
PAVING THE PATH TO PEACE: The Life and Work of Olenka Ochoa of Peru

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2008 Women PeaceMakers Program

Made possible by the Fred J. Hansen Foundation

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A NOTE TO THE READER

In the following pages, you will find narrative stories about a Woman PeaceMaker, along with additional information to provide a deep understanding of a contemporary conflict and one person's journey within it. These complementary components include a brief biography of the peacemaker, a historical summary of the conflict, a timeline integrating political developments in the country with personal history of the peacemaker, a question-and-answer transcript of select interviews, and a table of best practices in peacebuilding as demonstrated and reflected on by the peacemaker during her time at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice.

The document is not intended necessarily to be read straight through, from beginning to end. Instead, you can use the historical summary or timeline as mere references or guides as you read the narrative stories. You can move straight to the table of best practices if you are interested in peacebuilding methods and techniques, or go to the question-and-answer transcript if you want to read commentary in the peacemakers' own words. The goal of this format is to reach audiences through multiple channels, providing access to the peacemakers' work, vision, lives and impact in their communities.

ABOUT THE WOMEN PEACEMAKERS PROGRAM

Made possible through a generous grant from the Fred J. Hansen Foundation, the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice's (IPJ) Women PeaceMakers Program annually hosts four women from around the world who have been involved in human rights and peacemaking efforts in their countries.

Women on the frontline of efforts to end violence and secure a just peace seldom record their experiences, activities and insights – as generally there is no time or, perhaps, they do not have formal education that would help them record their stories. The Women PeaceMakers Program is a selective program for leaders who want to document, share and build upon their unique peacemaking stories. Selected peacemakers join the IPJ for an eight-week residency.

Women PeaceMakers are paired with a Peace Writer to document in written form their story of living in conflict and building peace in their communities and nations. The peacemakers' stories are also documented on film by the IPJ's partner organization Sun & Moon Vision Productions. While in residence at the institute, Women PeaceMakers give presentations on their work and the situation in their home countries to the university and San Diego communities.

The IPJ believes that women's stories go beyond headlines to capture the nuance of complex situations and expose the realities of gender-based violence, thus providing an understanding of conflict and an avenue to its transformation. The narrative stories of Women PeaceMakers not only provide this understanding, but also show the myriad ways women construct peace in the midst of and after violence and war. For the realization of peace with justice, the voices of women – those severely affected by violent conflict and struggling courageously and creatively to build community from the devastation – must be recorded, disseminated and spotlighted.¹

BIOGRAPHY OF A WOMAN PEACEMAKER – OLENKA OCHOA

An activist for human rights and women’s rights during the brutal civil war in the 1980s and throughout the authoritarian presidency of Alberto Fujimori in the 1990s, Olenka Ochoa continues to fight violence and discrimination against women in Peru. As a university student when the Shining Path rebels began their insurgency, Ochoa organized activities to promote and defend human rights in local shantytowns and, with political groups and nongovernmental organizations, sheltered fellow women leaders resisting both the insurgents and the armed forces. In Villa El Salvador, a village to the south of Lima, she worked on the promotion of women’s rights and organized political activities with local leaders such as Maria Elena Moyano, who was assassinated by the Shining Path for her community organizing.



Photo Credit: Patricia Rogers

In 1992, Ochoa joined the nongovernmental Research and Training Institute for Family and Women, which works primarily in the district of San Juan de Lurigancho, a destination for domestic migrants from Andean villages and an area hard-hit by the war. She worked with grassroots organizations and local women leaders in founding the first shelter for battered women in the district and later designed the innovative project “Peace Keepers,” which involved at-risk youth in combating violence and discrimination and won a national contest sponsored by the World Bank in 2001.



Photo Credit: Ryan Brennan/The Vista

On the governmental level, Ochoa has helped formulate new approaches to combating violence against women. In 1996, she founded the municipal program “Jacaranda” in Miraflores, which won the first U.N. Latin American Contest for Women’s Rights in 1998. From 1999 to 2002 she served as an elected member of the Metropolitan Lima Municipal Council, developing alternative security strategies to protect women and founding the first commission of women in the municipality. Ochoa contributed to the design of a law for equal opportunities for women and men, which was signed into national law in March 2007. She is also a board member of the Federation of Municipal Women of Latin America and the Caribbean and of the Huairou Commission, a global network of community development organizations.

CONFLICT HISTORY² – PERU

Peru is well known for its predecessor, the sophisticated civilization and historic Inca Empire that was nestled in the highlands of the Andes Mountains. Between 1400 and 1533, the great Inca Empire grew in size and power and at its height reached from Ecuador to the tip of Chile. The Incas called their grand kingdom *Tawantinsuyu*, or “The Four Parts Together,” referring to the four corners of their vast realm whose center lay in Cuzco, the home of the royalty and ruling elite.

The Inca Empire came to its demise in 1533 when – in the midst of a civil war between two Inca princes – a small Spanish brigade under the direction of the conqueror Francisco Pizarro captured and executed the Inca prince, Atawallpa. The Spanish continued to overpower all of the main Inca capitals and soon claimed Peru a Spanish colony. The gold and silver accumulated during the overthrow of the Inca Empire made Peru the main source of wealth for the Spanish in South America.

In the years following the demise of the empire, Spanish viceroyalty ruled the land until 1821, when revolutionaries Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín and the Peruvian Creole elite led the Peruvian people into the War of Independence. After independence in 1824, Peru and its neighbors engaged in sporadic territorial disputes. In 1878, a war erupted between Chile and the joint forces of Bolivia and Peru in an effort to take control of the coastal dry lands which were rich in nitrate and guano.³ This would later be known as the War of the Pacific. It lasted until 1883 and included a number of bloody battles for territory both in the sea and on land. Chilean troops marched all the way to the capital of Lima and claimed victory over the Peruvian forces, and in October 1883, the Treaty of Ancón was signed between Peru and Chile, resulting in the loss of the Peruvian province Tarapacá to the Chilean victors.

The 20th century was full of economic, social and political turmoil in Peru. Years of economic inequality between the social classes within society (rooted in the colonial practices of labor exploitation) was finally coming to a head. Tensions between the small elite class, which held almost all of the economic and political power, and the poor masses reached frightening levels. In addition, the rivaling Cold War factions and the growing socialist and communist ideologies among the peasantry added to these social pressures. The powerful social elite favored strong foreign investment, and free trade policies pitted them against the poor peasant class who insisted on national land reforms and meeting the demands of the strong labor unions. The confrontation between the opposing sides often ended in violent clashes.

Rising tensions fueled by land invasions and peasant uprisings were the backdrop for the 1962 presidential elections. Fernando Belaúnde Terry won the presidency after campaigning on a reformist political platform. Due to his ultimate failure in enacting his reformist agenda, Belaúnde was ousted from power by the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces, led by Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado in 1968.

Velasco’s regime was unlike any other military dictatorship in Latin America. Rather than combating communism through military force, Velasco’s primary political strategy was to win the favor of the masses through building alliances with the leftist movement on agrarian reforms while also creating a state-run capitalist sector. Only weeks after the military coup, Velasco sent forces to the oil-rich region of northern Peru and expelled the international petroleum companies. He

continued to nationalize other key industries in the country, including part of the mining industry and the banking system.

On the agrarian reform front, the Velasco government used a similar approach by expropriating the large cotton and sugar plantations along the coast and setting up state-controlled peasant cooperatives. Many of the international corporations were kicked out of the agrarian sector and the hacienda-owner elites took jobs in Velasco's government agencies. However, the old, unbalanced power structures between the wealthy elites and poor peasants remained.

The Velasco regime also attempted to co-opt the labor and trade unions, farmer organizations and neighborhood associations by creating the National System to Support Social Mobilization, or SINAMOS. Although this initiative brought new vehicles for political involvement by the disenfranchised peasantry, it ultimately failed to meet the needs of its members by refusing to acknowledge the already established labor unions and workers' associations.

Velasco's more central platform and authoritarian style of rule ignited a rising discontent within both the far left- and right-leaning parties. National strikes were held by the social leadership and trade and teachers' unions in response to the growing inequalities and lack of civil rights. By 1975 the economic situation in Peru had taken a dramatic turn for the worse. Industrial growth was decreasing while foreign debt increased. In addition, the cost of living rose 139 percent in the seven years the Velasco regime was in power. Due to these rising economic and political tensions, the military ousted Velasco and replaced him with Gen. Francisco Morales Bermudez. However, Velasco is still recognized as one of the top innovative and social reforming leaders of Latin America.

Morales Bermudez quickly turned to a more conservative method of rule, typical of most military dictatorships in Latin America at the time. He sought the approval of large financial lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and enacted a plan for price increases and wage freezes in June 1976. This caused an immediate negative reaction from the general public. Peruvians held a series of protests and marches in the streets throughout the country. The military regime called for a state of emergency, enforced a curfew in Lima and closed all opposition newspapers. But the civil unrest continued, and on July 19, 1977, the first national strike in almost 60 years took place with students, workers and shantytown dwellers taking over the urban streets.

Through negotiations between the dominant social-democratic American Popular Revolutionary Alliance party and the military leadership, an agreement was made to construct a new constitution in 1979 and hold true democratic elections in 1980. Returning candidate Fernando Belaúnde won the elections by a landslide and promised to create 1 million new jobs during his time in office.

Just as the political situation in Peru began to stabilize in 1980, a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist group called the Peruvian Communist Party – *Sendero Luminoso* (PCP-SL), or Shining Path, launched its first attack under their proclaimed people's war. The group, which had been gaining popularity in the highland region of Ayacucho during the 1970s, was started by a philosophy professor named Abimael Guzmán Reynosos, also known as Gonzalo. His vision was to start a war by the people, based on Mao Tse-tung's revolution of the masses in China in the 1930s. However, his methods were more similar to those of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

Guzmán supported the idea that only through an armed struggle and a full cleansing of the leftist party could a true communist, anti-imperialist and anti-revisionist society emerge. For a Sendero member, every action, belief and breath was in support of the ideology. Furthermore, anyone involved in local politics or grassroots organizations that were not part of the Sendero movement was considered an enemy of the people and a supporter of the establishment. Between 1980 and 1992, it is estimated that the Sendero forces had 5,000 members and combatants. Women participated in Sendero as members of the terrorist commands or in the higher levels of the party as “female companions” of the leaders and Gonzalo.

The newly elected president’s first response to Sendero was to allow the local police to handle the delinquent attacks. However, many ordinary citizens and police officers were being killed, and Belaúnde’s lack of strategy against the frequent bombings, destruction and murders was conspicuous. His blatant disregard for the security of the countryside and highlands allowed Sendero’s armed struggle to expand its influence and strength. On Dec. 26, 1982, Belaúnde declared a state of emergency in the department of Ayacucho (the area with the largest Sendero presence) and parts of three other departments in the Peruvian highlands. He called in the military forces to help combat the Sendero problem and allowed them to use whatever means necessary to deal with the situation. This was the start of the Peruvian government’s counterinsurgency strategy, sometimes called the “dirty war,” against its own people.

When Alan Garcia took office in 1985, he promised an end to the violence through social programs and economic development. However, his promises were short-lived. The military and the paramilitary group known as the Rodrigo Franco Command continued their attacks with even more ferocity, as did Sendero. Disappearances, abuse, torture and executions happened daily under the Garcia regime, coupled with daily bombings and retaliation by Sendero. The massacre at El Frontón prison, located on an island near Lima, was one of the most tragic episodes of the war. By the last year of Garcia’s five-year term, almost one-third of Peru’s provinces were under military rule and more than half of the people were denied their constitutional rights. The majority of the victims of both the Sendero attacks and the military counterinsurgency were the indigenous peasants in the countryside and the urban social leaders. Approximately 2.5 million people were victims of forced searches by the military and thousands of people were detained. Sexual abuse of indigenous women by the police and military officers was rampant. Tens of thousands of people from the highlands migrated to Lima in order to escape the persecution by both the military and Sendero forces.

Meanwhile, the economic situation in Peru during the 1980s was in crisis. Inflation skyrocketed while wages declined. Grassroots organizations mobilized once again in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the extreme poverty and armed attacks from both Sendero and the military. Among these were women’s associations organized principally in soup kitchens, “Glass of Milk” programs,⁴ indigenous organizations and human rights networks.

Following Garcia, President Alberto Fujimori was elected into office in 1990. His term started immediately with an economic shock package to stabilize inflation rates and appeal to the international lending institutions along the lines of a neoliberal framework. Known as Fujishock, his policies led to the number of people living in poverty nearly doubling overnight. Any existing food subsidies were cut and prices for electricity, transport, water, telephone calls and gasoline rose significantly. All social services, especially health care and education, suffered tremendously. Epidemics of diseases spread throughout the poor neighborhoods.

In the fight against Sendero, Fujimori's administration was even closer to the military than his predecessor. In 1992, after only two years in office, he carried out an *autogolpe*, or self-inflicted coup, that gave almost total control to the military. After years of the government's abusive, anti-terrorist campaign which was killing nearly 150 people per month during Fujimori's reign, the search for Sendero's leader finally came to an end. On Sept. 12, 1992, Guzman was arrested in his home in a middle-class neighborhood of Peru. While some Sendero attacks continued after his capture, the arrest was detrimental to the party's strength and any extension of the people's war.

Although many saw the arrest of Guzman as a major achievement in ending the political conflict, the people of Peru were fed up with Fujimori's corruption and denial of civil rights. Social pressure that mounted over the 10 years of Fujimori's rule – such as the March of the Four Suyos⁵ – as well as the release of videotapes exposing corruption in his cabinet, led to Fujimori's resignation in 2000.

After Fujimori's resignation, a process now known as the "Democratic Spring" began with the interim presidency of Valetin Paniagua. In 2001, Alejandro Toledo became the official, democratically elected president of Peru. Two significant developments took place in the initial years of the Democratic Spring. The first was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up to investigate the horrors of the 20-year internal conflict. In the final report, completed in August of 2003, the commission estimated that 69,280 people died or were disappeared during the conflict and there were 11,500 cases of human rights violations.⁶ The report also called for reparations to the victims of the violence. The second development was the passage of the National Accord, which established a political dialogue and specific actions and national policies on development.

Following the democratization process under Toledo's government, the former Peruvian leader, Alan Garcia, was elected president of Peru for a second time in 2006.



Map No. 3838 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS
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INTEGRATED TIMELINE

Political Developments in Peru and *Personal History of Olenka Ochoa*

- 1821** Peru gains independence from Spain.
- 1879-1883** Forces from Peru and Bolivia fight Chile in the War of the Pacific. Chile is victorious and gains land that was formerly part of southern Peru.
- 1963** Fernando Belaúnde Terry becomes president.
- 1964** ***Olenka Ochoa is born in the city of Lima.***
- 1968** Military coup by Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado overthrows Belaúnde. Velasco's ruling ideology is similar to other socialist regimes in Latin America at the time.
- 1978-1979** National strikes are organized against the military regime, including a strike by the teachers' union in the public school system.
- Olenka is a student in public school and is involved in activities in support of the teachers' union.***
- 1980** The Maoist guerilla group known as the Peruvian Communist Party – *Sendero Luminoso* (PCP-SL), or Shining Path, begins attacks and launches their people's war.
- Fernando Belaúnde is elected president of Peru again. Although elected amidst the growing political violence by the Shining Path, he did not have a strategy to confront the terrorism.
- 1981** The Shining Path causes a blackout in Lima on ***Olenka's first day of class at the Catholic University of Peru (PUCP).***
- 1983-1987** ***Olenka is a student in the School of Law of PUCP and participates in the activities of the Taller de Derecho, a student-run working group that offers training programs on human rights and legal guidance to victims who live in the shantytowns of northern Lima. With a group of students she co-founds the Legal Training and Advocacy Team (ECAL), which provides paralegal assistance. Olenka also collaborates with Propuesta (a nongovernmental organization founded by the academic Narda Henriquez) on, among other things, political leadership training for women.***
- 1985** Alan Garcia becomes president of Peru. His government applies a strategy of national security that includes a paramilitary death squad called the Rodrigo Franco Command in order to persecute social leaders and leftist politicians.

1987 *Olenka finishes her studies in law school. In Villa El Salvador, she begins work with Orientadoras Legales, a women’s rights project of Manuela Ramos, a feminist NGO.*

Villa El Salvador becomes a primary focus of the Shining Path’s violent attacks.

Olenka becomes involved in the Movement of Socialist Affirmation (MAS) political party, and comes into contact with Maria Elena Moyano, a social leader in the urban areas who later becomes the vice mayor of Villa El Salvador.

1987-1992 *Olenka participates in different public and political meetings and street mobilizations (as Marches of Peace) to confront the army and defend peace and human rights. She also implements a training program on human rights for social leaders.*

1988 *Olenka, along with Propuesta members and the NGO Calandria, organize a conference on women and political violence in Peru. It was the first of its kind and included Maria Elena Moyano.*

1990 Alberto Fujimori is elected president of Peru. He initiates harsh tactics against Sendero and those suspected of supporting them.

1991 *Olenka begins work as a member of the human rights team of the Research and Training Institute for Family and Women (INCAFAM) in San Juan de Lurigancho.*

San Juan de Lurigancho is a flagged “red zone” during the internal conflict because of the presence of the Shining Path and army operatives.

Narda Henriquez establishes the first Gender Studies program at the Catholic University of Peru. *Olenka is a member of the first graduating class.*

1991-1993 *Olenka works with INCAFAM to create a training program on human rights, develop actions to support leaders of grassroots organizations and offer technical advice to local leaders.*

1992 February 15 – Maria Elena Moyano is assassinated by the Shining Path.

April – Fujimori closes the National Congress, disbands the judiciary and gives the military control of counterinsurgency efforts. His civil dictatorship is marked by high levels of corruption, political violence and absolute control of the media. He is supported by his close friend Vladimiro Montesinos.

September – Abimael Guzmán Reynoso, leader of the Shining Path, is captured by the national police.

Olenka joins the National Network of Women and later becomes their coordinator for Lima.

1994 *At Mar de Plata, Argentina, Olenka attends the Latin American Preparatory Forum to the Fourth World Conference on Women. She is part of a team of experts in charge of collecting and disseminating information about the platform on women in Peru.*

Olenka develops the first projects on child abuse and domestic violence in San Juan de Lurigancho with INCAFAM. This includes the first study on the risks facing women in the context of political and social violence.

1995 *Olenka is a consultant for the United Nations Children’s Fund and works for the Ministry of Justice’s High Commission on Human Rights to promote gender and multicultural approaches in the national system of the Defenders for the Rights of Children (Defensorias del Niño).*

Olenka attends the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China. This attendance was the culmination of her work on a team that held civil society workshops, created reports on the situation of women, and developed a National Report – all in preparation for Beijing.

1996 *Olenka is a consultant for the U.N. Population Fund and begins work for the Ministry of Justice in the Commission of Women’s Rights division. Here, she organizes the first gender training program for local government and teaches women authorities in various districts of Lima.*

Olenka opens the first shelter for battered women in San Juan de Lurigancho in alliance with local women authorities, INCAFAM, Taller de Capacitación e Investigación Familiar (TACIF) and grassroots women’s organizations.

Olenka, in alliance with local women authorities, opens the Jacaranda program to address issues of urban violence and women’s rights in the community of Miraflores. She serves as coordinator of the program until 1999.

The Ministry of Women is created by President Fujimori in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action.⁷

Olenka serves as an expert consultant to the minister of women in the Cabinet, along with U.N. consultant Belkys Mones.

1997 *Olenka organizes the first gender-based training program on violence for the national police under the Ministry of Women.*

Olenka (as coordinator of Jacaranda) promotes the official Women’s Day celebration and organizes a special awards ceremony for women leaders given by the municipality of Miraflores. She also promotes the first campaign on women and urban violence, called “Our Right to Walk in Peace.”

The rebel group, Tupac Amaru, seizes the Japanese Ambassador's home and holds the residents hostage for four months. The government responds by killing all of the Tupac Amaru kidnappers, forcing the rebel group to disband.

1998 *Olenka, with the Jacaranda team, designs the first training program on urban violence with a gender perspective, for the municipal police and neighborhood committees of Miraflores. The project later wins the first Latin American prize for the defense of women's rights by a municipality government, given by the United Nations.*

Olenka provides training programs on gender and urban violence to prosecutors and judges, supported by the Ministry of Women.

Olenka is a candidate for councilor of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima (city council), representing Somos Peru. (The MAS political party ceased functioning in the mid-1990s.)

The Somos Peru political party, the principal opposition party to Fujimori, wins the local leadership of Lima when its leader, Alberto Andrade, is elected mayor.

1999-2002 *Olenka wins the election to the city council. She carries out many initiatives on women's rights while on the council, including the development of a training program for municipal police forces, the mobilization of support for a Women's Commission and the creation of the Minerva prize to recognize outstanding women's organizations.*

2000 *Olenka participates in the resistance movement against the Fujimori regime and promotes the first street mobilization as the "Women in Black" movement with her Somos Peru colleagues.*

July 27-28 – The March of the Four Suyos takes place in Lima to protest the Fujimori regime.

Olenka is part of a team of women who support the march and helps the tambos, to give food and shelter for the thousands of protesters who travel to Lima for the demonstration.

November – Fujimori resigns as president by faxing a letter from Japan to the National Congress.

Olenka is the coordinator of the "Peace Keepers" project, focused on confronting poverty through preventing youth and urban violence in San Juan de Lurigancho. The project is sponsored by INCAFAM and wins a prize from the World Bank for programs that confront poverty.

Olenka participates in the International Conference on Democracy and Security, in Italy, organized by the European Forum for Security. She assists in the founding of a Latin American Forum for Security.

2001 Juan Luis Cipriani, the Archbishop of Lima and a member of Opus Dei, is named a cardinal of the Catholic Church.

Alejandro Toledo is elected president of Peru.

As a member of Somos Peru, Olenka participates in the National Accord for Governance established by President Toledo as a place for dialogue on the creation of new policies for democratization in Peru.

Olenka is asked by the Minister of Internal Affairs to serve on the high commission for the prevention of youth violence during soccer games in Peru.

Olenka is invited by the United Nations to be a speaker in the Seminar on Cities and Gender Violence, organized by the U.N. Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the Urban Resource Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. The seminar took place at U.N. Headquarters in New York.

2002-2003 *Olenka designs the Safety in Schools Project for the Ministry of Education. She and her colleague Esther Moreno, a prestigious woman leader, create an intervention team for crisis situations in schools.*

2003 *Olenka works for the Ministry of Women as the principal advisor to the minister (Anel Townsend) and as national director of women. With the Ministry of Defense, she organizes a training program for the military academy on human rights of women students.*

2004-2005 *Olenka is the coordinator of the technical office for the Youth Commission under the National Congress. The commission develops a Plan for Youth, which creates an award program for Peruvian youth leaders and supports the activities of indigenous youth.*

Olenka joins a team of experts to develop the Latin American Gender Planning in Local Government project.

2004 *Olenka participates in the International Conference for Safer Cities, organized by UN-HABITAT. She also joins FEMUM-ALC's [Latin American and Caribbean Federation of Women in Local Government] participation on the Council of the Huairou Commission.*

2006-2007 *With INCAFAM, Olenka coordinates the project Municipal Planning for Equal Opportunities for Vulnerable People (e.g., adolescent mothers, persons with disabilities, child laborers), sponsored by the European Union.*

2006 *Olenka runs for a seat on the Andean Regional Parliament. She also helps the political campaigns of candidates in the municipal elections.*

Alan Garcia is elected president for a second time. His vice president is Luis Giampietri Rojas.

2007 *Olenka is invited by the Women’s Commission of the National Congress to be a member of the team of experts designing a national law on gender equality and equal opportunities.*

Olenka participates as a member of the Huairou Commission in a UN-HABITAT meeting and workshop on Safer Cities for Women, held in Nairobi, Kenya.

March – The Law for Equality of Opportunities of Women and Men passes.

2008 *Olenka travels to the United States to take part in the Women PeaceMakers Program at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice.*

NARRATIVE STORIES OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF OLENKA OCHOA

Vale un Peru

As the Chilean troops began invading Marta's hometown of Tambo de Mora, she had to make a decision.⁸ She could surrender and allow the rivals to finish their conquest of the Peruvian coastal region or she could take up arms and help the resistance movement. Marta chose to fight. She not only opted to join the battle that day, but also went on to become a recognized leader in the Peruvian irregular forces known as "Montoneras." When the conflict with Chile was over, she continued her service in the civil armed groups and eventually became a logistics officer in the military for many years. Marta was also a strong supporter of the opposition movement of Nicolas de Piérola, who later became president of the republic in 1894 and promoted her to a captain in the army.⁹ "The participation of Marta was not typical of this period. It was the late 19th century and not normal for a woman to be involved in military actions. [She] is an expression of the history of women, but the history of women never appears in the official history."¹⁰

Based on this legacy, it is no surprise that Olenka Ochoa, the great-granddaughter of Marta, has become a strong leader, activist and promoter of social justice and security in Peru. Through her family's history, especially the stories of the women, Olenka has learned the core values of solidarity, humanity and challenging the status quo.

Since she was young, Olenka has heard stories about her grandmothers and their struggles during war, epidemics, changing governments and natural disasters. She remembers the story of her grandmother, Magdalena, who saved other villagers during an earthquake in Arequipa who were stuck beneath falling homes and buildings. "She made sure her own children were safe, and immediately went to help other people who were trapped."

In another instance, when Olenka's mother was a child and became gravely ill during a devastating epidemic, Magdalena refused to allow the health officials to take her daughter from their home to be quarantined – the way thousands others were and then died far from home. Magdalena insisted on staying by her side and went with her to the secluded area.

This was very dangerous for my grandmother to go. She had to confront the difficult situation of either handing over her daughter to the health officials with the high possibility of her dying in the quarantined area or go with her daughter. She said, 'My daughter goes with me or does not go at all.' She cared for her daughter during the weeks of the epidemic while her husband cared for the other children. She fed the other sick people and doctors and nurses, and shared with them whatever she had.

The stories about Olenka's family are numerous, but there is a common thread through them that has made Olenka the person she is today. These women, though they may never reach the official history books in Peru, became leaders within their communities and challenged women's traditional role of staying in the home.

Olenka's mother, Lucrecia, was also a dedicated community leader and passionate about getting women working and learning outside of the home. When Olenka was a child, her mother would often take her to various workshops and local assemblies. Lucrecia was a natural leader during

these gatherings, and her principal focus was on organizing women and providing educational and leadership opportunities in the community.

There would be so many people in the room or auditorium and many of them were too shy to enter and walk through the crowds. When I went looking for my mother, she would be talking with leaders, teaching or speaking for the others. Everyone would be waving and saying ‘Hi, Olenka’ as we passed through.

Olenka’s mother was known to be an impressive speaker. She could speak clearly and effectively about the issues affecting their neighborhood. She was even successful in organizing local citizens to assist in the creation of a police station in their community. Olenka accompanied her mother to all of these events and learned the value of working for the safety of the people.

Even when things became tough and internal war in Peru ensued, Olenka and her family chose to stay in the country. The idea of fleeing was “not an option.” They had a history of pride and love for Peru. Her father’s family was from Cuzco, an important historical region in the Andes Mountains, known as the Land of the Incas.

There was always a lot of pride about our Peruvian heritage in my family. I would always hear that we are the land of the great Inca civilization and we were so proud of the Andean and Amazonian civilizations, the African and creole cultures – and we viewed Peru with dignity. My family never wanted to adopt a different model or way of life outside of that in my country. We traveled around all of Peru and recognized our treasures: the people, culture and biodiversity.

There is a famous expression in Peru that articulates the honor and dignity the people have for their country: *Vale un Peru* or “Value like Peru.” During colonization, the expression became the motto for Peru’s valuable riches. Today, the saying still has meaning and refers to a person or group of people, like Olenka’s family, who make Peru invaluable.

The Brigadier

“I want to go to school like my brother!” the eager, young Olenka vehemently told her parents, Lucrecia and Roberto. It was April of 1969, and she was just 5 years old. Typically, children do not start regular school until they are 6 in Peru. But Olenka had learned to read and write by the age of 4, so she felt she was ready to follow in her brother’s footsteps.

When Olenka’s parents finally informed her she was going to start “classes” that autumn, she was elated. She prepared her newly sharpened pencils, gathered her clean, empty notebooks and put them in her brand new backpack. She began counting the days until April when the school year would begin.

When the first day of classes finally arrived, she dressed in her crisply ironed uniform and anxiously walked with her mother. Finally, she would be able to join the prestigious ranks of her older brother. As she approached the classroom, Olenka gave her mother a hug and kiss and explained how everything would be fine. Unlike many of the other mothers, Lucrecia did not cry, confident Olenka would handle herself just fine. She merely hoped Olenka would be content with the pre-school classes.

As Olenka sat excitedly at her desk, ready to begin reading and writing in her fresh notebooks, her teacher passed out the children’s first assignments, giving each child a ball of clay and a plastic toy ball to drop the appropriate shapes into the holes that matched. The blood boiled beneath Olenka’s skin. How could this be? She was in school and they were giving her baby toys! Olenka was furious. These were games she had played when she was just 2 years old!

When she returned home that day, her parents asked the traditional first question, “How was your first day at school, Olenka?”

She threw down her backpack and screamed, “I am never, ever going back to that school! I want to learn how to read and write and all they gave me were toys! I am never going back there!”

Her parents looked at each other, acknowledging their scheme had not worked. “Olenka, honey, you cannot go to the regular school yet because you are too young.”

Somehow they knew this would not relieve her anger. She insisted, “I am not going back to that baby school!”

Her parents were stuck. They knew she was smart enough to attend regular school; however, there were no exceptions to the rule. Olenka’s mother explained the situation to her own mother, seeking some sort of resolution. Rather than forcing Olenka to stay home and wait another year, her grandmother decided to ask a favor of her friend, Ms. Adela, a neighbor and kind teacher. With her help, Olenka was able to enter school for a trial period to see if she could handle the primary level education. Once again, Olenka was ecstatic.

The following nine months were magnificent. Olenka passed her probationary period and finished the school year at the top of her class. Ms. Adela fell in love with Olenka’s fearless spirit and she became her favorite student in the school.

Olenka credits her parents and their unwavering respect for her maturity and self-determination in her early independence. Especially in her younger years, they did not try to stifle her ambition to seek an early education or limit her freedom to play with the boys. They would even allow her to stay up to watch television long after the rest of the family went to bed. The only rule was to turn it off before she went to bed to conserve electricity. Olenka stayed awake until the late evening hours watching “Peyton Place,” her favorite 1960s American drama.

Other television images – even graphic ones – played an important role in Olenka’s first impressions of Latin American politics. At a very young age, she witnessed a man lying dead on a table with bullets ridded through his body. He had a look of calm and ease, even though he had obviously been brutally murdered. Olenka noticed her family surrounding the TV with looks of despair and sorrow. She asked her father, “Who is that man?”

Her father explained, “It is Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, a *guerrillero* for the movement.”¹¹ At such a young age, she could not understand who Che was or what he stood for, but the strong image on TV and her family’s reaction were imprinted in her memory.

Another important scene that appeared on television when Olenka was young was of tanks full of Peruvian soldiers rolling into the northern districts of Peru. Rather than exhibiting somberness, her family members were cheering and celebrating the momentous event. Again, Olenka was confused by the strong reaction of her family to the powerful image on the TV. She asked her father what was happening. “It is the nationalization of the American oil companies by Gen. Velasco!” While this was an extremely joyous moment for the nation as a whole, the political situation in Peru would eventually turn for the worse.

The period under Gen. Velasco, or *Velasquismo*, between 1968 and 1975, did not begin as a typical military regime that existed in other parts of Latin America. Rather than combating communism through military force, Velasco’s primary political strategy was to win the favor of the masses through agrarian reform while also creating a state-run capitalist sector. These left-leaning policies initially gave the country a feeling of national pride and hope. Land was being redistributed (as more and more land invasions by peasants were taking place around Lima) and neighborhoods were engaging in various types of development activities and political activism through the National System to Support Social Mobilization, or SINAMOS.

Unfortunately, this state of euphoria and popular support did not last long. Gen. Velasco started to lose favor among the growing labor unions and empowered neighborhoods and began retreating to the old client-patron relationships from Peru’s past. His regime limited civil rights, announced states of emergency in response to the national strikes and imposed curfews.

Meanwhile, Olenka continued to grow up under this unique climate of military rule. She started secondary school at the tender age of 11 and was ready to make the change into her more mature adolescent years. As soon as she finished primary school, she packed up all of her children’s toys into boxes and set them outside of her room. Her mother walked by and noticed all of her precious childhood toys sitting in the hallway. “Olenka, you don’t even want your play iron or kitchen stuff anymore?”

“No, I am done playing with these things, *mamá*.”

Olenka's sudden transformation was a change in social and political consciousness. On her wall she pinned posters of revolutionaries such as Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, anti-Vietnam War signs and photos of rock stars. Her mother was in shock. She thought redecorating her room would mean pink walls with pretty flowers for her pre-teen daughter, not peace signs and protest posters. She did not understand the new Olenka, and it started to provoke tension between them. Olenka even quit her performing arts activities, such as the school plays and music concerts where her mother was always a proud spectator. "I am done being a clown!" Olenka proclaimed.

There was only one activity that Olenka really engaged in during secondary school. She was the brigadier of her class, or the senior class representative. Even though Olenka was younger and physically smaller than the rest of her classmates, that would not hinder her from making her presence known. She wore a special, button-filled vest over her uniform, organized weekend clean-ups at the run-down public school and gained the respect of her classmates and teachers. However, she was a brigadier with a different approach. Rather than sitting at the front of the class with the conservative students and snitching on her schoolmates when they misbehaved, she sat in the back of the room with the troublemakers and covered for them as they skipped class to play sports in the courtyard. While negotiating well with her teachers and convincing them that she was on their side and looking out for "the mischief," she also earned the respect of the bigger, more rebellious kids in her class. Olenka startled her mother when groups of what she considered social deviants showed up at her kitchen table for study sessions on Friday nights.

The last two years of Olenka's secondary school were unusual. The teachers' unions had joined the national strikes against the military regime and most of her teachers were in the streets protesting, rather than in the classroom teaching. In response, the military government suppressed the demonstrations and arrested protesters. Olenka and her neighbors would hear people shouting in the streets and look out their windows to see a group of teachers running away from the troops. Most of the people in her neighborhood were in support of the teachers and would whisper, "Come in, hide in here!" as the fleeing teachers were trying to escape.

Olenka followed in the footsteps of her older brother, Pocho, a student at university who was part of the uprisings against the military regime. He would inform Olenka about what was happening with the national strikes and the government's forceful response.

She continued to attend school, even when most of her classes were cancelled due to the protests. Her parents, aware of the teachers' union strikes, asked Olenka, "Are you still going to school? What are you doing there?"

Olenka would answer, "Oh, we have to go. There might be news about the strikes, or other teachers teach our class." Olenka could not imagine staying home with her parents all day and missing the exciting days with her classmates and the political activity. She was always an outstanding student so her parents never questioned her whereabouts.

Olenka and her friends would typically show up at school in the morning and meet in the center courtyard to play basketball or volleyball for a few hours. The rest of the hours, she was talking with teachers about politics, the strike – and then if a protest was to take place that day, they would ditch school, change their clothes and head out to the demonstration hot spot. They walked alongside their teachers and chanted "Down with the military regime!" and "We want democracy!" As soon as the police or military units arrived, they took off running. Teargas flew over their heads

as they dashed into the neighborhood streets. Some of the teachers were arrested and some got away. Olenka and her friends always seemed to evade the authorities. They quickly changed back into their school uniforms, brushed off their shoes, freshened up their hair and headed back to their homes by 4 o'clock.

“So, how was school today?” Olenka’s parents asked as she returned home invigorated.

“So boring. Nothing happened at all.”

Blackout

It was Olenka's first day as a student at the Catholic University in Lima. She and her classmates were attending their first class and sat listening anxiously to the insights of their new professor – insights soon lost in the sound of an ominous boom and then darkness. The force of the blast could be felt for miles. Everyone sat terrified in their seats. Could it be the end of the world? Were aliens invading the city? No one knew what powerful force could have caused such mayhem. It was 1981 and *Sendero Luminoso's* invasion had just reached the capital city of Lima.

The Peruvian Communist Party – *Sendero Luminoso* (PCP-SL), or Shining Path, had previously launched, in 1980, its first attack in Peru under their proclaimed “people’s war.” The group, which had been gaining popularity in the district of Ayacucho in the countryside during the 1970s and early ‘80s, was founded by a philosophy professor named Abimael Guzmán Reynosos, known as Gonzalo. He believed that a true Communist, anti-imperialist state could only emerge through an armed struggle and a full cleansing of the leftist party.

Throughout the looming threat of violence and internal conflict, Olenka continued to be very active in politics and social mobilizations while studying at the university. She often sparked debates in the classroom on the root causes of the political violence, and attended marches and protests in the streets of Lima. Many of her university classmates were more conservative and believed the attacks by Sendero were “the problem of the left party.” But Sendero’s methods of mass violence, destruction and brutality divided the leftist believers into those who believed in the bloody revolution and those who opposed it.

[At] my university there was so much discussion about the terrorism and the political violence. They were asking, ‘Who is Abimael and who are these terrorists?’ There never appeared a movement like this in Peru before. Several years before, there were guerrillas in Peru who were linked to the other guerrilla movements in Latin America. But these guerrillas had more support in the urban areas and with the left parties. Regarding Sendero, only a few people knew about this movement, because it was born in Ayacucho. In the academic discussion at the university, no one knew the objective of this party or how to combat it.

Olenka held strong to her left-leaning philosophies and argued in favor of the socialist utopia. She believed in the creation of a more egalitarian society and spreading the wealth between all the citizens of Peru. She did not, however, believe in using violence to get there.

The day of the city-wide blackout in Lima was the first of many acts of violence, destruction and fear caused by Sendero that would last for over a decade. “Living under constant threats was just a way of life. You had no choice. You became accustomed to it in your daily life.”¹²

The period of conflict was especially difficult for university students in Peru. On one hand, Sendero combatants targeted students as potential recruits for the revolutionary movement. If they refused to join, they were called traitors and then targeted as the enemy of the people. On the other hand, the police and military forces were labeling students as subversives and supporters of Sendero because of their strong affiliation with leftist ideologies. The Catholic University was a unique place where the students discussed ideas about the socialist utopia, but Sendero never gained full entry

into the school nor were able to captivate the spirit of the students. Olenka and her leftist colleagues had to confront both sides of the conflict and try to live within the harsh context of the war.

On one occasion, Olenka was heading to the university on a public minibus. Traffic was very heavy and moving slowly. Traveling through the neighborhood of the large public university in Lima called San Marcos – which had been infiltrated by both Sendero combatants and military forces during the conflict – the bus eventually came to a complete stop next to a gas station. As they sat waiting for the traffic to start moving again, suddenly people were running through the streets, chased by the security police. Those fleeing wore black masks and threw rocks and bricks at the threatening police officers, who launched teargas in response. As they came dangerously close to the gas station, the passengers yelled at the driver, “Move! Get out of here! Keep going!” But there were vehicles on all sides and he could not move an inch. As the skirmish intensified, so did everyone’s fear. What if one of the teargas bombs hit the gas pump? What if the Sendero fighters planted a bomb near the station to retaliate? The innocent were trapped.

And then the gunshots. Everyone on the streets began screaming and running. The heavily armed police force, also known as the *rompe manifestaciones* (or “strike breakers”), started to outnumber the black masks and moved toward the gas station. The masked men dispersed. The tense exchange had seemingly ended, but a new concern quickly arose. What if the police got on the bus to check documents? It was standard procedure after a violent clash for the police to search everyone who was near the attack. Olenka had her student identification in her bag – usually cause for immediate arrest by the police. Fortunately, the driver was able to start moving again and the bus was soon safe.

Although the police were her saviors that day, Olenka was not always happy to see them. During numerous street protests during the conflict, she was often the one running from them. The “strike breakers” were popularly known as *Tombos*.¹³ When Olenka and the student protesters spotted the threatening unit, who appeared like armored robots ready to take over the world, they would scream “The Tombos are coming!” and scatter into nearby alleyways and hiding places.

During one particular protest, Olenka and her classmates were marching from the Catholic University to the capitol in support of the university workers’ union. As they marched through the streets holding their painted signs and yelling slogans in support of equal rights for all, the police approached the group, ready to suppress the small strike. The protesters ran.

Olenka and her friends noticed a park ahead and thought it would be a perfect hiding place. As they turned the corner and charged toward the garden, they ran directly into a group of police patrols. They immediately retreated and headed for a nearby hospital with its garage door wide open. As they came closer, they saw a security officer standing before the gate. Olenka, with her quick thinking, stopped in the street and told her fellow students to pick her up and act like she was hurt. They lifted her off the ground and started alerting the security guard, “Hurt woman coming through! We need a stretcher! We have a hurt person here!” The security guard looked frazzled and guided the bunch through the garage door and into the hospital. The group of activist actors scurried into the hospital emergency room, past the concerned doctors and nurses and directly out the front entrance.

Running became Olenka’s sport of choice in those days. She was an expert at ditching the police and military forces and heading home after the protests, rather than to a jail cell. She and her

women colleagues improved their tactics and created new ones for the street mobilizations. Rather than wearing clothes that were typical of leftist university students in the 1980s – ripped jeans, revolution-themed T-shirts with the face of Che Guevara on the front, or brightly colored Incan handbags – Olenka and her colleagues wore more formal clothes and colors appropriate as “ladies,” so to have more opportunities to blend into the crowds when police arrived.

Life went on as the violence and social movement stirred. Olenka remained an active student at the university, both academically and socially. Although she had an interest in studying history, she soon realized that she enjoyed working directly with people – and so turned to studying law. She felt law was a way for her to implement change and participate in programs that served the public. She even created a unique schedule of classes which included anthropology, ecology, ethnography and sociology. This was an important choice that guided her future career in serving the public. “I understand now that the option to study law along with the social science classes was so useful for my career. A friend, Carmen Barrantes, who worked with me at the time and later became a chief in the Ministry of Justice, called me a ‘social lawyer.’”

In the last years of her college career, between 1984 and 1987, she worked for a small civil rights working group that set up small offices in the new shantytowns forming in the outskirts of Lima. It is estimated that 600,000 people migrated from the Andean highlands to Lima and other coastal cities during the war.

I became involved in activities in support of human rights and how to come up with legal strategies in support of communities who were suffering from the home searches by the military and the persecution by the Shining Path. We established law workshops which were run by a group of students from the law school called the *Taller de Derecho*. The group offered legal advice, but also had a social agenda of promoting human rights in poor neighborhoods in Lima.

She would arrive by bus in the northern neighborhoods and sometimes walk several miles into the foothills where many of the new shantytowns were developing. Oftentimes their office would be a small building without a roof – only four walls, a table and one chair. They would offer advice on civil codes, family law and attend to cases of domestic abuse or violations of human rights. Olenka observed how the unrelenting violence was permeating the lives of the Peruvians from the countryside, to the city, to the streets and into the homes of everyone. “There were more and more attacks, murders, domestic violence and child abuse.”

Olenka’s lifelong dedication to the people of the shantytowns was well on its way.

City of Peace

Olenka awoke early each morning to catch the bus and take the long ride to the dusty new shantytowns of northern Lima. She would typically arrive by 9 o'clock and walk up the steep, winding hillside greeting neighbors as she passed. Many of the houses were recently constructed out of random pieces of tin, straw and other discarded materials. There were no cafes, schools, stores, running water, electricity or cars roaming the dirt roads. Groups of hopeful families and anxious immigrants from the Andes were the only ones filling the shack-lined streets.¹⁴

It was 1987 and Olenka had finished law school and founded an organization called the Legal Training and Advocacy Team (ECAL) in the northern shantytowns of Lima. She developed the organization in collaboration with her colleagues from the university and the local Catholic parish. ECAL provided legal assistance to those who were victims of human rights violations such as illegal detentions, imprisonment, home searches, abuse by authorities and domestic violence – all of which were on the rise.

One day as Olenka approached her precarious office, she found a group of women waiting for her arrival. Normally she would settle into her work and then visit the neighbors in their homes for private consultations. But this day the women were waiting outside her door with expressions of fear and confusion on their faces. They started explaining how they had lost everything overnight. Alan Garcia was serving his first term as president and had enacted the first of several economic policies that would dramatically affect the lives of the poor people living in Peru. The sudden rate of inflation due to the new policies and an overall drop in wages caused many in the poor class to lose all purchasing power, even for basic necessities.

The women put their heads together and decided to create an *olla común*, or community pot, to provide food for the poverty-stricken neighborhood. Olenka donated all the money she could to help buy the ingredients, including vegetables, fish and rice that would make meals big enough to feed the entire neighborhood. Since this was a newer shantytown, the women had not yet organized a *comedor popular* (community kitchen) to meet the needs of the community.

In Peru, there are two common strategies. The *olla común* is used in an emergency or when the people do not have any formal organizations. We organize these for one or two weeks only. Later, they can open a *comedor popular*. This is a more established, everyday community kitchen. They are both examples of women organizing, but different levels of establishment.

The comedores were started by groups of neighborhood women who were suddenly forced to provide food and sustenance for their families and communities. As these women began to leave their homes to establish grassroots development organizations, they started to develop a greater awareness about the political situation and the true causes of the growing violence. These social organizations, which included the Glass of Milk program that provided milk and nutritional supplements to shantytowns in Lima, soon developed into important social and political mobilizations throughout the capital.

With her mother's upbringing and experiences working in grassroots organizations, Olenka learned the importance of solidarity and working hand-in-hand with the women of the shantytowns. These women would prove to be the central backbone of the resistance movement and Olenka's

primary alliances during the war. Her lifelong goal to establish equality for women started with her strong shantytown alliances.

In addition to her work at ECAL, Olenka joined two other agencies that focused on the rights of women and children. The first was *Propuesta*, which was founded by Narda Henriquez, Peru's leading gender academic from the Catholic University. The organization provided leadership training and technical support to local political leaders, especially women, who were a growing number of representatives in the municipalities and local governments. They often collaborated with the local comedores and Glass of Milk committees on social leadership and community organizing.

Additionally, Olenka worked with a small group of advisors, or *orientadores legales* (legal guides) – a project of the feminist organization Manuela Ramos – in the town of Villa el Salvador. This group also consisted of local leaders in Villa who were dedicated to promoting human rights and more specifically, women's rights. They held activities to teach women and children about their civil liberties and ways to prevent domestic violence. They also frequently organized community campaigns for peace and women's rights.

Villa El Salvador was one of the more famous, well-established shantytowns in Lima. It had its beginnings under the Velasco regime in the 1970s, during a wave of land invasions by Andean immigrants who fled to Lima for more economic opportunities. The newly created neighborhood, similar to the other new shantytowns in Lima, had a strong sense of self-governance and self-management. Thanks to the tremendous organizing efforts of the community, several local development projects, such as electricity, water and sewage systems, were created throughout the town. Many of the 700,000 residents who lived in Villa El Salvador came from the poor or working classes and overwhelmingly supported candidates from the leftist parties in their local elections.

In 1987, Villa earned the distinguished title of “Messenger City of Peace” by a United Nations-sponsored organization called the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities. Unfortunately, its name would turn out to be a paradox as the inhabitants and social leaders of Villa suffered tremendously from the invasion of both Sendero and government security forces in the 1980s and '90s.

[On] one occasion there was the bombing of the Villa police station. These areas were always under attack by Sendero. I remember one day going to Villa El Salvador a few days after the attack, and I went to the orientadores office, next to the bombed area. Everything in it was destroyed. The tables were bent, the chairs were broken, the cooking machines were destroyed, but the restaurant continued to serve food to the people. It was in the central area of Villa El Salvador where everyone would go and the restaurant owners needed to keep on working to make money. People had to continue their activities. People accepted it as life. It was normal for the city [during] the terrorism.

As the violence amplified, so did the women's voices. Many who started out working in the community kitchens became popular grassroots organizers and important social and political actors. As many of the men were being murdered or detained during the conflict, the women were left as the sole breadwinners for their families and the only candidates for the vacant political positions.

Many of these women were starting to criticize publicly Sendero's violent methods and discouraged other women from joining the guerillas. Villa El Salvador was considered a "red zone" by the government because of Sendero's infiltration of the city. "In Villa, the attacks were stronger primarily to confront the local government because they represented the left party. It was the political objective of Sendero to take over the left revolution and win the city."

Maria Elena Moyano, a feminist, community organizer and well-known activist against Sendero, was the deputy mayor of Villa El Salvador. She was also Olenka's friend and an important inspiration in her life.

She was my [role] model, because she was very young, about my age. When I met her, she was a social leader and a local authority. She taught me the importance of working for the people in the municipality, rather than being a politician for the photo opportunities. She was a model for all social leaders. She believed in freedom, women's rights and having an open mind. She was very popular and a magnificent speaker.

Maria Elena was an obstruction to Sendero's plan of pushing the "people's war" forward. She separated her vision of the socialist revolution from that of Sendero's, and spoke openly against their violent attacks, gaining a very large following in the community. Consequently, the threats against her intensified.

On the grand opening of the orientadores legales office in the new municipal building of Villa El Salvador, Olenka noticed a group of strange men surrounding the building. Her new office was located on the second floor of the building, so she had a good view of the entire street. When she first spotted the suspicious men, she immediately alerted the security guard who ran across the street to notify the police. Suddenly, one of the men knocked on the door.

"Olenka!" her co-worker shouted from downstairs. "There is someone at the door for you."

Olenka ran down the stairs, well aware of her strange guest's arrival. She approached the door and saw the young man who appeared to be holding a weapon under his jacket. He asked her about the grand opening festivities that were going to take place that evening. "What time is the event?" he questioned.

"Why don't you come in and I can tell you about it!" she replied. She knew that once he entered the building, he would be disconnected from his fellow combatants and would be outnumbered by Olenka and her co-workers in the office.

"No, I just want to know what time it starts," he repeated, visibly annoyed.

"Please, just come in!" Olenka insisted, but she could tell he was not going to budge.

"It starts at 7 o'clock," she finally answered.

"Is Maria Elena going to be there?" he asked. Olenka grew nervous.

“No, no. Maria Elena is not going to be here.” In truth, Maria Elena was to be one of their honored guests that evening.

“Are you sure?” the man continued to press her.

“No, Maria Elena is not supposed to be here tonight. Right, guys?” Olenka looked to her colleagues who had stood in stunned silence until now. “No, she is not coming tonight!” they all responded like robots. But at the same moment, the police arrived and the man took off, the entire group below dispersing into the streets.

But Sendero’s threats and attacks were far from over. A few days later, they attacked the municipal building with a car bomb. The entire building was blown into pieces. Olenka saw the attack on the television and immediately went to Villa to see the wreckage. The walls were crushed, the furniture in pieces and all the documents lost.

But Olenka continued to attend social gatherings and events with Maria Elena, including public meetings for the new political party, *Movimiento de Afirmación Socialista* (Movement of Socialist Affirmation, or MAS). It was established by politicians from the democratic left, such as Maria Elena, leaders of grassroots women organizations, professors from the Catholic University (including Narda Henriquez), human rights activists, university students, union teachers and artists.

At her first general council meeting for MAS in the late 1980s, they held elections for new board members. Several leading women activists and organizers – and Olenka’s friends – such as Mariela Rivera and Marisa Alva, founders of INCAFAM; Cecilia Bravo, founder of TACIF¹⁵; Narda Henriquez, Maria Elena, national congresswomen and other leaders attended the meeting to show their concern about the lack of women’s leadership in the movement.

The women decided to add a gender-specific item to the meeting’s agenda. As they only had 30 minutes to prepare the plan, the women quickly drafted a proposal that would ensure the advancement of women within the party and create a women’s commission. They handed it to the party leaders, all of whom were men. The party leader announced the final agenda item to the crowd, “Now, we have the proposal of women to organize a gender commission within the party,” a look of surprise appearing on his face as he read.

He asked the room full of attendees, “Who will be speaking on behalf of this proposal?” All the women looked to Olenka. Suddenly, the fearless women leaders were afraid to confront the room full of conservative men. How were they going to convince them to pass this proposal? “Olenka, you go and present it for us!” The women started to push Olenka onto the stage. A group of men started to whistle and cat call as she entered the stage. Other men colleagues stood in silence, neither joining in the immature barking nor supporting Olenka.

She took the microphone. “Are we at an important political meeting for the left movement or are we all on an episode of the ‘Peña Ferrando?’” she challenged, referring to a comedic variety show famous throughout Peru.

The crowd fell silent. A group of older gentlemen started to applaud Olenka for quieting the rowdy pack. Olenka presented the proposal and the vote was tallied. The plan to create a women’s

commission within MAS was approved – the first political party in Peru to have such a commission. Her friends burst into applause as she exited the stage.

Olenka continued to be an active member of MAS until the mid-1990s and furthered her fight for the rights of women. She also spent much of her time participating in public marches and mobilizations to confront the army strikes sponsored by Sendero and the human rights abuses by the government forces. It was an incredibly dangerous, violent and challenging time to be a social activist, feminist leader and grassroots organizer in Peru.

Tiro de Gracia

After some long, exhausting weeks, Olenka simply needed a day of rest. She and her colleagues from INCAFAM, Propuesta and MAS had been working in the shantytown of San Juan de Lurigancho evaluating the political situation and planning campaigns and rallies against the “armed strike” called by Sendero.

During these weeks, it was important to reach out to the people and tell them to get out of the house. Sendero told everyone to stay in their homes during this time as a protest [against the government]. So we told everyone to leave their homes and go to the streets. Otherwise, it would be like supporting Sendero.

The threat of an attack by Sendero was looming and the government security units were on high alert. Anxious military and police troops were searching homes looking for terrorists.

The leftist parties and social movement decided to confront Sendero’s strike by organizing a March for Peace. Olenka and her INCAFAM team spent the days mapping out the different rally locations, coming up with safety strategies and providing technical and moral support to the local leaders. Despite the dangerous situation, thousands of frustrated, Peruvian citizens marched in the streets on a hot Friday afternoon in February of 1992.

I was with my colleagues from the political party, MAS, to evaluate the protests. Whenever there were marches or mobilizations there was usually a meeting to evaluate the performance of the day. On this day, I stayed with my friends and colleagues who worked with me at INCAFAM and Propuesta. It was important to our work to evaluate the performance of the strike. We had a map of all the districts of Lima. We also watched the march of Maria Elena.

Among the many protests that day was the March for Peace in Villa El Salvador, organized by Maria Elena. She appeared on TV that night talking about the day’s events. “The media had a very important story about Maria Elena on the day of the strike and held interviews with her.” She had been publicly open about her opposition to Sendero and had distanced herself from their bloody version of the “leftist revolution.” Olenka agreed with Maria Elena’s negative assessment of Sendero, as did thousands of others who were tired of the senseless violence. Sendero was starting to feel the popular resistance.

Sendero’s attacks were increasing because they were having a difficult time. They were losing social support. It was a difficult time for them. The history shows that it is a more dangerous time when the terrorists are having troubles – their attacks are more lethal.

The public demonstration organized by Maria Elena was a success and gained national support and attention for the anti-Sendero cause.

The day after the strike, Olenka and her friend Babette decided to get away from the stress and spend a day at the beach. Babette was a volunteer from France who worked in the shantytowns alongside Olenka and Maria Elena. The exhausted women took the long bus ride to the sunny

coastal town of San Bartolo, south of Lima, to stay with Olenka’s friend Irma, a smart and good-hearted woman.

San Bartolo was a more peaceful place because it is not in the center of Lima. It was also a safer place because there were not many people there and it was not an important place for Sendero. When I needed to relax or have a peaceful time, I would always go to Irma’s place. She understood my situation. She always invited me to her place to take a break from the work. She [was] an extraordinary woman with a high level of humanity and had such an open mind for young people.

Despite their enjoyment of the hot sun, Olenka and Babette could not stop talking about their work in Villa El Salvador and Maria Elena’s tireless efforts. They knew how dangerous it was getting for Maria Elena and thought it was probably time for her to seek safety outside the country. “At this time, she had just received support from the Spanish Embassy to flee Peru as a political refugee. However, the procedure was still processing and she hadn’t received the clearance yet.”

After spending the entire day at the beach reflecting about the current situation – unable to completely remove themselves from their work – Olenka and her friend returned to Irma’s house for dinner. Babette went straight to bed after eating, as Olenka settled in her room to read. Suddenly, Irma started screaming from the living room, “Olenka, come here. Olenka!” She rushed in only to see the news flash on the television: Maria Elena had been murdered.

I was so furious. I didn’t start crying. I just started to beat the door and the walls. I was so mad. I wanted to leave right then for Villa El Salvador, but it was not easy that night to leave because always after an attack the police were out looking for terrorists.

Maria Elena had been attending a celebration at one of the Glass of Milk locations in Villa El Salvador. She lived right in Villa and frequently attended these types of local events in support of the women’s organizations. Maria Elena always had faith in her supporters, thinking the people would take care of her. She believed their concern would keep her safe from harm. On that dreadful evening, she arrived at the kitchen with only her chauffeur, her younger son and her nephew.

Once the celebration began, a group of [Sendero] commanders forced the door open and everyone started to scream. They shot Maria Elena several times, but she was still alive. Then the terrorists dragged her out of the building onto the street and blew her up with dynamite. There were pieces of her everywhere. There were pieces of her on the wall and on the street. Some Peruvians will never forgive Sendero. I do not have mercy for Sendero. It is impossible for me.

The next day, thousands of mourners gathered in Villa El Salvador to pay their final respects to the great leader. Olenka and Babette left the beach house early to participate in the funeral procession.

In response to her death, there was a huge mobilization with thousands of people carrying her casket through Villa El Salvador – the most significant civil march in those times. People from all parties, neighborhoods, classes and ages were carrying

her casket through the town all the way to the cemetery in the hills. [It] made a huge impact on the political situation.

Although Sendero had been losing social support within the shantytowns, Maria Elena's violent murder was instrumental in establishing the group as a terrorist organization in the public eye. "This was the moment that the society in Lima realized that the Shining Path was really a terrorist movement and assumed the commitment to confront the group." Furthermore, the typical, strong image of women comrades who fought for the Sendero cause was permanently discredited.

Sendero tried to show the image of their women as courageous soldiers of the revolution. But all the women were dominated by the traditional gender rules inside Sendero, and saw Gonzalo as a divinity. Many women, especially the young and poor, were members of the killing command and did the *tiro de gracia*, or 'death blow.' When a person is hurt, the women were in charge of shooting the last bullet to kill them. The others, women from the academic or economic elite, were members of the group even closer to Gonzalo, to attend to his 'daily needs.' But the murder of Maria Elena showed the real gender approach of Sendero, because her political trajectory and model of life was so different.

Following Maria Elena's funeral, Olenka and her colleagues from MAS worked late into the night helping other Villa women leaders flee the dangerous situation.

It was too dangerous for them to stay now. Sometimes in war, a huge attack happens and people just say 'No more. It is time to leave.' The principal concern at the time was to leave. We were assuming that Sendero was planning more attacks on the leaders, so we worked all day to get them somewhere safe. We were telling the leaders to prepare one suitcase and go to the embassy.

Maria Elena's death was also a "death blow" for the movement and the morale of the social organizers for the revolution, peace and democracy. "The people were so frozen." This was especially true for the women leaders of leftist parties, grassroots organizations and the municipalities. "The women were broken. I saw my older friends crying for the first time. The women's movement was so battered. They could not support it anymore."

When Olenka returned home that night around midnight, she was burnt from the hot sun and exhausted from the day's events. Her mother and brother were sitting up waiting for her. They had not spoken to Olenka all weekend and did not know if she had already heard the news about Maria Elena. Her mother asked, "Did you hear?"

"Yes," Olenka replied solemnly. "I know."

One Thousand Ears, One Thousand Eyes

Olenka's close friend Carlos saw the flyer for an Andean music and dance performance being held that evening in a legendary theater in the central area of Lima. Knowing she enjoyed cultural events, he invited Olenka, who accepted and quickly changed clothes after work and ran out the door.

They arrived at the local theater and sat down next to the other audience members. As the harmonious guitars started to play, a group of dancers entered the stage with brightly colored indigenous clothing. They began singing to the beautiful Andean beat of the *huayno* and other songs.¹⁶ Slowly, their lyrics became more and more aggressive and repeated political slogans, phrases such as “The revolution is coming,” and “The comrades are sacrificing for the power.”

Olenka and her friend looked at each other, stunned by the unusual presentation. Many of the older folklore songs included political messages about oppression and injustice, but they were typically expressed through poetic symbolism. This performance was very different. It evoked the more sadistic spirit of the Sendero ideology, an ideology determined to divide the world into good versus evil and the pure versus impure.¹⁷

Olenka whispered to her friend, “Do you think this performance is a little strange?”

He nodded, “Yes, there is something wrong here.” The two looked around the room and saw similar expressions on the faces of the other spectators. One by one, the people started to get up and leave. Olenka and her friend decided to follow them out.

“That was very weird,” Olenka said to her friend as they rushed out of the theater.

After they returned home that night, they saw a news flash on the TV. Sendero had just car bombed a huge upscale apartment complex in the more affluent neighborhood of Miraflores. They parked two huge trucks full of explosives on Tarata Street and blew the building to pieces, killing 24 people and injuring over 200. Sendero's bloody revolutionary front had reached the heart of Lima.

After watching the gruesome news report, Olenka thought, *I just attended a Sendero celebration of the attack*. Days later she was in the home of her colleague Marisa Gonzales when her daughter arrived, sobbing, and announced that her colleague at the Catholic University, a leader in the Social Sciences Faculty, was one of the victims, along with his sister.

Beside the Tarata Street bombing, 1992 was a significant year in Peruvian history. The internal war between Sendero and the counterinsurgency units was at its height. The tragic death of Maria Elena further infuriated the citizens of Peru who were already being persecuted by both sides. The new president elected to office in 1990, Alberto Fujimori, immediately implemented a series of economic shock policies, also known as Fujishock, which drove the already starving and desperate poor into a deeper, poverty-stricken nightmare. Furthermore, only two months after Maria Elena's murder, Fujimori closed the National Congress, disbanded the judiciary and gave almost complete control of the government to the military.

Olenka was in the middle of the horrendous mess, working for INCAFAM in the emergency “red zone” of San Juan de Lurigancho. Her position as a technical advisor to the local women

leaders was connected to every angle of the war. She trained local leaders on their strategic political and social initiatives, including how to stay safe during the war.

As the threats by Sendero loomed closer and closer to the grassroots women, the women became more and more strategic in their methods of organizing. They were forced to take their political and social activities underground as Sendero watched their every move. One of Sendero's strategies to instill fear into the people was to claim they always had "1,000 ears" to hear each word spoken and "1,000 eyes" to watch their every move. They painted the communist symbol of the hammer and sickle on the office doors of the local organizations to show they knew the women's whereabouts and working locations. They also sent threatening letters in the mail, mysteriously appeared in the food lines of the comedores and made fear-provoking phone calls to intimidate the staff members of the organizations.

But the women were not about to surrender and discovered more creative ways to continue their work in the shantytown. They organized sporting activities in local parks, while behind the scenes they were exchanging information about their next food pick up or political protest. They also held secret planning meetings and training sessions in the women's homes or garages, doing whatever it took to continue their efforts and not allow Sendero's ears and eyes deter them in any way.

The 12th of September, 1992, was a turning point. The leader of Sendero, Abimael Guzmán Reynoso, was captured in a small apartment above a dance studio in an upper-class neighborhood of Lima. Everyone was shocked by his whereabouts in the heart of Lima and his plush living conditions compared to the harsh surroundings of his comrades fighting in the countryside. The Fujimori regime declared his capture a major victory over the Sendero terrorists and the end of the armed struggle. Over the next year, the government security forces continued to capture Sendero's most prominent leaders while internal divisions within the group deepened and its powerful mystique began to crumble.

Meanwhile, Olenka and her INCAFAM colleagues Maritza and Bernarda were writing a report on the political violence and its impact on the women's popular organizations. Throughout the next year she sat down and talked to the women leaders of these active grassroots groups and asked about their experiences during the armed conflict. While many of them had stories to share about Sendero's horrendous crimes and continuous threats to their organizations, an equal number of women told stories about the abuses by the military and security police. Several of the women leaders and Olenka's acquaintances were framed by Sendero and subsequently arrested by the security forces and imprisoned for years – including a woman named Santosa Layme.

Santosa, a comedor leader in San Juan de Lurigancho, received a demand from Sendero to support its troops. The women of the comedor and the Glass of Milk organizations, like Santosa, were committed to serving anyone who walked through their doors and thus could not refuse these requests. Shortly thereafter, the police arrested Santosa and charged her with conducting subversive activities.

Santosa suffered too much in prison. Her life was broken. This happened to many women who were imprisoned because they were framed by Sendero. They would lose their husbands, children, house and couldn't do anything about it. It was

different when the men went to prison. Everyone would be waiting for them [when they got out]. And these were innocent women!

Between 1980 and 1992, Olenka and every other innocent Peruvian citizen were caught in a war they did not begin. Whether it was a bomb attack by Sendero or a human rights abuse by the government, the everyday people of Peru were the victims. But even with the end of the war, the turmoil was not finished. The Peruvian people would continue to find out how a civil dictatorship can be just as threatening and abusive as a terrorist guerrilla movement.

House of Lords

“These women are being abused by their husbands and are showing up at our door with nowhere else to go. One woman came here with her three children. She was too afraid to go home. So she lived in the station for a while and we pooled our money together to get them something to eat.” An overwhelmed police officer was describing the situation of the San Juan de Lurigancho police department as Olenka patiently listened to his concerns.

Even with the war over, problems of violence and social struggle continued to infect the weak and wounded country of Peru. After 10 years of internal conflict, the swelling shantytown of San Juan de Lurigancho continued to experience a huge influx of immigrants from the highlands due to the poor economic conditions and the ongoing human rights abuses by President Fujimori’s brutal civil dictatorship. By 1996, hundreds of thousands of people lived in the impoverished shantytown – and the number was growing. The cases of domestic violence and urban crime were also on the rise as a legacy of violence permeated the post-conflict environment. The victims of domestic violence, the majority being women, not only needed psychological and legal support for their cases, but also a safe place to shelter themselves and their children.

Olenka was working for the women’s rights division under the Ministry of Justice, where she organized the first gender training program offered to local government officials.¹⁸ She had established several close ties with various government officials while working for the ministry. Her acting chief, Patricio Rubio, was a former classmate at the Catholic University and especially fond of Olenka and her innovative initiatives. In the middle of the training program, she came to know an important group of municipal women with whom she would work during subsequent years.

In coordination with two local authorities in San Juan de Lurigancho – Ana Melba Perez, a young political leader, and Ana Chuquimango, a dedicated teacher – Olenka had enough backing to convince the municipal government to open a shelter for women victims of domestic violence. But she had no money to start it. The second step was to get the building – which the municipality secured, again with the support of Ana and Ana Melba, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was a huge house, formerly owned by narco-trafficking lords. In the end, the municipal government approved some provision and agreed to provide security and partial funding for the shelter.

Olenka’s work was not yet over. She knew that if she did not get the local organizations and community to support the shelter it would not be sustainable over time. So with the sponsorship of INCAFAM and TACIF – and the organizations Flora Tristan and DEMUS – Olenka and grassroots women’s organizations created the Network of Women of San Juan de Lurigancho. These women were in charge of coordinating the volunteers, accepting donations and running the shelter’s day-to-day operations. Olenka also promoted a network of public service providers, including the local police stations, municipal authorities, NGOs and legal prosecutors to provide additional support to the shelter.

Through these local networks, community support and different levels of collaboration, the shelter has stood the test of time. It is a simple house without many decorations or elaborate furnishings. However, it is cozy, safe and full of smiling faces, support and companionship for the women and children who seek refuge there. Six to eight women and their families occupy the house every week. It is a short-term shelter, the average stay about one week. While living there, the

women participate in small income-generating activities that help to support the shelter's long-term program.

But they still encounter difficulties. Since its opening, each newly elected mayor of San Juan has protested the fact that such a large, impressive property is being used for a women's shelter. They do not see its importance and would rather move the program to a less desirable facility. Olenka continuously receives phone calls from the women operating the shelter asking for help as yet another mayor threatens to take it away.

After establishing the shelter in San Juan, Olenka wanted to prove that domestic abuse and urban violence were problems for women and society everywhere, regardless of socio-economic class or cultural sect. Through her contacts from the training program, various women leaders and the police force, she began to draw up plans for a local safe service in the comfortable district of Miraflores on the other side of Lima.¹⁹

The program, called Jacaranda, would focus on post-conflict societal problems such as urban violence, at-risk youth, child abuse, domestic abuse, rape and mental health concerns within the community – from a gender perspective. It was developed by a team of lawyers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, women city councilors and the mayor of Lima, Fernando Andrade (the brother of Alberto Andrade and the head of Somos Peru, a leftist political party). These dedicated community service leaders recognized the symptoms of post-traumatic stress and the mounting trend of violent behavior that so many were experiencing following the armed struggle. Their vision was to define a new approach to security and safety in the communities.

Following her experience with the shelter in San Juan, Olenka and municipal authorities of Miraflores decided to approach the Ministry of Internal Affairs again and ask for another former drug-lord house that could be used to accommodate the new Jacaranda program. The ministry agreed for a second time and granted the Jacaranda program a comfortable house in Miraflores.

For Olenka, the shelter in San Juan de Lurigancho and the Jacaranda program were intended to restore dignity and pride in the Peruvian people – much of which was lost during the armed conflict. Her experience working in the public sector exposed her to the dismal conditions of so many social programs. The government's blatant disregard for the welfare of its people, especially the poor and disadvantaged, was evident in its rotting institutions.

As she scrambled around town tying up loose ends for the Jacaranda house, she received a phone call from a municipal staff member. "We have furniture from the old offices at the municipality that you can use at your new Jacaranda program. Would you like to come over and take a look?"

Olenka took a deep breath and remained calm. "No thank you," she responded politely and immediately called the mayor's office. She would not stand for this secondhand treatment of her hard work and the morals and principles of the Jacaranda program. Miraflores was a wealthier district that had the financial resources to support these simple enhancements, and Olenka was not about to give up. She called for an emergency meeting with the mayor and city council.

Before the mayor and council members, she demanded, “The Jacaranda house will be full of nice, new furniture. I will not permit these old, destroyed desks, chairs and tables from old offices. If I do not get new things for my program, I will not be there.”

“OK, Olenka. I understand totally. Let me come over and take a look at the place and we will see what you need,” the mayor replied.

The next day, the mayor looked around at the unfurnished house and asked, “OK, OK, what more do you need?” She started naming a list of new furniture pieces, window coverings and paint colors needed to create the respectable establishment.

After three months of hard work, advocacy and networking, the Jacaranda house opened on Nov. 25, 1996, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Two houses, two programs, one year.

Favorite Students

Olenka watched from a friend's apartment as the military troops under the orders of President Fujimori stormed the Japanese Ambassador's house and ended the hostage situation led by the Tupac Amaru movement.²⁰ Four months earlier, the left-wing guerilla group had seized the ambassador's house and taken all 600 guests hostage as they demanded the immediate release of their fellow imprisoned comrades. It was one of the final episodes of large-scale political violence in Peru.

But during the 1990s, there was also an oppressive dictatorship. And this regime did not like the opposite voice.

The national government was completely driven by Fujimori. He bought the congressmen with political favors and money, and to the national businessmen and the TV and newspaper he gave financial favors. It was terrible, because if you were opposed to the views of the regime, they would say terrible things about you. They would use the national intelligent services and media to persecute all opposition.

Not only did the corruption and denial of political and civil rights tarnish the reputation of the Fujimori regime, but also his disregard and even support of the military's human rights abuses and mistreatment of thousands of Peruvians led to the people's complete loss of faith in the government and security forces by the late 1990s.

Through the course of her work, Olenka encountered many officers in the police force and military who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and faced problems of violence within their own homes. She understood the difficult position that many of them confronted, especially those in the lower ranks who were forced to perform the dirty work. Olenka looked toward a new future for Peru and the safety of its people by working with, not against, the security forces.

In 1997, Olenka organized the first gender-based training on the prevention of violence for the national police force. The program was designed by INCAFAM and sponsored by the Organization of American States and Peru's Ministries of Women and of Internal Affairs.

It was very difficult for police during the internal war. The theme of human rights or women's rights posed a huge struggle within the forces, because they considered it part of the terrorism or 'subversion.' So, a year after the Ministry of Women was established, we organized the first training for police. It was a good opportunity to provide training with the new security approach.

As they entered the classroom on the first day of the training, the officers looked entirely uninterested. However, if they wanted to change their long-lasting negative image and tarnished reputation in the eyes of society, this gender class was an essential first step. They sat down silently in their seats, expecting to get a long lecture about women's rights from a bunch of radical feminists. Olenka confidently walked through the crowd of huge men and headed directly to the front of the room, just as she did with her mother at the neighborhood meetings when she was young.

“Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for coming to this training today. I want to start the training on the various types of urban crimes and profiles of killers.” The police perked up and started taking out their pens and paper. Maybe this woman did have something interesting to say.

They discussed their daily struggles and how hard it was to confront the ongoing violence, drug trafficking and abuse in the streets. As the day went on, the police became more and more engaged in the classroom discussion. They left the first day feeling satisfied and ready for more.

The following day, Olenka had arranged for a woman who conducted self-care courses to upper-class women in Lima to lead part of the day’s discussion. The topic was on the “personal war,” as many of the police were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and having their own violence issues in their personal lives. Olenka and her staff members stood outside the door and watched as she began her self-healing rhetoric.

“OK, I would like everyone to please get out of their chairs and stand up.” The weary policemen stood up. “I would like everyone to move their bodies, feel your inner organs, get in touch with your inner selves.” She began to move her hips in a circular motion, around and around. The police looked at each other, back at their instructor and then began to copy her strange movements.

“Feel your bodies, from your head to your hips to your feet.” She repeated this gentle command over and over again. The men started to get into the groove. Olenka and her team members gazed into the classroom with wide eyes, not believing what they were seeing.

Each day of the training, the non-traditional pupils seemed eager to return to their gender training. They turned in their daily assignments and showed up early to class. “*Doctorita*,²¹ I was so busy last night with work and my family obligations, but look! I still finished my homework for today!” This particular group of police became Olenka’s favorite students.

These were my best students. After all the years of trainings I did, they were my best students. They would come to class prepared, with their homework finished. And when I announced the days of self-care they all started to cheer. It was such a good experience. I learned how to work with the men and the military and policemen. I tried to always have respect for them. I treated them as people, like me, with a difficult job.

Three years later, Olenka was walking through the jam-packed Plaza de Armas with her assistant Fantin and other colleagues. The plaza was filled with thousands of people protesting the civil dictatorship. In his familiar response to any opposition, Fujimori sent in the police forces to suppress the huge protest. As Olenka and her colleagues walked past the troops, one of the officers, in full armor with a gas mask covering his face, started to approach the group. *Trouble is coming*, was all Olenka could think.

As the officer marched toward the ladies, he started to unveil his face. “Doctora! Doctora Olenka! Do you remember me?” He had an enthusiastic smile across his face, so pleased to see his gender instructor.

Olenka exhaled as her initial response to run for her life subsided. “Yeeeees ... how are you?” she replied, though she had no recollection of the excited officer.

“I was in your training program, remember? I am doing so much better after taking your class. Before, I was having so many problems with my wife, fighting all of the time. But after going to your class and learning some of the techniques, we are so much better! Thank you so much, Doctorita!”

“Oh, it’s so good to hear that. I was so proud of that experience, and I am so happy for you.” Olenka responded, still relieved she was not encountering problems. If he only knew that she was part of this huge resistance movement he was supposed to defeat.

“OK, I have to go back now to my troop. Nice to see you, and be careful Doctora.” He scurried back to his spot in the long line of officers.

Olenka and her group looked around at one other and smiled. She knew they were her favorite students for some reason.

Five Minutes

Olenka walked slowly into the traditional house of Lima's mayor, Alberto Andrade, who was running as a candidate in the metropolitan government for a second time. She had no idea what to expect or who was scheduled to be at the meeting. Her friend from Miraflores, Nora Bonifas, told Olenka that she had been invited to attend a political reunion with the mayor, but would not give her any further details. Olenka arrived expecting to talk about her work with the Jacaranda program and urban violence issues in the community.

The historic house was beautiful. It was near the main municipality building in Lima and made a striking presence amidst the crowded, urban landscape. Olenka entered the reception area of the mayor's house and sat down. Several people were walking around and talking.

The municipality of Lima was a very powerful entity and its recommendations usually made a tremendous impact on the federal, regional and local governments in Peru. At the time it was also the center of political opposition to Fujimori, with Mayor Alberto a powerful actor in that opposition.

Nora called her and walked into the large dining room. There was a large table with candelabras and beautiful decorations, but no other people. The mayor was sitting at the opposite end of the table. "Come in, Miss Olenka, please. Come in." He waved her into the room and told her to sit next to him.

As she began walking toward him she was thinking, *Where are all the people?*

"I have heard about your trajectory," he began as she sat smiling and nodding. "Do you know why you are here?" he asked with ease.

"No, Mayor, but I suppose you need information on new approaches to ..."

"Well, in fact," he interrupted her, "I want you to be my candidate as a city councilor in the municipality of Lima."

Olenka was in shock. She had no idea she was even considered a candidate for the elected position. Her first thought: *I am going to kill Nora!* She looked at the mayor and thanked him for his consideration, "I appreciate your confidence in me and in asking me to be a candidate. I recognize that this position requires a lot of responsibility and it is a very big decision. How much time do I have to decide?"

The mayor did not look surprised by her response and responded with his calm demeanor, "I am happy that you see the importance of this position and what it entails. You have five minutes to decide," he grinned.

Olenka's eyes widened and she started to laugh. "OK! I do not have any more time to think it over?"

"Just five minutes," he said.

She felt completely unprepared for the occasion, but Olenka took a deep breath and went with her instinct – and nodded yes.

“Oh, Olenka! That is wonderful. I am so happy to have you on the team. You will be a perfect person for the job.” He looked happy and relieved. Olenka stood up and felt as if she had just strapped on a parachute and jumped out of an airplane. She put her blank notebook under her arm and walked out of the room.

Nora appeared shortly after, “So? Did you say yes or no?”

“Yes. And I am going to kill you!”

Suddenly, the mayor came running out yelling, “Olenka, wait! I forgot to tell you something. When you are a councilor, the daily job is very hard. Every day, and the weekends too. All the councilors receive a monthly stipend for the job.”

Olenka snapped out of her daze. “OK. Thank you, Doctor.” She just realized she hadn’t asked a single question while in his office. She didn’t ask him about the pay, how to get the financial support for the campaign, nothing. All she could think of was the opportunity to promote the gender and safety policies for Lima.

One of the most important things that Olenka forgot to ask in her meeting was her number on the ticket ballot. This was a crucial strategy in winning an election in Peru, especially for the city council where the list of candidates can be very long. Olenka was aware that politicians paid huge amounts of money to get a top spot on the ballot. She was about to embark on a long, tenuous election process and had no idea her number on the ticket ballot or her official plan of action.

The next morning, her brother was sitting in his office at *La Republica*, one of the most respected newspapers in Peru. For several years he had been a political journalist and was then an editor for the paper. Some of his colleagues approached him that morning and congratulated him on his sister’s nomination. “Oh, that is wonderful! Congratulations on Olenka’s nomination. Wow, we didn’t know that your sister was in the circle with the mayor! And 11th place on the ballot. We didn’t know she had so much money!”

Olenka’s brother sat in stunned silence. He had no clue about his sister’s position with the city council. He immediately called her cell phone to inquire about this new political venture. “Olenka, what is going on? And how did you get the 11th spot on the ballot?”

This was news to Olenka. She had no idea how she was placed so high on the election ticket. Perhaps it was the exciting, new image of a young woman representing the mayor’s leftist party, Somos Peru. Or maybe it was their interest in meeting the quota requirements for women in government. It could also have been her strong link with the community, knowledge of the issues at hand and her dedication to improving life in the shantytowns of Lima. In any case, she definitely did not win that spot with her bank account.

One of her first activities in the 1998 political race for city councilor of Lima was an important interview with the Fujimori-controlled national radio station. The Somos Peru party was one of the strongest opposition parties to the Fujimori regime between 1995 and 2001. The party

leaders asked Olenka to be their representative for the interview, even though many were nervous about her lack of experience in politics. But Olenka's natural ability to speak out and provide clever responses proved to be successful during the interview.

The first question posed by the biased radio host was, "So, how do you respond to your party only representing the rich population of Lima?" The Fujimori regime claimed to represent the poor people of Peru – the president often called himself the "son of the people" – though his political tenure was wrought with corruption, deceit and severe human rights violations that affected the poor.

Olenka responded to the question with passion and poise, "Rich people? Where are the rich people? The rich people are in the government! My colleagues, like Michel Azcueta [the former mayor of Villa El Salvador] and candidates in Somos Peru, aren't rich. We are a team that always stays with the labor class, always with the popular movement, working with families who live in misery. Tell me, where are these rich people?"

Following the interview she immediately received a phone call from her Somos colleagues. "Olenka, that was spectacular! Wonderful job – it was great!"

Olenka proved her worth to the political party and the people of Lima that day. Her strength in public speaking and her firsthand knowledge of the current issues faced by the neighborhoods in Lima won her the seat on the metropolitan city council in December of 1998. Yet the mayor and Somos Peru did not realize how equipped Olenka was for the position.

Only a few weeks after the election, she put a plan into place. She had run her campaign on the platform that she would represent the gender cause and the safety and welfare of young and poor families in Lima. Her extensive background working with the women's grassroots organizations, providing gender trainings to various government agencies and her attendance at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 made a tremendous impact on her political focus.²² Her colleagues advised her that she had four years in office to implement the gender-focused policies and programs. But it was not in Olenka's nature to wait four years to get something done. If anything, her years of organizing social mobilizations and fighting against oppressive systems taught her that the time to act is now. You cannot wait to make a change. Immediate response is the only response.

Olenka made another appointment with the mayor immediately following the election. She worked vigorously on a plan to implement a gender agenda within the municipality, provide technical assistance to departments on gender equity and most importantly, start a new women's commission to administer these strategies. This time when she walked into the mayor's office she was prepared with her documents and detailed plan.

"Hello, Olenka. How can I help you out?" the mayor asked as she entered his office. "Is there something or someone that I can provide assistance to?" Typically, once someone wins political office, he or she seizes opportunities or favors for family or friends.

"Well, Doctor, I have been working very hard on some things to prepare for my position with the city council. I have created a plan for women, which involves working at the community level on issues like domestic violence. I would also like to propose a program which gives an award

to women who are working hard on these issues in Lima. But the most important plan is to create a commission of women within the municipality that would implement the gender agenda. Mayor, let me show you these documents.”

The mayor sat back in his chair, astonished. He did not expect this proposal, complete with full documentation. “Hmmm, a commission on women. Well, you know there are already many commissions on the council which address various issues.”

“I know, Doctor. However, there is not a commission on women.” She explained the importance in creating such an entity, the teachings at the Beijing conference, the history behind the gender agenda and the importance of Lima carrying out the new policies.

“Well, I will definitely think about these proposals and consider them.”

“Well, Doctor, we need this urgently so we can start immediately. You have about five minutes to decide.”

The mayor smiled at the familiar approach and picked up the phone to call the council’s administrator. “The next new commission is for women. Put this in the report for the first council session. It is our proposal as Somos. And the first president is Miss Olenka.”

“OK, Mayor!” she exclaimed, somewhat surprised. “Thank you so much for your support!”

“It’s OK.”

Once again, Olenka walked from the office with the blank notebook under her arm and the parachute on her back. Only this time, she knew where she was landing.

Keeping the Peace

The lost generation. Olenka was concerned with what happens to an entire generation of youth who grew up seeing and living through bombs blowing up their neighborhoods, social leaders violently murdered, protests in the streets, armed military personnel on every corner, dozens of school days missed, teachers beaten, intimidation by rebel groups and gangs, and the likely impetus to all of these destructive social factors – extreme poverty.

Although the conflict with Sendero ended in 1992, the remnants of war and destruction were far from disappearing. Problems of gang violence, lack of economic opportunity, poor social services and the remaining tender wounds from the war proved too much to handle for many young people of Peru. This was especially true in the poor neighborhoods of San Juan de Lurigancho, where Olenka was working closely with community members and INCAFAM on preventing domestic violence and child abuse.

The problems in San Juan de Lurigancho were very hard, because it is the biggest district in Peru with the largest population – 1 million people. The *pandillas* (gangs) began to appear after the armed conflict. The young people lived in permanent states of violence. Most of them resided in areas with a high migrant population from the countryside. There were no opportunities for these young people, no opportunities for employment, education, health care, etc.

In 1998, while Olenka was working for INCAFAM, she and her colleagues noticed a significant increase in the number of violent crimes committed by notorious gang members. “We saw the murders and conflict between young people and the enormous social cost of young people without opportunities. We began to do an analysis and held a focus group with young people where we could learn more about their special needs and dreams. This occurred between 1999 and 2000.”

From the focus groups, Olenka learned that these youth were being persuaded into joining the gangs mostly by their family members – their fathers, brothers, cousins. They also discovered that these young adults were increasingly participating in high-risk behaviors, including drug and alcohol abuse, gang violence, unprotected sex, sexual precocity – and even attempting suicide.

As a result of these findings, Olenka designed a program for INCAFAM in San Juan de Lurigancho called the *Defensoras de la Paz* or “Peace Keepers.” She started the project with very few resources – only a vision and a goal to help these lost youth. “I love INCAFAM because they always supported my ideas. They never had a very large budget, but they always liked my plans. We didn’t have resources to fund the project, so we just planned small group activities.” She gathered young members of the community who were between 18 and 22 years old and started to meet with them regularly to discuss topics important to their lives.

In 2001, Olenka entered Peace Keepers into a contest sponsored by the World Bank that sought innovative projects to combat poverty. She and her colleagues won third place and were given a small grant to implement the project.

The objective of the Peace Keepers project was to provide different cultural and recreational activities for the youth to experience, and to create a safe space for young people to share their

problems and frustrations – a place where they could feel supported. They learned about the values of peace, human rights and, of course, gender equality.

We gave them a space to develop their lost childhoods, and gave them opportunities to experience different things, like cultural and recreational activities. Some of them were connected with the gangs; they definitely stood out. You could see the anger in their faces. In the Peace Keeper space, they only received care and recognition of their humanity and spirit. The boys/men were very charming and formal with me. I never treated them like gang members, only like adults, and they treated me the same.

One of Olenka's students was the rough Juanito, a noted gang member and unlikely participant in a group promoting peace. He was around 19 and came from a very poor family; he had little hope.

This was common among these young people: no hope for a job or a future. He had a very tough image and seemed angry when he first started coming to the class. My idea for the group was to mix the youth, those who were getting in trouble and in the gangs and those who were some of the more promising young leaders. It was my own experiment.

Juanito would always talk about how he didn't have a problem, "which was a typical way for boys to react. I would ask him to come up to the front of the room and reinforce to him that he was one of the group leaders. I would have him explain things at the head of the class. Little by little, he started to change. He became more open in the class and took more of a leadership role. He started to change his attitude, even the way he dressed. His friends would make fun of him for changing."

Olenka's colleagues in the Peace Keepers project eventually connected Juanito to a training program offered to youth by the Ministry of Labor. He was well on his way to a life of opportunity and hope and avoiding the doomed life of a gang member.

Besides fostering these important group discussions, the Peace Keepers project also offered recreational outings for the youth to experience cultural and popular events in other parts of Lima and to give them a chance to explore the world outside of their community. Olenka would bring her eager students to the movies, the beach, beautiful parks and other areas of the large city that the youth never had the opportunity to visit on their own. Olenka wanted them to know there was a whole world out there to explore.

One of the most moving parts of the project was to hear the boys and girls, some 19 and 20 years old, upon asking what recreational activities they would like to do, ask to go to the beach! To the zoo! They reverted back to their lost childhoods and just wanted to get away from the weight of their heavy lives. They had never been to any of these places – something so innocent, so simple, as the zoo.

Out of all her years working with the lost communities of Peru and all the projects and programs she was involved in, the Peace Keepers project affected Olenka the deepest.

It was such a gratifying project for me because I found alliances with young people who had lived through such difficult circumstances. They had conflict within their families and very little resources. It was gratifying because I thought I could cause a little change in their lives, and I suppose I did. These young people had never gone to the movies, the beach, the theater. They had never felt a sense of identity or recognized their own history. Some of them face tremendous obstacles because of the violence within the family. They have a huge sadness within their heart.

Although the project had very few financial resources, Olenka felt lucky she had such a young, vibrant and talented staff helping her. Her young project assistant, Jenny Uribe, was her “right arm” during the project, and an essential contributor to the design and implementation of the project from start to finish. It also could not have been successful without an amazing young volunteer, Carla Rimac. Carla was a university student who grew up in a small town in the Andes during the height of the conflict. Her father was a mining union leader who was detained and never seen again. The family lost their entire income and security after the loss of her father. They were forced to live in the streets; Carla’s mother lived in constant fear that the perpetrators would retaliate against her and her family for her husband’s controversial career. She moved Carla and her family to the city, away from the relentless threats, into a small shack in San Juan de Lurigancho. They only lived in San Juan for a short time until economic hardships forced them to a small desert town on the outskirts of Lima.

Carla was a source of inspiration for our project, because she was also a victim of the war, part of the generation of children that grew up during that violent epoch. She was very active and committed to the project and a political and student leader. There was not a day or a single hour in which she was not walking the streets of San Juan fulfilling a task for the project, an organization or another local project.

Carla became well-known in the community and was able to relate with the youth in the most difficult zones of the district.²³

Part of the Peace Keepers project was to recognize their identity through their own family history. A young Fulbright scholar, Daniel Alarcón, assisted Olenka in her quest to reach out to these forgotten youth.²⁴ Daniel lived in California but was born of Peruvian parents who still had a deep connection to their homeland. “Daniel was like a Godsend. I had very little money to do my program and he brought in great ideas and an artistic vision. I was so thankful to have him on the project.” He purchased a case of cameras through his scholarship money and gave one to each Peace Keeper participant. He ordered them to take photographs of themselves and their families and to provide a description of who they were and where they came from – something no one had ever asked them to do before or even cared to know.

Olenka remembers some of the more moving stories that came out of the photography exhibit the youth participants organized at the end of the project. One “Defendor” displayed a photo of her siblings and niece standing in a dry, desolate, rocky terrain with only one plant in the background, a cactus. Every family member had a smile while posing amidst the barren, lonely backdrop. The caption under the photo read: “This is my brother, his wife, my little brother and my niece. We see that there are plants that can live in dry places. ... The photo means a lot to me ... because this is the place that I will be able to call my second home.”

Olenka soon learned that this family was smiling because they were taking a picture in front of their newly acquired lot of land and were about to build, with their own hands, a new home in their new neighborhood. One of the many happy endings for a peace keeper from San Juan.

Rebel Angel

The angry group of people stood before the huge Catholic Cathedral in Lima's central Plaza de Armas expressing their disgust for Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani's unnecessary attacks against them. It was not the first time the very powerful religious leader publicly showed his disrespect for the human rights activists in Peru. On several previous occasions, Cipriani called human rights groups "*cojudeces*" and disregarded them as "just covering the tails of political movements, almost all of them Marxists and Maoists."²⁵ He had a marked history of openly supporting military abuses in the highlands. His good friend, Luis Giampietri Rojas, a former vice-admiral in the Peruvian Navy, was one of the most prominent political actors tied to the Fujimori dictatorship.

It was Cipriani's first Sunday mass after being made cardinal in 2001. The women stood before the open-air mass and shouted, "The Church yes, Cipriani no!" and "Christ is justice, not complicity." They were tired of his blatant disregard and outright hostility for their years of sacrifice in order to restore democracy and work for political justice. The cardinal, now a "prince of the church" upon his appointment, was visibly bothered by the protests.

The following day, the Catholic hierarchy condemned the angry protesters, calling them "disrespectful" and their actions disloyal to the church. But they were not the only ones condemning the protesters' dissidence. Fujimori's special counselor to the metropolitan municipality of Lima, Giampietri, also planned on making a public statement shaming the protesters and supporting his good friend the cardinal.

Olenka, on the city council in Lima, had become a reputable spokeswoman for Somos Peru. When her colleagues were too afraid to present a recommendation to the council, they would volunteer Olenka to do the speaking.

In one instance, she called for a government investigation into the deaths of 26 children in the remote area of Taucamarca in 1999. They had died from contaminated milk supplied by the government, but the local authorities were blaming the teachers for giving the mislabeled pesticide to the innocent children. The Fujimori regime said nothing immediately following the horrific event. They stood silent and did not indicate they were concerned with finding those responsible for the poisoning. They had not even sent letters of condolences to the family.

"If this had happened in a high school in Lima, everyone would be up in arms and demand the head of the health minister," Olenka argued before the political authorities at the city council meeting. "But since it was in the highlands, in the indigenous community, no one cares. We need to set an example. Doesn't anyone on this council care about these poor children?"

Eventually, with her fellow party members also intervening, the council drafted a public statement calling for a public investigation into the tragedy.

After the demonstrations in 2001, Giampietri stood up to pitch his own letter of support to Cardinal Cipriani and a denouncement of the human rights community. The former military man Giampietri was a physically large, intimidating character with red hair and a strong presence. During the Garcia government in the 1980s, he had given the final command to enter El Frontón prison with machine guns and bazookas in response to a prison riot. The offensive killed almost every

prisoner inside, including many indigenous people and the unjustly accused who were sent there by the counterinsurgency forces during the war.

Giampietri's history, commanding presence and close ties with the present dictatorship did not deter the petite, young Olenka from speaking out. She directly challenged Giampietri's support for Cipriani and argued for the true meaning of Christian values. "Jesus worked for peace, for reconciliation, for justice, and with the vulnerable people, but Cipriani is all the contrary. He is so close to the government and has never said anything to rescue peace and dialogue in our country. He does not use his power for justice, for the people who stand up for the victims. He provoked the protests by the activists."

Giampietri's responses to Olenka's claims were not timid. He aggressively condemned Olenka's "unnecessary attacks against him and the church." The match lasted for three hours. It was a David-and-Goliath scene: the imposing angry naval commander versus the small, feisty council member.

Olenka, with the support of a few colleagues in Somos, continued the vigorous debate and finally won out. Although they were hesitant to confront a high official from the church, the council members finally agreed with the argument that Cipriani had not proven his goodwill toward the poor and deserved the disapproving accusations made by the protesters. They voted against the public statement in support of Cipriani.

A few days following the great debate, Olenka's assistant received a message from Giampietri's assistant which read, "Your actions against the church won you a ticket straight to hell."

"Oh, don't worry," Olenka calmly answered. "I'm sure I bought myself that ticket a long time ago."

Nothing New

Olenka stepped out of the packed van overflowing with eager assistants, event supplies, posters and materials for the long day ahead. As her comfy sneakers hit the dirt road and she stepped out into the early morning air, she felt excited, revived and a little nervous about the day's activities. She and her team had been planning a series of health fairs in the shantytowns throughout Lima as an effort to reconnect the Ministry of Women with the poor women and communities. As Olenka had argued to her chief, Minister Anel Townsend, "Women from the shantytowns need to look at us and say, 'OK, actually I received something from the Ministry of Women.'"

She arrived in the center of Villa El Salvador that morning ready to regain the trust and support of the people. The idea that the minister and national director of women would organize, coordinate and work a community health fair was not characteristic of the sector – but the minister agreed with Olenka.²⁶

The new campaign was called "Women's Eyes" and offered free eye exams and glasses to the impoverished women who could not afford them. Olenka thought this would be a safe and easy way to attract the women to the fair, while also informing them of and offering other important health exams that women would normally shy away from at a public event.

In true Olenka fashion, she quickly started to gain support from other national and local agencies in planning and donating to the event. "I got the support of the other services within the ministry, like the programs on domestic violence, children, welfare services and abandoned children as well as the local mayors, municipal governments, NGOs and, of course, the women and Spanish doctors of the Lion's Club."

Olenka and her team prepared weeks in advance by printing flyers, arranging entertainment, scheduling guest speakers (including the minister herself) and coordinating all the free health services. They were expecting around 200 people to show up and wanted to be ready for the crowds.

By 8 a.m., groups of people started to filter into the ministry building, located in the middle of Villa El Salvador on a mountain called Lomo de Corvina. Not only were the local women showing up, but they were also bringing their entire families. Not hundreds, but thousands of people showed up that day.

The minister of women arrived a few hours after the opening and was awestruck by all the people who were there getting health exams and seeing what the public office had to offer. Olenka and her team were running the large area. They set up on every corner information on everything from health services to the rights of women and children and the prevention of domestic violence.

However, no good deed goes unpunished. As the primary event coordinator, Olenka ran around "putting out fires," doing everything from fixing broken chairs, finding guitars for the musicians, greeting important guests and setting up tables. She recalls,

One woman showed up very ill to the event. Her husband and family were basically carrying her into the fair as she was too weak to walk herself. 'Doctora, Doctora, we have an emergency here!' my team started to shout and look for me. I finally ran over to where the woman was sitting and called an ambulance. She was taken to the

hospital. I figured they were too poor to take the woman to the doctor and seek medical help themselves. There were so many stories like this all day long.

Olenka and her team distributed thousands of pairs of glasses to the people of Villa El Salvador that day, many of them too poor to afford health care.

I was talking to Anel and showing her the services. Suddenly an old, indigenous woman who probably lived with her family in Villa El Salvador appeared. She had two braids and was dressed in her traditional Andean clothes. She was there to get glasses. They asked her, 'Do you have glasses?' She replied 'No,' and they gave her an exam and a new pair of eyeglasses. She was so happy and excited. I remember Anel talking with her about the new glasses, and the old woman saying, 'Finally, after many years I can see people's faces.'

Reaching out to the people, not waiting for them to reach out to you – that is what Olenka understood as a young child and continues to live by as a Peruvian peacemaker, community organizer, women's rights activist and influential policy maker, paving her own path to peace.

A CONVERSATION WITH OLENKA OCHOA

The following is an edited transcript of an interview conducted by Elena McCollim, program officer at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ), during a public event on Oct. 7, 2008. The transcript includes questions from the audience. The event was held in the Peace & Justice Theatre of the IPJ.

Poem reading by Olenka Ochoa.

“Mass”

by Cesar Vallejo

At the end of the battle and the combatant dead,
A man came toward him and said,
‘Don’t die I love you so much.’
But the corpse kept dying.

Two more approached him and repeated,
‘Don’t leave us. Be brave and return to life.’
But the corpse kept on dying.

Twenty, one hundred, fifteen-hundred, half a million came to him and said,
‘So much love and nothing can be done against death!’
But the corpse kept on dying.

Millions surrounded him with one common plea,
‘Stay here brother!’
But the corpse kept on dying.

Then, all of the men on earth surrounded him.
And the corpse looked at them, sad and deeply moved.
He raised up slowly and embraced the first man and started to walk.

Q: You often say you have lived through 20 years of war and dictatorship, yet you are still so young.

A: Life was so difficult during those years in my country. I was born under the military dictatorship of Juan Velasco Alvarado. Two years after the dictatorship finished began the actions of Sendero Luminoso. The war began. Immediately after the internal war with Sendero, the civil dictatorship of Fujimori began. Life during the internal war was more similar to the life under dictatorship. But many people see a country under war and they think people are always suffering or crying. This is not always true. The people have a level of resilience to confront the war. The people, my friends and I suffered during the armed conflict. But then we got up, worked and went to university everyday. It was a difficult time for my generation. But the problem is, the war is finished but the impact of the war and the dictatorship still exists in my country. It is in the relationship between civil society and the state, between men and women and between young people and adults.

“Many people see a country under war and they think people are always suffering or crying. This is not always true. The people have a level of resilience to confront the war. The people, my friends and I suffered during the armed conflict. But then we got up, worked and went to university everyday.”

In this landscape, my work has two sides. The first side focuses on the gender perspective, human rights and women’s rights. The other side of my work is to keep democracy. It is an expression of my time. I try to work for women’s rights and for food for the families, and for democracy and good governance. It is a dilemma for all the women.

Q: This dilemma came to a head throughout the 1990s under the Fujimori regime, for you and for your fellow feminist activists and women’s movement activists. What were the dilemmas you faced?

A: Under the Fujimori regime, it was a paradox. On one side, Fujimori created the Ministry of Women to push the gender agenda after the Beijing conference.²⁷ Obviously, women’s rights were not important for him, he was only looking for support from the women’s movement. It was great for the women’s movement and the feminists, but on the other hand, Fujimori broke democracy and the social movements. During his regime, there was more political and police persecution against the opposition, political parties, journalists. Fujimori used the media too. He bought broadcasters, TV, radio, newspapers. During 10 years, he organized campaigns against the women’s organizations and their leaders. It was a dangerous time.

Q: Can you say more about the social movement that Fujimori managed to split?

A: In my country and in Latin America, the principal support of the social movement is the women’s movement. Thousands of women from the shantytowns, rural areas and indigenous communities have different organizations. Thousands of women. For the government it is very important to have the support of the women’s movement. For example, Fujimori tried to capture one of the principal programs called Glass of Milk. It is a food program that gives families a “glass of milk” and nutrition. Fujimori broke the organization and promoted other leaders. Until now, this movement, which is so important for Peru and the women, has conflict between two leaderships. One sector during Fujimori was corrupt and received more government support. Now again it is supported by the present regime in Peru. It is a huge problem for the women’s movement, the government strategy to co-optation.

Another problem for the women of the grassroots organizations (and for other women’s networks) is that their work is volunteer. They do not receive money, they don’t receive anything. They only receive a little support for food, for example. But the public thinks that women receive money and some resources from the state. But the truth is that the women worked very hard with very little for more than 20 years, but there is no gratitude for their work.

Q: Before Fujimori, the point arrived in the latter half of the '80s when your own response came about. What turn did your career take then?

A: You know, my generation did not have an option. We had to work for human rights, governance, democracy, and to change the economic and social problems. It was so difficult for my generation. Many people call us the “lost generation.” I never accepted this expression. Young people like me, during our whole lives we worked very hard to change the situation and they still call us the “lost generation.” It is not true and it is not justice, this expression.

“... my generation did not have an option. We had to work for human rights, governance, democracy, and to change the economic and social problems.”

I began to work for human rights in the 1980s, and I also worked with women in the shantytowns. We began to recognize that besides the political violence, there was more and more the problem of domestic violence, child abuse and the problems with young people in the urban areas. In the shantytowns the people were saying there were so many people battered by their husbands. In addition, child abuse and problems with gangs were fueling the fire.

In the 1990s, the principal problems were not only social but also economic. You know the crash in the U.S.A. in the 1920s, the depression? We lived in this situation in Peru in the 1990s. The poor people did not receive education or health services. In the 1990s, the other part of my intervention was the support of the women’s movement in the shantytowns who worked for the food programs.

In my country, there are resources – but more corruption too. The resources go to the local elite. Right now, half of the population is in poverty in my country. A quarter of the population is in extreme poverty.

One of the main motivations of my work was to empower women to develop strategies for advocacy with the national government and the municipalities. The benefit is not only for the women, but also for the families, especially the poor.

Q: There was a very important incident in the recent history of Peru that you were a part of. Can you describe the March of the Four Suyos?

A: As I’ve explained, the Fujimori dictatorship was so dangerous for the social and political movement, and for citizen freedoms and human rights. At the end of the 1990s, there was a fierce commitment of the opposition force against Fujimori. I was part of the political movement which promoted the March of the Four Suyos.

Suyos is a Quechua word that refers to the four cardinal points: north, south, east and west. The strategy was to get people from every point of the country to come to Lima for a huge mobilization in the center of the city where the government palace is, where Fujimori and Vladimiro Montesinos

live. (Fujimori's principal supporter was Montesinos. He was a former military man and a lawyer who managed the "mafia" in power.)

The political forces promoted the March of the Four Suyos. I was in the metropolitan municipality at the time and belonged to Somos Peru, the principal opposition party to Fujimori, in the capital. This was a special responsibility because thousands of people from the highlands and the Amazon area, from the north of Peru, came to Lima without money. Our responsibility as metropolitan leaders was to welcome the people. Our group, some local women authorities and politicians helped to organize the shelter, food and medicine for these people, in the public square and gardens in Lima. It was hard work for one month because Somos Peru suffered from persecution from Fujimori. The leader of my party, Alberto Andrade, was the mayor of Lima and the principal leader against Fujimori at the time. Fujimori tried to isolate our party. Obviously, our work with municipal colleagues for Four Suyos was clandestine.

On July 27, 2001, the march occurred. People really sacrificed to get there. They came to Lima by foot, on bus or train. There were so many people in the shelters and in the public places. The municipality had many gardens and the people slept there. Then on the 27th, the day before the independence of Peru, the march began in front of the justice palace. All types of people were there: men, women, young, families, the poor from shantytowns, from Andean communities and Amazonian villages, along with students, workers, artists, etc. All the people and political parties were there. It was such a spectacular march. At 12 o'clock at night, many Andean musicians played conch shells and Andean instruments and sounded the call for democracy against Fujimori. Obviously, this was an emotive moment.

The next day, the repression of the people and the street marchers was so dangerous. Fires were set in different public entities in Lima, which provoked the paramilitary groups that were attached to the Fujimori regime. They were used as the argument to detain more leaders, students and journalists.

It was a lesson for democracy and showed how the humble people have more of a commitment to dignity and democratic governance.

Q: You studied at the prestigious Catholic University of Peru, and your political mobilization and awareness was with the democratic left and the mobilization for human rights. What was the impact of liberation theology on your thinking?

A: The Catholic University in Peru is apostolic and Roman Catholic. However, inside it is more progressive. When I had the option to go to San Marcos University – a public, very leftist college – my parents were thinking, "Oh, my God! You only go to San Marcos because the Catholic University is more difficult to enter." It was very intelligent of them, to push me harder to get in. I said, "OK, I will go to the Catholic University because I can do it."

But inside the Catholic University it was like Woodstock and had a discussion of ideas. My parents, I suppose, thought, *My daughter will finish like a monk in the Catholic University*. But my destiny was so different. When I went to the Catholic University there was a huge cultural movement and cultural expression, but I also connected with the ideas and leaders of liberation theology. Many professors and priests were so connected with this new theology, with Gustavo Gutierrez, who founded this approach. This context was more open-minded to the new perspective of the commitment to the

social movements, with a special view on poverty and the poor. It was another impulse for connecting with the political and social affairs.

In Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s, there were many wars and revolutions and this is when liberation theology appeared. This was so useful because in Peru the poor people have an attitude of dignity and empowerment. I always say we don't need charity. The people need solidarity. It's very different.

Q: What presence does the Opus Dei have in Peru?²⁸

A: It is a good question. The archbishop of Lima is named Cipriani and he is part of the Opus Dei. He calls himself the prince of the church. The title is more important for him, not for us. The problem for the Opus Dei is the advancement of liberation theology, because liberation theology argues that poverty is not natural. It says poverty is based on economic and political factors. Also, the Opus doesn't like women's liberation. Cipriani and the Opus Dei have more power among the political elite in Peru today.

Let me tell a little anecdote about Opus Dei. I confronted Cipriani's best friend and supporter when I was in the metropolitan municipality. Giampietri – a former vice-admiral with difficulties regarding human rights – is best friends with the archbishop and was an authority in the municipality just like me. He was a principal representative to the council from the Fujimori regime. The connection between Giampietri, Cipriani and Fujimori – remember this connection. It is very important for the future of the country. Giampietri, Cipriani and Fujimori.

On one occasion, the discussion was very strong. Cipriani said something about human rights – that for him human rights are a stupid idea. Many people marched and stood up in front of the cathedral against Cipriani. They would yell, "Oppressor!" and other things against him. Then Giampietri stood up in the middle of a session of the municipality and asked the city council to give public support to Cipriani and write a statement. His argument was that "He is the prince of the church and the son of God," more or less. This was terrific for me, and I confronted this initiative strongly.

But the problem in Peru is that democracy lives under two powers: the military force and the church. Some of my colleagues in the city council never say anything against Cipriani because of their fear of God and wanting to go to heaven. Giampietri said we need to support him. The discussion in the session was very difficult. I said something like, "I went to the Catholic University and I know the message of Jesus and the mission of the Catholic Church. It's different from Cipriani's." I finally convinced the city council not to support Cipriani.

However, now, Giampietri is the vice president of Peru under President Alan Garcia. When Cipriani says something about democracy, Giampietri talks about this in the media. When Giampietri says something about human rights, Cipriani supports him in the media. A few days ago in Peru, there was a new scandal because Cipriani once again began to confront the NGOs and nonprofit organizations. Cipriani also does not accept the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and he continues to support Giampietri and Garcia – and remember, Cipriani is part of the Opus Dei.

Q: Are the young people as involved in politics as in the 1980s and, if so, is it more of a violent trend or peaceful trend in politics?

A: My generation was so involved in the political issues because of the context. At present, the young people do not necessarily have this option. The new generation confronts other problems. In the shantytowns, they confront the lack of equality of opportunities. The majority of the young people in Peru are in the poor or extreme poor category. They do not have a good education, they do not have good salaries or employment options. It is very difficult to go to colleges or university or other studies because it is so expensive.

On the other hand, the problem for the young people is urban violence. I worked for more than 10 years with the young people in the shantytowns in Peru and they always told me, “For me it is more difficult to walk around my neighborhood, because there exist two or three gangs. If you are a quiet, careful person, the gangs attack you.” The other option is to become involved in the gangs for protection. The safety of the young people in the shantytowns is a huge problem. If you have a job, you cannot return to your home after 5 o’clock because of the gangs. For the girls it is more difficult because the family says they cannot work because of the risk of sexual harassment and abuse. Many people live under fear and without safety in the shantytowns. For this reason I work very hard for the young people.

The local government and the national government do not understand this problem. I did a lot of advocacy during these years and knocked on the doors of the national congressmen and worked with the municipalities. The politicians and municipal authorities usually say to me, “The work with the young people is so dangerous because they are alcoholics and drug addicts.” This is the normal expression from the elite in power.

“The safety of the young people in the shantytowns is a huge problem. ... With this project, I tried to give a life raft to the young people whose main opportunities are with the gangs.”

So I decided to develop a project called Peace Keepers in the shantytown of San Juan de Lurigancho. This is a huge shantytown in Lima where there are 1 million people living. Many of the people were immigrants from the Andean areas during the armed conflict. It is a huge district and huge shantytown. In this district maybe 100 gangs exist, more or less. The local government never had one service to prevent or attend to the problem. In this district, I and my team from INCAFAM, without money, developed a new project. My idea was to give the young people a unique opportunity to go to cultural places, movies, beach, etc. I found young people that were 18 or 19 years old that never went to the movies or beach because their families were so poor. But in the shantytowns, there are no movie theaters or sports places. With this project, I tried to give a life raft to the young people whose main opportunities are with the gangs. Many young people in my

country cannot necessarily have a plan to look forward to in their lives. Its impossible for them, and they are categorized as the generation without any future.

Q: How do you empower mothers and what types of tools do you use?

A: In Peru, the women take different paths and trajectories. There is a feminist movement, academic movement, women politician movement and a huge grassroots movement formed by leaders from the shantytowns. I talked about the thousands of women in Glass of Milk, and there are others, such as the popular kitchen network, the federation of women in Villa El Salvador, etc. My support to the women’s movement has two methodologies: political support and technical support. The technical support is for common problems of the organizations: conflict between them, the necessity of accountability and confronting public opinion, the necessity of a toolkit to improve their services.

On the other hand, I give political support to women. The women in Peru, for more than 20 years, have developed different actions at different levels – the municipality levels and the national levels. You can find a lot of leaders who have a high level of empowerment but need toolkits to develop their political leadership. At this point, my support is connected with the political movement and the discussion in the national government.

For instance, now the huge discussion in national affairs with the ministers is the reform of the state. In the middle of this discussion of the reform of the state of Peru, many people – who never go to the shantytowns – say “the women’s food organizations should not exist.” The politicians think the grassroots women only prepare food. But they not only prepare food – they prepare food for two or three hours and the rest of the time they attend capacity trainings and have mobilizations in the street and develop different political activities. They also develop the toolkits to do advocacy and confront the national government and the reform of the state debate. The women at present are more empowered.

“The politicians think the grassroots women only prepare food. But they not only prepare food – they prepare food for two or three hours and the rest of the time they attend capacity trainings and have mobilizations in the street and develop different political activities.”

Q: You are the first Woman PeaceMaker ever to come to us from South America. We are very happy about that. What are you learning from your experience that you will take back with you to Peru?

A: Well, I have more ideas now. But that is always the problem, too many ideas with no budget. Based on my work with the young people, I am thinking about the necessity to create a service, a shelter similar to the Casa de la Paz.²⁹ It’s been my dream for some years to give some opportunities

and special places to young people. To create a Casa de la Paz for girls and boys is a good idea, but oh my God, I need the lottery!

The young people in my country do not have a good life or a good home. They do not have a good life inside of their families. I work with different young people. I found a huge problem: They have no connection with adults. Adults usually think of them as just dumb kids. I found more abuse in the families, not only physical or sexual abuse, but also abuse against their dignity. This problem affects young people who live in the shantytowns and those who live in the upper class. The young people must put up with the abusive situation because they do not have an option or another house or economic support.

I work with young people from different levels in Peru and I always see young people and the risks of alcohol and drug abuse and other problems like suicide. I am thinking about creating services, like an open house where the young people can go when they have a problem in the family. Don't go to the street, with bad friends or the gangs. Go to the house temporarily. The idea is a house for the people, but managed by them. A place for peace. It is an idea for the long-term I suppose, until I win the lottery.

BEST PRACTICES IN PEACEBUILDING

Activity	General Category of Peacemaking	Description of Implementation
Creating a broad-based network to implement community programs	Advocacy and Program Development	Olenka helped in the creation, with basically no budget, of a domestic violence shelter for women by asking all sectors for support. With the support of local women authorities, she asked the minister of internal affairs to give a house that was seized during a drug raid. She asked the mayor and municipal council for financial support for food, and then gathered volunteers from the citizens' groups and grassroots women organizations. The shelter is now sustainable.
Combining social empowerment with public services	Empowerment, Addressing Basic Needs	It is important to meet social demands and empowerment of the communities with the appropriate services to meet basic needs. Programs like comedor popular or Glass of Milk provided food and sustenance for the community, while also empowering women through education, organizing and advocacy.
Thinking outside the box	Advocacy	With the Jacaranda Municipal Program and domestic violence shelter, Olenka involved the municipal government and the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the space for these programs – a ministry that would not typically be involved in these types of programs.
Becoming an architect	Institutional Development	Design programs that fit the situation. If the national state and municipal government do not have an agenda for women or youth, then create one. Olenka created and proposed several gender-based policies and youth programs with very little time to prepare.

<p>Mixing gender mainstreaming with gender-separate entities</p>	<p>Institutional Development</p>	<p>Many argue for one approach or another, e.g., either creating a Ministry of Women or mainstreaming gender agendas into the existing ministries. Olenka combines the two approaches. In the Ministry of Women, her creation of the women’s commission within the municipality of Lima was supported by a plan of action to educate all sectors of the municipality on gender issues.</p>
<p>Involving men in discussions of women’s rights, especially in the security sector</p>	<p>Education and Advocacy</p>	<p>After first appealing to the interests of men in specific sectors, show how gender issues are connected. Olenka would start all of her gender trainings talking about security issues, urban violence – topics that were relevant to their day-to-day lives. Then she would show how those security issues were integral to the rights of women and children.</p>

FURTHER READING – PERU

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BIOGRAPHY OF A PEACE WRITER –
BIANCA MORALES-EGAN

Bianca Morales-Egan graduated from the University of San Diego in 1998 with a bachelor’s degree in International Relations and a minor in Spanish, and from the American University in Washington, D.C., in 2003 with a master’s degree in International Development with a special emphasis in women in development. Her master’s thesis was on “Women and Politics in Latin America: From Social Movements to Democratization.” Morales-Egan has worked in the research department at the Center for Victims of Torture in Minnesota, coordinated a girl’s youth mentoring program for the Liberian Women’s Initiatives of Minnesota and served as a medical outreach coordinator for the ComCARE Alliance. She has dedicated many hours as a community volunteer, including work for African immigrant organizations, international networking groups, a women’s homeless shelter and transitional housing for abused children. Morales-Egan is now the regional desk officer for Latin American and U.S. Programs at Project Concern International, a San Diego-based nonprofit health and humanitarian aid organization dedicated to preventing disease, improving community health and promoting sustainable development.



Photo Credits: Patricia Rogers

JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

The mission of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) is to foster peace, cultivate justice and create a safer world. Through education, research and peacemaking activities, the IPJ offers programs that advance scholarship and practice in conflict resolution and human rights. The institute, a unit of the University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, draws on Catholic social teaching that sees peace as inseparable from justice and acts to prevent and resolve conflicts that threaten local, national and international peace.

The IPJ was established in 2000 through a generous gift from the late Joan B. Kroc to the University of San Diego to create an institute for the study and practice of peace and justice. Programming began in early 2001 and the building was dedicated in December 2001 with a conference, "Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century."

The institute strives, in Joan B. Kroc's words, to not only talk about peace, but also make peace. In its peacebuilding initiatives, the IPJ works with local partners to help strengthen their efforts to consolidate peace with justice in the communities in which they live. In Nepal, for example, for nearly a decade the IPJ has been working with Nepali groups to support inclusiveness and dialogue in the transition from armed conflict and monarchy to peace and multiparty democracy. In its West African Human Rights Training Initiative, the institute partners with local human rights groups to strengthen their ability to pressure government for reform and accountability.

In addition to the Women PeaceMakers Program, the institute has several ongoing programs. The Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series is a forum for high-level national and international leaders and policymakers to share their knowledge and perspective on issues related to peace and justice.

WorldLink, a year-round educational program for middle school and high school students from San Diego and Baja California, connects youth to global affairs.

Community outreach includes speakers, films, art and opportunities for discussion between community members, academics and practitioners on issues of peace and social justice, as well as dialogue with national and international leaders in government, nongovernmental organizations and the military.

In addition to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies includes the Trans-Border Institute, which promotes border-related scholarship and an active role for the university in the cross-border community, and a master's program in Peace and Justice Studies to train future leaders in the field.

UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

Chartered in 1949, the University of San Diego (USD) is a Roman Catholic institution of higher learning located on 180 acres overlooking San Diego's Mission Bay. The University of San Diego is committed to promoting academic excellence, expanding liberal and professional knowledge, creating a diverse community and preparing leaders dedicated to ethical and compassionate service.

The university is steadfast in its dedication to the examination of the Catholic tradition as the basis of a continuing search for meaning in contemporary life. Global peace and development and the application of ethics and values are examined through campus centers and institutes such as the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, the Values Institute, the Trans-Border Institute, the Center for Public Interest Law, the Institute for Law and Philosophy and the International Center for Character Education. Furthermore, through special campus events such as the Social Issues Conference, the James Bond Stockdale Leadership and Ethics Symposium and the Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series, we invite the community to join us in further exploration of these values.

The USD campus, considered one of the most architecturally unique in the nation, is known as Alcalá Park. Like the city of San Diego, the campus takes its name from San Diego de Alcalá, a Franciscan brother who served as the infirmarian at Alcalá de Henares, a monastery near Madrid, Spain. The Spanish Renaissance architecture that characterizes the five-century-old University of Alcalá serves as the inspiration for the buildings on the USD campus. The architecture was intended by the founders, Bishop Charles Francis Buddy and Mother Rosalie Hill, to enhance the search for truth through beauty and harmony. Recent additions, such as the state-of-the-art Donald P. Shiley Center for Science and Technology and the new School of Leadership and Education Sciences building carry on that tradition.

A member of the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa, USD is ranked among the nation's top 100 universities. The university offers its 7,500 undergraduate, graduate and law students rigorous academic programs in more than 60 fields of study through six academic divisions, including the College of Arts and Sciences and the schools of Business Administration, Leadership and Education Sciences, Law, and Nursing and Health Science. The Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies opened in Fall 2007.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ECAL	Legal Training and Advocacy Team
FEMUM-ALC	Latin American and Caribbean Federation of Women in Local Government
INCAFAM	Research and Training Institute for Family and Women
IPJ	Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
MAS	Movement of Socialist Affirmation
MRTA	Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PCP-SL	Peruvian Communist Party – Shining Path
PUCP	Catholic University of Peru
SINAMOS	National System to Support Social Mobilization
TACIF	Training and Research Workshop on Family Issues
UN	United Nations
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
USD	University of San Diego

ENDNOTES

¹ A version of this paragraph first appeared in the article “‘Women Cannot Cry Anymore’: Global Voices Transforming Violent Conflict,” by Emiko Noma in *Critical Half*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2007). Copyright 2007 Women for Women International.

² Much of this conflict history relies on Terrence N. D’Altroy’s *The Incas*, Barbara Poole and Gerardo Renique’s *Peru: Time of Fear* and Susan Stokes’ *Cultures in Conflict: Social Movements and the State in Peru*.

³ Guano is the droppings of seabirds, bats and seals. It is used in fertilizer and gunpowder.

⁴ The Glass of Milk programs are discussed in further detail in the narrative section “City of Peace.”

⁵ On July 27 and 28 of 2000, thousands of people from every corner of Peru gathered in the main Plaza de Armas, in front of the government palace and municipality building, to protest against the Fujimori regime. It is known as the March of the Four Suyos, after the four cardinal points of the Inca Empire. Women, social leaders, labor movements, teachers, students, indigenous folks from the highlands and people from all walks of life marched in the streets of Lima to show their discontent with the situation in Peru and against Fujimori’s self-proclaimed election victory. The March of the Four Suyos is discussed in further detail in the section “A Conversation with Olenka Ochoa.”

⁶ Comision de la Verdad y Reconciliacion. *Informe Final*, Vol. 1, No. 53 (2003). Available at: www.derechos.org/nizkor/peru/libros/cv.

⁷ The Beijing Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration were the outcome documents from the Fourth World Conference on Women.

⁸ During the War of the Pacific, Chilean troops landed in the coastal city of Pisco in 1880 and eventually pushed their way to the capital city of Lima in January of 1881. The Treaty of Ancón ended the war in 1883.

⁹ Nicolas de Piérola is an important historical figure in Peru for his leadership during the War of the Pacific against Chile. He took over the country for a short period (1879 to 1881) during the war when the current president at the time, Mariano I. Prado, left for Europe. Though his efforts to fight the Chilean forces proved fruitless, he was successful in later ousting President Andres D. Carceres in 1894 and became the president of Peru again. He was known for his work in reconstructing Peru after the devastating war against Chile.

¹⁰ All quotations not cited are taken from interviews with Olenka Ochoa from Sept. 10 to Oct. 31, 2008.

¹¹ Ernesto “Che” Guevara was a leftist revolutionary and leader of the socialist movement in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. He was a trained physician who traveled throughout the continent observing the depths of poverty for so many people and attending to their needs. He spent a significant period of time in the Amazon area of Peru helping the poor and needy. He later became involved in the Cuban Revolution alongside Fidel Castro. He was killed in Bolivia by CIA forces in 1967.

¹² The survival instincts Olenka developed during the armed conflict have been difficult to shed. She always avoids walking next to a garbage bin in fear there is a bomb planted in it. She automatically examines large envelopes that arrive in the mail, skimming the edges with her fingers to check for explosive devices.

¹³ The Tombos were prevalent in the urban areas of Peru, but in the rural areas, indigenous communities and shantytowns, the *Sinchi* division was in force. Sinchi is a Quechua word for an Inca soldier or captain. But

during the internal conflict, the sinchi division was an intimidating, well-equipped counterinsurgency unit known for its aggression and excessive brutality.

¹⁴ Between the 1960s and 1980s there was a large urban trend in Peru called *pueblos jóvenes*, or young towns that were developed by squatters and immigrants from the highland areas. These towns started as fragile shanties and developed into more permanent structures. They were known for their dedication to self-management and self-government.

¹⁵ INCAFAM is the Research and Training Institute for Family and Women, and TACIF is the Training and Research Workshop on Family Issues.

¹⁶ Huaynos are traditional, Peruvian folk songs that originated in the highlands of the Andes Mountains.

¹⁷ Deborah Poole and Gerardo Renique, *Peru: Time of Fear* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1992), 48-49.

¹⁸ The program was sponsored by the national government and the U.N. Population Fund.

¹⁹ These contacts included Nora Bonifaz, Renate Normand, Patty de Olavide, Pilar Dughi and Sabina Deza.

²⁰ The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) was created by a leftist rebel leader named Victor Polay in the early 1980s. They named themselves after an 18th century leader who fought against the colonial ruler and re-named himself Tupac Amaru after the last emperor of the Incan Empire. Some refer to MRTA as a “robin hood” movement who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Although they have been known to conduct violent acts of terrorism throughout their history, many still distinguish them as a less bloody or violent group than the Sendero Luminoso.

²¹ The title of “doctor” is often used for lawyers and other professionals in Peru.

²² The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was a momentous event analyzing the status of women around the world. The conference developed a Platform of Action for the advancement of women around the world and a set of resolutions that were to be adopted by governments around the world. Olenka learned a lot about issues faced by women in other areas around the world and also how to implement gender equity and equality in the political realm. She gathered many ideas about gender mainstreaming – enforcing a gender perspective into every area of policy making and government entities – and creating gender-based entities, which oversee the gender agenda in each institutional agency. Olenka believes in using a mixture of the two strategies.

²³ Carla and her mother, Doris Caqui, became recognized leaders of the relatives of the disappeared, tirelessly fighting for the victims and their families to receive reparations.

²⁴ Daniel Alarcón is a writer and editor. His two best-known works are the short story collection *War by Candlelight* and the novel *Lost City Radio*.

²⁵ Much of the context provided in this section is from Olenka and from Barbara J. Fraser’s “Peru’s new cardinal known for standing with the powerful – Juan Luis Cipriani – Brief Article.” *National Catholic Reporter*. FindArticles.com. Accessed Dec. 1, 2008.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_21_37/ai_72960577

²⁶ The ministry had a crucial alliance with Soledad Cisneros, a member of Olenka’s staff, who connected them with the Lion’s Club and the Women Lions of Recoleta – groups which had significant work experience in humanitarian issues.

²⁷ Please see endnote #22 for more information on the Beijing conference.

²⁸ Opus Dei is a controversial movement within the Roman Catholic Church. According to its Web site, “Opus Dei is a Catholic institution founded by Saint Josemaría Escrivá. Its mission is to help people turn their work and daily activities into occasions for growing closer to God, for serving others and for improving society.”

²⁹ While in residence at the IPJ, the Women PeaceMakers live together in a building called the Casa de la Paz.