



Congregations Respond

Accompaniment teams form to help refugees

In the last six months, SBSC has heard from members of five South Bay congregations who have formed accompaniment teams to assist Central American refugees. At SBSC's October event, Rhonda Lakatos and Nicholas Hurley from Stone Church of Willow Glen in San Jose described an urgent learning curve as their team accompanied a mother and daughter after the undocumented father was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers

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Accompaniment Stories

Rhonda Lakatos and Nicholas Hurley
Stone Church of Willow Glen

The Family

The family we agreed to accompany is made up of a mother, who is without U.S. documentation, an 11 year old daughter who is a U.S. citizen and a father. Both of the parents migrated separately from Honduras 19 years ago when they were in their late teens. During the time they've been in the United States both parents have been employed, he as a handyman and contractor and she as a restaurant employee, house cleaner and most recently as a stay at home mom. The father took care of all the finances and he was the sole breadwinner.



Credit: Jack Owicki, Pro-Bono Photo

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'Massacres Migration and Memory' Electrifying Lecture by Dr. Terry Karl at SBSC 10/13/19

By Trudy Reagan

Professor of Political Science and Latin American Studies emeritus at Stanford, Dr. Karl has spent 20 years working to bring the perpetrators of the massacre at El Mozote and other El Salvador Civil War crimes to justice.

The homicide rate in El Salvador is the worst in Central America. Honduras is second, Guatemala is third. They lie on the major routes for traffickers in drugs, weapons, and sex slaves from Venezuela and Colombia. Although immigration levels are far less than in 2002, more immigrants are women and children, making the situation a humanitarian crisis.

At the end of every Civil War there is much greater violence owing to a diminished economy, and people who become criminals for lack of other opportunities. Victims become perpetrators. It's a cycle of violence that passes through generations unless there is an effective process of reconciliation. In the El Salvador peace agreements, the right wing halted trials for the perpetrators and the legislators declared a general amnesty.



Dr. Terry Karl, Credit: Jack Owicki, Pro-Bono Photo

Victims feel anger, hatred, shame, grief, self-blame. They describe howling, shattering pain whenever they see their torturer on television or out in public. What is needed are people meeting in small groups with the perpetrators, and trials. Because there were no trials in El Salvador, Terry Karl is part of a group bringing the offenders to justice in other countries.

Dr. Karl strengthened evidence against those on trial in Florida (2006) and convictions were secured. However these men are still living in the United States, for instance, in Fresno and can't be deported. There are an estimated 1000 war criminals from 190 countries living here. In 2007 Congress passed the No Safe Haven law, but there has been no enforcement of it.

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In the case of the murder of four Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in 1989 in El Salvador, Gen. Garcia was tried in Spain for Crimes Against Humanity. In 2009 ICE, which has a war criminals unit that collaborates with Karl, tried to deport Garcia and another general, Vides Casanova, responsible for the massacre at El Mozote, to El Salvador, but El Salvador didn't want them. Surprisingly, the left-wing FMLN leadership (not the rank-and-file) opposes trials. The FMLN itself committed crimes against humanity during the civil war, and although those accounted for only 10% of the total, some in the leadership nevertheless feel vulnerable to being put on trial.

The perpetrators of the assassination of Oscar Romero were arrested at the Boston airport as they attempted to flee the US. Though the amnesty for war crimes was rescinded by El Salvador's legislature in 2016, hope for justice still rests with Spain. Several of the assassinated priests were Spanish nationals, motivating the government there to pursue the case.



Dr. Terry Karl, Credit: Jack Owicki, Pro-Bono Photo

Dr. Karl emphasized the importance of prosecuting perpetrators at the top of a military chain of command, and said she has gathered evidence for both United States and Salvadoran prosecutors in this effort. She compared the process to a puzzle, in which the pieces fit to show the chain between victim and the high command. Vested interests present obstacles at all levels.

Karl presented a graph of massacres between 1979–85, coinciding with the administration of General Garcia. Comparing his power to a spigot, she asserted that he commanded both the start and stop of killings. The assassination of Monsignor Romero was designed to turn on the spigot, and show that if the government could murder him they could murder anybody at all.

Dr. Karl says trials matter. Victims of Nazism felt shame until the trial of Adolf Eichmann years later, and realized it was just part of the Nazi strategy. Most Salvadorans didn't know, or don't know General Garcia's role. First of all Dr. Karl is laying the basis for these trials by discovering the truth with documents. Then she intends to inform the general public. This Civil War was short, intense, and a whole generation of

authors, journalists, and judges was killed. By building up a memory of what

happened, the rule of law can be rebuilt. The goal for trials is to validate the victims' experiences and to show the top people did it. The top people are still living, often complicit in drug trafficking or enriching themselves by oil and mining.

NGOs, the Episcopal Church, and political organizations are fighting the renewal of amnesty for the criminals in the legislature in El Salvador. Surprisingly, one branch of the FMLN that committed some crimes is siding with the right wing to oppose them. Karl asserted that the right wing has convinced some in the FMLN that they would also be convicted, even though their crimes were a small minority of the total. Corruption could be another contributor, she said, as the FMLN could fear losing power and control of Government funds from which it profits. Finally, Karl noted that the present Minister of Defense is a military man, Magella, and especially in El Salvador, the military protects its own. The same networks of military and private businessmen, who ran and financed Death Squads during the Civil War still exist.

Dr. Karl took questions from the audience, and one was about reparations. She answered that if they are made through land reform, there is not enough land implement them. El Salvador's strength is its big labor force, and some combination of finance and manufacturing is the key to prosperity. New systems that use labor in novel ways offer a more promising solution.

To a question about retribution against her, Karl said she has received many threats, but she feels enlivened to continue this work because of the quality of the people she works with. She said, "The people you meet change and sustain you."

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Delegations

Join us in El Salvador! Mar 21-29, 2020

Delegations are open to youth and adults interested in traveling to El Salvador to learn about the country and enhance solidarity with the U.S.A. For more information email: contactsouthbaysanctuary@gmail.com.

Our Delegations to El Salvador:

We will stay in our Partner Community, *Comunidad Octavio Ortiz*, and also in the capital San Salvador, where we will connect with longtime friends and learn about the realities of their lives there. March 2020 marks the 40th anniversary of the slaying of then - Archbishop, and now Saint, Oscar Romero. It will be a special time to be in the country. Come with us!

Usually we go together as a group for 8 or 9 days. Before we go we meet to get to know one another, choose what we want to see and do, and prepare for what we need to take with us. Upon arrival, experienced Voices on the Border staff will meet us at the airport and transport us to a guesthouse in San Salvador.

We will likely begin our exploration in San Salvador, the capital, and from there venture out into villages that we have chosen because of their importance for understanding the effects of their civil war, their current struggles, and the promising efforts to rebuild the nation.

When we go south to our partner community (Comunidad Octavio Ortiz) we will live several days in their homes and experience their warm hospitality, the farming economy, their leadership and their bonds forged out of founding a new village and life after the war.

What do we do on Delegations?

We get to know ordinary people who are dedicated to supporting their community of modest means and working to strengthen their nascent democracy. Because of the extraordinary connections of Voices on the Border we learn how villages are banding together to promote their values and resist exploitation from the outside. In recent years we have met with government and other officials, such as the National Ombudsman for Human Rights, Supreme Court justices, staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, healthcare worker union leaders, religious leaders, university professors, school teachers and students, and with non-government groups that are supporting idealistic students for leadership.

You will be inspired by courageous and hard-working Salvadorans! We then return home to tell what we experienced and inform those here about our Central American neighbors.

Check out the SBSC website!



www.southbaysanctuarycovenant.weebly.com

SBSC's March 2020 Delegation will coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop, now Saint Oscar Romero. Romero's transformation into a courageous defender of human rights and his ultimate martyrdom inspire Solidarity movements around the world.



WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS

\$3575 Fight To End Violence Against Women and Girls The Citizen Network of Morazán Women (RCCM) works to reduce the distressing level of gender-based violence in the Department of Morazan, where many families in SBSC's partner community, Comunidad Octavio Ortiz, have roots. Statistics from 2018 show that more than 44 out of 100 women were victims of violence, and underage pregnancy sometimes reaches 10-year old children. RCCM is expanding its activities with a new center & shelter in the town of Osicala, running a series of trainings for community leaders, and implementing a community action protocol to improve community response and accompany victims.

You can help!

\$3,000 Partnerships for Teachers Many kids in Comunidad Octavio Ortiz attend school in nearby Amando Lopez. A partnership is growing between the Amando Lopez teachers and the teachers at the Carlos Rosario School in Washington DC. Improving teachers' skills and growing such partnerships are important goals. This gift will support a trip by some of the teachers from Amando Lopez to visit the Carlos Rosario School for a week. **You can help!**

\$1000 Emergency Fund For Migrant Needs: SBSC's Bay Area partner, The Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, assists immigrants and asylum applicants in California 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!**

ONGOING COMMITMENTS:

\$ 828/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.

You can help!



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SBSC Accompaniment Update Sanctuary to Salvadoran Family

Throughout its 36 year history, we in South Bay Sanctuary Covenant have always taken a strong stand on behalf of immigrants. For the last several years SBSC has been providing legal assistance, trauma counseling and other support to a family from El Salvador who fled extreme violence in that country. Alberto, Carolina and their young daughter Josefa (not their real names) have applied for asylum and are awaiting court hearings (Alberto's hearing will be in January 2021, while the hearing for Carolina and Josefa isn't currently scheduled.) Obtaining asylum is difficult under any circumstances but the Trump administration's anti-immigrant policies have sadly increased the burden even more. A change of administration in next year's elections could improve the family's chances for a successful outcome.

By way of background on the family, Alberto was forced to flee death threats by a gang in his native community in 2015. In the urgency of the moment, he had to leave his partner and child, parents and siblings, and all other relatives and friends in the only home he had ever known. After a perilous journey across Mexico, he was apprehended by U.S. immigration authorities at the border and 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, like Alberto, were apprehended at the border. After suffering through very cold and inhospitable conditions in an immigration detention center, they were conditionally released to pursue their asylum claims. SBSC again provided the airfare to fly Carolina and Josefa to California, where they were reunited with Alberto. The inhumane detention center conditions, however, left Josefa with a severe case of pneumonia, for which she was hospitalized for 10 days upon her arrival in California.

Both Alberto and Carolina are hard workers. Alberto works as a maintenance worker in an apartment complex, while Carolina works at a furniture store. Josefa attends pre-school and enjoys dancing and singing. After reuniting in California, the family lived in shared rental houses in East Palo Alto and Menlo Park but now enjoys their own small apartment in Redwood City.

Our 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 our continued prayers and support.

Mark Reedy

At SBSC's May event, Attorney John Allured from First Lutheran Church in Palo Alto, and Marty Dreher & Alan Stivers from First Congregational Church of Palo Alto described how they each responded to help a refugee family in crisis, despite having little training or experience. After some training and discernment, teams from the Unitarian Universalist Church in Palo Alto and First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto are each accompanying a Guatemalan parent with a school-age child.

Common threads in these cases include the need for more volunteer training, increased professional assessment and guidance, and best practices to avoid having separate teams discover and solve the same problems. Two organizations responding to these needs are The Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity (IM4HI, <https://www.im4humanintegrity.org/>) and Amigos de Guadalupe (<https://www.amigoscenter.com/>). IM4HI, already a partner of SBSC, has helped organize a Rapid Response Network to provide witness to ICE actions, and is expanding referral, training and support services for accompaniment teams, including those mentioned above. Amigos de Guadalupe has launched a case management model that seeks to match refugees and volunteers more effectively, and maximize the value of professional resources such as attorneys and counselors.

The need for volunteer efforts such as these to address a humanitarian crisis highlights the gross failure of American immigration policy at all levels. However, the growing response of congregations in forming accompaniment teams is a hopeful development.

Chris Nilson

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Because we honor the privacy of their story we don't ask questions about their history. We were chosen to accompany them and help them with what they needed. We won't be using their names today or tell you many details, but we've been told by the family it's ok to share some things and over time they have confided in us in ways that deepen our understanding of their circumstances.

In March, the father was going to buy milk for the daughter's breakfast and he was picked up by ICE and sent to detention in Yuba City. A few weeks later, a neighbor told the wife about the Rapid Response Network and she called to get help. Our newly formed Stone Church Accompaniment Team was asked if we could help the family. We said Yes & we had an interview with the mom and a Spanish speaking representative from the RRN. We learned the family primarily needed donations to help them cover their essential expenses, since

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the father was the sole breadwinner. These added up to about \$2000 a month. They also needed support for the daughter, who was falling behind in 5th grade. The family had some relatives locally, but none could help with the financial burdens and these were wearing on the wife because she feared homelessness and worried for their safety on top of her worry for her husband.

Some Unexpected Things

We had met with the wife and learned of her basic expenses, which came to about \$2000 a month, but there were some unexpected costs:

- In June the **vehicle registrations** came due but and a Stone donor stepped up to cover that cost.
- In July the **father had a hearing** and we were asked to pay the attorney who the family had hired so he would appear at the hearing in San Diego.
- The wife knew that their neighborhood in San Jose has a **parking permit tag**. She didn't know that the tag was only good for parking 72 hours in one place. When the father worked he moved his truck every day, but when he was gone it sat. The truck was towed and we had to work with the wife, the City of San Jose, a Stone Church member who worked for the City and the SJPD to get the truck released to the wife even though the title was no place to be found. The cost was \$495.
- We didn't expect that many of the family's **bills would need to be paid in cash or money orders** or that she did not have a bank account. This caused a rift with our Finance committee who worked on a Check based accounting system. They tried hard to make this work, but it was hard for them and required much explanation from us so they would understand the family's situation.
- Along the way, many people wanted to know **how long** we would need to support the family. That wasn't in our agreement with our sponsoring organizations, so we couldn't give an answer and that was frustrating to some.

More Things We Learned

- How, as privileged people, we have not understood how **difficult and complicated life** is for many people in our community. There have been times the mother has not kept appointments or been late or has given us partial information. We have had to acknowledge that her sleep quality is poor, she fears for her family and she'd rather not be in a position to have to accept things from strangers. We try to be trustworthy, to listen to her and be faithful to her.
- How **families are families & kids are kids** – the 11-year-old daughter was entering middle school so we gave them a \$100 gift card from Target for uniforms & school supplies. The daughter reported happily that she got everything she needed and spent \$99.46!
- How there are **other things to do to help** – members of Stone have trained with the Rapid Response Network to respond to ICE actions, one member drove two children from their Sanctuary Church home on the East Side to their school once a week, some members have gone to the Morgan Hill ICE office to complain about its presence or

stand with immigrants who are being held, being released or returning to have their grille removed.

- How sometimes large, complicated social justice issues can be **best understood by a specific example**. A few criticize the large amount of money raised for one family rather than working on root causes, but more church members have been awakened to the larger issues through the experience of being helpful to this one family.
- How it is a blessing for us to have had contact with this family.

We've also learned that although we did everything we could, on Sept 11, after filing for a second appeal against his original removal order, the father was deported to Honduras. Despite this, the team's effort has made a big difference to the family members remaining in the US.

Art Auction! Artist Trudy Reagan has generously donated three paintings inspired by her time in El Salvador. They will be auctioned at SBSC's next event.

Clockwise from the upper left, "AGUAS NEGRAS"/"SEWAGE", "BLANCAS"/"TARGETS", "HONDURAS"



Luz Deras, formerly of SBSC, founded *Centro Esperanza* to provide safe after-school programs in her home town of Texistepeque, El Salvador. Learn more at the links below:



web: <http://www.centroesperanzaelsal.org/>
facebook: @centroesperanzaelsal
email: centroesperanzaelsal@gmail.com

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