

YWLP-Cameroon Global Solidarity Retreat

with Caroline M Berinyuy, PhD
Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) in Cameroon
March 11-13, 2016; ongoing solidarity 2016 and beyond

Overview: Caroline Berinyuy and YWLP

Join Caroline M. Berinyuy and a group of others interested in local/global leadership for a retreat this spring. You'll spend a weekend on Mt Washington in the Comox Valley on the unceded territory of the K'mox people. As a group, you will get to know each other, learn more about Caroline's work, consider ways to be in solidarity - and have fun!

Caroline M. Berinyuy, program director of the Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP) in Cameroon, completed her PhD in Education at the University of Virginia. Global Solidarity Retreat organizer Mali Bain has connected with her in relation to her visit to Vancouver to present at the 2016 Comparative and Intercultural Education Society (CIES) conference; Caroline is thrilled to be co-facilitating the YWLP-Cameroon Global Solidarity Retreat.

Retreat Goals

The retreat will be an opportunity to

- Connect with others in British Columbia interested in global solidarity
- Learn more about Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) in Cameroon and Caroline Berinyuy's approach to leading this work
- Explore topics such as: intercultural collaboration; global citizenship; insider/outsider perspectives; assumptions, biases & ways of knowing, and imposed/expressed/perceived needs.

Other topics that may emerge in conversation and discussion could include managing time and resources in engaging with the community, building partnerships, and identifying practices for ensuring sustainability and community ownership.

We welcome a diverse group of participants, both those new to this work and those with significant experience/training. You will benefit most from this retreat if you have one or more of the following:

- Interest in social justice and/or working in solidarity
- Awareness of own social location (race/gender/class/sexual orientation/ability/etc)
- Interest in or experience working in an international and/or Indigenous context
- Interest in youth leadership locally and/or internationally

Logistics

We will be staying at the Mt Washington Mountain Centre. Meals (Saturday breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner; Sunday brunch) will be collectively prepared and shared by participants.

Bring loose, comfortable attire, warm clothing appropriate for a snowy location, and a few of your favourite snacks and beverages. There will be bus transportation from the Comox Valley to

Mt Washington. Transportation to the Comox Valley can be arranged via ferry and bus (<https://www.islandlinkbus.com/>), carpooling (from the Horseshoe Bay – Nanaimo Ferry), or Pacific Coastal flights (www.pacificcoastal.com/)

We will be starting the retreat Friday evening, leaving 7:30 pm from the Comox Valley (Vancouver participants will need to be on the 3pm Horseshoe Bay – Nanaimo ferry). The bus will return from Mt Washington on Sunday afternoon departing 12:30 pm to allow air, bus & ferry transportation back to Vancouver.

Important dates:

- Fri Feb 12th First-round applications due
- Feb 12th – March 7th Applications considered on a rolling basis

Participants in the retreat commit to the following dates:

- Fri – Sun March 11th – 13th Global Solidarity Retreat at Mt Washington
- Thurs April 7th (TBC) Post-retreat gatherings in Vancouver and Comox Valley

Before you come to the retreat, you need to do two things (this should take about 2 hours):

- Research examples of global solidarity and/or girls' and youth mentorship programs taking place where you reside.
- Connect with another participant by phone / Skype

Cost

The Global Solidarity Retreat builds the kind of meaningful relationships that are normally built only through international volunteer experiences, by providing an immersive opportunity to connect with a global leader. Retreats are fueled by volunteer time, love, and energy. Additional contributions welcome from those supporting retreats and unable to attend.

\$350 – \$500 (sliding scale) - including room, shared food, facilitated sessions, transport from Comox Valley to Mt Washington, and 10% contribution to Caroline's work. Does not include snacks, optional beverages, travel to Comox Valley.
Subsidies available, please enquire.

To apply, please fill out the application form (below; also available in word format) and submit to globalsolidarityretreat@gmail.com. Participants will be selected after February 12th; after that spaces will be allocated if they become available.

Young Women Leaders' Program (YWLP) Cameroon: Background



Women's Day in Kumbo

Caroline M Berinyuy PhD Program Director

The Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) in Cameroon

The YWLP in Cameroon is an adaptation of a researched based mentoring program at the University of Virginia, US that pairs college women or *big sisters* with middle school girls or *little sisters* for a year to boost self-esteem and leadership skills development for both groups. The YWLP in Cameroon operates with high school girls as big sisters to their middle or secondary school little sisters. YWLP is as an afterschool program in twelve secondary/high schools. The YWLP recognizes that adolescence is a difficult period for girls as this period is absent from most Cameroon cultures. The absence of a notion of adolescence means that maturity is based on physical changes such as the development of breasts which means that the transition is often abrupt with little consideration for their psycho-social states of the girls. The YWLP in Cameroon also recognizes the 'globalizing effect' on adolescent behavior. It employs the concept of 'intelligent borrowing' from one culture to another in this case, borrowing from the US culture that is more 'informed' on adolescent development and adapting the knowledge in a culturally sensitive ways to address some of the issues facing adolescent girls in Cameroon. The purpose is to make leaders of the girls who can take control of their own lives enabling them to stay in school longer among other things. Its objective is to provide a safe space where adolescent girls can bring their problems, especially those they are uncomfortable talking to their parents about, and receive support from their big sisters who have just gone through adolescence themselves.

The YWLP provides space where girls can learn to recognize and avoid dangerous situations as well as learn from the experiences of other girls. The YWLP also provides an opportunity for girls to bond with older girls and with girls from other ethnicities and regions and religions in order to promote respect for diversity. The ultimate goal is to help the adolescent girls to be leaders in their own lives; to feel comfortable with their changing bodies, to recognize and enhance their confidence and self-worth, improve their hygiene and nutritional knowledge and their academic potential so they can avoid risky behaviors that could lead to health problems or cause them to drop out of school. The day to day activities are organized in form of a curriculum that has been organized into sessions to address each aspect of the psycho-social challenges associated with adolescent development. Our curriculum has been borrowed and used to inform such programs as Seed4Africa in Ethiopia and YWLP Zambia. We have four foundational goals.

1. Promoting the education of girls

YWLP Cameroon was founded to keep girls in school longer and continues to stress the importance of education. We strive to make the school environment user friendly for the average girls. We provide 'sanitation buckets' for such emergencies as a first period or soiled uniforms during menstruation and counsel on sexual harassment in the school grounds. We ensure the academic follow-up and support in math and science through the female coordinators who are teachers in the schools. The scholarship program an addition to YWLP Cameroon through the initiative of little sisters and individual groups in the US, specifically in Charlottesville, VA have increased program impact. With these scholarships we were able to send two girls from the Islamic High School to college who have since graduated. One of the girls from the nomadic Mbororo minority is the pride of her people as she is the first community member to attend college. Some of our scholarship alumnae have attended short-termed training and are now nurses and elementary school teachers.

2. Capacity recognition and enhancement

We provide opportunities for participants to showcase their emergency leadership skills. High school girls in Kumbo run the program and once a year they run a workshop on some identified issue facing girls. The girls have become confident and eloquent as public speakers and their skills are now recognized by the larger community. We provide opportunities for girls to acquire other skills such as using information technologies. We bring guest speakers from diverse background to keep the participants grounded on the emerging professions



Photo story workshop, Kumbo & Dschang

3. Community Outreach

In recognition of the mother's crucial role in adolescent development, our workshop titled *Bring Your Mother to the YWLP* looks at the cultural and emotional challenges to communication between girls and their mothers and provide a platform for mothers and daughters to begin to dialogue. We also identify and honor the 'elders' or trail blazers in the community by recognizing and showcasing their contributions to the advancement of the cause of women in the community and in the country at large.



4. Recognition and Celebration of Diversity

In a country as diverse as Cameroon with more than 250 ethnicities and languages and a political heritage that has resulted in the use of English and French as official languages, YWLP Cameroon has striven to be as inclusive as possible of this diversity. The YWLP in Cameroon operates as a bilingual program in English and French. The program is located in the Francophone part of the country in the Lycee Classique which is all French and in the Lycee Bilingue where instruction is in English and French. In Kumbo, the YWLP has responded to the local diversity as well. Schools in the program include an Islamic school, five public schools, one Baptist and two Catholic schools. Girls come from all ethnic backgrounds and YWLP celebrations such as the *Cameroon Girls' Day*, ensure that they continue to mix and mingle and learn from one another. Our program is inclusive of girls with disabilities and those on the margins such as albinos. This way, stereotypes are broken down among participants and through them in the larger society.



Cameroon Girls' Day

Backgrounder: Global Solidarity Retreats

Summary

Global Solidarity Retreats (GSRs) are a way to connect residents of Canada with changemakers from other parts of the world. The core of this 3-day 'getaway' to a beautiful location is an experience bringing together:

- One (or more) full-time changemakers from another part of the world
- Canadians, permanent residents, students and others

The weekend is a mixture of building relationships, sharing experience, building understanding, and taking action. Participants learn and explore through facilitated sessions, around kitchen tables and at the campfire. The focus, structure, and content of the retreat is co-created by facilitators from Canada and the focus region. Participants might include youth who have a keen interest in international solidarity work, undergrad or grad students seeking relevant global context for their field of study, older adults transitioning careers and/or retiring, educators, and those who have personal connections to the region of focus and/or global solidarity.

GSRs create a transformative learning experience similar to an international volunteer or service learning trip. For participants, the GSR is an opportunity to develop as leaders, build relationships, and gain a better understanding of their potential role in the international solidarity/sustainable development sector. For changemakers, this an opportunity to have quality relationship-building opportunities during a short visit to Canada.

Context

Canadians and others residing in Canada, recognizing their complicity in global and local inequality, can become isolated, even helpless', feeling they have nothing to offer solidarity movements and therefore unlikely to be involved as leaders, volunteers, or advocates for change. At the same time, changemakers in other parts of the world are leading significant movements for change locally and globally and seeking like-minded partners in other parts of the world. Current responses to this challenge often involve international travel and 'voluntourism' type efforts, which while providing transformative learning experiences come at a significant cost (both in cash and in time) for Canadian and Southern participants.

The GSR concept was developed in consultation with international solidarity / sustainable development organizations in BC. The GSR is an opportunity to begin to build an understanding of solidarity as represented by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which are intended to speak to the universality of many issues shared by people around the world.

In September 2014, CoDevelopment Canada hosted a GSR with Sandra Moran from Artesana in Guatemala. The retreat involved participants from 17 - 65 years old, from students to professionals to university faculty. Feedback from Sandra Moran and participants was very positive; after the retreat, participants led fundraising dinner and helped organize a women's march. The next GSR will be March 11-13th, 2016, with Caroline Berinyuy of Young Women's Leadership Program in Cameroon.

Retreat Framework

A GSR takes place over a weekend, from Friday till Monday, at a location somewhat removed from urban areas. Participant numbers are usually limited to maximum of twenty participants. Key elements of the retreat include activities to build relationship among all participants and the changemaker/s, information sharing about the questions the changemaker/s brings to the Retreat, exploration of how the participants might respond to the needs identified and then planning for a specific action/s or learnings to be enacted after the retreat. Funding for a GSR comes from registration fees charged to participants and sponsorship by local groups/organizations. Some participant costs are fully subsidized. Participants apply to participant; accepted participants are expected to participate in pre-retreat and post-retreat preparation and debrief sessions.

Impact

For those Canada who are interested in being leaders, volunteers or advocates for change, the GSR provides an opportunity to listen, connect with, and learn from changemakers and also an opportunity to connect with a group of people around a shared passion or interest in global solidarity. Participants will leave with an understanding that the issues affecting people in one part of the world are intrinsically linked with those happening in their own community.

The GSR makes a direct connection between changemakers who are often marginalized and under-resourced and residents of Canada who are disconnected and wanting to build professional skills. Through the GSR participants become connected, on a deep and more personal level, to issues that may have seemed distant or hard to empathize with. As a result of the retreat, Canadian participants will leave empowered to work in solidarity with local and global initiatives, and to take steps toward employment or involvement in the sector. Changemakers will leave with a new set of relationships and allies in Canadian social networks.

Want to connect? Email globalsolidarityretreat@gmail.com

YWLP-Cameroon Global Solidarity Retreat Application

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

First Name: _____ Last Name(s): _____
Gender: _____ Age: _____
City: _____
Your cell phone number: _____ Email address: _____
Emergency Contact: _____ Relationship to you: _____
Phone Number: _____

Food allergies or dietary restrictions: _____
Other allergies: _____
Mobility or other needs: _____

Where will you be travelling from on March 11th? _____
If you are not driving, would you like to carpool (to the Comox Valley)? _____
If you are driving, are you willing to take another participant? How many spaces do you have available? _____

1. How did you hear about the Global Solidarity Retreat?

2. What motivates you to apply for the Global Solidarity Retreat?

3. What do you hope to learn from this retreat?

4. What intercultural experiences have you had? What have you learned from these?

5. What special skills or experiences do you bring that relate to YWLP's work (eg work with young girls/women; participation in youth/mentoring programs; community development)?

6. What role might you consider playing in the group during the retreat? (Do you see yourself leading, supporting, making peace, organizing, challenging...?)

7. Do you have any questions, concerns, or comments?

I understand that a Global Solidarity Retreat is a collaborative team effort and participants are expected to share accommodation. I agree to accept all of the risks existing in this activity. By signing this document, I acknowledge that if anyone is hurt during my participation in this activity, I have waived my right to maintain a lawsuit.

Signature (electronic): _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your application and interest!
Please submit to globalsolidarityretreat@gmail.com