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RECENT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES IN EL SALVADOR

RETURNING TO ESTANCIA

By Monica Dhand

What a privilege to visit Estancia again, my first visit since 2009. The clinic, which serves the entire *canton* of Estancia and attracts many patients from further away, is staffed by a laboratory technician, a health promoter and a general physician. *Licenciada* Wendy in the lab provides the community with basic low-cost services, including urine microscopy, stool microscopy, basic chemistries, blood counts and pregnancy tests. She spends the week in Estancia, working during the day and studying and taking classes at night to prepare for her cytology exams on weekends. I saw firsthand her dedication to and passion for her studies, her kindness and her tireless work ethic. It was also my pleasure to be Wendy's roommate for a month in the volunteer house, and I can attest that she wields a broom effectively against any invading tarantulas, a quality I much appreciated.

Rosa Maribel is the community health promoter with a wealth of energy and expansive knowledge about, well, everything. Any difficult question was directed to Maribel who inevitably could give a clear and concise explanation about topics from natural medicine to politics, from history to animal behavior. I had the pleasure of walking throughout Estancia on home visits with Maribel. She is a confident guide who knows everyone in the community. On our walks, she described medicinal uses for all the plants we saw, talked about local history

and greeted everyone by name. Maribel is already a community leader and, given her intelligence, ability to quickly learn, confidence and resolve to do what's right, she should surely continue in this role.

Dr. Granados trained in Cuba and his mastery of pathophysiology was likely ingrained there. He frequently spewed off complicated mechanisms of actions for various medications, graciously assuming I still had my pharmacopeia memorized. His medical knowledge, clinical reasoning, procedure skills, and drive to learn are matched only by his wonderful bedside manner. Personally, it is always a pleasure to engage with physicians who truly love what they do. Dr. Granados is one of them. His passion for this community and his work is clear in his daily patient interactions. He speaks with respect and



compassion to all patients equally and provides thoughtful, high-quality care. He's also pretty funny!

Though individually each staff member is stellar, it's their day-to-day chemistry that makes working in the *Campesinos para el Desarrollo Humano* (CDH) clinic so rewarding. I've had the opportunity to work in many different positions in many different places. One of the most important characteristics of satisfying work is having a group that strives together for a common goal with the same priorities. The clinic staff in Estancia definitely has this quality.

That being said, I recognize the privilege that a month-long visit brings, the ability to see-through rose-colored glasses when you come from a different background and are able to leave. The day-to-day is tough for the community of Estancia. Poverty and lack of government support prevent many from accessing the care they need and deserve. Both new and old diseases permeate clinic visits: diabetes, hypertension and hypertriglyceridemia are ubiquitous and treatment in a poorly resourced setting with few dietary options is limited. New diseases [to Estancia] like dengue are directly related to climate change and likely will continue to evolve even more in the next few years.

The clinic is ever present through this fluctuation, and would have the capacity to meet needs more effectively if only it was better financed. How would the additional finances affect care?

The addition of one health promoter would mean the difference in medical access

for many patients. A fund for referral visits would enable those with unique needs to receive specialist care in larger towns. Improved access to water chlorination would decrease the burden of waterborne disease. Consistent diabetic diagnosis and treatment with routine labs, education and medications would prevent complications that are more difficult to manage.

In a gaggle of non-profit actors whose social mission ratios are low, DGH spends essentially our entire budget on social mission and thus has the ability to directly support activities in communities like Estancia effectively and efficiently.

Please donate! I see where the money goes and it's needed.



TWO WEEKS IN ESTANCIA

By Emily Cohen

The San Salvador airport is a sleek building peeking over a shrubby forest. Bright yellow tape warns of active construction, and large prints of digitally rendered images of a terminal hang proudly on the chain fence. Tourism has boomed in the last ten years, with over 6.5 million tourists visiting El Salvador last year. The country is on track for even more visitors this year, investing significantly in the roads in and around the capital.

Estancia, nestled amidst the serene landscapes of the Honduran-Salvadoran border, where the Río Torola winds its way through small mountains and tree-covered valleys, is a community removed and excluded from this development. As the rest of the country grows, the president (elected for another term in February 2024) has steadily cut funding to vulnerable communities, ending bus services and threatening to close the few community clinics accessible to the region's rural inhabitants. However, the people of Estancia, with their unwavering spirit, have not given up. CDH, a DGH community partner, founded in the 1990s by the people of Estancia, is committed to continuing to serve and repair its war-weary community.

I had arrived in El Salvador as part of my practicum project for my master's in public health. After a week of exploring as a tourist, I took a bus to San Miguel to meet the CDH directors, José Ramiro Cortez Argueta (Executive Director) and Lucia Sanchez Martínez (Director of Operations). CDH had invited me to visit Estancia to learn more about the impact of diabetes on their community and explore ways I could help from abroad. Non-communicable diseases, like diabetes, are the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in El Salvador. In 2021, the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) extrapolated from surrounding countries to estimate a 7.1% prevalence of diabetes in the country. However, there are no current nationwide surveys of diabetes prevalence, and the CDH clinic's staff have become alarmed by the increasing impact of diabetes on their patients. After being treated to a delicious dinner of pupusas at a local restaurant, I settled into a large concrete house I could call home for the rest of my visit.

On my first Monday, I walked up the dirt road to the clinic, where Dr. Granados and Mirabel (community health promoter) greeted me with smiles and welcomed me into CAIPES, the small community clinic run by CDH. The clinic, made of cement bricks, overlooks a grassy



PHOTOS OF CDH PROJECTS: FIRST PAGE: Book distribution at the Kinders. ABOVE: LEFT: Dr. Granados on a home visit with a patient whose diabetes led to leg amputation and needs careful monitoring. CENTER: New CDH vehicular and pedestrian crossing over a ravine. RIGHT: Monica examining a patient at home.

field with horses and cattle. I shadowed Dr. Granados, witnessing his dedication to serving his patients firsthand. His expertise is matched only by his empathy as he navigates the complexities of healthcare in a resource-constrained environment. His commitment to the community's well-being was evident from diagnosing common ailments to offering preventive care. Dr. Granados and the team have noticed an uptick in patients presenting with diabetes-like symptoms, but without a working glucometer or HA1C machine, they could not formally diagnose.

Halfway through the week, I walked with Mirabel and Dr. Granados to a neighboring town. To get there, we crossed one of CDH's first-ever projects, a beautiful bridge crossing the Río Torola. Standing on the sturdy structure, I was struck by the significance of this infrastructure project in improving the lives of the people it serves. No longer isolated by impassable rivers during the rainy season, the community is now connected by the bridge to vital resources such as healthcare, education, and economic opportunities year-round. The bridge stood as a tangible manifestation of the collective efforts of the community, CDH, and its partners to create positive change from the ground up.

At the end of my visit, Ramiro, the heartbeat of CDH, recounted the people's hunger and difficulties during the Civil War and the scars they still bear today. Despite the challenges, the people of Estancia hold democracy, representation, and human rights as pillars of their beliefs.

“ Standing on the sturdy structure, I was struck by the significance of this infrastructure project in improving the lives of the people it serves. No longer isolated by impassable rivers during the rainy season, the community is now connected by the bridge to vital resources. ”

The time I spent in Estancia was an immersion into the heart and soul of a community bonded by compassion and resilience. I witnessed the profound difference that can be made when individuals come together to serve a common purpose. CDH and its dedicated team exemplify this spirit, including Ramiro, Lucy, Dr. Granados, Mirabel, and Wendy (another CDH staff member). Despite the pain of seeing bus routes cut and clinics at risk of closure, their hope and persistent pursuit for a better future is inspiring. They continue to provide what their community needs, demonstrating that determination and solidarity can pave the way for lasting change despite adversity. 🌿

PROGRESS OF CDH PROJECTS IN ESTANCIA

By José Ramiro Cortez Argueta, Lucia Sánchez Martínez, Shirley Novak

INFRASTRUCTURE. In a nutshell, the roots of DGH are in the mountains of Morazán, El Salvador when a devastating civil war officially ended via a negotiated peace in January 1992. In October 1992, an invitation by community leaders in South-Eastern Morazán to *Médecins du Monde* (MDM), France resulted in a successful community-driven partnership for health and social justice that remains strong to this day. Nineteen ninety-four saw maternal and children's health issues and social justice being addressed by a team headed by Dr. Lanny Smith, under the auspices of MDM, using 'Health as Reconciliation.' Focus was on specific projects prioritized by the communities: integral child development centers (*Kinders*), vaccination programs, women's health and rights, malnutrition / nutrition, parasitic infections, community-based rehabilitation, a village water system, latrines, and construction of a bridge.

The "José Entrecanales Ibarra Bridge" came to be in Estancia in 2007 when The Development Cooperation Award went to a proposal presented by CDH for the construction of a single-lane vehicular bridge over the Torola River, located in an area of difficult access. It was built in

the six months of the 2007 rainy season at a total cost of \$434,700, removing the historical isolation of this remote rural area and increasing access for locals to get their crops to market; students to safely get to the educational complex and for patients to more directly and safely arrive at the community clinic, both located in *caserío* El Rodeo. This second bridge directly benefits about 2,500 residents distributed in the *cantones* of La Estancia, Guachipilín and Agua Blanca.

CDH, as put forth in their Mission, has always "been committed to search for solutions to current problems of the population, look for and manage resources and projects to strengthen the development of the com-



LEFT: Water storage containers are part of new climate change mitigation project. CENTER: CDH Laboratory Tech Wendy preparing blood for testing. RIGHT: Distributing toothbrushes at the kinders as part of dental health campaign.

munity.” Over the years, the *DGH Reporter* has showcased a variety of projects that CDH has undertaken: 2004 construction of a comprehensive Health Clinic in the community of Canton Estancia; 2010 housing project in five *caseríos* (hamlets); 2015 updated construction of *kinder* and cistern in *caserío* Tierra Blanca; 2011, 2019, 2023 latrine projects in several *caseríos*; 2022, 2023 project adaptations to climate changes. In 2024 CDH completed another vehicular and pedestrian bridge project over two ravines that will greatly benefit the local communities.

The most recent \$96,000 CDH project will help in the mitigation of climate change through reforestation, protection of water sources, purchase of water collection tanks, hillside/sloped ditches, reservoirs for rainwater storage, and silos for crop storage.

With additional \$27,000 financing from TELUS International, a passageway over Las Tres Cruces ravine was constructed this year on the main street of *Caserío* El Rodeo, where the CDH Clinic is located. This bridge will mitigate constant flooding and dangerous conditions during the annual rainy season in four *caseríos* within CDH’s catchment area.

Additional funds for two new passageways came from dedicated donations in memory of Dr. Juan Carlos Martinez, as well as a successful CDH microcredit program. Also, the commitment of the local people to participate in construction projects provides manual labor to stretch the budgets for maximum advantage to their community.

EARLY EDUCATION. One of the earliest projects in Estancia was the building of six *Kinders*, serving children from two to six years old. There were two *educadoras* in each center who developed the overall educational program, giving classes every day, parent workshops, weighing and measuring the children, parent meetings, among other activities. At the same time, a nutrition program was carried out with the Ministry of Health

(MOH), which delivered basic foodstuffs (rice, beans, oil, milk) on a monthly basis. That is why these centers were officially named Rural Health and Nutrition Centers (CRSN). Our commitment was to monitor the weight and height of the children every month, in exchange for the food and training the MOH gave the health promoters at the centers.

A change in *Kinder* operations took place in 2020, due to enrollment size and the high cost of maintaining the buildings. The MOH has assumed the role of providing teachers and maintenance for two of the buildings. Lucia Sánchez Martinez, CDH Director of Operations and a long-time preschool teacher in the *Kinders*, states that “The program of early education is not taking place as before under CDH. The promoters have been assigned three days a week to teach the children and two days to work in the community.” The centers were closed during the COVID epidemic and have only recently re-opened. “That is why we at CDH are supporting very specific activities that take place within the *Kinders*,” Lucia continues, “This year we took on the project of the delivery of toothbrushes and books for the close to 100 kindergarten and preschool children. These are parts of the *Kinder* programs that have always had the financial support of DGH and we are grateful that we have been able to continue with these programs for the benefit of the children.” As in the past, toothbrushes were brought down by a recent DGH volunteer carrying out a dental campaign.



Dental volunteer Subin Jeong performing a mouth check as part of dental health campaign.

The books are a continuation of a partnership between CDH and DGH that began in 2006, *Abriendo la Imaginación en Casa* (Opening the Imagination at Home), patterned after the successful national Reach Out and Read program in the US since 1989. The goal continues to be to stimulate children’s interest in learning, familiarize them with books, and facilitate the interaction of parents with their children around books. Adapted to meet needs of this rural community with historically low-literacy, DGH has worked closely with CDH staff to guide them into selection of sturdy, developmentally- and culturally-appropriate board books, purchased from a reputable US-based company at below-market cost. A DGH member places and receives the order, then coordinates transport to El Salvador with a DGH volunteer traveling there. Distribution of the books, 2-3 times/year, has always been an exciting event where parents explore the books with their children before they are taken home. The 2-4-year-old children receive very simple, colorful books with large pictures and few words. The 4-6-year-old children receive more “advanced” books, appropriate because they have participated in the program previously.

ADMINISTRATION. El Salvador has seen many changes over the years that have affected some families positively. The country has gotten wealthier: GDP per capita has risen from \$1,552 in 1995 (when DGH was founded) to \$5,127 today. But this growth does not reach most of the population, especially those in rural, isolated areas and with no family members working outside the country, able to send money home. It’s easy then to see the importance of CDH advocating for this marginalized population. José Ramiro Cortez Argueta, Executive Director of CDH, explains: “For CDH to be able to maximize our efforts, we are most grateful to Doctors for Global Health for their important support of CDH projects and programs.”

With DGH covering costs of essentials in the CDH budget, i.e. partial salaries, basic medicines, supplies, truck maintenance, etc., CDH has been able to apply for and receive funding from NGOs inside and outside El Salvador for its crucial projects. To DGH, there is symbolism in the three bridge projects, funded outside of DGH. Bridges of course go in two directions—allowing access to services outside the community and for goods and services to come into the community. Ramiro shared this, “Thanks to their administrative and financial support, DGH allows us to seek outside funds for other necessary projects that foster the development of families in the different communities within our catchment area.”

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION THAT BUILDS HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN OAXACA, MEXICO

By Irma Cruz Nava

At *Comunidades Campesinas de Camino* (CCC, Rural Communities in Cooperation) we are very interested in caring for the planet, nature, health and people. One way we do this is through the growing of sesame seeds from ancient cultures. We oversee the transformation and commercialization of the seeds into sesame oil used to promote nutrition due to the health advantages sesame has for the body. This production also contributes to the economy of the community.

There is a high social impact with the participation of *campesinos* (peasants), men and women of the indigenous peoples in Mexico. Indigenous people make up six of the nine ethnic groups in the region. Another important social impact of sesame oil production is the processes of conservation in natural resources use. The basis of all our production is fertile land, water, and forests incorporated into our agricultural practices. The wisdom of the ancient people is taken into account as the basis of the work that is done.

Faced with the trend of using agrochemicals for the production of edible crops and even introducing transgenic seeds, CCC is firm in its convictions. The practices of more than 30 years of work give us answers and examples of life when observing that organic cultivation favors people's health. Around the world, it is already recommended that all people consume organic, chemical-free foods to avoid various diseases, including cancer and chronic degenerative diseases, as well as obesity, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, and others.

The work done by CCC and its methodology serves as an example that we believe must be reproduced and supported to improve the health of people in our communities and to sustain a healthy planet in which we live. Time is of the upmost importance!



Community member amongst sesame plants.



Sesame seeds ready to be turned into oil.

CULTURE ARTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

By Michéle Brothers

There are many ways to understand the importance of well-being and connections to social justice and health care—even if not experienced directly. Organizations like DGH and the communities we accompany have long been working together through arts and cultural tools to help in the healing process via creative moments. These festivals, exhibits, and similar events can also help create awareness and engage in thought-provoking activities for many audiences. Below are some recent examples from Paris, France with internet address for more information:

► **United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF)**, now in its 27th year, was founded by Stanford University educator and film critic, Jasmina Bojic (who was a judge in a DGH video competition many years ago). UNAFF holds an annual documentary film festival based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights, inspired and based on the dedication of Eleanor Roosevelt (an extraordinary woman). This organization is based at Palo Alto, CA and holds a Traveling Film Festival, which shows films throughout the US and in many European countries.

UNAFF and The ARTS ARENA recently screened a very powerful documentary called “The Evangelists from Faith to Power,” produced and directed by Thomas Johnson and Philippe Gonzalez, in conjunction with ARTE France and PBS: www.unaff.org; www.artsarena.org.

► **Socially Relevant Film Festival (SRFF)**, founded and curated by Nora Armani is now in its 12th year. It is a NY-based film festival that presents films and documentaries from around the world, focusing on many categories of films with a socially relevant content and human interest to raise awareness. The festival, which is generally held in March is presented in-person and online: www.ratedfilms.org.

“Organizations like DGH and the communities we accompany have long been working together through arts and cultural tools to help in the healing process via creative moments.”

► **Europe Autour de l'Europe Film Festival**, now in its 20th year, founded by filmmaker Irena Bilic, focuses on films created by European filmmakers. It offers a large category of films honoring classics and little-known films: www.evropafilmakt.com.

One of this year's documentary films shown at The Arts Arena, *Playing the Changes: Tracking Darius Brubeck*, cele-

brates the story of jazz and the transformation of South Africa. Darius Brubeck, son of legendary musician Dave Brubeck, is a well-known musician in his own right. The

documentary explores how he and his wife have made change through their music, education and personal diplomacy. The film, which was produced and directed by a team in the Netherlands, is very uplifting! www.playing-the-changes.com.

Send us your ideas for future activities combining the arts, health and justice. ✨

APHA EXCELLENCE IN CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AWARD PRESENTED TO PETER NATAREN OF ESTANCIA

By Lanny Smith

On Friday, October 27, 2023, DGH Board of Directors member Peter received the following letter:

Dear Mr. Nataren,

Congratulations! It is our pleasure to recognize your hard work with an Excellence in Climate Leadership award. APHA's Center for Climate, Health & Equity will award you with \$250 to support expenses associated with your proposed climate activity and the programming-related costs. We were very impressed by your application. Your application demonstrated creativity and a commitment to prioritize climate change and health equity. We hope that the climate activity you have planned to implement in the next 12 months will provide an opportunity to further advance your climate work centered around equity.

Your commitment to health equity and passion for advancing climate solutions is exemplary of the kind of action APHA's Center for Climate, Health and Equity strives to recognize and support. With a long-standing commitment to climate as a health issue, APHA's climate

center applies the principles of health equity to help shape climate policy, engagement and action to justly address the needs of all communities regardless of age, geography, race, income, gender and other factors.

Award details: Your final award amount is \$250 to cover expenses for your proposed climate activity to be implemented in the next 12 months. Please note that the award will be sent to you by check following an introductory call with APHA.

Peter received the award at the APHA Excellence in Climate Leadership Awards Breakfast on November 14, 2023. For his work supporting the Santa Marta Five Environmental Water Defenders, currently under house arrest in an attempt by the Bukele government to repeal El

“Your application demonstrated creativity and a commitment to prioritize climate change and health equity.”

Salvador's Anti-Extractive-Mining for Metals law they helped pass in 2017. Currently, the Water Defenders are under house arrest. The next phase in their trial will be 8-10 October 2024. Peter will be presenting the “Case of the Santa Marta Water Defenders and El Salvador's Regimen of Exception” at Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health on 4 October 2024, along with other members of the Santa Marta community and representatives of the local Boston Salvadoran solidarity community. (www.common-dreams.org/news/el-salvador-environment.)

“It is outrageous that the judge is allowing this trial to go forward despite the lack of any evidence of a crime,” said John Cavanagh, a senior adviser at the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies.

“The international community stands strong with the five leaders of the successful fight against mining, and we will join Salvadoran water defenders to continue to fight with them for justice in this case,” he added. (<https://aplaneta.org/weeks-of-action-santa-marta-5>)

From October 8-10, 2024, the trial against the 5 Santa Marta Water defenders will be held in El Salvador. They were detained and charged, on January 11, 2023, with committing a crime that allegedly took place more than 33 years ago in the context of the Salvadoran civil war.

The Water Defenders were quickly sentenced to six months of pre-trial detention and in February 2024 a judge allowed the case to go to trial despite the lack of evidence and a series of irregularities with the testimony of the sole secret witness presented by the Attorney General's office. Although the ruling of the judge was appealed by the defense on several grounds, it was upheld by the Appeals Court. Given the concerted domestic and global outcry over the arrests, the five Water Defenders were released to house arrest after their health was affected in prison.

Social organizations in El Salvador have denounced that instead of pursuing justice for the victims of the war, the government of El Salvador is manipulating the judicial system to criminalize well known environmental leaders who, for more than a decade, played a key role in the struggle that led to the country's ban on metal mining in 2017.

The same leaders had denounced the presence of mining companies in the department of Cabañas despite the prohibition, while members of the National Roundtable on Mining had denounced measures taken by the Bukele regime to create conditions to repeal the anti-mining law. 🌱



Katherine Catalano, Deputy Director, Center for Climate, Health and Justice, presenting award to Peter Nataren.



Peter Nataren (left), Lanny Smith (3rd from left) and other participants at a DGH-sponsored session on Environmental Activism at the APHA 2023 Conference in Atlanta, GA.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE ARTS: BOOK REVIEW

By Lanny Smith

Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and The Revolution of Reciprocal Care, by Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba, is an effective community-building invitation.

Let This Radicalize You (LTRU) emphasizes journey, joy, present and future with concrete step-by-step examples as well as helpful warnings. This book shares practical guidance on the action-practice of mutual aid. It sings to the reason Doctors for Global Health was born and lives Liberation Medicine. Every serious organizer toward health and social justice should read this book with care.

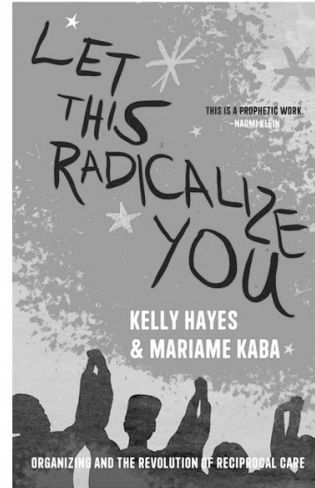
“Every jailbreak begins with a decision to reject the inevitable,” writes Kelly Hayes in her “Introduction: Remaking the World” celebration of poet Diana di Prima. “An important thing to do when injustices compound is to resist numbness. In order for change and transformation to occur, we must refuse the current order of the world,” writes Mariame Kaba in her “Conclusion: Beyond Doom, toward Collective Action.” She continues, “All humanity is connected and interdependent...Refuse to acquiesce to despair...For me, hope is not a metaphor, it is a lived practice...Even if the end times are upon us, we should still plant trees. This is disciplined hope. This is hope in the doing, hope as action.”

Essentially a practical guide, while also encouraging us to know our history, LTRU has an “Appendix: Navigating Police Use of Chemical Weapons.” For any of us who know the taste of tear gas and other favorite poisons of the powers that be, terror domestically unleashed recently by universities like Emory’s president on students (and faculty!) peacefully protesting what the International Court of Justice has called “plausible genocide” by Israel in Gaza, such advice is indeed spot on. [“Atlanta Police Violently Arrest Emory Students and Faculty to Clear Gaza Solidarity Encampment, April 4, 2024, www.democracynow.org/2024/4/26/emory_protests.] For example “do not wear contacts if you are at risk of being exposed to chemical weapons (ex: tear gas). Contact lenses have been known to trap the chemicals against your eyes, which could damage the cornea.”

The “Introduction: We Can Only Survive Together,” notes, “Activism encompasses all the ways we show up for justice. It can take a multitude of shapes, depending on a person’s skills, interests and capacity.” Further, “Making positive change is difficult. Uprooting oppression is the work of many lifetimes...The most important thing you can do to transform the world is to act. Taking action is a practice of hope. This book is your invitation to act in the best way that you know and to survive together.”

LTRU shares stories, good narrative, about successes in confronting injustice. Why stories? Because “Facts are not enough to mobilize people into action.” “When a fact or set of facts prompts people to change course, it’s usually someone or something that has interrupted the narrative they knew and told a story that feels more true....When these narrative shifts occur among communities and groups of people, new potentials arise. People are capable of taking actions that defy systems of oppression and popular expectations.”

“Rejecting our fear of each other,” is an important sub-chapter that notes, “As the unprecedented flourishing of mutual aid projects during the pandemic has demonstrated, many people respond to communal crisis with generosity and shared concern.” “When we are no longer ruled by a manufactured fear of one another, we experience a form of liberation.” “What becomes increasingly possible in spaces where people experience belonging, imagine new ways of living, and practice those kinder, more just beliefs in relation to each other, is the cultivation of hope. Because if we can experience other people as co-strugglers—not as competitors or fearful enemies—we can act on the values of the world we want to build.”



One of the tenets of *Let This Radicalize You* is building relationships. “A counterculture of care exists in opposition to all manner of state warfare and to the very nature of empire. It requires the undoing of individualism and siloed politics and harbors the potential for new life-giving frameworks.

Care-driven organizing compels us to ask: “What would it take to provide for people’s needs and address the root causes of a problem? How do we care for each other as crises unfold? At what cost are we willing to offer shelter and protection to people who are under attack?”

The richness within the LTRU text is so beautiful that my brief report can only say, “Go there and read, please, carefully read it all.” But, I will share a few more of the reasons anyone bent

on organizing for justice should indeed read these 277 pages. “We also have to prepare for the eventualities of becoming a threat to the status quo. The more successfully our work challenges the status quo, the more likely social media platforms and other digital services are to blacklist us or otherwise impede our efforts.” A “defiant act of care” example given is how “life rings” to prevent drownings were installed on Chicago city beaches.

In “Rejecting Cynicism and Building Broader Social Movements,” there is the sage counsel: “The stories and histories we carry position us to warn people that they cannot fight the evil that currently inflames them without understanding its relationship to the past and to other elements of the present...As you strategize in the face of cynicism, ask yourself these questions: What is the outcome you want? Do your words and actions lend themselves to the creation of that outcome? If not, how can you change them? What is the impact you would like to have? Do you believe you are capable of making that impact? If so, how will you go about making it? What power do you possess, and how are you leveraging that power in relation

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DOCTORS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

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BOOK REVIEW

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to the issue at hand? We ask these questions not to prescribe answers but to provoke them."

Another chapter looks at how "The violence of the state in response to protest is rarely scrutinized to the degree that the protesters are scrutinized. The idea that if you are defiant in the face of authority you should expect to incur its wrath is firmly entrenched in our culture." Examples given are from the Indigenous movement at Standing Rock, the Stop Cop City movement to preserve the Weelaunee Forest in Atlanta (DGH sponsored an expose of Atlanta's environmental racism violence against the Weelaunee Forest at the 2023 Atlanta American Public Health Association meeting—together with presentations about the Santa Marta 5 Water Defenders and JusticeLA's successful fight to stop a new Los Angeles prison's construction), and "Poetry as Violence" where Israel arrested and incarcerated Palestinian poet Dareen Tatour for "inciting violence" with her poem "Resist."

One of the most helpfully beautiful chapters in LTRU is "Avoiding Burnout and Going the Distance." "People who commit themselves to justice work should not see their lives ruined or shortened because they chose to fight for a better world. Such losses are themselves a form of injustice." And "Organizers are not machines. We are living beings who experience stages of energetic growth, periods of exhaustion, and various stages of healing, reconfiguration and renewal. The same is true of movements and communities." The group Doctors for Global Health is currently in the stages of "healing, reconfiguration and renewal"—and as you are reading these words, please know you are an essential person in our DGH healing, reconfiguration and renewal journey. Your participation we both need and welcome!

And so, in re-quoting from LTRU's last chapter "Conclusion: Beyond Doom, toward Collective Action," a beautiful poem from that most wonderful of poets (Rest in Power) Octavia Butler, in *Parable of the Sower*, I will finish my report on LTRU. Please join and support DGH to help us be part of the changes YOU want to see and make happen in our world!

"All that you touch
You Change.
All that you Change
Changes you.
The only lasting truth
Is Change."



DGH Reporter

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