

WHAT IS RÍO ABIERTO SOLIDARITY?

“Reality is hitting us hard; let’s recover our Creative Power”.
María Adela Palcos

Arising from this nuclear idea of its founder, Río Abierto Solidarity is an area of the Río Abierto Foundation, Buenos Aires. Its main function is to elaborate and carry out programs of direct solidarity action in community organizations and Institutions.

Our principal aim: To recover and strengthen one’s Creative Power in order to overcome this reality that is hitting us hard as individuals, society and nation.

Instructor Viviana Britos is in charge of the coordination of this area. At present, two programs are being carried out:

- Camino Abierto
- Sol Naciente

Economic support for these programs comes from contributions of students from Río Abierto Buenos Aires, Río Abierto Italy and other centers worldwide.

Also, we should like to point out that all those who wish to participate in our work, through actions, ideas, or anything that they know how to do, are more than welcome to join us. Just come to our weekly meetings, Saturdays at 11.00 AM in our home quarters, Paraguay 4171, city of Buenos Aires.

HOW WAS IT BORN?

Moved by the critical situation of social and economic crisis in our country, in the month of May 2002, we began to collect clothes and foodstuffs in our home quarters of Río Abierto Buenos Aires to be taken to Institutions devoted to attending the most needy.

Then, on coming into contact with the painful Argentine reality, foreign students who came to further their instructor preparation here during the months of July and August 2002, before returning to their home countries, decided to donate money to Río Abierto Buenos Aires to be used in solidarity work.

At first, this work was limited to the purchase of foodstuffs, diapers and clothes that were taken to “Los caras sucias” directed by Monica Carranza.

Then, a large donation arrived from Italy to be used in furthering this solidarity work.

At that time, as always, our idea was not just to “bring things”, but rather to transcend charity action and go beyond, by generating actions that would lead to the setting up of local community work enterprises and fundamentally of finding a way to bring our work to the needy: vital expressive movement, work on oneself... the harmonious development of man.

Towards the end of October, thanks to Dolores Milberg, we were able to contact Lidia Hernandez who presides the Sol Naciente Soup Kitchen, located in the Neighborhood Arturo Illia, in the area of Bajo Flores, opposite Shanty Town 1, perhaps the largest and poorest in Buenos Aires.

First, Río Abierto collaborated with Sol Naciente in the installation and operating of a baker’s oven that enables the production of 75 kilos of bread every 25 minutes. Then, both institutions together proposed to go ahead with the idea of renting an unoccupied factory with the aim of setting up two spaces there:

- A Río Abierto Center: a space for us to work in what we do best, in what identifies us: life in movement... for the harmonious development of man
- A Home for single mothers and their babies which would support itself by means of its own diaper factory. To this end, a new machine for manufacturing diapers was donated.

Beds were also purchased, as well as mattresses and building materials to be used in the dwelling area for mothers and babies and contributions were made towards paying the rent of January, February and March. With additional contributions from our Argentine students, we are improving the floor of the large room, which will later be covered by donated linoleum. We have also received the donation of musical equipment and speakers.

Within this solidarity initiative, we have also contributed economically to another Institution that attends children: Camino Abierto.

These undertakings, based on the principles of social economics and on our belief in economic providence, show us that when love moves, dreams are neither so impossible nor so far away.

**Thank you, Italy... thank you Argentina
 Thank you to all those who are making this possible!**

At present, we have opened the initiative for a broad-spectrumed debate to help us define further direct action of Río Abierto Solidarity. To that end, we have been meeting every Wednesday at 8 PM in our Río Abierto home quarters during the month of February.

FEBRUARY 5th, 2003

For the first time in its history, Río Abierto founds "Río Abierto Solidarity".

We wish to share this with all:

This morning, early by our watches, those of us who could go, met at the doors of Río Abierto Buenos Aires: María Adela Palcos, Viviana Britos, María Lanata, Cristina Plante, María del Carmen Daidone, Alicia Santos, Roxana Cabut, Graciela Iglesias, Viviana Gilardi, María Inés Otero, Cristina Esposito, Graciela Guidi and Charito Alonso... We got into 4 cars and departed for the Bajo Flores area, near the San Lorenzo football stadium. Yes, we went to the Arturo Illia Neighborhood just opposite shanty town 1-11-14, the biggest and poorest in Buenos Aires.

And there, waiting for us, were all the people from the Sol Naciente Soup Kitchen.

At 9:00 AM we formed a circle, took hands, recognizing each other through our eyes; our energy and joy filled our meeting. María Adela Palcos on behalf of Río Abierto and Lidia Hernandez on behalf of Sol Naciente, said a few brief words, the initiative... they spoke little, just enough to set the foundation of this common shared time and space. And then it was movement, yes, our bodies in movement that became the real foundation ceremony: men, women and children, with or without embarrassment, with or without fear, with or without money, with or without work, meeting together through our bodies in movement, our energies, the music, sounds, the loving contact of massage, the mutual support of leaning back to back...

And now, on writing this, it strikes me that the very word solidario holds the key: SOL (SUN) i DA (GIVES) RIO (RIVER), Yes, yes... SOL (SUN) – RIO (RIVER) and DA (GIVES). Who gives to whom? All of us giving to all of us – yes, the sun giving to the river, the river giving to the sun and the river being re-born in the sun and the sun flowing within the open river Río Abierto...

When the class ended and before beginning the day's work, Manuel, a 10-year-old child, told us: "When I received the massage, I felt like I was flying, and ever since I was very little, I've always had the deepest wish to fly – and today for the first time, I could feel my wings"

**THANK-YOU SUN... THANK-YOU RIVER...
 THANK-YOU TO ALL WHO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE**

REFLECTIONS ON DIGNITY AMONG POTATOES, BREAD, BUTTONS AND SOY...

Today, February 22, 2003, we visited Sol Naciente Soup Kitchen again. Activity began with a class given by Viviana Britos.

We worked with massage and movement, children, men and women, teens and adults, came together and had a good time together. They enjoyed themselves moving their bodies, their smiles, their souls.

Later we all shared in the work for the day: some in the bakery, others in "The Clothes Closet"; others in the square with the children and others on the electric installations of the big room.

I could write many things that I thought, describe landscapes that I saw, paint emotions that I felt, draw expressions that I shared. Nevertheless, I prefer to remain with that wonderful feeling of fullness and plenitude that marked this encounter. And when I say encounter, I'm referring precisely to the word, the verb itself, to the concrete action of encountering. According to the dictionary: "to encounter" is "to come across something or someone that one has been looking for... to find that which was lost".

I must admit that this definition surprises me and makes me wonder about several things that I hadn't been aware of until this very moment, as I'm writing. What am I looking for? What are we all looking for? What did I find there that I thought I had lost?

Actually, I feel that I don't really know what I'm looking for; maybe I can begin to feel what it is through my skin, because I think the answer lies in what I found; I found a sun-filled landscape where I had expected a desolate one, extraordinary places contained within common places, corners where love blows along with the wind, part of the past and its markers. But, fundamentally, I believe I found an extraordinary sense of dignity (yes, that kind of dignity that seems to be insane just because it is so very sane); I came face to face with the dignity of poverty, that which is written on the skin and which enables one to face without a wince, those well-known eyes that gaze at us from the mirror. It's the dignity of those who do not exchange their roots for wings, of those who ask neither for a crust of bread nor fireworks. It's the dignity that dignifies, that dignity that is never mentioned nor published.

And then, returning to the banks of this River of Solidarity and feeling on my skin the warm rays of this immense Rising Sun (Sol Naciente), I can't help asking myself once again, who gives to whom?

Throughout the morning, the question that was heard again and again was: "When are you coming back?"

Our answer is our certainty: "We are a part of this. We have come to stay".