



CITY OF LODI

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

AGENDA TITLE: Introduction of Delegates from Lodi who will attend the World Council of Churches in Zimbabwe, Africa

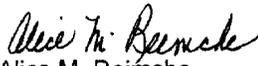
MEETING DATE: May 6, 1998

PREPARED BY: City Clerk

RECOMMENDATION: That Mayor Sieglock introduce and recognize two members of the Lodi community who have been selected to attend the World Council of Churches in Zimbabwe, Africa.

BACKGROUND: Paula Soto and her daughter Elena Aguinaga were selected to be among 25 women representing the United States at the World Council of Churches meeting in Zimbabwe, Africa in November, 1998. The conference will focus on encouraging human rights and equality for women throughout the world.

FUNDING: None required.


Alice M. Reimche
City Clerk

APPROVED: _____
H. Dixon Flynn -- City Manager

April 28, 1998

Lodi City Counsel

My daughter Elena and I were selected by Church Women United to be two of 125 representatives to attend the Celebration of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women conference 1988-1998. The conference will be held in Harare, Zimbabwe in November, 1998.

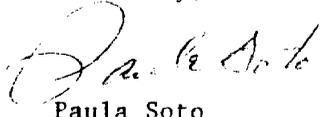
Issues this conference will address are encouraging human rights and equality for women throughout the world, and finding ways to provide women with more opportunities to celebrate their gifts to the church and society.

At the conference, I will be exploring the issues which women around the world face. As Center Director for Lodi Community Service Center, I will be able to share my experiences working with the homeless, single mothers, the unemployed, the elderly, disabled, immigrant, and impoverished populations. In addition, I will be able to contribute more by sharing my experiences as a wife, mother, and an active member of my church and community. Elena will contribute her experience working with various youth groups to address the issues facing young women today.

When we return from our trip, Elena and I will be glad to speak to groups about our experience in Zimbabwe. We can supplement our discussions with videos and pictures from the trip.

Elena and I are very fortunate to be able to participate in this festival, and we would like to thank Church Women United and all the community for their support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paula Soto".

Paula Soto

Lockeford pair will journey to Zimbabwe women's meeting

By Nancy Forrest
News-Sentinel staff writer

Lockeford resident Paula Soto and her daughter, Elena Aguinaga, will attend a meeting of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe as part of a United States delegation of 125 women.

The conference of Christian women worldwide will be held Nov. 27-30 and will be preceded by two days of guided tours of villages surrounding the capital city of Harare.

The seminars at the conference will focus on "Celebrating the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women," encouraging human rights and equality for women throughout the world.

The seminars will also offer a festival of celebration of the conference's interfaith vision beyond 1998 and into the new millennium and provide an opportunity for women to celebrate their gifts to the church and society.

Women from around the world will have the chance to reflect on the past 10 years and evaluate how far the churches have come in their solidarity with women. They will also offer a challenge to churches and the World Council of Churches to act in solidarity with women in the years beyond 1998 by providing a clear and practical program of action.

The Ecumenical Decade began in 1988 as a program of the World Council of Churches. The decade has been a global ecumenical strategy to enable the churches to respond to the challenges to move forward in their commitments to women.

The themes of the Ecumenical Decade emphasize four themes including participation of women in the life of the churches and affirmation of their contribution to the theological, spiritual and administrative life of the churches; the context of violence against women in church and society; and the context of racism and xenophobia (fear of strangers or foreigners) and their impact on women.

Soto, who has lived in the Lodi area for 25 years, is the director of the Lodi Community Service Center. Aguinaga is a freshman studying business administration at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton. They have lived in Lockeford for six years.

The mother and daughter duo have participated in Church Women United events for the past five years and were recently selected by the local chapter to attend the conference.

They will be one of two such pairs to represent chapters throughout the nation. A grandmother and granddaughter duo from Puerto Rico will also attend

the conference in Africa.

Soto expressed pride in the fact that her daughter will join her at the African conference, as women from around the world seek to include greater numbers of young women and girls of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds in their combined activities.

The Lodi-Galt chapter of Church Women United has established a trust fund for the trip to Zimbabwe. The two must now raise \$8,000 for their combined travel and other expenses while in Africa. They will take literature on Church Women United programs and speak as representatives of the chapter during daily seminars.

Soto has also scheduled several fund-raising events, the first of which is an open house party to be held at 8 p.m. Thursday. An opportunity drawing will be held April 27 to raise for funds for their trip.

"It will give us a tremendous opportunity to share our view on women's issues," Soto said. "I think I can bring some of my own insights to the issues facing women, whether it is the need for jobs, the issue of homelessness, battered women or single mothers. These are issues facing women around the world."

"As director of the community center, where we help people with these problems, and with my personal experiences, I think I will be able to take an active role in the seminars," Soto said.

Both in Reynosa, a Mexican town near the Texas border, Soto moved to the United States at the age of

The third eldest of seven children, Soto was raised in Texas and moved with her family to Fresno in 1965 and later met and married her husband there.

She recalls the grueling eight-day journey with her family from Texas to California that had promised to yield jobs for her mother and elder siblings in Merced but the jobs did not materialize. The job foreman offered them the shade of a nearby tree but little else.

Her mother, a U.S. citizen raised in Mexico, had been given money for transportation to California but when she arrived with her children, no job was available. Her mother could not draw public assistance because she had not been a county resident for one year. People told her she should return home to Texas. Her mother had sought for 13 years to find Soto's grandfather, whom she finally located in Parlier.

Soto has served as director of the Lodi Community Service Center since 1992 and previously worked for San Joaquin County, at its Stockton center. She has worked for the county for 12 years.

For the location and more information, call Soto at 397-0885, voice mail pager