

A MESSAGE TO FRIENDS AT BOTHWELL  
& WABASH UNITED CHURCHES

# A year of remarkable hope & continued struggle for justice

DECEMBER 2021

Dear Friends,

**I hope this message finds you well in the midst of days of darkness but promised light.**

**2021 was a year of hope for me, but also a reminder that our collective work to make this a more just, loving and peaceful world must continue.**

In July, five years after her murder, there was finally a step towards justice for one of the people who have most influenced my life - Berta Caceres. Berta was an Indigenous Lenca woman from Honduras, who, just a day before her 44th birthday in March 2016, was murdered inside her home as a result of her opposition to a hydroelectric project that was being built on a river sacred to her people.

Although I never met Berta, accompanying and working for justice her, has taught me so much. A mother of four, Berta believed in the liberation of her People and all Peoples from all forms of oppression. She believed we had a responsibility to care for our common home - the earth - and took concrete actions to protect the sacred, always through ceremony and in connection with Spirit.

In July, through the sheer tenacity of her family and Honduran and international organizations that accompanied them, the CEO of the dam company was convicted of murder. The significance of this should not be underestimated. Although dozens of people are murdered in Latin America every year for defending the earth, there is almost never justice. When there is a step, it usually stops with the hitmen hired to carry out the crime - not the CEO and shareholders who ordered it to happen.

In almost twenty years of solidarity work in Central America, I cannot name another case where there has been a company executive held responsible for such a heinous crime. This is huge and is a testament to how deeply Berta, and all she worked and lived for, touched so many people - which is why so many people did everything they could to press for justice. One of the most beautiful acts of solidarity and accompaniment during the trial was the "Long Live Berta Camp" that was set up outside the courthouse. During the three months of trial, hundreds of people from across the country and the world came to be in community, sharing stories of Berta, and also sharing their own work for a more just and dignified world. It was a beautiful expression of friendship and solidarity.



Although there was great hope when the trial ended conviction, there is still so much to do so that these kinds of crimes do not continue. Currently, I am working on a case of eight water defenders who have been in arbitrary detention for more than 2 years for protecting two rivers inside a National Park that are at risk due to open-pit iron oxide mining. They spoke out against the mine, which threatens the water of tens of thousands of people and as a result, were thrown into jail at the request of the mining company, which has counted on strong backing from US steel company Nucor and which has benefitted from weak mining laws in Honduras, which the Canadian government help create.

For the "Guapinol River Defenders" this will be their third Christmas away from their families, simply for protecting their water sources.

If you wish to send them a message of support, you can do so online at [bit.ly/CartasParaGuapinol](http://bit.ly/CartasParaGuapinol) or send me an email: [jmcvicar@gmail.com](mailto:jmcvicar@gmail.com)

Photo below: "Freedom for Guapinol" one of the water defenders Jose Cedillo, hugs his daughter through a fence at the jail where he has been in arbitrary detention more than 2 years.



The photo above shows Berta Caceres sitting on the banks of the Gualcarque River, which she fought to protect from a dam that was funded by international development banks. She was followed and threatened for months before her murder and urged her family to be strong and keep fighting if something happened to her for protecting water and life for everyone.

Berta did her work selflessly and with great love. Just months before she was murdered, she received the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in the USA. In her acceptance speech, she said, "Giving our lives in multiple ways for the protection of our rivers is giving our lives for the well-being of humanity and the planet."

She concluded, "Wake up! Wake up humanity - there is no time left!"

I invite you to watch a short video of Berta, just a few minutes long, as a way to honor her life and all those who courageously put their lives on the line for the well-being of all life and creation - our rivers, our forests, our earth, ourselves. <https://youtu.be/AR1kwx8b0ms>

May Berta's guiding light and courage, not unlike the great example of Christ which we reflect upon in this season, inspire us all to fight for a more just, peaceful, and loving world in times of darkness.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO TO MAKE THIS A MORE PEACEFUL, LOVING & JUST WORLD.

BLESSINGS IN FRIENDSHIP, JACKIE

