



Putis, Peru: 24 Years of Waiting

It was near the beginning of the 20 years of internal violence that Peru suffered when the campesinos of the hamlet towns of Cayramayo, Vizcatánpata, Orccohuasi and Putis in Ayacucho province fled to the mountains for safety. The Shining Path had been terrorizing their villages, so to protect their families, they hid. Then the military moved in. Finding the citizens' hiding in the mountains, they convinced the campesinos that it was safe to come to Putis; they would be protected there. There was work for them to do as well as trout beds were going to be put in and holes needed to be dug. Many of the people went, bringing their wives and children with them. And they dug. And when they were finished, the 123 men,

women, and children were forced into the holes, showered with machine gun fire, and buried.

There they lay, hidden but not forgotten, until May of 2008 when EPAF (Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team) began the exhumation of the mass graves in Putis. Around 50 family members watched and waited; hoping for a shoe or a scrap of clothing that could identify a loved one. Five mass graves have been found, the largest of which contained the skeletons of 60 people, and the remains of ten more. With the support of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the team returned in June to finish the job.

On Wednesday, December 10, days before the 24 year anniversary of the massacre, 60 people gathered in front

of the Justice Building in Lima to ask a question of the ministry of defense; a simple question that has been waiting 24 years for an answer. What are the real names of the military officials responsible for the massacre that took place on December 13, 1984 in Putis, Peru? As of now, the government is using nicknames to disguise the true identities of those people being investigated, and the military claims any paperwork from the time was destroyed in a fire. With the help of human rights and social advocacy organizations like Peace and Hope, the campaign requesting the release of the names of those being investigated for human rights abuses will not stop until the names are released.

<http://www.justiciaparaputis.org>

Dear Readers,
Hello Hello and Happy Holiday Season! I hope this issue, albeit short and sweet, finds you and yours in good spirits. This new year is sure to be adventure filled as the other YAVs and myself will be spending the better part of the holidays in Cusco and then traveling around the southern half of Peru. In the new year, we have many exciting things to look forward to; the Second Annual Environmental Youth Conference to be held in Huancavelica, youth summer camps in Huanuco, and the General Assembly of the Joining Hands Network. But for a moment, I want to pause and say thank you. Thank you for reading LaRetama. Thank you for caring about Peru and what happens here. Thank you for being concerned and aware. We need more people in the world like you. Not everyone has the opportunity to spend time in another country, but we all have the opportunity to care and do our part to make a difference, so thank you for that.

Con Cariño, katie rains

Youth Gather to Share Ideas and Impacts

For the first time since 1997, twelve youth (ages 16-32) representing five different institutions of the Joining Hands Network Peru, came together to update the youth manual for human rights. The manual serves two purposes. First, to teach the involved youth what human rights are and what human rights they have. The second part of the manual includes program ideas about how to teach others those same principles.

The youth had the opportunity to share what they have been busy doing with their institutions this past year. In Huancavelica, they have been recycling paper and plastic bottles into flower vases and keychains. Dia del Pueblo is working on preserving forest in Lomas. Youth in Huancayo are teaching factory workers what their rights are.

In between each presentation, they shared dynamic get to know you games, not only building their leadership skills, but also improving relationships with each other. Most importantly, they all committed to work to improve life for all in Peru.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!