



# our developing world's voices

Spring, 2002 — Vol. 8, No. 3

## Obras No Palabras

by Chris Gibson

“Words Not Deeds” is what the President has put up near construction sites and other working facilities to show that they act rather than just talk. The majority of Nicaraguans haven’t heard the government even talk to them. The deeds don’t do much good for them.

The government seems to be teasing the people. My translation for this saying is “*We speak to the rich and act for the richer.*” They know that if Nicaraguans started a revolution, they would then be considered the bad guys. And like last time, the U.S. Army, thinking that they’re doing good, would try to crush these rebellions. So in other words, poor Nicaraguans are stuck. They can’t do anything about the situation they’re in.

If you could take one or two of the government officials and, for at least a week, show them first hand what the life of a “real” Nicaraguan is like, I guarantee you that they would have a totally different perspective of what’s going on. You may not be able to change their minds right then, but at least you can try.

Margarita said, “65 percent of the population of Nicaragua is under age 25 and the candidate for President of the party in power’s almost 70 years old. What they need is someone younger who can more effectively connect with them and understand their needs.”

After a week and a half in Nicaragua, my life has been totally altered. Seeing how the Nicaraguans live makes me realize how good my life is. Even though word about this may not go out for a while, I think that if we start small and take little steps, then we can work our way up to showing the world the realities of life in other countries.



*CANTERA, in English, short for Popular Education & Community Center Nicaragua, hosted odw’s 2001 Nicaragua Tour for Youth. Since 1988, the non-profit CANTERA has worked in Nicaragua’s rural and urban areas providing parent education, youth centers, and homes for the poor.*

If you took just a little time to look at our curriculum, the Nicaragua lessons are at the bottom at the very end of the list. Some people think Nicaragua isn’t important enough to talk about, but I think that this is very important.

What I saw those ten days totally changed the way I thought. It also compelled me to want to share it with others. As a great philosopher once said, “*one thousand miles starts with a single step*” meaning, if we want to tell the world about Nicaragua, then we might as well start with things small, such as a flyer or article in the school newsletter and then move onto bigger plans. No one knows the future, its up to us to help pave the way to a better one.

*Chris Gibson, a junior high school student, participated in odw’s 2001 Nicaragua Tour for Youth. CANTERA hosted the Tour.*

*Continued on page 2 →*

## JOIN our developing world’s NEXT STUDY TOUR!

**South Africa: Living up to promises? Successes and on-going struggles**

**Summer 2002, July 21–August 11**

Meet with grassroots people to learn what’s really happening. Limited to ten adventurers to see for themselves. *odw* first went to South Africa in 1976, and has been leading tours there since 1991. In 1994, we were Peace and Election Monitors for their first free election.

Cost: \$3899, including air fare from New York to Johannesburg  
\$2299, not including air fare to Johannesburg  
Cost includes one-day excursion to a game park.



→ *Continued from page 1*

### **Editorial comment:**

Chentex Union victory! The Supreme Court of Nicaragua ruled the Taiwan sweatshop had to hire back the union leaders. Enforceable? The Taiwan firm gave \$14 million for the Presidential Palace.

## **An Engineer's Personal Reflections Amid the Ruins of El Salvador's Earthquakes**

**by Johann Zimmerman**

Earthquakes fascinate me as an engineer. Every crack, overturned wall, landslide, and collapsed structure captures my attention. What was the failure mechanism? What details didn't hold up? What details didn't resist? What can I learn for my future designs? What can I pass on to others to prevent such destruction during the next quake?

I have come to El Salvador to consult on the reconstruction of houses destroyed by the 7.1 magnitude earthquake that struck January 13, 2001. After arriving at the airport on February 13, I take a taxi, only to have the 6.6 magnitude temblor that struck that day rock the vehicle as it stopped at a traffic light. Now I pick my way through the fresh ruins of a poor urban settlement.

A strange silence fills the air. Clouds of fine dust periodically puff up as chunks of earth break away from the landslides of the steep hills. People search for belongings amid the debris and set up shelters beside what remains of their dwellings. I greet an old woman sitting at her doorstep, body trembling. Yes, all survived in her household. "Thanks be to God."

Her husband is patching a crack in the front of their adobe home. I ask him to tell of his experience and he rambles on. He shows me how the rear wall of his house totters on the brink of a 20 meter deep gully, poised to slide down with the next tremor. What would I do if my world had suddenly been shattered, if the only thing I owned had been destroyed, and if I had no economic means to fall back on? What if my neighbors or my family had just been crushed without warning?

I stop to peer into a community hall. Two tall white candles flicker in the center of the concrete floor next to

The House of Representatives passed Fast Track. If the Senate does also, President Bush will decide the working conditions and environmental standards in FTAA (NAFTA for all the Americas). Congress will only be able to vote yes or no on the treaty. Urge Senators to vote no on Fast Track and FTAA.🌐

two wooden benches where moments before two coffins had lain. A little boy and his aunt had been crushed under the debris of their adobe house. Thoughts of my own little boy fill my mind. I turn moist eyes back into the tropical sun to watch a group of mourners straggle through the rubble filled street, a bleak procession led by a pickup truck bearing the bodies.

I've spent more than 20 years doing reconstruction work in areas hit by disaster in drought stricken West Africa, in postwar Uganda and Mozambique, in a deteriorated inner city of the US and in hurricane buffeted Nicaragua.

**Once again I'm reminded that physical reconstruction is only one element of the rehabilitation needed after tragedy.**

Human trauma is a much greater challenge to address. It is a great paradox that an earthquake creates such a sensation for me as a civil engineer, for in the midst of the rubble that so interests me wander dazed survivors struggling to make sense of it all. I need to open my heart to their world, look into their eyes, listen to their pain, and take a moment to grieve with them. After that, there is time for my structural analysis and insights.

I leave El Salvador technically enriched and deeply touched by the people I have met. It is a privilege to be able to contribute in some way to prevent such catastrophe from happening again. And I wonder whether I, under the anguish and stress of having my world cast into such chaos, would impulsively start patching a crack in the front of my house when the rear wall was about to slide down a 20 meter deep precipice.🌐

*Reprinted from ASCE News, 4/2001 with permission. Johann organized the work of odw teens in Nicaragua through CANTERA under the auspices of the Mennonite Central Committee from his base in Managua.*

*Multiply these experiences a multitude of times. Earthquakes in India, Afghanistan, anywhere in the developing world.*



## “Queridísimas Friends and Family”

**By Christina from El Salvador**

Just imagine this panorama:

The sun shines all the live long day and the stars all the live long night. NO rain. Too blue skies. The corn is drying up, the beans already dried up, 44 municipalities out of 262 are in a state of emergency, 28,000 families are receiving food aid and it’s possible the second planting will not make it.

The lush and cool coffee hillsides are neglected. Coffee prices are the lowest in 100 years, they have depreciated 59 percent and exports are down 33 percent. It’s not only that world prices have gone down, but the earthquake damaged 15 percent of last year’s crop and almost a third of the processing plants. Coffee growers have been told they have to cut their costs. Many people will not be picking coffee this year to supplement their piddling subsistence living, no sugar, no oil, for their families, how will they even buy soap to wash clothes?

Unspeakable crimes, crimes with no names. Last Sunday a priest in Santa Tecla, just outside of San Salvador left church after the evening mass, arrived at his parish house and was grabbed and taken in his own car as two parishioners helplessly witnessed. Visions of the 1980s, priests being assassinated, “be a patriot, kill a priest.” Although not political, well, what isn’t political?

Kidnappings are part of the whole economic, social, political scenario, for many, a job, a way to make a living. Anyway, this is one of, but not the only, of the unspeakable crimes, because I just spoke it and others can not even be spoken.

A few days ago two military attaches in Honduras were arrested for espionage, then released because of diplomatic immunity and sent home.

Espionage???? Well, that’s what they say. Apparently at a Central American Presidents’ meeting in Nicaragua, some delicate Honduran military papers appeared on the table that set off some accusations against Honduras starting up an arms race. So Honduran intelligence wormed around and said they have evidence against two women secretaries and these two Salvadoran army guys. Oh, and in the same article they say, there are probably more women involved because they are more easily convinced by pressure or by money!!!! Oooooooh, we just love that, don’t we.

And let’s not forget the earthquakes. We laugh here when people say, so where were you during the earthquake, or I hear there was an earthquake in El Salvador

and things like there. There were two, or many of us say three, earthquakes here in January and February and more than 10,000 aftershocks since, some of them strong enough to shake us out of bed and into the streets, and certainly the aftershocks or “replicas” as we say here, have been psychologically and emotionally more stressful than the actual earthquakes themselves.

But the problem is that one and a half million people were left without homes or homes too damaged to live in. There are so many efforts and expressions of solidarity from all over the world —temporary houses are being built, and also permanent houses. But what is clear is that only a small percentage of these houses are being built by the government. And over 41,000 small businesses were destroyed by the earthquake. If it weren’t for the almost two billion dollars that come in from family remittances every year, there would be a lot more visible social unrest.

One editorialist here said: It’s the poor that’s keeping our country out of poverty (the poor who can’t find work here, migrate to USA and send back part of their earnings to their families, the highest source of revenue El Salvador receives).

Anyway, it all sounds pretty bleak, huh? But this is El Salvador, Guanacolandia, the land of the eternal smile, and adelante we go.☺

*Christina guides and translates for odw tours.*

**To think of the war was to remember  
the waste, the incalculable loss,  
and to be brought back to that,  
to face the weight of those numbers  
over and over again  
was to be left in a rage.**

**Why would any society send its future  
to a slaughterhouse?**

*from These Good Men by Michael Norm*



## Which Expenditure Would Lead to More Security, and More Friends Worldwide????

The 2002 U.S. government budget alone projects \$379 billion for military purposes. Yet the U.N. Development Program reported that it would only require \$13 Billion for every man, woman and child to achieve basic health and nutrition.

“Raising Our Voices.”

(*Global Fund for Women, March 2002*)

## New Videos in the Teachers’ Lending Resource Library:

*Secrets of Silicon Valley.*

60 minutes.

The perspective of “temp” workers, fast becoming the majority of those producing, packing and shipping the products of Silicon Valley, and the youth trying to climb over the digital divide. A prophetic look at the backgrounds that lend hope through organizing and working together.

*The Global Banquet: Politics of Food.*

Two parts, 25 minutes each.

Part 1. Who’s Invited? Occasion: celebrate free trade-sponsors: WTO, NAFTA, IMF, W.B. — Time and Place: Today, at expense of U.S. and poor countries’ small farmers.

Part 2. What’s on the Menu? Low cost cash crops, short-term profits, genetically modified crops, land acquisitions, environmental havoc, earth’s resources, food patent biopiracy, animal cruelty, cheap labor, small family farms.

*Ancient Futures, Learning from Ladakh.*

60 minutes, includes book and lesson guide.

More than a film about Ladakh. The breakdown of that culture and environment forces us to re-examine what we mean by “progress” —not only in “developing” parts of the world, but in the industrialized world. The story teaches us about root causes of environmental, social and

In all, the administration plans to spend \$2.1 TRILLION on the military over the next five years [which] would lead the nation back into deficit spending for the first time in four years.

*Defense Monitor*

(Center for Defense Information, February 2002)

Nations have recently been led to borrow billions for war; no nation has ever borrowed largely for education. Probably, no nation is rich enough to pay for both war and civilization. We must make our choice; we cannot have both.

Abraham Flexner (Educator, 1866-1959)

psychological problems, providing valuable guidelines for our future. There’s a wonderful story set in Benin, Africa and Baja California that demonstrates the theme of this video.

*Where are the Beans?*

13 minutes, includes study guide by the Mennonite Central Committee.

Viewers, as detectives, try to find root causes for the disappearance of the black beans in Honduras. The trail leads to global economic policies and the connections between people in Central and North America.

*What I’ve Learned About US Foreign Policy: the War Against the Third World.*

Three hours with MLK Jr., John Stockwell, Bill Moyers, Amy Goodman, and others.

*The Good War.*

57 minutes. Conscientious objectors in World War II.

*A Force More Powerful.*

3 hours.. Non-violence used around the world.

*Global Village or Global Pillage.*

27 minutes.

How people around the world are challenging corporate globalization.

*Our Own Road.*

27 minutes.

How disabled in rural Mexico become useful.

## Interested in an odw Mali, West Africa Tour?

odw is considering offering a tour of Mali, West Africa from December 20, 2002 to January 5, 2003. If you are interested, please contact Vic or Barby Ulmer at (408) 397-4431.



## Kids Making a Difference: A Heartwarming Project

Walnut Creek Intermediate School kids raised \$7,000 through a school-wide geography quiz for a program called Physically Disabled Children Schooling Activities of Veterans International Cambodia, located in Kien Khleang, Cambodia. This program is sponsored by the VVAF Kien Khleang Physical Rehabilitation Center.

You can help these students meet their goal of \$9,330 by sending tax-deductible donations to *odw*. With these funds, Walnut Creek students aim to improve the lives of 30 disabled children from poor families in Kandal province, giving children access to a complete year in their local schools.

The VVAF outreach team:

1. Screens and selects children, and their families, based on economic need;
2. Generates a needs list for each child that includes: transportation, accessibility, and classroom setup.
3. Addresses accessibility and transportation through the purchase of bicycles, wheelchairs, and construction of ramps;
4. Buys school materials, uniforms, and supplies for selected disabled children;
5. Manages school fees through Veterans International.
6. Monitors and evaluates each child's case bimonthly.
7. Develops an action plan based on the evaluation and remedy sought.

Community follow up includes a survey of parents, children and teachers, assessment reports by teachers, teacher interviews, and attendance records.

Additionally, once the child has completed the program, CFU staff will visit the school to meet with classmates, teacher, parents, and the community to help provide a smooth integration of disabled child into the community.

In a country where the disabled were hidden, or laughed at, or both, this is a major project, one that gives hope and educational opportunities to the children, and reeducates the communities to accept these children as human beings with potential beyond their disabilities.🌐

For more information contact Julie Krug at [juliekrug@hotmail.com](mailto:juliekrug@hotmail.com).

Donations sent to *odw* will be passed on in full to:

Physically Disabled Children Schooling Activities of Veterans International Cambodia, VVAF Kien Khleang Physical Rehabilitation Center.



## Support Debt-Relief for Central American Countries!

Brenda Hubbard sent the following insert from *Univision, Nicaragua* which could be from any Central American country:

### **\*NICARAGUAN MARCHERS AGAINST HUNGER BEGIN ARRIVING IN MANAGUA\***

*Managua, August 29 (RHC)—A number of unemployed Nicaraguan campesinos who Monday began a 173-kilometer "March Against Hunger" arrived in Managua today, in advance of the main body of some 2,000 participants and their families. They are demanding that the government of Arnoldo Aleman prevent their children from starving, instead of claiming that there is no hunger in Nicaragua, as he did recently.*

Last year was the third year of drought in Central America.

*And* these countries are still paying on their international debt accrued by governments who cared nothing for the people. *And* we are funding the corrupt leaders who are using the aid money selfishly.

Cancel the debt. Contact your Congressperson to support the bill to Cancel the Debt. Approve the amendment to IDA and Yes on HR 4524 (Maxine Waters co-sponsor) and Senate Bill 2210.🌐



## Poems by Tatiana Ramage

### The Nicaragua Kid's Tour, 2001

Sure we have the money, the time, the  
easy life

And they work hard  
Each husband, child and wife

But they have a *sense of community*  
A community where they share and love  
A community where everyone is a gift  
from above

They know how to make do with what little  
toys they find  
And stick together to survive  
Always giving, all the time

They help their neighbor rather than thyself  
And I believe their morals  
Are better than any wealth

So while we have electricity, toys and  
daily bread

Would your entire community  
Gather if someone was dead

No, we live our own lives and don't worry about  
the other

Well, what would you do if someone lost a child  
Just ignore the mother?

They would all be there for her, to search and help  
in any way

ALL the time they know they can count on  
each other

Each and everyday

So, yes, Nicaragua needs some of our world, such  
as nice homes or cars

But I think the U.S. needs more love and happiness  
And we should bring a little of their world into ours.

### Leaving Footprints in My Heart



They are not the richest nor the poorest,  
but children that have touched me  
Leaving footprints in my heart.

I did not go to Nicaragua to feel sorry for these people  
But to obligate myself to make a difference in their lives  
But despite how little they owned or had  
They would always give and give.

I loved their *sense of community*  
And if one person died they all pulled together to help  
the family move on

I loved how important family is to them  
And how their love stretches so long.

Their pride and love toward their family touches my soul  
The bonds between the community amaze me  
(I could honestly say I don't know one-quarter of my neighbors)  
And I am inspired by what I see



The community knows they all can trust and rely on everyone  
To give what little they had.

And to think if we brought that closeness and bond of community to the U.S.  
Life sure wouldn't be so bad  
We would be able to move mountains  
And crumble buildings in the blink of an eye  
We would have a country of peace and unity  
I long to see that before I die.

There would be less violence and more hope  
And to help each other rather than to help yourself would be the moral of all  
Adults and kids  
Bringing that sense of community would change and affect the U.S.  
To make it a better county than it already is.

After walking out of the S.F. Airport  
My eyes opened up to the world I grew out of  
The sharply dressed people, the technology, the buildings, it all seemed like a dream,  
a blur, a smear  
That's when I realized how much I had taken for granted.

How little they had, how little I needed, and how much there was here  
Alvaro, Denia, Julie anyone of them would have been fascinated by our airport  
With automatic toilets, warm water, the stores, all the small things i took for granted.

I began to cry  
And wish I hadn't landed.

The U.S. practically destroyed Nicaragua  
Sending them a one way ticket to poverty  
It made me sad to think of everything the U.S. had and how little they would share  
The U.S. with riches galore does nothing to help change the problem  
It is as if they don't even care.

*Tatiana Ramage, a junior high school student, participated in odw's 2001 Nicaragua Tour for Youth.*

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**odw Calendar — DO JOIN US!**

**FRIDAYS**                      **4:30 to 6:00 p.m.**

Peace Vigil. Second and San Carlos, San Jose. Come whenever you can for as long as you can. It's an energizing and hopeful experience!

**JUNE 9**                              **6:00 p.m.**

Potluck. Recently the home of *odw* and Vic & Barby was retrofitted with solar-electric panels. Come celebrate when the PGE meter turns counterclockwise, indicating that our "grid" is online, generating current for our favorite electric utility. As a bonus, we'll be pulling the winning raffle tickets! Ruth Hunter will share experiences from Chiapas, Mexico, and maybe some entertainment.

**SEPTEMBER 10**              **10:00 a.m.**

*odw* presents "The Faces and Struggles and Hopes of Southeast Asia" at Trinity Methodist UMW, Sunnyvale.

**SEPTEMBER 11**              **7:00 p.m.**

*odw* presents "The Faces and Struggles and Hopes of Southeast Asia" at Calvary United Methodist UMW, near the intersection of Naglee and Morse.

**THANKS to our wonderful volunteers:**

the two Georges:

**George Clark**, our marvelous editor of *voices*

**George Hain**, a remarkable tech who has updated our website [www.magiclink.net/~odw](http://www.magiclink.net/~odw). Check it out!

And **Betty Ortez**, who keeps us sane and organized doing anything that needs to be done.

Also all those who help with the mailings:

**The Chudilowskys, Lee Anne Welch, Stan Seaberg, John Wytmanms and members of the Peace Chorale.**

And we welcome teachers to give a call and come to borrow our resources.



***Moving? Dont' miss an issue of voices!***

***Please notify us of your new address.***

We are now asking \$10 per year from our readers to support the publishing and broader circulation of this newsletter. This issue is volume eight. Have you sent your donation for this new year to the address below?

*Thanks*

***our developing world***

13004 Paseo Presada, Saratoga, CA 95070



Address Correction Requested

***a non-profit educational project teaching about developing countries and diverse cultures through:***

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