

# Sophia's Circle & Weaving for Justice Annual Newsletter

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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

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*"It's like the fabric has been ripped." - Aurelia Holliman of Weaving for Justice*

15 March 2020

*Dear Friends,*

Aurelia's quote above describes how many of us in Las Cruces, New Mexico and in our border region have felt after refugees stopped being allowed to come to temporary shelters in our communities. Over the past year countless individuals and organizations on both sides of the border worked together tirelessly to try to insert some humanity into the treatment of refugees at our southern border. This effort was against great odds and had to constantly adapt to abrupt changes in the government's policies. But together people on our border created a human fabric that spread across our region and into Mexico where currently thousands of asylum seekers await their court appointments in the U.S.

We have never been more aware of the importance of selling textiles for Maya weavers in Chiapas than over this past year. Sales in the U.S. at fair trade prices have helped the 150 weavers with whom we work stay on their ancestral lands where they can work with dignity and not be forced to leave their homes in search of work or safety.

We write you at a time when the world is experiencing the spread of the coronavirus. We hope you stay safe and well. We are just beginning to think about alternative ways to sell the textiles in lieu of face-to-face sales. Unfortunately, on-line sales don't work well for most of what we sell because the textiles are one-of-a-kind. (But please see what we do have on the on-line store on our website.) One option is to create a catalog with photos of the individual items that can be emailed to our supporters. If you have any ideas to share with us, we welcome them.

## OUR WORK WITH WEAVERS IN CHIAPAS

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 the meeting house); **Mujeres Por La Dignidad** (Women for Dignity), a Zapatista collective of over 100 women who work in small groups throughout the state of Chiapas, with their headquarters in Oventic; and a small **doll-making group** based in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. All the women in the weavers 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. The girls in the photo below are the newest generation of weavers in Tsobol Antsetik. They are carrying on the back-strap weaving tradition of their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers. Photo by Christine Eber, 2019.



### MAYA FACES IN A SMOKING MIRROR

This documentary directed by Bill Jungels and co-produced by Bill and Christine Eber is now available to view for free on youtube. Two sisters – Zenaída and Claudia – weavers in Tsobol Antsetik are in the documentary which shares the struggles of seven Maya individuals in Chiapas to defend and recover aspects of their cultures and communities that they value.

In May 2020, 2,000 free copies of **CUANDO UNA MUJER SE LEVANTA**, the Spanish translation by Camilo Pérez Bustillo of

**WHEN A WOMAN RISES**, a novel given away to Maya women, men and youth in Chiapas as well as Maya youth and weavers in Guatemala.

Christine wishes to thank the over 100 donors from the U.S. and Mexico whose donations in 2019 made the translation possible. The Spanish edition will soon be available for purchase through Cinco Puntos Press in El Paso & on the internet.



## NEW HUIPILES FROM VENUSTIANO CARRANZA



In 2019 we began to sell huipiles woven by Zapatista women living in Venustiano Carranza, a township in the lowlands of Chiapas. For some time women in Southern New Mexico, another hot place in the world, have been

asking us if we could carry very light weight blouses. We were happy to start doing so this past year.

But the story doesn't end there. When the blouses arrived, we realized that running along their bottom edge were images of the Ti', the golden olive woodpecker, a very important bird in Maya mythology (see photo of blouse at left). In their forthcoming book, anthropologist Diane Rus and Maruch Santis Diaz Jolote of Chamula, Chiapas, explain that the Ti' is one of God's important messengers. Maruch describes how the Ti' comes to people as they are walking on trails or working in the fields and calls out to them to warn them that an envious person has asked Pucuj, the devil, to bring harm to them. To avoid this end, people must immediately gather together candles, incense, rum, and pine boughs and offer prayers to God to protect them from harm.

More about the remarkable blouses from Venustiano Carranza can be found in *Maya Threads: A Woven History of Chiapas* by Walter F. ("Chip") Morris Jr. and Carol Karasik, Thrums Books, 2015. We are deeply grateful for Chip's work and life. He passed away in 2019.

## WAYS YOU CAN HELP:

**DONATE MESOMERICAN & LATIN AMERICAN TEXTILES** for our Fall 2020 sale at the New Mexico State University Museum. At our 6<sup>th</sup> annual textile sale, we will turn your donations into scholarships for Maya students through partnering with the University Museum 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. In 2019 our sale corresponded with Days of the Dead. We celebrated this beautiful fiesta of remembrance in the museum courtyard with an altar remembering the refugee children who died in US. custody in 2019. We also showed the wonderful film, "Interlacements: Threads and Lives," by Marilyn and Rainer Romatka. To see a trailer, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dMezVEB4c4>

In 2020 we are delighted to welcome as our guest speaker, **Carol Hendrickson**, an anthropologist who has been engaged in research and accompaniment of Mayas in Guatemala since the 1970s. Carol was one of our first donors to the donated textile project and 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). Your donation is tax-deductible. We are grateful to all our donors, and especially **Karen Sprenger** for coordinating donations from Tucson and **Flora Graham, Nena Singleton, and Sally Meisenhelder**

for helping the Weaving for Justice steering committee inventory, photograph and price the textiles donated in 2019.



*Donated textile sale at New Mexico State University Museum, November 2019.*



*Detail from Weaving for Justice Day of Dead ofrenda (altar) at The NMSU Museum, 2019.*

\* **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.

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

**\* VISIT THE WEAVERS IN CHENALHO, CHIAPAS** - Directions to the weavers' meeting house of Tsobol Antsetik in Chixiltón, Chenalhó, Chiapas 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."

Andrea Bryan and Greg Lester, two visitors to the meeting house in August 2019, had this to say about their experience:

*"We were so honored to spend the day with the weavers of Chenalhó where we were welcomed with open arms and hearts. We met all of the weavers in the co-op and enjoyed putting names on the faces of some of them from our previous purchases and from Bill Jungels' and Christine Eber's documentary. They graciously treated us to a very moving prayer service and a wonderful lunch. Their work is some of the most beautiful in Chiapas and it is remarkable how they manage such excellence with all of the other responsibilities that consume their lives....They have a strong spiritual connection to their culture and to each other and it is reflected in their work. In spite of their hardships and personal struggles these women are an inspiration to those who take the time to venture into Chenalhó."*



Andrea Bryan and Greg Lester with Juana María Arias Pérez at the Tsobol Antsetik meeting house with the blouse she wove, August 2019. Photo by Christine Eber

**\* 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. Give us the person's name and address and we will notify them.)

**\* HOST A HOUSE PARTY/READING from *When a Woman Rises***, a novel by Christine Eber, Weaving for Justice co-founder. Christine's debut novel is about a friendship between two Maya women of Chenalhó, Chiapas, one of whom is a weaver. The book is available from Cinco Puntos Press ([www.cincopuntos.com](http://www.cincopuntos.com)), or on various internet sites and at book stores. If you live in our area, Christine, or another member of our steering committee, is happy to come to your home or organization to sell weavings. 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).

**\* VISIT OUR WEBSITE STORE** to find woven 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/>)

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

**\* 3<sup>RD</sup> Saturday of the month sale** - You can find us upstairs at 525 E. Lohman Ave. in Las Cruces from 10:00 a.m.-4 p.m. on the 3rd Saturday of each month. We thank **Beatriz Ferreira** for loaning us this space, for both sales and

educational events. In 2019 we hosted a talk by **Dylan Fitzwater** based on his book, *Autonomy is in Our Hearts: Zapatista Autonomous Government Through the Lens of the Tsotsil Language*.

- \* **Beck's Roasting House & Creamery**, 130 N. Mesquite St., Las Cruces, NM (brocaded change purses)
- \* **Bowlin's Mesilla Book Center**, 2360 Calle Principal, Mesilla, NM (shawls and scarves)
- \* **Hijos del Sol**, 2715 W. 8th Avenue, Denver, CO. 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)
- \* **Mountain View Market Co-op**, 1300 El Paseo Rd., Las Cruces, NM (a variety of items)
- \* **Palabras Bilingual Bookstore**, 1738 McDowell Rd., Phoenix, AZ (a variety of items)
- \* **United Nations Association Center**, 6242 E. Speedway Blvd. Tucson, AZ (a variety of items)

## THANK YOU!!

We owe of debt of gratitude to **Shirley Baca, Nena Singleton, and Susan West** who regularly volunteer at our sales and other events. *We also wish to thank our members and donors, and to the following individuals for their support in 2019: Adrianna Abarca; Guillermo Acosta; Andrea Bryan; Carol Charnley; Mike Cook; Denise Chávez; Meghann Dallin; Dylan Fitzgerald; Karen Gonzalez; Flora Graham; Elaine Hampton; Maxine Insera; Bill Jungels; Linda & Jack Laughlin; Greg Lester; Elisabeth Nicholson; Gail Ryser; Jeanne Simonelli; Elise Stuart; Joanne Turnbull; Carol and Peter Vanier; Rebecca Wiggins-Reinhard; and to the following organizations & businesses: Abuelita Books, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas; Lisa Ann Tyler & LuAnn Kilday of Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces; KRWG Radio & TV; Fumiyasu Arakawa and Rachel Cover of the NMSU University Museum, LC; Carlota Duarte of The Chiapas Photography Project; Rebeca Zuniga-Hamlin of the Denver Justice and Peace Committee; Latin American Solidarity Committee of Western New York; The Maya Educational Foundation; Museo de Las Americas, Denver; Ross Barnum Library, Denver; Southwest Women's Fiber Arts Collective Silver City; Sprouts Market; Su Teatro XicanIndie Film Fest, Denver Tucson Spinners & Weavers Guild; Weave a Real Peace; Soroptomist International of Borrego Springs, CA; and The United Nations Association Center, Tucson.*

In 2019 we said goodbye to steering committee members **Mary Kerwin** and **Til Zimmerman**. Our thanks to Mary and Til for continuing to support our work and for their many contributions over the years to the weavers and other important causes. In 2019 we were thrilled to welcome back **Susan Beck** to the steering committee.

Warmest regards,

Aurelia, Christine, Crystal, Janet, Lorena, Patricia 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.

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

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

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

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