Emeritus Nomination—Larry Mosqueda—May 20, 2015

By Anne Fischel

The word that comes to me when I think about Larry Mosqueda is *constancy.*  Dictionaries list many synonyms for constancy: steadfastness, devotion, loyalty, faithfulness, resolve. Cormac McCarthy writes that “courage is a form of constancy” and Larry is one of the most courageous people I know. Georg Simmel, the German sociologist-philosopher, wrote an essay in which he explained faithfulness (constancy) as, not the quality that engenders relationships—that comes from other qualities we have—but the quality that enables relationships to endure over time, over the long haul. We can have constant relationships with people, with principles, with a vision of hope and possibility for the future. To me, Larry epitomizes all those forms of constancy.

I taught with Larry in “Contested Realities” with Therese Saliba in 1998-99. It was a wonderful experience. One of the high points was learning from Larry about the history, politics and culture of El Salvador, a subject to which he brought his deep expertise as well as his long-standing experience working with CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. Throughout the 1980’s and early 1990’s El Salvador experienced a totalizing civil war between the rebel Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberación Naciónal (FMLN) and the U.S. supported government. On a deeper level this was a war conducted by the elites who controlled the state and the economy against both the FMLN and the civilian population. The battlefields were urban streets and rural villages; there were targeted assassinations of labor leaders, priests and nuns, university faculty and community activists. It was a dreadful period in Salvadoran history, but the constancy of Larry and others helped to bolster the Salvadoran popular movements and keep hope for a peaceful and democratic future alive.

The war ended in 1992, but it left deep scars that have not healed. One outcome of the Peace Accords was that the former guerilla movement, the FMLN, became a political party. Each election, international observers arrive to monitor the polling booths and guarantee the legitimacy of the elections. For many years Larry helped to perform this function. During one of our class sessions he explained his commitment as a natural outcome of the relationship he had built with El Salvador through his years of solidarity work and he argued that one had to be true to those relationships. This meant staying the course, continuing to be engaged and involved, and providing the support needed for a fragile democracy Every decade is characterized by a distinctive struggle: in the 1960’s, the Civil Rights Movement; in the early 1970’s, the anti-Vietnam War movement; in the 1980’s the Central American wars. Inevitably, many of us move on to address the next, critical emergency and human rights struggle. And while Larry has been responsive to so many human rights movements, he was also constant in maintaining his commitment to El Salvador. I was struck by how he explained this, and so, in spring of 1999, I went with him to El Salvador to participate in monitoring the second presidential election to take place in peacetime.

Besides election monitoring in El Salvador, Larry was also producing a documentary film with a former student, Ron Smith. As part of our preparation we were taken to political rallies and met activists on all sides of the political spectrum. One night we we were standing at the back of a huge rally for the FMLN, looking for vantage points to film. I helped strap a video camera on Larry so he could move about. All of a sudden he plunged into the crowd. He simply propelled himself forward and the crowd parted around him. I grabbed onto the back of his shirt and did my best to keep up with him.We were surrounded by literally thousands of people. My first reaction was to be fearful—in the United States, crowds can spell chaos or danger. But here, people were turning towards the camera, waving and smiling, calling out their greetings and their thanks for our presence. It was a breathtaking moment, made possible by Larry’s courage and determination to engage.

Several days later we went to the polling booths to do our work. We arrived at dawn; the polling centers were not open yet, but long lines of people had already formed. When we approached, they said to us, “*This is our democracy and it is our right to vote, it is our right to participate!*” I will never forget that moment. It helped me understand the welcome we had experienced as we moved through the FMLN rally. I understood peoples’ sense that they were participating in a historic and joyous moment; that they were saying “Witness us building our democracy here” and welcoming us to that process. I wish that our students could understand that urgent sense of what political participation could and should mean—and could know what it’s like for an embattled people to begin to claim their political voice. I feel privileged to have learned about this because of Larry’s constancy and commitment, and I know that it informed his teaching as well.

It’s worth noting that because of Larry, Evergreen is well-known and respected in El Salvador. Some years ago I was contacted by Salvadoran students who wanted to apply to Evergreen. When they came they told me Evergreen was the college they aspired to attend—because it was the college of Larry Mosqueda.

Larry Mosqueda received his Ph.D. in Political Science in 1979 from the University of Washington. He taught for two years in the Chicano Studies Center of Claremont Colleges, and then for ten years in the Department of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Denver, where he received an award for excellence in teaching. He joined the Evergreen faculty in 1989.

In 2002 our faculty honored Larry by choosing him to represent us as the Graduation Speaker, a role he will again be fulfilling this June.

He is a two-time documentary filmmaker, having collaborated with Ron Smith to make *Resistance as Democracy,* and with Laurie Meeker, to make *Special Lies: Hate Propaganda of the Radical Right.*

Larry is a prolific author who has published in academic journals and on-line venues. His essay “A Duty to Disobey All Unlawful Orders,” about the U.S. military and the legality of the war in Iraq, has been widely distributed and was extremely influential to the emerging movement of anti-war resistance to the war among US soldiers.

It’s my pleasure to nominate Larry Mosqueda for emeritus status.