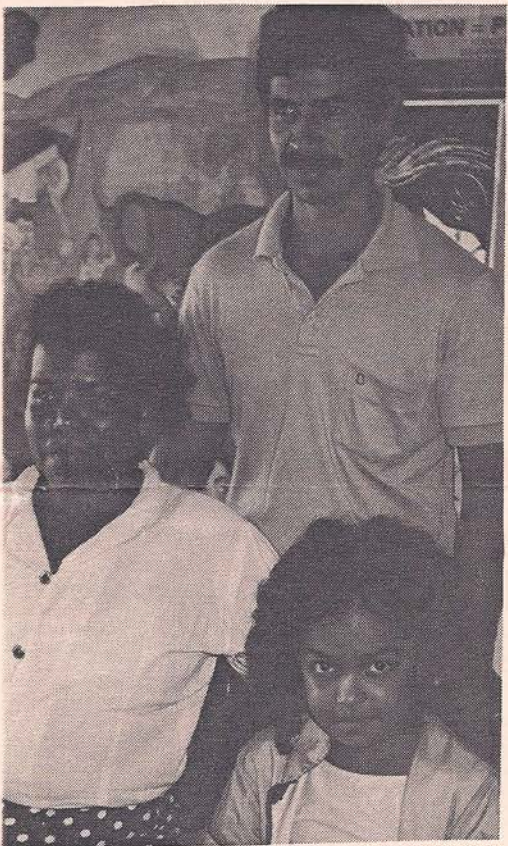
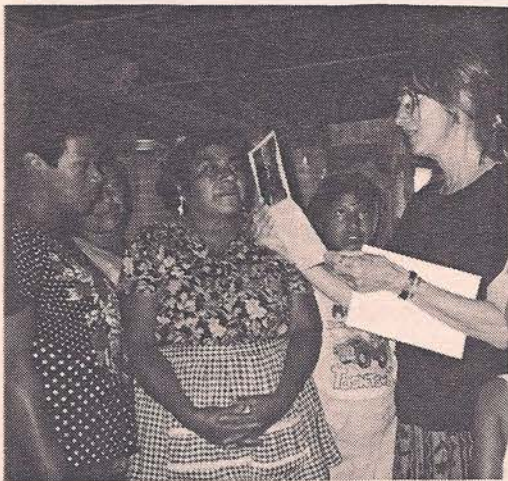
Top: A gift of seeds for the CANTERA farm, Nicaragua.

Below: Joan Lohman and Penny Mann sharing bodywork with the women of Tierra Viva, Guatemala.

R. Top: Isa Dempsey bringing good news about future houses to the women of Santa Inéz Petapa, Guatemala. R. Bottom: Mirza Carolina and her parents, with a new wig donated by a California woman who survived cancer.



Forming circles of healing and solidarity with the women of Colonia Nicarño, Nicaragua



Bridging Hunger and Hope in Nicaragua —Penny Mann

I sat holding a 3 year-old child on my lap. About 300 of us had gathered in a covered, open-sided area in Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua, which serves as school, community center and church. We were at a 14th anniversary Mass remembering the four women killed in El Salvador, December 2, 1980. Maura Clarke, one of them, had worked in Ciudad Sandino for eight years.

I had made eye contact with the 3 year-old and her sister who were squeezed into one chair beside me. We'd smiled. I had noticed a dullness in their eyes which spoke of a vitamin deficiency in their diet. When I stood to sing, the youngest scooted over onto my chair. So as I sat, I gained permission to hold her on my lap. She molded easily to my embrace. It was a bitter-sweet yielding though, for it felt as if her small body just didn't have the vitality of many wiggly toddlers. It was a listless surrender. My eyes were wet as I held this child and remembered other young ones we had seen on our short bus trip over here. So many unaccompanied children beg while standing in the middle of the street. Seven year-old sisters with, 2 year-olds in tow, standing at intersections, begging or holding up tiny items to sell. This is a change in the last five years. Government subsidies which once aided the purchase of rice and beans have been taken away. Now the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund set loan policies which eliminate these subsidies. There is much more hunger and malnutrition now than in the 1980's.

So as I listened to community people testify at this mass, and as I felt this tiny body against my chest, I was sobered and inspired. The ritual of remembering Maura and so many other martyrs brings forth hope in all people. Their commitment to the future and to self empowerment is encouraging to everyone.

A couple of days later, the ten of us on the Women's Journey were gingerly stepping around carrot, pepper and radish plants at the farm run by CANTERA, a center for popular education. The view is beautiful and the air is clear. The food is nutritious. A compañero named Eddie gave us a beekeeping demonstration, but not without first telling us how he came to this. He praised CANTERA's influence in his life. "As a boy, I used to dream about how one day I would be strong enough to chop down hundreds of trees. I didn't know what it did to the environment. Now I have learned." At CANTERA he took the beekeeping course to learn a skill. Now he teaches others. CANTERA uses the popular education model: we are the subjects, not the objects of our own learning; we have the resources within and among ourselves to make necessary changes; we reflect critically on our situation, we teach others whatever we have learned.

This model of development is so liberating for all of us. I thought of community organizing efforts I know of in the U.S. and connected and savored them with this strong effort in Nicaragua. I pictured the small child from Ciudad Sandino as I tasted the radishes. And I knew that she and so many children benefit from CANTERA's efforts. Adelante! (Penny Mann is an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ currently serving at Woodside Village Church, Woodside, CA. She animates many groups with song, dance, body movement, improvisation and play.)

¡Mil Gracias! Thank you from Many Friends in Central America —Isa Dempsey

Theoretically there were ten of us. Actually there were hundreds. Ten pairs of hands loaded the boxes and duffles at San Francisco Airport on Thanksgiving Day. But for many months before, countless hands and hearts had been involved in donating, collecting, preparing and packing the material gifts we were able to take with us to Central America. So generous were our many friends and supporters that at least \$20,000 worth of medicines, medical supplies, computers, office machines, educational materials, art supplies, Christmas stockings, toys, sewing materials, farming and beekeeping equipment, seeds and gardening supplies—and more—made the journey with us. Five wigs, some colorful scarves, toys and money donations arrived at the last minute for Mirza Carolina, a very poor 9 year-old Guatemalan child who is undergoing cancer treatment.

In Guatemala, we climbed up into the hills of Santa Inés Petapa to visit the 23 homeless families living in small, dark shelters to bring them support and good news about the success of the Seeds of Peace habitat project. This summer IF, a Nonprofit Corporation, plans to work with this community building 23 houses with loans and donations from friends in the U.S.. In Nicaragua, a new and special project visited, was the CANTERA farm near Mateare, where a young couple from California is dedicating three years to coordinating a self-sufficiency organic farm project. Medical supplies went to alternative clinics in both countries. Art and school supplies were delivered to popular education projects sponsored by Casa CAMI in Guatemala and by CANTERA in Nicaragua. Meetings with numerous women's groups and some veterans groups in both countries included stress relief exercises and simple bodywork, and we were able to leave donated oils and lotions so that basic bodywork and massage can be continued.

Throughout our travels and visits to communities, we felt, with great gratitude, the presence of the unseen members of this year's Journey—the many people whose generous hearts made it possible for us to take the message of care, friendship and solidarity to the courageous people of Central America. (Isa Dempsey is a retired educator and family counselor who encouraged many friends and businesses to contribute their gifts. Isa is currently working in the IF office.)

CAPACITAR is still collecting funds to help pay for Mirza Carolina's chemotherapy. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please send us your tax-deductible donation.



A Birth Blessing for CAPACITAR inc. —Joan Seybold

This blessing was written by all of us. Each word was offered by a friend of CAPACITAR during a ritual celebrating our recent incorporation as a nonprofit. In the ritual each person was encouraged to play the mythic fairy-godmother, bestowing magic blessings on the newborn. I have taken those blessings and woven a spell, the key to which is belief. I believe that love, shining from the souls of many, creates strong magic, and with this magic, CAPACITAR is blessed.

BLESSING

May CAPACITAR grow strong and healthy, nurtured by all who touch her spirit.
May she put down deep roots, sustained by fresh water from Gaia.
May she enjoy glorious growth, reaching out with compassion and joy.
Her branches will offer shelter—a place for following dreams, for wild dancing, for laughter, and relaxed deep breathing.

A place for children and women and men to learn to live
with diversity, enjoying one another as unique beings.
May her stability allow her to continuously stretch with openness and
enthusiasm, creating connections, having impact.
May she mature with perspective, faith and energy, living the divine feminine.
And may the spirit of "capacitar" take hold in our hearts and give hope
in our lives, and in the lives of our sisters and brothers throughout the world.

CAPACITAR Executive Committee: Hilary Bendon, Julianne Boyajian, Teddy Carney, Johanne Christmas, Doris DeVilliers, Alice Godfrey, Diane Klein, Lucia Lopez Hecker, Penny Mann, Suzy Marks, Sr. Mary Ondreyco, Teresa Padilla, Yolanda Provoste-Fuentes, Barbara Richmond, Joan Seybold, Zenaida Velasquez **Office:** Laura Scott
International Advisors: **Guatemala:** Marisa Grijalva, Carmen Lucia Pellecer **Nicaragua:** Sr. Mary Hartman, Anabel Torres **Honduras:** Gladys Lanza, Alba de Mejia **El Salvador:** Isabel Ascencio **Peru:** Sr. Magdalena Castro, **Chile:** Victoria Martinez, Mary Judith Riss **Europe:** Sr. Mary Litell **CAPACITAR Executive Director:** Pat Cane

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

CAPACITAR inc.

3015 Freedom Blvd. Lake Freedom
Tel/FAX 408-761-5893 Access Code 761

Pat Cane, Executive Director

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone (____) _____ FAX _____

☐ 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.
☐ 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 donation of \$ _____

☐ I would like to order a CAPACITAR Manual:
Spanish _____ English _____

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

Make tax-deductible donations payable to:

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