



**Delegates Meet Vice Minister of External Affairs:  
Settling Those Deported From the US**



Our August Delegation met with the Vice Minister of External Affairs concerning El Salvador’s policies about migration, TPS, and support for returned migrants. Because of the international turmoil over migration and its dangers for El Salvador’s citizens, the government is planning how best to receive refugees who are forcibly returned by the United States and re-insert them into productive lives. Recall that most fled threats and murders of family members so they are traumatized and very afraid of returning.

Returnees can’t go back to where they used to live, and they must start their lives over again. This foreign affairs office aims to ensure their safety and assists them to find employment, medical care, and trauma care. We had good discussion with the staffers, and we empathized with their frustration that the U. S. Government was not coordinating with them.

**A Ray Of Hope?**

Violence is real in El Salvador. It is always at the top or near the top of the list for murders. A major factor is the strength of the gangs who aim to exercise exclusive control over villages or areas and collect “protection” money from small merchants and businesses as well as collect “tolls” for the right to pass through their territory. If they threaten death to you for not cooperating, believe them. You may move to another part of the country, but if the gangs want to find you and kill you in El Salvador, they will. THIS is the reason that panicked people flee the country in the night. Tremendous risk and suffering lie ahead when they flee through Guatemala and Mexico toward the United States. Still, they probably escape certain death.

The Salvadoran government responds to the crisis with denial or the policy of “el mano dura”, the hard fist. The United Nations has found Police forces responsible for extrajudicial executions and excessive use of force toward gang members. They are reputed to kill off gang leaders or round up gang members and put them in squalid, overcrowded jails for years. This has not reduced the crime rate nor stifled the gangs, but it is action that the fearful public has supported.

On July 13 the Constitutional Chamber of El Salvador’s Supreme Court ordered the government to take action on this violence. The court ruling is good, but it remains to be seen how it will be done.

More rays of hope, ironically, came in surprise rulings that the three most recent Presidents of El Salvador have been indicted for looting the country of upwards of \$350 million each during their administrations! One President Christiani died at the end of his trial; President Sacca was just sentenced to ten years in prison, and President Funes fled to Nicaragua for asylum. This signals that their judicial system is gaining courage and support for tackling the big problems. Heretofore there has been impunity for the powerful and rich. Justice cannot be done if all know that their leaders are crooks. Hope is this victory over impunity!

*Dale Bracey*

## August SBSC Delegation—What Inspired Me

This past August there were six of us on an SBSC delegation to El Salvador: Arlene Schaupp, Dale Bracey, Maria Farfan, Rosa Melgar-Takahashi, Rebecca Marquez and myself. It was a first delegation for Maria and Rosa and a 37th for Arlene! The delegation was led by José Acosta and Ebony Pleasants of Voices on the Border.

During our 9 days in the country, we divided our time between the capital San Salvador, the department of Morazán, and the Bajo Lempa, where our long-time partner community of Comunidad Octavio Ortiz is located. Although we heard a lot about the continuing scourge of poverty and violence in the country, there was also much that was very inspiring and hopeful. Some of the most inspiring things for me were:

- Meeting with engaged, energetic and passionate young people. Early on, we met with Milton, a young medical student receiving a scholarship to study medicine through the Palo Alto Friends Meeting scholarship program run by Robert Broz. It's a long course of study, but Milton is committed to his career choice. Later, we met several other scholarship students from the Center for Exchange and Solidaridad (CIS, by its Spanish acronym), pursuing a variety of studies, but all with energy and passion about carving out a bright future in their country. We also met with several university students and young professionals who inspired us by their commitment to supervise and mentor kids in a youth group.
- Appreciation event at Monte Cristo Island. The teachers of the small school live on the mainland but travel to this island to teach the students on the island's small school. At last spring's event, we raised funds to buy a new boat to replace their dangerous, worn-out boat they had been using. In an elaborate event that included a dance performance by a trio of students, representatives of the school and community showered us with thanks and then served us a delicious lunch of fresh fish.



School kids perform a dance in front of the new boat that will transport teachers to their school on Monte Cristo Island.

*'Inspired' Continued on page 4*

## Arlene — Not Goodbye, but “See You Now And Then”



*Pictured above is Arlene with her dear friend Mirtala Lopez.*

We surprised Arlene at our April Event by honoring her as our last active founder of South Bay Sanctuary Covenant when she and her husband, Jack, were moving to Redding, CA. Mellow words of deep appreciation and some teary “thank-yous” were shared with her. She is one of the originals who started SBSC during the Salvadoran civil war in 1983 when four of our original Sanctuary churches announced their protection of Central American refugees who fled here because their lives were in grave danger in their homelands. Arlene’s congregation of First Presbyterian Church and University Lutheran Church, both of Palo Alto, gave lodging to refugees in their facilities. She was among the five from sanctuary churches who responded to “go and see” what was happening in El Salvador in 1988. They spent 10 days in El Salvador and then went to Honduras to the Colomoncagua refugee camp where many Salvadorans had fled from their repressive government.

So, after the Peace Accords were signed in 1992, she began leading annual delegations from SBSC every year. This August was the 27<sup>th</sup> Delegation that she organized and led!

*‘Arlene’ ...Continued on page 4*

**Check out SBSC’s local partner!** The Interfaith Movement For Human Integrity (<http://www.im4humanintegrity.org>) assists immigrants in the Bay Area and beyond

## A Special Message From the SBSC Steering Committee

Your financial support is critical to our partner community and to the professionals working on our behalf in El Salvador. Without it we may be forced to tell them we can't help them achieve their goals. Please consider how big a difference your donations make, and respond accordingly.

Thank you

### WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS

**\$2,575 Environmental Education in Comunidad Amando López:** In 2013, our partner community's nearest neighbor won protection for a 120 acre forest bordering the Lempa River, partly with help from Voices On The Border. At the same time it launched a solid waste management system to improve the health of both the community and the forest. Educating residents about these interconnected systems and how they can help by managing their garbage is an ongoing effort. This gift will fund a series of workshops, a festival to boost awareness, and perimeter fence repairs for the forest. **You can help!**

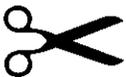
**\$2,520 Women's Anti-Violence Project in Morazán:** El Salvador is a dangerous place for women, with nearly 500 femicides and 2000 sexual assaults reported in 2017. This gift will help the Citizen Network of Women in Morazán expand and strengthen its role in advocating, educating for, and accompanying women in 16 communities in Morazán. **You can help!**

**\$1000 Emergency Fund For Migrant Needs:** SBSC's Bay Area partner, The Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, assists immigrants, including with emergency housing, legal help, and posting bonds. This gift will assist those impacted by detention and deportation, and those seeking asylum. **You can help!**

**\$350 26th Anniversary Celebration of Comunidad Octavio Ortiz:** COO was founded in 1992, following the peace accords that formally ended the Civil War. This event marks the many accomplishments of the community, which perseveres despite many challenges – both natural and man-made. **You can help!**

#### ONGOING COMMITMENTS:

**\$ 900/mo. Voices on the Border.** Partial salary support for VOTB Director, José Acosta, assisted by Ebony Pleasants, to ensure our donations are used effectively, to keep us informed about the needs and the people, provide training and support for Salvadorans who administer our projects, and to lead Delegations.



Please cut off the form below and mail in the enclosed envelope!

**YES! Today I donate \$\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Make tax-deductible check to University Lutheran/SBSC  
3290 Middlefield Road Palo Alto, California 94306**

## **SBSC Continues to Provide Sanctuary to Salvadoran Family**

In a time when anti-immigrant sentiment runs high in many areas of the U.S., South Bay Sanctuary Covenant continues to provide legal support to a family from El Salvador who fled violence in that country. SBSC is paying the legal fees of Alberto, Carolina and their young daughter Josefa (not their real names) in their attempt to obtain asylum and safety in the U.S. This has become a significantly more difficult challenge under the Trump administration's more restrictive asylum policies.

In 2015 Alberto was forced to flee death threats by a gang and made a perilous journey across Mexico, before being apprehended by U.S. immigration authorities at the U.S. border. In the urgency of the moment, he had to leave his wife and child, parents and siblings, and all his other relatives and friends in the Salvadoran community. Apprehended by immigration agents while crossing the U.S. border from Mexico, Alberto was held in a detention center for months. SBSC and Voices on the Border worked with immigration attorneys to get him released. He was flown to California in July 2015 by SBSC and lived with an SBSC supporter for a year and a half. During that time he applied for asylum with the immigration court in San Francisco.

After a close relative of Carolina's was murdered in their Salvadoran community in 2016 under suspicious circumstances, she and Josefa also fled to the U.S. and were reunited with Alberto. Carolina and Josefa applied for asylum in the summer of 2017, also with the immigration court in San Francisco. Alberto's asylum hearing will be in April 2019 and the hearing for Carolina and Josefa will be some time after that.

The family rents a room in Redwood City and both Alberto and Carolina have work permits. Alberto works as a construction laborer. Carolina works at a local Target store as a stock clerk and takes English classes at night. Their daughter Josefa has started pre-school.

Your continued financial support helps fund the family's quest to live here in the U.S., free from the death threats and violence that forced them to flee their native country. They are very thankful for your continued prayers and support.

*'Arlene' continued from page 2*

Over these years she made many lasting friends in the country and especially among our partner community, Octavio Ortiz. This comunidad eagerly looks forward to her coming with a delegation each year!

Now that Arlene has moved, she might show up at our twice-annual SBSC events and even at Steering Committee meetings from time to time. But she had to put aside her leadership of delegations, and that leaves a huge hole in SBSC planning. She will continue on the Steering Committee from afar. Her encouraging, inspirational focus on mission and her voice for "a preferential option for the poor" will continue to propel us!

SBSC

*'Inspired' continued from page 2*

- Comunidad Octavio Ortiz Tour and Presentation. During our first day of our visit to our long-time partner community of Comunidad Octavio Ortiz, we were taken on a tour of the community. We were quite impressed with all the new projects the community is undertaking. They were just finishing a new soccer "field" composed entirely of sand where teams from C.O.O. as well as neighboring communities will compete. The strategic location close to a small bakery and a home-made jam store will facilitate sales to provide needed income for the workers and community. We also toured a nursery of 2000 plants of many species that will be planted in 7 different communities to counteract the effects of monoculture and climate change.

Later that same day the community gave a presentation about all that had been accomplished in the last several years during the term of the outgoing community president, Elmer Portillo. Elmer told us that the community is about to get a new health clinic, with both the land and funds already approved. On behalf of the entire community Elmer expressed his deep appreciation for the special bond of solidarity that exists between C.O.O. and SBSC. And, fittingly, the night before our departure back to San Salvador, they treated us to a special celebration of food and festivities and gave Arlene a very special tribute for the great love and commitment she has shown the people of C.O.O. over nearly 25 years.

- Hospitality shown me by family of Alberto. Alberto, his partner Carolina and their daughter Josefa (not their real names) are applying for asylum in the U.S. Their legal costs are being paid by SBSC. I had a chance to visit his extended family, who all showed me great hospitality and kindness in my brief stay with them.

*'Inspired' Continued on page 5*

Upon reflecting on my experience during this delegation, I feel gratified that, despite the serious problems that continue to make life very difficult for so many in El Salvador, our bonds of solidarity in our partner communities are still strong and mutually beneficial.

*Mark Reedy*

## **A First Visit To El Salvador**

Ellen Hartog

I am Ellen Hartog. I went to El Salvador in November 2017 on a delegation led by Voices on the Border and South Bay Sanctuary Covenant. My experience was extraordinary, not only because of the important work we did there, but because of the fantastic women I had the pleasure of traveling with, Anne Filin and Arlene Schaupp. I feel truly blessed to have been able to travel with such a strong and mindful group of people.

Anne is a veteran in the work of Social Justice. She was in the Venezuela Peace Corps and has been on several delegations to El Salvador. Arlene is a leader and a mentor, and a shining example of solidarity in bringing peace and justice to El Salvador. She has now made the journey 37 times. While this was only my first time on the delegation, it certainly won't be my last, and I would encourage anyone to consider going.

We traveled to the most remote areas to meet and talk with people, to let them know we want to support their efforts in improving nutrition and education, ensuring safe transportation to schools, and sanitation in the communities.

At the Mangrove forest we were greeted with lunch and hospitality by people who live without access to electricity or transportation. They were living with water 100 times more toxic than what is considered drinkable before help came to install a water filtration system.

It was moments like this that were the most eye opening, where something as simple as clean water, which can so easily be taken for granted in our world, is just one of a dozen challenges these people grapple with every day of their lives. Seeing that highlights just how lucky we are to have the things we do, and instills a real sense of responsibility to help those less fortunate.

But it's not just impoverished conditions that they are fighting to overcome, it's also a tragic history. We visited the massacre site at El Mozote. A village where the military

tortured, mutilated and killed 8 innocent people. To this day, the military and the government have not taken responsibility for the atrocities committed, denying that the massacre even took place.

We were met and guided by Sebastian, a civil war veteran and a musician. He spoke to us about the book, Commission of Truth 1992-1993, which tells the true story of what happened in El Mozote. We went to the memorial garden, the site where they discovered the parts of bodies in the rubble of a building burnt to the ground. Those that could be identified are now remembered in a memorial garden and rebuilt church. The names and ages of all those murdered are written on the wall of the church. One of the victims was only three days old. One survivor's story was on display at the site. A woman named Rufina Amaya Marquez, who was powerless to save her own child as she cried for her mother's help. She is the only witness to these crimes against humanity which are only now finally being heard in courts in Spain.

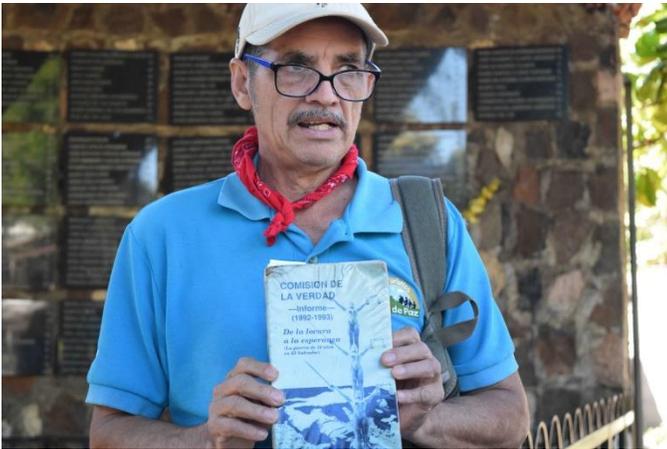
Sabastian brought us to the hill where he had secretly manned the radio communication during the war. He said that it is a very special place to him. This hill is now home to a 25 million dollar monument erected by the United States that makes no mention of the war or what really happened. The people of El Mozote have a symbol of what happened — a silhouette of a family, the children on the outside of the parents, a representation of what could not be protected — a symbol that has since been added to the top of the monument. "THEY HAVE NOT DIED, THEY ARE WITH US, WITH YOU AND WITH THE WHOLE HUMANITY." EL MOZOTE DEC. 11 1991



*At the monument to 800 innocent people murdered by the Salvadoran military at El Mozote in December, 1981.*

We also went to the El Mozote war museum and the location where during the war, Sabastian had a broadcasting station for the people. The museum also houses the arms donated by Spain, Russia and many other countries around the

world which the young men, women and children used to protect themselves. The memorabilia and posters tell the story.



*Ellen and the other delegates who visited El Mozote last November were guided by Sebastian, a veteran of the civil war and a musician.*

Our visit took place during the 25th year of "Comunidad Octavio Ortiz," a community consisting of about 100 families who had next to nothing after the events that took place, but by working together, have managed to make incredible changes. It was truly inspiring to see how far they have come. There are still many miles to go and nothing can ever fully right the wrongs that took place, but you can see the steps big and small being taken to rebuild.

*Ellen Hartog*

*SBSC's October event fell on the historic day of October 14<sup>th</sup>, as martyred Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero was canonized in Rome. Romero's example of courage and dedication to justice inspires the Solidarity movement.*

**Centro Esperanza Celebrates 1 Year In Operation!**



This August, our delegation met with Luz Deras, former SBSC Steering Committee member and founder and Director of *Centro Esperanza* in her home town of Texistepeque. The center hosts before- and after-school programs for young students to reinforce their class work, add English and other lessons, and provide a safe place for them to be. To learn more about the center, please visit [Centro Esperanza](#) or email Luz Deras directly at [centroesperanzaelsal@gmail.com](mailto:centroesperanzaelsal@gmail.com)



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