

# LAS LIBRES NEWSLETTER

*Special March 8th Edition*

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**Centro Las Libres de Información en Salud Sexual  
Región Centro A.C.**

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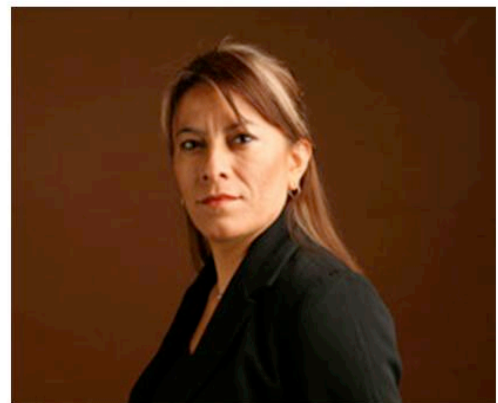
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## **Guanajuato Feminist Wins Human Rights Defender of 2006.**

By Marisa Díaz.

Centro Las Libres is proud to announce that executive director, Verónica Cruz Sánchez, has been named Human Rights Defender 2006. This prestigious honor, given by Human Rights Watch, recognizes Verónica's work with women from disadvantaged communities who seek legal abortions for pregnancies resulting from rape. Only three activists worldwide are presented with this award each year. As part of the award, Verónica toured the United States and Canada speaking in New York City, Washington D.C., Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Toronto.



A European tour will take place in October and November 2007. This has been an invaluable opportunity to create international awareness of women's rights in Mexico and the work of Centro Las Libres.

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Verónica's recognition comes after a relentless 15-year struggle to defend and promote women's rights in the state of Guanajuato, one of the most politically conservative states in the country. In addition to lifelong grassroots work with women in marginalized rural and urban communities, Verónica served as the national and regional coordinator of the feminist NGO network Milenio Feminista. In 2000, Verónica joined with other activists to establish Centro Las Libres in response to an initiative in the Guanajuato state congress that attempted to eradicate the right of women to abort in pregnancies resulting from rape. Since that time, Verónica has led the organization to expand its services to reach women and girls throughout the state of Guanajuato.

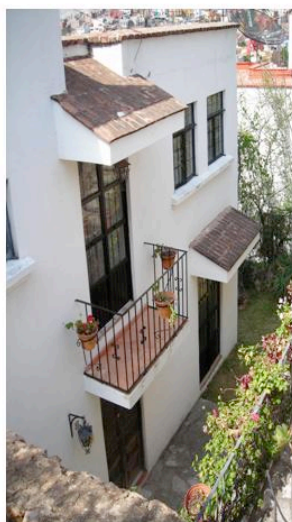


*El Coyote Guanajuato*

*"Centro Las Libres is response to an initiative in the Guanajuato state congress that attempted to eradicate the right of women to abort in pregnancies resulting from rape"*

Born on February 1, 1971, Verónica grew up in León, Guanajuato among a large and loving family. Throughout her life, her parents and seven siblings have supported her work and her passion to help others. Due to her interest in social justice, Verónica pursued a degree in social work from the José Cardijn School of Social Work in León. After receiving her degree, Verónica obtained a B.A. in International Commerce from the Instituto Politécnico Nacional in 2000. Since then, Verónica has continued her formal education through various courses on diverse themes such as sexual and reproductive rights, leadership, feminism and gender. Currently, Verónica is pursuing a Masters in Organizational Development from the University of Guanajuato.

## **We at Las Libres started off the year in a new home!**



*Las Libres Home*

Las Libres is currently in the process of purchasing a home that will serve as our permanent headquarters. We officially moved into our new space in December, ready to start off the new year.

The house ensures that Centro Las Libres will continue to grow and consolidate, since it provides a permanent site for our organization and the women we serve. In the new offices, Las Libres will continue to fulfill its mission of advancing and defending the rights of women, girls, and youth around the state.

The house will serve as a safe haven for women and youth seeking services and a space to hold workshops and educational events for the community. In addition, the house will enable us to host two full-time interns, guaranteeing ongoing support in the office and in the communities we work in. The room downstairs will be transformed into a library and an information center, where the community will have access to books, magazines and the Internet for research on the topics of sexuality, gender, reproductive and sexual rights and health, and domestic violence.

Through the effort and dedication of Holly Silver, our Fundraising and Outreach Coordinator in Portland, Oregon, our Donor Network in the U.S. has raised 48,000 US dollars to buy the house.



A big THANK YOU to all the individual donors in the United States who made this possible!

And thank you, Holly-- we could not have achieved our goal without your enthusiasm and hard work.

In addition, we would like to thank The Global Fund for Women for its generous donation of \$13,000 and Nion McEvoy for his donation of \$5,000 made through the Drumstick Fund of the San Francisco Foundation.

We at Las Libres continue our efforts to raise funds for our new home. We know that with your help we will meet our goal of raising the remaining \$24,000 this year to pay off the house completely!

To donate please visit our website

<http://www.laslibres.org>

and select the **Support Centro Las Libres** link. Here will find a Donation Pledge form and details on how to donate.

Remember that

*INVESTING IN LAS LIBRES IS INVESTING IN SOCIAL CHANGE*



## Empowering Women, Creating Social Change

*"We see the workshops as our most important work because we believe in prevention via education"*

We are proud to state that this year we have been invited to start empowerment and educational workshops in two new communities: Santa Rosa and Lagunilla. In both communities, women formed a group and collectively decided to invite us to do workshops on human rights and preventing intrafamily violence.

This year we are continuing our workshops in four communities around the state of Guanajuato. These include San Jose de la Luz and Las Cruces, where we have been working for three years, El Coyote, where we have been working for two years, and our newest community, San Antonio, where we have been conducting workshops for children and women for one year. Starting this month and continuing into April, we will be going to each community every two weeks, except for San Antonio, where we go once every month due to distance. As soon as funds become available, we will once again hold weekly workshops, as this is what the women in the communities are requesting.

We see the workshops as our most important work because we believe in prevention via education. Essential to our workshops are the themes of human rights, sexual and reproductive health, gender violence, gender equity, and self-esteem. We initiate and sustain a process of empowerment and education for as long as the women ask us to. Our methodology is participatory and involves working with women, girls and boys to develop their own process of empowerment according to their own interests and at own pace. This way the workshops benefit them in their particular communities and circumstances. We feel very excited about continuing our work in the communities and extending our reach to more women, girls, and boys around the state. Together we are making changes. Now that is truly inspiring!



## Interview – Norma García, Centro Las Libres

### How did you get involved with Las Libres?

*Through the FIDEPO institution (a government program that promotes social development in marginalized urban zones). Vero asked for people who could give vocational training in Salvatierra and that is how I met them.*

### What work do you do with Las Libres?

*My work with Las Libres is giving vocational training workshops in hairdressing, which is really an excuse for women to learn about their rights and have an opportunity to talk to one another about their lives. What I would like to do next is to give other kinds of workshops that interest me more, such as informational workshops on human rights and sexuality.*

### What do you think is the most important aspect of the work that Las Libres does?

*There is a lot of information given that I had never seen anywhere else. And I see that it is useful to people, because many people didn't know it either.*

*They were, we were, very closed-minded with respect to the information and now what we are seeing is that the women are opening up more in their ways of thinking, and that is important.*

### What are your future plans?

*My plan is to continue with Las Libres as long as I can and until there is an impact. My personal plans are to keep growing and studying, that is what I want. What I have always wanted to do is to attend high school.*

*With Las Libres, I have taken their workshops and I see that they have helped me so that I can make a new start. I see myself ready for Vero to tell me, "Go to this or that community and give the workshops there." So that I can take on more responsibility than I have now and keep developing {my skills}.*

*"Norma is from Irapuato, Gto. And has worked with Las Libres for the past two years living vocational training in the communities where we conduct our empowerment workshops"*

## Centro Las Libres Website!!

We are happy to announce that we now have an organizational website! Please visit our website to find out more information about our organization, the social and political context of women's rights in Guanajuato, how to donate, and volunteer and internship opportunities.

We would like to give special thanks to Enrique Aranda Rayas, Doris Gallan, Jacob Frank, Berenice Reyes, Kimberley Silver, and Marisa Díaz for their hard work in the design and creation of the website!

[www.laslibres.org](http://www.laslibres.org)



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