

HOLIDAY SEASON - 2012

2012 EMERGENCE: SUPPORT THE LIVING MAYA

Dear Friends of the Maya people & Red Wind Councils,

As we approach this holiday season of giving, your Maya brothers & sisters continue to send their prayers that you & your families be filled with love, hope & strength. We of Red Wind Councils in the USA are privileged to share in the continuing social justice efforts that our friends in Chiapas carry on with such brave determination & dignity.

The Maya Long Count calendar ends at December Solstice, marking a huge energetic opening for renewal & healing of our world's imbalances. We have learned so much from the Maya, knowledge held from their enlightened ancestors, that Red Wind has always felt compelled to give back to them for all we have received from their outstanding sharing with us. In three decades our many Red Wind projects have impacted the daily lives of thousands of Maya families, the majority living in remote rural communities, & all of them impoverished by the inequities, injustice & terrible threats of the government & corporate predators.



With the help of Red Wind funds, the tremendous workload of men, women & children has been eased through the creation of community stores, integral farms, clean local water sources, corn mills for the unending number of tortillas they make for their families, & they now have more time to dedicate to other projects. Today for the first time since the Conquest the women are able to

dream & hope again through making their ancestral & beautiful crafts for sale at Red Wind events. The young women, encouraged by their mothers' hope, are learning to weave & embroider. They are now able to educate themselves in the alternative schools that Red Wind has funded, & learn other skills as education & health caretakers. Without your support, these people are abandoned to struggle in isolation.

This year, we at Red Wind are sharing with you some stories of families & children in Chiapas whose lives have found sanity with the help of Red Wind's generous contributors so you can get to know them a little through our eyes.

We warmly invite you to take a few minutes to read of the experiences & struggles of the Maya people & children through these poignant stories. It will give you a glimpse of the vital difference Red Wind Councils is making now & with your heartfelt help, in the year to come.

Patricia Worth,
assistant to Ohki's Medicine center in Santa Fe, NM
& US Board member, Red Wind Councils

Donations to Red Wind Councils:

Your donation to RED WIND COUNCILS goes directly to support spiritual, social, cultural & economic project development, emergency relief funds, & operating expenses for the Red Wind Centers in Chiapas, Mexico.



SEND DONATIONS TO:

RED WIND COUNCILS

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Uxbridge, MA 01569

www.redwindcouncils.org
(978) 633-7388

Your contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.

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Ohki's Vision & How Red Wind Councils Came To Be: Consuelo, a Maya Grandmother's story

When I first came to Chiapas in 1985, I met an astonishing elderly Maya woman, now passed away, who shared with such grace the struggles of her life. I feel inspired today to tell of these with you as I am writing this at the time of the Day of the Dead & her spirit returns to me vividly as I light the candles on my altar to the Dead. Her story was one of the first impacting stories I heard here & it is when I made the most determined decision of my life, that if I live here, as a native myself, I ought to do something for the impoverished Maya people.

Consuelo was a healer by nature. She was just a little girl when the 1910 Zapatista revolution broke out in Mexico claiming justice for all poor people. In 1912, Consuelo had to flee for weeks with her family from their modest ranch in the warm lands into the cold woods as the Federal army invaded their property, destroying the little they had, including their farm animals. This made them even poorer & made a deep impression on her, making her stronger as she promised to herself that she would never give up no matter what difficult situations she met in life. She was after all a true revolutionary in her heart.



When Consuelo became a young woman, she married a *marimba* maker, a good Indian man, & lived in the traditional Maya way. She never knew money.

When I met her in the mid-80's she was still trading for her few goods, like sugar, soap or other necessities with cacao beans which she kept preciously in a jar under her bed. She had twelve children & led a very dignified life in spite of her poverty. Her ancestral ways were rooted in Maya matriarchy. Her husband died when she was in her 70's. She thought that she would end her days quietly dedicated to her Medicine healing, but destiny had another plan for her.



When she was 86, two of her children died within the same year. One of her daughters, Lucia, had nine children & died of malnutrition & depression when her husband left her for another woman. A very familiar story for women here in these lands. Consuelo's other son, Ramiro, who had four children, was killed by federal soldiers who invaded their village to search for "rebels". Ramiro's wife, soon after, died of illness. Suddenly Consuelo, at 86 & in the midst of grieving for the loss of her two children, had to raise thirteen grandchildren who had nowhere else to go. Because Consuelo's husband was no longer, & because her oldest grandchild was only 11, the youngest being a baby, there were no providers except herself.

Needless to say, she was a very strong woman. She was old, yet she would literally kick the children out of bed before dawn every morning to grind the corn in the old stone *metate* while she made dozens of tortillas for them. She went with the children to haul water from two miles away, to fetch heavy loads of firewood, wash cloth diapers, & so much more.

There were times when she & the children were so poor that their only food was tortillas made from the corn of her *milpas* (corn fields). She continued to plant her fields with her grandchildren at 86, 90, 105 years of age -- resilient & determined to feed & protect them all.

Neighbors would sometimes provide food when famine for her was at its worst. Once she received a piece of meat which she smoked on the cooking fire, making it last for several months bit by bit. Once the meat was gone, she kept a piece of lard on the roof's beam so the children would not eat it. She would take down the piece of lard, meal after meal, to re-heat it on the *comal* (hot plate) so it would release a bit of grease, & then the piece of lard was passed around so the children could sweep their tortillas with it to give them flavor. Then the intact piece of lard would go back on the beam for the next day.



Consuelo, a Maya Grandmother's story, contd.

This lard lasted almost four months. This was all they would eat days after days. It was the most precious thing she had for the children.



Consuelo raised all of her grandchildren with discipline & dignity preparing them for a hard life. She died a few years after her last grandchild left her house, when she was over 110 years old, leaving for a much, much deserved rest. For me, Consuelo's courage & commitment in the face of real danger & constant lurking hunger throughout her life is a potent contrast to the abundance & safety we all enjoy up North & that we take so much for granted. We often complain needlessly with a full belly, as my mother would always say.

This is the first story I heard when I arrived in Chiapas that made me cry. In shame, in pain for the harsh reality of this sub-continent. Consuelo has visited me in dreams since then more than once for she had such a strong spirit. It is as though she lives in my Indian blood, for this is the story of my own people in the terrible times of the "Trail of Tears" over a century ago, a story that all native people have suffered. And this more contemporary story of Consuelo is the very same one that cries in my native blood still today...

In my work with Red Wind Councils in Chiapas, I continue daily to meet women & children who face starvation, disease, poverty & injustice while a wealth of resources from the Mexican government flow around them as though these dignified & strong women & children don't exist. As though they are not true humans...

It is disparities like Consuelo's that Red Wind Councils addresses by offering crucial support to families facing life-threatening circumstances through the very kind donations each of you makes every year. For twenty-seven years, we have implemented vital projects in remote rural communities such as: corn mills, clean water, health care & emergency relief, autonomous education, greenhouses, non-GMO seeds program, integral farming & animal husbandry, & emergency food when crops are devastated by floods, frosts or droughts as has happened these past three years.

With my sincere gratitude on behalf of the Maya people & communities we serve, I thank very much for your generous donations this year & I wish you & your families a very blessed holidays & an abundant New Year,

Ohki Simine Forest / for RWC Chiapas board



The Coming Faces: Luz, the Reality of a Rural Indigenous Girl

Sadly, the story of Luz is all too common. Luz is a lovely & bright eight year old Maya girl. She is very small for her age; her daily diet consists only of tortillas, salt, & chiles. Beans have even become a luxury item for her family as their price has risen, & what her father is able to plant on their meager plot of land does not last this family of twelve through the year till the next harvest. So they rely on eggs only a few times a year when the hens are laying, & this if the hens survive epidemics for the family cannot afford medicines for themselves, much less for their animals. Luz vaguely remembers eating a chicken, but that was nearly a year ago. Luz is suffering from severe malnutrition.

Luz has been to school a few times but her parents have stopped sending her for several reasons. The lessons she was taught were in Spanish, a language which she is not fluent in for she speaks Maya Tzotzil. The school program from Mexico City is based on a modern urban setting, but incomprehensible to a child of rural poverty living in the remote mountains of Chiapas. The government-salaried teacher comes to the school only sporadically, & most of the time drunk. Nor does Luz have a



Luz, the Reality of a Rural Indigenous Girl, contd.

pen, pencils, notebooks, or lunch. Besides, she is desperately needed at home by a mother overwhelmed by the labor of the daily chores of the household, especially the time-consuming making by hand of nearly eight to ten pounds of tortillas per day.

So Luz can be seen early in the morning, trembling with cold & trudging along the road carrying a heavy load of firewood, or gallons of water, along with one of her little brothers or sisters in a shawl on her back. It is common in Chiapas to see, starting from as young as age 5, little girls carrying their baby siblings in their shawls to help their mothers with so many children. No matter the weather, Luz's clothes are thin & she feels fortunate to even wear broken plastic sandals on her feet for other girls have none.

If Luz or any member of her family should fall ill, no medicines are available to them. Nor are there doctors, clinics, or drugstores for miles around. So death by easily preventable diseases such as fever, gastroenteritis, or other common ailments is an ever-present threat for this eight-year-old girl.

Luz has no toys other than sticks, stones, & metal things dumped by the side of the road that become inventive toys, when she & her other siblings ever have time to play. The only entertainment is the neighbors' TV at night displaying on Mexican channels an invasion of American shows that depict a middle-class, blond, rich & educated American "reality" that only confuses Luz when she compares it to her own life. Seeing this, she realizes just how impoverished & marginalized her own existence is. On these shows, she sees American children with healthy, abundant & happy lives. From this most painful revelation she understands that her own people, all that she knows, are kept in a kind of sub-reality, in a sort of hopeless basement.

Luz, sadly, understands at her young age that the government of her own country has literally abandoned her & her people & has no interest in helping them raise their standard of living, that instead she is in fact invisible. She realizes that she is on the lowest of the lowest rung of the social & economic ladder, she is indigenous & female. The Dinosaurs in power don't even care, in fact would prefer, if she & her people disappear from the face of the earth. A desperate & depressing realization indeed for a child, especially in this era where the great majority of humans of the

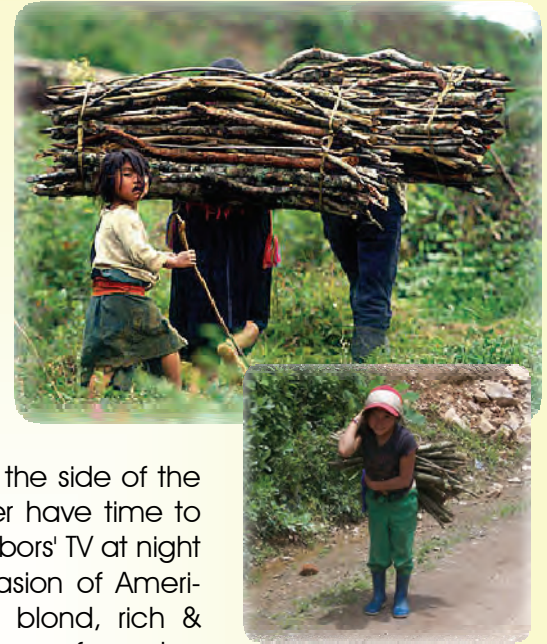
world are given the standards of security, equal rights, democracy, justice & dignity. Why not for her & her people? She can now more fully grasp the strong stand that her father & her people have taken with their powerful cry against the many injustices in their lives.

Red Wind Councils is dedicated to communities in resistance against governmental abuses such as Luz's & has helped, since 1985, to raise the consciousness of the people of their own cultural dignity. Red Wind Councils supports the school where Luz can receive instruction in her native language based on a deep respect for Mother Earth & her indigenous culture. Health promoters visit her community now & teach about birth control, healthier food, prevention of diseases through sanitation, & also provide care for the ill. These & all the programs designed to help the women of the community described in this newsletter free children such as Luz from the responsibilities demanded of one so young, so they can have at last true childhoods, not starting their young lives with the heavy destiny & responsibilities of an adult.

With your generous donation we can ensure that Luz will grow into womanhood with dignity & pride in her own heritage, strong, healthy, educated & with the tools & opportunities to help her family & her people.

MUCHAS GRACIAS FOR YOUR CRUCIAL SUPPORT...

Deborah Fernandez, US Board member of Red Wind Councils



SEND DONATIONS TO:

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