

# Pacific Yearly Meeting Latin American Concerns Committee Report to Representative Committee 2021

In 1997, PYM Annual Session established a standing Latin America Concerns Committee to gather and disseminate information to Pacific and other Yearly Meetings regarding Friends groups and service projects in Latin America with special attention to Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City, El Salvador Project and Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program (Progresa). The intention is to support rather than replace spirit-led projects already supported by Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups and individual Friends. In 2017, the Undocumented Student Program of Sacramento Meeting became the fourth project in LACC.

## **Brief updates from LACC programs:**

### **Casa de los Amigos**

Casa de los Amigos is a Quaker Center for Peace and International Understanding in Mexico City and the historic home of the Mexico City Meeting. Today, the Casa is in crisis. In 2018, the outgoing director removed the majority of the Board (Asamblea) without their knowledge and hired a friend of his as the new director. Since then, most programs have ceased, most partners cut ties, and the building has been occupied. The rightfully constituted Board is the legal owner of the building and steward of the organization. Board members are grateful to have received support and care from the PacYM Ministry Committee. The Board is working diligently to return the organization and its historic home to its community and mission. Please visit their website [www.casadelosamigos.org.mx](http://www.casadelosamigos.org.mx) and to connect by emailing [asamblea@casadelosamigos.org.mx](mailto:asamblea@casadelosamigos.org.mx).

### **El Salvador Projects**

El Salvador projects of Palo Alto Friends Meeting started the 2020 academic year and worked normally until mid-March, when we were forced to adapt quickly to the situation. The Salvadoran government's response to the pandemic included strict lockdowns and forced detention and quarantine for those breaking the established guidelines.

At this time, we have extended normal dates and deadlines for student requirements (grades and registration), as well as the selection process for new applicants for 2021, since many faculties at the National University extended both first and second semesters. We hope to support 24 university students this year.

A major change was closing our coed student house in San Salvador, where 22 students had resided prior to March of 2020. We partially reopened the house in September, restricted use to students taking finals and making virtual presentations, with a limit of six students in the house on any given day. This arrangement continues in 2021.

To follow our work or for more information, you can visit [www.pafmelsalvadorprojects.org](http://www.pafmelsalvadorprojects.org), or see our fan page on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/pafmelsalprojects](https://www.facebook.com/pafmelsalprojects). You are also welcome to write to our Project Director, Robert Broz, at [rpbroz@gmail.com](mailto:rpbroz@gmail.com), or Committee Clerk Hulda Muaka, at [huldamuaka@hotmail.com](mailto:huldamuaka@hotmail.com).

### **Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program (PROGRESA)**

2020 was a year of great challenges and significant achievements. 87 students were supported and 12 graduated. According to the UN, by the end of 2020, 8 out of 10 Guatemalans live in poverty or extreme poverty. In addition to the pandemic, 2 hurricanes caused significant damage to communities.

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PROGRESA's response: provide emotional and academic support to students through 33 virtual workshops; provide food support to 38 student families in need; students performed services in 80 communities with mask making and prevention campaigns in Mayan languages; food, shelter and clothing provided in 8 communities affected by the storms; support students living in remote areas without internet to attend virtual classes. A successful Teaching English course was held virtually thanks to the work of 3 board members, 24 tutors, and 29 students participated. We are looking forward with a step of faith into 2021 by enrolling 100 students in response to the increased need. For more information visit: [www.guatemalafriends.org](http://www.guatemalafriends.org) or <https://www.facebook.com/progresaquakers>. Or you can contact us: Miguel Costop, Director [progresas3@gmail.com](mailto:progresas3@gmail.com) or Donna Smith, Progresas co-clerk at RedwoodForestFM [dforestvil@aol.com](mailto:dforestvil@aol.com)

### **Sacramento Friends Meeting, Undocumented Student scholarship Project**

Since 2010, Sacramento Friends Meeting has been working to support undocumented students at Sacramento State University. Our scholarship consists of a \$1,000 award per year. It is renewable and available to undergraduate and graduate students. In the current academic year 2020-2021, we awarded all five qualifying applicants. Currently, we are supporting ten students. When we contacted continuing recipients about how they were facing their financial situation during the pandemic, it became clear that we needed to be a little more generous in the award. In the past, students had received \$500 per semester, and this year, renewing applicants are receiving \$750 per semester. When three recipients spoke at our January 24th Second Hour Meeting at Sacramento Friends Meeting (via Zoom), it was clear that they use the scholarship money for vital things, including books, food, transportation, and fees for renewing their DACA status. We at Sacramento Friends Meeting are grateful for the continued support from members of PYM and Monthly Meetings.

<http://www.quakerundocumentedstudentscholarship.org/index.html>

The Committee consists of Sirgei Agalzoff (Orange Grove), Rogelio Bellamy Roque (Mexico City), Patricia Constantino (Mexico City), Hulda Muaka (Palo Alto), Patricia Portillo (Sacramento), Linda Rowell (Chico, Co-Clerk), Donna Smith (Redwood Forest Co-Clerk)