

Olympia/Santo Tomás **Quarterly** US/Nicaragua Solidarity

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Editor's Note

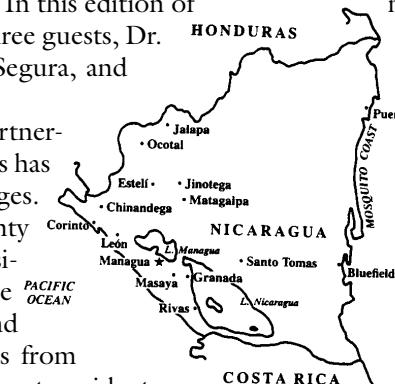
This April, the Thurston – Santo Tomás Sister County Association (TSTSCA) welcomes the eighth delegation to visit Olympia from Santo Tomás Nicaragua! In this edition of the quarterly you will get to know our three guests, Dr. María Salvadora González, Rosa Aura Segura, and Facunda Zeledón.

The success of TSTSCA's 17-year partnership with the community of Santo Tomás has been built on people-to-people exchanges. Nearly 100 people from Thurston County have visited Santo Tomás, and 21 Tomasinos have visited Olympia since 1990. The opportunities for cultural exchange and community-building during delegations from Nicaragua to Olympia bring Thurston County residents closer to the sister city experience.

This issue of the TSTSCA Quarterly focuses almost exclusively on the upcoming delegation; however, this is not for lack of important events affecting the people of Nicaragua. While much of the world is rightly focused on the horrendous

U.S.-led war that continues in Iraq, U.S. economic warfare also intensifies in Central America. This war takes shape by way of overt authoritarianism and through gradual deterioration of the economy. Two examples of the tightening fist on Central American autonomy include The International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), a U.S.-run police training school modeled after the notorious School of the Americas, slated to open this year in El Salvador; and the Dominican Republic – Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA). Olympia is fortunate to be able to learn from our three visitors as they share their experiences about the ways rural communities and families are affected by U.S. militarism and imperialism.

We hope you can join us to hear their stories, to strengthen the bonds of solidarity between our two communities, and to celebrate the delegates' presence in Thurston County! Be sure to check out the calendar of exciting events at www.olympiasantotomas.org. We hope you'll join us in our efforts to commemorate and sustain this dynamic people-to-people exchange between Santo Tomás, Nicaragua and Thurston County, Washington.



A nonprofit community organization founded in 1988

International justice and peace depend on the friendships of people across national, cultural, and ethnic boundaries. In the urgent desire to engender peace and heal the effects of past aggression and current economic oppression by the US

on the people of Nicaragua and for the mutual benefit of Santo Tomás, Chontales, Nicaragua and Thurston County, Washington, USA, we intend:

► To foster sustained relationships and greater understanding between the peoples of Santo Tomás and Thurston County through the development of personal friendships, community ties, and people-to-people exchanges.

► To educate ourselves and our community about the impacts of US foreign policies that cause the dependency and economic deterioration of Central America.

► To promote peace and a just relationship while challenging the imbalance of power and supporting self-determination and self-sufficiency for the Nicaraguan people.

► To help sustain our sister community in its struggle for dignity and hope.

Intentamos:

► Promover relaciones sostenibles y un mejor entendimiento entre la gente de Santo Tomás y la gente del condado Thurston através del desarrollo de la amistad, los lazos comunitarios e intercambios de pueblo a pueblo.

► Aprender y educar a nuestra comunidad acerca de los

consecuencias de las políticas internacionales del gobierno de los Estados Unidos los cuales causan la dependencia y el deterioro económico en Centro América.

► Promover la paz y una relación justa al mismo tiempo disputar el desequilibrio del poder y apoyar determinación autónomo y autosustentación para la gente nicaragüense.

► Ayudar a sostener nuestra hermandad en la lucha por la dignidad y la esperanza.

TSTSCA Steering Committee meetings are usually held on the third Monday of each month at 7:00 pm. Call for location. Everyone is welcome! These meetings are preceded by a social potluck at 6:15 pm. To confirm date and location or for more information, call Jean Eberhardt at 360-943-8642.

Our newsletter is produced by TSTSCA members on a quarterly basis. Everyone is encouraged to submit articles, poems, photos, and letters to the newsletter. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Steering Committee, the membership at large, or our advertisers. Submissions and comments can be directed to:

TSTSCA Newsletter
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Cover collage by Lee Miller from photos by our compas in the CDC in Santo Tomás, Sean Izzarone, and Michi Thacker.

Teaching as a Revolutionary Act: Facunda Zeledón

Facunda, 46 years old, was born and raised with eight siblings on a small farm outside of Santo Tomás. She married José María Cabrera in 1976 at the age of 16, and in 1979 when the impending revolution made living in the countryside too dangerous, Facunda and José María moved into the town of Santo Tomás. Her husband, then part of the volunteer reserve battalions of the Sandinista Army was called to serve in 1981. He left to fight and Facunda, in dire need of a job, found herself with an offer to teach preschool. "I chose this career out of necessity. At the beginning of the revolution, there were few teachers. One of the Sandinistas' goals was to provide education in all corners of Nicaragua, including the most remote areas in the mountains." When Facunda began teaching preschool she was herself a student receiving her fifth and sixth grade education.

After teaching preschool for one year, Facunda was asked to teach second grade at what is now Rubén Darío, sister school to Lincoln Elementary. "I worked teaching the first grade while studying my first year of high school." Facunda worked and studied simultaneously until she completed her high school education and obtained her teaching title in 1989. "It was a great accomplishment for me. I had no idea I would enjoy working in education. It started out of circumstance and now I ask, how could I live my life not being a teacher?" After receiving her title, Facunda acted as vice-president of Rubén Darío for eight years until she lost her administrative post due to the political changes following the 1996 presidential elections.

In 1999, with a partial scholarship from TSTSCA, Facunda began studying pedagogy at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua to earn her teaching credential. In 2004, she was elected as Principal of Rubén Darío with overwhelming support from the school's parents. Today, Facunda is excited to be back in her 2nd grade classroom where she can return to what she loves most, teaching.

Facunda has also "adopted" several Olympian delegates whom she hosted in

her home and welcomed into her family. Stephanie Guilloud, a former Evergreen student hosted by Facunda remembers,



"In three months I became her daughter, and now it is difficult to imagine a time when I did not know her."

Facunda is a dynamic community

leader. She began working with the Committee for Community Development (CDC) as a volunteer when she moved to Santo Tomás and later became a member in 1995. She served as the CDC president in 1997-1998 and was then elected to the Directive.

We welcome Facunda as the first return visitor from Santo Tomás! After her first visit to Olympia in 2000, Facunda wrote, "I hope Lincoln parents will continue to support their children in creating solidarity and friendship with the children of Santo Tomás. Together, we will be stronger against the problems of poverty that oppress everyone in the world, although some are more affected than others. Only our unity will make us strong." On this visit, Facunda hopes to continue to fortify the connections between the sister schools

Continued on page 6

Facunda Zeledón: Maestra maravillosa

Facunda tiene 46 años. Crecía con sus ocho hermanos en una granja pequeña en el campo cerca de Santo Tomás. Se casó con José María Cabrera en 1976 cuando tenía 16 años, y en 1979, se trasladaron al pueblo de Santo Tomás para evitar el peligro de la revolución pendiente. Cuando su marido tenía que salir con el ejército Sandinista en 1981 para luchar en la guerra, Facunda necesitaba trabajar

"I had no idea I would enjoy working in education. It started out of circumstance and now I ask, how could I live my life not being a teacher?"

y se encontró una oferta para enseñar el preescolar. Ella dice, "Yo opté esta carrera por necesidad. En esa época, a la empieza de la revolución, habían pocos maestros. Una meta de los Sandinistas fue educar a todos en los rincones de Nicaragua, incluyendo en las regiones más remotas de las montañas." Cuando empezó enseñar, Facunda estaba si misma estudiante en los grados quinto y sexto.

Facunda seguía así trabajando mientras estudiando hasta que terminó su educación secundaria y recibía su título de maestra en una escuela para autorizar los maestros que se llama *El Normal*. Desde entonces, Facunda ha trabajado en varios puestos en la escuela primaria Rubén Darío que tiene un hermanamiento con la primaria de Lincoln en Olympia, incluyendo 2 años como Directora de la escuela. Actualmente, está trabajando como maestra del segundo grado.

Facunda empezó trabajar voluntariamente con el CDC cuando se mudaba a Santo Tomás en 1979. Se ingresó como miembro del CDC en 1995 y servía dos años como presidenta en 1997-1998. Estamos muy emocionados invitar a Facunda como la primera delegada a volver a Olympia! Nos visitó la primera vez en el año 2000 como representante de Rubén Darío con la meta de fortalecer el hermanamiento con la escuela de Lincoln. Ahora viene otra vez para continuar este mismo trabajo. ♦

María Salvador González, MD: Improving Community Health

Like many of our friends from Santo Tomás, Dr. María Salvador González has achieved grand dreams in the face of great odds. María Salvador entered kindergarten in 1979, the same year that marked the successful overthrow of the oppressive 42-year Somoza regime by the Sandinista Revolution. Against a backdrop of dramatic social, economic, and cultural change María Salvador pursued her elementary studies in Santo Tomás. Throughout her childhood the US-orchestrated Contra war devastated the nation and resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans. As a high school student María Salvador witnessed a Contra attack on her community of Santo Tomás. Under these conditions education was not a guaranteed right but a luxury available to few Nicaraguans.

In 1989, at the age of 16, María Salvador began to work as a secretary in the Ministry of Education in order to help improve her family's difficult economic situation. She later became a secretary to the head of the local Sandinista military unit and attended high school classes at night in order to continue her high school studies.

In 1991, María Salvador entered the University of Juigalpa to study medicine. Juigalpa is the largest city near Santo Tomás, located an hour away by bus.

Thanks to the help of uncles, her father and a teacher from Santo Tomás, she was able to pay for the first year, which she ended up needing to repeat due to health problems. In 1992, due to her hard work, huge potential, and financial need María Salvador was honored to receive a scholarship from several Olympia donors to finance her medical school educa-



tion. In her own words, "Oh, so much changed for me then. I couldn't have supported myself and gone to school because there were days that I arrived at school at seven in the morning and left

at six in the evening."

Upon finishing her studies in 1996, María Salvador interned at the Juigalpa Hospital and did social service in the town of Acoyapa, located just outside Santo Tomás. Gradually, María Salvador got to know members of TSTSCA's sister non-profit in Santo Tomás, the Committee for Community Development and also began to meet visitors from Olympia. In 1999, she began to work as a general doctor at the CDC-operated People's Clinic.

After many years of hard work and with the support of friends and family, María Salvador continues her work today as a general practice doctor at the People's Clinic and has also served since January 2004 as the clinic coordinator. She also recently completed a second degree in pharmacy.

María Salvador and her partner, Julio Meneses, who is a veterinarian, have an adorable 3-year-old daughter, Gisell Meneses. María Salvador's role as a mother has brought her closer to her community and made her a better doctor. "The thing that I enjoy most about my job is the opportunity to serve the community and to work with the children—with all the patients—to understand their problems." María Salvador is excited to visit Olympia and to meet all of the people who supported her studies. She especially looks forward to supporting the further development of the sister city relationship, saying, "I'll push forward and keep fighting until we reach our destination." We are also very excited to help celebrate her 33rd birthday on May 9th! ♦

María Salvador: Cuidando al pueblo

Igual como muchos de nuestros compañeros en Santo Tomás, Doctora María Salvador González ha realizado gran metas aunque la enfrentaba muchos desafíos. Después de graduarse de colegio en Santo Tomás, María Salvador se matriculó en la Universidad de Juigalpa, el capital del departamento donde queda Santo Tomás. En 1992, por parte de su gran esfuerzo académica, su potencial impresionante, y su necesidad financial María Salvador recibió una beca de varios donantes de Olympia para finan-

ciar sus estudios para ser doctora. Dice María Salvador de las oportunidades que le presentaba la beca, "Definitivamente trabajar y estudiar yo no podría porque había días cuando yo entraba a la escuela a las 7 de la mañana y salía a las 6 de la tarde."

Actualmente María Salvador trabaja en la capacidad de Médica General y coordinadora de la Clínica Popular en Santo Tomás. La doctora y su esposo Julio Meneses tienen una hija de tres años que se llama Gisell Meneses. María

Salvadora explica que el nacimiento de Gisell ha mejorado su manera de practicar la medicina. "Las cosas que más me gustan de mi trabajo—servir la comunidad y estar en contacto con los niños, con todos los pacientes, conocer sus problemas."

Estamos muy emocionad@s para recibir Doctora María Salvador con la delegación que viene en Abril. Esperamos que la comunidad de Olympia pueda juntar con nosotros para darle la bienvenida y también para celebrar su cumpleaños el 9 de Mayo cuando cumplirá 33 años! ♦

Music and Nourishment: Rosa Aura Segura Dishes it Up!

Rosa Aura Segura Guerrero, 35 years old, grew up in Santo Tomás during the 1970s. As a child, Rosa Aura enjoyed singing and dancing, including a traditional dance known as *baile folclórico*. When she was seven, an uncle taught her to play guitar. She says of her musical talents “I carry it in my blood; my whole family loves music.”

Rosa Aura was nine when the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown by the Sandinista Revolution in 1979. She was a member of the Association of Sandinista Children (ANS) and later a member of the Sandinista Youth Movement (Juventud Sandinista). This led her to become a volunteer at the Children’s Free Lunch Kitchen in Santo Tomás, a center she attended as a child that has continued serving hot meals to the children of several neighborhoods.

Rosa Aura completed her studies through her first year of high school, during which time she formed a group to help promote interest among other youth in cultural activities such as dance and singing, instructing students at other schools in revolutionary songs. She was also involved in the support that was mobilized around the many families who lost fathers, mothers, sons, and siblings in the Contra War. Rosa Aura says of her involvement with the movement that “we met on street corners, burned tires at night, sang the revolutionary songs, and screamed protest chants. The struggle, the revolution, had to be lived each and every day.”

Because of the destruction wrought by the U.S.-orchestrated Contra War and

U.S. embargo, the country’s economic situation was dire. In 1988, at age 17, Rosa Aura emigrated to Costa Rica in search of work and a better life than she was able to find in Nicaragua. After several years in Costa Rica, Rosa Aura returned to Santo Tomás. She joined a popular local band, Nuevo Amanecer, with whom she still performs today. The group’s name conveys the themes of hope and the breaking of a new day. Rosa Aura and her family often share music, stories, and food with visitors to Santo Tomás from the Olympia community.

During the last few years, Rosa Aura’s

“I have always enjoyed helping others in the community however I can, and I think that the work that happens at the kitchen is very important.”

community organizing has focused once more on the Children’s Free Lunch Kitchen, which now also includes a preschool and small library. Rosa Aura says of her work at the Kitchen “I have always enjoyed helping others in the community however I can, and I think that the work that happens at the kitchen is very important. Many of the children who attend



have many problems in their lives: some are orphans, some have been abused, some are disabled, some spend much of their lives on the streets, begging for food, shining shoes, or selling wares, and are exposed to danger. I like talking with the kids to really get to know them and their ideas. I really enjoy working with children, as they are so sincere, and so many of these children lack the attention

and love they need. I enjoy telling them a story or singing a song that makes them laugh. I feel very proud to work here.”

Rosa Aura also enjoys spending time with her active and intelligent five-year-old son, Délin, and studies cosmetology at the Night School. She hopes that starting her own cosmetology business will offer her more options for steady employment in the face of an increasingly bleak national economy.

About her upcoming visit to Olympia, Rosa Aura says, “You would have to see the situation in Nicaragua in order to believe it. I would like to strengthen the sister city relationship and communicate the importance of solidarity for my community.” Rosa Aura looks forward to sharing her musical talents on Sunday, May 7th at the Capitol Theater, working with organizations that serve children to enhance her experience at the Children’s Free Lunch Kitchen, talking with the Olympia community about the problems of hunger and poverty in Nicaragua, and meeting with other mothers. ♦

Rosa Aura Segura: Tocando música, tocando corazones

Rosa Aura Segura Guerrero, 35 años de edad, crecía en Santo Tomás desde niña. Siempre le ha gustado cantar y bailar. Era miembro del organismo “Asociación de Niños Sandinista” y más tarde, de la Juventud Sandinista. Asistía un centro llamado el Comedor Infantil, que da un tiempo de comida caliente a los niños de varios barrios Tomasinos; como joven, Rosa Aura trabajaba de voluntario en el mismo comedor infantil. A los 17 años, Rosa Aura fue a Costa Rica para buscar oportunidades mejores a las que le ofrecía la economía Nicaraguense debido al bloqueo económico. Al regresar a Santo Tomás unos años después, Rosa Aura se intergró en un conjunto musical llamado “Nuevo Amanecer”, con que ella sigue tocando hasta ahora. Hoy día, el trabajo comunitario de Rosa Aura se ha enfocado otra vez en el Comedor Infantil. Dice Rosa Aura de su trabajo, “siempre me ha gustado ayudar a la comunidad como puedo, y creo que el trabajo que realiza el Comedor Infantil es muy importante.” ♦

Consider visiting Santo Tomás this summer!

Have you ever considered visiting our sister town of Santo Tomás, Nicaragua? A family-friendly trip is being planned for this July, in part because of the interest of some folks from Lincoln Elementary (sistered for seven years with Rubén Darío Elementary School in Santo Tomás). We may already be full for this trip, but feel free to call Jean to inquire: 943-8642.

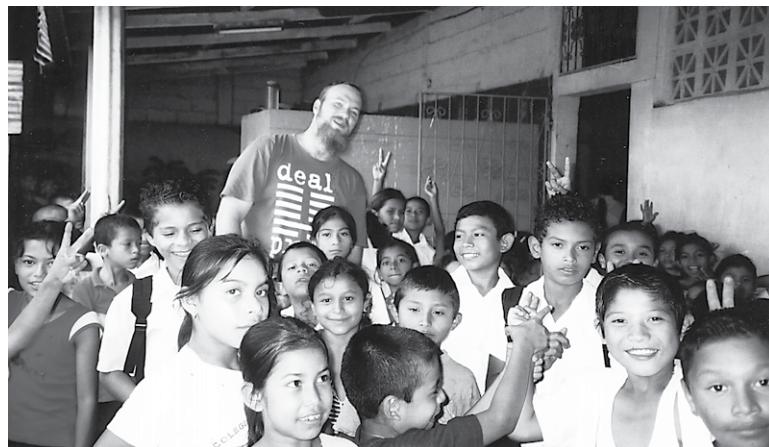
The Thurston Santo Tomás Sister County Association organizes a community delegation from Olympia every other year, and a spring trip of Evergreen students on the alternating year. Those of us who have had the privilege to spend time volunteering and learning in Santo Tomás believe that the 17 year-long connection is meaningful and

beneficial to both of our communities.

TSTSCA is preparing a thirteen-day trip in early July that can include people who are not strong Spanish language speakers (you must have at least some speaking and comprehension skills). There is an option of a longer stay for

intermediate-level Spanish language speakers who need less direct support. The trip fee will depend on how many people decide to participate.

We invite you to an information session on Thursday, May 25th from 5 pm sharp to 6:30 in the staff lounge at Lincoln Elementary. Prior to the information session, please try to view the hour-long TSTSCA documentary, "Know Our People." There is a copy in the Lincoln office area or you can borrow one from TSTSCA. Please RSVP by May 20th so we'll know if we need a larger space at the school. Please bring a potluck dish to share. Any questions? Contact Jean at 943-8642. ♦



Sean Izzarone with children at the comedor

Facunda

From page 3

by spending the majority of her time in Lincoln classrooms, studying the way students learn, different teaching methods, and how students are evaluated. TSTSCA and Lincoln are excited to have Facunda's warm and inspiring presence in our community once again. ♦

TSTSCA gratefully acknowledges the financial contributions of the Options Community Council at Lincoln Elementary and the Community Sustaining Fund to help bring this delegation.

Bienvenida/Welcome Party!

Traditions Café and World Folk Art

Friday, April 21, 7:00 PM

Join us for an evening of fun to lend a hearty welcome to the three delegates from Santo Tomás! This is a great chance to mingle with the delegates and folks in our community, be entertained, eat yummy food and maybe even join in a very special sing-a-long!

Performers include **Coyote Nation, Los Calaveras,** and delegate **Rosa Aura Segura.**

Free! All ages welcome!

Check out our website for more events: www.olympiasantotomas.org

Questions? Call Carrie at 866-4401



Lee Miller

Work-A-Day for International Solidarity this May Day!

May Day, International Workers Day, what better day is there to support cross-border organizing efforts by participating in Thurston Santo Tomás Sister County Association's Work-A-Day for International Solidarity?

Join us in donating all or part of your day's wages on May 1st to support the work of Thurston Santo Tomás Sister County Association and our counterpart, the Committee for Community Development in Santo Tomás, Nicaragua.

Why Our Money Matters:

Here in Thurston County, the average full-time worker earns about \$34,000/year, \$135/day, or \$16.50/hour. A minimum wage worker who averages 40 hours per week earns about \$15,870 a year, or \$61/day.

In Nicaragua, teachers earn between \$112 and \$123 per month. Agricultural workers, which represent about 43% of all employed

Nicaraguan workers, average \$36.60/month; construction workers just under \$100/month, and manufacturing workers, most of whom work in free trade zones, earn

U.S. poverty line) for a Nicaraguan family costs \$104/month.

TSTSCA supports the salaries of 7 community service workers in Santo Tomás, including the coordinators of the Children's Free Lunch Program, the Farm, and the Library. Money raised in this Work-A-Day will also support delegations from Santo Tomás to Olympia, our newsletter and social projects in Santo Tomás.

How This Works:

1. You fill out the form below and send it to TSTSCA, PO Box 561, Olympia WA 98507.
 2. In return for your pledge form, we send you a free ticket for "Joining Hands, *Juntos Somos un Volcán*", our gala event on May 7th at the Capitol Theater. We also send you a beautiful button and some literature to hand out on Monday, May 1st as you do your regular work.
 3. You send us a check for the amount of your wages that you can afford to donate!

Simple! ♦

\$48.80/ month. AND full time is 48 hours / week, not 40, as is the U.S. standard.

Meanwhile, the National Minimum Salary Commission has determined that the Canasta Básica (basic basket of services equal to

: SIGN ME UP TO WORK-A-DAY FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY ON MAY 1ST!

- Please count on me for a contribution of:
• \$50 \$100 \$200 \$1 gazillion \$Other _____
 - Let's save a stamp. I'm enclosing my check at this time.
 - Name: _____
 - Address: _____

 - _____
 - Phone: _____
 - Email: _____
 - **Donations are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to:**
 - TSTSCA
 - PO Box 561
 - Olympia, WA 98507
 - Phone: (360) 943-8642

Joining Hands: Juntos Somos un Volcán

An evening of revolutionary music & stories from
Nicaragua

Join us for this gala event in celebration of 17 years of solidarity between Olympia and Santo Tomás, Nicaragua!

Sunday May 7, 6:30 pm, Capitol Theater

206 E 5th – downtown Olympia

Doors open at 6 pm, Show starts at 6:30

Refreshments will be served following the performance.

**\$6 children under 12; \$10 OFS, student & low-income;
\$12-\$30 (sliding scale) General Public**

Advance tickets available at Rainy Day Records & Traditions Fair Trade

Rosa Aura Segura Guerrero, lead singer for the Nicaraguan band Nuevo Amanecer and coordinator of the Santo Tomás Children's Free Lunch Kitchen, joins forces with members of Olympia's own **Citizens Band** to present a rich array of Nicaraguan *nueva canción*. More than just a commodity, popular music throughout Latin America has been used to teach history and organizing skills, inspire community involvement, and tell the people's stories not covered by the media. The presentation will include a wide selection of Nicaraguan revolutionary music.

Lincoln Elementary students will perform *Baile Folclórico* (traditional Nicaraguan dances) and join in several songs.

All three delegates will share a photo slideshow and tell stories about their work in Santo Tomás from their unique perspectives as an educator, a doctor, and a community organizer working against poverty and hunger. ♦

**Thurston–Santo Tomás
Sister County Association**
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