

# Sophia's Circle & Weaving for Justice Annual Newsletter

Friend us on Facebook at Weaving for Justice/Email us at [weavingforjustice@gmail.com](mailto:weavingforjustice@gmail.com)

Visit our website and on-line store at [www.weaving-for-justice.org](http://www.weaving-for-justice.org)

We are also on Instagram at Weaving for Justice



*Photo taken in the home of a weaver in Chenalhó, Chiapas by Meghann Dallin, 2007.*

30 March 2021

Dear Friends,

Since the pandemic started early last year, the empty chair has become a symbol of those who have passed on due to COVID-19. Many chairs at tables throughout the world are empty. Chairs are empty in front of looms in homes in Chiapas, Mexico. Our hearts go out to all of you who have lost family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors during the pandemic. We are deeply grateful that none of the weavers with whom we work in Chiapas have died, although some of them have lost loved ones to the virus.

A year ago, due to the pandemic, we suspended face-to-face sales of the textiles at our store in Las Cruces and at other events and venues. Except for several stores that have steadfastly sold for us over the years, we didn't know how to keep selling for the weaving cooperatives until one of our Steering Committee members, Meghann Dallin, set us up to sell on Instagram. Since then, sales on Instagram and through email, phone, Facetime, and store appointments have helped us bring in more sales for the weavers than in any past year! We are grateful to all of you who purchased textiles and helped us in other ways. We are also thankful that so many people are now fully vaccinated in Southern New Mexico. Given improving conditions, in May we will resume our once monthly Saturday sales at our store. We also look forward to selling at fiestas and other public events in the future and we will continue to sell on Instagram, as well.

The weaving cooperatives we assist are **Tsobol Antsetik** (Women United), a group of 35 women and their children in the township of San Pedro Chenalhó, with a meeting house/store in the community of Chixiltón (see p. 5 for information about visiting the meeting house); **Mujeres Por La Dignidad** (Women for Dignity), a Zapatista

collective of about 90 women with their headquarters in Oventic in the autonomous township San Andrés Sacham ch'en de los Pobres; and several smaller groups of weavers in **Aguacatenango, Chamula, Oxchuc, Pantelhó, Venustiano Carranza**, and a **doll-making group** in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. All the women in these weaving groups are in the resistance, that is they do not participate in top-down economic development projects that fail to take their needs into account. Instead, they rely on developing local economies of solidarity in collaboration with civil society organizations in Mexico and in the U.S. and other nations, such as Weaving for Justice.

**THE YEAR IN REVIEW:** Over the past year we've tried to keep in touch with you through monthly email newsletters. If you haven't been receiving our newsletters please email us at [weavingforjustice@gmail.com](mailto:weavingforjustice@gmail.com) so we can make sure you receive them. The following are excerpts taken from these newsletters with information about the pandemic in Chiapas and our activities on behalf of the weaving cooperatives:

**Solidarity in the time of COVID-19, April 2020:** *"We haven't heard of any deaths from COVID-19 in the weavers' communities, but in Chenalhó where one cooperative is based, tuberculosis is prevalent. This, in addition to endemic poverty; scarce information about the pandemic; few clinics in rural areas; and the continuing displacement of communities from paramilitary violence places the original peoples of Chiapas at risk for being infected."*

**Solidarity in the time of COVID-19, July 2020:** *An excerpt from words of the representative of Mujeres Por La Dignidad (Women for Dignity), a Zapatista weaving cooperative: "Friends, sisters and brothers, good morning, afternoon and/or night to all. We want to let you know how we are living in Chiapas in the face of this COVID-19 emergency. We as peoples know that you in the city are also facing this difficult situation in some way. In our communities we have not stopped working in the fields. We continue the struggle to acquire our food on a daily basis. But we see that this does not meet all our needs. We still buy some products necessary in daily life, such as salt, corn, sugar, and medicines and clothes. And for these, the prices have increased. In order to buy them, we are obliged to make handicrafts for people to buy who visit our country and our state. But with the closing of borders we have been left without ways to sell."*

**Solidarity in the time of COVID-19, December 2020:** *"Weaving for Justice is saddened to lose one of our favorite local stores, Mountain View Market, an owner-operated, organic food co-op in Las Cruces. The co-op has supported our efforts for years by selling textiles and other items made by the weaving cooperatives in Chiapas. As a source of locally grown organic produce, they tried to hang on as long as possible during the Covid pandemic, but finally had to shut their doors. We will sorely miss this co-op and the wonderful people who worked there, especially Karla who did the ordering of Weaving for Justice items. Perhaps when the economy recovers, they will be able to re-group and re-open. We hope so!"*

**Solidarity in the time of COVID-19, January 2021:** *"To heal we must remember." - Joe Biden, 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States "To remember...it has been a central lesson of our work with weavers in Chiapas, as it is today in this moment in our nation. The weavers have taught us to remember the ancestors, how they laid out the path to follow into the future...to keep alive the traditions, the languages, the values that the ancestors handed down...to never forget those who fell in the struggle for justice...to never forget our reciprocity with Earth that feeds us...not to take more than our share....to feed whoever comes to our door."*

**Solidarity in the time of COVID-19, February 2021:** *"For several years Beatriz Ferreira has generously rented us space for our store at 525 E. Lohman Avenue in Las Cruces for the cost of utilities. Last year she lost several tenants in the building and needs to sell the building unless she can rent two offices. Please contact Beatriz if you are interested in renting - [quina99@msn.com](mailto:quina99@msn.com). In the event that we have to move, we're starting to look for a space to sell the textiles for the cooperatives and donated textiles we sell to raise scholarships for Maya youth. Call us crazy or hopelessly optimistic, but we are hoping to find a space for a nominal rent (under \$100 a month). Please contact us at [weavingforjustice@gmail.com](mailto:weavingforjustice@gmail.com) if you know of a space we could rent."*

## An upcoming exhibition at the New Mexico State University Museum

We are deeply grateful to Dr. Kristin Otto, Curator at the NMSU University Museum, for inviting us to collaborate with the Museum on an upcoming exhibit of Maya weavers and weaving in Chiapas, Mexico. Below is an announcement from Dr. Otto taken from our March 2021 monthly email newsletter:

"In preparation for an exhibition opening Fall 2021, I have been collaborating with Weaving for Justice, their partner cooperatives in Chiapas, Mexico and museum students to curate a new exhibition centered on Maya textiles from Chiapas and the many layered relationships created through them. Inspired by Christine Eber's **When a Woman Rises** book and title, the exhibition will pay particular attention to issues of generational difference, global circulation, and township practice by highlighting weavers and work from Chenalhó, Venustiano Carranza, and Zinacantán. The exhibition will also involve input from partner cooperatives in Chiapas through sections and programs highlighting their voices and facilitating exchange, and by commissioning and documenting new pieces for the University Museum's permanent collection. The exhibition will be open from Fall 2021 – Summer 2022, and the University Museum is excited to welcome you into the space! For more information feel free to contact me ([krotto@nmsu.edu](mailto:krotto@nmsu.edu)) or visit the museum's [website](#)."



*This shawl from Zinacantán, Chiapas was originally donated to Weaving for Justice by Patricia Ferrer of Tucson to raise scholarships for Maya youth through our partner, The Maya Educational Foundation (see page 4 for information about our scholarship fundraiser). The University Museum recently purchased this shawl for the upcoming exhibit.*

### WAYS YOU CAN HELP

As an all-volunteer organization, all expressions of solidarity from our members and donors mean the world to us, and to the weavers. Into the new year and as long as the pandemic lasts, we will continue to send monthly donations on the first of each month to Tsobol Antsetik and Mujeres Por La Dignidad. You can donate on the **DONATE** button on the homepage of our website – [www.weaving-for-justice.org](http://www.weaving-for-justice.org).

**\* BECOME A MEMBER** - All proceeds from weaving sales go back to the weavers. We depend upon memberships and donations to cover the costs of holding sales and events. Costs include printing literature, covering booth fees, and a small monthly electric bill at our store in Las Cruces. Our membership form is on the last page of this newsletter. If you are already a member, please take this opportunity to renew your membership.

**\* DONATIONS IN HONOR OR MEMORY** of a special person in your life. (Please see the form at the end of this newsletter or donate on our website.) Please email us - [weavingforjustice@gmail.com](mailto:weavingforjustice@gmail.com) - with the person's name and address and we will notify them. We would also be honored to remember on Instagram one of your loved ones who has passed with a photo and a few words about the person.



Photo by Claudia Pérez Pérez of weavers of Tsobol Antsetik distributing food aid from donors to Weaving for Justice

\* **DONATE MESOMERICAN & LATIN AMERICAN TEXTILES** to raise scholarships for Maya youth in Belize, Chiapas, and Guatemala. In 2020, due to the coronavirus, the New Mexico State University Museum where we have held fundraisers for the past six years was closed. Although we couldn't have a face-to-face sale of donated textiles to raise funds for scholarships, we were able to sell these textiles on Instagram and at an occasional store appointment. We are grateful that with progress made from vaccinating against the virus, that the University Museum will re-open in August 2021 and we will hold our 7<sup>th</sup> annual textile fundraiser sale there at the end of October during Days of the Dead. At that time we will remember those who have passed on from COVID-19 and turn donated textiles and other items from Latin America into scholarships for Maya students through partnering with the University Museum (<https://univmuseum.nmsu.edu/>) and the Maya Educational Foundation ([www.mayaedufound.org](http://www.mayaedufound.org)). Each year more and more children and youth in Belize, Chiapas, and Guatemala, are pursuing their dreams of an education thanks to the work of the Maya Educational Foundation and the Maya men and women who facilitate MEF's scholarship programs in their home countries.

We hope that conditions will permit **Dr. Carol Hendrickson**, Professor Emerita of Anthropology, Marlboro College, to speak at our fundraiser. Hendrickson is an anthropologist who has been engaged in research on Maya dress and identity and other issues in Guatemala since the 1970s. She was one of our first donors to the donated textile project, is a long-time member of Weaving for Justice, and also served for many years on the board of the Maya Educational Foundation.

If you would like to clean out your closets and donate to a worthy cause, please contact Christine Eber at [ceber@nmsu.edu](mailto:ceber@nmsu.edu). Sophia's Circle is a 501c3 organization and your donation may have tax benefits.

\* **VOLUNTEER WITH US** – We're happy to explore with you how you might get involved in our work. We have a volunteer handbook to orient you to our work and to the weavers and their communities.

\* **HOST A HOUSE PARTY** - A member of our steering committee is happy to come to your home or organization to sell weavings if everyone in attendance is fully vaccinated. As a thank you, you will receive our gift of a weaving. Please contact Christine at 575 621-5999 or at [ceber@nmsu.edu](mailto:ceber@nmsu.edu). **Note:** If she is available, Christine would be happy to do a brief reading at a sale in your home from her novel, ***When a Woman Rises***. One of the characters in the novel is a weaver from Chenalhó. The novel, translated into Spanish by Camilo Pérez Bustillo, was recently released for sale by Cinco Puntos Press under the title: ***Cuando una mujer se levanta***. Christine would like to thank Camilo and the over 125 donors who also

made it possible for 2,000 copies of the Spanish translation to be printed in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas and given away for free to Maya women, men and youth in Chiapas.



*Members of Tsobol Antsetik with free copies of Quando una mujer se levanta*

**\* VISIT INSTAGRAM & OUR WEBSITE STORE** for many woven personal and household items, including blouses, shawls, scarves, table runners, bookmarks, photo books by weavers, nursing mother dolls, bilingual cloth books of animals or numbers in Tsotsil and Spanish, and woven squares embroidered with "When a woman rises no man is left behind" and the face of a Zapatista woman (also in Spanish) <http://weaving-for-justice.org/online-store-books-for-sale/>)

**\* VISIT THE WEAVERS IN CHENALHO, CHIAPAS** - When you feel safe to travel again, the weavers of Tsobol Antsetik welcome you to visit their meeting house in Chixiltón, Chenalhó, Chiapas. Directions to the house are on our webpage – [www.weaving-for-justice.org](http://www.weaving-for-justice.org) A good way to prepare for your visit is to view the film, "A Maya Celebration," made by Janet Darrow, Weaving for Justice Steering Committee member. Janet made the film during the inauguration of the meeting house in April 2016. A link to the film is on our website under "About Us."

**\* PATRONIZE THE FOLLOWING STORES & VENUES:**

**\* May 1<sup>st</sup> Mother's Day Sale** - On this day we celebrate the reopening of our store at Makai Suites, 525 E. Lohman Ave. (upstairs) in Las Cruces from 10:00 a.m.-4 p.m. You will find many items for Mothers Day and other occasions.

**\* Las Cruces, New Mexico - 3<sup>RD</sup> Saturday of the month sale** – Our monthly sales will resume on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of June, the 20<sup>th</sup>, 10 – 4 at 525 E. Lohman Ave., Las Cruces.

**\* Mesilla, New Mexico - Bowlin's Mesilla Book Center**, 2360 Calle Principal, Mesilla, New Mexico (shawls and scarves).

\* **Denver, Colorado - Hijos del Sol**, 2715 W. 8th Avenue, Denver. The Latino Cultural Arts Center's retail store, Hijos del Sol, is open every second Saturday of the month or by appointment. 720-353-2233 [www.lcac-denver.org](http://www.lcac-denver.org) (a variety of items).

\* **Phoenix, Arizona - Palabras Bilingual Bookstore**, 906 W. Roosevelt St. Unit 2, Phoenix (a variety of items).

\* **Tucson, Arizona - United Nations Association Center**, 6242 E. Speedway Blvd. Tucson, Arizona (a variety of items).

### THANK YOU!!

A beautiful part of the process of selling remotely this past year was working with volunteers who generously modeled clothing for us to post on Instagram and Facebook. **We extend our deepest thanks to our models:** Judith Baca, Sophia Baca, Susan Beck, Suzanne Buker, Janet Darrow, Briana Rae Dorado, Elvia Hilaria Dorado, Sylvia Dorado, Christine Eber, Elijah Emon, Flora Graham, Aurelia Holliman, Lia Norem, Mike O'Malley, Linda Pearson, Taylor Rey, Sibella Salazar, Ben Shendo, Nena Singleton, Kim Sorensen, Naya Turner, Bobbie Widner, Sheryl Williams, Amalia Zeitlin, and Leora Zeitlin.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our many donors and members who helped us sustain sales for the weavers over the past year. We also wish to thank the following individuals for their support: *Adrianna Abarca; Shirley Baca; Andrea Bryan; Denise Chávez; Mike Cook; Mary Ann Daley; Amy Dockter; Carlota Duarte; Beatriz Ferreira; Peter Goodman; Flora Graham; Elaine Hampton; Angela Kocherga; Maxine Insera; Bill Jungels; Greg Lester; Martha Loustaunau; Elisabeth Nicholson; Kristin Otto; Tom Potts; Jeanne Simonelli; Nena Singleton; Kristi Smith; Rebecca Wiggins-Reinhard; Sheryl Williams; Til Zimmerman; and to the following organizations & businesses: AAUW, Las Cruces; Bisbee Fiber Arts Guild; The Chiapas Photography Project; KRWG Radio; KTAL Radio; Latin American Solidarity Committee of Western New York; Maya Educational Foundation; New Mexico State University Museum; Rochester Committee on Latin America; Tucson Spinners & Weavers Guild; Unitarian Universalist Church, Las Cruces; Weave a Real Peace; and Wisdom Through the Pages, Las Cruces.*

Warmest regards,

*Aurelia, Christine, Crystal, Janet, Lorena, Patricia, Sally, and Susan (Weaving for Justice Steering Committee)*

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### MEMBERSHIP FORM

**YES!** I want to support Weaving for Justice in its work on behalf of weaving cooperatives in Chiapas, Mexico. Enclosed is my check payable to Sophia's Circle in the amount of US \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Sophia's Circle is a 501c3 organization so your membership or donation is tax deductible. Please mail your form to: Sophia's Circle, 1825 Myrtle Ave., Las Cruces, NM 88001. **Note:** You may also pay with a credit card on the membership page on our website – <http://weaving-for-justice.org/become-a-member/>

**Membership:** Budget membership \_\_\_\_\_ (**\$15**); Basic Membership \_\_\_\_\_ (**\$35**); Gold membership \_\_\_\_\_ (**\$50**); additional donation \_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_