

Adriaan Bronkhorst
The Drug Peace Insitute
Utrecht, Holland

April 5, 2018

Dear Mr. Bronkhorst:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Drugs Pacifists Committee in support of the Centro Indígena Huichol A.C., and its founder Susana Valadez for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.

My experience with Ms. Valadez dates back to 1982 when, as the head botanist at the Huntington Botanical Gardens, I was planning a plant-collecting expedition to Mexico with my colleagues Gilbert Voss of Quail Botanical Gardens (now the San Diego Botanical Garden) and Jim Dice, curator of the Desert Garden at the Huntington. We shared a burning desire to visit the Huichol (Wixárika) ceremonial center of San Andrés Cohamiata in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, to look for interesting plants and seeds and to begin investigations into traditional Huichol plant uses. By then, Susana was a seasoned veteran of life in the "Huichol Sierra". We approached her to ask if she could help us by writing a letter of introduction for us. She graciously drafted a document introducing us that opened up a path for continued visits and field work in the community.

When I entered the Ph.D. program in Botany at the Claremont Graduate School (now University), I again approached Susana for her assistance. Susana had been conducting her own research into Huichol culture, including useful plants, for some time. She had been working with an exceedingly knowledgeable Huichol shaman, Santos Aguilar Carrillo. She graciously arranged for me to meet Santos who became my primary consultant. Because of his work with Susana, he was comfortable talking to outsiders. His extensive knowledge and Susana's introductory list of useful plants laid the foundation for the research that lead to my degree.

Throughout these many years, I have been deeply impressed by Susana's unwavering dedication to understanding and preserving Huichol culture. She has devoted her life to supporting the Huichols economically through preserving their artistic traditions and marketing their art through the Centro

Indígena Huichol A.C., first in Santiago Ixcuintla, Nayarit, then in Huejuquilla el Alto, Jalisco, Mexico. She has provided food and shelter at her center to the groups of *peyoteros*, representatives of their communities, on the arduous trek from their Sierra homeland to the desert in the state of San Luis Potosí to collect the peyote cactus, *Lophophora williamsii*, that is so important in their mythology and culture.

Ms. Valadez' commitment to the Huichol people has required extensive thought, planning, creativity, resources, perseverance, patience, dedication and sacrifice over decades. I remember many times she did not know if there would be enough funds to cover the month's expenses. And yet she continued to use her energies to keep her center functioning. She has provided employment to countless numbers of Huichols over the years, building on their traditional arts in creative ways. She has provided food and shelter to workers and visitors. She has initiated sustainable agricultural projects and even aquaculture to demonstrate healthful and environmentally-sound means of sustenance.

In addition to her Center in Huejuquilla, Ms. Valadez has a store and yarn-painting workshop run by her son Cilau, in Sayulita, Nayarit, a quiet fishing village that has transformed into a popular tourist spot. Next door to the shop is her restaurant "Blue Corn Mama" which serves delicious, healthy meals and attracts visitors to the art store. The restaurant is based on foods made from Huichol blue corn. She has contracted with Huichol communities to grow the corn, and she hires Huichol employees to help with the cooking.

Her interest and enthusiasm has not waned over the years. As recently as January of this year, I visited with Ms. Valadez. She encouraged me to continue with my Huichol ethnobotanical studies. At her instigation I completed the digital archiving of my taped interviews with Santos, as has she. She wants to collaborate in the future to publish more of the information on traditional plant knowledge we have collected so that it will not be lost.

Because of her hard work and dedication to supporting communities, preserving and protecting the culture, and as a torch-bearer for the Huichol People, I can unequivocally support and nominate Susana Valadez for the Nobel Peace prize.

Sincerely,



James A. Bauml, Ph.D.

Senior Biologist, Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden, Retired