



## Men in the Gender Process – Awakened

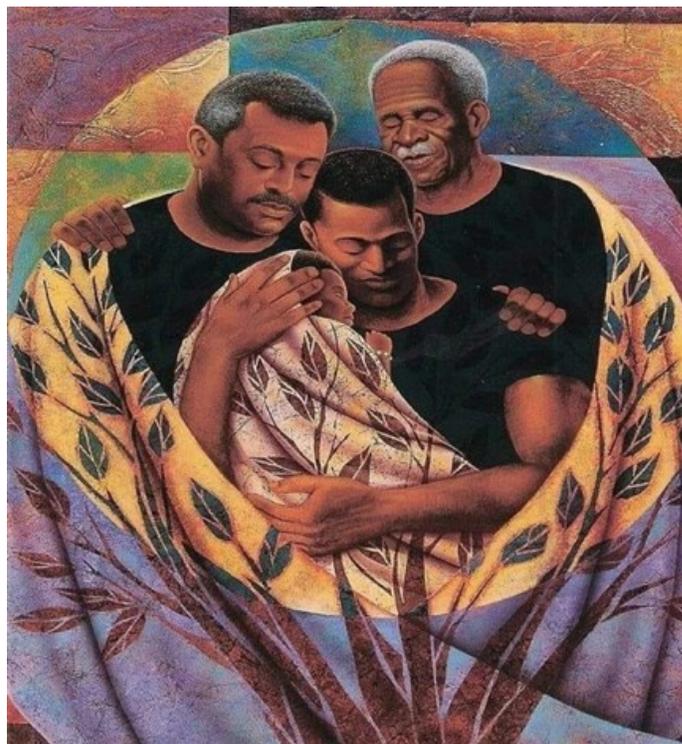
Wilmer Sibrian  
Executive Director of CoCoSI

Patriarchal violence creates and maintains men's power over women and is upheld primarily through violent means. Latin culture determines particular characteristics to fit the patriarchal ideal masculine construct. Socialization of masculine identity starts at a young age defining masculinity as related to toughness, stoicism, heterosexism, self-sufficient attitudes and lack of emotional sensitivity. Society tells men they are entitled to be all-powerful. Tenderness and emotions are not permitted to develop in their bodies and minds. Anger in men is culturally accepted, they are socialized to be destructive; war domination and violence have been the norm.

Boys live under intense pressure to display gender-appropriate behaviors according to the ideal male code. Little boys are pressured to be strong; many feel they are expected to hide their emotions when they are sad and to not express empathy towards other children. They feel they must project stereotypical male behaviors, even when they don't want to.

CoCoSI's prevention education is not a *fact-dispensing assembly line*. It fuses academic, social and emotional learning based on the principle of equality and impartiality. Children and teens thrive in an intellectually exciting space. They can connect with one another, explore their inner lives and develop greater self-awareness, empathy and lifelong healthy practices.

For the month of March CoCoSI's *Men in the Gender Process* project celebrates International Women's Day by recognizing that men are capable of expressing tenderness. We call on all men to break the patriarchal pact and return to warm-heartedness. Emotionally literate men contribute effectively towards eradicating misanthropic violence towards women, men, children and pursue a future for a life free of violence.



“We all have the right to flourish in tenderness, love and connection. We are not the always strong, nor always insensitive. We are not the echo of the beliefs of our tribe, there is something more within us. It is an untamed presence that seeks to touch and be touched with love.” Christian Ortiz - Awakened Men

CoCoSI appeals to the Salvadoran Ministry of Education to celebrate boys who embrace “feminine” qualities like introspection or vulnerability.

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## Community Based Rehabilitation

By Dolores Leiva

Rehabilitation Center Coordinator

Milagro Martinez is 16 years old girl and diagnosed with Myelitis, inflammation of the spinal cord that disrupts the normal response of the brain to the rest of the body. This can cause pain, muscle weakness, paralysis, sensory problems or dysfunction of the bladder and bowels.



Milagro is one of Maria’s three daughters. Maria is a single mother with few resources who has worked hard for many years to feed and educate her children. Attending to Milagro’s special needs is inordinately challenging. With tears in her eyes Maria recounts how difficult her life and caring for her daughters has been. She talks about how she came to live in the community of Santa Marta after her husband died, a single mother with no income, only a great desire to raise her daughters and make Milagro happy.

Maria can’t afford to take the bus to the Sensuntepeque Hospital for her daughter’s treatment. CoCoSI’s Rehabilitation Center therapists, at no costs, make weekly home visits, provide physical therapy and teach her family how to work with Milagro at home.

## The Road of No Return

Nelson Alexander Reyes

Impacting the new flood of migrating families to the United States is an increase in poverty in El Salvador during the pandemic. Poverty has reached a new height of 51.4%, a 20% increase, implying from 1.3 to 1.6 million new poor.

Emigration of Salvadoran children to the United States increased at the beginning of 2021. The government uses the armed forces to prevent people from leaving and has increased border security. People trying to leave El Salvador are being stopped and prevented from going forward.

Parents are risking theirs and their children’s lives to be close to their families and live in a country where they can enjoy their human rights. They face the dangers found on the 2,000 to 3,000 mile journey north optimistically and hopeful to find better opportunities for themselves and their children.



There have been 3 people murdered from our Department of Cabañas in the past two years. Our heartfelt condolences to the Family of young Milagro Elizabeth from Ilobasco, Cabañas, murdered in Mexico City in February 2021.

Migration to the United states for reasons of conflict, poverty, gender and human rights violations and climate change already afflicting our youth has seen a dramatic increase since Covid-19. One person told us: “We may feel overwhelmed by this reality; still there is reason to be hopeful.”



## PTSD, Substance Abuse and Youth in Rural Communities

Carmen Jovel y BRH

Substance abuse is growing among adolescents in rural Santa Marta communities. These youth are the children and grand children of Salvador's civil war veterans who have received almost no treatment for post-trauma stress disorder (PTSD). Parents with PTSD self-medicate with alcohol to treat their symptoms of trauma.

Research shows a relationship between parents PTSD and children's distress and behavioral problems.

Studies in humans exposed to traumatic conditions suggest subtle biological and health changes in their children. The emotional trauma of children being separated from their parents who migrate to the United States also triggers subtle biological alterations suggesting that the children might even pass them to their own offspring. PTSD is not an individual experience, in fact, it is inherited.

Isolation, poverty, unemployment, no mental healthcare make it especially difficult to combat PTSD in rural communities, making prevention, treatment, and recovery unattainable. It should not be surprising that alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and drug abuse is growing among the youth in Santa Marta.

Community leaders are challenged yet they have not made the connection between parents' PTSD and their children's substance abuse.

The Association CoCoSI and community leadership were invited by governmental agencies to participate in a new anti-drug pilot project to respond to increasing substance abuse. The pilot project would be developed in Santa Marta; facilitators would then take it to other rural communities. Santa Marta was chosen because of its well-known success in community leadership and organizing.

The Salvadoran government is attempting to develop and organize activities without any financial backing for this project.



There are no drug addiction treatment centers in El Salvador, no effective supervision, no monitoring or subsidized substance user treatment. Moreover, their focus is on treating substance abuse symptoms and there is no urgency to address the roots of the problem.

Young experienced leaders have expressed concern to dedicating scarce resources to a project that has no financial backing, further substantiated by the government's prior unsuccessful attempts to address substance abuse in El Salvador.

CoCoSI's education workshop packages implemented in schools include drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse.

Early substance abuse education programs see a reduction in crimes related to contracting illicit drugs, increase productivity associated with diminished alcohol use and less tax-dollars spent on public health care for smokers and alcoholics. The best public health strategy would be to treat the post-war inherited PTSD roots of substance abuse within the young populations.



## COVID-19 Havoc on Salvador's Children

Nelson Alexander Reyes

Since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared family life as we know it has been completely disrupted. Childhood progress across every standard of measurement has deteriorated. Salvadoran children are faced with a



devastating new normal.

The consequences of the pandemic are felt by Salvador's children as it will be for many years by generations to come. Since a mandatory quarantine was declared in March of 2020 children increasingly are experiencing violation of their rights. Exasperating this trauma was the storm Amanda that affected the poorest and most vulnerable now suffering serious consequences such as homelessness and decreased income.

Recent Legislative elections during Covid-19 quarantine added to pandemic-induced stress. A new political party, New Ideas, now holds the majority in congress as well as the presidency; people are still waiting to see if it will be better for their lives.

Experts have affirmed that children are the least vulnerable to Covid-19 infection; nevertheless they are the most vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic. Thousands of children have been displaced and/or migrating to the US, further falling behind in their education. Tens of thousands of children have not attended classes and the online learning modality only reaches those students who have access to the internet at home. Eminently it is the poorest children from rural communities most affected.

The Association CoCoSI, founded on the principles of human rights and equality are deeply saddened by consequential effects of Covid-19 on the most vulnerable populations in El Salvador. At the same time CoCoSI educators are more stimulated by the challenges to create innovative methods to provide prevention education in rural vulnerable communities.

### A CoCoSI Key Announcement

#### New Management Structure for 2021

The organizational management of the Association CoCoSI has been restructured for the purpose of strengthening community based prevention education and strategic alliances with both national and international actors. This major change aims to more effectively and efficiently educate and defend the rights of the most vulnerable populations living in Cabañas.

We welcome Wilmer Abel Sibrian to the key management position of Executive Director.

### A Note To Our Readers

Thank you for your contributions to our fund raising campaign.

You can continue to empower people to own their sexuality and defend their rights by making a tax deductible donation to CoCoSI through our partner and fiscal sponsor CoCoDA.

<https://www.cocoda.org/donate/>

Please email CoCoDA and CC CoCoSI to inform them a donation has been made and designated for CoCoSI.

CoCoDA: [info@cocoda.org](mailto:info@cocoda.org)

