

Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize Proposal  
**The Indigenous Women's Media & Poetry Project**

Background: Guatemala and Honduras are the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere following Haiti.<sup>1</sup> The southern states of Mexico—Chiapas and Oaxaca—are the poorest in the country, with the lowest literacy rates and the highest maternal mortality rates in the nation.<sup>2</sup> In all three countries, indigenous people are economically marginalized and repressed politically. Reflecting widespread poverty, recent civil war or violence, and lack of political representation, indigenous people do not have equitable access to the media or arts programs.<sup>3</sup> Literacy and media representation are directly linked to political participation and self-determination, and are integral aspects of equitable economic development.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous women and girls are more likely to live in poverty and less likely to have access to the media or literacy education than men.<sup>5</sup>

Project Description: The Indigenous Women's Media and Poetry Project addresses unequal development, gender inequality, and lack of political representation in Southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras through community media and poetry workshops with girls and young women. I propose to offer workshops for girls and young women ages 12 to 18 at five sites in Southern Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. These workshops will address the lack of participation by young women in existing community radio projects, and provide a space for girls and young women to develop their voices, build literacy and self-confidence, acquire technical competency. I propose to work in collaboration with Popular Communicators for Autonomy (COMPPA), an independent media and education organization with programs throughout Latin America. COMPPA supports community radio stations and grassroots education projects at indigenous peoples' organizations.

Community media is media created to allow individuals to tell their own stories and have the conversations necessary for their own self-directed development as citizens.<sup>6</sup> The mission of community media is to serve and transform the communities in which it operates, and to challenge misrepresentations in mainstream corporate media by putting the tools and resources to create media in the hands of people marginalized in public dialogue.<sup>7</sup> Poetry is a potent tool to develop literacy and self-confidence. Poetry produces dialogue and "names what has been silenced, allows us to understand and articulate our connections to one another and to the world we inhabit."<sup>8</sup>

Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize Proposal  
**The Indigenous Women's Media & Poetry Project**

The Indigenous Women's Media and Poetry Project proposes to offer community media workshops including basic radio journalism, computer literacy, sound editing and production, and digital photography. Group projects will range from public service announcements on issues affecting women and girls to oral history projects interviewing older women and community leaders. Poetry workshops will center on autobiographical and witness poetry, with an emphasis on the development of self-expression. All workshops will be inclusive of participants who do not read or write (though the majority are literate). I will travel with COMPPA's five-person team and facilitate four to five workshops over one week at each site. Workshops will last between two and three hours, and will take place at the host organization. COMPPA has used this model for the past six years, and it has proved an effective way to build capacity and support project development. In between workshops and visits to the site, participants will work on assignments at the host organization using Indigenous Women's Media Project equipment. I anticipate an average of 12 to 16 participants at each site, with a total of about 70 participants.

I propose to work with five organizations. They are well-established and respected community-based organizations working for the political and economic representation of indigenous people. In Chiapas, I will collaborate with the Caracol Radio Network (CACTUS) based in Oventic, an autonomous community in the Chiapan highlands. In Oaxaca, I will partner with the Association of Indigenous Communities in the Northern Area of the Tehuantepec Isthmus (UCIZONI). Based in the town of Matías Romero, UCIZONI represents 105 Mixé indigenous communities. UCIZONI's work includes reforestation and agricultural projects, clinics and health campaigns, micro-credit financing of small businesses, women's rights initiative, and legal services.<sup>9</sup> In Guatemala, I will partner with the Alliance for Peace and Life (APVP) based in Petén. APVP is an alliance of twenty-three community organizations and churches working towards the political representation of Mayan indigenous people and equitable economic development.<sup>10</sup> In Honduras, I will partner with the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and the Fraternal Black Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH) in La Ceiba. Based in La Esperanza, Southwest Honduras, COPINH is a grassroots indigenous peoples' organization dedicated to promoting Lenca and other indigenous peoples' national political

Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize Proposal  
**The Indigenous Women's Media & Poetry Project**

participation, legal representation, and environmentally sustainable economic development projects.<sup>11</sup> OFRANEH is based in La Ceiba, on the Caribbean coast, and defends the rights of Garifuna people. The Garinagu<sup>1</sup> are descendents of African, Carib, and Arawak indigenous people. OFRANEH is dedicated to the protection of the Garifuna and the promotion of Garifuna culture.<sup>12</sup> COMMPA will continue to work with participants at all sites when the project is completed.

Statement of Purpose: The Indigenous Women's Media & Poetry Project will provide the space and tools for young women and girls to express and define themselves in an economic and political climate within which they are often marginalized and silenced as indigenous people, as women, and as youth. Although youth radio, photography, and poetry may seem a novel combination, research shows that combining literary, visual and media arts builds multiple literacies and caters to diverse learning styles and levels<sup>13</sup>. Recent scholarly research shows that community arts and media programs for youth significantly improve conflict resolution skills, self-confidence, and emotional wellbeing.<sup>14</sup> Finally, community media and the arts are effective and empowering tools to promote public health, including issues of HIV/AIDS, sex education, and violence against women.<sup>15</sup> This project will strengthen and diversify existing community radio stations by facilitating the creation of public service announcements and short radio documentaries for broadcast. Finally, this project will broaden the scope and reach of COMPPA's Popular Communication, Gender, and Community Radio initiative by engaging girls and young women and addressing their specific experiences and needs.

Timeline<sup>2</sup>

<b>Month</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description of Activities</b>
June	Berkeley, California	Purchase and order equipment; curriculum development; purchase health insurance; organize housing and office space; confirm workshop and meeting dates. Write detailed Spanish instructions on how to use all equipment.
July	San Cristóbal, Chiapas	Purchase supplies; print readers; meet with COMPPA; develop curriculum.
August	Oaxaca, Guatemala,	Present project to host organizations and form groups for poetry and

<sup>1</sup> Garinagu is the plural of Garifuna.

<sup>2</sup> All travel is with COMPPA's five-person team.

Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize Proposal  
**The Indigenous Women's Media & Poetry Project**

	Honduras	media workshops at UCIZONI, APVP, COPINH, and OFRANEH. Unit 1: Poetry and oral history project starts.
September	San Cristóbal, Chiapas and Oventic, Chiapas	Feedback and reflection with COMPPA, curriculum development, archive work. Workshops (Unit 1) with CACTUS. Prepare for 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mesoamerican Gathering for Indigenous and Popular Communication (La Ceiba, Honduras).
October	Oaxaca, Guatemala, Honduras	Workshops with UCIZONI, APVP, COPINH and OFRANEH. Unit 2: Edit oral history project, begin public service announcement project, and introduce digital photography.
November	San Cristóbal and Honduras	Workshop at CACTUS (Unit 2). Attend 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mesoamerican Gathering for Indigenous and Popular Communication.
December–January	San Cristóbal, Chiapas and Oaxaca.	Planning meetings for 2010 with COMPPA. Curriculum development and archive work. Two week break (Dec 21–Jan 7). Workshops with CACTUS. Unit 3: Finish public service announcement, begin short radio documentary, and form poetry anthology committees.
February	Guatemala & Honduras	Workshops with APVP, COPINH and OFRANEH (Unit 3).
March	San Cristóbal, Chiapas and Oventic, Chiapas	Edit video footage taken so far, CACTUS workshop. Unit 4: Finish short radio documentary, final submission deadline for poetry anthology, and portraits for poetry anthology. Transfer of equipment to host CACTUS.
April	Oaxaca, Guatemala, Honduras	Workshops with UCIZONI, APVP, COPINH and OFRANEH (Unit 4). Participation in Popular Communication, Gender and Community Radio Project Regional Conference (La Esperanza, Honduras.) Transfer equipment to host organizations.
May	Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guatemala, Honduras.	Publish poetry anthology, compile all radio projects, poetry recordings and burn audio CDs. Short final visit to each site for closing workshop, book release party, and presentation of video.

Final Outcomes:

- Poetry anthology with portraits in Spanish and indigenous languages with participants from all sites (copy given to each participant and distributed in the community).
- Radio–broadcast quality 10-minute oral history collage, 2-minute public service announcement, and 15-minute radio documentary on topic of the group's choosing for each site. (Aired on community radio stations).
- Participation in 3<sup>rd</sup> Mesoamerican Gathering for Indigenous and Popular Communication
- Participation at Popular Communication, Gender and Community Radio Project Regional Conference
- Completion (by Emma) of 30-minute video documenting Indigenous Women's Media and Poetry Project. (Distributed to all participants, host organizations, and to COMPPA).

Qualifications: I witnessed the Zapatista Insurrection of 1994 as a child living in Chiapas with my family.

Some of the rebels were only a few years older than me, carrying guns carved of painted wood. The Zapatistas demanded land to grow food, access to health care, education, and the right to self-determination. The Mexican military violently retaliated against indigenous communities, though many had no affiliation with the rebels. I

Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize Proposal  
**The Indigenous Women's Media & Poetry Project**

traveled to many of these villages with my father, a physician and human rights investigator, and listened to testimonies. I learned, in the words of Arundhati Roy, "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard."<sup>16</sup> I returned to Chiapas to do service work throughout high school. Before enrolling at UC Berkeley, I completed an eight-month internship with COMPPA. I learned workshop facilitation skills and basic radio and film production. When I returned to California to begin coursework at UC Berkeley, I interned with Prison Radio, where I further developed my audio production and journalism skills, and coordinated a high school internship program serving youth at risk for incarceration. With support from the Strauss Foundation, I founded the B-Tech Media Project, a school-day community journalism and poetry project at Berkeley Technology Academy, a continuation high school in West Berkeley. I am grateful to be able to work with and learn from youth at B-Tech.

As a Student Teacher Poet in Poetry for the People, I coordinate poetry workshops with young women at B-Tech, Spanish-speaking immigrants in San Francisco, college students at UC Berkeley and elementary school students. Poetry has given me the space to strengthen and develop my own voice. At the same time, my academic coursework in Race, Gender and Development at UC Berkeley has provided me the space to explore and interrogate the complex and often contradictory work of engaging with and learning from people who are marginalized and silenced. My education took place between coursework and community work. Uruguayan intellectual Eduardo Galeano observed, "Our system is one of detachment: to keep silenced people from asking questions, to keep the judged from judging, to keep solitary people from joining together, and the soul from putting together its pieces."<sup>17</sup> It is my experience that poetry centered on personal narrative and community media are tools to break silence, ask questions, develop critical analyses and literacy, and build alliances. I learned invaluable lessons as a child in San Cristóbal and as a young woman in Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guatemala and Honduras. I would be honored to return and carry out this project there.

Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize Proposal  
**The Indigenous Women's Media & Poetry Project**

---

- <sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Report 2007-2008, undp.org
- <sup>2</sup> Weinberg, Bill. 2000. *Homage to Chiapas: The New Indigenous Struggles in Mexico*. Verso, London.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America*. 2004. Edited by Nancy Grey Postero & Leon Zamosc. Sussex Academic Press, England **and** Rockwell, Rick & Noreene Janus. 2003. *Media Power in Central America: History of Communication*. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, IL.
- <sup>4</sup> Stahler-Sholk, Richard with Harry E. Vanden & Glen David Kuecker. 2008. *Latin American Social Movements in the Twenty-first Century: Resistance, Power, and Democracy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD.
- <sup>5</sup> Eber, Christine with Christine Kovic. 2003. *Women of Chiapas: Making History in Times of Struggle and Hope*. Routledge, UK. **and** Stephen, Lynn. 2005. *Zapotec Women: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Globalized Oaxaca*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC. **and** Tooley, Michelle. 1997. *Voices of the Voiceless: Women, Justice and Human Rights in Guatemala*. Herald Press, Waterloo, ON. **and** Rowlands, Jo. 1997. *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*. Oxfam Publishing, UK.
- <sup>6</sup> Howley, Kevin. 2005. *Community Media: People, Places, and Communication Technologies*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- <sup>7</sup> 'What's Going On in Community Media?' 2007. Fred Johnson and Karen Menichelli. Published by the Benton Foundation ([www.benton.org](http://www.benton.org)).
- <sup>8</sup> *June Jordan's Poetry for the People: A Revolutionary Blueprint*. 1995. Edited by Lauren Muller & The Poetry for the People Collective. Routledge, New York & London, p. 17
- <sup>9</sup> See UCIZONI website: [www.ucizoni.org.mx](http://www.ucizoni.org.mx)
- <sup>10</sup> See APVP website: [www.vidaypaz.org](http://www.vidaypaz.org)
- <sup>11</sup> See COPINH website: <http://rds.org.hn/copinh/>
- <sup>12</sup> See OFRANEH website: [www.garifunaweb.com/ofraneh/ofraneh.html](http://www.garifunaweb.com/ofraneh/ofraneh.html)
- <sup>13</sup> Page D. Ware and Mark Warschauer. 2005. 'Hybrid literacy texts and practices in technology-intensive environments'. *International Journal of Educational Research* 43, 432-445.
- <sup>14</sup> Robin Wright Ph.D., Lindsay John Ph.D., Ramona Allagia, Ph.D., and Julia Sheel. December 2006, 'Community-Based Arts Programs in Youth in Low-Income Communities: A Multi-Method Evaluation.' *Child and Adolescence Social Work Journal*, Vol. 23.
- <sup>15</sup> Knaus, Christopher Stephen and Erica Weintraub Austin. 'The AIDS Memorial Quilt as Preventative Education: A Developmental Analysis of the Quilt.' *AIDS Education and Prevention*, Vol. 11 No. 6, 1999. p. 525
- <sup>16</sup> Roy, Arundhati. Speech given upon receiving the Sydney Peace Prize at the University of Sydney, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Available online: [www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/11/04/1099362264349.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/11/04/1099362264349.html)
- <sup>17</sup> Galeano, Eduardo. 1991. 'Divorces' from *The Book of Embraces*. Norton, New York.