

Sophia's Circle & Weaving for Justice Annual Newsletter

Friend us on Facebook at Weaving for Justice/Email us at weavingforjustice@gmail.com

Visit our website and on-line store at www.weaving-for-justice.org

We are also on Instagram at Weaving for Justice

"I want my daughters and granddaughters to have courage to defend their rights and also not to forget our traditions. I want my granddaughters to have courage and be fighters [for justice] like I was."

- Flor de Margarita Pérez Pérez, member of Luchom Jolom Antsetik (Women Embroiderers and Weavers), Tsabalhó, Chenalhó, Chiapas

1 April 2024

Dear Friends,

Over the years, we have often quoted Margarita in our newsletters. That is in part because of the pivotal role she has played since the 1980s to connect weaving collectives in communities of Chenalhó, Chiapas with supporters in the U.S. In February of this year, several Weaving for Justice members and volunteers visited with Margarita and other women in two collectives. In anticipation of International Women's Day, we asked them about their hopes for their daughters and granddaughters. We were moved by the women's words which spoke consistently of their hopes for their daughters and granddaughters to fight for justice, carry on traditions, and be free from abuse. We also asked young women students from Chenalhó who receive scholarships through our fundraising efforts how they would like their lives to be different from their mothers and grandmothers. The students also spoke of wanting to be free from the abuse that many of their mothers and grandmothers suffered.

Below is a photo of Margarita's mother, Angélica, who taught her daughters to weave and continues to guide her granddaughters and great-granddaughters. Angélica endured her own share of trials over the years, but she persevered and as you can see is still weaving!



Angélica isn't able to attend meetings anymore, but she still belongs to Tsobol Antsetik (Women United), a weaving collective of 28 members that she, her daughters, relatives and neighbors co-founded in the late 1980s after participating in a government-sponsored co-op in the headtown of Chenalhó and in Sna Jolobil (House of the Weaver), an independent cooperative based in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. The photo on the next page is of members of Tsobol Antsetik in February 2024 when several Weaving for Justice members visited with them.

Photo of Angélica by Peter Vanier, March, 2024



Photo by Peter Vanier, February 2024

In addition to **Tsobol Antsetik**, Weaving for Justice assist **Mujeres Por La Dignidad** (Women for Dignity), a Zapatista collective of about 80 members primarily from the municipality of San Andrés Sakam Ch'en de los Pobres; **Jolom Luch Maya** (Maya Weavers and Embroiderers), comprised of 24 women members of Las Abejas (The Bees), the Catholic social justice organization based in Acteal, Chenalhó; a **doll-making group** in San Cristóbal de Las Casas; and several smaller groups of weavers in **Tsabalhó, Chenalhó; Aguacatenango; Chamula; Oxchuc; Pantelhó; and Venustiano Carranza.**

The members of these weaving groups are in the resistance, that is they do not participate in state and federal 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 nations, and in the U.S organizations such as Weaving for Justice."

Our goal in selling textiles for collectives and raising funds for scholarships is to help women and their families remain on their ancestral lands doing dignified work and to help students prepare themselves for careers that will enable them to stay in their home communities and countries and give back to their people. Over the past year, we have often wished we could do more to respond to the escalating violence against communities in resistance and the original peoples of Chiapas. Many communities find themselves caught in warring between criminal organizations for control over municipalities. The effects of this reign of terror include displacements of large numbers of people from their ancestral lands; assassinations and disappearances of community leaders; the forced recruitment of young people into criminal gangs; and a tenor of terror which tears at the social, economic, and cultural fabric of communities. Criminal organizations are a special threat to young people who have few opportunities to advance in their lives. These organizations pressure young people to work for them, promising them easy money. In this context individual human lives have little value. Under these conditions, more and more young people who want to live with dignity have no choice but to leave their communities and migrate to the U.S. or other parts of Mexico. For more about the efforts of the organizations, with which many of the weaving groups are affiliated, to

defend the human rights of the original peoples of Chiapas, please go to the web pages of Las Abejas (www.acteal.org); the EZLN (www.ezln.org.mx; www.enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx); the Center for Human Rights Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas (<https://frayba.org.mx>); and Schools for Chiapas (<https://schoolsforchiapas.org/>)

We can't thank you enough for supporting us in our work. As an all-volunteer organization, at times we feel stretched, but then someone offers to help, or a donation arrives in the mail, and we feel renewed and strengthened. We are also forever grateful to the weavers in cooperatives in Chiapas who have been teaching us about the meaning of solidarity through drawing us into their struggles to create alternative societies that uplift everyone.

WHERE TO PURCHASE TEXTILES FROM CHIAPAS COLLECTIVES

We have been in our store space at **First Christian Church** at 1809 El Paseo Road in Las Cruces for over two years now. We are grateful that the church has embraced us as part of their social justice mission. In the aftermath of a robbery in our store in July 2023, the church Board forgave us several months rent to help us recover from the loss. In countless ways, they have facilitated our work on behalf of Maya weavers and students.

We hold sales of textiles made by weavers in Chiapas, from which all proceeds go directly to the weavers; and sales of donated textiles and other items which provide funds for scholarships for Maya youth.

Our sales are held in the Church Atrium on the **3rd Saturday of the month, 10-3 pm**. Recently we've also been expanding items for sale on our website store – <https://weaving-for-justice.org/online-store-books-for-sale/> From time to time we also post items for sale on our Instagram page - <https://www.instagram.com/weavingforjustice/?hl=en>

We're happy to announce that ten napkins are now available on our website store! The detail photos below show three napkins with symbols of corn, a woman, and the Maya cosmogram.



Photos by Autumn McAllister

ANNUAL DONATED TEXTILE SALE TO FUND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MAYA YOUTH

Each year we partner with The Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) to turn donated textiles into scholarships for Maya youth in Belize, Chiapas and Guatemala by selling textiles and other items from Latin America that have been donated to us. We also send funds to MEF from sales of donated

textiles at our 3rd Saturday sales. With the help of these sales, each year more and more children and youth in Belize, Chiapas, and Guatemala, are pursuing their dreams of an education.

This year we were honored to welcome a former scholarship recipient - **Norma Esther Subuyuj Boj** - who came from Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Sacatepéquez, Guatemala to Las Cruces to speak. Despite growing up in a large family with few resources and with vision in only one eye, Norma was encouraged by her mother to pursue her dreams. While working as a maid in Guatemala City, Norma heard about the Maya Educational Foundation scholarships. She applied, was accepted, and completed university with a degree in business. After graduating Norma started a textile business in Antigua, Guatemala - Nakoj (Roar of the Lion) in Kakchiquel. Nakoj supports women weavers in Norma's community of Xenacoj.

We were also delighted to welcome **Elisabeth Nicholson**, Director of the Maya Educational Foundation (MEF), who came from Cape Cod to share the story of the foundation's work.

In Spanish there is a word, "**tocaya**," for women who share the same name. At our fundraiser Norma Subuyuj met her tocaya, **Normal Chairez-Hartell**, Curator at the time of the New Mexico State University Museum where we held the fundraiser. The two young women were key to the success of our two-day event and we thank them both! In the photo below, Norma H. is wearing a tunic from Sololá, Guatemala that she purchased at the fundraiser. It was donated by Judiann McNulty, one of the 79 textile donors who have generously supported our project over the past decade.



*Norma Chairez-Hartell and Norma Ester Subuyuj Boj.
Photo by Christine Eber, October 28, 2023*

Below is a photo of eight high school and two university students from Chenalhó who receive MEF scholarships who Gail Forrest and Christine Eber visited with in February 2024. It has only been a couple decades since most young people in Chenalhó ended their formal education at 6th grade. We congratulate these students for their determination to carry on in school. They give us hope for the future!



Photo by Gail Forrest, February 10, 2024

We welcome donations of textiles and other items from Latin America, including books, jewelry, and tourist items. Please email us at weavingforjustice@gmail.com for guidance on donating. Our heartfelt thanks to those who have donated their treasures to this project since we began in 2015.

BORDER IMMERSION GROUP VISITS WITH WEAIVING FOR JUSTICE

For a couple years Weaving for Justice has been presenting to groups of students from around the country who visit our border region to learn about the realities of life here. Our presentations are part of a Border Immersion Program sponsored by the Border Servant Corps in Las Cruces – <https://www.borderservantcorps.org/border-education>. The photo below was taken when eleven students from the St. Agnatus Preparatory School in San Francisco came to visit us in June 2023. After our presentation, the students had a chance to shop. As you can see, they were very happy with their purchases!



VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS ABOUT MAYA WEAVING COLLECTIVES IN CHIAPAS

We are grateful to Aztlander Magazine of the Ancient Americas for posting on youtube a talk by Weaving for Justice coordinator, Christine Eber – “Maya Weavers, Envy in Times of Struggle and Hope: Challenges of Working Collectively in Chiapas, Mexico” - <https://youtu.be/EyYtpA6aivA>

We also thank Weave a Real Peace (WARP) for inviting Guillermo Acosta and Christine Eber to talk about Weaving for Justice at their monthly webinar, April 20, 2024. Link at www.weavearealpeace.org

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

* **BECOME A MEMBER** - All proceeds from weaving sales go back to the weavers. As an all-volunteer organization, we depend upon memberships and donations to cover the costs of holding sales and events. Memberships in Weaving for Justice come with our gift of a woven bookmark and a 10% discount on purchases at our face-to-face and virtual sales sites.

Donating on our webpage automatically enrolls you as a member. To donate please go to the **DONATE** page on our website homepage. There you will have the option to make your donation **recurring**. If you'd prefer to become a member by check, please fill out the form on p.8 of this newsletter or on the membership page of our website - www.weaving-for-justice.org If you prefer to mail a check, the form at the end of this newsletter provides space for a note.

* **VOLUNTEER WITH US** – We're happy to explore with you how you might become involved in our work. We need help in many ways! Please contact us at weavingforjustice@gmail.com.

* **VISIT THE WEAVERS IN CHENALHO, CHIAPAS** - The weavers of Tsobol Antsetik welcome you to visit their meeting house in Chixiltón, Chenalhó, Chiapas. Directions to the house are on our webpage – <http://weaving-for-justice.org/weaving-cooperatives/> Below is a photo of Gabriela Yazmin Fuentes taken by Diane Manning on a tour to meet the weavers of Tsobol Antsetik. Gaby is wearing a huipil and shawl from Chenalhó. Gaby, Norma Schafer and Eric Chávez Santiago organized the visit. Go to <https://oaxacaculture.com/> for information about Norma's & Eric's tours.



INTRODUCING A NEW STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER



We're delighted to introduce you to our newest Steering Committee member, Guillermo Acosta who joined us in 2023:

"I am a third generation Chicano from southern New Mexico. I grew up in and around El Paso, and feel very fortunate to have settled in Mesilla, New Mexico following my academic endeavors. Being deeply rooted and personally connected to the desert southwest, I identify with the struggle native weavers and their families face as they search for a way to remain on their ancestral lands. For me, it is difficult to name a more worthwhile cause than empowering communities that want simply to live with dignity where their forebears lived, in a similar fashion as they had for centuries. While the efforts of Weaving for Justice are outside my area of expertise (I am a physicist/engineer), I am pledged to do my best to contribute and continue to support our Maya friends.

PATRONIZE THE FOLLOWING STORES & VENUES

- * **Las Cruces, New Mexico - 3RD Saturday of the month sale** – Our monthly sales are on the 3rd Saturday of each month, 10 – 3 in the Atrium of First Christian Church, 1809 El Paseo Road in Las Cruces. We are also open by appointment, in our store in a wing of the church. For appointments email us at weavingforjustice@gmail.com
- * **Mesilla, New Mexico - Bowlin's Mesilla Book Center**, 2360 Calle Principal, Mesilla, New Mexico.
- * **Denver, Colorado - Hijos del Sol**, 2715 W. 8th Avenue, Denver. The Latino Cultural Arts Center's retail store, Hijos del Sol, is open Monday-Sunday, 11-4 pm or by appointment. 720-353-2233 www.lcac-denver.org
- * **Phoenix, Arizona - Palabras Bilingual Bookstore**, 906 W. Roosevelt St. Unit 2, Phoenix.

HELP US STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOU

Once a month we send email newsletters to our supporters and anyone interested in learning about our work. If you haven't been receiving our newsletters, please email us at weavingforjustice@gmail.com so we can add you to the email list.

THANKS TO OUR MANY MEMBERS, DONORS, & VOLUNTEERS!

We owe a debt of gratitude to all our volunteers, members, and donors, and to the following individuals and organizations for their support over the past year:

Emma Álvarez de la Rosa; Fumi Arakawa; Manuel Arias; Shirley Baca; Andrea Bryan; Rachel Barber; Lorena Cabatic; Jazmin Celis; Denise Chávez; Eric Chávez Santiago; Kate Colwell; Rosalina Contreras; Mike Cook; Ron and Kathy Cooke; Nathan Craig; Dennis Darnell; Esther Devall; Carlota Duarte; Steve Duffy; Kit Elliott; Gail Forrest; Shaunna Foster; Patricia Gallegos; Victor Gallegos; Pedro Garcia; Patricia Gonzalez; Peter Goodman; Anna Gray; Norma Amparo Chairez-Hartell; Gabriela Yazmin Fuentes; Flora Graham; Carol Hendrickson; Karen Holmes; Ashley Infante; Joe Jencks; Witold Jacorzynski; José Alfredo Jiménez Pérez; Bill Jungels; LuAnn Kilday; Bruce King; Greg Lester; Tess Lane; Charlotte Lipson; Diane Marron; Lori Miller; Sandy Marshall; Autumn McAllister; LeeAnn Meadows; Julia Mehrer; Bria Milberry;

Teddie Moreno; Sandra Marshall; Carol McCall; Sarah Murphy; Ian Mursell; Rachel Newman; Elisabeth Nicholson; Jennifer Olguin; Esther Ontiveros; Elva Osterreich; Abby O'Malley; Antonio Pérez Pachitan; Tom Potts; Jim Reed; William Reed; Jerry Romero; Mica de la Rosa; Norma Schafer; Mary Alice Scott; Karen Shevet-Dinah; Jeanne Simonelli; Nena Singleton; Kristi Smith; Kim Sorensen; Penny Spingarn; Chantel Thurman; Carol & Peter Vanier; Aracely Villegas; Sheryl Williams; Til Zimmerman; and to the members and staff of the following organizations & businesses: ABC Printing; Aztlander: Magazine of the Ancient Americas; Bentley College Service Learning and Civic Engagement Center; Bisbee Fiber Arts Guild; Black Knuckle Metals; Border Servant Corps; Branigan Library of Las Cruces; The Las Cruces Bulletin; CAMP Program, NMSU; The Chiapas Photography Project; Casa Camino Real Bookstore; Corazón Collective; Del Valle Printing; Doña Ana Arts Council; Exhibit This; Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum; First Christian Church of Las Cruces; Gettysburg College, PA Border Immersion group; KRWG Radio; KTAL Radio; Latin American Solidarity Committee of Western New York; Maya Educational Foundation; Mesilla Valley Film Society; New Mexico State University Museum; Oaxaca Navigator; Paisanos Restaurant, Mesilla; Rincón de Mesilla; Rye Country Day School, Rye, NY BSC Border Immersion group: St. Joseph's University, PA, BSC Border Immersion group; A Still Small Voice 4U; Norma Ester Subuyuj Boj; The J.Paul Taylor and Mary Daniels Taylor Family; Tucson Handweavers and Spinners Guild; Trinity Lutheran Church, Las Cruces; University of Wyoming BSC Border Immersion Group; Weave a Real Peace; The Society for Applied Anthropology; Soroptomist International of Las Cruces; and The Southwest Women's Fiber Arts Collective.

In solidarity,
 Aurelia, Christine, Crystal, Guillermo, Janet, Meghann, Susan (Weaving for Justice Steering Committee)

MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES! I want to support Weaving for Justice. Enclosed is my check payable to Weaving for Justice or Sophia's Circle in the amount of US \$_____ Sophia's Circle is a 501c3 organization so your membership/donation may have tax benefits. Please mail your form to: Weaving for Justice, 1825 Myrtle Ave., Las Cruces, NM 88001.

Note: You may also pay with a credit card or through paypal on the membership page on our website – <http://weaving-for-justice.org/become-a-member/> **Please consider a recurring membership!**

Membership: Budget _____ (**\$15**); Basic _____ (**\$35**); Gold _____ (**\$50**); additional donation _____. (Please indicate if you'd like this donation to go to the following: _____purchase of land to benefit food security for Tsobol Antsetik; _____to assist with health emergencies of members of the cooperatives; _____ the Weaving for Justice general fund to cover our operating expenses.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Please tell us anything else you'd like us to know: