

The Inauguration of Wawa Munakuy Nursery-Kindergarten

• JoAnne Dennee and Joyce Gallardo

In early May of 2009 we had the good fortune to be present at the inauguration of Wawa Munakuy Nursery-Kindergarten (pronounced *Wa' wa Moo nah' koo wee*, meaning *for the love of the children* in Quechua, the indigenous language of Peru). As we crossed the beautifully decorated threshold that sun-drenched afternoon, the delicate aroma of calla lilies and native roses wafted in the air.

We gathered together in verse, song, and dance with parents, children, and friends to give thanks for the completion of the new building which would house Wawa Munakuy. The moment of dedication had arrived and the tones of indigenous instruments invited the procession of teachers and *niños* to enter the school. Adorned with flower crowns and dressed in native costume, the children were led by their teachers, heads dappled with flowers. Acknowledgements were made of the many friends worldwide without whose support this dream could not have come true. The Foundation Stone Meditation was read and we did the Hallelujah in eurythmy before the foundation stone was laid near the flower-bedecked arch of the portal to the kindergarten.

This beautiful new facility is part of El Proyecto Social Q'ewar (The Q'ewar Social Project), where high-quality Waldorf-inspired dolls are made by local indigenous women. In order to insure family security for the doll makers, a commitment was made to the care of their children as soon as the first baby was born. The nursery- and kindergarten-age children of the doll makers attend Wawa Munakuy in the morning, and their school-age children attend the after-school program, where tutoring and homework support is offered, as well as physical activity, movement, handwork, and music.

It took nearly 5,000 hand-made adobe bricks of mud and straw to build this new two-story home, topped with terra cotta roof-tiles, for Wawa Munakuy. Atop the tiles were placed crosses and flowers to gain the blessings of the gods of nature.

The construction was made possible thanks to increasing doll sales and two generous grants from a Swiss and a New Jersey-based foundation. The second story of the school will serve as a temporary transitional refuge for women and children suffering from domestic violence and for visiting teachers. Vilma, one of the doll makers, told us, "The Q'ewar Project has helped so many people. Here I know that I can work in a tranquil environment and my children are well cared for. It is not like this in other jobs. I cannot bring children with me to work."

The therapeutic process of doll making

The Q'ewar Project was initiated seven years ago by Peruvian native Julio Herrera Burgos, former high school art and sculpture teacher at the Waldorf School in Lima, Peru, and his wife, Evelina Lucila (Lucy) Terrazas in response to the poverty and homelessness in their community of Andahuaylillas. It would become an antidote to the common social ailments of extreme poverty, alcoholism, and malnutrition that plague *los pueblitos* and villages in the Province of Quispicanchi, to which Andahuaylillas belongs. The spiritual intention for the founding of the Project—the development of a social initiative based on compassion, respect, love, and brotherhood—is imbued with the impulse of Anthroposophy.

JoAnne, an early childhood educator at the Lake Champlain School in Vermont, has been a working advocate and supporter of the Project since the early days of its existence, when she responded to their request for marketing help for the dolls. Interest in the dolls grew and they are now sold all over the United States and abroad. JoAnne has continued to visit and work at the Q'ewar Project for two weeks each year since her first trip to Peru.

Working with the teachers and the children Joyce, who is bilingual, had been invited to spend a month at the Q'ewar Project to work with the four teachers of Wawa Munakuy, who are participating

in the Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training in South America. These women, all residents of Andahuaylillas and all former public school teachers, were becoming familiar with the Waldorf early childhood pedagogy, but needed guidance in implementing these practices in their daily work with the children. During the beginning years of the Project, mentoring was offered by JoAnne and many activities at Wawa Munakuy were put in place; communication, however, had been encumbered by a language difference and by translators who were not themselves Waldorf teachers.

Monday is “bread day,” and the children, with their teachers, prepare and bake in the wood-fired adobe bread oven enough whole wheat bread to feed each family. Wednesday is “bathing day” and the small children are bathed in tubs outdoors under the warmth of the morning sun in mountain spring water that has been heated by solar energy. A solar-heated hot water bath house for the children, women, and men was installed last year, thanks to a donation from Germany. The caregivers wash and rinse the children with loving, gentle hands and song. Warmly wrapped in fluffy hooded towels, the children, with shining, smiling faces, are rubbed dry sitting beside the wheat field where nodding golden seed heads gaily greet them. Their hair has been shampooed, combed, and de-loused, and the little girls’ long, dark hair will be braided by the nimble fingers of the caregivers.

The community

There is a strong sense of the community of an “extended family” here that surrounds the children at the Q’ewar Project. Each morning as the younger children came through the big green doors with their mothers, they are greeted by warm smiles and a cheerful “*Buenos dias, wawas!*” from the many workers (*wawa* is the Quechua word for child). This place is like a second home to these little ones, who are one-and-a-half to three-and-a-half years old; their mothers came to work here each day while they were pregnant with the same little ones.

This sense of responsibility to the well being of all amongst the workers and children of the Project was reflected in a later conversation with Vilma, “Julio and Lucy have always told us that we needed to work together like a family and that is why I very proudly call them ‘Papa’ Julio and ‘Mama’ Lucy, since I do not have a mother or father. I feel that everyone has to support each other like a family, not only to be

concerned for my own family or my own situation. When it rains, it rains for everyone. When the sun shines, it shines for everyone.”

Establishing a healthy rhythm

As we worked together with the teachers of Wawa Munakuy to establish a healthy rhythm, each morning after greeting the children we would walk through the biodynamic gardens and along the edge of the *chacra* (corn field) where we collected ears of corn wrapped in dry leaves to make corn dollies, past the peach and avocado trees, stopping to pick flowers, or to examine seed pods that had fallen to the ground, and play in the shade of *el arbol grande* (the big sheltering tree) in the flower garden that overlooked the terraced wheat field. One morning little Christian, who was just three, dreamily watched the sunlight dancing on the leaves of the tree. He hugged its trunk and discovered that he could pull himself up to a crook where two branches met. There he sat, legs dangling, just two feet off the ground, waving at us and grinning gaily at his accomplishment.

Later, skipping happily up the steep, uneven path to the herb garden, the children carried little baskets in which they would collect chamomile or mint for tea to drink with their hot organic morning meal. The table in the kindergarten was set and decorated with flowers from the garden, the candle was lit, and a simple blessing was sung in Spanish:

*O, angel mio, guardian tan fino,
Noche y dia, tarde y temprano,
Llevame a la puerta del cielo,
O, angel mio*

“Oh, angel mine, guardian so fine; night and day, early and late; lead me until I reach heaven’s gate. Oh, angel mine.” This was followed by a verse:

*Tierra, esto tu gracia nos dio,
Sol, esto tu luz maduro.
Sol y tierra bien amados,
Nunca series olvidados.*

“Earth, who gives to us this food, sun who makes it ripe and good, Dearest Earth and dearest sun, we’ll not forget what you have done.”

The children ate heartily of the warm food. Shortly after the meal, one of the mothers who was working nearby came in to change her child’s diaper. The two younger children, who were tucked into their little beds in the corner of the room, were

soon sleeping peacefully. The older children played indoors and out. Songs and finger games, simple nature crafts, and free play filled the rest of the morning. The mothers appeared at lunch and *siesta* time, tucked their little ones into *mantas* and carried them home safely on their backs down the long, steep hill. “*Adios! Hasta la tarde!*”

The after-school program

After lunch and *siesta* the older children, who attend school in the village, begin arriving. Their homework load is a concern for them and for their parents, many of whom are unable to help their children due to their own lack of education. Thus they look to the teachers at Wawa Munakuy for support. Physical activity and purposeful movement before starting homework is encouraged, and carefully thought-out activities enhance gross motor development and balance in the children.

Jump rope and circle games are joyful alternatives to sitting behind a desk reading and writing. The children are drawn to the big llama rope spirals that have been laid out on the ground and walk forward and backward, in and out, through each spiral path. This can be a real challenge for some. A “ladder” of bamboo sticks which has been laid out invites hopping, side-stepping, forward and backward stepping, hopping on one foot. Soon the giggles and laughter of children engaged in purposeful and playful movement fill the courtyard.

We bring the play and movement to a closure with the bean bag toss, when we form a large circle and greet each other in song: “*Buenas tardes, Adriana! Buenas tardes, Sra. Joyce! Buenas tardes, Abel! Buenas tardes, Sra. Joyce!*” In this toss of the bean bag and the greeting of each other, the child is met in his unique individuality; eye contact is made, and then comes the moment of the recognition of the “I” in the other. This is always a significant moment for the child. Now with light hearts and clear minds the homework can finally begin.

When homework has been done, colorful baskets of wool yarn invite the children to work on knitting projects, some alone, with able fingers, others with help from their teachers, while their mothers skillfully knit doll clothing in the nearby knitting workshop. Knitting is a favorite activity of all the children; the younger ones can finger-knit. Finally, a hearty warm snack prepared by the teachers is served.

This afternoon we would celebrate Emanuel’s

second birthday with a birthday circle in the patio with all thirty-two children of Wawa Munakuy. Emanuel was glowing, wearing the golden silk birthday cape and gold crown. He was the tiny “prince” as we sang,

*Arroz con leche, se quiere casar...
Yo soy el principe, el hijo del rey,
quiero casarme, pero no encuentro con quien.*

“Rice with milk, he wants to marry... I am the prince, the son of the king, I want to marry, but I don’t know with whom.” The “prince” chooses his “princess” and holding his teacher’s hand, they weave in and out of the circle as we sing, “*Arroz con leche...*”

During the month Joyce was there, three joyful birthdays were celebrated at Wawa Munakuy, with crown, cape and birthday circle song, followed by a lovely birthday cake made with sweet corn meal ground from corn from the *chacra* and decorated with an array of colorful flowers from the garden. With Emanuel’s birthday celebration, the children’s day at Wawa Munakuy has come to a close—it is time to go home.

The mothers are finished with their doll-making tasks for the day and come to fetch their children. “*Buenas tardes. Hasta manana!*” The children come to each of their teachers to hug them and to say good-bye. So many lovely children to hug! At last, mothers and children weave their way back down the steep, bumpy road to home in the village, filling the oncoming dusk with their lively, happy chatter and laughter.

Special preparations for La Pachamama (Mother Earth)

In between daily pedagogical meetings with the teachers of Wawa Munakuy, weekly meetings with the whole Q’ewar community on the possible economic crisis they would face due to a decrease in doll orders, weekly meetings with the mothers on Waldorf education, and the many preparations for the inauguration of the new kindergarten building, we made and spread preparations for healing the earth in and around the Project, with the intention of helping to transform and create new elemental beings who are in the service of the Christ through our work.

Our further intention was to recognize and show our appreciation for the elementals, the nature spirits, and the Christ in Nature by offering a potentized healing preparation of several

special substances: gold, silver, copper, red rose petals, ground corn, silica, sunflower, rose quartz, frankincense, myrrh, cinnabar and aurum hypericum to *La Pachamama*. (It was possible to make this potentized healing preparation for the Q'ewar Project thanks to Dr. Basil Williams, who has been working for more than twelve years with these substances to heal the earth. He generously gifted us the minerals, the frankincense and the myrrh for the making of the preparation in Peru.) We also made and spread the bio-dynamic Barrel Compost preparation on the gardens and fields of the Project.

Human brotherhood

Our visit to El Proyecto Social Q'ewar was drawing to a close. There would not be a day after we returned home that we would not remember an experience we had had or a child, woman or man with whom we had made a special heart connection—each of them is implanted as a treasure in our souls. It was an honor to live with, to work and play, to laugh and cry with all of the wonderful people of the Project. What we witnessed here in this *pueblito* of Andahuaylillas, tucked quietly away in a peaceful valley of the Andes Mountains of Peru, is in the truest sense the *human brotherhood* of which Rudolf Steiner spoke when he said that human beings have been too long separated and ought to become socialized in brotherhood. “It must depend upon the human will to determine how brotherhood shall be awakened among men” (*The Challenge of the Times*, Anthroposophic Press, 1941, p. 177-178). The founders of the Q'ewar Project, through their unshakeable dedication and Michaelic deeds, have found the will forces to foster and develop *human brotherhood* as the basis of the social life here, out of

which were born the seeds of Waldorf education.

The effect of the world-wide economic crisis on the Project

Unfortunately, the Q'ewar Social Project, which needs to be recognized and supported as a valid representation of the Anthroposophical impulse in the world, has deeply felt the effects of the world-wide economic and financial crises. The development of a broader world market for the dolls will be essential in order to bring the Q'ewar Social Project soundly into the future. If you be moved by their story and would like to buy or sell these high-quality dolls, solicit or contribute donations, or have any suggestions, we would be very grateful. Please contact JoAnne Dennee, at earthheart@madriver.com or call 802-425-4185.

JoAnne Dennee is an early childhood educator at the Lake Champlain Waldorf School who is dedicated to giving love to the children in Vermont and Peru. She has written three books on gardening and nature curriculum. JoAnne has served as the Q'ewar Project's advocate and USA distributor for their beautiful dolls to be viewed at www.qewar.com

Joyce Gallardo is an early childhood educator and mentor. Joyce is the director of Los Amiguitos, a family day care home, where she works out of the insights of Waldorf early childhood education, offering a kindergarten-nursery program that is enriched by the work of Emmi Pikler. She has worked with children internationally in Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. Joyce graduated in August 2009 from the Spacial Dynamics Training Program.

