

**Mario Albeiro Acevedo Aguirre**  
( - August 2016)

It is with sadness that we announce the loss of a member of the CIE community; Mario Albeiro Acevedo Aguirre died on August 11, 2016, in Cali, Colombia, after a prolonged illness. He had recently retired from the *Universidad del Valle*, Colombia's third largest university, where he was a professor at the *Instituto de Educación y Pedagogía* for nearly four decades, and where he held the posts of Director and subsequently, Sub-Director of Research and Postgraduate Studies.

Mario's professional and academic life was intertwined with his alma mater, known familiarly as "Univalle". As an undergraduate at Univalle, he studied Education with a specialization in Biology, graduating in 1976 and then accepting a teaching position at the university. In 1985 he won a Fulbright scholarship for university professors ("LASPAU"), and went first to Pittsburg to study English. From there he came to the Center for International Education where he completed Master of Education in 1988 and went on to earn a Doctor of Education degree in 1988. He then returned to Cali and resumed his career at Univalle.



While at the CIE, Mario met and formed a friendship with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who invited Mario to accompany him to visit Myles Horton at the Highlander Center in Tennessee, where Freire and Horton were working on a series of dialogues which resulted in the book *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (1990). Mario remained in contact with Freire until Freire's death in 1997, and continued to study, reflect upon, and teach from Freire's writings.

The tribute posted on the Univalle website refers to Mario as "a pillar of Popular Education in Colombia", contributing to its development through classes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, research, articles and other documentation. He was instrumental in founding the interdisciplinary Popular Education Group at the university, and in establishing the undergraduate degree program in Popular Education which he directed for many years. Together with colleagues from the Group, he was advisor to the Popular Educators' Network of Cali, and collaborated in writing a book about the Network's experiences, soon to be published.

Mario's passion for Popular Education manifested itself in other professional venues as well, including numerous national and international consultancies; among them programs at the Institute for Training and Development in Amherst with Central American Peace Scholars, and the *Fundater* and *Universidad Javeriana* postgrad program in alternate management strategies for NGO's, in Cali.

The youngest of eleven children, Mario grew up in a village in the foothills of the Andes, an area known for its coffee production. He was the first in his family to attend university, yet he never forgot his roots. In the years previous to his retirement, Mario embarked on a life-long

dream: he returned to *El Madroño* for extended periods and undertook several projects, rebuilding the family home, organizing adult literacy classes and promoting modern technology for coffee cultivation on local farms, including the beloved family farm “*La Aurora*”.

Mario is survived by his daughter Lilian Ximena Acevedo, his grandson Gabriel Nicholas Espinosa, his colleague and *compañera* of sixteen years Stella Valencia, his sisters, to whom he was devoted, and other members of his large extended family. His loss is felt by his many friends and colleagues, including his wife, Kathy Searle, from whom he separated in 2000, but with whom he remained close. In the CIE network, he will be remembered for his sense of humor and his unassuming modesty as well as his intellect, creativity and talent as an educator. *¡Le extrañaremos, Mario!* - Kathy Searle de Acevedo (M.Ed. 1985)

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Like everyone whose life has been touched by Mario, I was deeply saddened to learn of his passing. He was a remarkable man known for his immense talents and tireless dedication to popular education. I first met Mario in 1992 when I came to Amherst to work at ITD on an environmental education program for El Salvador. He quickly became a mentor to me and pointed me on a path that ultimately led me to CIE. I admired so much how easily and genuinely he related to all the participants while at the same time seamlessly challenging them to reflect upon their own positions of power and its implications in their own communities and in their work.

In the early days of ITD, (the late 1980's) he was among the core group of CIE practitioners tirelessly developing and refining popular education workshops and techniques reaching the multitude of grassroots change agents passing through Amherst as part of the Reagan era Central American Peace Scholarship Program. His legacy lives on at ITD and within the innumerable *comunidades* throughout Latin America that he or one of his inspired students has inevitably touched. With Mario's passing, our world has lost one its brighter and more caring lights. - Mark Protti (Ed.D. 1999)

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