



2022 Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Mission to Guatemala **Humanitarian Empowerment, Healing, Transforming Horizontal Violence, Meaning-Making, and Establishing Peace and Forgiveness Gardens**

11 – 24 June 2022

Dr. Ani Kalayjian and Lorraine Simmons

After many months of preparation, the Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention, MeaningfulWorld embarked on a humanitarian mission to Guatemala. The team, Dr. Ani Kalayjian and Lorraine Simmons, was uplifted and supported by several new Guatemalan collaborators throughout the entire journey. We impacted 325 people directly and 3,000 indirectly. We traveled to the 9 regions of Guatemala: Mita, Solola, Tecpan, Guatemala City, the Garbage dump area, Peten, Atitlan, Antigua and Tekal, while breathing in and absorbing the beauty of Mother Earth and the lovely people. We worked with 4 Universities, 9 NGOs, 4 Associations, the Police, Firefighters, staff at a hospital and a the Metropolitan Morgue.

Witnessing mudslides, torrential rains, collapse of 8 bridges, sinkhole, 7-hour traffic, and many human-made traumas, we were impressed at the silent resilience of the Guatemalan people. The local inside joke is “Anything could happen in Guatemala.”

The core of each of our workshops was the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model, Emotional Intelligence, mindfulness, meditation and Soul-Surfing. We taught the importance of emotional regulation, expression of emotions, validation and empathy to heal from trauma. We encouraged the exploration and identification of lessons learned as taught by Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapeutic techniques. We engaged people in Soul-Surfing exercises to help dislodge negative emotions trapped in the body and breathing techniques to support mindfulness. We also included information regarding self-care, awareness of the way trauma impacts well-being, Mayan Genocide awareness, as well as the 5 types of trauma; individual, collective, vicarious, horizontal, and generational.

Participants loved the EQ, breathing and meditation exercises, Soul-Surfing, and mindfulness. They appreciated the interactive aspect of our work. As Pablo Callejas, Director of Safe passage said; “Dr. Ani, your time, company, insight, and knowledge were a gift to us all. I am grateful for the opportunity to get to share the experience of MeaningfulWorld workshop with you and Lorraine. I look forward to our continued collaboration.” And Ruth Noemi Gámez Navas quoted; “It was a nice experience to share with Lorraine Simmons and Dr. Ani Kalayjian God bless them, they came from NY to be here in Guatemala to share conferences voluntarily about Emotional Intelligence.”

We concluded our mission with ecological consciousness raising and planted mahogany trees in Peten with the assistance of Javier Esquivel, director of reforestation project Las Azuzenas.

After 13 workshops, the team identified the following areas of strength in Guatemala;

1. Family values
2. Identity with ancient Mayan cultural roots
3. Silent resilience
4. Commitment to help one another
5. High levels of education amongst collaborators,
6. Dedication to religious and spiritual practices, and
7. Openness for international collaboration. Our collaborators have a vision to embrace the scientific process and continue the research process and joint publication.

The challenges we identified are:

1. Learned helplessness
2. Disconnection from practicing Mayan healing techniques
3. High levels of domestic violence, inequality, repression and violence against women
4. Patriarchal judicial system
5. Machismo
6. History of repression of Mayan peoples, and repression
7. High rates of suicide and high rates of homicide of women.

The team has made the following suggestions for sustainability:

1. Join the free Meaningfulworld weekly zoom support groups
2. Join our monthly workshops via zoom
3. Continue scientific research
4. Create peer support in each organization and empathy groups at the morgue
5. Connect troubled youth with reforestation programs
6. Create and update a resource list
7. Create men's EQ groups through teaching trade professions
8. Integration of Mayan traditions
9. Organize nature retreats, and mediators for support and follow up.

We extend our deepest gratitude and respect to our collaborators; Silva Lima, Dr. Maria del Pilar Grazioso, Marines Mejia, Eliezer Gamez, Dr. Ana Vides, Dr. Aracely Martinez, Pablo Callejas, Laura Ortiz, Dr. Anne Kraemer, Dr. Nely Amparo Elena Can Saquic, Claudia Morales, Juan Jose Hurtado, Delia Catu, Javier Esquivel, Abigail Ortega, Gilda Pettit, Claudia Diaz, Gadiel Orellana, Dr. Elmar Gonzalez, Daniel Cruz Cruz, Dr. Judith Gibbons, and Francisco Charchalac.

When one helps another, BOTH become stronger!

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