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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

TRANSNATIONAL CONCERN AND MULTI-CULTURAL CARE: A CASE  
STUDY OF CASA DE MILAGROS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

MORGAN MCKIBBEN

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2009

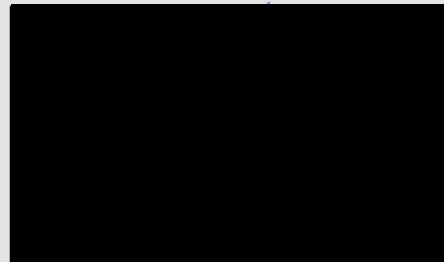


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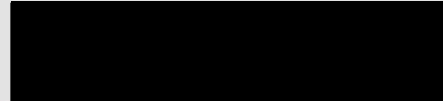
TRANSNATIONAL CONCERN AND MULTI-CULTURAL CARE: A CASE  
STUDY OF CASA DE MILAGROS

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

BY



Dr. Laurel Smith, Chair



Dr. Karl Offen



Dr. Fred Shelley



This thesis is dedicated to my supportive and loving mother and father, who have cultivated my motivations in life,

To the Casa de Milagros family for opening up their hearts and home to me,

And in loving memory of Brandon L. Krpec

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## Abstract

An eclectic social advocacy network--comprised of national and international grassroots actors, advocacy tourists, and celebrity advocates--operates across national borders to sustain Casa de Milagros, a home for indigenous children in the Sacred Valley of Peru. Emotions fuel the long-distance support that makes this home possible. This conglomeration of transnational advocates, together with the indigenous on-site care providers, collaborates on the provision of multi-cultural care for previously abandoned children. Qualitative fieldwork gave me a sense of the geographies of multi-cultural care practiced at Casa de Milagros, and this thesis examines some multifarious associated impacts. I investigate globalizing forces that have led to risky mobilities in the Sacred Valley, and how Casa de Milagros offers an alternative model to traditional survival strategies, such as child circulation. Central to Casa de Milagros tactics are the ways in which their children shape—and are shaped by—their emotional experiences. I explore how Casa de Milagros aims to offer a different cultural framework for hope and to recognize and reconfigure the children's socio-spatial relationships.

## Chapter 1 Introduction: Casa de Milagros' Multi-Cultural Care

The purpose of this study is to consider how one transnational advocacy organization attends to the plight of impoverished children with little hope of avoiding living on the streets in Cusco, Peru. For a month, I participated in and explored daily life at *Casa de Milagros* (House of Miracles), a home for indigenous Peruvian children. Casa de Milagros was established by American expatriates who continue to run its administration with the help of employees from nearby Quechua indigenous communities.

Casa de Milagros is located in the rural Sacred Valley of southeastern Peru. It is a 35—minute walk down a dirt road from the bus stop in the small town of Lamay. Alpacas, llamas, and various other livestock graze on the dried corn fields that line the road as it winds among the Andes along the Vilcanota River (see Figure 1.1). Casa de Milagros is about a two--hour train ride from Machu Picchu, and a 30 minute bus ride from Pisac, a well-visited Andean market (see Figure 1.2). Pisac is about an hour bus ride from Cusco, the historic capital of the Inca Empire. Cusco is around 30 miles from Casa de Milagros, but takes about an hour and a half by bus because the roads climb the rugged Andes.



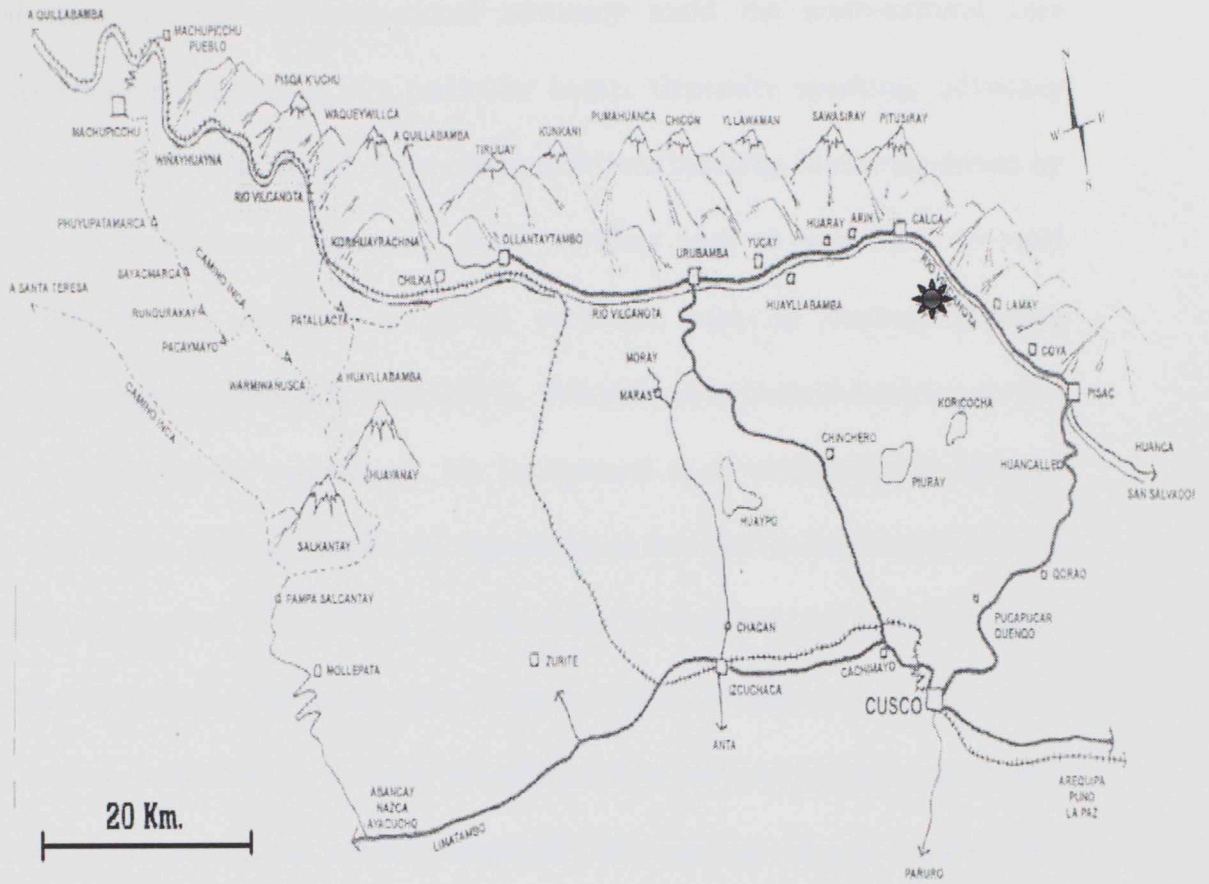


Figure 1.1 Map of Rural Sacred Valley 2009. <http://www.cusco.net/maps/sacredv.htm>



Figure 1.2 Pisac Market. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

In addition to providing refuge for children abandoned at its door, Casa de Milagros offers food and lodging for tourists and volunteers. During my stay, I

examined how currents of transnational advocacy mold the multi-cultural care indigenous children receive in this particular home. Generally speaking, advocacy tourists view themselves as global environmental citizens pursuing itineraries driven by ecological and humanitarian concerns. Such travelers seek to contribute to—and advocate for—ethical solutions to global problems such as community-based sustainable development (Waite & Cook 2007). When I was in Central America several years ago I sought similar experiences. My background as an environmental educator working with at-risk children shaped my agenda back then and it continues to inform my research and analysis today. Since I cannot shake my concerns and commitments, I visited Casa de Milagros as an advocacy tourist *and* as an academic. I felt, and I continue to feel, compelled to research the intersections between children, advocacy, and tourism. I am aware that tourism negatively impacts individuals, communities, economies, and cultures in complex ways, but that it also harbors potential for multi-cultural understandings, care, and economic opportunity. As an academic, I remain dedicated to continuously becoming more knowledgeable of the harm tourism can do, and aim to practice an informed method of traveling and conducting fieldwork.

Other people felt emotionally compelled to visit and volunteer at Casa de Milagros when also drawn to the cultural and historical appeal of the surrounding area. These visitors assist with the home's sustainably designed organic gardens and play with the children. They bathe and wash clothes in spring water routed from the mountainside and sleep in quarters built of adobe, local eucalyptus, leather, and bamboo (Figures 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5).





**Figure 1.3** Casa de Milagros garden. Photo by Morgan McKibben.



**Figure 1.4** Volunteer washing clothes. Photo by Morgan McKibben.



**Figure 1.5** Volunteer washing clothes. Photo by a Casa de Milagros child.

Some volunteers also participate in Casa de Milagros' community-outreach projects undertaken in nearby towns and villages. Unsurprisingly, the efforts and aims of these advocacy tourists intersect with the initiatives and agendas of a collection of other

similarly committed grassroots, national and international actors and organizations. These multiple layers of advocacy assure Casa de Milagros' success.

Scholars refer to young children's mobility—or their placement into relative's homes, state institutions, and/or adoptive families—as “child circulation,” whereby the child's “material, moral, and relational responsibilities” are transformed as the child physically moves (Leinaweaver 2008b, 3). Because the children who have come to live at Casa de Milagros have endured tremendous emotional trauma as well as economic hardship, Casa de Milagros' administrators and employees strive to provide a stable home and a brighter future. Their endeavors both recognize and reconfigure the children's previous socio-spatial relationships. On the one hand, every effort is made to promote the children's abilities to facilitate emotional safety for each other. And on the other hand, Casa de Milagros' administrators have adopted all their children into one big family which challenges a traditional survival strategy of circulating children among households. They do so because they see child circulation as unstable for the children's emotional well being. This study explores Casa de Milagros' multi-cultural approach and associated best practices. I am interested in children's individuality, identity, and adaptability to the global forces impacting their lives and by extension indigenous populations more broadly.

Researching solutions to the overwhelming existence of street children is essential, especially in Latin America where 40% of the world's street-dwelling children reside (Southern Cross Humanitarian 2008). My study explores the impact of globalization and development on a community of rural and indigenous Peruvian children, and the ways in which a few transnational actors mobilize an alternative



strategy to those offered by the Peruvian state or the Catholic Church. Drawing from my fieldwork spent in the Sacred Valley at Casa de Milagros during the summer of 2008, and in order to situate Casa de Milagros and to study the multi-cultural care provided there, this thesis focuses on three 3 key geographical lessons: 1) the vital importance of celebrity advocacy to Casa de Milagros, 2) transnational ties forged and fortified through emotional motivation, and 3) Casa de Milagros' practice of stopping child circulation in the Peruvian highlands and (some) associated impacts.

### **Thesis Roadmap: Chapter Breakdown**

Following this introduction, Chapter Two theoretically examines two themes: children's geographies and emotional geographies. I look at how perceptions of children have historically shifted, which leads to a discussion about how geographers currently approach children and childhood. Then, I situate my study in geographical research and explore recent theorizations of emotional geographies. I also detail my methodology for studying the emotional geographies of children and of activists who advocate for others. That is to say I identify and describe the research methods I utilize and address my theoretical reasons for doing so.

Then in Chapter Three, I situate my study geographically. Focusing especially on the Peruvian countryside, I examine some historical and contemporary situations shaping indigenous children's lives and livelihoods. This overview illustrates some political and globalizing forces impacting indigenous people of the Sacred Valley. I concentrate on the ways in which indigenous communities cope with impoverishment, oppression, and discrimination.

Casa de Milagros is largely funded by actors, musicians, and others who work in the entertainment industries centered in Southern California. Chapter Four explores the emergence of Casa de Milagros, examining the establishment and maintenance of its linkages to celebrities and handlers. I begin by reviewing theories of celebrity advocacy and the unsettling influence celebrities increasingly have. Then I apply this framework to discuss Woody Harrelson, who is a key actor in the transnational connections that catalyzed and continue to sustain Casa de Milagros.

Advocacy tourists also play a role in Casa de Milagros. Chapter Five begins by exploring recent theories about the emotional components of tourism, transnational community development opportunities, and the ways in which “Westerners” often perceive and are perceived by *others* living in the Global South. Additionally, Chapter Five includes my observations about tourist/resident encounters at Casa de Milagros.

An interpretation of the geographies of emotion, care, and concern prevalent at Casa de Milagros comprises chapter six. Here I detail and discuss the goals, values, and practices of Casa de Milagros, and consider how these impact the children residing there. I pay particular attention to the ways in which the directors of Casa de Milagros design their home along communal lines and the care it provides the children. I also outline the directors’ visions for the children’s futures and current strategies they undertake to make those a reality. Finally, I differentiate between the Western clinical approach to emotional trauma and Casa de Milagros’ alternative approach to fostering emotional well-being for their children.

I conclude by briefly summarizing my central concepts and research findings. I also reflect upon my perceptions of the impact Casa de Milagros has on the indigenous



children living there. Particular attention is paid to their multi-cultural model, and the ways it benefits and hinders their aims (according to my research findings). Finally, I discuss some of the shortcomings of my research project, and suggest strategies for bridging the gaps. I address some broader theoretical questions that have emerged from this study. For example, I question who benefits from research dedicated to social movements, how to articulate emotions that catalyze advocacy, and for what reasons we conduct research. Particularly, I am interested in exploring how an academic can influence the livelihoods of children.

### **Critical Praxis: Theory, Reflection, Practice, and Action**

Critical (theoretically informed) praxis—practice that seeks to redress inequalities—informs the type of research I wish to conduct and the lifestyle I choose to lead. Weaving theory/reflection with practice/action, I aim to investigate how the world is and how it could be while acting on my convictions both professionally and personally. Like Sarah Wakefield (2007), I intend for my research to reach minds and lives within and *beyond* academia.

Wakefield links critical theory to praxis in geography to her own involvement in the Food Movement in Canada. She argues that research and practice are co-constituted inside and outside the academy. This is important! Food security has long been a concern among marginalized people throughout the world, as well as the scholars, policy makers, and activists who seek to redress this unevenness by drawing attention to it and proposing alternatives. Increasingly, scholars emphasize the dire lack of environmental sustainability in a food production system fueled by chemicals, gasoline, and genetic modification. Working together (sometimes awkwardly, sometimes not),

scholars and activists confront the globalized corporate industrial model of agriculture that treat its workers unfairly, its animals inhumanely, and the environment poorly. Anti-poverty and environmental activism join forces with academic scholarship as access to sustainable, wholesome food becomes an environmental justice issue (Wakefield 2007).

Wakefield discusses how her community engagements require her fostering relationships with social and environmental activists, service provider activists, students, and other academics (Wakefield 2007). I too cultivate relationships with similar sorts of people in my studies and in my life more broadly. Reflecting on theory and the ability of research to initiate change, Wakefield questions the extent to which we refine theory at the expense of action. She notes that this helps explain why community-based activists are often skeptical of academic inquiry. Because I have experienced both perspectives, a community activist and a researcher, I refuse the either-or perception by acting on my convictions. Like Wakefield, I recognize the importance of staying connected to the issues one seeks to influence, rather than theorizing them from a distance (Wakefield 2007, 348). Specifically, I hope to stay connected personally with the directors of Casa de Milagros and children living there. I also want to be a microphone for Casa de Milagros, magnifying this organization by making it visible to others seeking to establish similar or intersecting projects. And yet as a scholar I cannot help but notice the organization's shortcomings as well. Nonetheless, I have begun advocating for Casa de Milagros by bringing it to the attention of the Whole Foods' Whole Planet Foundation, which aspires to do the following:



Through innovative assistance for entrepreneurship - including direct microcredit loans and tangible support for other community partnership projects - we seek to unleash energy and creativity of every human being we work with in order to create wealth and prosperity in emerging economies. Microcredit loans are small loans - usually \$300 or less - requiring no collateral or contract. (<http://www.wholeplanetfoundation.org/>)

Whole Planet Foundation seeks to establish microcredit loans in emerging economies throughout the world. It also organizes volunteer groups to visit the area and support community projects initiated with these loans. I am currently working with the directors of Casa de Milagros and the Whole Planet Foundation's Director of Partnership Development and Internal Programs to organize and recruit aid for Casa de Milagros' soup kitchen, garden education program, and summer school. We want to ensure the volunteers speak Spanish because, as we will see later, language barriers create distance between volunteers and local citizens, which often contributes to individualized experiences that neglect the experiences of the *others*.

Wakefield also explains how working in partnership with marginalized people can generate strong feelings of fellowship (Wakefield 2007, 349). She suggests that praxis, at its best, serves to bridge the gap between academics and *others*, so that the oppressed are no longer distant strangers but colleagues and companions. This conviction shapes my current research project. I explore how international partnerships between the Global North and South can create more equality between those caring and those *being* cared for (Silk 2004, 229). My case study illustrates one small network of layered emotions across national borders. The activists who initiated Casa de Milagros have fostered familial ties with the children who have found them. The constant flow of transnational advocates crossing borders seek to physically contribute as opposed to clicking their mouse to make a financial donation for someone they will never



encounter. Community participation can help break down the inside vs. outside barriers, both inside/outside the academy, and inside/outside the Global South (Wakefield 2007).

## **Chapter 2 Agency: For Adults Only?**

Conceptualizations of children and childhood have changed over the course of history. It is important to examine how children are represented to prevent them from becoming commodified, and scholars recognize the dynamic nature of considering childhood. Drawing from the work of Gill Valentine, in this chapter I briefly examine how Euro-American perceptions of children have changed historically. Next, I discuss how geographers currently approach children and childhood. Then, I explore recent theorizations of emotional geographies, and situate my study accordingly. Finally, I discuss my research methodology for studying emotional geographies of advocacy and care.

### **Invisible Voices: Shifting Constructions of Childhood**

In her article, “Angels and Devils: Moral Landscapes of Childhood” Gill Valentine traces some of the historical debates concerning the dominant Western constructions of childhood. Her review focuses on oscillations between representations of children as bearers of sin and as innocent angels, and draws out key arguments that have characterized sundry perceptions of what it means to be a child. Valentine discusses the work of Philip Aries (1962), “perhaps the most famous child historian” (Valentine 1996, 583). Aries argues that during the Middle Ages children were regarded as “miniature adults” (Gagen 2004, 404; Valentine 1996, 583) rather than as categorically different from adults. Therefore, no special provisions were made for children. They were expected to assume adult responsibilities once they demonstrated sufficient competency and rational capabilities. Gradually, meanings of childhood

evolved to distinguish children as a class distinct from adults. Given the historical shifts, Valentine argues that “childhood is therefore an invention” (ibid.).

Historians have argued that prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, children were seen as savages who could be morphed through society’s corporal punishment into redeemable entities. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a group of academics known as the Cambridge Platonists proposed a reevaluation of childhood, claiming an ‘innate goodness’ exceeding even the “notion of the innocent baptized child” (583). Philosopher John Locke resisted claims that children were inherently good. He argued that the child is “a blank piece of paper, as neutral and without morals, so that in effect, children could be molded by parents and education” (ibid.). According to this perspective, parents were accountable for the types of influences to which their children were exposed (ibid.).

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the nature and meaning of childhood was debated. Some contested the pro-child lobby, such as conservative writers who challenged notions of children’s rights and sought to establish an “ordered society” (583). Others were persuaded by emerging novelists and poets who romanticized innate innocence (e.g., Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth) (ibid). Over time, children were thought to enter the world as angelic, flawless, pristine creatures prone to violation by a corrupt society. Carrying over into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and accompanied by brutal exploitations of child labor in factories, this elite conceptualization became tied to class. The view that society contaminated children’s spirits led increasingly concerned middle-class reformers to seek to regulate child labor. In addition to the need and desire to nurture and conserve children as a natural resource, fears of social instability fueled their endeavors. The predominant solution to hindering “dangerous classes” from spreading



their malignant tendencies was education, which was seen to promote discipline and respect within working class children (Valentine 1996, 584).

Entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the family, and particularly mothers, were seen as the cornerstone to the development and well-being of children. This imagining conceptualized children as incompetent and dependent and viewed childhood as free of responsibility; however, this idealism was rarely experienced in reality. In fact, the grave inconsistencies experienced by many, such as poverty, abandonment, illness, and malnutrition have prevented children from experiencing this privilege of a time of innocence and dependence (Valentine 1996). Again, notions of class configured constructions of childhood and children.

### **Feminist Geographers Reconsider Children**

Twenty-first century scholars have shifted from viewing children as 'incomplete' to accepting children's roles in shaping culture and identity (Gooskens 2006; Gagen 2004; Valentine 1996). Scholars now argue for the acknowledgement of children as dynamic social agents who help create society through interactions with other children and adults, as opposed to passively receiving 'adult' knowledge (Gooskens 2006; Ferguson 2007; Valentine 1996; Leinaweaver 2007a; Gagen 2004). Academics are increasingly studying children as individuals with the agency to make competent decisions and participate creatively in social life. Informed by feminist methodologies, this new angle of analysis entails conducting work *with* children instead of *on* them so as to produce more accurate accounts of their lives. As an academic response to how children have been seen as the 'other,' such research aims to break

down adult-child distinctions. Furthermore, researchers adopting this approach suggest that scholarly representations of children openly acknowledge childhood as ultimately unknowable (Gagen 2004).

This questioning of time-honored dichotomies is central to feminist geographies (Rose 1997). Feminist geographers advocate for a dismantling of binary categories. For example, recent work assesses the spaces historically identified as appropriate for children to occupy. Traditionally the home, under the care of women, was seen as the *proper* place for children. Thus, recent debates have emerged around the assumption that if the home is deemed 'proper,' then the street is clearly 'improper.' This either-or opposition categorizes children with a familiar formula: innocent and corrupt. Child identity is, in many ways, constituted by positionality, and such a constitution of childhood spaces influences the ways in which space is perceived and experienced (Rose 1997; Gagen 2004).

Given my experience working with at-risk children as an environmental educator, the socio-spatial relationships of street children are of particular interest to me. The term 'street children' encompasses "those for whom the street more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults" (Ennew 1994, 15). UNICEF further differentiates "home based" street children (or "on the street"), as those who work or beg on the streets daily but have a structure of support to return to at night, and "street based" children (or "of the street"), who are homeless with no foundation of support (Scanlon et al 1998; UNICEF 2008). Many recent researchers see this as a problematic classification with elusive gray areas. This binary categorization is too simplistic and



does not portray their actual lives or account for varying situations. Children likely traverse between categories often, and the definitions were manipulated to serve the agendas of funding and welfare agencies (Panter-Brick 2004, 84; UNICEF 2008). Research concerning homelessness and poverty has shifted focus from the street to the children themselves, thereby attending more intimately to individual experiences and to the children's thoughts on their own adversity (Panter-Brick 2004, 84).

Imke Gooskens (2006) conducted research in South Africa, studying the role of children within society, their racial identities, and their experiences of diversity and integration. Gooskens hones in on South African children's interactions with their physical and social environment, paying close attention to the ways they talk about racial classifications. This allows her to better understand children's roles in "creating new ways of being within a rapidly changing society" (Gooskens 2006, 138). She examines global forces by exploring individual children's lives in South Africa. There is a common differentiation between globally focused studies—or those examining the global shaping mechanisms of children's position in different societies around the world—and locally concerned projects—those illustrating children's role in creating their own cultures and 'lifeworlds' (Holloway 2004). At the forefront are feminist geographers (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Katz 2004; Gagen 2004; Valentine 1996) who, again, refuse to work with binary categories and view global and local as interlaced in practice.

Cindi Katz's work is widely celebrated for refusing the polarization of global and local, preferring instead to emphasize the local repercussions of global processes of change (Katz 2004). By exploring global change through the perspective of children's

lives, Katz (2004) demonstrates how the effects of social, environmental, and political shifts shape the material and social practices of childhood. Her research follows several Sudanese children, examining strategies of reworking, resilience, and resistance that they often employ in the face of development and change. She juxtaposes children's relationships with capital globalism in Howa, Sudan with the experiences of children in New York City. By examining the effects in both locales, she argues that there are global and abstract sensitivities that must be challenged with mobile and abstract alternative politics. She presents a "countertopography" as one such mobilization in the hopes that it invigorates "the sort of political imagination able to counter the disabling effects of global capitalism" (Katz 2004, 259). Katz studies a variety of knowledges about work: what parents share with their children, what children have learned on their own, and what they encounter in more formal contexts. In both places she found many children to be unprepared for their futures. In Sudan, children were trained and skilled in agricultural labor and yet had no future access to land. In NYC, working-class children were ill-equipped for their futures due to economic restructuring (2004, 179). Accounting for children's displacements within a transitioning agricultural to industrial economy, and also within an industrial to postindustrial economy, Katz illustrates the structural similarities and differences of their coexistence, revealing the intertwined consequences of capital globalism. In Howa, she explains how "environmental knowledge is practical knowledge" (2004, 60-62). Such knowledge, according to Katz, includes awareness of local terrain, land-use practices, and local resources. She illustrates how such environmental knowledge, acquired and implemented through



children's work and play, was critical to both the continuation of the village and the children's transformation into adulthood (2004, 60).

Peter Nabhan and Stephen Trimble (1994) emphasize children's need for wilderness, offering geographical evidence of the profound effects that natural plants, wild animals, and open spaces have on childhood development. According to Nabhan and Trimble, these experiences enable children's comprehension of the spaces in which they live. They suggest that connections with nature can foster lasting attachments to the earth, and, in turn, nurture self-esteem. In today's world, experiences in nature are increasingly considered a luxury rather than an essential human need. Many have no time to familiarize themselves ecologically, because they are consumed by other taxonomies regarded as more critical to survival. For example, Nabhan and Trimble ask us to consider a PBS interview taken in the midst of the Los Angeles riots of 1992. One adolescent listed multiple automatic weapons used on the streets of south-central L.A., identifying each by sound. He did not see this as unusual in the context of his peers, expressing their knowledge as a necessity since these were the sounds of his experiences and existence. "In another place and time, he would have spoken as matter-of-factly about the six common species of hawks and owls" (Nabhan & Trimble 1994, xiii).

While the majority of their book calls for fortifying wilderness awareness among children in the West, they extend their argument to experiences of indigenous children in rural Mexico. Nabhan and Trimble discuss these children's ecological literacy via communal generational storytelling, whereby metaphors are used as vehicles for interpreting human behaviors and means for self-expression; for example,

“to be lazy or lascivious like a coyote, to stand firm like a stalwart saguaro cactus, to be distant and uncontrollable like a mountain sheep” (Nabhan & Trimble 1994, 84). While many children still have access to oral traditions, modernity is disrupting such practices. The authors mention globalizing forces such as television, formal education in a classroom, and urban migration, mainly focusing on television (Nabhan & Trimble 1994). Their fieldwork demonstrates that children predominantly acquire environmental knowledge from books and films as opposed to direct contact with nature (87). Nabhan and Trimble also briefly touch upon the dangers of the globalized food production system in separating native people from their traditional foods. They study children’s farm life in the United States, comparing their environmental knowledge of undomesticated versus domesticated livestock and other species (Nabhan & Trimble 1994, 112).

This topic deserves far more attention. An understanding of where our food comes from is a crucial aspect to familiarity with one’s environment. Furthermore, what about the rural children in the Sacred Valley of Peru, whose diet consists predominantly of locally grown and raised constituents? Many of the indigenous children living in the rural Sacred Valley work the agricultural fields to support families and are strongly connected to the earth; therefore, their connectedness is not one of leisure. At young ages they assume tremendous responsibilities, such as working long hours to put food on their families’ table. Often times, they do not attend school because learning valuable survival skills take precedence, and many do not have access to television. They work at the source of production and their tasks involve immense environmental and agricultural knowledge. Their environmental knowledge is, as the children in



Howa, essential for the survival of their family and perhaps community, as well as their personal growth. The forces these children face encompass, among others, political oppression and economic marginalization. At Casa de Milagros, the children are learning vital survival skills of *how* to produce nutritious foods on their own accord, but are relieved of the pressures of sustaining their families through work. Their lives and livelihoods differ from others nearby. My study explores the impact of globalization and development on a community of indigenous Peruvian children, and the ways in which a few transnational actors mobilize an alternative strategy to those offered by the state or the Catholic Church. Emotions catalyze advocacy, which has manifested and continues to maintain the multi-cultural care of 29 indigenous Peruvian children at Casa de Milagros. I draw from previous theories about childhood to study the emotions driving activists to advocate for others, and how emotional geographies contribute to the multi-cultural care given to Casa de Milagros' children.

### **Geographies of Emotion, Charity, and Care**

This thesis contributes to recent theoretical developments about emotional geographies, articulated by critical geographers, who emphasize how emotions underscore the spatiality of social relations. Emotional geographies is a fresh current within the discipline. A recent book titled *Emotional Geographies* (Davidson *et al.* 2005) examines how we experience the world and how knowledge is produced. Instead of approaching emotions as completely internalized mental phenomena, recent research aims to comprehend and convey emotion, both experientially and conceptually, in terms of its socio-spatial mediation. I am particularly interested in the ways that emotions color dynamic transformations from childhood to adulthood (Davidson *et al.* 2005).

Articulating such a complex emotional landscape is not easy. Emotions shape the production of academic knowledge triggered by the practices of social inquiry, and yet they are often excised from the scholarly product. Since emotions are never simply surface phenomena, Davidson *et al.* argue that “geography, like many of its disciplinary siblings, has often had trouble expressing its feelings” (Davidson *et al.*, 2005, 1). Although I have learned this is a challenging task, I aim to address this shortcoming. I focus on one particular network of emotions. In addition to theories about children’s geographies, I take interest in the emotions of indigenous Peruvian children now residing at Casa de Milagros. Others are emotionally driven to become involved with the children of Casa de Milagros in a variety of ways and on various scales. I examine celebrities as they advocate for social and environmental change, activists and transnational tourists seeking to bridge the distant gap with community involvement, and my personal commitments as a researcher.

In her recent report on gender, emotion, and change, feminist geographer Joanne Sharp (2009, 78) quotes feminist Sara Ahmed saying that progressive politics without hope is impossible. She also notes her own hope that the world can take different forms. I too am a hopeful academic, and perhaps too hopeful. But I recognize that hope, care, and concern can set progressive social change into motion. My aims resonate with Cindi Katz’s argument that in order to imagine a different world, or “space of hope,” revolutionary consciousness has to mobilize transformation. And like Katz, I find inspiration in the vibrant imaginations that distinguish children’s play, and believe that such openness to possibilities may indeed exist in adults (2004, 257).



Fernando Bosco has studied the emotions driving activists to advocate for others, as well as the emotional labor activists and advocates collectively perform. His work draws attention to the emotional components of social movements and illustrates ways in which movements are structured (Bosco 2006). He calls for geographers to examine the relations between care, ethics, and children. I situate my study in geographic research that, according to Bosco, “deals with care and caregiving activities- from the provision of healthcare to the family care provided by different types of caregivers even to the emotional work involved in a care giving relationship” (Bosco 2007, 56). A significant portion of the academic literature on children is situated in the Western context. While this literature provides background that is sensitive to historical change, we can’t assume all children everywhere emotionally respond the same way.

Hopkins and Hill’s geographical work focuses on the active role of asylum-seeking children and transnational migration, and associated traumatic emotional experiences. They argue that studies of mobility and transnational migration often neglect the agency of the child. The term ‘separated’ implies passivity and overlooks the fact that some children may have chosen to move (Hopkins and Hill 2008, 258). To avoid these shortcomings, researchers must operate with historical and contemporary situations shaping children’s lives, which means considering their livelihoods.

Sarah Radcliffe examines the geographies of fear that Latin American indigenous populations face regarding insecure livelihoods. She also explores indigenous geographies of hope about new spaces of participation bolstered by transnational advocacy. She refuses to view hope and fear as separate categories, arguing they are entwined. Radcliffe’s geographies of fear and hope provide a backdrop

for a regional contextualization of the rural Sacred Valley, and for the indigenous Peruvian children living at Casa de Milagros (Radcliffe 2007). Her argument also informs my research methods.

I would like to account for my own emotions as an academic going into the field. Such an account cannot be unambiguous, but I can touch on the fact that for various personal and political reasons, and in several theoretical and empirical ways, I am involved in emotional geographies. My work is infused with, and informed by, emotion in complex and dynamic ways. I am emotionally committed to my work, and to my connections with the children and individuals who make my research possible. My project is motivated by an understanding that emotions are embedded within, and co-constitutive of, my professional (as well as social) life (Bondi 2005). Broadly speaking, because of my care and concern for the well-being of homeless and/or malnourished children, my anger about the globalizing forces that historically cultivated and currently foster inequalities, my sadness for those beings who lack someone to care about them, my passion for traveling and new experiences, the feelings of hope I experience when working with at-risk children and making a break-through or witnessing their vulnerable side, I was and am drawn to my current research project. I aim to be mindful of all of these emotions and to recognize their power to shape my research interests and findings (Bondi 2005, 236). Like Radcliffe, I recognize these emotions configure a complex network accompanied by the production of knowledge. Each one compounds, (re)produces, deconstructs, and/or enhances the next, comprising an intricately shifting interplay.



## **Methods**

Drawing from my emotions that propelled my research interests, I now explain my methods used in the process. In this thesis, I explore transnational advocacy and a multi-cultural model of care. Specifically, I wanted to experience how Casa de Milagros works with its (previously abandoned) children's emotions. This investigation required qualitative methods because my subject matter is not measurable variables but, rather a cluster of individuals comprising a 'culture' that could only be understood via direct experience (Crang and Cook 2007, 7). According to Crang and Cook (ibid), qualitative methods can facilitate understandings of parts of the world as they are experienced by people living there. I conducted three strands of qualitative research (to which I now detail) in two phases: prior to going into the field, and in the field.

### **Phase One: Establishing Connections and Theoretical Framework**

First, before venturing into the 'field,' I identified my case study by web surfing and began contacting relevant people from the organization. Casa de Milagros is operated by the Chandler Sky Foundation, which is classified under the Oasis Preserve International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based out of Los Angeles. Therefore, the directors have non-profit status in Peru and in the United States. From the website, I located appropriate personnel and contacted her via phone and email to initiate prospects for gaining access (Crang and Cook 2007, 19+). This liaison working for Oasis Preserve who handles Chandler Sky's volunteer logistics contacted Marie Patton in Peru, one of the key directors, on my behalf. Shortly after, I received an email from Marie saying Casa de Milagros would be pleased to support me in my research

endeavors and welcomed me to visit their home. I maintained close contact via email with Marie until my departure from the United States.

Next, I located several informative videos and interviews online of Kia Ingelath (another key director) discussing Casa de Milagros, and absorbed as much information as I possibly could (<http://enlightenedconcierge.com/html/outreach/>). Prompted by the International Review Board (IRB), I also researched The Ministry of Women and Social Development (MIMDES), Peru's governing body for adoption, to begin unraveling the complexities of the organization and its affiliations. Finally, I began formulating a framework, and reviewed literature focused on children's geographies, voluntarism, grassroots organizations, Latin America, and social movements. Drawing from this framework, I contacted and met with Jessaca Leinaweaver, a Canadian anthropologist studying Peruvian adoption. Leinaweaver helped prepare me for entering the field as a qualitative researcher. Thus, I entered the field with two central themes I hoped to explore: Casa de Milagros' approach to child circulation, and organic gardening practices related to the children's emotional well-being. I went with the assumption that the children would be far more involved with agricultural practices than they actually were. Therefore, once in the field the focus of my study shifted towards the emotional well-being of the children living at Casa de Milagros, the residents' encounters with transnational tourists, Casa de Milagros' Western approach to child care and associated impacts, and how the organization is sustained spatially.

## **Phase Two: In the “Field” at Casa de Milagros**

I visited Casa de Milagros for a month during the summer of 2008, during which I undertook further qualitative research in order to flesh out the framework established in phase one (Yin 1984). The first strand was participation-observation, informed by ethnographic techniques (Emerson 1995). My duration was short, providing me with only a slight glimpse of what everyday life is like at the Casa de Milagros. I partook in daily activities while empirically collecting data (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). Whenever possible, I systematically recorded what I saw and heard by composing detailed field notes (Emerson 1995).

As a volunteer and an academic conducting participation-observation (see Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3), I helped the children daily with homework; worked in the garden and the kitchen; helped prepare for a *quinciñera* (traditional birthday celebration for girls turning 15 years old); organized clothes, shoes, and other donations to be circulated to the nearby pueblo of Sacclo; painted a mural in the soup kitchen of Sacclo (an operation orchestrated by the Casa de Milagros’ directors); hand washed clothes; ventured to the Pisac market (a village nearby) to purchase dry goods for the Casa de Milagros; accompanied and supervised a large group of the children to a national celebration in the nearby town of Lamay; organized activities with the children, such as dancing, drawing, and painting; supported the children at a sporting event between multiple schools, including several sports such as track, volleyball, basketball, and soccer; exchanged practicing language skills (my Spanish, their English); shared gardening strategies with the children and adults; and so on.

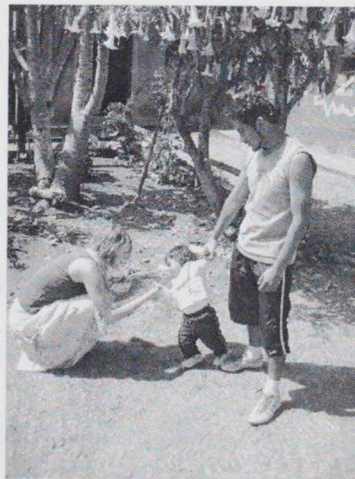




**Figure 2.1** Participation-Observation. Photo by Casa de Milagros Child.



**Figure 2.2** Participation-Observation. Photo by Casa de Milagros Child.



**Figure 2.3** Participation-Observation. Photo by Casa de Milagros Child.

I conducted, and often recorded, structured and unstructured interviews with key actors involved with Casa de Milagros (Fontana and Frey 1994). I designed different interview strategies that catered to the four groups of actors I identified as central to my

study: the directors, employees, tourists/volunteers, and children. I recorded the formal interviews conducted with the directors of Casa de Milagros. Interviews with employees, volunteers, and children were more informal and were not recorded, although I took notes during and then composed field notes promptly afterwards. All interviews were open-ended (Emerson 1995; Fontana and Frey 1994).

During my interviews with the directors, I sought to learn about: the manifestation of Casa de Milagros, who contributes to the organization and how it is sustained spatially, how the Peruvian government interacts with Casa de Milagros, how and why the children arrive, the overarching goals and aspirations of the organization, how the children's emotions are addressed, and so on. When talking with the indigenous employees, I more casually inquired about the forces drawing them to Casa de Milagros, the details of a typical work-week, their feelings towards international tourists passing in and out (recognizing that, as an international tourist asking, I might not get a true response) and how this fluctuation appears to impact the children. I asked them to describe their perceptions of Casa de Milagros' lifestyles and philosophies, local indigenous villagers' opinions towards Casa de Milagros (in their opinion), whether they see Casa de Milagros as unique and in what ways, whether they have noticed any physical changes in the children after having lived at Casa de Milagros for some time, and if so, to provide specific examples.

I asked the international tourists how they located Casa de Milagros as a destination spot, their countries and cities of origin, if they spoke Spanish, how long they intended to stay, and if they planned to return in the future. I was also interested in their planned activities with the kids, their perceptions of and interactions with the



residents of Casa de Milagros, their thoughts about the concept of a multi-cultural, international house for children and whether they found it problematic, beneficial, etc. Finally, I asked the children general, non-invasive questions to gauge their level of comfort with themselves and their home. I focused on aspects such as: what they are passionate about in life, what they hope to do as an adult, what type of music they enjoy, what their favorite feature of school is, whether they enjoy meeting the tourists passing through, what their favorite game is, how they generally allot their free time, etc.

### **Working with Children: Engagement, Accountability, Responsibility**

Drawing from children's geographies literature (Valentine 1999; Gagen 2004), I sought to work *with*, not *on* or *for*, the children of Casa de Milagros. My aim was to blend adult-child differences in this research relationship because I think it is the best way to engage the young people living there. My aims were met with relative ease, as the children of Casa de Milagros are not treated as 'objects of concern' by the directors and care-givers (Valentine 1999, 141+). As I will detail in chapter six, it is a philosophy of the home to recognize the children as competent agents in their own individual lives. They are not regarded as incomplete, or in training of becoming adults; rather, they are accountable, to a large degree, of their own lives. This fostered a research environment that did not necessitate my seeking information *solely* through 'adult proxies' (Valentine 1999, 142). Instead, I explored the children's experiences by listening to and observing the children themselves. Also, I did not rely on 'siblings' (as they refer to one another as 'brother'/'sister') to account for one another's stories and experiences,



because each child holds a different role as an individual within the communal household.

Recent literature suggests traditional institutional assumptions about children not being able to provide their consent to participate in a study until the age of 18 establishes a qualitative difference between children and adults as knowledgeable (Valentine 1999, 143). Considering the regional and structural settings, however, I opted to acquire written consent from the directors, and oral consent from the indigenous on-site care-givers and children. I did not ask any children questions until they were expressing comfortable body language and actively engaging in a conversation wherein they were sharing stories of their experiences (most times, while sitting in my lap). Ultimately, I am aware that there are many messy ethical issues and moral ambiguities that riddle geographical research with children, for example, getting the children comfortable with foreigners, which might have unintended consequences down the road. Accordingly, I attempted to engage in thoughtful research strategies while striving to always have the children's best interest at the foreground.

Other key components to my research included organizing field notes and transcribing recorded interviews upon return home. Through repeated readings, I have culled themes and analyzed them in reference to scholarship on international advocacy, children's geographies, and Latin America. In order to discuss my research findings, it is necessary to conceptualize the region in which the organization operates, the rural Sacred Valley of Peru. Social hierarchies, centuries of political oppression, economic marginalization, and cultural discrimination that most observers emphasize when

exploring the region allowed me to better understand the multi-cultural care provided at Casa de Milagros. I address this body of literature in the following chapter.

### Chapter 3 Regional Setting: The Rural Peruvian Highlands

This chapter provides a regional description of the rural Sacred Valley in Peru. The rural Sacred Valley is a part of the Highlands, a large region that sits within the Andes Mountains and crosses international borders. In Peru, a largely indigenous population lives in the highlands while a mostly *mestizo* (mixed races, of European descent) population occupies the lowlands, although these classifications are certainly not exclusive. Although urban centers and larger cities exist in the Highlands, my focus is on rural highland areas, and particularly the Sacred Valley where Casa de Milagros is located (Figure 3.1). To understand the emotional experiences of children living at Casa de Milagros, we need to examine the historical and contemporary situations that shape their lives and their former families' livelihoods. Accordingly, this chapter provides a regional snapshot of the Peruvian Highlands and the political and globalizing forces, such as neoliberalism and tourism, which have impacted the indigenous people located there. Of course, previous time periods and other forces have shaped indigenous livelihoods to date, but for the scope of this thesis I will primarily focus on recent decades. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which indigenous communities cope with impoverishment, oppression, and discrimination.





**Figure 3.1** Road to Casa de Milagros. Photo by Morgan McKibben.



**Figure 3.2** Disney Character Slide: Lamay Independence Day Festival. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

### **A Glance at Latin America**

Twenty-first century Latin America is an intensely globalized place. Consider the differential access, privilege, and vulnerability to symbols of globalization like the

Disney slide at a regional festival in Figure 3.2. Tourism connects the region's local economies to the consumption patterns of visitors from the Global North. Neoliberal regimes have rescaled state welfare provision. Additionally, regional and national socio-political movements have transformed the political and economic organizations of Latin American countries (Bosco & Jackiewicz 2008, 1). For example, a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) increasingly take responsibility for indigenous peoples' rights. While this shift in responsibilities can help further the agendas of indigenous organizations, it allows governmental institutions to dodge accountability (Bosco 2007, 55-56).

Likewise, local childhoods intertwine with transnational and global processes and local, national, and international laws (Leinaweaver 2007a, 375; 2008b). As seen in Chapter Two, the 'child' is a historically-specific construction. It is also geographically and culturally specific. In Latin America, categorizations of childhood intersect with other kinds of power relations, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Increased opportunities for children's active involvement in civil society and their right to exercise citizenship are necessary as the future of the continent relies on effective handling of children's rights. Children embody both the results of Latin American transformations and the potential for its future (Bartell and O'Donnell 2001). It is important to remember, however, that every child's development process is uniquely vulnerable to family and societal influences. Each child is susceptible to—and shaped by—processes of political and social change (Bartell and O'Donnell 2001, 2).

Despite advances in modern communication and information technologies, improvements in child health care, nutrition, and sanitation, and the expansion of



market economies and global trade, the highest rates of unequal wealth distribution worldwide continue to distinguish Latin American countries. More than a decade ago, about one-third of the Latin American population held an income of less than US \$2 per day. Almost 60% of Latin American children are impoverished, constituting more than one-third of the region's poverty-stricken population (Bartell and O'Donnell 2001, xxi). In Peru, a National Household Survey in 2000 reported that 62.8% of the indigenous population lived in poverty and 22.2% lived in extreme poverty (Trivelli 2006, 201).

Traditional agricultural work provides many rural families with subsistence. It is, thus, not surprising that approximately 40% of child workers engage in agricultural production. As a result of domestic chores, rural children tend to be less educated and have less access to health care. Minimal access to potable water, electricity, communications, secondary schools, and other developments create disparities between rural and urban impoverished children; however, it could be said that rural children's agricultural employment offers more stability than employment opportunities in urban areas. Rural children often begin working the fields as young as age 5, and as they approach adolescence, their tasks become gendered. Often those who work in the fields do not attend school. Instead of formal education, learning valuable survival skills and work procedures are perceived as vital to rural children's role in the community. Additionally, children's labor is regarded as essential for the survival of other family members (Salazar 2001, 173-176; Leinaweaver 2008b).



## **Indigenous Communities in Rural Peru: From Land Redistribution to Years of Terror**

Examining how the Peruvian government, NGOs, and citizens work to change chronic structural inequalities requires an understanding of Peru's social, economic, and cultural history (Bosco and Jackiewicz 2008, 3). A history of marginalization and exploitation of indigenous men, women, and children challenge policies geared towards alleviating rural poverty and encouraging rural economic growth (Salazar 2001, 171). A history of brutality and discrimination molds the lives and livelihoods of rural Peruvians (Leinaweaver 2007a, 375-376).

Historically, coastal Peru and its capital city Lima have attempted to dominate the highlands, politically, economically, and culturally. Middle and upper-class city government planners have imposed developmental models on residents of the highlands without an understanding or appreciation of existing agrarian practices and associated peasant logic. According to Goodwin, peasants traditionally place emphasis not on producing a surplus, but on "attaining a satisfying level of well-being" (Goodwin 2007, 99-100). The agrarian reform of 1968-1979 catalyzed much of the turmoil still lingering today in rural Peru (100). Beginning in the mid- 1950s, peasant communities challenged *haciendas* (large estates) through land invasions. Peasants revolted from both within the large estates and from the outside in order to confront the systems of common land tenure and to call for land reform. Under the Velasco regime in 1969, agrarian reform promised to redistribute land among tenants, but redistribution occurred unevenly. According to Goodwin (2007, 100), the reforms hardly impacted existing agricultural trends, neglected to alleviate income disparities, and failed to ease poverty. The turmoil

after the 1969 reforms contributed to the uprising of the Shining Path. The Shining Path is a Maoist guerrilla movement in Peru.

In Peru, years of terror (1980-1995) fueled by the Shining Path undermined the politics of culture and development, especially in the Andes, where much of the violence was directed towards indigenous people. *Sendero Luminoso* (The Shining Path) surged into Peruvian politics in 1980 by burning ballot boxes and voting lists, launching isolated bombs in dispersed areas of the highlands, and capturing the public eye by hanging from lampposts dead dogs labeled “Deng Xiaopeng, Son of a Bitch.” Alberto Guzmán was the leader of the Shining Path. He declared that “the flaws of the post-Mao leadership in China had left Sendero as the new leader of the world revolution” (Garcia 2005, 38). The goal of these “revolutionary peasants” was to muster indigenous peasant support, establish a stronghold in the countryside, and then “strangle” the cities that held political power (Garcia 2005, 39).

Perhaps because of its rural entrenchment, it was assumed that Guzmán would defend indigenous rights. This notion promptly dissipated when he demonstrated tremendous hostility and violence towards peasants and their indigenous practices. Guzmán initially accumulated indigenous support by reminding communities about the state’s neglect for their well-being. Then, by establishing “people’s committees” to supersede local authority, Guzmán challenged traditional customs. The militants labeled religious ceremonies as “archaic superstitions” and banned their practice; they controlled food production; and they forcibly recruited children, some as young as 7 years old. Those refusing to perform militant duties encountered lashings, mutilations,



and public trials and executions. Every *Senderista* (militant of the Shining Path) was expected to kill and die for the Party.

Community resentment and resistance to the Shining Path were exacerbated by the Peruvian government's deployment of military counterinsurgency forces in 1982, which were funded and advised by the US military and CIA. The inability of the governmental forces to distinguish Senderistas from rural peasants resulted in bloody massacres of indigenous Quechua-speaking men, women, and children. The military's equating indigenous peasants with terrorists intensified the extreme discrimination the indigenous population has always endured. Historically, they have been stereotyped as ignorant, primitive, and violent. Indigenous peasants were caught between the battlegrounds of the military counterinsurgency and the Senderistas. As armies entered communities, the Senderistas retreated, leaving the men, women, and children at the mercy of the violent government forces: the same forces that the Shining Path promised to protect peasant communities from (García 2005).

Resistance to the Shining Path led to rural indigenous communities' organization of *rondas campesinas* (peasant militias). Gradually the state recognized the *rondas campesinas* as defenders of the country and provided support (Garcia 2005, 39). This allowed peasants to oppose the Shining Path with bombs and guns, as well as machetes. Under a new president, Alan García, the Peruvian government increasingly saw the peasant communities as allies in the war against the movement. In 1991 under García's successor, Alberto Fujimori's regime, governmental forces distributed more than 10,000 shotguns to Andean peasants. Although communities with *rondas* were better protected, from 1988 to 1991, Peru held the highest number of 'disappearances'



(persons declared missing with no physical remains) of any country in the world (García 2005, 45).

### **Fujishock: Lost Opportunities and Tentative Openings**

Alberto Fujimori was elected president of Peru in 1990. Although Fujimori initially attracted support by presenting himself as a political *other*, and Peruvians who had previously felt excluded from the ‘traditional white ruling elite’ were drawn to a new face, this moment of appreciation quickly faded. By 1991, Fujimori had established close relations with the military in efforts to halt the Shining Path and more than half the country was declared an emergency zone. The result was an annihilation of civil liberties (García 2005, 39). Along with Fujimori’s increasingly authoritarian rule came strict neoliberal policies that Fujimori argued were essential for Peru’s success in the international financial economy. Accordingly, the state took measures to liberalize the economy by privatizing state-held enterprises and reducing tariff barriers (García 2005, 47). His economic program, which became known as the Fujishock, had a devastating impact on Peru’s impoverished rural population, thereby diminishing his support among indigenous communities. A nascent movement comprised of regional strikes undertaken by NGOs, peasant organizers, teachers, and other social actors opposed to Fujimori and his policies were combated with tremendous brutality, such as death, imprisonment, or ‘disappearance’ (García 2005).

On September 12, 1992, Fujimori and his national intelligence agency captured Guzmán and claimed the war with the Shining Path was coming to an end (García 2005, 48). However, Peru was devastated. The war caused 69,280 casualties and more than

4,000 were reported to have 'disappeared'. Those most strikingly affected were indigenous people and their children (García 2005, 48-49). In addition to turning indigenous lands into violent warzones, Fujimori's constitutional reforms allowed for loopholes through which extractive industries were able to infringe upon communal lands, among other things. Under Fujimori's legal reforms, the amount of land claimed by the mining industry shockingly rose from approximately 4 million hectares (in 1992, before reforms were underway) to more than 25 million hectares (García 2005, 58).

Fujimori's neoliberal agenda aspired to promote individual ownership through new land laws in 1995. His plan intended to offer small rural producers greater security, an opportunity to better profit through private ownership, and better access to loans and mortgages. This plan, however, was unsuccessful. Fujimori's privatization of state assets brought an end to the Agrarian Bank, which had been a no-interest credit reserve for peasants. Such attempts to increase rural peasants' competitiveness actually undermined their capacity to compete with the "cheaper food imports" entering local markets (Luciano 2005, 46).



### Tourism in the Highlands



**Figure 3.3** Machu Picchu. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

The Peruvian government named the world-renowned ruins of an Andean Incan City, Machu Picchu, a national trust in 1982 (see figure 3.2). The aim was to protect and conserve natural and cultural entities such as the Inca Trail, Machu Picchu's structural remains, and local biodiversity. Suddenly, residents of the area lived in a state-managed protected zone. By the mid-1990s, state conservation agencies, NGOs, large-scale private corporations, foreign governments, and international organizations were positioned to take control of residents' land. According to Luciano, as deregulation, privatization, and market solutions were mobilized behind the label of cultural heritage, state control and related privatization endeavors countered democratic reforms, a possibility that had seemed feasible after the Shining Path war and end of the Fujimori regime. Luciano argues that Machu Picchu, as a public asset, is used for private gain at the expense of residents. Not only does the neoliberal agenda privatize public goods in



the form of state managed resources, but it also provides a framework for land dispossession. Residents are caught between the neoliberal claim of a free market and the contradictory government forces that privilege some and neglect others (Luciano 2005).

Under the Fujimori regime and during the Fujishock, tourism and textiles stimulated growth, perhaps at a faster rate than any other Latin American country in the last several decades (Tamborini 2005). The Peruvian economy began to recuperate- as these measures paralleled the capturing of Guzmán- growing 13% in 1994 and 7.5 % in 1995. Inflation was managed and foreign investment catapulted as Peru charmed the international investment arena (Tamborini 2005, 49-50). Several factors have fueled Peru's astonishing growth in tourism in recent decades. One was that the economy opened up to foreign investment. Another factor revolved around the state reforms' impacts on Peru's economic and political stability. Their establishment of a steadier political ambiance created a more safe and sound tourist destination. Market forces also stimulated tourism growth in the 1990s, as Westerners' enthusiasm for adventure and culture-historical tourism attracted them to Peru. Specifically, a fascination for the Machu Picchu and Cusco area emerged, which has induced environmental and social problems (Tamborini 2005). Tamborini (2005) suggests that the higher-end tourism labor markets of Cusco often employ trained Peruvians from Lima over the Cusco labor pool, which reflects and reinforces the stereotype of Cusco's inferiority to Lima (an example of the mestizo trumping the indigenous, as Lima is considered *more* mestizo, and Cusco *more* indigenous). There is also a gendered dimension to working with the tourism industry. Men often seize such opportunities as porters carrying camping

equipment for hikers of the Inca Trail. Women make and sell chicha (a popular fermented corn beverage throughout the Andes) to local porters, and sell textiles, fruit, and baked goods to tourists passing by (Tamborini 2005, Cadena 1995). Children also have an important role within the tourism industry (Figure 3.4).



**Figure 3.4** Cusco Child Working Tourists: Dressed in traditional Andean attire and carrying a goat, offering pictures for money (often times, women and children lead llamas for the same purpose). Photo by Morgan McKibben.

### **Peruvian Indigenous Movements: Emergent Demands for Rights**

The end of the Shining Path war marked a political shift in Peru. The government ratified a new constitution tailored to the protection of indigenous rights. Despite skepticism about the government's commitments to the cultural policies covered in the constitution, the endorsement and financial support from international actors such as NGOs and the World Bank helped implement a multicultural development agenda (García 2005, 51). Then, in 1989, the International Labor



Organization (ILO) drafted the ILO 169 Convention, recognizing the rights of “tribal and indigenous peoples”, and emphasizing the obligation of national governments to assure their protection (ibid, 51). During the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (1994-2004), multilateral agencies such as the U.N. Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank institutionalized programs geared towards indigenous people (ibid, 52). Despite seemingly helpful intentions, top-down foreign and state involvement has continuously wreaked havoc in the rural Peruvian highlands.

In 2000, Fujimori’s spy chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, was caught bribing a number of politicians. Fujimori fled to Japan and Peru was left unstable and without a president. Many hoped this sudden occurrence would divert Peru from authoritarianism and violence to democracy and peace. Valentín Paniagua accepted the daunting task of serving as president for a short term until the 2001 elections. Paniagua’s term was crucial regarding democracy and indigenous politics. He appointed a National Truth Commission, which soon evolved into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under Alejandro Toledo, the next president. The TRC intended to investigate the violent abuse of indigenous people during the ‘dirty war’ and to provide a microphone for indigenous voices calling for justice and healing. National television broadcast hundreds of indigenous victims’ interviews. Additionally, excerpts of these interviews were compiled into a report delivered on August 8, 2003. Though problematic, the TRC represents substantial steps towards democratic reform. Also, the emergence of dynamic indigenous political leaders has amplified indigenous politics in Peru. Although President Toledo seemed to defy deeply embedded racial inequalities, Indigenous



organizations and their advocates increasingly questioned his integrity (García 2005, 56).

Moving beyond abstract conceptualizations of globalization as uniform global-local processes, it is important to account for the cultural factors shaping the ways in which change is interpreted. Luciano argues that neoliberal reforms in the Andes reproduce gender and racial categories through market interactions (2005, 6). At the outset, some indigenous communities supported the idea of a free market; however, such strategies were enacted through—and thereby fortified—the existing inequalities. Dispossession was the consequence. Neoliberal policies permitted the confiscation of communally owned lands and diminished local self-rule in Peru's indigenous regions. In some areas, the oppression of indigenous land rights contributed to a “racialized laboring underclass” (Luciano 2005, 22).

Indigenous populations have suffered territorial displacement and genocidal reductions in size. Additionally, although indigenous communities have seen no profits and very little benefits from mining companies, corporate interests have seized their water resources and mercury spills have contaminated their environment (García 2005, 58). These dire inequalities prompted Miguel Palacín (an indigenous Peruvian advocating for indigenous rights) and others to organize protests against the state and industry in the early 1990s (ibid, 58). Mining companies wrongly accused Palacín of criminal activity, for which he was first found guilty without any formal investigation. Unexpected assistance came from Canadian First Nations' requests for a formal inquiry by the state. Upon investigation, Palacín was found innocent and the charges were dropped leading Palacín to declare that “the only weapon is organization” (ibid, 59). In

1999, Palacín was elected president of the first congress of a new indigenous organization, the National Coordinator of Communities Adversely Affected by Mining (CONACAMI). CONACAMI represents indigenous communities, emphasizing culture and indigenous rights, as well as focusing attention to the negative environmental impacts of resource extraction (García 2005, 58).

Indigenous collectives, as well as other actors in the state and civil society, constitute the new organization, CONACAMI. Opinions about CONACAMI differ, but “there seems to be an emerging consensus that it is the most coherent and influential indigenous highland organization to come along in a long while” (García 2005, 59). Oxfam America, a key international funder of indigenous organizations throughout the Andes, has supported CONACAMI since its inception. Neoliberal economic reforms have transformed the political context of indigenous movements. The rise of indigenous leaders and politics is promising, and yet, because they emerge from a long history of classed and/or gendered participation, things are complicated. Many argue the political context for indigenous movements is full of contradictions because it is still undermined by outside actors and the state. On the other hand, indigenous leaders are increasingly able to amend the constitution with regards to indigenous rights (García 2005, 60-62).



## Livelihoods, Social Hierarchies, and Survival Strategies in Andean Indigenous Communities



**Figure 3.5** Andean Agricultural Practices. Photo by Morgan McKibben.



**Figures 3.6** Andean Agricultural Practices. Photo by Morgan McKibben

Most indigenous communities of the rural Peruvian highlands pursue agricultural livelihoods (Figures 3.3 and 3.4). Maize and potatoes provide the predominant source of income, although some people also raise livestock. Additionally, many households respond to the growing volume of tourist traffic by producing textiles for market sales (Cadena 1995, 334). Women and children participate in these production tasks. Patriarchal traditions characterizing many indigenous communities



often position both of these social groups (women and children) as childish inferiors. Generally, women acquire social status through their male partners. In addition to gender, ethnic and class differences construct hierarchies in indigenous communities, and even within families. Ethnic hierarchies exist at the macro *and* micro levels. The dichotomous categories—‘peasant’ and ‘mestizo’—shape identities in the Sacred Valley. According to this categorization, a peasant speaks only Quechua, is illiterate, and raises livestock, while a mestizo is a migrant or urban resident, bilingual in Quechua and Spanish, and literate (Cadena 1995, 331).

However, people traverse between categories by attaching fluid ethnic labels to themselves and others. Ethnic identities shift with a change in context, and one can, for example, be categorized as a mestizo in his or her community, and a peasant at the market. Therefore, social hierarchies establish and legitimate both identities and the fluidity of each (Cadena 1995). One can climb the social ladder by demonstrating symbols such as speaking Spanish, and abandoning other symbols such as the Quechua language (Leinaweaver 2008a, 61). Therefore, deserting native practices can serve as a means to better oneself, but the same fluidity does not distinguish gender relations.

Among other factors, gender and racial discrimination construct social hierarchies. Drastically uneven social hierarchies force risky mobility. For example, many rural indigenous men and women (and often children) are obliged to pursue itinerant work such as selling textiles or agricultural produce at markets or relying on the strength of one’s own back through manual labor for hire. Often times these sources of income force unwelcomed dependence on dangerous, poorly maintained, overcrowded buses and other informal modes of transportation. In the Andes, vehicles

like this crash more than a dozen times per month (Leinaweaver 2008). Forced migratory labor predates the Spanish conquest. The Incas forced temporary relocation for laborers to construct roads, dwelling structures, and so on. Sometimes, entire families would relocate, where men worked construction and women cooked and cared for the children. Other times, only the men would migrate, leaving the women and children temporarily, or the mother and father would migrate and leave the children with another care-giver. The Spaniards adopted these forced labor migration tactics for mining purposes.

In the Peruvian highlands, many indigenous children currently undertake or are submitted to risky mobility. For example, they are often cyclically relocated by guardians—or choose to move—to different families' or community members' homes, or even to local orphanages. State and civil actors also sometimes have a hand in children's mobility. Jessaca Leinaweaver, an anthropologist studying children and adoption in the Peruvian highlands, spoke with many children in her fieldwork. These children emphasized their active role in their own relocation, whether they provided consent or initiated the move on their own accord. She argues that Peruvians have likely practiced child circulation for centuries. The practice of parents willingly passing their children to a different care-provider has been common practice throughout Peruvian history. Today, child circulation is often undertaken because parents are unable to provide adequate care, because a childless elder needs assistance and/or company, because better opportunities for the child lie elsewhere, or poor women must migrate to find work, leaving the children behind with kin or in an orphanage. Emotionally traumatic events, such as the death of parent(s), extreme impoverishment, a personal



tragedy, and/or an unflinching hope for a better future commonly lead to child relocation (Leinaweaver 2007a, 379-380). Leinaweaver traces the life of one indigenous Peruvian child Paty. She notes how Paty's circulatory patterns were both facilitated by adults and her own voluntary actions. Paty's relocations involved different family members' households, and eventually her choice to enter an orphanage, a move supported by her surviving siblings (Leinaweaver 2007a).

In the Andes, placing a child in a *traditional* orphanage has its risks, but families faced with financial and personal crises often turn to an orphanage's safe haven in moments of desperation. Traditional orphanages are often run by Catholic nuns encouraging strict discipline and structure. However, given that many children residing (either temporarily or permanently) in traditional orphanages have families, to label these places as "orphanages" seems a bit off the mark. Nonetheless I will refer to traditional orphanages as such for lack of a better word. It is seen as means for structure, discipline, and an understanding of the frugality essential for surviving impoverishment. Placing a child in a traditional orphanage does not necessarily terminate parental rights, and the strategic placement is carried out when it seems a comparatively superior option. Orphanages provide children with food, shelter, medical care, and education. They accrue funding from the Peruvian State, NGOs, private donors, and the Catholic Church. Children living in orphanages thus encounter a wide array of local and international practices and values. As the children are thrust into an unfamiliar environment, their personal history with the state and civil society collide with globalized notions of child welfare and institutionalization. Several possible outcomes can result from a child's strategic placement in an orphanage: the child could be



temporarily or seasonally interned (meaning the parents could drop the child off until the child reaches an age capable of working the agricultural fields, and the parents could return at that time to take them home, the child could live at the orphanage temporarily until the family found new means to support the child, the child could be picked up for holidays and returned to the orphanage afterwards, etc) ; internment could shift into permanency; and/or the child could be adopted by a new family, perhaps from a different country (Leinaweaver 2007a & b; 2008a & b).

I have provided a regional sketch of globalized and historical forces that have shaped indigenous children's lives and livelihoods in the rural Peruvian highlands. This overview opens a space to now explore the multi-cultural care of Casa de Milagros. Most traditional orphanages in the Sacred Valley are run by the Catholic Church. These institutional homes are orchestrated by nuns set on providing discipline and structure for the transient children who are moving in and out all the time, and the institutions thus often lack emotional comforts and affections (Leinaweaver 2007a; 2008b). These patterns when compared such institutional and cultural traditions differ greatly from Casa de Milagros' holistic and family focus.

## Chapter 4 Celebrity Advocates: Contributors to Progressive Social Change?

To care for other distant strangers is to extend the geographical, psychological and political scope of a universal human activity (Silk 2004, 229).

This chapter explores how Casa de Milagros' multi-cultural care is organized and sustained spatially. Traditionally, caring was spatially restricted, limited in scope to family, community, and well-known others. Expanding communication and travel interactions have extended geographical and emotional ranges for reaching out and caring for others. Globalization has encouraged greater communications between distant 'strangers' by facilitating cheaper and easier access around the earth. New links among actors working with civil societies, states, and international organizations instigate opportunities for increased dialogue and exchange across national borders. These constellations, founded in caring and giving, often take funds, practices, and action to the Global South and bring back information to the Global North to attract more donors and funds (Silk 2004). There are many instances of generosity forming South-North and South-South linkages, but I will focus on those from North to South.

North-South relations have sought to promulgate a shift from caring *about* to actively caring *for* others. This shift is a response to the conceptualization that distant strangers across the globe cannot clearly understand the very specific needs of a local community elsewhere (Bosco 2007, 57). Efforts have been made to create balance and reciprocity between partnership and participation initiatives and to oppose paternalistic mannerisms. Instead of working solely from a distance, some donors and volunteers strive to work in the 'field' and in grass-roots, or bottom-up organizations (Silk 2004;

Keck & Sikkink 1998). Their aim is to foster more equal exchange between grass-roots workers and community members. These grass-roots actors often partner with NGOs to articulate cross-border social movements, and NGOs increasingly rely on celebrities to accrue attention and donors. These cross-border connections create an intricate web of multi-cultural care. In this chapter, I begin by exploring different venues of celebrity advocacy. Then I illustrate how particular celebrities contribute to the maintenance of Casa de Milagros by explaining (some of) Casa de Milagros' historical and contemporary geographical connections with the Global North.

### **Celebrity Advocacy**

While the phenomenon of celebrities lending their faces and names to social and political affairs has existed for decades, the scale at which they influence the attitudes and values of the public is perhaps greater than ever before. Public viewing audiences often experience an 'imagined familiarity' with celebrities. Film stars are skillfully trained in producing the appropriate emotional response to a given situation within the public at large, and these capacities exist both inside and outside films. These talents appear to influence politics and public affairs, but their effectiveness in shaping such arenas is increasingly debated (Hughes 2008; Andersson 2007; Jackson and Darrow 2005). This section of this chapter explores the geographical imagination of celebrities, their potential to shape the public's geographical imagination, the methods they use, and their potential to influence progressive social and environmental change.

### **Background: The Geographical Imagination**

In order to fully comprehend the global reach celebrities have come to possess, it is essential to first understand how their power over the public imagination is



formulated. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* illustrates the ways in which modes of apprehending one's place in the world have evolved, and how these changes made it possible to 'think' the nation. Two forms of imaginings facilitated this transformation, the novel and the newspaper. Both provided the technical means for representing the kind of imagined community that is the nation. Nationalism can be characterized as the unifying sentiments and cultural ideas that bond a group of people. The concept of nationalism is imagined because the members will never know most of their fellow members, and yet an image of communion lives within the minds of each. Anderson describes the mass ceremony of simultaneously consuming, or imagining, the newspaper, wherein readers are confident in the notion that other readers perform the same ceremony, and yet their specific identities are unknown. The newspaper reader observes the barbershop visitor, the subway rider, and the coffee shop attendee consuming an exact replica of his paper, and is therefore continually reassured that the depicted world is a part of everyday life (Anderson 1991).

A similar experience unfolds in a movie theater, as those performing the ceremony of watching a film together, along with fellow movie-watchers, imagine they have experienced all that the actors endure and thus feel a sense of communion, familiarity, and attachment (Hughes 2008). Yet, they have not the slightest notion of anyone's personal identity, neither in the room with them nor on the screen. Some may take the messages put forth in films as truth, allowing this to be an informational source of worldly affairs. Novels can put the imagination to work by situating the characters within a sociological landscape that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside (Anderson 1991). Similar emotional ties exist within imaginations created by

actors in films. Once celebrities have established an imagined familiarity, the audience is more inclined to trust—and be persuaded by—stars’ opinions, statements, beliefs, and actions *outside* films. Or at least, the audience is more inclined to listen or watch.

In the book *Picturing Place*, Joan Schwartz and James Ryan identify the geographical imagination as the mechanism by which people situate themselves within space and time and familiarize themselves with the world around them. “It consists, in essence, of a chain of practices and processes by which geographical information is gathered, geographical facts are ordered and imaginative geographies are constructed” (Schwartz & Ryan 2003, 6). Schwartz and Ryan focus their analysis on photography, and I argue that films and the internet are also key sources of geographical imaginations. Like photography, they too capture and project feelings, the spirit of a place, and the character of people. These powerful instruments mediate many people’s engagement with the physical and human world, providing material for their formulation of public opinions, morals, ideals, and imaginings. Our perception of the world around us is seen and shaped by comparing and contrasting it with the images we hold of other worlds. This process of perception links our identity to the author, actor, photographer, or film-maker, and the meanings they generated within their audience (Schwartz & Ryan 2003).

### **Grant McCracken’s “Meaning Transfer” Theory**

Little research explores the impact celebrity endorsements have on public opinion in regards to socio-political arenas. Marketing scholars, political scientists, and other academics have however long studied the impacts of celebrity endorsements of products (McCracken 1989; Jackson & Darrow 2005). Examining how the celebrity



endorsement of a product potentially influences consumers can provide insight concerning celebrity support for social and environmental causes and potential associated impacts. Several theoretical arguments have emerged about celebrities' power in convincing consumers to purchase a product and to agree with certain opinions. Grant McCracken's "meaning transfer" theory links the celebrity's effectiveness as an endorser to the cultural meanings with which they are endowed. His model illustrates the interconnectivity and transfer of meanings as they pass from celebrity to product, and product to the consumer society (McCracken 1989).

McCracken argues that the celebrity endorser's effectiveness is partially due to the meanings s/he brings to the endorsement process, such as social status, class, gender, age, personality, lifestyle, and sexual preference. The identities of successful celebrities evoke a variety of these meanings, and a product endorsement will only thrive if an association is fashioned between the appropriate characteristics of a celebrity's meaning and the product. According to McCracken, the consumer then grafts the meanings from the product onto themselves. McCracken contends that celebrities facilitate the transfer of meaning from products to consumers, and the transferred meanings by celebrities—via products—to consumers are assimilated into the consumer's identity (McCracken 1989; Jackson & Darrow 2005). These two central transfers of meaning can be translated into celebrity advocacy. The cause a celebrity chooses to endorse reflects the celebrity's personality, values, emotions, and commitments. An association is formed between the celebrity's meaning and the cause, which is transmitted over to the public, who assume the celebrity's meaning along with the cause as a part of their identity, should they choose to support it.



Why listen to actor Will Ferrell's plea for Burma as he advocates for the Human Rights Awareness Month, when the letter that was sent by previous world leaders, presidents, and prime ministers to the UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon asking him to secure the release of all political prisoners in Burma can be read online? Not only is Ferrell dispersing and highlighting the message to a global public, but the perceived trustworthiness and familiarity the audience feels for him may inspire his fans to investigate the situation in Burma, to seek out the letter themselves, and to locate ways they might get involved. Therefore, his fans who are consuming his message will assume Ferrell's values and convictions, *as they are stated on the website*, by choosing to support the cause, and those beliefs will congeal into their identity. Jennifer Aniston, Woody Harrelson and Sylvester Stallone are among the other celebrities recruited for awareness-raising videos highlighting the crimes of Burma's military-run government and the plight of its people (Look to the Stars; Celebrities Turn the Spotlight on Burma, 2008). Ferrell says,

Every now and again, a single person or event captures the imagination and inspiration of the world. This moment belongs to Burma, and to Aung San Suu Kyi. Please honor her courage, honor your compassion and let this month be the month you join an effort to change the world. (Celebrities turn the spotlight on Burma 2008)

McCracken (1989) suggests that young people are especially susceptible to star-power influence, whereby celebrities offer them fresh meanings for adolescence. He classifies the celebrity world as one of experimentation and innovative new cultural categories whereby the adolescent self is constantly invented and reinvented by entertainment figures. The most recent inventions of adolescence increasingly offer an image of speaking out for justice and attaching emotions and actions to a cause. If

young fans generally follow their heroes, nowadays they are assuming an image projected by stars that involves having social and political beliefs, and potentially voicing and acting upon them. Celebrities and their promoters recognize this.

Indeed, certain organizations work behind the scenes to assist the transfer of meaning by matching celebrities to causes, and educating them about contemporary issues. This bridge is constructed by evaluating a celebrity's meaning and linking that meaning with a relevant cause. For example, the Creative Coalition, founded in 1989, seeks to "educate and mobilize leaders in the arts community on issues of public importance, specifically in the areas of First Amendment Rights, arts advocacy and public education" (The Creative Coalition, 2008). Celebrity Connection in Los Angeles is another organization connecting celebrities to socio-political and environmental causes (Huddart, 2005).

Celebrities can change our clothes and haircuts, decorate our homes, and can encourage us to support the causes they believe in. Today, many influential NGOs and social and environmental change advocates enlist the services of celebrities to disperse their messages to the global public. Their engagement with political, social, and humanitarian endeavors has existed since the 1950s and 1960s; however, the expanding media and internet landscape we see nowadays strengthens the global reach these celebrities possess (Hughes 2008; Andersson 2007). Because of their potential to be highly visible and perhaps influential spokespeople, celebrity advocates can strengthen agendas and enhance humanitarian work.



## Celebrities who care?

To give to Tibet and not to Africa may seem callous. But to pick Richard Gere over Bono—that's just show biz (*Sojourners Magazine* 2006, online version).

In 1953, UNICEF formed a partnership with entertainer Danny Kaye, and this new type of relationship between celebrities and global causes created the celebrity advocacy we see today (Andersson 2007). Kaye was appointed UNICEF's first Goodwill Ambassador the following year. In the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. inspired a wave of celebrity activism which took place during the Civil Rights Movement. The sixties were also characterized by mass protests opposing the US involvement in the war in Vietnam. Performers and actors were so involved with social movements that at times, it could be difficult to separate the two. Rebellious and outspoken lyrics constituted the protest movement, in which artists sang in a storyteller tradition about social injustices and war. Celebrities became the voice of the people, singing of joys and troubles, and calling for economic justice (Huddart 2005; Richey and Ponte 2008; Andersson 2007).

Growing importance of entertainers reshaped the sense of nationalism, and also of the notion of being a 'global citizen' in the hearts and minds of many. In the late sixties and into the 1970s and 1980s, celebrities began responding to inter-, transnational, and global concerns. The aim of Band Aid (recording of a charity single) and Live Aid (charity concert) to support efforts to alleviate the Ethiopian famine cultivated the prominence of celebrity activism, initiating currents of charity-shows, records, and other projects (Richey and Ponte 2008; Andersson 2007; Huddart 2005). During the TV Broadcast of Live Aid, highly emotional images stimulated donations. Today we are saturated with such images (Richey and Ponte 2008). This ubiquitous



nature of such awareness-raising material has (re)enforced the Western geographical imagination of Africa, where the entire population is naked, starving, and has flies circling their eyelids. All advocates use imagery and rhetoric to craft their message more powerfully. Celebrities often have professional teams behind the scenes, embellishing the message to make it more sellable.

“Celebrity diplomacy,” or an institution enlisting the services of a celebrity, has become a part of the communication-strategies for opinion-building on the part of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). This practice has become more institutionalized through the appointments of the UN “Goodwill Ambassadors” and the UN “Messengers of Peace” (Andersson 2007). Angelina Jolie, for example, took up the position of Goodwill Ambassador after filming *Laura Croft: Tomb Raider* in Cambodia. She advocates for—and represents—The UN Agency for Refugees (UNHCR), and attended the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2005 and 2006 as a representative and “cultural leader” (Hughes 2008).

There are numerous emotional motivations compelling celebrities to advocate for environmental and charitable work: guilt, faith, personal suffering, ratings, good publicity, or the recognition of their abilities to voice their opinions in meaningful and influential ways, to name a few. I will primarily focus on the conscientious message that some celebrities intend to disseminate. It should be noted, however, that engaging in charitable causes humanizes one’s image. And so undertaking such a project (likely) spawns from the other motivating factors I just listed as well. Barry M. Greenberg, head of Celebrity Connection, says,

I get calls all the time from publicists saying, 'find me a charity. Any charity will do.' I ask what sorts of things they are interested in and they say, 'whatever.' They are just looking for publicity. (*Philanthropy Journal* 2000, online version)

Celebrity advocates often speak and act on behalf of issues concerning complex global matters and concerns that have little to do with their day-jobs. They support politicians and organizations, and undertake many of their humanitarian, social, and political activities without formal knowledge or training (Andersson 2007). The question immediately arises: Are these celebrities aware of what they are speaking and acting for, and the effects their socio-political endeavors can have? Consider Graydon Carter, as quoted in Huddart (2005, 47):

The celebrities are necessary, because magazines at some point become hostage to their own success. I'd love to put scientists and statesmen, nurses on the cover, but you can't, it's a business...So you put a celebrity on the cover. Look, most of them are, like, 27 years old and they spend most of their time in a trailer. They don't read much. They're nice people and I think, why beat up on some poor little movie star? They're like baby seals. I'd rather take a club to somebody bigger. They're not overdogs, they're underdogs. They're terrified. The shelf life of a movie actor or actress is so short, it's like milk.

One can argue that celebrities need not be specialists in all they advocate for, that they have the right to voice their beliefs and should be encouraged to participate in social activities, along with every other citizen. Though it is impossible to cluster all celebrity advocates and their intentions together, in general they live, breath, and act in the same world we do as non-celebrities, and are shaped by the very same shaping mechanisms they use to mold us (Andersson 2007). On the other hand, what is at stake if we grant physically beautiful stars (and we often insist they be beautiful) the right to inform us about any and all issues? Considering their potential influence amidst fans, the celebrity's understanding of the cause they advocate for is crucial.



Many celebrities donate to charity, but only some recognize these nickel and dime donations as unsustainable for the long-term and want to make deeper contributions involving raising awareness and mobilizing change. For celebrity advocates to be truly successful and for their credibility to be favorably viewed, they must *at least* be well-versed in communicating the political or moral message they seek to convey. However, a much more useful scenario would entail celebrities being experts in the issues they represent. The proliferation of non-officials and non-politicians, be they celebrity or non-celebrity, to speak out and take action is a response to the neglect, or perhaps, failure of the traditional nation-state, its politicians, and their politics/policies for national, transnational, international, and/or global issues (Andersson 2007). Huddart (2005), among others, argues that a failure of foreign aid and development cooperation prompted celebrities and other citizens to involve themselves in what has historically been carried out by traditional aid or development work. Their having to fill this void can be seen as a failure of concerned national or international actors, institutions, and organizations to explain to the voters and citizens of the world what the real problems are, how they emerged, and what the most reasonable and attainable solutions might be (Andersson 2007; Huddart 2005). Increasingly, the world's most important collective bodies are manufacturing visibility by hiring voluptuous celebrities. While I agree with the fact that in the absence of action by political bodies, citizens—be they celebrity or non-celebrity—should step up and act, the explosion of celebrities marketing and selling causes and taking responsibility for important decisions is disconcerting.



Celebrity activists offer an alternative to the political and economic establishments about which large groups of citizens are rightfully suspicious. But if politicians refuse to respond by passing laws, neglecting legislation, or supporting the causes for which celebrities advocate visible change will not occur. Celebrities are often involved in the earlier stages of the process, such as opinion-building and awareness-raising (Andersson 2007; Huddart 2005). Celebrity advocates use the media and internet to raise cognizance and spark movement for justice, caring for the world around us, helping others in need, leaving a lighter footprint on the earth, etc. The multifarious processes of internationalization and globalization have indeed altered the way we imagine the world.

If the information technology is today's equivalent to electricity in the industrial era, the internet can be likened with both the power-net and the power-engine because of its ability to distribute the information power to all areas of human activity. (Castells 2001, 13)

The internet functions as both an apparatus of and an arena for change, serving as a virtual gathering place and a plaza of opinion in cyberspace (Castells 2001). Before the explosion of the internet, celebrity advocates' ability to control their message was restricted, and somewhat shaped by their critics. Consider, for example, the case of Jane Fonda, who had less power to counter critiques of her activities and associations. Fonda was at the mercy of the mass media. Nowadays, celebrity advocates have the ability to refute critiques via the internet (provided people are willing to seek out such claims and view them), and therefore they have more pronounced control over the message.

In today's information age, cultural values mobilize social movements. Cultural movements aim to defend—or advocate for—specific ways of living. The internet and the mass media of cultural industries provide the most productive and efficient method

for reaching out to others who potentially share the same values and beliefs and can therefore imagine joining forces. The goal is to influence the consciousness of others. Emotional appeals such as these, often triggered by media-covered big crises, instigate more immediate attention than the diligent routines of non-profit organizations (Andersson 2007).

Glamorous enthusiasts can create a buzz, drawing attention to their causes, and the media's fascination for celebrities helps to assure the visibility of events. When combined charisma and fan-worship, credible knowledge of social change, trusted representation and ability to stay on the message, stars can become leaders (Thrall 2008; Richey & Ponte 2008). They galvanize voters, protesters, and/or non-political citizens. Pop culture icons can reach the minds, feelings, and attitudes of young people, sparking their awareness of and engagement with matters they might otherwise not concern themselves with (Huddart 2005; Jackson & Darrow 2005). Celebrity activists appear more effective in selling messages than politicians and officials who target similar groups. Comparing their persuasive power over the UN, The World Bank, etc is especially interesting. Hughes (2008) argues that Jolie's presence at the World Economic Forum supplemented the 'visibility' of the meeting, as the session chair granted the audience some flash photography minutes.

Authority and legitimacy are two central concepts linking leadership with public affairs. "Authority is a social relation where a person, group, or institution has influence over another person, group, or institution, and where this influence is seen as rightful or legitimate by the latter" (Andersson 2007, 23). Because they are seen and heard around the world, celebrity advocates possess a reach capable of shaping social meaning and



inspiring civic engagement. On the other hand, celebrities do us a disservice when they use their power to represent their actions as heroic, thereby diminishing the individual power of each citizen to act on principles and affect our immediate surroundings and the rest of the world, and reducing the perceived importance of causes lacking celebrity endorsement (Huddart 2005). But imaginings of what is a moral good or bad differ from one individual's or culture's lens to the next. Therefore, what is deemed heroic by one individual or culture may be seen as harmful by the next, and a celebrity endorsement may funnel support and encourage feelings of empowerment from some groups and distaste and feelings of disempowerment from others.

When pop stars insert themselves into a weighty world matter, they remind us of the lives and deaths of other people we so often ignore while focused on day-to-day occurrences. The weighty ailments of the world are daunting to imagine, forcing us to limit our imagination somewhat to our surroundings. It is easy to associate the lack of involvement with lack of awareness about worldly matters. But I would argue that in a world of affliction, one can be overwhelmed into an unimaginative state, leading to inaction. Or, arbitrary choices are made. When a star lends his or her identity to a cause, they *catalyze* which cause to support and *validate* that cause within the public's imagination. Clearly, not everyone has the opportunity to jet to Africa and help children with facial deformities, but when a celebrity who has gained an imagined familiarity with the masses does so, the public imagines they can trust the cause.

So, with this informed insight, how does one perceive the phenomenon of celebrities authoritatively advocating for complex environmental and social causes? I find it unsettling. Are they *all* entirely sincere? No, they indeed cannot be. Most



certainly, the world is composed of intricate happenings that are convoluted by endless different choices, intentions, and perceptions. But, particularly relevant to my case study is the life work of celebrity Woody Harrelson, to which I now turn. Unlike many other celebrity advocates, Harrelson combines many causes, does not shy away from potentially career-damaging publicity, and he lives what he advocates. He is deeply committed to encouraging others to do the same.

### **“Activism is my Rent on Earth”**

Since Woody Harrelson’s contribution in the television hit series *Cheers*, his professional career has taken flight. He has starred in films such as *White Men Can’t Jump*, *Indecent Proposal*, *Natural Born Killers*, and the Oscar-nominated *People vs. Larry Flint*, among others. In addition to being a widely recognized star, Harrelson is a dedicated environmentalist, who has networked with many organizations, such as: the Turner Foundation, Surfrider Foundation, Earth Island Institute and Rainforest Action Network, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), among others. But Harrelson is not only concerned with the environment and animals.

He is also an avid peace activist. Harrelson is not shy about making public his aversion to the US invasion of Iraq and his concern for civil liberties. He advocates for the preservation of old-growth redwoods, and also for the legalization of hemp and marijuana in the US. Furthermore, Harrelson is a devoted raw-foods promoter. Harrelson has undertaken a wide variety of environmental causes and acted upon them in a number of ways over the years. He funded a Hemp Museum in Campbellsville, Kentucky, and at the opening night, announced a nation-wide industrial hemp essay contest for high school and college students. With the planting of four French industrial

hemp seeds in a Kentucky field, he challenged the constitutionality of a Kentucky law that failed to distinguish between industrial hemp and marijuana. He was arrested; however, Harrelson won the case (Wood 1997). He later narrated the documentary *Grass*, voicing his sentiments to the public viewing audience. As an ethical vegan and raw foods advocate, Harrelson has denounced animal experimentation within the cosmetic industry (Mahalo 2008). PETA presented him with its Humanitarian Award in 1997 (Wood 1997). In 1996, he and eight other forest activists were arrested after scaling the Golden Gate Bridge and unfurling a banner protesting the planned logging of the since-protected 60, 000 acre Headwaters Forest in Northern California. The activists were charged with trespassing, creating a public nuisance, and failure to obey a police officer (Wood 1997).

Harrelson seems to be an avid promoter of the 'counterculture'. The term counterculture essentially describes a cultural or sub-cultural group with values, norms, and beliefs opposing those found in the mainstream culture (Adams 2004). This notion applies to Benedict Anderson's ideas about how we 'think' the nation, and the vehicles driving us to that particular place in our collective imagination (Anderson 1991). The counterculture serves as an imagined community, according to Benedict Anderson's definition. One example illustrating Woody's political beliefs and commitment to the countercultural movement is quoted from his website:

Laura [Woody Harrelson's wife] and I had the opportunity to meet Barack and Michelle Obama. Despite my tendency towards skepticism as it pertains to our political system these days, I was deeply impressed by the honesty and character of the man. He spoke candidly about the anxieties of the American people. It was the first time I've ever heard a presidential candidate talk about biodiesel, solar and wind power as answers to our energy problems. He called on



community effort to bring about change, which resonates deeply for me. The very concept of a man in the oval office actually caring and not just enriching himself and his buddies is mind blowing. But I think of Barack and Michelle as a *beautiful wave in a sea of change that is sweeping the nation and the planet* (Woody Harrelson 2009, [www.voiceyourself.com](http://www.voiceyourself.com)).

In the United States, the mainstream media is responsible for shaping the mainstream opinion about other cultures around the world; however, countercultural communities often look to alternative media sources because they distrust the mainstream media. Celebrities are very much embedded within the mainstream media; however, some, such as Woody Harrelson choose to oppose it. In a Freespeech TV filming titled “Howard Zinn and Woody Harrelson, a conversation” from the Manhattan Neighborhood Network in 2003, Zinn expresses his gratitude for Harrelson’s “interest in the world.” Howard Zinn (author of *A People’s History of the United States*) read a peace article online Harrelson wrote pertaining to the war, for the Guardian of London while shooting a film there. Harrelson and Zinn discuss their shared opinion that alternative media sources spread information that the major media will not report, and persistence with alternative sources is therefore essential (Freespeech TV, 2003). As “trustworthy” celebrities endorse and actively engage in alternative information sources, and illustrate their first-hand discovered “truths” from experiencing a culture under speculation, the validity of the mainstream media and associated government *can* be called into question. It depends on whether or not the celebrities are able to gain respect and trust from their public.

Harrelson and his wife, Laura Louie, created and continue to maintain a website titled *Voice Yourself (VYS)*, which “promotes and inspires individual action to create global momentum towards simple organic living and to restore balance and harmony to



our planet.” It is a multi-faceted site, but I will list a few key elements. “Wood’s goods” has eco-friendly household items, building, body, and pet products, organic clothes, and locations to purchase each (VYS 2008). Educational information about those along with his endorsement of each illustrates the Meaning Transfer Theory. Harrelson attaches meanings to the products he advocates for, which in turn are transferred to his fans when they purchase the products. As seen on his website, Harrelson ties his personal environmental convictions to the products, and does so with a narrative. For example, he advertises *Dr. Bronner’s Magic Soaps* with the following:

Wash, shave or clean with conscience and enjoy the wonderful scents of the liquid and bar soaps. 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps in America. These products are renowned for their quality, versatility and eco-friendliness which are certified under the USDA National Organic Program and Fair Trade under IMO's 'Fair for Life' program (Voice Yourself 2009, [http://www.voiceyourself.com/site/woods\\_goods/our\\_favorites.php](http://www.voiceyourself.com/site/woods_goods/our_favorites.php))

When consumers purchase the products endorsed by Harrelson, they feel they are making a difference in the world by how they shop, and thus, partaking in a Movement. Therefore, the consumer has assumed Harrelson’s personal environmental convictions as a new part of their own identity.

The ‘planet arcade’ further contextualizes the Meaning Transfer Theory in this light. The site-visitor can play a variety of educational games, for example: to find out which accessories are harmful in each area of the home and alternatives for those. VYS explicates a wide variety of social and environmental issues and different ways to act on those. Partnership organizations and initiatives, and their links, are listed. The ‘global community’ section allows site-visitors to become members, and provides the freedom and space for visitors to voice themselves through poetry, youtube clips, and so forth

(VYS 2008). Unlike Jane Fonda's pre-internet opportunities to counter critiques from the public and media, Harrelson has created a space to refute critiques, and to defend his actions, convictions, and words, to his fans. Harrelson says,

I can't let people who don't want to change stop my evolution; I've got too much at stake. Just like everybody else, I've only got so much time to make a statement with my life, and the question is, is that statement going to be the one I want to make? Is it going to be a statement that is in alignment with what I believe inside? I want to know that when I'm done that I stood for something, and that it was something that was right for me and right for the world (Condrón 2005).

Harrelson is arguably not advocating for public relations or ratings, since he makes statements and takes actions that potentially lead to a negative buzz, or to being arrested. Rather, he is acting on his personal principles, and aiming to encourage and broaden the numbers of the 'countercultural movement'. Therefore, he has the ability to be controversial, unlike Angelina Jolie who speaks to a wider viewing audience and represents a massive international agency, and therefore must maintain a level of discreteness and a more neutral stance. Harrelson arguably has a more narrow audience. Generally speaking, site-visitors to VYS are likely to be actively engaged in the same or similar countercultural movement that Harrelson advocates for. In contrast, due to her role as the Goodwill Ambassador, Angelina Jolie has to reach a wider audience, or that is her job. Speaking and / or acting controversially would most likely deter a portion of her support. While Jolie is responsible to a wide and varied audience, Harrelson is accountable only to himself. Harrelson says,

I've found that every time you stand up for something and open your mouth, you alienate someone. I spent a lot of time wanting to become rich and famous, then when I got there, I found it was hollow. What is important to me is my connection with family and friends, and to nature, and to stand up for what I believe in. It really makes you feel good to follow through with your convictions. Granted, between opening my mouth and



some of the movies I've chosen to do, I've alienated a lot of my fans, I'm sure. Hopefully I'll make better movies, but I'll never stop opening my large, prominent mouth (Wood 1997).

Harrelson posted “activism is my rent on earth” on VYS, which illuminates his personal justification of his actions. He advocates for individual awareness to promote change. “Change yourself first. Become your own ideal, the ideal that you want to see in the world around you. Others will see you evolving and want to know what you’re doing – that’s how you change the world” (VYS 2008). His documentary, *Go Further*, depicts Harrelson’s way of setting an alternative example by his everyday lifestyle. The film showcases a bike caravan he assembled and participated in along the American West Coast. He and the caravan members promote their perceived best practices to creating a healthier planet. The riders were accompanied by a hemp-fueled biodiesel bus equipped with a “sustainable” cork floor, and all solar powered electricity. A raw foods chef accompanied them and prepared all their meals. Their tour was called the SOL tour, simple organic living. They traveled to multiple college campuses where Woody spoke on environmental and socio-political issues (VYS 2008; Condrón 2005). The film captures the young audience’s engagement with Harrelson, as they hang on his every word (*and/or the camera man did his job well*). Harrelson seemingly captures the hearts of his young audience, thereby attempting to restructure their geographic imagination. Also, one caravan member is new to Harrelson’s world of alternatives, and is highly influenced by Harrelson’s statements and actions, thus making several big lifestyle changes, *or so he says in the film*. These changes were not only initiated by Harrelson, but Harrelson’s commitment to his own values and beliefs have transferred over to this young man who idolizes Harrelson. Those characteristics have assimilated into the young man’s identity.



Through public speeches, activist endeavors, the internet, film, organizational involvement, and personal lifestyle, Woody Harrelson seeks to inspire his fans, and to encourage them to assume a new identity, to question current socio-political situations, and to act on personal convictions. Harrelson's language, rhetoric, strategies, and methods are for the most part, defiantly countering the mainstream's collective methods and thoughts. Is he having a substantial impact, and is the impact beneficial or harmful? In Harrelson's case, I perceive his website viewing audience to embody similar interests and "visions" and therefore, his potential to reach fresh minds unexposed to the alternative lifestyle he promotes may be somewhat limited. Harrelson's presentations at college campuses seem to be his most productive means of reaching and influencing a larger number of young, motivated, soon-to-be professionals. But again, would a college Republican or conservative attend a public speech by Harrelson? Not likely.

Judging from my personal involvement within the countercultural movement, Harrelson appears to embody the united values and drive of the counterculture, generally speaking, and to therefore serve as a representative voice. Academic studies have rounded out my personal understandings and perceptions of the world. Therefore, he does not seem as credible as he once may have seemed in my geographic imagination. I do, however, maintain a level of respect for his commitment to speak for and live out his convictions despite potential consequences that might hinder his career's success. To a different audience, however, his same actions could bolster his career's success. I will now discuss the various ways in which Woody Harrelson is involved with Casa de Milagros.

## **Celebrities and Casa de Milagros: Historical and Contemporary Connections**

Casa de Milagros is the only active non-profit under the auspices of Oasis Preserve International. Oasis Preserve is an NGO and is Woody Harrelson's project based out of Los Angeles. Kia Ingenlath, her daughter Marie Patton, and son-in-law Allan Patton, all American expatriates, established Casa de Milagros more than a decade ago and continue to maintain the organization in Peru. Kia (I'll refer to her as Mama Kia, as does everyone else) and Woody have been friends for years. In addition to marrying Woody to his wife Laura and delivering their babies, Mama Kia and Woody attended an activist training program together some years back in California. Woody and Mama Kia have undertaken various activist endeavors together over the years, such as protesting the planned logging of redwood trees in Northern California by accompanying Julia Butterfly Hill in a campout atop a redwood. Hill is an American activist and environmentalist, best known for living in a 180-foot tall, 600-year-old California redwood tree for 738 days in the late 1990s, to prevent the Pacific Lumber Company from cutting it down (2009 <http://circleoflife.org/inspiration/luna/>).

As an activist, a yoga guru, a midwife and nurse practitioner, and a mother-to-many, Mama Kia is an interesting example to consider when studying the geographies of emotions, charities, and care. She is from the Global North, and yet it is important to note that the Global North is not homogenous. She pursues an alternative lifestyle to hegemonic biomedical models of health and well-being. Motivations to undertake meaningful humanitarian work geared toward indigenous Peruvian children began with the death of Chandler Sky, Marie and Alan's son, in 1997.

Shortly after Chandler passed in 1997, Mama Kia first visited Cusco, Peru. During her stay, she and a documentary film producer with whom she was traveling noticed the Peruvian police force rounding up all street children. Kia and her friend followed the police cars full of children to find out where they were being taken and why, filming the entire episode. It turns out that President Fujimori was scheduled to visit Cusco, and the street children were to be confined behind bars until his departure so the city would appear cleaner. This experience propelled Kia toward charitable actions and connected her to the surrounding areas of Cusco. Mama Kia began feeding local street children in Cusco parks, and quickly realized this was unsustainable. She told me she felt compelled to really make a difference in these children's lives. International projects concentrating on street children were scarce because Peru was still recovering from the trauma of the Shining Path and the government's response to it. For instance, the US embassy was discouraging citizens from traveling to Peru. Given these circumstances, Mama Kia's commitment to undertake a community-based development project geared towards street children provides an example of the emotionally fueled charitable aims commonly shared by activists and the sorts of real-world experiences that shape them.

Once Casa de Milagros became a concrete plan, Kia rode the bus through the Sacred Valley until she located a colonial house near the city of Calca. The house was abandoned but owned by the *cooperativa* (cooperative) comprised of community members from three surrounding pueblos. I am unclear whether or not this house had been abandoned during the 1969 agrarian reform. Nonetheless, the house was overrun with livestock and ceilings and walls were caved in. Kia acquired local materials to



rebuild the structures, including eucalyptus, bamboo, and leather for the ceilings. They utilized the piles of dilapidated adobe to rebuild the walls. Before receiving a contract for the house, Kia had to attend cooperative meetings. However, the substantial time lag between establishing contact with the cooperative members, arranging a meeting, and word of a new home for children spreading throughout the Valley meant children arrived prior to approval for her initiative from the cooperative. Therefore, she stubbornly squatted on the land until the cooperative eventually agreed to a contract. Attending cooperative meetings proved challenging as a non-Quechua speaking woman with authority (not to mention the *chicha*- or fermented corn alcoholic beverage- that was passed around at each meeting). According to Kia, many of the all-male cooperative members understand Spanish, but few speak it. Despite this initial challenge, however, a contract was granted with the aid of a translator and ten meetings later. To this day, Kia and family continuously attempt to purchase the house, but the cooperative will not grant such permission. Initially, the men of the cooperative and most surrounding community members were highly suspicious of the Casa de Milagros directors (interviews with Kia, Marie, on-sight indigenous care-providers, and a few local villagers I spoke informally with). After facilitating a wholesome environment for local indigenous children and other community outreach projects for over a decade, the directors are now more widely accepted by local community members- according to the directors themselves, the indigenous employees at Casa de Milagros, and the few people I spoke with from local communities.

Shortly after Kia settled in during the late 1990s, people began bringing children to her door. Kia and family had to establish a foundation, named The Chandler Sky

Foundation, and obtain status as a 501 C3, before accepting any children in their household. The foundation is under the umbrella of the Oasis Preserve. Kia, Marie, Allan, Woody Harrelson, Laura Louie (Woody's wife), and Tracy Harshman (Woody's secretary) encompass the board of Chandler Sky (and perhaps a few more). According to Kia the Foundation's directors, comprised of US residents and Kia's immediate family in Peru, was established so that more than one person's voice controls the decision-making processes. As issues arise, the board collectively works through them until they reach consensus. Other Foundation employees or representatives work in various ways across national borders. Based in Los Angeles, Trisja Malisoff fields all inquiries about Casa de Milagros, serving as liaison between the home and those aspiring to volunteer there. Trisja was my first human contact with Casa de Milagros. She is not legally on the board, according to Kia, but is committed to the organization. She also adores the children and visits Casa de Milagros often (according to Trisja herself, and Mama Kia).

In addition to being a project of Oasis Preserve International, Casa de Milagros comprises a Peruvian NGO, or an 'Asociación Civil' (Civil Association). To achieve this organizational status, the Peruvian government has to be assured that all children receive vaccinations and that the home had/has electricity and running water. Furthermore, every two years Casa de Milagros administrators must register with the Department of Adoptions even though their children are not up for adoption. They must also maintain a proper and current working business license and consent to regular safety inspections. Casa de Milagros receives no financial support from the Peruvian

government. It is entirely funded by donors from the Global North, primarily from the US.

Woody was Kia's first main supporter. He gave her \$80,000 to bring Casa de Milagros to life in the late 1990s. His continuous contribution thereafter entails paying his accountant in Los Angeles to manage Casa de Milagros' financial donations. All Casa de Milagros' donations come from countries outside of Latin America, the majority from the United States. Clothes, art supplies, homeopathic and other medicines, shoes, and toys constantly stream in. When there is an overflow, Mama Kia and family circulate spare items to residents of nearby impoverished communities. As Woody adamantly calls for living out one's convictions, he most certainly supports Mama Kia's efforts to do so. Woody has introduced Mama Kia to a wealth of connections. For example, the Red Hot Chili Peppers (American rock band) donate \$20-50,000 per year when on tour. Movie producer Bill Johnson (producer of, among others, *The Good Night*) organizes celebrity auction benefits and \$500/ plate dinners. Another actor, Owen Wilson, has placed \$100,000 in a trust fund for Casa de Milagros. Other donors include clothing designer Ted Baker, Curtis Martin of the New York Jets, and more. Casa de Milagros does not rely on an organization, such as those listed in the previous section of this chapter, to connect their project with celebrity endorsers; rather, Woody Harrelson has aided the establishment of connections between Casa de Milagros and various celebrities that seemingly goes beyond celebrities' seeking out any cause at random for personal gain.

Mama Kia travels to participate in various benefits organized on Casa de Milagros' behalf. She attends celebrity dinners, auctions, and music and yoga benefits.



This accentuates the idea of transnational advocacy networks taking action to the Global South, and information back to the Global North to attract more funds. Woody Harrelson and Owen Wilson visited Casa de Milagros, as did some family members of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. After Woody introduced the Chili Peppers to Mama Kia, she has befriended them as well. The Red Hot Chili Peppers are avid members of the counterculture movement and are often involved with Woody in advocacy projects, most often publicized on the VYS website.

Also, Casa de Milagros is listed on the VYS website under partnerships, and the description reads:

Casa De Milagros (Home of Miracles) is a children's home in the Sacred Valley near historic Machu Picchu, Peru. It was founded by the Chandler Sky Foundation to heal the mind, body and spirit of many of the thousands of orphaned and abandoned children living in poverty on the streets of Cusco, Peru and surrounding towns. It is based on the philosophy that we must start at the root of the problem, healing and educating children so that they can give back to their community (<http://www.voiceyourself.com/site/home/>).

Woody does not seem to exploit Casa de Milagros by posting their link and information on his website. Rather, he endorses the project by providing a brief description of Casa de Milagros, and the link to the Casa de Milagros website which offers ways in which 'his audience' might get involved. His description of Casa de Milagros is true to an extent, but is also idealistic in the sense that Casa de Milagros does not "heal the bodies and minds of the *thousands* of orphaned and abandoned children living in poverty on the streets of Cusco and surrounding towns," rather, it cares for 29 children. Dramatic emphasis, as discussed earlier, accrues donors and funding.

To my knowledge, these celebrities have not exploited Casa de Milagros for personal promotional benefits throughout the US mass media. Celebrity auctions,

however, frame a wealthy audience among peers, and their donations could attach a humanitarian label to individuals within their circle of 'friends' and colleagues in the cultural or entertainment industries. And perhaps the media would focus more on the celebrity who donates as opposed to the specific charity receiving the celebrity's donation. In this case, they could indeed be contributing for egotistical reasons. Nonetheless, Casa de Milagros receives significant donations and does not appear exploited by its funders. I am however ambivalent about celebrities' involvement, mostly because I am skeptical of celebrities and their intentions in general. I am also weary of their commitment. But the support of entertainers makes Casa de Milagros' emergence and continuation possible. This became crystal clear when, during my stay at Casa de Milagros, one volunteer visited with future aims of organizing a similar multi-cultural children's home in Guatemala. She had come to gain insight from Mama Kia about the process of creating and sustaining Casa de Milagros. She learned, as did I, that such ventures would be absolutely insurmountable without the very personal connections to celebrities that Mama Kia has.

This past summer when I was on-site, Casa de Milagros' family makeup was composed of Kia, Marie and Allan, their four biological children, six indigenous 'mamas and papas' serving as on-site care-providers, 29 adopted children, two full-time cooks, two garden tenders, two administrative operators, and two laundry personnel (Figure 4.1).





**Figure 4.1** Casa de Milagros Family Portrait. Photo from website, 2009. <http://www.chandlersky.org/about-us.html>

Considering the lengthy list of donations by celebrities, it is important to note that the Casa de Milagros residents do not live in extreme luxury. Sustaining a family of 50 (plus international volunteers) is rather expensive. Their basic needs are met, and in the context of the surrounding impoverished pueblos, they live in a relatively healthy environment that provides nourishing foods and has a septic system and electricity. Compared to the donors who support Casa de Milagros, its residents live minimally. For instance, they have only had running water through their house for the last few years. For their first eight years in operation they walked to town (a 35 minute walk each way) three times per day with buckets.

Celebrities and other donors, committed grassroots actors, such as Trisja in Los Angeles, and organizations such as Oasis Preserve and the Chandler Sky Foundation, embody the web of concern and flows of resources that the multi-cultural care at Casa de Milagros requires. International tourists visiting Casa de Milagros also contribute to the multi-cultural care provided there. It is this population of concerned travelers that I now turn.



## **Chapter 5 Altruistic Travels: Beneficial to Everyone?**

Since most readers have been tourists--and anthropologists [and geographers] share significant characteristics with tourists--we can place ourselves within the dilemma of development as privileged consumers whose actions may leave behind real consequences (Sunyer and Thomas 1997, 190).

Given my concern for emotional geographies, I am interested in the emotions of tourists who take their concerns for children and community development on the road. I want to know about the impacts these travelers may have along the way. In this chapter, I explore the emotional investments in tourism and advocacy. I discuss transnational advocacy networks and related literature concerning 'geographies of voluntarism.' I also examine how tourism shapes identities. Then I turn to specifics, exploring the forces that lure volunteers to Casa de Milagros, and their impact there.

### **Advocacy Tourism**

The ability to holiday anywhere in the world has become increasingly engrained within the lifestyle practices of Western European and U.S. citizens (Mowforth and Munt 1998). Affluent white Westerners possess freedom, cross-border mobility, and openness to--and experiences with--different cultures (Verstraete 2002). Their travels have caused the tourist industry to skyrocket. The world's number one employer, tourism is a \$4.5 trillion/year industry (statistic from a class taught by Dr. Karl Offen).

Many areas of the Global South are becoming economically dependent on tourism. From 1985 to 1994, the number of tourists coming into South America rose 86 percent, and continues to climb (Swarbrooke 1999). This increase led many academics and tourists to consider the negative impacts of tourism. Out of this contemplation arose alternative practices as well as a new vocabulary to describe them: 'sustainable

tourism,' 'green tourism,' and 'ecotourism' (Swarbrooke 1999; Butcher 2007). These modes of traveling with an environmental or humanitarian agenda often overlap, and yet they have distinguishing traits as well. I will use the term *advocacy tourism* as to represent tourism undertaken with social and/or environmental purpose.

Advocacy tourists often seek to minimize the harmful impacts generally associated with mass tourism. They also hope to enhance the livelihoods of local people. For this section, I use advocacy tourism and voluntarism somewhat interchangeably, although it should be noted that not all advocacy tourists are volunteers. For example, one may attend a 'sustainable' farming conference across national borders as an advocacy tourist, seeking to assimilate newly learned techniques upon return home. This traveler may not undertake a volunteer opportunity but still travels with an environmental purpose, such as seeking to learn responsible practices and preferring 'environmentally friendly' accommodations along the way.

### **Emotions of Tourism**

Academics such as Crouch et al. (2001), Crang (1997), Crouch and Desforges (2003), Edensor (2007), and Urry (2002), among others and in different ways, address the embodied 'performative' nature of tourism. They seek to understand relationships between tourism, the body, subjectivity, and space. These studies view tourism as a practice, a fluid series of poetic encounters--both imagined and experienced--that are expressively mediated through the body that is actively engaged in space (Crouch et al, 2001; Crang, 1997; Crouch and Desforges, 2003; Edensor 2007). Gordon and Waitt (2007, 537) draw from Thrift's (1999) 'ecology of place' to argue that every aspect of the process of life is informed in the context of *being* in the world, and that *having* a



world is very much about possessing a body. It is not through representation, but rather through practice, that people actively produce embodied geographical knowledge (ibid). Urry points out the merriment of the 'collective' tourist gaze (Urry 2005, 78). The practice of touring places and visually consuming a place evoke a sense of pleasure (ibid).

I argue that emotional motivation is a substantial component of advocacy tourism. Whether one yearns to help, educate, or learn, the desire to engage in some form of advocacy tourism is fueled by emotions. Emotionally and politically driven, most advocacy tourists see their participation in community enriching projects as means to connect—emotionally and socially—with the overarching concerns of poor and marginalized people (Silk 2004). Many such travelers also advocate for international awareness of what they see as unjust situations. And these emotions--or geographies of hope and concern--intersect with wishes for excitement experienced in new or strange places (Davidson et al 2001).

### **Organizational Geographies of Voluntarism**

Advocacy tourism opportunities increasingly overlap with the work of NGOs (Butcher 2007; Waitt and Cook 2007). Geographical research examining the relationships between people, place, volunteering and the voluntary sector is often referred to as "geographies of voluntarism" (Milligan 2007). A substantial amount of the geographical research on voluntarism concentrates on welfare policy reforms in industrialized areas; however, an expanding body of scholarship focuses on the work of the voluntary sector in the Global South. Much of this research is situated within development geographies, where voluntary organizations are commonly NGOs. In other



words, this kind of voluntarism is part of the private sector versus public service. The global proliferation of voluntarism has blossomed out of the ineffectiveness of state and market responses to national and international social crises. An alternative “Third Way” strategy is being undertaken to address these issues. It recognizes how important it is to have the voluntary sector operate alongside state and market forces (Milligan 2007).

Complex constellations comprised of actors working with civil societies, states, and international organizations attempt to alter the practice of caring for distant others across the globe. These social clusters transfer funds and practices to the Global South and convey information back to the Global North to attract more donors and funds. Instead of working solely from a distance, some advocates and donors choose to work across national borders, in grass-roots organizations, and/or NGOs (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Fisher 1997; Silk 2004; Townsend 2004). According to Bosco, working solely from a distance reduces our ability to engage distant others in meaningful ways and, aside from providing temporary aid, such outreach models fail to sustain change. Moreover, such models enforce uneven geographies of care by cultivating unequal relationships between donors and recipients (Bosco 2007). For example, the opportunity to click on an image of a hungry or needy child across the world without any knowledge of their life narrows the responsibility of geographies of care. Such images may reflect truth in that these children are indeed hungry, but the images commodify the children by appealing to a global audience who seek out these specific constructions of children in the Global South. Organizations use images of suffering to solicit sympathy from different audiences, primarily from the wealthy Global North. Furthermore, the bombardment of images of suffering and pain within the media (including the internet)

often leads to what scholars refer to as “compassion fatigue” (Bosco 2007). Bosco quotes Ruddick (2003) to argue, “...what is at stake here is not the improved physical welfare of children, but the modes by which this is achieved” (Bosco 2007, 67). Transnational volunteers seek out opportunities provided by NGOs and other organizations to work in the ‘field,’ usually with the hope of rectifying paternalism. Although they may respond to images or stories that pull on their heart strings, they also address limitations of caring from a distance by seeking a personally informed perception.

### **Tourism and Identity**

It is important to recognize that voluntarism is not unproblematic. Packing one’s suitcase, ideas, and expectations, and venturing out to explore the ‘other’ inspires part of what is known as the ‘gap year’ in Britain. The ‘gap year’ describes the break young adults often take between high school and college or career breaks for adults, during which individuals partake in a variety of work, travel, and volunteer practices domestically and internationally (Simpson 2004). There are numerous organizations providing similar opportunities in the United States as well, with projects in the Global North and South. Kate Simpson argues that gap year projects (re)produce particular conceptualizations of the Global South, of the ‘other,’ and of ‘development’ (Simpson 2004).

The concept of the ‘developing world’ is important to gap year programs as this region portrays a ‘need’ in the world that Westerners have the ability and right to meet and alleviate. All too often such a condescending Western geographic imagination is



laden with sentiments of paternalism and missionary zeal for uplifting the Global South. Advertisements for volunteer programs often generalize an entire population to accommodate that imagination. They offer prescribed cultural experiences and directions to the Western traveler, who then is informed of what to expect and how to consume the experience (Simpson 2004). Moreover, marketing ploys distinguishing advocacy tourism and community-enriching opportunities often employ an ethic of duty and care, whereby sustainable development strategies offer travelers a way to envision themselves as global environmental citizens (Waitt and Cook 2007). Simpson claims the dominant ideology is that “doing something is better than doing nothing, and therefore, that doing anything is reasonable” (2004) Within this line of thought, ‘development’ implies a final product or outcome, such as ‘teach the child,’ ‘conserve the forest,’ ‘build the bridge, library, clinic, well,’ and so on (ibid). Therefore, questions concerning the appropriateness and value of volunteers, and also of long-term strategies, appear to be absent from many gap year programs (ibid).

Because Western conceptions of development are linked to modernization models and the assumed universality of Western economics, culture, and values, in some instances Western volunteers model a lifestyle of cultural and material values by exuding their usual routine in a landscape different from their home. This perception can therefore inform, perhaps unconsciously, the way participants experience the ‘other’ and associated expectations of their encounter. Participants’ differentiation between a Western way of life and the ‘others,’ permits a discourse of ‘luck’ to replace one of justice and equality. Experiencing radically different standards of living can provoke travelers to reflect on their own positionality in the world and to recognize their



personal fortunes. Focusing on themselves rather than on the 'others,' advocacy tourists enable a form of "lotto logic" to account for the disparities witnessed. Conforming to the belief that socio-economic conditions (and life in general) are products of random luck sets parameters for social justice, by distancing wealth and poverty apart from one another, as opposed to viewing them as constituents of the same process. Therefore, through this adherence to lotto logic, volunteers *can* allow social responsibility to take the back seat to the optimistic belief in the justice of fate (Simpson 2004).

According to Simpson, organizations connecting volunteers with community projects in the Global South could address this issue by enhancing global awareness and fostering education, as opposed to concentrating on the individual experience. She draws on the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, to argue that education offering individual progression at the expense of collective understanding and transformation compounds structural inequalities (Simpson 2004, 689-690). While tourism is often a catalyst for changing the way individuals view themselves and others, the presumption that travel to--and encounters with--'others' will generate structural changes and engender multi-community understanding is, and should be, questioned (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, interactions between locals and tourists entail expectations, stereotypes, and expressions of ethnicity and culture, among many other things.

When tourists and locals meet, their encounters are like windows that double as mirrors: each side uses the other to peer into a new world while at the same time casting back impressions, and reflecting on themselves through the eyes of the other. Expectations of how each side 'should' look are often based on ethnic stereotypes, nostalgic ideals, and the promising pictures of brochures (Stronza 2008, 244).

Geographers, anthropologists, and other academics have studied the tourist gaze, as a key mode through which ethnicity and/or cultural difference is represented, perceived, and reinvented. Some argue that tourism is a major component of the current wave of globalization that endangers local traditions and values, while others proclaim tourism's ability to inspire a resurrection of pride within local communities for native cultures (Stronza 2008, 245). Alas, minimal research explores the social impacts tourism has on children living in the Global South (Gamradt 1995).

### **Travelers Meet Casa de Milagros**

We at Chandler Sky Foundation are dedicated to helping raise awareness for a new global culture to emerge that lifts the boundaries of discrimination so we can function as one world, one people.

(2009: [HTTP://WWW.CHANDLERSKY.ORG/ABOUT-US.HTML](http://www.chandlersky.org/about-us.html))

Here I provide a snapshot of everyday activities at Casa de Milagros, and a key player to daily-life there is Marie Patton (Kia's daughter and co-founder of Casa de Milagros). While Kia is heavily involved with donations and international relations, Marie works the administrative aspects and oversees daily practices, including everything from getting the children in the van each morning for school to conversing with the judge in Cusco about adoption paperwork. It has been Marie's dream to expand Casa de Milagros' reach with different local projects in villages nearby. Some of those have emerged with the help of volunteers. There are different types of visitors flocking to Casa de Milagros. Some volunteer (and these volunteers emblemize 'advocacy tourists' discussed in the previous section of this chapter), and others briefly pass through as tourists (sometimes just for half an hour!).



It is important to clarify 'multi-cultural care' as I use it in the context of Casa de Milagros. I use 'multi-cultural care' to represent the American expats, residing in Peru, caring for indigenous children. 'Multi-cultural care' also encompasses the transnational actors, such as celebrity advocates, volunteers, and tourists that together sustain the organization. And finally, a crucial element of the multi-cultural model is the indigenous on-site care providers and employees. Together, these individuals with different cultural backgrounds collaborate to form the hybrid Casa de Milagros. During my observations and interviews, the residents often refer to their home as the "Casa de Milagros culture" which illustrates the different ways of life colliding within the home and how they intertwine to create something entirely different.

Casa de Milagros provides food and lodging for travelers, but they have done little to no marketing to attract such individuals. Rather, those seeking advocacy tourism prospects discover Casa de Milagros mainly through their friends, or as I did, through the website. During my four weeks' stay, twelve tourists passed through, staying various durations and having multiple motivations to come. But they all seemed to share a common vision driven by altruistic travel experiences.

Casa de Milagros' website lists epidemics plaguing the Sacred Valley in general. However, they emphasize their *approach* to these situations to accrue funding and present images of their healthy children as opposed to commodifying the children as needy and hungry objects of concern. They provide a brief bio for each child, but instead of listing sad life stories, these vignettes provide the viewer with a quick glimpse of identity characteristics differentiating the uniqueness of each child. The website's viewing audience appears to be predominantly from the Global North, and



several clues inform this assumption. First, they have recently updated their website to a new format. The old format, in English, had a Spanish translation option icon; however, I do not see any alternative language-translating options on the new layout that is presented in English (but, it is new and clearly still under construction, perhaps this is forthcoming). Secondly, all twelve tourists passing through during my stay were from the US, and I have heard about some coming from other “core regions” of the world as well, such as Australia and the UK. Therefore, if many site-visitors do locate Casa de Milagros via the website, as Mama Kia and Marie suggest, and all donations come from countries outside of Latin America, then this indicates who the viewing audience is at least partially composed of. The older version of their website seemed to target the counterculture by emphasizing practices such as: natural medicine cultivation, permaculture (sustainably-aimed organic gardening), yoga benefits and retreats, music benefits and concerts, and, regarding donations, their preference of natural and homeopathic medicines over pharmaceuticals. The newer website, however, offers easier ways to make financial donations online, which appears to be the central focus of its design.

### **‘How can I help?’**

Casa de Milagros is required by Peruvian law to meet all children’s needs via paid employees. Nonetheless, volunteers can: provide the children with attention and care; aid the children with their homework; organize art, gardening, and/or music projects; wash dishes and clothes; clean the kitchen and courtyard; contribute to garden duties; assist at the local soup kitchen orchestrated by the Casa de Milagros founders; gather clothes and necessities for surrounding pueblos; gather firewood, etc. Because the Casa de Milagros administration does not delegate volunteers’ tasks, there is

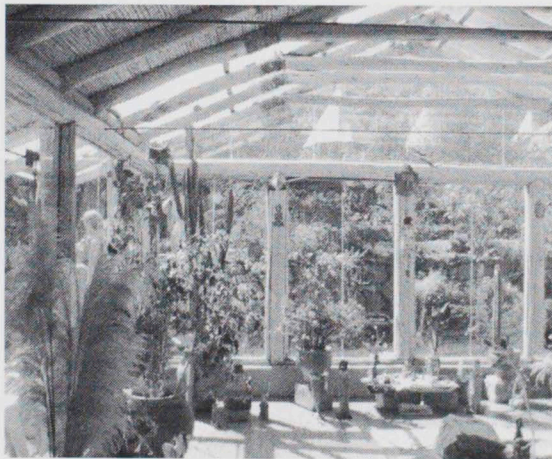
generally (based from my observations and interviews) an awkward transition as each volunteer arrives. Volunteers entering the scene seem to expect an experience similar to the first-day on the job in the US. While they do receive a thorough tour of Casa de Milagros by Marie, they may not be assigned any specific tasks. If the volunteer inquires how they might assist, they are generally suggested to 'have fun with the kids', to pitch in where they see fit, and/or to organize projects for the children on their own accord during certain scheduled times (such as between homework and dinner). Volunteers' presence at Casa de Milagros seems to serve two purposes. First, an ebb and flow of international tourists contributes to the multi-cultural communal-style household that Kia and family seem to embrace. Second, each volunteer pays a daily stipend in return for accommodations and meals, and proceeds support the home. Visitors and volunteers are key sources of income for Casa de Milagros.

Additionally, the directors operate a business that accumulates revenue and volunteers. Drawing on connections made through travels, as well as her 18 years experience operating a similar center in Costa Rica, Mama Kia recently created a yoga retreat center called Hanaq Pacha (where heaven meets the earth in Quechua) near Casa de Milagros (5.1 and 5.2).





**Figure 5.1** Hanaq Pacha. Photo by Morgan McKibben.



**Figure 5.2** Hanaq Pacha. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

All revenue this center makes goes to Casa de Milagros. Many times, people partaking in a retreat become inspired by Casa de Milagros, thus becoming donors. Many yoga practitioners also return as advocacy tourists to volunteer at the multi-cultural home. As Mama Kia says,



Everybody wants to do something good, they just don't always know what. Once you have experienced a place, you are more motivated to become more deeply involved. Every project should open its doors to its funders! (Mama Kia, director, interview July 9, 2008)

I have demonstrated how volunteers provide assistance at Casa de Milagros, and also how they contribute to Casa de Milagros' sustenance in the overall picture. Now I turn to the ways in which volunteers are received by Peruvian residents of the Sacred Valley. I would like to note that geographic literature and fieldwork has informed my analysis of Casa de Milagros. Therefore, observations support some key points and I speculate about others.

### **Openness? Ambivalence? Distaste? A World of Unpredictable Encounters**

In order to explore how residents of the Sacred Valley receive the volunteers flocking to Casa de Milagros, it is first essential to discuss how Kia and immediate family were initially received more than a decade ago. Indigenous communities of the Sacred Valley were skeptical and it was challenging for the American expats to connect with them right away. According to Marie, local communities have strong barriers against people from outside their communities, and are laden with social hierarchies, as discussed in Chapter Three. The struggle is not about cultural difference as much as resistance to community infiltration by others (coming from anywhere outside their immediate community). Marie believes that they would have faced such difficulties (likely to a lesser degree) even had they come from a different village of the Peruvian Highlands because villages are so provincially-oriented. Marie explained the complex relationship and fluidity between mestizo and peasant identities, and claimed that these bipolar categories lead to racial prejudices between individuals *and* communities.

One example of the suspicion they eventually overcame involved the Peruvian forensic team scanning Casa de Milagros' land, searching for the 'missing bodies' reported through hearsay. It is unclear where the suggestion that Casa de Milagros was hiding buried bodies originated, but the directors speculate it to have sourced from an accountant in Cusco who worked for them in the beginning stages (to which they had suspected of embezzling, and subsequently let go). While they do not assume anyone from local villages alerted the forensic team to such speculations because many local communities do not have telephones, word travels fast in the Sacred Valley. Even if residents of the Sacred Valley were not responsible, this occurrence likely informed their initial perception of Casa de Milagros. However, after over 10 years of operating without exhibiting any harmful behaviors, having implemented various community outreach projects, and connecting with local indigenous communities (through midwifery, friendships, kind neighborly gestures, etc), local villagers--according to the directors--have grown to trust the American expats and their intentions. My observations of interactions between local residents and the directors support their claim, that they are now more accepted by local communities.

I attended the Independence Day celebration on July 28, 2008 in Lamay (a small town near Casa de Milagros) with the Casa de Milagros children, papas, and mamas (Figure 5.3).





**Figure 5.3** Independence Day Festival in Lamay. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

I happened to be the only non-Peruvian attendee in the entire town, and as a white Western female, I was the spectacle. The children sensed the attention my positionality garnered and noticed how people stared. The children communicated, non-verbally, their acceptance of my presence to other attendees by hugging me, holding hands, and placing their arms around my back, combating the stares with direct smiles. Perhaps their behavior embraced a wider message that they accept non-Peruvians as acquaintances, and that I was a part of the Casa de Milagros entourage. Once bystanders connected my accompaniment with the children of Casa de Milagros, they seemed less entertained. I suspect that this response reflects a general acceptance of Casa de Milagros' American expat directors in the Sacred Valley.

When I was ready to depart the celebration, the younger children were ready to head home as well, but the papas and mamas wished to stay longer. Therefore, I acquired responsibility of supervising 7 or 8 of the children's 35 minute walk back to Casa de Milagros (ages 6 to 14). The children generally respond to behavioral requests



made by the directors, papas, and mamas, and I was therefore not anticipating a challenge, especially considering my years of experience leading groups of 15 at-risk children on hikes through the woods as an environmental educator. I was unprepared though for how easily the children took advantage of the fact that I have no real control over their behavior or permanency in their lives. I organized games to play while walking, and this focused them momentarily, but overall they ran wild. The children climbed adobe walls, ran close to the river's powerful current, and scurried into the corn fields in all directions. Luckily, we arrived safely to Casa de Milagros intact, but I felt as though I had been taken advantage of.

Casa de Milagros' paid employees are from nearby indigenous communities. Each spends five nights per/week sleeping in the children's quarters, and has two days off to spend with their local families. The indigenous employees (on-site care-providers aka mamas and papas; cooks; laundry personnel; garden tenders; administrative personnel) each seem to respond to the constant flux of international tourists differently. Some are extremely welcoming and aim to assure the comfort of each guest, while others are ambivalent. Then there are those who are opposed to non-Peruvian houseguests, and they emanate distaste for volunteers' presence. Often times, they congregate and chat negatively about volunteers in Spanish; however, if they discover the volunteer speaks Spanish, they quickly change hats. Volunteers coming to Casa de Milagros have various levels of language capabilities, and those with heightened aptitudes seem to gain acceptance and formulate bonds with residents, generally speaking. I suppose it is the employees' way of hazing the plight of transnational volunteers entering their home. Clearly, volunteers visiting Casa de Milagros each have

different motivations and backgrounds. It seems the indigenous employees use language capabilities to gauge possible degrees of communication and connection. Those with weak to no Spanish-speaking skills are quickly cast into a group to be ignored and pestered. This could also reflect a rejection of paternalistic, pompous Western mannerisms. This is *not* to say that all volunteers without Spanish-speaking abilities embody condescending sentiments, but the indigenous employees seem offended when transnational tourists enter their home without capacities to communicate. On the other hand, they do not treat volunteers who are capable of communicating via their language as a waste of their time. They react to the ability to connect and create friendships. Some might presume ethnicity and/or nationality would determine the residents' and volunteers' abilities to relate; however, the notable patterns of inclusion/exclusion I observed were predominantly related to language-speaking abilities.

Based on my observations of the children's behavior towards volunteers, for the most part I did not perceive negative feelings from the younger children. The children--a constant flurry running in and out of the volunteers' rooms--hop into laps, on bunkbeds and chairs, *expecting* attention, chocolate, and toys. The children have therefore learned that they can look forward to handouts from all volunteers. They are also eager to learn about musical tastes of people coming from different parts of the world. They truly delight in playing with volunteers' cameras and ipods, and drawing pictures with volunteers. In addition to the structured time space set by the papas and mamas for homework, the children often seek volunteers' guidance with their homework in the evenings. The children hug and tickle (each other and volunteers) often, and take pleasure in trading language practice with volunteers. The older teenage boys are more



reserved towards female volunteers. They are keen to learn of Western-based musical artists, and appreciate when volunteers participate in sports games, such as volleyball, soccer, and kickball. They appear to connect with male volunteers more comfortably. The older girls are highly interested in female volunteers. They inquire about each volunteer's personal romances, and enjoy playing with makeup and learning dance techniques and styles. Although I have just provided broad generalizations, it is important to note that each volunteer is received differently by--and interacts differently with--each individual living at Casa de Milagros. Here I profile a few different volunteers.

It was Jenny's second trip to Casa de Milagros, and she was eager to learn administrative tactics with hopes of starting a similar multi-cultural home in Guatemala. This time, she did not travel alone. She brought her long-time friend and college roommate from years back, Bobby. Bobby was a sorority mom (if you will) who also brought her 16 year old daughter and 17 year old niece. Jenny's Spanish was good; however, Bobby's was elementary if that and the younger girls spoke none. Bobby and the two teenage girls were quite accustomed to Western perceptions of cleanliness in all manners of the word, and clearly did not adapt well to practices at Casa de Milagros, even though they might have been sanitary practices (though I must admit, not *all* were). They attempted to practice their usual lifestyle in a landscape different from their home and therefore embraced a condescending Western geographic imagination.

Bobby's adolescent girls embodied the 'discourse of luck' by reiterating how "lucky they are" to have what they have and be placed as they are in the world. This shaped their perception of--and experience with--the 'other' Peruvian children of Casa



de Milagros. Their pity saddened them, not their privilege. They said, "It just makes me so sad to see such living conditions," which seemed to (re)enforce condescending sentiments from their perspective. They established an uneven relationship with the children living at Casa de Milagros, and differentiated between their normal daily life back in Arizona and the 'others'. Considering themselves served 'lucky' at the hand of fate enabled a distance between wealth and poverty as opposed to recognizing their interconnected nature. I do not mean to invalidate the life changing experience these American tourists had and will likely never forget. But what Bobby and the two teenage girls missed was the global forces that have caused a family to be unable to care for their child.

Brian (also from the states), spoke Spanish fluently. He traveled to Peru 20 years prior as a Mormon missionary seeking to 'save' Peruvians by converting them to his (at the time) faith. When I met Brian last summer, he had returned with the goal of reconciling with Peruvian people. He also seemed to seek personal solace by righting his previous actions within himself. He seemed to connect well with the inhabitants of Casa de Milagros, and stayed for 4 months as a volunteer. He spoke Spanish well, and was able to establish relationships with the employees. The children appeared comfortable around--and fond of--him. Another volunteer, Jen, has visited Casa de Milagros four times now, and is deeply committed to her relationships with the residents (Figure 5.4).



**Figure 5.4** Volunteer with a Casa de Milagros Child. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

She speaks Spanish fluently, and the children adore her, as do the papas and mamas. Jen is from a Pilipino family who now resides in New York, and she grew up speaking Spanish in her neighborhood. At Casa de Milagros, she generally has at least two children (always different individuals) curled up in her bunk bed, sharing her ipod, and she often initiates dance parties with the children. The older girls confide in, and admire her. She is self-motivated and directed, which the papas and mamas appreciate. Not all volunteers construct personal projects with the children as she does. Rather, many wait to be told what to do. Jen is quoted on their new website saying, "...the Casa is like my second home...that's why I've come back four times to volunteer! *Jenny Armas - Frequent Volunteer*" (2009: <http://www.chandlersky.org/about-us.html>). She has tickets and plans to return again this May (2009). Another Volunteer, Rebecca, was an American from a mixed family of African and Venezuelan descent, whose appearance was quite distinct from the Quechua residents; however, she was fluent in Spanish and was therefore accepted promptly upon arrival. Finally, Heather was an American whose family is from the Dominican Republic. Her demeanor was closer to that of the



residents than some of the other volunteers, but her Spanish was basic, and she did not relate to the residents as deeply as some of the others noted above.

### **Next Stop: Casa de Milagros**

Casa de Milagros' directors also derive donations from tourists who purchase a package tour that passes through their home. These caravans are quite literally provided with a walk-through tour of Casa de Milagros. I am unsure why Casa de Milagros is included as a part of package tours for tourists seeking to experience Peru, but the children told me that tourists (generally speaking) want to see a Peruvian "orphanage." This negotiation benefits Casa de Milagros financially. Some tour guides are acquainted with residents of Casa de Milagros and suggest donations to their tour bus prior to arrival. When donations are not prompted, tourists often do not donate. Kia says a few tourists passing through with large groups such as these have returned to Casa de Milagros as volunteers. I felt caravans of Westerners descending upon Casa de Milagros placed the residents on display. It seemed, therefore awkward and disrespectful in some instances. For example, a group of 15 to 20 college professors from Ft. Worth, Texas descended during my stay. None spoke Spanish, and each emphasized the purpose of their trip (in English): to 'experience' Peruvian culture. They were loud and obnoxious, and seemed uncomfortable about the fact that they could not communicate with the residents. They were only able to speak English to Marie and the volunteers, and yet they came to *observe* Casa de Milagros and all residents there. They created tension among the residents (and me) by neglecting to be mindful of their presence and its effects. By reiterating their personal travel plans and stories in English, instead of aiming to observe and participate, they accentuated their personal identities as



Westerners. Therefore, they also avoided cross-community understandings and the supposed purpose of their trip. However, considering that the duration of their visit lasted a mere half hour, more or less, the range for establishing connections with anyone seems limited.

According to Kia and Marie, a community development non-profit with headquarters in the US, Global Routes, conducts an annual two-week training program at Casa de Milagros. Global Routes organizes teams of high school students, led by two adults per group that disperse throughout different countries across the Global South and carry out community development projects. After the two week training at Casa de Milagros, which introduces the high school students to Peruvian ways of life, small groups of high school students disperse among villages throughout Peru and undertake specific community projects such as building water filtration systems, libraries, bridges, etc. The group left the week before I arrived at Casa de Milagros. On the one hand, I can *assume* (some of) the adolescent volunteers' geographic imagination is colored with condescending conceptions that these impoverished villages have needs to best be met by Westerners. I assume this to be so because these are teenagers who have traveled for a specific purpose: to address geographies of need. This opportunity provides young Westerners with one way to picture themselves as global environmental citizens, but potentially neglects a means for collective understanding. On the other hand, the residents all spoke highly of the Global Routes and their visit. The children told stories of the transnational tourists they met and activities they did together, and the directors said having them was a pleasure. Therefore, Global Routes may indeed operate differently than those Simpson (2004) describes. Global Routes might in fact focus on

multi-cultural, collective understandings of all parties involved, as opposed to centralizing on the individual experience.

### **Community Outreach Projects**

The Casa de Milagros directors have initiated several other local humanitarian projects. They coordinate a local soup kitchen, Sopa Del Día, in the nearby impoverished village of Saclo. According to Kia and Marie, the soup kitchen feeds 110 elderly and young community members three times each week. It has been operating for four years now, and is annually funded by the Ananda Foundation, a non-profit with headquarters in Boston and Hawaii, whose aim is to:

.... alleviate the suffering of individuals and families in the poorest communities through sustainable grassroots initiatives aimed at local empowerment, access to health services, and educational opportunities, in an effort to fulfill basic human rights, embracing a spirit of compassion and service to all humanity. (2009: <http://www.anandafoundation.org/mission/Mission%20-%20Ananda%20Foundation.htm>)

Volunteers put Marie's dream--to mobilize the soup kitchen-- into action. Two Australian tourists volunteering at Casa de Milagros contacted friends and family back in Australia to muster initial financial donations. Marie and family had been slowly piecing the project together when the donations outfitted the kitchen in Saclo with essentials such as a stove, the floor, pots and pans, and funding for the first few months. The Australian volunteers then composed a grant proposal and contacted the Ananda Foundation. The Australians successfully received the grant and handled all subsequent paperwork for Casa de Milagros. The result was a continuous and nutritious food supply for the community of Saclo. An American advocacy tourist has donated seed money to start another soup kitchen, Sopa de Esperanza, in another local impoverished pueblo.

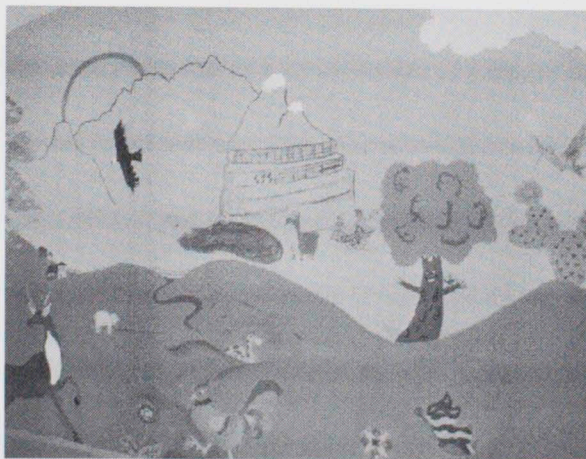


This further illustrates the concept of transnational actors from the Global North taking information to core regions of the world and drawing funds and donors back to the Global South. The Australian volunteers represent one strand of the multi-cultural web sustaining Casa de Milagros and its affiliated projects.

I visited Sopa del Día several times with a few other volunteers. We painted a mural on their wall and played with the children at Saclo's far less privileged schoolhouse (Figures 5.5 and 5.6).



**Figure 5.5** Saclo School. Photo by Casa de Milagros Volunteer.



**Figure 5.6** Mural at Saclo's Soup Kitchen. Photos by Morgan McKibben

The children in Saclo's school appeared needier of attention than the children of Casa de Milagros, who seem to expect attention rather than respond to a lack of it. The



indigenous cooks in Saclo were far more welcoming to--and appreciative of--international volunteers than the cooks at Casa de Milagros, perhaps because they do not encounter transnational tourists on a daily basis.

Another example of community outreach undertaken by Kia and Marie is midwifery practice. According to Kia and Marie, many impoverished women cannot afford to utilize Cusco's hospital services for childbirth. Therefore, Kia and Marie have for many years delivered many local children. They also try to supply expectant mothers with organic, home-grown vegetables, fruits, and grains throughout pregnancy while offering the women health-based educational support. According to Kia and Marie, the state, however, increasingly discourages natural home births because of high mortality rates in general and also because the state does not benefit financially when women do not use state services. Therefore, Kia and Marie have shied away from offering home births, but still supply expectant mothers with pre-natal care and education.

Yet another outreach program the orphanage's directors have undertaken is a summer school in Saclo. Last year, 120 students attended the free educational opportunity. The Casa de Milagros pays local teachers for the summer with donations sent to the Chandler Sky Foundation. Advocacy tourists who speak Spanish fluently can plug in here, as I was told they have in the past. Additionally, Marie and I discussed this as an option if the microcredit loan from Whole Foods (discussed in chapter one) is successful and a team of volunteers arrives. This project is, in my opinion, unquestionably worthy of a grant because of the exceptional numbers of attendees last summer (according to Marie), and also because Casa de Milagros pays teachers out of

donations sent to Chandler Sky. No Casa de Milagros employees are trained in grant writing yet, although Marie aspires to learn in the near future.

### **Responsible Geographies: Searching for the Pristine Model?**

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that distant models of caring are problematic because they often commodify the 'needy' with visual images and supply web-surfers a means to feel self-gratified by clicking on an image of a distant stranger and donating. This distant model does not incorporate meaningful experiences or understandings, and ultimately fails to accommodate long-term sustainability and change. The tourist-volunteer practices I have reviewed suggest that Casa de Milagros' model is different from those providing care from a distance. This home offers various routes for direct involvement and potential for establishing multi-cultural relationships, such as those between the directors, indigenous and American expat children, indigenous employees, and volunteers. Their philosophy of opening Casa de Milagros' doors to potential funders seems financially beneficial, because it allows donors to witness the integrity of the organization. In *some* respects, however, it appears to place the children and their home on display for Westerners seeking a way to bolster their personal egos by feeling more wholesome. Therefore, what are the alternatives to Casa de Milagros' alternatives? Is there a perfect model? Indeed, there cannot be.

Unfortunately, discrimination continues to be a problem despite the directors' best intentions to address it. Three of Marie and Allan's four biological (American expat) children attend a private Catholic School where the other students are indigenous children from nearby settlements (their youngest daughter has not yet begun school). Each of the three children blends in differently. The oldest says she likes her classmates



and has assimilated quite well. The two middle children say they are subject to racist remarks and are less comfortable attending. According to Marie, one child has recently developed coping mechanisms, such as deviance and manipulation. The other child wishes to stay home more often than not. Marie and Allan (her husband) struggle to find effective means of handling these emotions. This is one problem they encounter through their endeavors of multi-cultural care. Because of challenges such as this, during my visit Marie and Allan mentioned their desire to find replacements someday soon and move back to the US. They said they worry they might be compromising their biological children's well-being because they are firmly committed to the emotional well-being of their 29 adopted children. The directors' best attempts to address racial prejudices via emersion are impacting their biological children.

Busting the binary *us* versus *them* categories, enabling alternative means of acting responsibly, and accruing funding to support their family appears to be the goals of Casa de Milagros' multi-cultural care. The directors' unwavering dedication to their children's personal growth appears to be their coping strategy for constant international encounters. Although Kia and family cannot account for each individual tourist's interactions passing through Casa de Milagros, by closely attending to each child's needs and fostering the strength of each child's personal identity they aim to enable the children to shape their own perspective of such encounters. It is to Casa de Milagros' perceived best practices that I now turn to discuss multi-cultural care, and some specific ways in which Casa de Milagros focuses on each child's needs and identity, more deeply.



## **Ch. 6 Geographies of Care and Concern: Emotional Work at Casa de Milagros**

Through participation-observation and in-depth qualitative interviews, I gained a sense of the multi-cultural geographies of care and related practices encouraging the emotional well-being of the children living at Casa de Milagros. This chapter focuses on the Casa de Milagros directors' vision of their 'best practices'. That is to say that I review the techniques considered to be most effective at delivering a particular outcome, which in this case is enabling their children to become productive citizens of Peru. Central to their strategies are the ways in which Casa de Milagros' children shape--and are shaped by--their emotional experiences. This home offers Peruvian indigenous families an alternative to traditional practices of child circulation. In the following, I explore how the children's emotions are understood at Casa de Milagros, and how the organization both recognizes and reconfigures the children's socio-spatial relationships. These children have endured tremendous emotional trauma, but all signs indicate that their resilience prevails. This chapter takes a deeper look at the multi-cultural care underway at Casa de Milagros.

This chapter illustrates 'multi-cultural care' in the Casa de Milagros context by discussing some cultural lines that are embraced and others that are drawn and/or crossed. The directors adhere to local Peruvian cultural activities in a variety of ways, and others they seek to alter. When I asked the directors, employees, and children how they characterize the culture of Casa de Milagros, inquiring whether they perceive it as 'more' American or 'more' Peruvian, they were often baffled. After pondering the

question, their response was generally “both *and* neither.” As mentioned in chapter five, they unanimously refer to their way of life as the “Casa de Milagros culture.” The “Casa de Milagros culture”, or model of multi-cultural care, can be understood through several examples. First are the ways in which the directors modify their agendas in a way that is culturally sensitive to the identity-heritage context from whence the Casa de Milagros kids came from (Figure 6.1).



**Figure 6.1** Casa de Milagros Kitchen. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

The indigenous on-site care providers address the children’s culturally-specific needs that the directors are not equipped to handle. The directors recognize their inadequacies in regards to such needs and heavily rely on their colleagues, the indigenous *mamas* and *papas*, to attend to those. For example, the directors do not enforce strict religious preferences or practices, and *Mama Kia* in particular does not adhere to any one specific religious belief. Catholicism is prevalent in the Sacred Valley. The indigenous ‘*mamas* and *papas*’ attend Catholic Church weekly, and the children often choose to join them. Casa de Milagros also houses communal celebrations undertaken by local community members, such as the *Virgin Del Carmen* Festival that they celebrated during my visit



(Figure 6.2). Local community members arranged and oversaw the entire production, and the directors hosted the celebration and enjoyed attending.



**Figure 6.2** Virgin del Carmen Festival at Casa de Milagros. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

There are also ways in which Casa de Milagros differs from traditional households in the rural highlands. For instance, Casa de Milagros' directors and paid employees are in place to support the children's needs at all times of each day. It is their job, and they have no other labor requirements. Generally speaking, indigenous families love their children, but many are not afforded the time to love in a constantly reaffirming way. Their love is often expressed by working long hours to sustain their children. The parent-child relationship at Casa de Milagros differs from the traditional idealistic world-view of having one mother and one father. Instead, these children have seven mothers and two fathers, all providing constant attention. Thanks to the generosity of Woody Harrelson and his entourage, there is not a dire scramble everyday



to feed people. Rather, the love they are afforded to share with one another means more direct attention and involvement. They therefore strive to focus on each individual child's needs, interests, and development. The multi-cultural care underway at Casa de Milagros can be further conceptualized by examining child circulation and the directors' aim to break the centuries old cycle.

Placing a child in a traditional orphanage can be understood in some cases through a lens of geographies of hope. As I have discussed in chapter three, strategic placement has its risks, but families often turn to an orphanage as a safe space in moments of desperation. In Peru's institutions, parental rights are not necessarily terminated. This flexibility allows parents and family members to seek out orphanages for various reasons. Sometimes a parent or parents are unable to provide adequate care. Maybe a childless elder needs assistance. Often, better educational and/or employment opportunities lie outside the family's home. Many poor women must migrate to find work, leaving a child or children behind. All too often these mobile children's travels began with tragedy. According to Leinaweaver, however, children's circulation offers *hope* for a better future (Leinaweaver 2007, 379-380). Whatever the driving forces may be leading parents and families to seek out traditional orphanages, the outcome of such placements vary. Several possible outcomes can result from a child's placement in an orphanage: the child could be temporarily or seasonally interned; internment could shift into permanency; and/or the child could be adopted by a new family, perhaps from a different country (Leinaweaver 2007). Now I want to discuss the ways in which Casa de Milagros is different. The administrators respectfully *recognize* and *reconfigure* the

emotions and families of the children coming to live at Casa de Milagros, as members of an *extended* family.

### **An Alternative Model: Changing Tradition through Multi-Cultural Care**

Children's hopes coexist with what may strike us (observers who are not experiencing forced mobility) as great uncertainty. For example, children likely wonder when their next move will come and to where they will relocate, who will be there, what will be expected of them, etc. Casa de Milagros is different with its holistic and family focus. Mama Kia visited a traditional orphanage run by the Catholic Church in Lamay before establishing Casa de Milagros. Her experience there shaped her vision of the type of home she aspired to create. Mama Kia and family aim to offer their children different forms of hope by providing certainty and stability in their home. Shaped by Mama Kia's emotional investment, Casa de Milagros is unlike traditional orphanages run by the Catholic Church. Orchestrated by firm nuns set on providing discipline and structure for the transient children who are moving in and out all the time, these institutions often lack emotional comforts and warm affections (Leinaweaver 2008; Kia, personal interview). Casa de Milagros aims to stop child circulation because they believe it creates uncertainties, and induces trauma. At the same time, while they seek to limit what are often uncertain and traumatic mobilities part and parcel of child circulation, they offer a different cultural framework for identifying hopes of (social) mobility, such as educational or employment opportunities. Casa de Milagros' goal is to prepare the children to be in control of their own mobilities.

Casa de Milagros offers shelter, food, survival skills/training, education, and access to medical care. So do many orphanages. What is distinct about Casa de



Milagros is that Kia focuses on familial, emotional, and *stable* support. In addition to recognizing the children's hopes and potential social mobilities sparked by educational and employment factors, Mama Kia (Figure 6.3) aims to reconfigure the sense of 'family' along communal lines as only a California free spirit can. Working alongside her daughter Marie and son-in-law Allan, Kia strives to halt child circulation because she and her immediate family (in effect the administrators of Casa de Milagros) believe it destabilizes the children's emotional well-being. One way to see this multi-cultural strategy is as a 'Western' import, albeit *one* of many different 'Western' models available for import and application, into the Sacred Valley.



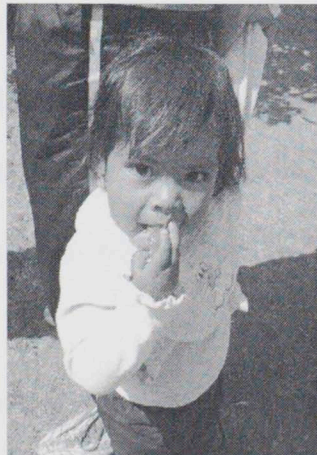
**Figures 6.3** Mural of Mama Kia at Casa de Milagros. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

Casa de Milagros does not allow adoptions by other families. Aiming to stop children's uncertain and risky mobility, Kia has gained legal custody of each child. According to Peruvian law, the children's custody is afforded to the Chandler Sky Foundation. Kia and family undertook this strategy to prevent child relocation in the event that anything was to happen to the directors. This way, in the event of an



unforeseen circumstance, such as if Marie and her family depart from Peru, the children would remain wards of the Foundation. This would allow the board members of Chandler Sky to locate new directors to oversee Casa de Milagros' operations.

In Mama Kia's world, Casa de Milagros is not an orphanage, but rather a big boisterous family. Kia and family have already adopted these children into their hearts as well as their home. The children are not simply waiting in a temporary location to be adopted by someone else. Recognizing the importance of family, Kia insists that Casa de Milagros' doors are always open to anyone wishing to visit the children. Although, I was told by the Casa de Milagros personnel and the kids themselves that most children have never received a visitor. To provide as much stability as possible, Mama Kia and her family seek custody of siblings whenever they can. During my stay, Kia was busy with paperwork, aiming to get custody of their youngest baby's siblings who were living in the orphanage of Lamay (Figure 6.4).



**Figure 6.4** Casa de Milagros' youngest (at the time of my stay). Photo by Morgan McKibben

There is not room at Casa de Milagros to take in all children needing refuge and the directors have turned away many cases. However, to prevent the children's separation and isolation, Casa de Milagros will always make extra room for siblings.

Kia and her daughter's family seek to address what they see as the emotional instabilities of child internment in traditional institutions, continuous shuffling between households, and/or unfortunate adoption. To provide stability for the children's upbringing, parents cannot return and take them when children reach a capable age (generally 5+) for working in the agricultural fields. In other orphanages in Peru, this is a common survival strategy families undertake (Leinaweaver 2007). The guardians who seek out Casa de Milagros as a refuge for children, therefore, give up all legal rights of the child to Casa de Milagros. According to Kia and Marie, the guardians recognize this will terminate the circulation process by signing documentation that gives their legal rights to Casa de Milagros. Despite this difference, Casa de Milagros never had to market their home. Word-of-mouth quickly spread throughout the Valley, and families unable to provide adequate care for their children flocked to this opportunity, although Casa de Milagros can only take in as many children as they can provide care for. It appears that families leaving children with Casa de Milagros are amenable to this new sense of hope through stability.

### **Multi Cultural Care: Beneficial? Problematic? Both?**

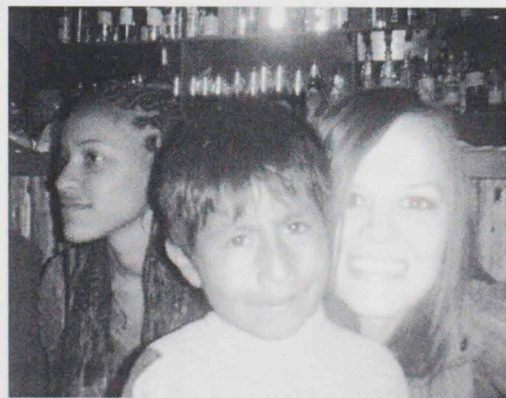
And yet, does Casa de Milagros offer the stability that Kia and family hope for? As I discussed in Chapter Five, the house is open to international volunteers year-round, and these visitors may interact as closely with the children as they like. My experience at Casa de Milagros suggests that the children, generally speaking, are approachable and



comfortable with the volunteers (see figures 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7). Kia and family offer a model of care that seems valuable in some respects, but could be problematic in others. Consider, for example, that at least three times per day, one of the children would jump into my lap and ask me “when are you leaving?” *every day*. Through observations and conversations with other volunteers I learned that all were regularly asked the same. Therefore, the communal-style household with its steady flow of transient tourists, mostly from other countries, passing in and out could perhaps contradict the sense of stability that Casa de Milagros has worked hard to assure. It would appear that a fear of loss continues to be a daily concern for the children. Because many tourists visit multiple times, the second question is always “when?” The children most likely recognize the circulation patterns of tourists.



**Figure 6.5** Volunteers at Casa de Milagros. Photo by Casa de Milagros child.



**Figure 6.6** Volunteers at Casa de Milagros. Photo by Casa de Milagros child.





**Figure 6.7** Volunteers at Casa de Milagros. Photo by Casa de Milagros child.

### **(Ad)dressing Emotional Wounds at Casa de Milagros**

According to Mama Kia, the US emphasizes isolated incidents of trauma shock and wounds by constantly reiterating the need to sift through them in order to heal. However, this approach will not necessarily ring true for children whose entire lives have been fraught with trauma. Mama Kia questions the Western clinical approach to nurturing emotional wounds in the context of abandoned children of the Sacred Valley. She suspects that prior to arriving at Casa de Milagros, most of the children have been beaten, physically and/or sexually abused, witness to traumatic experiences such as the death of family members or the devastation of their community. None arrived with a single possession aside from the clothes on their backs. All were malnourished, and malnutrition depletes body functions, stimulates panic for survival, erodes vital brain and organ functions, and exhausts energy levels, and so on. Casa de Milagros approaches these emotional wounds in ways that differ from the contemporary clinical models characterizing many Western institutions.

Being a midwife and decade-long resident of the Sacred Valley, Mama Kia has encountered some of the traumas her children have endured. More than once, she has cut the umbilical cord to release a surviving newborn from its deceased mother's body with the babe's siblings bearing witness. She knows many local young girls who have babies after being dragged into the corn fields against their will and raped. Some of the babies have ended up at Casa de Milagros. According to Kia, alcoholism has fueled the physical and/or sexual abuse of many of the children who now live at Casa de Milagros. Other children were delivered to Casa de Milagros by loving families seeking alternative futures for their children because they were too poor to provide adequate care. According to Mama Kia, when the children first arrive at Casa de Milagros, the children are closed up and self-conscious because of the traumatic emotional events they have experienced. Indeed, some arrive temporarily catatonic, lacking the ability to make eye contact. Surely, fear of violence, sadness, and hunger compound their anxieties about a new home.

Recognizing this situation, the Casa de Milagros family approaches these emotions with care.

Love isn't just a word here. It means action. It means attention. Even though there are 29 of them, each one is an individual. They function very differently from one another. They are allowed to be who they are while, at the same time, getting the attention they need to feel like they matter to someone in the world (Mama Kia, video <http://enlightenedconcierge.com/html/outreach/>).

With this engaged definition of love, the directors of Casa de Milagros strive to provide a safe space in addition to regular schooling, a stable diet, and emotional support. Their goal is to express to their children that, "this is your daily life NOW. You have the



support and tools to follow your passions and become the person you hope to be. No one will hurt you here” (Mama Kia, personal interview). They seem to focus more on collectively moving toward the future than harping on the past, and to emphasize the safe environment Casa de Milagros provides.

At Casa de Milagros the children’s agency to assist one another’s emotional health is most certainly recognized. The directors rely on other children, who previously encountered similar geographies of fear to take the lead in facilitating a sense of emotional safety (Kia, personal interview). It is important to highlight the emotional bonds the children share. They have endured similar transformations, and have aided one another through each individual’s process. Through living with one another as a family, they *seem* to have evolved through their traumatic emotions together with resilience (Figure 6.8).



**Figure 6.8** Casa de Milagros Kids. Photo by Morgan McKibben.

An example Kia shared with me as an illustration of the kid’s emotional bonds was their response to the death of one of their ‘sisters’, who died of lupus in January, 2008. Dressing her in her quinceñera (traditional birthday celebration for girls turning 15 years



old) gown, she was placed in her coffin. All the children slept on the floor in her room together to prevent her from 'sleeping alone' (Kia, personal interview).

The loss of a loved one, daughter, sister, dear friend opened our hearts to each other in a new way. The grieving process has many facets and phases, each unique to the individual and yet can be recognized by the family. It is such a personal process, yet in a loving and caring environment it can also be a community process. Our love for L.M. has not lessened; her presence is still missed in so many ways and on so many days. We are however walking into the future with our heads high and our hearts full of hope (Personal email from Marie).

My observations and interviews indicate that, while the children are provided room to share stories and fears from their pasts, Casa de Milagros sets an overall ambiance to collectively reconcile as a family, and the directors strategize ways to instill hope in their children.

### **Finding Talent, Finding Comfort**

Casa de Milagros periodically produces performances of theater, song, and dance. According to the administrators, these performances are *not* the sorts of traditional folkloric performances for tourists' sake. Rather, Casa de Milagros facilitates the children's travels to different indigenous orphanages, schools, and villages in the Valley in order help the children find comfort in their own bodies, their own voice, and personal pride. They were not producing any theatrical performances during my stay; however, the children showed me pictures of their performances from the past. They were dressed in costumes as animals and trees in some photos, and traditional Andean attire in others. The children expressed avid pride and excitement about their performances, and Kia said future plays were in the works.

Whatever their individual inspirations, talents, and passions may be, they are encouraged to pursue them and are offered the means to do so, provided they are financially feasible (Kia and Marie, personal interview). The children are taught essential life skills such as sustainably-aimed gardening, but because agriculture is seen as an inferior livelihood in the Sacred Valley, most (if not all) of the children choose to seek out other skills as well (Allan, personal interview). This is perhaps an unintended consequence: by providing the children with hopes for different mobilities in the context of the Sacred Valley, the children not learning agricultural skills--which are deemed essential for other children in the area--*to the same degree*. When asked what they aspire to be when they grow up, I was told (among others) teacher, famous sports player, musician, and secretary. They all attend regular private schooling, and most are involved in sports and music. Some of the children play all types of music in a band, having evolved through the music teacher who visits weekly, hired by Casa de Milagros. They are learning mostly guitar, but some pursue the keyboard. They recently played their first concert in Cusco, and according to Marie, received a warm and wholehearted response from the audience. Apparently, the children's original song composition was the "best in the show" (Marie's words, coming from a proud mom) and the audience was highly impressed with their talent (Marie, personal email).

### **Hoping for the Future at Casa de Milagros**

On the one hand, the directors of Casa de Milagros eschew clinical models of therapy in recognition of the emotional support the children provide one another. On the other hand, Kia and her family adamantly refuse to operate along the lines of child circulation that have been common practice in the Andes for centuries. They do so



because they believe the traditional model of circulation too often lands the children on the streets of Cusco. Sometimes because extended family's home options are exhausted. And, many children become young adults without access to land (Marie, personal interview). According to Marie, the overarching goal of this organization is:

...to create a family environment where the children can become loving living beings that will help to change the next generation in their own country by going into their communities to make a difference. This way, change does not always necessitate foreign involvement, and these children can be catalysts (Marie Patton, Casa de Milagros Director).

The hope is that consistent practices will become engrained in the children's behaviors, and they will grow up to become productive Peruvian citizens who help others and resist racial prejudices. According to Marie, this is the only way to break the cycles of orphaned, abandoned, and abused children (Marie, personal interview).

Most likely, the true repercussions and effectiveness of their techniques will remain unknown until the children are grown. In the future, Mama Kia envisions grown children building their own home nearby. Not only would this to create new openings for children at the orphanage, but former residents would extend the large, but cohesive family into a community. Toward this aim, Mama Kia works to purchase adjoining property. She has also implemented a yoga retreat center that can employ interested children when they are grown. Additionally, when I departed in August of 2008 Casa de Milagros personnel were busy researching options for funding if the children choose to attend a university (Kia, personal interview). I have since received an email update. Their oldest son has greatly enjoyed his first six months of culinary school at the Blue Ribbon International Gastronomy Institute in Cusco where he is in the top of his class. Their second oldest graduated from high school in December and then passed a



challenging entrance exam for the university in Cusco. The first Casa de Milagros child to attend a university, he begins studying systems engineering in May 2009 (Marie, personal email).

The emotional and structural commitments in place at Casa de Milagros differ from the traditional Catholic institution. Geographer Carolyn Gaskell argues that the absence of children's hope in their ability to initiate change is a learned response derived from negative experiences of disrespected citizenship (Gaskell 2008), where institutionalized experiences of disrespected citizenship negate hopes for change. Casa de Milagros fosters a culture of respect and encouragement that offers a hope for a new sort of social mobility that is less risky. The children of Casa de Milagros are offered a different kind of hope and are able to create their own vision of their futures, instead of inheriting life-work and livelihoods, or living on the streets of Cusco.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes is a medical anthropologist who studies, among other things, globalization, vulnerability, resilience, and the commodification of children's bodies. She reminds us that humans are indeed fragile beings, but not everyone nurses emotional wounds in the same way after facing tragedy. Most humans do live in an era of post traumatic stress syndrome, but it is experienced differently by different people and communities, depending on their geographical location and political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. According to Scheper-Hughes, the majority of the world's impoverished populations live in a state of constant trauma. As recognition of these geographies of fear grow and transnational charity grows along with it, the manners in which Westerners handle post traumatic stress syndrome may be inappropriately imposed on these people through outreach programming. Scheper-

Hughes does not deny the existence of trauma, but she underscores impoverished people's methods of resilience and abilities to reconcile and survive (Scheper-Hughes guest presentation at OU: February 13, 2009). It seems to me, Mama Kia and her family envision alternative futures for their children through a similar lens. Instead of harping on the fact that their children may have been abused, neglected, and malnourished, the directors provide the children with attention and support, and emphasize moving forward *as a family unit*. Though the multi-cultural model that Casa de Milagros embraces may not be unproblematic (and I cannot personally imagine a completely unblemished model), they offer a view of an alternative future and a steady community of support that seems to instill individuals with hope that their worlds can indeed take different forms.

## **Chapter 7 Conclusion: Contemplating Mobilities**

This chapter emphasizes the spatial configuration of actors working across national borders to sustain Casa de Milagros. I also discuss children's mobilities in the context of the Sacred Valley. Casa de Milagros' directors aim to limit mobilities associated with child circulation, but strive to offer new prospects for social mobilities. Considering the plethora of Western approaches to child care that operate across national borders, it is important to evaluate such associations critically. Drawing from my case study, I examine the potential impacts Casa de Milagros' multi-cultural care has on the residents of the home. Finally, I explore the emotional geographies of geographers who seek to contribute more than theoretically.

### **Viewing Advocacy through the Lens of Emotional Geographies**

This research contributes to recent theorizations about emotional geographies articulated by critical geographers who emphasize how emotions underscore the spatiality of social relations. Specifically, I explore a small-scale social movement stimulated by collective emotional commitments. Emotions urge activists to advocate for others and these emotional connections foster the spatial relations that span the globe and maintain Casa de Milagros. In addition to the key actors working across national borders for Casa de Milagros, the American expat directors—driven by their socio-political commitments—operate Casa de Milagros in the Sacred Valley. Various emotionally compelled transnational advocates visit Casa de Milagros and some cultivate cross-border relationships with the home's residents in Peru.



Casa de Milagros illustrates how emotions are embedded in place. However, embeddedness is not dependent on relations of physical geographic proximity (Bosco 2006). This non-profit organization relies upon an assortment of transnational advocates who work to various degrees to maintain the organization. Casa de Milagros brings together grassroots actors like Kia, volunteers like Jen, Brian, and Bobby, and celebrity advocates like Woody Harrelson. Indeed, celebrity advocates play a substantial role in the maintenance of Casa de Milagros. Woody Harrelson, Kia's long-time friend, helped bring the home to life, and has introduced Kia to many actors and artists who contribute significantly to the operation of Casa de Milagros. It is costly to maintain such a large family and without external support their efforts could not be sustained. The emotional basis for the charitable external contributions sustains the health and well-being of the indigenous children living at this Peruvian home.

Such emotional convictions and commitment brought Kia and family's attention to the plight of abandoned children in the Sacred Valley and to some of the historical and political forces influencing child circulation. One outcome of these forces is the existence of social hierarchies, which often force risky mobility in the highlands. Child circulation is a case in point, because of the uncertainty potentially felt by the mobile child (or at least what may seem uncertain to observers who are not experiencing child circulation). For instance, children may wonder where they will end up next, who will be there, what will be expected of them, if their stay will be temporary or permanent, and so on. Peruvian indigenous families often undertake child circulation as a survival strategy, utilizing other family or community members' homes, and often times local orphanages. Whatever the forces driving families to relocate their children may be,

there are several possible outcomes when placed in a traditional Andean orphanage where parental rights are not necessarily terminated. The child's stay could be temporary, where the parents return when more financially-equipped to adequately care for them, or once the child reaches a capable age to work the agricultural fields. The child's stay could shift into permanency if the above instances do not occur. Or, the child could be adopted by another family, perhaps from a different country. Therefore, the child's placement in an orphanage is risky because adoption by another family is always a possibility but may not be the outcome the family hopes for.

Child circulation may have been common practice for centuries in the Andes, but Kia and family see it as inherently unhealthy for children's emotional well-being. The foundation for their view likely stems from a culmination of experiences in the Sacred Valley along with Western notions of family and child-care. Also, according to the directors, the particular children that arrived at their door came from unhealthy and abusive situations. Casa de Milagros responds with an alternative approach. One way to see this multi-cultural strategy is as a 'Western' import, albeit *one* of many different 'Western' approaches available for import and application. The indigenous families/guardians who have brought their children to Casa de Milagros have seemingly embraced the unconventional opportunities that the home provides by giving all legal rights to the Foundation. While Casa de Milagros aims to limit mobilities associated with child circulation, they aim to offer new possibilities for (social) mobility, such as new employment or education opportunities and access to land. Because many children who relocate multiple times likely wind up on the streets of Cusco after exhausting all living options or becoming of age without access to land, the possibilities offered by



Casa de Milagros equip the children to shape their own futures (*provided all works out according to plan*). This alternative approach provides the children with different resources and options than are attainable through child circulation.

Mama Kia and family strive to recognize and reconfigure children's socio-spatial relationships through multi-cultural care. The staff relies on the children's abilities to facilitate emotional safety for other children's coping process. Generally speaking, the children have endured trauma, and are placed out of a traumatic situation into a foreign environment. Therefore, Casa de Milagros promotes various strategies to help the children find comfort in their own bodies and with their new and unfamiliar family. A few examples I have discussed include periodically producing theatrical performances for indigenous audiences, hiring a music teacher to draw out the children's talents (if they show interest), traveling locally so that the children's recently-formed band can perform, encouraging involvement in sports, gathering for communal meals, etc. Furthermore, the directors are currently pursuing longer-term strategies that provide support for the children as they become of age. They hope to provide funding for college, employment opportunities, and open, collective land for the children to build homes nearby in order to remain a well-connected family. Their multi-cultural approach, driven by emotions, provides children with potential futures they could not obtain through the traditional orphanage.

### **Gauging the Impact**

Considering the potential impact such charitable undertakings might have, no multi-cultural approach can be unproblematic. It is important to evaluate the local



effects that Western approaches can have. As I have discussed, approaches that care from a distance often create an unequal relationship between those caring and those being cared for (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Fisher 1997; Silk 2004; Townsend 2004). According to Bosco, working solely from a distance reduces our ability to engage distant others in meaningful ways and, aside from providing temporary aid, such outreach models fail to sustain change (Bosco 2007). All too often such a condescending Western geographic imagination is laden with sentiments of paternalism and missionary zeal for uplifting the Global South. Transnational volunteers increasingly seek out opportunities provided by NGOs and other organizations to work in the 'field,' usually with the hope of rectifying paternalism. Although they may respond to images or stories that pull on their heart strings, they also address limitations of caring from a distance by seeking a personally informed perception. It is important to evaluate the local effects such initiatives can have. Casa de Milagros is an example of this approach.

In the case of Casa de Milagros, advocacy tourists coming predominantly from the United States have an opportunity to participate however they choose, but since individuals' experiences (and positionalities) differs, their engagement may at times be problematic. Those unable to speak Spanish have a difficult time communicating and connecting emotionally with Casa de Milagros' residents because Spanish is the primary language spoken at Casa de Milagros. Language barriers can lead to individualized experiences, and the international visitor may consequently neglect the *other's* (in this case, the indigenous resident's) perspective. Consider the group of professors from Texas that could not speak Spanish. They were part of a large tour that

passed through Casa de Milagros, and continuously reiterated the purpose of their trip: “to experience Peruvian culture.” The Americans were only able to speak English to Kia, Marie, and the volunteers. Not only were they unable to communicate with the other residents, but they neglected any potential cross-cultural understandings. Ironically, they appeared to experience *themselves* (and their Western lifestyles) in Peru as opposed to experiencing “Peruvian culture,” and their experience was therefore internalized. In that particular scenario, I felt Casa de Milagros’ residents were placed on display. The staff cannot entirely account for each visiting tourist’s behavior, but their dedication to fostering their children’s self-confidence and competence can provide a detour around awkward encounters. The multi-cultural environment arguably provides children with interpersonal skills. The children seem to form bonds with some of the volunteers previously discussed, such as Jen and Brian. On the other hand, the constant flow of tourists passing in and out of the children’s daily lives may erode the sense of stability Casa de Milagros works hard to assure.

Celebrity advocates attaching their names to social and environmental causes in general is troubling. They certainly cannot all be sincere and the various impacts their involvement can have are immeasurable. However, in my case study’s particular circumstance, were celebrities not involved it seems difficult to envision another financial floatation device for Casa de Milagros. Furthermore, while no celebrities appear to have exploited Casa de Milagros for personal gain, only Woody Harrelson’s emotional connections and friendship with Kia are evidenced. Woody Harrelson has time and again illustrated his convictions to social and environmental initiatives, despite consequences that might hinder his personal career. Some of Harrelson’s activist



endeavors include scaling the golden gate bridge in protest of the planned logging of old growth redwoods, advocating for the legalization of hemp in the US, and promoting raw-foods through his documentary and website. Harrelson is also an avid peace activist and advocate for the counterculture. His involvement with Casa de Milagros, in addition to supporting a close friend, demonstrates his commitment to his socio-political convictions. However, despite his convictions he is a celebrity, and wherever he goes the paparazzi follows. He has only visited Casa de Milagros once. The Peruvian paparazzi greeted him at the airport and followed him to Casa de Milagros; therefore, the unwelcomed camera crew and reporters cut his visit short. The motives of other donors remain unclear. In the end, identifying celebrities' incentives to donate seems relatively pointless to pursue because they are non-exploitative in the funding process.

In addition to donations from celebrities, advocacy tourists pay a daily stipend in return for accommodations and meals, and proceeds support the home. Visitors and volunteers are key sources of income for Casa de Milagros. The Casa de Milagros children are privileged compared to children living in surrounding communities. As previously noted, they have indigenous on-site care-providers tending to their every need because it is their job. Additionally, the children have paid staff that cook their meals and work the garden. One clear observation was that the children are accustomed to hand-outs. The children continuously receive international donations, such as toys, art supplies, clothes, music, books, shoes, etc. Additionally, most volunteers arrive with gifts for the children. To what degree the children will recognize how their fortunes differ from and are connected to disadvantages of other children in the Sacred Valley could resemble Simpson's "lotto logic" (2004), where gap year volunteers focus on



their own positionalities and allow a discourse of luck to replace one of justice and collective understanding. This would likely be an unintended consequence. Each individual child's ability to decipher luck versus the interconnectedness of their fortunes with others' disadvantages and the global processes affecting local lives and livelihoods will likely be revealed through time.

The charitable aims and sacrifices the directors of Casa de Milagros have undertaken most certainly earn my respect. They have made numerous personal sacrifices for their socio-political commitments. Their biological children struggle to be accepted as "others" in school, their salaries are minimal after tending financially to the needs of the children and employees, they work every waking hour with no vacation breaks, they have not taken warm showers in over a decade (Marie and Allan that is, as Kia often travels to the US for benefits), during their first eight years of operation they walked to Lamay (a 35 minute walk each way) three times per day with buckets to obtain potable water for their home, and they speak their second language as their primary means of communication. I do not know of an unblemished approach, and theirs appears to have a significant impact. As a feminist geographer, I choose not to view models as dichotomously good or bad. Instead, I recognize there are beneficial aspects to their aims and practices, and problematic characteristics that can use attention.

According to Simpson, community-enriching projects can (re)produce particular conceptualizations of the Global South, of the "other," and of "development." The concept of the "developing world" in the context of the Western geographic imagination portrays a "need" in the world that Westerners have the ability and right to meet and

alleviate (Simpson 2004). However, considering Casa de Milagros' American expat directors, I found no evidence that they assume Westerners are the primary and/or only agents capable of meeting their children's needs. One example of this is that the on-site care providers are themselves indigenous Peruvians from the Sacred Valley. The American expats rely on the integrity of the "mamas and papas" and depend on their capabilities to meet the children's physical and emotional needs in a culturally specific way. Consider, for example, the types of bedtime stories the children are told, or the sense of pride Peruvians share about traditional holidays celebrated in the Sacred Valley. The directors recognize the importance of local culture to the children's livelihoods and depend on their care-providers/co-workers to attend to the children's needs in ways they themselves are unable to do. At no point did I detect an elitist or paternalistic attitude on the part of the directors. Rather, it seems they have immersed themselves in a social ambiance that functions differently from their personal upbringings, and they now call it their home. They appear to have adapted themselves to their extended family which is not of Western descent. My perception is based on the level of comfort I observed between the directors, resident employees, and children.

The purpose of Casa de Milagros is to nourish the mind, body and spirit of orphaned children and instill in them a sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Our orphanage is a unique healing home where we encourage growth by providing the children proper health, a good education, art, and recreational and social activities. At Casa de Milagros the children and adults live as a single family, in an atmosphere filled with love and creativity. Living within a cooperative environment all of our children learn how to manage interpersonal relationships, respect for all living beings and each other, and non-offensive verbal communication. We are a home where children can be children. (Chandler Sky Foundation website 2009: <http://www.chandlersky.org/>)



Casa de Milagros aims to embrace some aspects of Peruvian culture, to assimilate that culture into their communal home (and in some cases, into their personal identities), and to cultivate a sense of pride within the children for their indigenous Peruvian culture. The multi-cultural aspect comes into play here as the two cultures collide and blend to configure what they refer to as the “Casa de Milagros culture”. In a sense they distinguish themselves and their ways of life from the surrounding cultural context. This is evidenced by their rejection of some local practices, such as child circulation. Casa de Milagros’ directors aim to incorporate local values and have also implemented their own morals and practices. Their approach to focusing on each individual child’s needs and growth can be beneficial in many respects; however, it clashes with local indigenous practices. Children of the Sacred Valley living outside Casa de Milagros begin working at younger ages, and their parents are obligated to work to sustain their families. These parents/guardians are not afforded the same time and energy to provide each of their children with constant attention, whereas at Casa de Milagros, the children’s individual needs are continuously met by paid indigenous employees. Casa de Milagros is a hybrid home characterized of different parent-child relationships than are typically seen in other households in the Sacred Valley. Casa de Milagros operates with a steady support system (six indigenous mamas and papas, Mama Kia, Mama Marie, and Papa Allan, in addition to the indigenous cooks, laundry personnel, garden tenders, administrative faculty, etc.) tending to the children at all times. The employees have no other labor requirements. The indigenous mamas and papas described Casa de Milagros as a community focused on constant attention and affection. My observations indicate that Casa de Milagros strives to cultivate each



child's individual self-awareness, social skills, and personal aspirations. This is to say that the care-givers provide the children with individual attention to increase self-awareness, the multi-cultural approach provides children with social skills, and the directors/employees aim to meet the children's personal aspirations with new education and employment opportunities. I characterize these aims as positive cultural impositions. They intend (I presume their intentions emerge from Western notions of family and child care, and experiences in the Sacred Valley) to foster the children's upbringing in a way that will cultivate productive citizens of Peru who are capable of creating change in their own communities. Only time will tell how much the "Casa de Milagros culture" shapes the children in ways that are too distinct from local practices and culture, and how the children reinsert themselves locally.

Casa de Milagros children have the opportunity to work in the gardens but most choose not to on a regular basis, whereas many local children work the agricultural fields at young ages to sustain their families. At Casa de Milagros, the children have learned that sustenance gained from agricultural work cannot produce ipods and cameras on its own. Agricultural labor construes peasant identity to which the children seek to avoid, and globalization seems to influence their choice as well. Witnessing the mobile transnational tourists flowing in and out of their daily lives may have embedded desires for such material things that agricultural work could not afford. Their priorities could be perceived as distinct from other local children not living at Casa de Milagros. Additionally, Leinaweaver notes that traditional orphanages run by Catholic nuns promote understandings of the frugalities essential for surviving impoverishment (Leinaweaver 2008b). Casa de Milagros is quite different because the children receive a

steady flow of international donations, and therefore might not learn the same frugalities as other children in the Sacred Valley.

A potentially problematic component to Casa de Milagros' multi-cultural approach lies in the contradiction biological parents and/or families are presented with. Casa de Milagros asks parents/guardians to give all parental rights over to the Foundation. Therefore, all children living at Casa de Milagros are wards of the Chandler Sky Foundation. The directors undertake this strategy to prevent parents from returning once the children reach a capable age to work the agricultural fields. Their hopes are to limit mobilities associated with child circulation. However, the parents are told that Casa de Milagros' doors are always open to anyone wishing to visit the children. From the perspective of the directors, I perceive their intentions are to recognize the importance of family, especially considering their aims to gain custody of all siblings in order to provide as much stability as possible. However, from the perspective of the parents dropping their children off and handing over parental rights, it could be received as a contradictory message. I was told by the children, residents, and directors that most children have never received a visitor. Numerous scenarios could determine the lack of visitation. Perhaps the families are emotionally unequipped to handle minimal contact with their children. Maybe they do not have means to travel to Casa de Milagros. The children's original guardians could be deceased. If the child came from an abusive household, the parents could feel unwelcomed by the child or might worry the other residents of Casa de Milagros are aware of the child's previous circumstance.



There is more to learn from the case of Casa de Milagros. For example, how children who grow up at Casa de Milagros will fare in adulthood will only be revealed in years to come, and yet is a crucial indication of Casa de Milagros' effectiveness. Time will tell if any of the children wind up reinserted into the traumatic situations previously encountered, for some unforeseeable reason (or perhaps not noted during my stay). A future researcher could address these implications by visiting the children who have left the home to see how they have adapted to life outside Casa de Milagros, whether or not they maintain ties with Casa de Milagros or other children who grew up there, and the nature of those connections. Furthermore, my study focused on life at Casa de Milagros; therefore, future research could expand my study's framework by exploring how the children interact and are treated at the private school they attend.

Also, I draw from a literature base focusing on Western conceptualizations of children, which fosters my study of Casa de Milagros' Western approach to child-care. Future research could incorporate the Quechua view of children and childhood. Ideally, the researcher could speak Quechua, immerse his or herself in a Quechua village, and learn about child circulation via direct observation. This would enrich conceptualizations of child circulation and enhance the theoretical framework for critiquing Casa de Milagros' aims to reject the traditional norm.

Future research could also explore how Casa de Milagros adapts to growth as an organization. Consider, for example, the recent emergence of a new template for Casa de Milagros' website. Several clues hint at the site's connections to a larger entity. The new website appears to focus on funding opportunities, whereas the previous website highlighted the home's charitable aims and projects. Marie recently sent out an email



update to friends and family. In this mass email, which is the first I have ever seen, Marie alerts recipients to the new website and shares recent stories about the children. This correspondence could perhaps indicate they are seeking new channels of development via larger organizations, and it could be inferred that the larger organization designing their website suggested sending a mass email update as a funding strategy. These are, however, mere speculations.

### **Theory and Praxis**

Recently, researchers of collective action call for a need to analyze the effectiveness of social movements more broadly. They suggest going beyond studying achievements attained through political processes by considering cultural and emotional dimensions of activism and social movements. This, they argue, addresses the broader agenda of social movements. According to Bosco, "...embeddedness is not necessarily a process dependent on relations of physical geographic proximity and...embedded ties in a network can operate across space" (Bosco 2006, 360). This thesis explores contemporary positionalities of indigenous children living in rural Peru, and the ways in which a few transnational actors mobilize an alternative strategy to those offered by the state or the Catholic Church. I have studied the ways in which these transnational actors operate across national borders to maintain the organization. This study furthers Bosco's argument that emotional commitments and connections need not be approached as measurable dimensions of network interactions bounded by fixated localities (ibid). In the case of Casa de Milagros, emotional bonds and associated actions extend across a large territory, although they are configured on a small scale.

Casa de Milagros' assorted transnational actors seek to address the well-being of children living in a particular region, the Peruvian Sacred Valley. Their approach aims to limit mobilities associated with child circulation, but also to offer new prospects for social mobilities. I have examined potential impacts Casa de Milagros' multi-cultural approach has within the residents of the home. Numerous Western approaches to child care currently operate across national borders. It is important for scholars to continue evaluating their associated impacts by studying the relationships between globalization and local practices and effects.

This research project has given rise to much wider questions about how to articulate emotions that catalyze advocacy, and for what reasons we conduct research. If our commitment is to social change, I wonder how our work can contribute to social movements and what the implications are for how we address different audiences. Scholars who are emotionally committed to their work can contribute beyond theoretical inputs. Emotions appear to be a starting point for understanding the world, how it works, and how it is perceived and (re)produced. But *how* to take a geographical emotional base and mobilize it on the ground deserves attention. I presume critical praxis is one method of acting on one's hope for change.

By balancing praxis and theory through community involvement, academics can contribute to the application of theories that can inform perceptions of the world and shape potential alternatives therein. As Wakefield suggests, scholars and activists working together (sometimes awkwardly, sometimes not), seek to redress inequalities in the world. Wakefield questions the extent to which we refine theory at the expense of action. She notes that this helps explain why community-based activists are often

skeptical of academic inquiry. She also explains how working in partnership with marginalized people can generate strong feelings of fellowship. Wakefield suggests that praxis, at its best, serves to bridge the gap between academics and *others*, so that the oppressed are no longer distant strangers but colleagues and companions (Wakefield 2007). By blending theory with praxis, academics can practice an informed method of traveling, conducting fieldwork, and participating in community-building projects. Informed participants can foster meaningful cross-cultural encounters and understandings. Emotionally-committed academics can live what they advocate for and theorize about, as Woody Harrelson, Mama Kia, and her family do. Considering my own emotions as a geographer, I hope that the strategies employed by Casa de Milagros will catalyze prosperous futures for these children; however, my fear lies in the knowledge that it is not perfect. Though multi-cultural care and Casa de Milagros' approach has problematic areas, the organization does offer *potential* alternative futures for the children, which is exactly why families deliver children to Casa de Milagros.



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