

TUESDAY MORNING

WHEREAS, the United States Congress enacted the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 on July 9, 1921, establishing a homesteading program for Native Hawaiians;

WHEREAS, the Hawaiian Homes Commission act of 1920 set aside approximately 203,500 acres of land within the State of Hawaii for residential, agricultural and pastoral uses for Native Hawaiians;

WHEREAS, the Federal-State Task Force on the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 issued a Report to the United States Secretary of the Interior in August, 1983, which indicated the following:

1. That the United States and the State of Hawaii have obligations to superintend the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920;
2. That Congress should enact legislation granting beneficiaries the right to sue for breach of trust in Federal Court;
3. That 1,356 acres of Hawaiian Home Lands at Lualualei, Oahu were illegally removed by Executive Order for military use;
4. That the United States and the State of Hawaii have contributed to the misuse of Hawaiian Home Lands and have received the beneficial use and enjoyment of these lands in violation of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920;
5. That the United States military utilizes Hawaiian Home Lands at Kamaoa-Pu'ueo, Humu'ula, Kekaha, and Nanakuli, which uses should be rescinded;

WHEREAS, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands Annual Report 1988 indicates that there were 17,643 Native Hawaiian families waiting for homestead awards as of June 1988;

WHEREAS, the United States Congress and its Agencies have not taken action to allow Native beneficiaries the right to sue in Federal Court, or to rescind the illegal military uses and taking of Hawaiian Home Lands; and to return these lands to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands for the homesteading of Native Hawaiians.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas on June 28, 1989 to July 4, 1989, supports the rightful claim of the Native Hawaiians to the lands set aside by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 establishing the homestead program for Native Hawaiians, and therefore urges the United States Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, chaired by Senator Daniel Inouye, to sponsor legislation to insure the following:

1. The prompt return of all Hawaiian Home Lands currently utilized by Federal agencies for military or other uses;
2. Just land rental payments to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands for continued use of the lands until such a return is accomplished;
3. The enactment of Federal legislation allowing Native Hawaiians access to the Federal District Court for protection of the Native Trust Entitlement including Hawaiian Home Lands and ceded Lands;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod urges Delegates to the 17th General Synod, Conferences, Associations and Members of Local Churches to communicate the intent of this Resolution to their Federal Legislators before the end of August 1989;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod requests the Commission for Racial Justice, in collaboration with the Hawaii Conference, to monitor this legislation and keep the church informed.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

20. UNITING THE COMMUNITY

The Rev. Patricia deJong thanked the Synod for their responsive participation in the various activities she had led. She then helped the community to celebrate the 4th of July.

21. RESOLUTION "SUPPORTING AMERICA SOSA OF COMADRES"

Ms. Liane Wong, on behalf of Committee 20, moved the adoption of the Resolution "Supporting America Sosa of COMRADES" with the following correction: in the second paragraph under Theological Rationale the second sentence should read "The ministry of Jesus, centered on the poor and the oppressed." After short discussion, it was

89-GS-87 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Supporting America Sosa of COMRADES."

SUPPORTING AMERICA SOSA OF COMADRES

Summary

America Sosa, the United States Representative of COMADRES (Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador) was arrested by two agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service on March 28, 1989 in First Congregational United Church of Christ of Washington, D.C. while in sanctuary with Dumbarton United Methodist Church. She has been charged with illegal entry into the United States and a deportation hearing is scheduled for August 1989.

This resolution declares support for America Sosa, for her defense against deportation, and for her application for political asylum. It calls upon the Attorney General and the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to apply the Refugee Act of 1980 to refugees from El Salvador. And, it protests the entry without warrant into a church for the purpose of arresting America Sosa.

Background

America Sosa entered the United States in 1985 with purpose and without documents. Her purpose was to serve as the United States Representative for COMADRES, the organization of El Salvadoran mothers formed at the suggestion of Archbishop Oscar Romero. To best represent the plight of these mothers, America Sosa chose to come to Washington, D.C. and enter sanctuary in Dumbarton United Methodist church, and later accepted office space donated by First Congregational United Church of Christ. Following her well-publicized arrival, she has spoken publicly for the last four years across the nation, including at the last General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

An element in achieving political asylum in the United States is demonstrating imminent peril to her life in El Salvador. Her story is thus relevant background for the case, and it qualifies her as a representative not only of COMADRES, but also of El Salvadorans more generally both in El Salvador and in this country.

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From 1973 to 1979, America worked in several leadership capacities at the Base Christian Community in San Miguel, El Salvador. In 1979 security forces occupied the village. After ransacking a retreat house, they shot and killed the priest and four teenagers.

In 1980, America's fourteen-year-old son, Juan, disappeared. He was then a student in the eighth grade and volunteered with the Green Cross (Salvadoran Red Cross). Imprisoned without charge or trial for seven months, he was beaten with rifle butts and tortured. Forced to sign a confession he never was allowed to read, he was found guilty of the murder of a colonel and burning several school buses. Yet he was later released and gained political asylum in Mexico.

In 1981 America's husband, Joaquin, a construction laborer who was fearful of political involvements, was abducted, imprisoned and tortured. When he was released, America took him to a hospital where he died two weeks later from his injuries.

America joined COMADRES in 1981 where she found other women who understood her pain and desperation. They provided help in the form of valuable information, legal and financial assistance, and precious moral support through human compassion. Each mother has suffered similarly.

In 1984 COMADRES was awarded the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award and four members were invited to the United States to receive the award. The U.S. Department of State denied their visa applications, describing them as terrorists, even though COMADRES is politically non-aligned and thoroughly non-violent. In spite of twice having had its offices bombed, no member of COMADRES has ever been linked to violence.

In 1985 America came to the United States with the help of the Sanctuary Movement. Dumbarton United Methodist Church was seeking to give sanctuary to a person whose life was clearly in danger. America was seeking to come to Washington, D.C. as the best place from which to awaken our people to the plight of the Salvadorans who suffer from violence by their government, a government which the United States funds at the rate of \$2 million per day. In addition to giving her sanctuary, Dumbarton United Methodist Church also gives her a monthly stipend of \$600. In 1986 First Congregational United Church of Christ voted to donate COMADRES free office space and to accept COMADRES as part of its ministry.

In this country she uses the name of America Sosa to protect her six children remaining in El Salvador. Yet seven months after her arrival, her son Joaquin Caceres was abducted. He works for the Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, an agency whose director, Herbert Anaya, was assassinated much like Archbishop Romero. Joaquin was charged with being a guerilla and a subversive and was imprisoned for one year, nearly dying from torture.

For the past four years America Sosa has criss-crossed the country, speaking publicly of the government violence against the poor, documenting the gross pervasive violations of the most basic human rights, and representing faithfully the mothers. Yet Roberto D'Aubuisson, the leader of the ARENA Party now in power, has vowed to "cut the head off COMADRES." Americas Watch, the noted human rights watchdog agency, has concluded after careful study that "terror is the means by which the armed forces maintain their authority."

Theological Rationale

The stranger in their midst (Lev.19: 9-10) reminds Israel that once they were oppressed and strangers. In that reminding, God brought them into a land that would sustain them abundantly. The nation is called to remember that God acted on their behalf to establish them in a free land. The Biblical story of Ruth reminds us, as does America Sosa, who is a jolt to our consciousness, that justice is meant for all people and is not exclusively for the privileged. We dare not lose sight from whom comes the abundance of the imperative to be hospitable through God's liberating love.

In the reminder of Leviticus 19, comes the teaching to love your neighbor as yourself. The ministry of Jesus centered on the poor and the oppressed. It was a ministry which never sacrificed compassion and justice for political purposes.

It is Jesus that taught us to love God and neighbor and this is our purpose as the Church.

Text of Resolution

WHEREAS, America Sosa, the U.S. Representative of COMADRES, was arrested on March 28, 1989 by two agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service following an entry without warrant into First Congregational United Church of Christ, while she was in sanctuary with Dumbarton United Methodist Church, and was then charged with illegal entry into the United States, and was released on bond pending a deportation hearing in August 1989;

WHEREAS, the imminent peril to America Sosa's life if she were deported is clearly demonstrated by the facts included above;

WHEREAS, the Refugee Act of 1980 reaffirms this nation's commitment to refugees, a commitment originally made when we signed the United Nations Refugee Protocol of 1967, thereby guaranteeing political asylum to all those whose lives would be endangered in their homeland due to political repression and war;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ declares its steadfast support for America Sosa, for her defense against deportation, and for her application for political asylum, recognizing her as an authentic representative both of the mothers of El Salvador and of the refugees in this country;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod asks the President of the United Church of Christ to write to Attorney General Richard Thornburgh and Commissioner Alan Nelson of the Immigration and Naturalization Service calling upon our government to apply the provisions of the Refugee Act of 1980 in respect to the refugees from the war and repression in El Salvador, granting political asylum to America Sosa and other refugees;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod asks that the same letters protest the entry without warrant into a church by government agents for the purpose of arresting America Sosa.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.