

NEWS FROM KATHY AND PHIL IN OAXACA

July-August 2019

Dear Friends and Family,

In our last newsletter we described some of the community efforts to achieve more food and financial self-sufficiency in Yukuyoko. We also suggested that if anyone were really interested in addressing the causes of the so-called “migrant crisis” in the US, they might look at ways to support similar efforts in Mexico and Central America.

Last week, near our former home in New Mexico, at an El Paso, Texas Walmart, another way of dealing with the migrant “problem” was acted out in grisly detail. A young white man traveled over ten hours to El Paso, sought out the spot where he knew there would be the greatest gathering of Mexicans and people of Mexican descent – a Walmart, since these people make up a great part of those with low incomes and buying power. This young man calmly and systematically went from aisle to aisle gunning down people of color until he had killed some 22 and wounded another 26.



Communal tomato project ripening

This man was not mentally ill! He was quite rational and calculating about his actions. He was an angry man merely acting out the rhetoric used by our President and other local, regional and federal officials who have bet on frightening us into supporting them by fabricating a crisis on our borders at peaceful and secure communities like El Paso, Texas. If this rhetoric is allowed to continue, we will soon see white paramilitary groups, not just individuals, carrying out such massacres on our borders and in our inner cities.

In the meantime, it is worthwhile remembering what many of you already know and what we detailed in a previous newsletter: Over the last half-century, US foreign policy in Mexico and Central America has been responsible for creating the conditions here that are producing migration northward...all of this in the name of control of wealth and markets.

The mother civilization of the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Central America, the Cem Anahuac, has a very different understanding of the special place of the human being in the cosmos. The special role of the human family in the cosmos is, according to the ancient depository of wisdom called the Toltecayotl, to bring harmony to the opposing forces of the universe to move all to a higher spiritual moment. In practical, everyday terms, the purpose of the human community was neither to accumulate wealth nor to dominate and control nature. (Remember that Francis Bacon, the founder of Western science, proposed to “put Mother Nature on the table and torture her until she revealed all her secrets”). The role of the human community was to bring the living Mother Earth and all of its creatures to a new level of spiritual

harmony. The techniques for doing this are still practiced in our community of Yukuyoko and the other indigenous pueblos of Oaxaca. A friend here has labeled this set of practices “the incarnation of harmony.” It includes mutual aid, called *tequio*, community service, called *gueza*, democratic community assemblies, wealth balance through *fiesta* and *mayordomias*, and love of and respect for the Mother Earth, asking permission before plowing, excavating or disturbing the earth on which we depend.

Of course, those involved being human, this “incarnation” doesn’t guarantee there will never be conflict. We have just finished writing the manuscript of a historical novel that describes in detail the joys *and difficulties* of living this way in contemporary Mexico. In spite of this, people may accuse us of romanticizing this culture where we have lived for the past 18 years. This would seem to us a curious observation coming from a country of massacres, endemic drug use which seems to cover a deep-seated national unhappiness, and an economic and foreign policy of brutal wars and resource extraction around the globe that actually threatens the existence of the human family. Perhaps no country in the history of the planet has been more romanticized than our United States. We sometimes wonder if the instinct to think that anything that sounds better than the way we are must be romanticizing derives from the sense of American “exceptionalism”, with which we are surrounded from crib to grave. If we are the exception and the example, what could other people possibly have to teach us?

From here in Yukuyoko, nevertheless, we continue to be convinced that the communal values of the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca, and of North America and many other places where indigenous communities still thrive, represent a very wise part of the collective memory of the human family from which we can learn much...perhaps in time to save ourselves from our own Western greed and aggressiveness.

Meanwhile, the tribal government of the Ojibwe nation in northern Wisconsin has joined in efforts similar to Oaxacan efforts here to preserve native seeds, native wisdom, and ancestral technologies declaring in tribal law the rights of the native wild rice, which they have harvested for over 1,000 years. The rice, called *manoomin* in Ojibwe, now has the legal right to be free of contaminated air and water, of contamination by the genes produced by biotechnology, and to be free from patents.

Where can we look to find the wisdom necessary to assure the survival of the human family and our brother and sister species in the future of this planet.....?

The financial help which many of you so generously share, is essential to developing such plans that can serve as examples for other communities around Mexico. We are so grateful for your sharing.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: We have just learned that the radio programs we have mentioned, “Tilantongo – Conversations from Indigenous Mexico; Conversaciones desde el México indígena,” will begin with a first series of seven programs on Gila/ Mimbres Community Radio and KURU 89.1 on Friday, September 13 at 1 pm MDT and the following seven Fridays. Join us then!

Peace and blessings,

Kathy and Phil

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