



TIKONELAAB' MOLAAJ AJ UK'U'X IXIMULEW
Comité Campesino Del Altiplano
Col. Santa Cruz Quixayá, San Lucas Tolimán, Sololá
Guatemala, C.A.



The Peasant Committee of the Highlands



iJusticia!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who have played a crucial role in this Community Service Learning project: my colleague María Carbonetti for giving us the opportunity to reinforce our ties with solidarity organizations such as BC CASA and CCDA; the doctoral student Carmen Barrios for putting us in contact with the members of these organizations and organizing their visit to the University of British Columbia; Steven Steward from BC CASA for taking the time to talk to my students about Guatemala's recent history and the importance of CCDA's work; the MA student Gabriela Badica for kindly taking care of the design and final editing of this document; André Lamontagne, the Head of the Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies, for encouraging us to create links between the classroom and the Spanish-speaking community of Vancouver; and last but certainly not least, Heather Turnbull from CBEL (Community-Based Experiential Learning, Faculty of Arts, UBC) for her moral and financial support, both necessary for the publication of this work.

Finally, I am grateful to the Guatemalan people who are at the center of this text and who, through their daily struggles and activism, inspire me to fight for social justice.

- Kim Beauchesne

PROLOGUE

Vancouver, March 2013

This English language version of the Comité Campesino del Altiplano (CCDA) outreach document is part of a community service learning project accomplished entirely by the undergraduate students of SPAN 207 (section 203) at the University of British Columbia during Winter Term 2 of 2013. These students are: Alette Bansema, Raissa Bustos Suéscum, Agatha Choi, Enrique Ciurlizza Parro, Shantel Dauphinée, Ingemar de Wet, Kaitlyn Degenhardt, Gabrielle Fauconnier, Czarina Fermín, Rachel Gutman, Astghik Hairapetian, Henry Lebard, Nirel Marofsky, Sorina Moldovan, Sébastien Monzón Rueda, Christiana Papageorgiou, Claudia Pisarek, Thalia Platis, Julie Prodor, James Quirk, Abhinav Sharma, Emma Warford and Jessica Webster.

The students found it very enriching to practice their translation and language skills for a good cause. They are delighted to have been able to make a contribution to the work of the CCDA and are proud to show their solidarity with this organization.

Thanks to this opportunity, they were able to discuss the benefits and challenges of fair trade, to learn about the history of Guatemala and the current living conditions of its indigenous communities, and to reconsider Canada's role in international development.

We hope that this is only the first of many more projects of mutual commitment and learning through solidarity.

If you have any inquiries, please contact Kim Beauchesne at kim.beauchesne@ubc.ca.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kim Beauchesne and her SPAN 207 class

PREFACE

This document is addressed to you in order to present Café Justicia. This coffee is produced by a Guatemalan peasant organization: the CCDA. The original structure does not have as its principal vocation the sale of coffee like a classical cooperative. It is an organization fighting above all politically for improving the conditions of the indigenous populations. Therefore, Café Justicia is not a coffee like the others: it is produced to finance our fight and it belongs to a project of social and solidarity economy.

We choose to leave the marketing of product presentation in order to present Café Justicia in the context of the global ideas it defends and the struggles it supports. Therefore, this document has as a greater objective: to present the political, economic and social activities of the CCDA, and finally, to understand why our coffee is more than simply a product.

Now, you undoubtedly understand why this document is addressed to you: more than clients, we look for partners who share our values and who are willing to support our struggles. Café Justicia is a promoter of solidarity and international friendships, instead of a product of international trade.

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Introduction

The CCDA originated during the war of 1982, in San Martín Jilotepeque, Chimaltenango. Its original name was The Peasant Committee for the Defense of the Highlands.



Like other social groups, many of its members were kidnapped, killed, or sent into exile by the governments who were against social groups and human rights. For this reason, the CCDA changed its name to the Peasant Committee of the Highlands (Comité Campesino del Altiplano) and started working underground until 1988. However, it wasn't until 2000 that the committee started working in a formal and legal manner.

The CCDA is an organization that fights for the improvement of the living conditions of the indigenous farmers by seeking a global change in the social, economic and political spheres, and for the respect of the cultures, ethnicity, language(s), traditions and territories of these peoples.

We associate social and collective economic projects to our mission with the purpose of improving the conditions of the communities and their autonomy, using the production of Café Justicia as a means by which to achieve these goals.

In this manner, the CCDA, in its fight against inequality and poverty, places political activism at the center of its activities.

Our Central Political Mission

Political Struggle as a Priority

51% of the Guatemalan population lives under the poverty line, and half of the children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition.

This high level of poverty, as well as the social exclusion of the indigenous population, is due to the great inequalities that exist in Guatemala. According to the World Bank, Guatemala is the country with the highest inequalities in Latin America, and the lowest human development index. These inequalities are particularly related to inaccessibility to land, since 56% of the cultivable land is in the hands of 1.86% of the population, and only 22% of the cultivable land belongs to small farmers.

In these conditions, the CCDA thinks that the struggle against poverty is particularly linked to the fight against inequalities that can only be achieved through a significant change of the political, social and economic structure of Guatemala.



Our Struggles

- **Human Beings Are at the Centre of Development**

We reject the idea that development is synonymous with economic growth. These two terms can at times go hand in hand, to the point that politics guarantee equity in the redistribution of the profits of development. This is why the main goal for development must be the improvement of living conditions and the reduction of inequality for Guatemalans. Therefore, the focus must be on the human beings who live in centres of development and not on economic growth.

We can try to be more productive by:

- generating more decent jobs
- having better opportunities, therefore preventing more migration
- promoting more projects and programs for agricultural development in order to prevent hunger

- **Integral Agrarian Reform**

The understanding of land tenure is fundamental to the appreciation of the social organization of our country. The inequalities of access to land are the cause of economic poverty, and of the social, political and cultural marginalization of indigenous farmers.

Challenging this situation, the CCDA proposes a modification of the structure that facilitates the existence of land tenure: the implementation of an integral agrarian reform.

Additionally, the resolution of these conflicts in the country requires the political intervention of the government and all of the sectors involved in the problem of land tenure, so that we can find an urgent solution to the current conflicts.



- **Food Sovereignty**

Since the Spanish colonization, the agricultural sector of Guatemala has been oriented towards the production of raw materials for export. This is why its economy is based on a model of agro-export, which is now compounded by the development of agrofuels.

The increase of the prices of the basic food basket, as well as the recent global financial and economic crisis present the threat that residents will suffer from famine to an even greater extent than before. It is urgent to make a program of safety and food sovereignty that is concerned with the indigenous rural communities.

Therefore, the aim is not only to share the land thanks to the agrarian reform, but also to redirect the agricultural sector towards food production for the consumption of the population of Guatemala. In addition, it is very important to protect national production by controlling imports.

- **To Put into Question the Capitalist Model**

Capitalism does not allow social progress; on the contrary, it is the main cause of inequalities, wastefulness and injustice. It promotes models of domination and extreme individualism. We believe in an alternative model, where the economy would be at the service of social welfare.

- **Social and Solidarity Economy**

Social and solidarity economy combines social commitment and economic initiative to place human beings at the center of activities and re-position the economy in its context: economic activities are a means at the service of a social project. This project is based on values such as:

- The promotion of the factor of living together through a collective initiative, the spirit of cooperation and responsible citizenship
- The association of principles of internal and external solidarity along with economic principles of production and exchange
- The preponderance of the service done on the profit made
- The response to the needs and aspirations of society

The social and solidarity economy develops a scheme of sustainable human, solidary and responsible growth, a cohesion factor of society that embodies another way of conducting practices in the economy.

It is with the use of this kind of economic model that we want to build our future.

- **Protecting the Environment**

Since the green revolution, the use of chemical products has been generalized in agricultural practices in rural areas, thus causing an artificial environment, the contamination of soils and rivers and a reduction in biodiversity. The CCDA aims to sensitize producers to the harmful effects of chemicals on the environment and on health. We request and support producers to return to natural practices by promoting organic farming and the technical support from the producers that want to change.

- **Social Justice**

- **Respecting the Peace Agreements**

12 years after signing the peace agreements (29-12-96), the CCDA sees the country's situation in a process of constant deterioration that has worsened since the implementation of neoliberal policies such as free trade. Since the signing of the peace agreements, the CCDA states that there has not been any political help from the state to complete their commitments. Although the methods of pressure and incidence have changed over the agreements, the factors that perpetuate the poverty and marginalization of the rural sector continue to be the same ones that lead to the origin of the internal armed conflict. One of these factors is the re-concentration of the land and the politics of the state that, on one hand, facilitate the development of business both nationally and internationally, and on the other hand, marginalize and exclude peasant and indigenous peoples.

In these conditions, we fight for the respect and compliance of the contents of the Peace Agreements.

- **Respect for Human Rights**

The armed conflict that lasted over 36 years in Guatemala came to a close at the end of 1996. The original problems which began the conflict have still not been resolved to this day because they are basic structural problems that impede the full implementation of human rights in our country. There was impunity against human rights violations during the civil war, which is still the case today. Because of these conditions, human rights violations are still much too common in our country: violence, illegal assassination, the murder of women, torture, disappearances, etc. continue to be part of the reality of our country. As such, the CCDA participates in the battle for the respect of human rights.

- Respect for Workers' Rights



Just as human rights are violated, so too are labour rights: unpaid salaries, disregarded work hours, lack of work contracts, violated safety laws, etc. Also, we have often observed the practical slavery of farm workers who have no other means to support their families.

On the other hand, anti-union violence is worsening in Guatemala, where assassination, intimidation, kidnapping, drive-by shootings, attacks and abuse of union leaders and their families have occurred throughout this year. It is urgent that we fight for labour rights and for the respect of these struggles.

- For Cultural and Gender Equality

Indigenous people suffer from racism and their culture is neither respected nor recognized by the government. They make up a marginalized social class economically, socially and politically. They also live in extreme poverty. Therefore, the position in which indigenous people are in is a central worry of ours.

The condition of women in Guatemala is also alarming. We see a feminization of poverty due to the inequalities between men and women and women's social and political exclusion, which is organized culturally. Often, girls do not have the same educational opportunities that their brothers have and they are frequently forced to marry when they are fifteen years old.

Women are victims of domestic violence far too often and rape is common and rarely punished, as it should be.

In this situation, it is imperative that we fight to end violence and create economic, social and political equality between men and women.

CCDA's Plan of Political Action

- **Pressures and Proposals**

Nationally, the CCDA forms part of the Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural Integral (ADRI, or Association for Integral Rural Development) and the Movimiento Sindical, Indígena y Campesino (MSIC, or Movement for Unions, Indigenous Peoples and Peasants). Through these groups, the workers and peasant farmers have organized themselves to fight for better living conditions. This means that peasant farmer organizations, like the CCDA, can create technical proposals and legal initiatives, and they can also unite in order to express their general dissatisfaction with the lack of government policies in favour of rural development. Also, this will bring attention to creating better political policies in Guatemala that will take peasant farmers' and indigenous people's needs into account.

In sum, our intention is to demand that the government direct its policies towards structural and constitutional wide-ranging reforms. These pressures are made possible thanks to demonstrations, proposals of political programs like the National Policy of Integral Rural Development of the ADRI, or our proposal of food sovereignty, "Producing to Eat."

- **Protest Movements**

During the civil war, the protest movement was carried out in secrecy; due to the strong repression and counterinsurgency policies of the state, the initial protest was a fight for survival. Currently, the movement is being implemented publicly, having as assets the contents of the Peace Agreements, the Constitution, the international conventions, the laws of the RIC (Registry of Cadastral Information), the law for the decentralization of government, the political knowledge of its leaders, its funds and procedures in which international solidarity has played an important role.

- **The Struggle for Access to Land**

The CCDA has already achieved the recuperation of 22 fincas, which represent 4,200 hectares of land, through different channels: the support of the communities in their request for the fund appropriations for the land, through the labour laws and the historical right to land tenure.



○

- Labour Laws

We support the groups of peasant farmers whose rights are not respected. We propose workshops on legal training with the hope that they will gain knowledge of their rights. We will educate them about mediation, negotiation and argumentation, and will accompany them in their legal proceedings.

- The Construction of Collective Claims

Each government program that affects the poor population will affect us and raise proposals for the appropriation of the established policies of the CCDA for the poor. However, the propagandistic policies and the threats of cooptation and media that weigh on the social movements cause a depoliticization of the population. Thus, the CCDA, through information workshops on the current policy in the country and through the organization of discussions and workshops on forming collectives tries to strengthen the protest struggles of these groups for their legitimacy.

The Application of Politics through the Development of a Social and Solidarity Economy

- Who are the Producers?

Café Justicia is produced by peasant Mayan farmers of the CCDA organized to protect their working conditions and the quality of the coffee. They have worked in large plantations for generations. However, their own lands were only acquired in 1998. For these families the coffee serves as a main source of income.

- Where?



Café Justicia is cultivated in lands recovered by the CCDA, near the lake of Atitlán, in the central highlands of Guatemala.

- **CCDA's Protest Struggle and Coffee Production**

The CCDA undertook the merchandising of coffee to be able to finance its political struggle of protest while improving the economic conditions of the producers. Before embarking on the project of coffee at the end of the 1990s, the CCDA's actions were limited due to a lack of financing. First, because they had little financial support from other organizations and second, when they received this aid, it usually came with strings attached. The marketing of coffee granted a bit more autonomy in terms of the political actions of the CCDA and strengthened international solidarity.

Coffee complements protest on two levels: on one level, the CCDA is strengthened by coffee sales because it has better funding to carry out political and economic projects that help solidify its relationship with the bases, and solidarity with organizations abroad. On another level, the bases are strengthened when they acquire the estate with the accompaniment of the CCDA.



Finally, what we are looking for through the coffee production is not only to produce benefits for producers, but also to give more sustainability and autonomy to our organization, and thus strengthen the protest.

- **Quality**



Café Justicia is geographically located in the municipalities of San Lucas Tolimán, San Antonio Palopó and Santiago Atitlán. Its origin is strictly hard type “gourmet” coffee, which comes from some 30 small communities totaling approximately 1200 producers, with a production capacity of 30 million pounds and that currently sells only 20%, the other part being sold cheaply to intermediaries known as coyotes.

○ An Organic Coffee

Since 2003, Café Justicia has been partially certified organic (8% of the production has been organic – that is to say, 125 producers). In 2008, it obtained more engaged producers and the certification of 280 hectares of organic coffee. Additionally, 58 producers are currently in transition to obtain the certification.



**FAIR TRADE
PLUS**

The emphasis that the CCDA puts on the organic farming of coffee is based on two reasons. One is that the CCDA views organic production as a form of restoring the farming methods of the past, which were in harmony with nature and with the Mayan worldview. Second, a certified organic coffee has a higher possibility of competing in the international market – that is to say, there is a higher level of demand for certified organic

coffee. Considering these two reasons, but also in order to preserve the health of the producers and to allow them to be autonomous over the big chemical companies, the CCDA has fueled the development of organic agriculture in the Sololá region. Thus, Café Justicia is not only an organic coffee; it generates the expansion of organic practices in an entire region in Guatemala. Organic agriculture forms a plantation of trees and, in this way, contributes to the preservation of volcanic slopes, the struggle against climate change and the conservation of Lake Atitlán.

Furthermore, we are enabled to leave the model of monocropping and artificial environment behind, thanks to the partnership of fruit trees and farming of basic grains to eat in the coffee plots. In this way, it allows us to improve the producers' food safety, which allows for greater autonomy over the coffee prices and a greater biodiversity of plots.

- **The Limitations of Conventional Fair Trade**
- **Our Experience with FLO**

In 2001, with the objective of exploring the certification process, we contacted the Fair Trade Labelling Organization (FLO) in El Salvador. FLO is the international organization in Bonn, Germany, that functions as the independent force of certification and verification in order to ensure that a long-term fair trade relationship exists between the producers and the importer. When the CCDA communicated with FLO, FLO said that there were already too many cooperatives that were certified, the majority of which did not have international markets and at that time there was also a crisis in the international price of coffee and, due to this problem, many producers were asking for their fair trade certification. As a result, the entry of other organizations was suspended. This meant that none of the new cooperatives would be able to receive Fair Trade certification until the market stabilized.

Facing this situation, we think that:

Fair trade is a movement of hope and future, but it will not be an alternative if it is integrated into the mercantilist economic system. If this happens, then it will be reduced to a mere rhetoric.

- **A Threat to a Real Change**

The fair trade cooperatives get out of social struggle, considering that their situation is sufficiently acceptable. Nevertheless, the economic situation of the small producers is not changed by their association with FLO. Often, their living standards still remain inferior to the poverty threshold. We understand that fair trade can constitute a false cure for a system of fundamentally international economy, which is the cause of inequalities and injustices. It does not place any judgement on the mercantile economic system. In contrast, it integrates within this system, trying to give it a more human face.

It does not allow an improvement of a sufficient living standard, but it is enough to stop the emergence of social struggle. Under these conditions, we think that fair trade may constitute a threat for the social battle and a more global change. Therefore, it is necessary to resume the initial fair trade spirit and put it into practice.

- **Charity, Paternalism and Folklore**

We do not want to participate in a fair trade that presents itself like a process of charity and paternalism. Our relations are cooperative: we exchange with our partners in equality and with a total mutual respect, without any form of ideological domination.

In addition, we refuse to make a folklorization of our communities in order to sell our coffee. Even though this method may help us to sell, we will not be like a primitive society that dresses with feathers on their heads, in the woods. This exotic argument is overused by commerce actors.

- **The Evolution of the Market for Fair Trade Products**

The CCDA observes that as these initiatives (conventional fair trade) are growing and expanding, new intermediaries are integrated to the new export chains. These chains were formed in many cases in order to improve the situation of the peasant producer; however, as new intermediaries increase, the harder it becomes to maintain transparency and less benefits or remuneration are received by the producer. That is why we believe it unacceptable to see the chain of intermediaries grow, since the initiative has less legitimacy.

We may wonder whether the brand not only turns into a charitable argument of marketing, for the benefit of multinational corporations, which are also the cause of the neoliberal model.

- **Why Do We Talk About Fair Trade Plus?**

- **A Desire to Leave the Market Economy System**

Our activity has no vocation to cover breaches in a defective capitalist system, destined to disappear and one that generates many growing inequalities.

Therefore, we refuse to join in the market economy and we seek alternative marketing systems. We want exchanges that seek the welfare of agents, as well as the economic and political autonomy of the population. This means thinking and building new modes of production but also division, distribution, etc., while respecting humans and the planet.

- **For a More Global Change**

Through political struggle, the CCDA wants to create a collective claim for a global change of the social, political and economic structure of the country, in order to establish a real improvement of the living conditions of indigenous farmers. We are confident that the problem of poverty will find real solutions only through political decisions.

- **A Preeminence of Food Autonomy Over Exports**

Our support for producers does not have the purpose of increasing coffee production. We look to assist in the diversification of their production so that they may be able to better respond to their food needs, so that this way they are more independent from coffee prices.

- **A Global Support for the More Real Improvement of Living Conditions**

With their model of operation as a social and solidarity company, the CCDA does not only suggest minimum salaries and minimum coffee purchase prices. They propose a number of services to improve global social conditions in indigenous communities.

- **The Will to Export a Converted Product Instead of Raw Materials**

The international market is organized in such a way that it imposes the production of raw materials at a low cost for countries of the North upon the countries of the South.

It is the countries of the North that convert these raw materials and that retrieve the majority of the benefits. This model considerably strengthens the inequalities between the North and the South. Through their roasting project, the CCDA wants to demonstrate an example of exporting a converted product whose benefits are especially for the producers.

However, we find considerable obstacles within the organization of the coffee market: coffee importers are often coffee toasters, and their clients prefer to buy from toasters of the same country for simplicity in terms of access to their products. A project such as this one needs to find new kinds of highly motivated clients who care a lot about the aspect of commercial exchange.

In addition, international legislation that manages the quality of converted products destined for exportation is made in such a way that it is very difficult to respond to requirements in countries of the South. But it is an important challenge that we want to overcome.

- **For a Fair Export Chain and Total Transparency**

Fair Trade Plus aims to minimize the amount of intermediaries in the export chain. However, fair trade has replaced intermediaries for 'fair' intermediaries, which still subtract a percentage from the final sale of the product.

It's about creating a chain of partners that share a critical view of neoliberal international trade and who participate in the struggle for the respect of human rights and the reduction of poverty. We would partner mainly because we share the same ideas and our involvement in constructing a world that is sovereign, fair, sustainable, and humane.

The CCDA proposes training workshops on Mayan crafts, where the women are in charge of the machines and of the materials that they need to prepare their goods. The women then sell their handicrafts in the local markets or to organizations in cooperation with the CCDA.



The Sale of Handicrafts

- wallets
- purses
- change purses
- bags used for packing coffee
- cushions
- bags used for horse feed
- eyeglass cases
- camera cases, etc.

The Support of Production Activities

The activities of the CCDA are not limited to the centralization, transformation or the sale of fair trade coffee. Thanks to the expert proposal and individualized advice, we continuously support the producers.

Additionally, we propose training workshops on new techniques favourable to the diversification of production. We also organize workshops that are increasingly sensitive to organic agriculture for conventional coffee producers. Thus, we present a program of technical support for the producers who support change.

Our food autonomy project also teaches mothers how to create gardens and how to distribute the necessary seeds. In the same program, we work on a fruit and vegetable conservation project that allows communities to consume their products at a lower cost throughout the year.



Use of the Benefits from the Sale of Coffee for Social Activities

A Social Program Affecting Families and Communities

In the hopes of bringing about global change for the current political situation, the CCDA intends to implement a more autonomous social organization of the communities.



• Education

In rural communities in Guatemala, there are usually a lot of obstacles for the daughters of peasant farmers in accessing education due to their economic conditions.

This is why we support:

- The daughters of the peasant farmers who were victims of the internal armed conflict
- Other orphans without parents
- The daughters of peasant farmers whose economic condition cannot cover the price of their studies, mainly due to the fact that the girls have to travel to cities in order to study

Our support aims to take care of:

- School fees
- Transportation
- School supplies
- Books and texts

- **Health**

The CCDA organizes workshops for disease prevention, it trains both health promoters and midwives, and it organizes conferences for medical treatment in several communities.



- **Introduction of Collective Infrastructures**

The CCDA implemented roads, drinkable water and electric energy in the town of Chitulul in Sololá, as well as the construction of a school in the community of El Esfuerzo in Suchitepéquez.

- **Constructing Homes**

After land recuperation, it is often difficult for families to acquire money for building houses. Therefore, the CCDA helps families to build their houses and it now has a new promotional project of sustainable homes built from local materials (stones, clay, tile, earth, bamboo, etc.). This type of construction is low-cost and it strengthens autonomy.

The Fight Against Discrimination

- **The Struggle of Women**

We have a program called “women's empowerment,” and, as the name suggests, it is a program aimed at empowering women. Therefore, our program's objective is to help women know their rights, especially in the case of domestic violence. Moreover, this strengthens their economic autonomy thanks to the distribution of micro-credits to finance their projects, or thanks to the formation and the creation of collective companies (for women), and thanks to the crafts project.

The objective of this program is to give political power to women, through their training in different workshops and their integration in our political activities.

- **The Struggle of the Indigenous People**

Through our political struggles, we integrate the indigenous population's situation to remember their social, economic and political discrimination, and the lack of recognition of their culture and the racism of which they are victims.

10 Good Reasons to Buy Café Justicia

- To support the political struggle for social change, global economics and politics, and for the reduction of inequality and poverty.
- To create international solidarity between alternative organizations of social and solidarity economy.
- To support the fight against cultural discrimination.
- To support the struggle for the empowerment of women in Guatemala.
- To defend more real and fair trade.
- To support the promotion of organic agriculture.
- To consume a product of great quality of taste that is also of high quality at the social and environmental levels.
- To support the strengthening of political economy and food security.
- To support the struggle for land access, and to promote rural development, respect for labour law, as well as respect for human rights in Guatemala.
- To allow more producers to join Café Justicia so they can gain access to fairer trade and higher living standards for Guatemalan farmers.