

# Latin American Concerns Committee Report to Annual Session 2022 Pacific Yearly Meeting

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.

## **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 Monthly Meeting. The Casa remains paralyzed by an ongoing institutional crisis, but there is hope and progress. In 2019 the outgoing director illegally removed the majority of the Board (Asamblea) without their knowledge and hired a new director unfamiliar with Quaker work. Since then, most programs have ceased, most partners cut ties, and the building has been occupied. Since this past summer it appears that the people who instigated the crisis are no longer involved and that the occupants are overseen by Horacio Peña, a programmed Quaker from Northern Mexico and former board member in 2007. For reasons that remain unclear, he has largely refused the Board's efforts to meet and address our community's significant concern. The Board encourages anyone who might have an impactful connection with Horacio Peña to contact us. As the Board works diligently to return the Casa to its community and mission, please consider joining our newsletter email list by emailing [asamblea@casadelosamigos.org](mailto:asamblea@casadelosamigos.org) or visiting [www.casadelosamigos.org](http://www.casadelosamigos.org).

## **El Salvador Projects**

Political problems in El Salvador have made our director Robert Broz keep a low profile after basic constitutional rights were removed by congress as a way for the government to combat criminal and gang activities. The initial declaration has now been extended for a total of 90 days - three 30 day periods - and will most likely be continued. Over 40 thousand arrests, including now around 500 cases of people with no known ties to criminal activities, have been made, with more than a dozen deaths of detainees under arrest. Opponents of the current New Ideas controlled congress and president Bukele are fearful and believe this is an attempt to keep people from publicly criticizing the party and president.

Our work does continue providing financial support to a no interest student loan to 18 university students, providing a stipend to one teacher in the K-12 school in El Barrio, as well support for four teachers who provide extra classes to junior and senior high school students on two Saturdays of each month. Our coed student house in San Salvador is currently used by 12 of the 18 students, and our support to the youth group in El Barrio continues as in the past several years.

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, <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 Committee (PROGRESA)**

2021 was a second year of great challenges and significant achievements. 95 students were supported, and 19 graduated. About half of our students had sponsors. Despite heroic efforts of staff to support students, the continuing pandemic took a toll. Worsening economic conditions forced over 20% to drop out: a much greater number than in the past. PROGRESA, as well as other programs, was unable to meet our new student recruitment goals, yet we continue to work towards our goal of 100. Vaccinations are required by PROGRESA, and two potential students declined. Staff continues to ensure that our students

## Latin American Concerns Committee Report to Annual Session 2022 Pacific Yearly Meeting

can connect with virtual classes. Workshops are held weekly to provide student support and promote community. Some students participated in an Alternatives to Violence Basic Workshop taught by PAV Guatemala; there are plans to offer the Advanced workshop followed by a trauma awareness workshop, Resilience to Trauma. A second successful virtual Teaching English class was held in 2021. In December 2022, we will have the third virtual Teaching English class since the conditions are still not good enough for an in-person workshop. 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**

Sacramento Friends Meeting has been working to support undocumented students at Sacramento State University since 2010. 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 2021-2022, we awarded scholarships to four qualifying applicants. Currently, we are supporting seven students. During the pandemic it has been more difficult to keep in touch with scholarship recipients. One student who graduated last year got a job as a music teacher at a private school. Another recent graduate said, "Thank you very much! I am super excited to begin my professional career as a school counselor! I will make sure to share your link and stay in touch as I am sure I will be working with many students who can benefit from this scholarship!" From providing support for DACA renewal fees, to buying materials for classes, and helping students pay for housing, our scholarship continues to give students hope that someone cares about their future. We at Sacramento Friends Meeting are grateful for the continued support from members of PYM and Monthly Meetings.  
<http://www.quakerundocumentedstudentscholarship.org/index.html>

Latin American Concerns Committee consists of the following members:

- 2022 Linda Rowell, Chico, Co-Clerk
- 2023 Sergei Agalzoff, Orange Grove
- 2024 Margaret Willis, Delta.
- 2024 Paty Constantino, Mexico City
  - Appt by Casa de los Amigos--Bart Czyz
  - Appt by El Salvador Project-- Hulda Muaka, Palo Alto
  - Appt by Guatemala Scholarship (Progresas)--Donna Smith, Redwood Forest, Co-Clerk
  - Appt by Undocumented Student Project--Patricia Portillo, Sacramento

Submitted by Donna Smith, Co-Clerk